

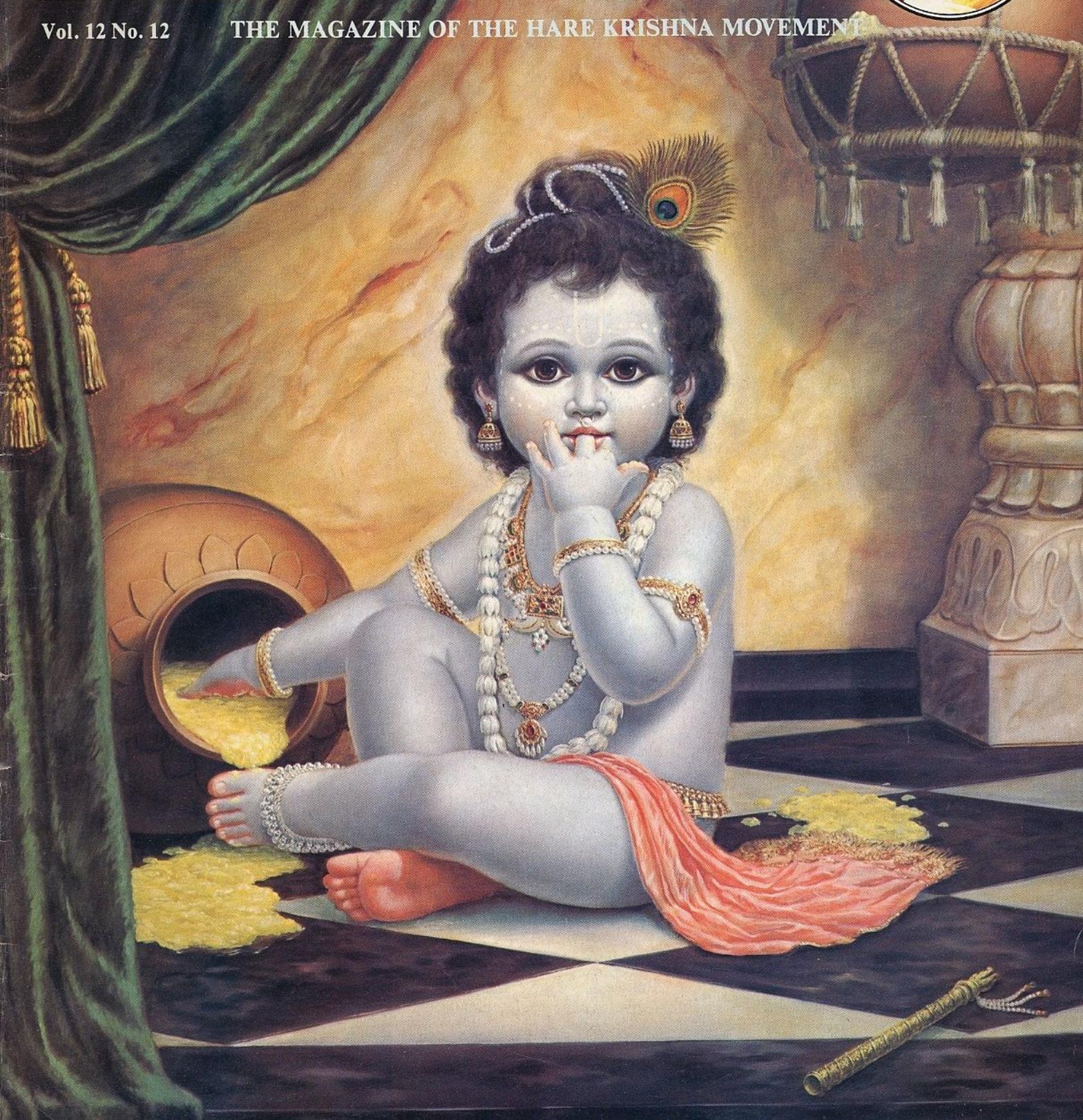
Godhead is light. Nescience is darkness. Where there is Godhead there is no nescience.

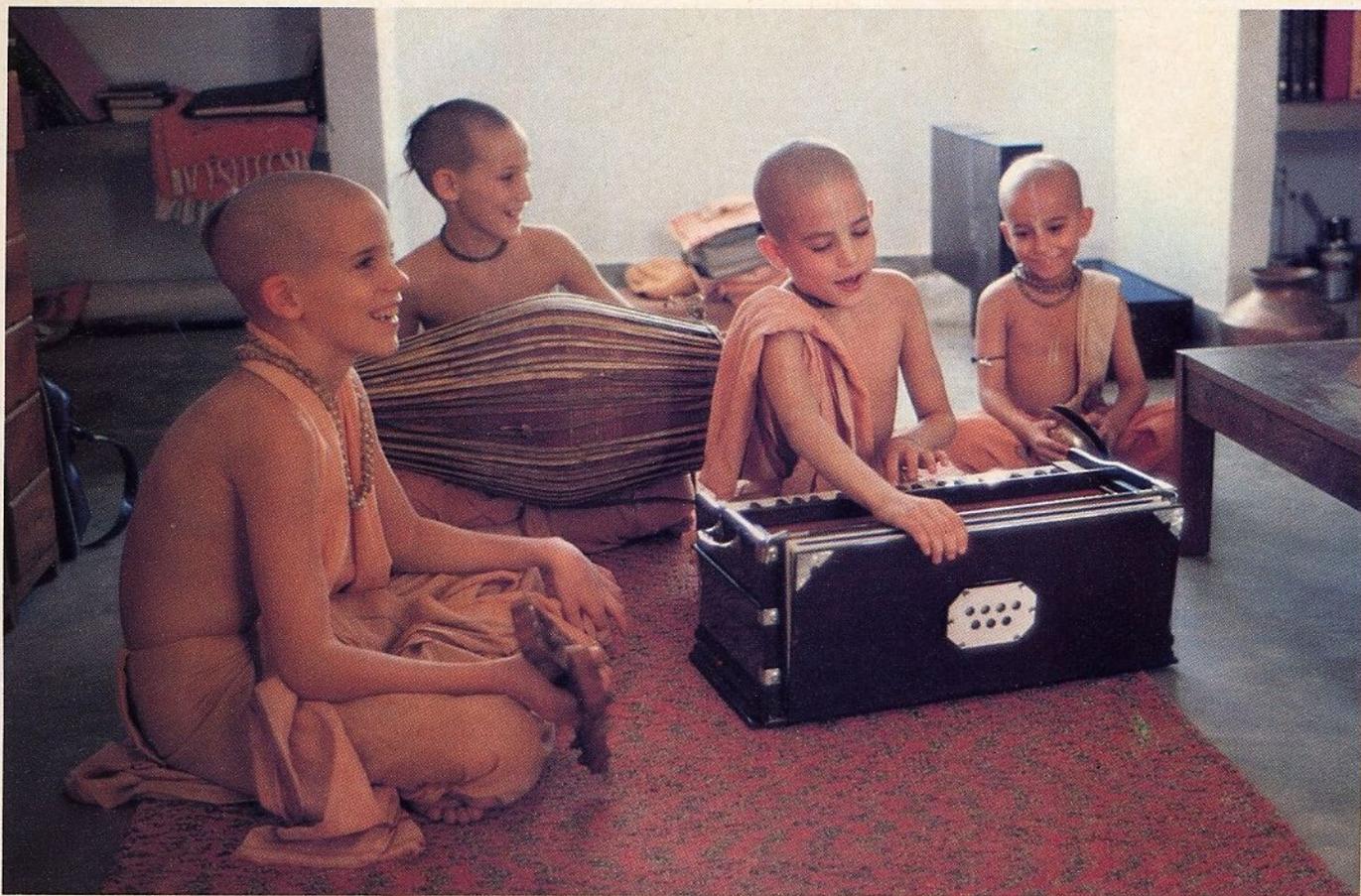


BACK TO GODHEAD

Vol. 12 No. 12

THE MAGAZINE OF THE HARE KRISHNA MOVEMENT





Students chant Hare Kṛṣṇa at the Kṛṣṇa-conscious academy in Vṛndāvana, India.

A short statement of the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa Consciousness

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

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

1. By sincerely cultivating a bona fide spiritual science, we can be free from anxiety and come to a state of pure, unending, blissful consciousness in this lifetime.
2. We are not our bodies but eternal spirit souls, parts and parcels of God (Kṛṣṇa). As such, we are all brothers, and Kṛṣṇa is ultimately our common father.
3. Kṛṣṇa is the eternal, all-knowing, omnipresent, all-powerful, and all-attractive Personality of Godhead. He is the seed-giving father of all living beings, and He is the sustaining energy of the entire cosmic creation.
4. The Absolute Truth is contained in all the great scriptures of the world. However, the oldest known revealed scriptures in existence are the Vedic literatures, most notably the *Bhagavad-gītā*, which is the literal record of God's actual words.
5. We should learn the Vedic knowledge from a genuine spiritual master—one who has no selfish motives and whose mind is firmly fixed on Kṛṣṇa.
6. Before we eat, we should offer to the Lord the food that sustains us. Then Kṛṣṇa becomes the offering and purifies us.

7. We should perform all our actions as offerings to Kṛṣṇa and do nothing for our own sense gratification.
8. The recommended means for achieving the mature stage of love of God in this age of Kali, or quarrel, is to chant the holy names of the Lord. The easiest method for most people is to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra:

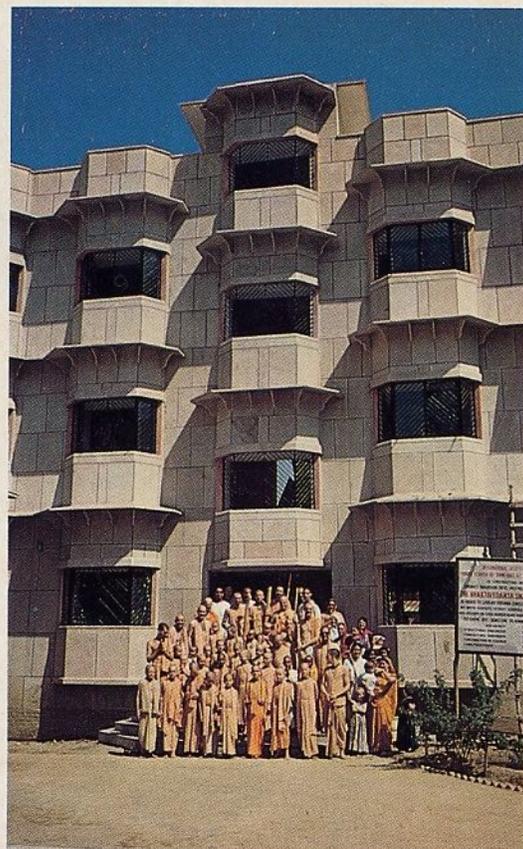
Hare Kṛṣṇa
 Hare Kṛṣṇa
 Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa
 Hare Hare
 Hare Rāma
 Hare Rāma
 Rāma Rāma
 Hare Hare

Chant and be happy...



Jagat Sakhā dāsa (left), book distributor, Los Angeles:
 "What's a Hare Kṛṣṇa person doing dressed up like Santa? That's what a lot of people want to know. Nowadays we usually think of Santa as some kind of wintertime Daddy Warbucks who'll satisfy our craving for more and more material things. But 'Santa' really means 'saint.' The original Santa taught people all about God and how to love God. So that's what I'm doing dressed up like Santa. I'm passing out these books about love of God and asking everybody to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*."

Ramesh Lal (right), Toronto health spa proprietor: "When you go into business, you're letting yourself in for all kinds of problems and anxieties. But by chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* and reading the authorized books on Kṛṣṇa consciousness, I've learned how to dovetail my work in the service of the Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa—and this has brought me great peace."

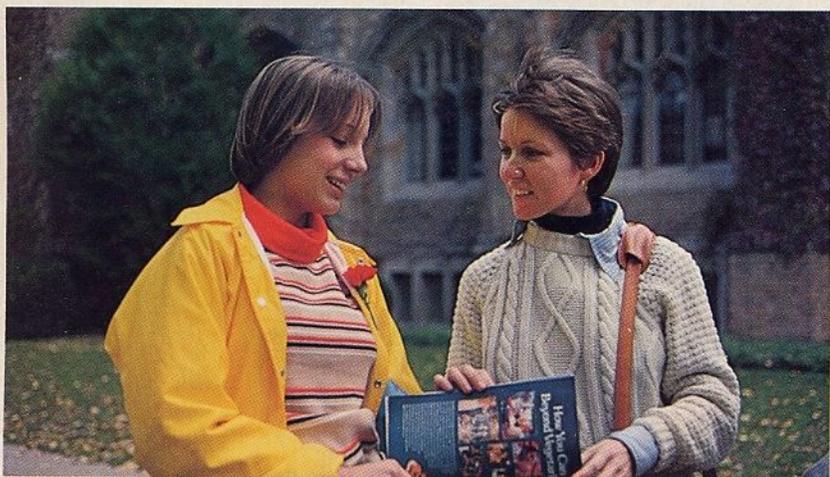


India's most sacred and joyful village is Vṛndāvana, where five thousand years ago Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself played as a child. And to this day everybody here remembers Kṛṣṇa. Everybody chants His names.

Including these children at the local Kṛṣṇa-conscious academy. They come from all over the world just to live and learn in Vṛndāvana. After all, this is the village where Kṛṣṇa's names have always been the most popular song.

Whether you live in a sacred village or a not-so-sacred village, chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. Then your village will be as joyful as Vṛndāvana.

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



Kāraṇa Kāraṇa-devī dāsī (above, on right), book distributor, Chicago:
 "Right now everybody is thinking, 'I'm from America,' 'I'm from Chicago,' 'I'm from the Smith family,' and like that. But when you chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*, you see yourself a whole lot more clearly. Sure, your body might come from America, from Chicago, from the Smith family, but when you chant you start seeing that you're the spirit within your body—you come from Kṛṣṇa, from God. That's when the real pleasure comes into your life."

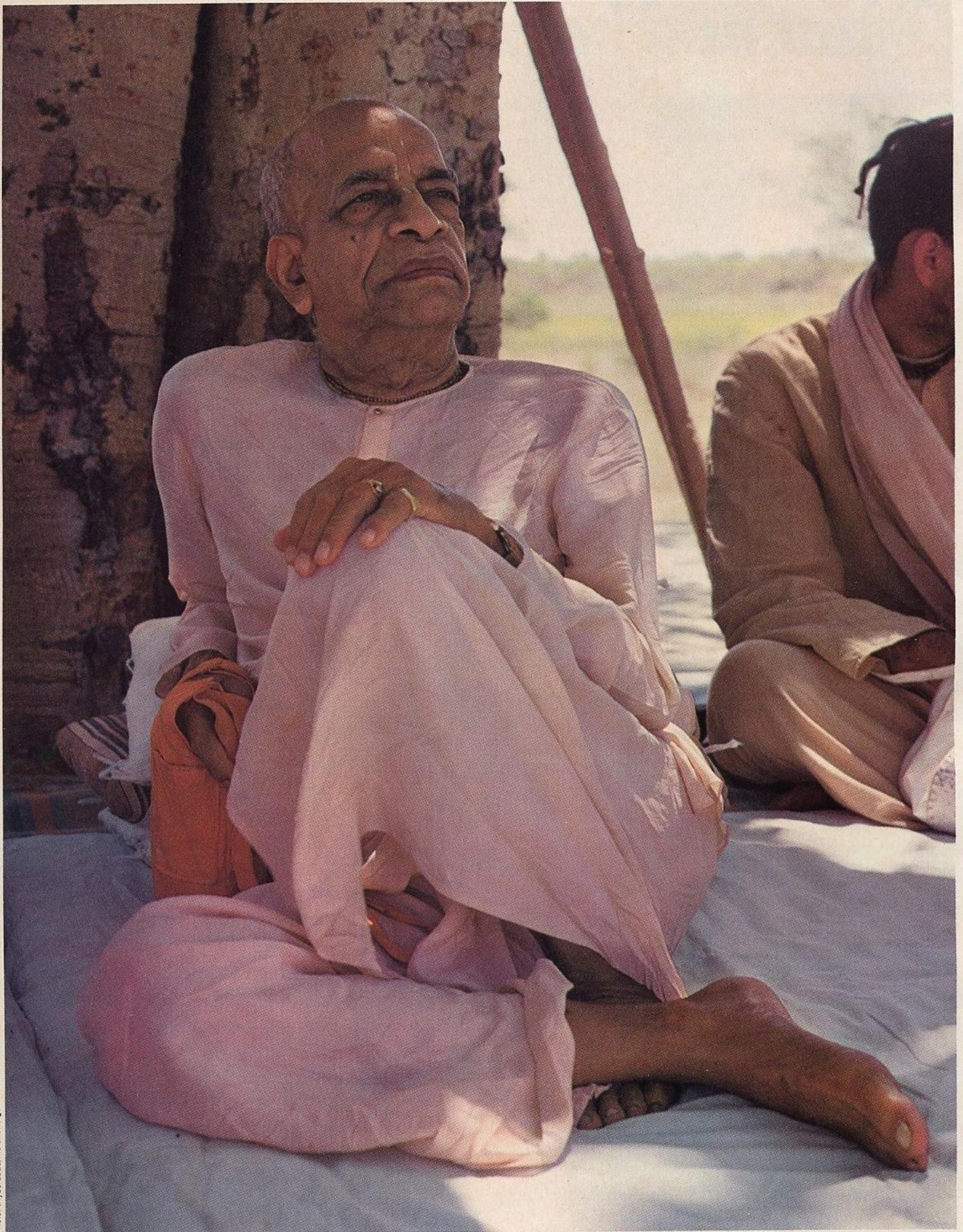


Photo: Hyderabad, India | Bhāṅgava oṣṭa

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

BACK TO GODHEAD

THE MAGAZINE OF THE HARE KRISHNA MOVEMENT

Vol. 12 No. 12

FOUNDER

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

His Divine Grace

A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda

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PRONUNCIATION OF SANSKRIT WORDS

Sanskrit words and names in BACK TO GODHEAD are spelled according to a system that scholars throughout the world use to show how to pronounce each word. Vowels in Sanskrit are pronounced almost as in Italian. The sound of the short **a** is like the **u** in **but**. The long **ā** is like the **a** in **far** and held twice as long as the short **a**, and **e** is like the **a** in **evade**. Long **ī** is like the **i** in **plique**. The vowel **ṛ** is pronounced like the **ri** in the English word **rim**. The **c** is pronounced as in the English word **chair**. The aspirated consonants (**ch**, **jh**, **dh**, etc.) are pronounced as in **staunch**, **heart**, **hedge-hog** and **red-hot**. The two spirants **ś** and **ṣ** are like the English **sh**, and **s** is like the **s** in **sun**. So pronounce **Kṛṣṇa** as **KRISHNA** and **Chaitanya** as **CHAITANYA**.



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◀ The founder and original editor of

BACK TO GODHEAD is His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. In September, 1965, Śrīla Prabhupāda arrived in the United States. In July, 1966, in a storefront in New York City, he began the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. And from those beginning days, BACK TO GODHEAD has been an integral part of ISKCON.

In fact, since 1944, when he started writing, editing, printing, and distributing BACK TO GODHEAD, Śrīla Prabhupāda has often called it "the backbone of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement." Although over the years it has changed in some ways, BACK TO GODHEAD remains, in Śrīla Prabhupāda's words, "an instrument for training the mind and educating human nature to rise up to the plane of the spirit soul."

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For atheist-existentialist Jean-Paul Sartre, "man is nothing else but what he makes of himself"—and this responsibility overwhelms man with anguish and anxiety. "Why remain disappointed and anxious?" asks His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. "There is a safe place where there is no anxiety."



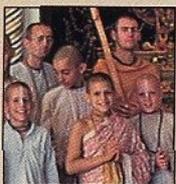
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Mandaleśwara dāsa talks with an airman: "Even if we got rid of every nuclear bomb and warhead in the world, that wouldn't solve the real problem. America and Russia might sign an arms limitation treaty, but everyone knows that's a joke. Even if, by a miracle, they did ban the bomb, what good would that do?"



The Things Christ Had to Keep Secret 10

"Ye have neither heard His [God's] voice at any time, nor seen His shape," said Christ. "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now" (John 5:37, 16:12). So can we ever find out what God is really like? Yes. And Kīrtanānanda Swami, the son of a Baptist minister, tells us how.



Training Tomorrow's Leaders 18

"If a young boy has no spiritual training," asks Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami, "how can he have a sense of morals or know anything about God? And if such a spiritually ignorant person gets to be a leader, how can we expect anything but a criminal?" Here's a look at a school that's training real leaders.

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Special Center Section:

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam

The continuing presentation of India's great spiritual classic.

Translation and commentary

by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda.



ON THE COVER

Why has ISKCON placed its main academy in Vṛndāvana, India? (See page 18.) Instructor Rūpa Vilāsa dāsa says, "Vṛndāvana is the land where Lord Kṛṣṇa displayed His most attractive pastimes. [Often, as shown here, child Kṛṣṇa delighted the townspeople by stealing and eating their butter.] Most of our boys have been hearing about Kṛṣṇa since they were three or four years old. So now that they've come to Vṛndāvana, they can see the very things they've heard about: the Yamunā River, the groves, the cows and peacocks. In fact, for a devotee, Kṛṣṇa and the spiritual world actually become manifest in Vṛndāvana." To put it simply, Vṛndāvana is the best place in the world for learning how to love God—and learning how to love God is the real business of life. (Artist: Parikṣit dāsa)



Searching for the Place

Atheist-existentialist Jean-Paul Sartre writes that because man wants to be God but cannot, he is a “useless passion” in a universe that has no purpose—and thus, he is always in anxiety. “That is foolishness,” says His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. “You are not God but God’s servant. . . . Sartre believes the universe has no purpose because he is blind. He has no power to see that there is a plan. We are trying to introduce Kṛṣṇa consciousness in order to make the world into a place where there is no anxiety.”

Hayagrīva dāsa: Jean-Paul Sartre, perhaps the most famous philosopher of this century, calls himself an “atheistic existentialist.” He sees man as having been thrown into the world and abandoned. For him, God is dead.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: God is not dead, nor has He abandoned us. If you feel abandoned, it is because you have done something that has brought about this condition. If you rectify your position, you will again feel accepted. Now you are condemned to the material world. But just because you are condemned, you should not think that God is also condemned. God is always in Vaikuṅṭha [the spiritual world]; God is not dead.

Hayagrīva dāsa: In any case, having defined himself as an atheistic existentialist, Sartre denies God’s existence—particularly the existence of a personal God. Sartre wants to set aside the whole question of God’s existence and place

emphasis on man, on “human reality.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: But the question of God’s existence is the main question of philosophy. God has created everything—your mind, intelligence, and body, and the circumstances surrounding you. How can you deny His existence? In the Vedic literatures it is stated that in the beginning God existed, and the Bible also states that in the beginning there was God. In this material universe, existence is temporary. According to the laws of material nature, the body is created on a certain day, it exists for some time, and is then eventually finished. Similarly, the entire cosmic manifestation has a beginning, a middle, and an end. But before the creation of the cosmos, who existed? If God did not exist, how could the creation be possible?

Hayagrīva dāsa: Sartre would not admit the existence of an originator for the creation. He would say that man simply



This detail from "The Subway" (by George Tooker, 1950) typifies the acute anxiety that Sartre sees in modern life—"man is nothing," "the universe has no purpose." Thanks to Sartre's atheistic-existential philosophy, many of us now accept this anxiety as inevitable.

Collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art

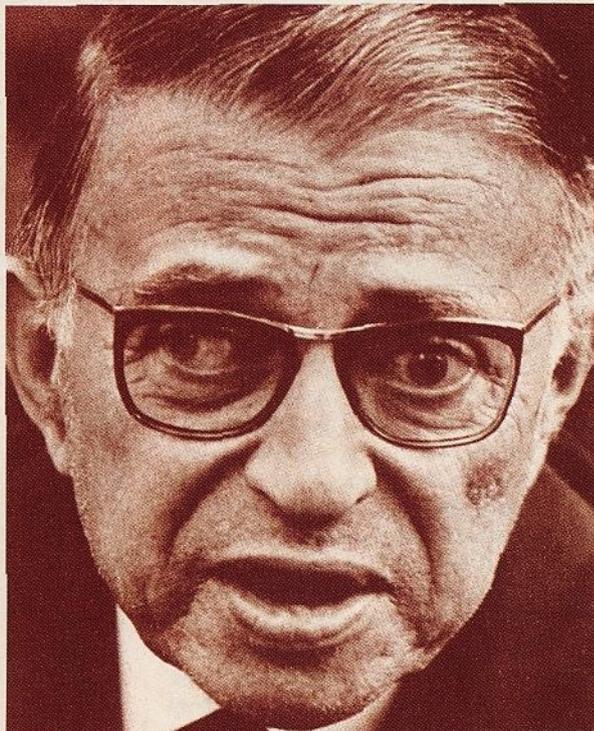


Photo: Time-Life

of No Anxiety....

exists, he turns up, appears on the scene.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: A person appears due to his father and mother. How can this be denied? Does Sartre mean to say, "I appeared all of a sudden—I dropped from the sky"? Only a fool would say that he appeared without parents. From our experience we can understand that all species of life are manifest from some mother. Taken as a whole, the mother is material nature. And as soon as the mother is accepted, the father, God, must also be accepted.

Why shouldn't God exist? If you believe in *your* existence, why not believe in the existence of God? There are 8,400,000 different species existing in multifarious forms. According to the Vedic understanding, God is also a living being, but He is different from all others in that He is the chief—the supreme living being. According to the *Bhagavad-gītā* [7.7], *mattaḥ parataram nānyat*:

"There is no living being superior to God." We all experience that there are beings more intelligent than us. And God has the ultimate intelligence. Why can't a person who exceeds all others in intelligence exist? There is no question of "if God exists." God *must* exist. In the shastras [scriptures] He is described as the superlative personality, the super-powerful and super-intelligent being. We can see that everyone in the world is factually not on an equal level: there are varying degrees of perfection. This indicates that there is a superlative person, and if we go on searching for the person with the greatest wealth, intelligence, power, beauty, or whatever, we will find that God possesses all these qualities in the superlative degree and that every other living entity possesses them in degrees relative to Him. How, then, can we rationally deny God's existence? Actually, Sartre's proposal means that he

does not *want* God to exist.

Hayagrīva dāsa: According to Sartre, because there is no God to conceive of human nature, the first principle of existentialism is that "man is nothing else but what he makes of himself. . . . Existentialism's first move is to make every man aware of what he is and to make the full responsibility of his existence rest on him." It is this very responsibility—this freedom to change himself and the world—that overwhelms modern man with anguish and anxiety.

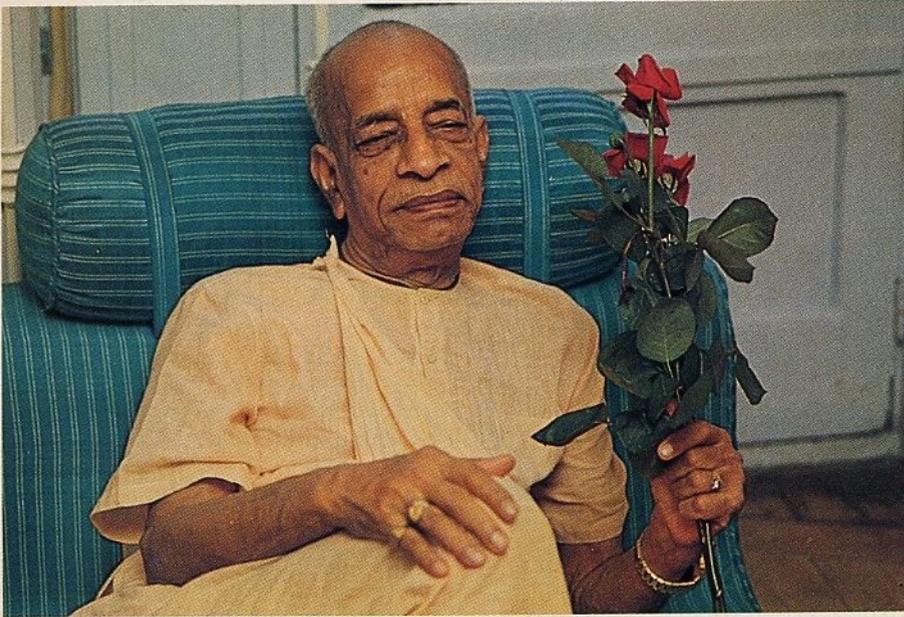
Śrīla Prabhupāda: This means that modern man is in an awkward position. He wants peace, but he does not know how to attain it. Peace is not possible for a man in ignorance, but this does not mean that peace is impossible. You are certainly responsible for your own life, so why not take the responsibility to transfer yourself to a safe place where there is no anxiety? Now you do not know of such a place, but there *might* be such a place, so why not ask someone who knows? Why constantly remain disappointed and anxious? The safe place where there is no anxiety is called *Vaiṅkuṭha*. The very word *Vaiṅkuṭha* means "no anxiety."

Hayagrīva dāsa: Sartre believes that men could live together peacefully if they assumed responsibility not only for themselves but for others as well.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Suppose I want to benefit you and you are free. Your freedom means that you can accept or reject my good instructions. How can I be responsible for you if you don't obey me? Sartre claims that we are responsible for others, but if others do not follow our instructions, how can we be considered responsible for them? This is all contradictory. Unless there is some standard knowledge, there must be contradiction. According to the Vedic literatures, God is the supreme person, and we should all be His obedient servants. God gives us some duty, and we are responsible to carry out that duty. Our real responsibility is to God. If we reject God, society becomes chaotic. Religion means avoiding chaos and meeting our responsibility to God by fulfilling our duty. Responsibility rests on us, and it is given by God. If we make spiritual progress by fulfilling our duty, we can finally live with God personally in *Vaiṅkuṭha*.

Hayagrīva dāsa: Sartre writes, "Since we have discarded God the father, there has to be someone to invent values. . . . Moreover, to say that we invent values means nothing else but this: life has no meaning a priori. Before you become alive, life is nothing; it's up to you to give it a meaning, and value is nothing else but the meaning that you choose."

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Therefore everyone



Kṛṣṇa consciousness—the place of no anxiety. In his quarters, Śrīla Prabhupāda accepts a flower from a disciple. Right, from top to bottom: at the Spiritual Sky factory in Los Angeles, Bhāskara dāsa dips incense sticks; not far from the Empire State Building, Dānta-devī dāsī shows a serviceman Śrīla Prabhupāda’s Bhagavad-gītā As It Is; in Portland, Oregon, Dīna-bandhu dāsa chants Hare Kṛṣṇa.

invents his own meaning? If this is the case, how will people live peacefully in society? Since everyone has his own idea of life, there can be no harmony. What kind of government would exist?

Hayagrīva dāsa: Recently Sartre has turned to Marxism.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: But in communist countries there are very strong governments. It is not possible for people to avoid government or leadership.

Hayagrīva dāsa: Sartre believes that regardless of the form of government under which men live, the structure of human consciousness is essentially free. What’s more, Sartre maintains that man is *condemned* to be free—that freedom is a fate which man cannot escape.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: If man is condemned, who has condemned him?

Hayagrīva dāsa: Sartre would say that man is condemned by accident.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: In other words, it is simply an accident that one person is condemned and another is blessed. It is simply an accident that one person is in jail and another is not. What kind of philosophy is this? Such so-called philosophers simply mislead others. Actually, nothing is accidental. We agree that the living entity is condemned to this material world, but when we speak of condemnation we mean that man has *lost* his freedom. He is tightly under the control of the material nature. This material world is like a vast sea, and when you are placed into the sea you have no freedom. You move according to the waves. This means that there is a power controlling you. Because you have placed yourself under the control of material nature, you act according to the modes of material nature. Kṛṣṇa says in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, “The bewildered spirit soul, under the influence of the three modes of material

nature, thinks himself to be the doer of activities, which in actuality are carried out by nature” [Bg. 3.27]. Because you are conditioned by the material nature, you are feeling its check—although you *think* that you are free. When you are thrown into the ocean of material existence, you lose your freedom. However, if you put yourself in better circumstances, you can regain your freedom. Therefore, it is your duty to get yourself liberated by becoming Kṛṣṇa-conscious.

Hayagrīva dāsa: Because we are one thing today and something else tomorrow, Sartre says that our essential nature is “no-thingness.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: You are “nothing” in the sense that you are under the full control of a superior power. You are being carried away by the waves of *māyā* [material nature]. In the ocean of *māyā* you may say, “I am nothing,” but actually you are something. Your “somethingness” will be very much exhibited to you when you are put on land, or, in other words, when you become Kṛṣṇa-conscious. Out of despair you conclude that your nature is “nothingness.” Sartre’s philosophy is a philosophy of despair, and we say it is unintelligent. Despair is the result of ignorance.

Hayagrīva dāsa: Sartre maintains that although the basis of our nature is nothingness, man chooses or creates his own nature.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Man’s basic nature is not “nothingness,” but “somethingness.” That “somethingness” is to be an eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, you should choose to be “something,” not “nothing.” But in order to do that you have to take lessons from a higher personality. Before philosophizing one should learn from a knowledgeable person. That is the Vedic injunction—*tad*

vijñānārtham sa gurum evābhigacchet: in order to learn the transcendental science, you must approach a bona fide spiritual master. A person can mold his nature by deciding to serve Kṛṣṇa, not by dismissing the whole matter out of confusion and disappointment and claiming that man is nothing. The attempt to make life zero is due to a poor fund of knowledge.

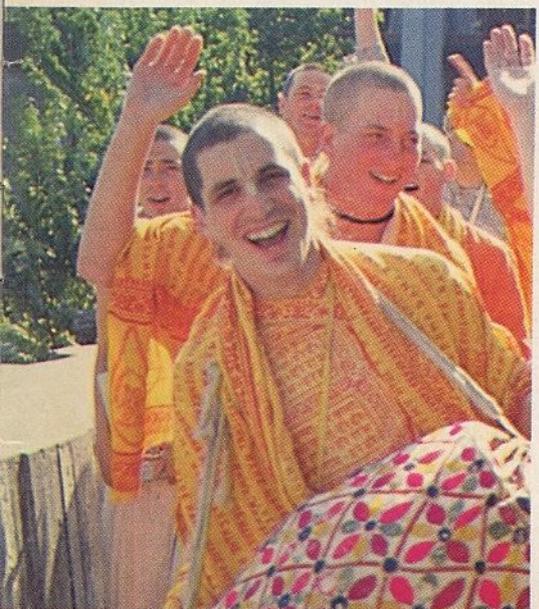
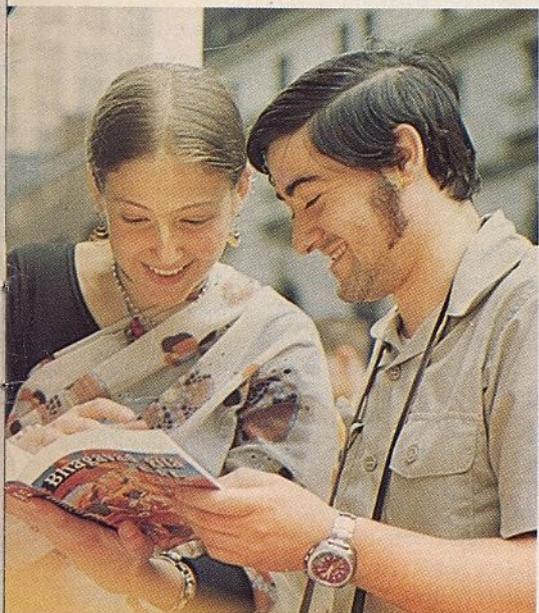
Hayagrīva dāsa: Sartre says that we are constantly choosing or making our life, but that everything ends at death.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Death simply means changing to another body. The soul, the active principle upon which the body stands, does not die. Death is simply like changing apartments. A sane man can understand this.

Hayagrīva dāsa: Sartre believes that man’s fundamental desire is the “desire to be.” In other words, man seeks eternal existence rather than mere nothingness.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: That is so. Because man is eternal, he has the desire to exist eternally. He is seeking eternal, spiritual life. Unfortunately, he puts himself under certain material conditions that are not eternal, and he must suffer repeated birth and death. Nothing in the material world exists eternally. A tree may exist for ten thousand years, but eventually it will perish. In the material world, nothing abides. But in the *Bhagavad-gītā* [8.20] Kṛṣṇa speaks of another world, which is permanent (*sanātana*). After the annihilation of this material universe, that spiritual world will abide. Through the practice of Kṛṣṇa consciousness one can attain his eternal position in that spiritual world.

Hayagrīva dāsa: Sartre writes that man’s fundamental desire is the desire to be God.



Śrīla Prabhupāda: This is more or less impersonal, Māyāvāda philosophy. The Māyāvādīs believe that when they attain complete knowledge, they become God. Because man is part and parcel of God, he wants to be united with God. It is like a man who has been away from home for a long time. Naturally he wants to go home again.

Hayagrīva dāsa: Sartre maintains that this attempt to be God is bound to fail.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Certainly, because man is not God. His very desire to be God means that he is not God at the present moment. And if he once was God, how has he become something else? No. If man could become God, there would be no question of his ever being something *other* than God. There would be no question of being ignorant. Another name for Kṛṣṇa is *Acyuta*. The word *acyuta* means "He who never falls down." This means that God never becomes non-God. God is God always. So it is not that one can become God through some mystic practice. A man cannot become God, but he can become godly. When we are in darkness, we desire light and come into the sunshine. But this does not mean that we *become* the sun. Similarly, when we come to the platform of perfect knowledge, we become godly, but we do not become God.

Hayagrīva dāsa: Because Sartre knows that man's attempt to become God is futile, he calls man a "useless passion."

Śrīla Prabhupāda: A man is not useless if he attempts to be Kṛṣṇa-conscious. The attempt to be Kṛṣṇa-conscious and the attempt to be Kṛṣṇa are totally different. One is godly, and the other demonic.

Hayagrīva dāsa: Sartre then reasons that because it is impossible to become God, everything else is useless.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: That is foolishness. You are not God but God's servant. You have chosen to attempt to become God, but you have found this to be impossible. Therefore you should give up this notion and decide to become God's servant. That is the proper decision.

Hayagrīva dāsa: Sartre concludes that since things have no reason to exist, life has no essential purpose.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: That is nonsense. Everything has a purpose. Nothing can exist without a purpose, because there is a supreme cause for everything. The defect in such philosophers is that they do not have sufficient brain substance to go further than what they superficially see. They are not capable of understanding God, the cause of all causes. Many modern scientists also maintain that nature, *prakṛti*, is the sole cause of existence, but we do not subscribe to such a theory. We understand that God is

behind nature and that nature is not acting independently. Nature is phenomena, but behind or beyond nature is noumena, God, Kṛṣṇa.

In the *Bhagavad-gītā* [16.8] philosophy like Sartre's is called demonic: "The demons say that this world is unreal, that there is no foundation, and that there is no God in control. The world is produced of sex desire and has no cause other than lust." Demons do not believe in a superior cause. They consider that everything is accidental. They say that a man and a woman unite accidentally, and a child is simply the result of sex. They claim that there is no purpose to existence. This type of philosophy is called demonic because it is of the nature of darkness and ignorance, and because it denies the existence of God.

Hayagrīva dāsa: Sartre writes that because man is free he is susceptible to what Sartre calls "bad faith." This bad faith is a kind of self-deception—a failure to take responsibility for one's life. Through bad faith one loses his freedom.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Certainly you have limited freedom to choose, but if you act irresponsibly you must suffer. Responsibility and freedom go hand in hand. So we must use discrimination. Without discrimination our freedom is blind—we cannot understand right or wrong.

Hayagrīva dāsa: For Sartre, bad faith means to avoid making decisions. A man in bad faith simply drifts from day to day without being involved, without making responsible decisions.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: That means he has decided to drift. His drifting is a decision.

Hayagrīva dāsa: Sartre believes that bad faith must be replaced by a solid choosing and by faith in our choice. For instance, if one chooses a certain path of action, he must have the faith to carry out that action valiantly and heroically. Then he will be doing the right thing.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: But if he makes the wrong decision, what is the value in his action? Moths fly very valiantly and courageously into the fire. Is that a very good decision? . . . Sartre speaks of bad faith, but what about good faith?

Hayagrīva dāsa: If bad faith is the avoidance of decisions, then good faith would mean making decisions courageously and following them up, regardless of what the decisions are.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: But what if your decision is wrong?

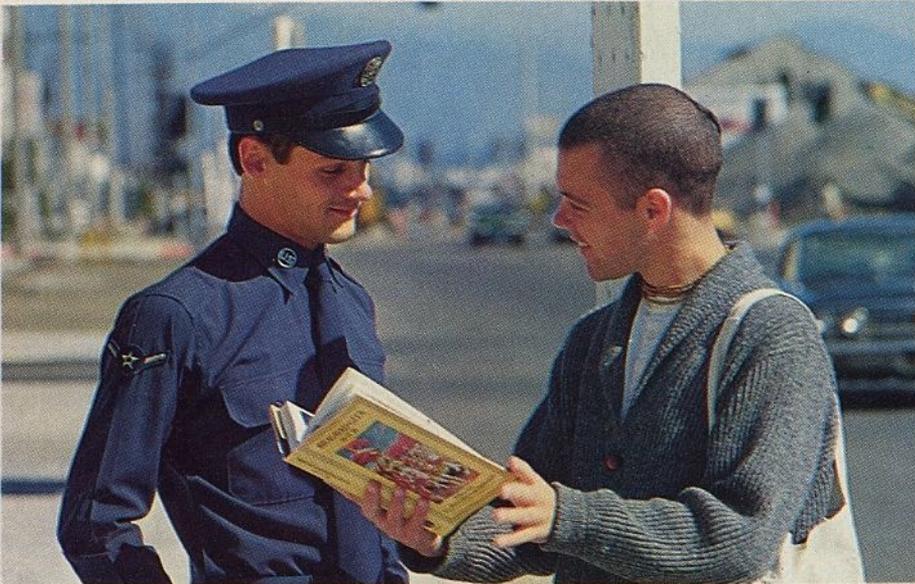
Hayagrīva dāsa: For Sartre, there is no question of right or wrong.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Then whatever decision I make is final and absolute? This means that the insect's decision to enter the fire is the proper decision. This is the philosophy of insects.

(continued on page 14)

Peace on Earth Or Earth in Pieces?

At Christmas Mandaleśwara dāsa and an airman talk of peace.



"This book will tell you about *real* peace on earth," I promised.

"All right, sir, I'll give it a look." The young airman smiled as he tucked the volume under his arm.

"Have a nice Christmas," I added. "Hare Kṛṣṇa."

I'd been distributing my spiritual master's books to San Antonio servicemen since nine o'clock that morning. Now I had to catch the bus from the base back into the city to join the other members of my group. It was late afternoon, and the mid-December air was cold and still. With numbed fingers I fumbled for the exact fare (thirty-five cents) and shuffled up the narrow metal steps onto the bus, along with half a dozen young airmen. I tried to seem casual about slipping into the only available seat. Whew! It had been a busy day. I glanced at the airman beside me. He squinted back from beneath a blue service cap pulled low over his brow.

"Hi," I said. "How's everything going for you?"

"Fine, sir." Then relaxing his newly acquired military formality, he pushed his cap up. We recognized each other and smiled. On his lap he held the book I had handed him back at the bus stop:

BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ AS IT IS, by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda.

"You're a Hare Kṛṣṇa, aren't you?"

"That's right. My name's Mandaleśwara dāsa."

We shook hands. "Mine's Steve," he said. "Where are you headed?"

"I'm going downtown to meet some friends at the Alamo. I'm not quite sure which stop. . . ."

"Easy. I'll let you know when we get there." He paused. "You religious groups talk a lot about peace this time of the year, huh?"

"Excuse me?"

"You know. Back at the bus stop."

We both leaned back as the bus pulled away from the curb.

"The book I gave you—the *Bhagavad-gītā*—contains the scientific formula for peace on earth. That's why I asked you to read it."

"I know, but this is an old scripture from India. I'm the type that likes to be involved with what's happening in the world *today*. You know what I mean? Practical things, like SALT talks, disarmament, the UN. Do Hare Kṛṣṇas believe in that?"

"Believe in what—peace through dis-

armament? But that's not really practical." Steve turned in his seat to face me. "Even if we got rid of every nuclear bomb and warhead in the world," I said, "that wouldn't solve the real problem. If we leave God out of our thinking, we'll just become more and more greedy and envious, and finally we'll start a third world war. America and Russia might sign an arms limitation treaty, but everyone knows that's a joke. The way it is now, both sides just try to get the advantage by finding loopholes in the treaty, right? And then one side comes up with a neutron bomb or something and swears that they haven't *exactly* broken the treaty. So even if, by some miracle, they *did* ban the bomb, what good would that do?"

"So you're a pessimist," he concluded. "You don't believe in disarmament or peace."

"A pessimist?" I thought about it. "No, I'm not a pessimist. I believe in peace, all right, but I know we'll never have peace as long as we hold on to our greed and envy. It's an impure mentality. That's what these books I distribute say."

"You said 'impure mentality'?"

"Yes. The mentality of exploiting God's world as if it were ours and God didn't even exist—that's impure, don't you think?"

"Sure, but don't you think it's possible to negotiate peace? After all, most of our men in Washington do have the people's interest at heart."

"America's leaders? That reminds me of a story I once heard. There were these two brothers who were always getting into trouble. One day they started a fire in their basement, but they were able to put it out—after it had done a lot of damage to the house. Right after that they said, 'Maybe Mom and Dad will be pleased with us for putting out the fire.'"

With his thumb and index finger Steve was tracing the crease in his woolen military trousers. "So, what are you trying to say?"

"That our national leaders are just like those two brothers. But instead of one little fire, it's a worldwide nuclear threat. Now they're boasting about their 'non-proliferation treaty' and promising disarmament—and we're supposed to be pleased and keep them in office. But *they're* the ones who led us into this mess in the first place. They lit the fire. So whether they blow up the world or sign a new peace treaty, these guys are real rascals."

He looked down, and in the shifting light he began leafing through the

gītā in his lap. We sat thoughtfully, sharing the silence for a few moments. He turned to the portrait of Śrīla Prabhupāda. "I never have talked with you people before. I guess I'm just curious." He frowned. "This is like your Bible, isn't it? All your beliefs are in this book?"

"You have the key to world peace right there in your hands." I suddenly realized that my words must have sounded crazy to him. Sure they were true, but why should this airman think that some book that had just dropped out of the blue at a bus stop could do more for world peace than SALT talks or the UN? As I searched for a way to explain, Steve gave me a clue.

"Hmmm, I see. You're saying you believe in world peace, but not the way they're trying for it."

"Yes. And that's exactly where this book comes in. The *Bhagavad-gītā* says you can't have peace on earth until you understand that everything belongs to God. You'll just fight over who gets which part of God's earth."

"You mean like the conflicts in the Middle East?"

"Yes, the Middle East. Or even the middle of San Antonio. The whole world belongs to God. You'll understand this when you read the *Bhagavad-gītā*. Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Lord, is the real proprietor of everything in the creation. But when you forget Kṛṣṇa, you have chaos and war."

"Well, I'd say that's a pretty safe generalization."

"Sure it is, but it's true. Look at Russia and America—they're always competing for land, oil, money, influence. But neither side sees that the real owner is God. So you have dissension and the nuclear arms race."

He looked down at the *Bhagavad-gītā* on his lap. The bus stopped rather roughly—bad driver—and the book slid forward, closing shut as he caught it between his knees. "I don't know," he said, "it seems impractical to me. If everything is God's... if we're all stealing... how could you tolerate living in a world where you can't own anything? If everything is God's... then what about us? What do we get? See what I'm talking about?"

"Yes, I see your point." I watched him lean back and open the *Gītā* again on his lap. "Everyone gets his quota," I said. "How many children were there in your family?"

"Seven. I have three brothers and three sisters."

"And every child was provided for, wasn't he? Your father earned all the

money, paid all the bills, and owned all the property in the family. But you all got your necessities. Sometimes if the kids would get into little fights over whose toy or whose piece of candy was whose, your father would step in and settle things: 'This is yours, this is his, this is hers—now don't fight anymore.' So it's like that on a larger scale as well. Kṛṣṇa is everyone's father, and everything in the universe is His. But since we're all Kṛṣṇa's children, He gives each of us the right to enjoy our own little portion of His property."

"Yeah, I follow what you're saying."



"That's the way my spiritual master explained it to me. If the leaders of the world's nations would just admit that Lord Kṛṣṇa is the rightful owner of everything, and if they would just see themselves as His children and try to follow His instructions in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, then we'd have peace all over the world."

"Just one big happy family, I suppose."

"Yes, exactly. Everyone's got his quota: 'This is your America, this is your Russia—now don't fight anymore.'"

"But the Russians don't even believe in God—not officially, anyway. But a lot of Americans read the Bible and pray. You know, America—'In God We Trust.'"

"Sure, we stamp 'In God We Trust' on the currency and put the Bible on display in the White House."

He grinned.

"But when you get right down to it, most Americans really put their trust in exploiting the *property* of God. They just want to improve the economy—with or without God. Isn't it a fact? It's the American way of life: raise our standard of living, increase our gross national product, raise our average yearly in-

come—and then build bigger and better bombs to protect all the loot. So now Americans are worried about crime, energy, morals, drought, nuclear weapons. But if we actually trusted in God, then we'd be at peace."

"So how can you Hare Kṛṣṇas really bring peace to the world?"

"Like I was saying, the key to world peace is in these books, and Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples are distributing them all over the world. The real enemy of peace is ignorance of Kṛṣṇa. By distributing these books we're spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness, the scientific formula for peace. And as soon as the world's leaders start reading Śrīla Prabhupāda's *Bhagavad-gītā* and taking it to heart, then you'll know that the enemy of peace has been defeated—then we can have peace on earth."

"But you've got to admit the odds are really against you."

"I'm not saying I have any special power to bring world peace, Steve. But these books are powerful transcendental sound. My spiritual master, Śrīla Prabhupāda, says they're like a moon of transcendental knowledge. You know how the moon appears small at first—just a sliver in the sky—but it grows bigger every night until you see a beautiful full moon. So Śrīla Prabhupāda says the light of transcendental knowledge will spread more and more as we distribute these spiritual books. Gradually the darkness of ignorance—and that's the real enemy of peace—will be destroyed, and then we can really have peace on earth."

"Sounds mystical," he mused. He had been leaning back, but suddenly he sat up and looked out the window. "The Alamo. I completely forgot." He reached up and pulled the cord to buzz the driver. An abrupt end to our talk, I thought.

"Okay, here's where I get off," I said. "I really enjoyed talking with you. Hare Kṛṣṇa."

I stood up to leave and Steve smiled. "Hare Kṛṣṇa." I walked up the aisle to the metal railing at the front of the bus. Then I remembered.

"Oh, Steve, here's our card. Why don't you keep in touch." I reached across two empty seats with the card in my outstretched hand, and he stood and leaned forward, holding the open *Gītā* flat against his chest.

"Thanks, I think I'll do that." He took the card from my hand. I looked out from the open bus doorway and saw my friends in front of the Alamo, still distributing Śrīla Prabhupāda's books. And as I stepped out I saw that night was coming but so was the moon. 🌕

THE THINGS CHRIST HAD TO KEEP SECRET

What does God's abode look like? What does God Himself look like? "I have yet many things to say unto you," Christ told a world filled with crudeness and ignorance, "but ye cannot bear them now" (John 16:12). The son of a Baptist minister now looks to ancient India's Vedic literature—for the facts about God that Christ left unsaid.

An Interview with Kīrtanānanda Swami

BACK TO GODHEAD: Can you say a little bit about your background? I understand you were raised a Christian and that your father was a Baptist minister.

Kīrtanānanda Swami: Yes. I was a very devout child, and I used to gather my friends together and preach to them. My father was such a conservative minister that he considered all other Christian denominations to be somewhat pagan. In any case, as a child I used to try to convert my friends to the Baptist church. **BTG:** So you were very much convinced at that time?

Kīrtanānanda Swami: Oh, yes.

BTG: Why did you give up that faith?

Kīrtanānanda Swami: In our American culture, when you become a teenager it is fashionable to reject everything. So as I grew up I gradually began to question my religion, and I was unable to get satisfactory answers. I wanted to know who I was and why I was here. I wanted to know why I should believe in God. I began asking questions like "What is God?" and "What is the relevance of God to modern man?" When I didn't get satisfactory answers, I rejected my religion. But when I met Śrīla Prabhupāda some years later, he *did* give me satisfactory answers to these questions and I accepted him as my spiritual master.

I'm not condemning any bona fide religion, because the principles of bona fide religion are the same everywhere. When we speak of religion, we speak of the law of God, and anyone who abides by the law of God is religious. The law of God is stated in all scriptures, and it demands that the soul surrender to God. This surrender was taught by Lord Jesus Christ when the Pharisees asked him, "Which is the great commandment in the law?" Christ answered, "Thou shalt

love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment" (Matthew 22:37-38). In other words, the first religious principle is to surrender to God. Śrī Kṛṣṇa imparted the same message in the *Bhagavad-gītā*: *sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekam śaraṇam vraja*: "Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me" (Bg. 18.66).

BTG: Has your understanding of Jesus Christ changed since you came to Kṛṣṇa consciousness?

Kīrtanānanda Swami: Yes. For the first time I feel that I have a real understanding of Jesus Christ. Previously I had been taught that Jesus Christ was competing with all other religious teachers and that if I wanted to be a Christian, I would have to condemn all others. Kṛṣṇa consciousness, on the other hand, condemns only those who deny God. In Kṛṣṇa consciousness we consider Jesus Christ to be the perfect son of God. And as God's perfect son, he is doing the work of his father. Since this is the case, it is not surprising to see a similarity between the New Testament of Jesus Christ and the *Bhagavad-gītā* of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Indeed, we often hear the *Bhagavad-gītā* being called "the New Testament of India." Also, there is an obvious similarity between the Greek word *Christos* and the Sanskrit word *Kṛṣṇa*.

BTG: Then you don't find any basic difference between the teachings of Christ and the teachings of Kṛṣṇa?

Kīrtanānanda Swami: No, not at all. Jesus Christ says to love God, and Kṛṣṇa says the same. What is the difference? Jesus Christ says to love the father, and Kṛṣṇa says,

*sarva-yoniṣu kaunteya
mūrtayaḥ sambhavanti yāḥ*

*tāsām brahma mahad yonir
ahaṁ bīja-pradaḥ pitā*

"O son of Kuntī, it should be understood that all species of life are made possible by birth in this material world, and that I am the seed-giving father" (Bg. 14.4). So there is no contradiction when Jesus Christ says, "Love the father," and Kṛṣṇa says, "Love Me."

BTG: What of Christ's contention that no one can come to the father except through him?

Kīrtanānanda Swami: We say something similar—that we have to approach the Supreme Lord through the pure devotee, who is known as the *jagad-guru*, the "universal teacher." It is the *jagad-guru* who speaks the Word that Saint John referred to at the beginning of his gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). Jesus Christ himself claimed to be this very Word, and this Word is one. Christ said that no one can approach God directly; one must approach Him through the Word. We also say that no one can approach God directly, but that one must approach Him through the Word—the spiritual master, or *jagad-guru*.

Christ's claim to be the only son of God is often misunderstood. This claim

Christ taught everybody to love his father, Kṛṣṇa. Why didn't he give more details about Lord Kṛṣṇa? "We have to consider the circumstances and the culture at the time Christ taught," says Kīrtanānanda Swami. "After all, one can only speak according to the understanding of the audience. In the beginning arithmetic class we cannot mention the principles of higher mathematics like calculus and trigonometry. We have to teach according to time and place. So Christ taught only the basics."



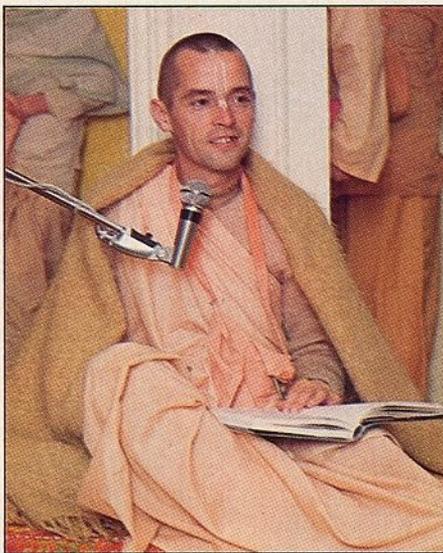
is meant not *quantitatively*, but *qualitatively*. When a devotee reaches the perfect position by rendering complete service to the Lord, the Lord reciprocates in a unique relationship. In this relationship it appears that the pure devotee is the only one in the entire universe. For example, each and every *gopī* [cowherd girl] who danced with Lord Kṛṣṇa thought that He was dancing with her alone. Also, when Lord Caitanya [an incarnation of Kṛṣṇa who appeared five centuries ago] danced before the Rathayātrā cart, He appeared in each and every chanting party, and the chanters in each party thought that the Lord was dancing exclusively with them. Similarly, two thousand years ago when Jesus Christ taught his doctrine in the Middle East, he appeared to be God's only son, or pure devotee.

By His inconceivable energy the Supreme Lord can expand Himself into the hearts of His devotees in such a unique way that each one seems to be His only devotee, or "son." Indeed, St. John instructs us that anyone can become a son of God by "believing in His name" (John 1:12). Why should God have only one son? Even a mere human being can have dozens of sons. Being infinite, God can have billions and trillions of sons, and by His inconceivable energy each and every one can be His "only" son. That is the mystery of the relationship with Kṛṣṇa, which we can awaken only by pure devotional service.

BTG: The Bible condemns "strange gods and graven images" (Deuteronomy 5:7-8). Don't the Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees worship idols of God?

Kīrtanānanda Swami: If an imperfect human being manufactures an idol of God, that is certainly a "strange" god, or graven image. God certainly cannot be manufactured by a finite creature. Therefore, in Kṛṣṇa consciousness mental speculation is condemned. We cannot hope to figure out God simply by using our tiny brain power.

However, God can reveal Himself to His pure devotee. If we accept the form of the Lord as it is revealed by the Lord Himself, that form cannot be considered an idol. It is a form given directly by the Lord out of His causeless mercy. No one can say that God cannot appear before man or that God cannot appear in a form made of wood, stone, jewels, or anything else. In the shastras [Vedic scriptures] it is stated that God can incarnate in wood, stone, paint, and so forth, because all these are part of His energy. Since everything comes from God, God can reveal



Kīrtanānanda Swami on Christ and Kṛṣṇa
Not a difference in kind but in quantity.

Himself through anything He desires. But the initiative comes from God, not from man. We can't make some statue and say, "Here is God." That is called idolatry. Rather, we must worship in the authorized way.

The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is not manufactured by any individual. It is not something that Śrīla Prabhupāda has made up. No. It is an authorized process, enunciated in the Vedic literatures and handed down by all the *ācāryas* [spiritual teachers]. The Vedic literatures were written down by Śrīla Vyāsadeva, "the literary incarnation of God," and they are older and more detailed than the Bible.

BTG: You say there are no essential differences between Christianity and Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but obviously there are *some* differences.

Kīrtanānanda Swami: There are differences in degree, but the basic principle is the same. Both Christ and Lord Caitanya taught surrender to God, but Lord Caitanya taught surrender up to the very point of conjugal love. This was never taught before. In Christianity we are taught to love God in the father-son relationship. God is worshiped as a father, and the father's duty is to provide for his children. In this relationship the duty of the children to provide for the father is only secondary. Kṛṣṇa-conscious philosophy calls this relationship the master-servant relationship, in which God is viewed as the supreme master or father, and all living entities are seen as His servants or sons. It is certainly possible for a loving relationship to develop between a master and his servant, but that love is not as intimate as the love between friends. When two friends love and serve each other, their relationship is very intimate. Kṛṣṇa con-

sciousness teaches that we can even enter into this intimate friendship with God. And even higher than this fraternal love is the love that parents feel for their child. When Kṛṣṇa appeared in Vṛndāvana, Yaśodā and Nanda Mahārāja took the role of His parents. Mother Yaśodā would think, "If I do not feed Kṛṣṇa, He will die." Here we find the same principle of love as in the other relationships, but the love is more intense. And even higher than parental love is the love between lovers, which we call conjugal love. Kṛṣṇa became the lover of Rādhārāṇī and the other *gopīs*, and this most intimate loving relationship is explained only in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. It is the unique contribution of Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

BTG: But what is the test for love of God? Many people say, "Well, I love God very much." How can we tell if their love is genuine?

Kīrtanānanda Swami: When we speak of love of God, there is no question of "very much." Divine love means "all." Bhīṣmadeva, one of the twelve great authorities on Kṛṣṇa consciousness, defined love of God as "reposing one's complete affection in the Lord." As long as our affection is divided between matter and spirit, there is no love of God.

Love is actually impossible in the material world, because no one can "repose his complete affection" in another imperfect soul. Actually, Kṛṣṇa is the only lovable object in the universe, because He possesses all lovable qualities—beauty, strength, wealth, knowledge, fame, and renunciation. He is the complete reservoir of all attractive, lovable qualities. Only He can accept all of our love, and therefore love of God is the only real love possible. So-called loving feelings in the material world are actually manifestations of lust—the desire for personal sense gratification.

BTG: How can Kṛṣṇa consciousness claim to be nonsectarian? The movement has its own books and spiritual master, which differ from those of other religions.

Kīrtanānanda Swami: In mathematics two plus two equals four, and this equation is true regardless of which mathematics book it is found in, and regardless of who reads or does not read the mathematics book. So "two plus two equals four" can be called a nonsectarian fact. Similarly, a religion is nonsectarian when it is factual. It is a fact that God is the Supreme Being and that all living entities are His servants. This basic philosophy of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness

movement makes it nonsectarian. We do not propose that people worship a new God. There is only one God, one Supreme Lord, regardless of what we call Him. God has millions of names, which was pointed out by Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu in His *Śikṣāṣṭaka* [Eight Instructions on the Holy Name of God]: “O My Lord, Your holy name alone can render all benediction to living beings, and thus You have millions of names, such as Kṛṣṇa, Govinda, and so forth.”

So the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is not restricted to a particular name of God. The main principle is God consciousness, surrender to God. It is not that one simply says, “Oh, I love God,” and then goes on to act as he likes. This type of lip service was condemned by Jesus Christ when he said, “Not everyone that sayeth to me, ‘Lord, Lord’ shall enter the kingdom of God, but he that doeth the will of my father” (Matthew 7:21).

BTG: Why not be content to follow Christ? Why introduce something new?

Kīrtanānanda Swami: We are following the teachings of Christ. Why distinguish between Christ and Kṛṣṇa?

BTG: Do you mean to say that Christ didn’t say anything different from what Kṛṣṇa said?

Kīrtanānanda Swami: As I have explained, it is not a difference in *kind* but in *quantity*. Jesus Christ himself told his disciples, “I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now” (John 16:12). In the Old Testament God appears as a burning bush, a dove, a pillar of fire by night, a cloud by day, and so forth—but He does not appear as He is. God the father remains a voice on high. Christ himself said, “Ye have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His shape. . . . No man hath seen the father save he which is of God; he hath seen the father” (John 5:37, 6:46). In the Bible we find God described as great, angry, terrible, greatly to be feared, almighty, the everlasting father, the alpha and omega, and so forth. But God’s all-attractive personality remains unexplained. What are God’s opulences? His activities? What does His abode look like? What does He Himself look like? What are His various manifestations? Specifically, how does He create? How does He pervade His creation? These and many other questions are neither raised nor answered in the Bible because of the time, culture, and circumstances in which the Bible was recorded.

Nonetheless, the essential meaning in Christianity and Kṛṣṇa consciousness is

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the same. The difference is in quantity. Is an abridged dictionary different from an unabridged one? Yes and no. The basic definitions are there in the abridged dictionary, but only one or two definitions may be given, whereas in the unabridged dictionary dozens of definitions and nuances are described. The Vedic literatures contain the most complete information about God available. From Genesis we understand that “in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth,” and we receive a description of the creation. But exactly *how* God created is not explained. In the Vedic literature the complete process of creation, maintenance, and annihilation of the cosmos is described. For instance, the Vedic literatures state that in the beginning everything was generated from sound.

BTG: St. John states that in the beginning there was the Word, or *Logos*. Does this indicate sound?

Kīrtanānanda Swami: Yes. The Supreme Lord creates everything from sound. And by the transcendental sound of Hare Kṛṣṇa, we can reverse the process and return to the Supreme Absolute. The Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* is a transcendental sound because it is composed purely of God’s names. Since God is absolute, everything about Him—His name, His form, His abode—is also absolute. Therefore God and His name are not different. They are both spiritual. This is acknowledged in the Old Testament, where Moses says, “Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God; Him shalt thou serve, and to Him shalt thou cleave, and swear by His name” (Deuteronomy 10:20). Also, “I will publish the name of the Lord: ascribe ye greatness unto our God” (Deuteronomy 32:3). There are also many examples in David: “Give thanks unto the Lord, call upon His name, make known His deeds among

the people. Sing unto Him, sing ye psalms unto Him, talk ye of all His wondrous works. Glory ye in His holy name” (I. Chronicles 16.8).

We do not say that one has to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*. Any bona fide name of God is spiritual, and by chanting it we become spiritualized. When we contact electricity, we become electrified, regardless of the appliance carrying the electricity. Similarly, by associating with God through His bona fide names, we become spiritualized.

BTG: Why didn’t Jesus Christ mention chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa? Why didn’t he mention the discipline followed by the Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees? Why didn’t he specifically condemn meat eating and wine drinking?

Kīrtanānanda Swami: As I stated before, Christ said, “I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now” (John 16:12). We have to consider the circumstances and the culture at the time Christ taught. After all, one can only speak according to the understanding of the audience. In the beginning arithmetic class we cannot mention the principles of higher mathematics like calculus and trigonometry. We have to teach according to time and place. So Christ taught only the basics. He instructed his disciples to go forth and preach among all men that “the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you” (Luke 10:9). This kind of preaching is also *kīrtana*, God-praise. Therefore, whether one says, “Repent, the kingdom of God is at hand,” or chants Hare Kṛṣṇa, the message is basically the same.

The masses of people Christ was speaking to had to be taught very basic principles of morality, such as “Thou shalt not kill.” This means that the people had to be educated from the ground up. On the other hand, the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* was spoken by the great sage Sūta Gosvāmī to other great sages in the sacred forest of Naimiṣāraṇya. So we can be sure that Sūta Gosvāmī would not waste time telling his audience not to kill one another. Nor do we find this type of moral prohibition in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, because mundane morality is taken for granted. Rather, the *Bhagavad-gītā* and the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* immediately come to the point of love of God.

All living entities are certainly equal in the eyes of God because they are all His sons, but this does not mean that everyone is equal in the sense of being on the same level. There is kindergarten, elementary school, high school, college,

and graduate school. Although the soul within all living entities has the same qualities, there are nonetheless 8,400,000 species of life, and each species represents a different level of the soul's consciousness. Therefore Kṛṣṇa, or God, is understood differently by different types of men.

In the Vedic literatures it is stated that there are four hundred thousand different types of human beings throughout the universe. In terms of God consciousness, who is the highest? In the Sixth Chapter of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna that the yogi is the highest: "A yogi is greater than the ascetic, greater than the empiricist, and greater than the fruitive worker. Therefore, O Arjuna, in all circumstances be a yogi" (Bg. 6.46). And since there are many different types of yogis, Śrī Kṛṣṇa specifically states in the next verse, "And of all yogis, 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). Thus the topmost teaching of the *Bhagavad-gītā* is surrender to God.

BTG: Around Christmastime people

are always curious to know whether Christmas has any particular meaning for people in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. What is the significance of Christmas for you?

Kīrtanānanda Swami: Christmas is meant to celebrate the appearance of God's pure devotee on the earth. Unfortunately, this meaning is almost lost today. Most people will tell you that Christmas means getting too many bills, giving too many presents, eating too much turkey, or going on vacation. Hardly anyone thinks about the real meaning of Christmas—how God's son has descended just to reclaim the fallen, conditioned souls.

BTG: Do the devotees of Kṛṣṇa celebrate Christmas?

Kīrtanānanda Swami: Actually we celebrate Christmas every day of the year—because our whole lives are dedicated to glorifying the Lord and His pure devotee Śrīla Prabhupāda. We should not think of Christmas as simply one day when we receive presents. Rather, we should think of it as a time to give presents to the Lord and His pure devotee. After all, the Magi came and gave presents to Christ. It was not the other way around. Christ's present was his very

presence, his appearance in the world. Therefore we should celebrate his appearance in the world every day, and this means giving to God every day. This means giving Him our whole lives and everything we have. If we do this, we will not be losers. This is also Christ's teaching to the rich young man: "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell what thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and follow me" (Matthew 19:21). When we give up everything for God, we are not the losers. Rather, we become gainers millions of times over.

BTG: Sometimes devotees are criticized for dressing up as Santa Claus. Since this isn't part of your tradition, isn't this cheating?

Kīrtanānanda Swami: No. This isn't cheating, because the books we are selling are worth millions of times more than what we get for them. Why? Because they contain instructions on how to achieve eternal, blissful life. They are the greatest Christmas presents of all. If necessary, we will wear any kind of suit to distribute this transcendental knowledge. Our business is simply distributing Kṛṣṇa consciousness. If we were dressing up like Santa Claus to extract money for our own sense gratification, that would certainly be cheating. But we are simply interested in spreading this transcendental information about God and His abode. When a devotee hands someone on the street a book by Śrīla Prabhupāda, the devotee is essentially saying, "The kingdom of God is at hand." After all, this is the essential message not only of Christmas but of Christianity and every other bona fide religion. 🙏

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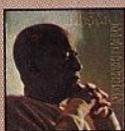
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Place of No Anxiety....

(continued from page 7)

Hayagrīva dāsa: Sartre's philosophy has been called pessimistic because he maintains that man is a "useless passion" vainly striving in a universe without a purpose.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Sartre may be a useless passion, but we are not. No sane man is useless. A sane man will follow a superior authority. *Tad vijñānārtham sa gurum evābhigacchet:* "If one approaches a bona fide spiritual master, he will not be bewildered." That is Vedic civilization. Sartre believes the universe is without a purpose because he is blind. He has no power to see that there is a plan. We are trying to introduce Kṛṣṇa consciousness in order to make the world into Vai-kunṭha, into a place where there is no anxiety. But our decision is not blind. It is the decision of a higher authority—Kṛṣṇa—and therefore it is perfect. 🙏

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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Dhṛtarāṣṭra Quits Home

(continued from previous issue)

TEXT 41

नारद उवाच

मा कंचन शुचो राजन् यदीश्वरवशं जगत् ।
लोकाः सपाला यस्येमे वहन्ति बलिमीशितुः ।
स संयुनक्ति भूतानि स एव वियुनक्ति च ॥४१॥

nārada uvāca

*mā kañcana śuco rājan
yad īśvara-vaśam jagat
lokāḥ sapālā yasyeme
vahanti balim īśituh
sa saṁyunakti bhūtāni
sa eva viyunakti ca*

nāradaḥ uvāca—Nārada said; *mā*—never; *kañcana*—by all means; *śucaḥ*—do you lament; *rājan*—O King; *yat*—because; *īśvara-vaśam*—under the control of the Supreme Lord; *jagat*—world; *lokāḥ*—all living beings; *sa-pālāḥ*—including their leaders; *yasya*—whose; *ime*—all these; *vahanti*—do bear; *balim*—means of worship; *īśituh*—for being protected; *saḥ*—He; *saṁyunakti*—gets together; *bhūtāni*—all living beings; *saḥ*—He; *eva*—also; *viyunakti*—disperses; *ca*—and.

TRANSLATION

Śrī Nārada said: O pious King, do not lament for anyone, for everyone is under the control of the Supreme Lord. Therefore all living beings and their leaders carry on worship to be well protected. It is He only who brings them together and disperses them.

PURPORT

Every living being, either in this material world or in the spiritual world, is under the control of the Supreme Lord, the Personality of Godhead. Beginning from Brahmājī, the leader of this universe, down to the insignificant ant, all are abiding by the order of the Supreme Lord.

Thus the constitutional position of the living being is subordination under the control of the Lord. The foolish living being, especially man, artificially rebels against the law of the Supreme and thus becomes chastised as an *asura*, or lawbreaker. A living being is placed in a particular position by the order of the Supreme Lord, and he is again shifted from that place by the order of the Supreme Lord or His authorized agents. Brahmā, Śiva, Indra, Candra, Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira or, in modern history, Napoleon, Akbar, Alexander, Gandhi, Shubhash and Nehru all are servants of the Lord, and they are placed in and removed from their respective positions by the supreme will of the Lord. None of them is independent. Even though such men or leaders rebel so as not to recognize the supremacy of the Lord, they are put under still more rigorous laws of the material world by different miseries. Only the foolish man, therefore, says that there is no God. Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira was being convinced of this naked truth because he was greatly overwhelmed by the sudden departure of his old uncles and aunt. Mahārāja Dhṛtarāṣṭra was placed in that position according to his past deeds; he had already suffered or enjoyed the benefits accrued to him in the past, but due to his good luck, somehow or other he had a good younger brother, Vidura, and by his instruction he left to achieve salvation by closing all accounts in the material world.

Ordinarily one cannot change the course of one's due happiness and distress by plan. Everyone has to accept them as they come under the subtle arrangement of *kāla*, or invincible time. There is no use trying to counteract them. The best thing is, therefore, that one should endeavor to achieve salvation, and this prerogative is given only to man because of his developed condition of mental activities and intelligence. Only for man are there different Vedic instructions for attainment of salvation during the human form of existence. One who misuses this opportunity of advanced intelligence is verily condemned and put into different types of miseries, either in this present life or in the future. That is the way the Supreme controls everyone.

TEXT 42

यथा गावो नसि प्रोतास्तन्त्यां बद्धाश्च दामभिः ।
वाक्तन्त्यां नामभिर्बद्धा वहन्ति बलिमीशितुः ॥४२॥

*yathā gāvo nasi protāśch
tantyāṁ baddhāś ca dāmbhiḥ
vāktantyāṁ nāmbhir baddhā
vahanti balim īśituh*

yathā—as much as; *gāvah*—cow; *nasi*—by the nose; *protāḥ*—strung; *tantyām*—by the thread; *baddhāḥ*—bound by; *ca*—also; *dāmbhiḥ*—by ropes; *vāktantyām*—in the network of Vedic hymns; *nāmbhiḥ*—by nomenclatures; *baddhāḥ*—conditioned; *vahanti*—carry on; *balim*—orders; *īśituh*—for being controlled by the Supreme Lord.

TRANSLATION

As a cow, bound through the nose by a long rope, is conditioned, so also human beings are bound by different Vedic injunctions and are conditioned to obey the orders of the Supreme.

PURPORT

Every living being, whether a man or an animal or a bird, thinks that he is free by himself, but actually no one is free from the severe laws of the Lord. The laws of the Lord are severe because they cannot be disobeyed in any circumstance. The manmade laws may be evaded by cunning outlaws, but in the codes of the supreme lawmaker there is not the slightest possibility of neglecting the laws. A slight change in the course of God-made law can bring about a massive danger to be faced by the lawbreaker. Such laws of the Supreme are generally known as the codes of religion, under different conditions, but the principle of religion everywhere is one and the same, namely, obey the orders of the Supreme God, the codes of religion. That is the condition of material existence. All living beings in the material world have taken up the risk of conditioned life by their own selection and are thus entrapped by the laws of material nature. The only way to get out of the entanglement is to agree to obey the Supreme. But instead of becoming free from the clutches of *māyā*, or illusion, foolish human beings become bound up by different nomenclatures, being designated as *brāhmanas*, *kṣatriyas*, *vaiśyas*, *śūdras*, Hindus, Mohammedans, Indians, Europeans, Americans, Chinese, and many others, and thus they carry out the orders of the Supreme Lord under the influence of respective scriptural or legislative injunctions. The statutory laws of the state are imperfect imitation replicas of religious codes. The secular state, or the godless state, allows the citizens to break the laws of God, but restricts them from disobeying the laws of the state; the result is that the people in general suffer more by breaking the laws of God than by obeying the imperfect laws made by man. Every man is imperfect by constitution under conditions of material existence, and there is not the least possibility that even the most materially advanced man can enact perfect legislation. On the other hand, there is no such imperfection in the laws of God. If leaders are educated in the laws of God, there is no necessity of a makeshift legislative council of aimless men. There is necessity of change in the makeshift laws of man, but there is no change in the God-made laws because they are made perfect by the all-perfect Personality of Godhead. The codes of religion, scriptural injunctions, are made by liberated representatives of God in consideration of different conditions of living, and by carrying out the orders of the Lord, the conditioned living beings gradually become free from the clutches of material existence. The factual position of the living being is, however, that he is the eternal servitor of the Supreme Lord. In his liberated state he renders service to the Lord in transcendental love and thus enjoys a life of full freedom, even sometimes on an equal level with the Lord or sometimes more than the Lord. But in the conditioned material world, every living being wants to be the Lord of other living beings, and thus by the illusion of *māyā* this mentality of lording it over becomes a cause of further extension of conditional life. So in the material world the living being is still more conditioned, until he surrenders unto the Lord by reviving his original state of eternal servitorship. That is the last instruction of the *Bhagavad-gītā* and all other recognized scriptures of the world.

TEXT 43

यथा क्रीडोपस्कराणां संयोगविगमाविह ।
इच्छया क्रीडितुः स्यातां तथैवेच्छया नृणाम् ॥४३॥

*yathā kṛīḍopaskarāṇāṃ
saṁyoga-vigamāv iha
icchayā kṛīdituḥ syātām
tathaiveśchayā nṛṇām*

yathā—as much as; *kṛīḍa-upaskarāṇām*—playthings; *saṁyoga*—union; *vigamau*—disunion; *iha*—in this world; *icchayā*—by the will of; *kṛīdituḥ*—just to play a part; *syātām*—takes place; *tathā*—so also; *eva*—certainly; *īśa*—the Supreme Lord; *icchayā*—by the will of; *nṛṇām*—of the human beings.

TRANSLATION

As a player sets up and disperses his playthings according to his own sweet will, so the supreme will of the Lord brings men together and separates them.

PURPORT

We must know for certain that the particular position in which we are now set up is an arrangement of the supreme will in terms of our own acts in the past. The Supreme Lord is present as the localized Paramātmā in the heart of every living being, as it is said in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (13.23), and therefore he knows everything of our activities in every stage of our lives. He rewards the reactions of our actions by placing us in some particular place. A rich man gets his son born with a silver spoon in his mouth, but the child who came as the rich man's son deserved such a place, and therefore he is placed there by the will of the Lord. And at a particular moment when the child has to be removed from that place, he is also carried by the will of the Supreme, even if the child or the father does not wish to be separated from the happy relation. The same thing happens in the case of a poor man also. Neither rich man nor poor man has any control over such meetings or separations of living beings. The example of a player and his playthings should not be misunderstood. One may argue that since the Lord is bound to award the reactionary results of our own actions, the example of a player cannot be applied. But it is not so. We must always remember that the Lord is the supreme will, and He is not bound by any law. Generally the law of *karma* is that one is awarded the result of one's own actions, but in special cases, by the will of the Lord, such resultant actions are changed also. But this change can be affected by the will of the Lord only, and no other. Therefore, the example of the player cited in this verse is quite appropriate, for the Supreme Will is absolutely free to do whatever He likes, and because He is all-perfect, there is no mistake in any of His actions or reactions. These changes of resultant actions are especially rendered by the Lord when a pure devotee is involved. It is assured in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (9.30-31) that the Lord saves a pure devotee who has surrendered unto Him without reservation from all sorts of reactions of sins, and there is no doubt about this. There are hundreds of examples of reactions changed by the Lord in the history of the world. If the Lord is able to change the reactions of one's past deeds, then certainly He is not Himself bound by any action or reaction of His own deeds. He is perfect and transcendental to all laws.

TEXT 44

यन्मन्यसे ध्रुवं लोकमध्रुवं वा न चोमयम् ।
सर्वथा न हि शोच्यास्ते स्नेहादन्यत्र मोहजात् ॥४४॥

*yan manyase dhruvaṁ lokam
adhruvaṁ vā na cobhayam
sarvathā na hi śocyās te
snehād anyatra mohajāt*

yat—even though; *manyase*—you think; *dhruvam*—Absolute Truth; *lokam*—persons; *adhruvam*—nonreality; *vā*—either; *na*—or not; *ca*—also; *ubhayam*—or bothwise; *sarvathā*—in all circumstances; *na*—never; *hi*—certainly; *śocyāḥ*—subject for lamentation; *te*—they; *snehāt*—due to affection; *anyatra*—or otherwise; *moha-jāt*—due to bewilderment.

TRANSLATION

O King, in all circumstances, whether you consider the soul to be an eternal principle, or the material body to be perishable, or

everything to exist in the impersonal Absolute Truth, or everything to be an inexplicable combination of matter and spirit, feelings of separation are due only to illusory affection and nothing more.

PURPORT

The actual fact is that every living being is an individual part and parcel of the Supreme Being, and his constitutional position is subordinate cooperative service. Either in his conditional material existence or in his liberated position of full knowledge and eternity, the living entity is eternally under the control of the Supreme Lord. But those who are not conversant with factual knowledge put forward many speculative propositions about the real position of the living entity. It is admitted, however, by all schools of philosophy, that the living being is eternal and that the covering body of the five material elements is perishable and temporary. The eternal living entity transmigrates from one material body to another by the law of *karma*, and material bodies are perishable by their fundamental structures. Therefore there is nothing to be lamented in the case of the soul's being transferred into another body, or the material body's perishing at a certain stage. There are others also who believe in the merging of the spirit soul in the Supreme Spirit when it is uncovered by the material encagement, and there are others also who do not believe in the existence of spirit or soul, but believe in tangible matter. In our daily experience we find so many transformations of matter from one form to another, but we do not lament such changing features. In either of the above cases, the force of divine energy is uncheckable; no one has any hand in it, and thus there is no cause of grief.

TEXT 45

तस्माज्जहङ्ग वैकुण्ठमज्ञानकृतमात्मनः ।
कथं त्वनाथाः कृपणा वर्तेरस्ते च मां विना ॥४५॥

*tasmāj jahy aṅga vaiklavyam
ajñāna-kṛtam ātmanah
katham tv anāthāḥ kṛpāṇā
varteraṅs te ca mām vinā*

tasmāt—therefore; *jahi*—give up; *aṅga*—O King; *vaiklavyam*—mental disparity; *ajñāna*—ignorance; *kṛtam*—due to; *ātmanah*—of yourself; *katham*—how; *tu*—but; *anāthāḥ*—helpless; *kṛpāṇāḥ*—poor creatures; *varteran*—be able to survive; *te*—they; *ca*—also; *mām*—me; *vinā*—without.

TRANSLATION

Therefore give up your anxiety due to ignorance of the self. You are now thinking of how they, who are helpless poor creatures, will exist without you.

PURPORT

When we think of our kith and kin as being helpless and dependent on us, it is all due to ignorance. Every living creature is allowed all protection by the order of the Supreme Lord in terms of each one's acquired position in the world. The Lord is known as *bhūta-bhṛt*, one who gives protection to all living beings. One should discharge his duties only, for no one but the Supreme Lord can give protection to anyone else. This is explained more clearly in the following verse.

TEXT 46

कालकर्मगुणाधीनो देहोऽयं पाञ्चभौतिकः ।
कथमन्यास्तु गोपायेत्सर्पग्रस्तो यथा परम् ॥४६॥

*kāla-karma-guṇādhīno
deho 'yaṁ pāṅca-bhautikah
katham anyāṅs tu gopāyet
sarpa-grasto yathā param*

kāla—eternal time; *karma*—action; *guṇa*—modes of nature; *adhīnaḥ*—under the control of; *dehaḥ*—material body and mind; *ayaṁ*—this; *pāṅca-bhautikah*—made of the five elements; *katham*—how; *anyāṅs*—others; *tu*—but; *gopāyet*—give protection; *sarpa-grastah*—one who is bitten by the snake; *yathā*—as much as; *param*—others.

TRANSLATION

This gross material body made of five elements is already under the control of eternal time [kāla], action [karma] and the modes of material nature [guṇa]. How, then, can it, being already in the jaws of the serpent, protect others?

PURPORT

The world's movements for freedom through political, economic, social, and cultural propaganda can do no benefit to anyone, for they are controlled by superior power. A conditioned living being is under the full control of material nature, represented by eternal time and activities under the dictation of different modes of nature. There are three material modes of nature, namely goodness, passion and ignorance. Unless one is situated in the mode of goodness, one cannot see things as they are. The passionate and the ignorant cannot even see things as they are. Therefore a person who is passionate and ignorant cannot direct his activities on the right path. Only the man in the quality of goodness can help to a certain extent. Most persons are passionate and ignorant, and therefore their plans and projects can hardly do any good to others. Above the modes of nature is eternal time, which is called *kāla* because it changes the shape of everything in the material world. Even if we are able to do something temporarily beneficial, time will see that the good project is frustrated in course of time. The only thing possible to be done is to get rid of eternal time, *kāla*, which is compared to *kāla-sarpa*, or the cobra snake, whose bite is always lethal. No one can be saved from the bite of a cobra. The best remedy for getting out of the clutches of the cobralike *kāla* or its integrity, the modes of nature, is *bhakti-yoga*, as it is recommended in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (14.26). The highest perfectional project of philanthropic activities is to engage everyone in the act of preaching *bhakti-yoga* all over the world because that alone can save the people from the control of *māyā*, or the material nature represented by *kāla*, *karma* and *guṇa*, as described above. The *Bhagavad-gītā* (14.26) confirms this definitely.

TEXT 47

अहस्तानि सहस्तानामपदानि चतुष्पदाम् ।
फल्गूनि तत्र महतां जीवो जीवस्य जीवनम् ॥४७॥

*ahastāni sahas-tānām
apadāni catuṣ-padām
phalgūni tatra mahatām
jīvo jīvasya jīvanam*

ahastāni—those who are devoid of hands; *sa-hastānām*—of those who are endowed with hands; *apadāni*—those who are devoid of legs; *catuṣ-padām*—of those who have four legs; *phalgūni*—those who are weak; *tatra*—there; *mahatām*—of the powerful; *jīvaḥ*—the living being; *jīvasya*—of the living being; *jīvanam*—subsistence.

TRANSLATION

Those who are devoid of hands are prey for those who have hands; those devoid of legs are prey for the four-legged. The weak are the subsistence of the strong, and the general rule holds that one living being is food for another.

PURPORT

A systematic law of subsistence in the struggle for existence is there by the supreme will, and there is no escape for anyone by any amount of

planning. The living beings who have come to the material world against the will of the Supreme Being are under the control of a supreme power called *māyā-śakti*, the deputed agent of the Lord, and this *daivī māyā* is meant to pinch the conditioned souls by threefold miseries, one of which is explained here in this verse: *the weak is the subsistence of the strong*. No one is strong enough to protect himself from the onslaught of a stronger, and by the will of the Lord there are systematic categories of the weak, the stronger and the strongest. There is nothing to be lamented if a tiger eats a weaker animal, including a man, because that is the law of the Supreme Lord. But although the law states that a human being must subsist on another living being, there is the law of good sense also, for the human being is meant to obey the laws of the scriptures. This is impossible for other animals. The human being is meant for self-realization, and for that purpose he is not to eat anything which is not first offered to the Lord. The Lord accepts from His devotee all kinds of food preparations made of vegetables, fruits, leaves and grains. Fruits, leaves and milk in different varieties can be offered to the Lord, and after the Lord accepts the foodstuff, the devotee can partake of the *prasāda*, by which all suffering in the struggle for existence will be gradually mitigated. This is confirmed in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (9.26). Even those who are accustomed to eat animals can offer foodstuff, not to the Lord directly, but to an agent of the Lord, under certain conditions of religious rites. Injunctions of the scriptures are meant not to encourage the eaters of animals, but to restrict them by regulated principles.

The living being is the source of subsistence for other, stronger living beings. No one should be very anxious for his subsistence in any circumstances because there are living beings everywhere, and no living being starves for want of food at any place. Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira is advised by Nārada not to worry about his uncles' suffering for want of food, for they could live on vegetables available in the jungles as *prasāda* of the Supreme Lord and thus realize the path of salvation.

Exploitation of the weaker living being by the stronger is the natural law of existence; there is always an attempt to devour the weak in different kingdoms of living beings. There is no possibility of checking this tendency by any artificial means under material conditions; it can be checked only by awakening the spiritual sense of the human being by practice of spiritual regulations. The spiritual regulative principles, however, do not allow a man to slaughter weaker animals on one side and teach others peaceful coexistence. If man does not allow the animals peaceful coexistence, how can he expect peaceful existence in human society? The blind leaders must therefore understand the Supreme Being and then try to implement the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God, or Rāma-rājya, is impossible without the awakening of God consciousness in the mass mind of the people of the world.

TEXT 48

तदिदं भगवान् राजन्नेक आत्मात्मनां सृष्टक ।
अन्तरोऽनन्तरो माति पश्य तं माययोरुधा ॥४८॥

*tad idam bhagavān rājann
eka ātmāmanām sva-dṛk
antaro 'nantaro bhāti
pāśya tam māyayorudhā*

tat—therefore; *idam*—this manifestation; *bhagavān*—the Personality of Godhead; *rājan*—O King; *ekah*—one without a second; *ātmā*—the Supersoul; *āmanām*—by His energies; *sva-dṛk*—qualitatively like Him; *antaraḥ*—without; *anantaraḥ*—within and by Himself; *bhāti*—so manifests; *pāśya*—look; *tam*—unto Him only; *māyayā*—by manifestations of different energies; *urudhā*—appears to be many.

TRANSLATION

Therefore, O King, you should look to the Supreme Lord only, who is one without a second and who manifests Himself by different energies and is both within and without.

PURPORT

The Supreme Lord Personality of Godhead is one without a second, but He manifests Himself by different energies because He is by nature blissful. The living beings are also manifestations of His marginal energy, qualitatively one with the Lord, and there are innumerable living beings both within and without the external and internal energies of the Lord. Since the spiritual world is a manifestation of the Lord's internal energy, the living beings within that internal potency are qualitatively one with the Lord without contamination from the external potency. Although qualitatively one with the Lord, the living being, due to contamination of the material world, is pervertedly manifested, and therefore he experiences so-called happiness and distress in the material world. Such experiences are all ephemeral and do not affect the spirit soul. The perception of such ephemeral happiness and distress is due only to the forgetfulness of his qualities, which are equal to the Lord's. There is, however, a regular current from the Lord Himself, from within and without, by which to rectify the fallen condition of the living being. From within He corrects the desiring living beings as localized Paramātmā, and from without He corrects by His manifestations, the spiritual master and the revealed scriptures. One should look unto the Lord; one should not be disturbed by the so-called manifestations of happiness or distress, but he should try to cooperate with the Lord in His outward activities for correcting the fallen souls. By His order only, one should become a spiritual master and cooperate with the Lord. One should not become a spiritual master for one's personal benefit, for some material gain or as an avenue of business or occupation for earning livelihood. Bona fide spiritual masters who look unto the Supreme Lord to cooperate with Him are actually qualitatively one with the Lord, and the forgetful ones are perverted reflections only. Yudhiṣṭhira Mahārāja is advised by Nārada, therefore, not to be disturbed by the affairs of so-called happiness and distress, but to look only unto the Lord to execute the mission for which the Lord has descended. That was his prime duty.

TEXT 49

सोऽयमद्य महाराज भगवान् भूतभावनः ।
कालरूपोऽवतीर्णोऽस्याममावाय सुरद्वेषाम् ॥४९॥

*so 'yam adya mahārāja
bhagavān bhūta-bhāvanah
kāla-rūpo 'vatīrṇo 'syām
abhāvāya sura-dviṣām*

saḥ—that Supreme Lord; *ayam*—the Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa; *adya*—at present; *mahārāja*—O King; *bhagavān*—the Personality of Godhead; *bhūta-bhāvanah*—the creator or the father of everything created; *kāla-rūpaḥ*—in the disguise of devouring time; *avatīrṇah*—descended; *asyām*—upon the world; *abhāvāya*—for eliminating; *sura-dviṣām*—those who are against the will of the Lord.

TRANSLATION

That Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, in the guise of all devouring time [kāla-rūpa] has now descended on earth to eliminate the envious from the world.

PURPORT

There are two classes of human beings, namely the envious and the obedient. Since the Supreme Lord is one and the father of all living beings, the envious living beings are also His sons, but they are known as the *asuras*. But the living beings who are obedient to the Supreme Father are called *devatās*, or demigods, because they are not contaminated by the material conception of life. Not only are the *asuras* envious of the Lord in even denying the existence of the Lord, but they are also envious of all other living beings. The predominance of *asuras* in the world is occasionally rectified by the Lord when He eliminates them from the world and establishes a rule of *devatās* like the Pāṇḍavas. His designation as

kāla in disguise is significant. He is not at all dangerous, but He is the transcendental form of eternity, knowledge and bliss. For the devotees His factual form is disclosed, and for the nondevotees He appears like *kāla-rūpa*, which is causal form. This causal form of the Lord is not at all pleasing to the *asuras*, and therefore they think of the Lord as formless in order to feel secure that they will not be vanquished by the Lord.

TEXT 50

निष्पादितं देवकृत्यमवशेषं प्रतीक्षते ।
तावद् यूयमवेक्ष्ण्वं भवेद् यावदिहेश्वरः ॥५०॥

niṣpāditaṁ deva-kṛtyam
avaśeṣaṁ pratīkṣate
tāvad yūyam avekṣadhvaṁ
bhaved yāvad iheśvaraḥ

niṣpāditaṁ—performed; *deva-kṛtyam*—what was to be done on behalf of the demigods; *avaśeṣam*—the rest; *pratīkṣate*—being awaited; *tāvat*—up to that time; *yūyam*—all of you Pāṇḍavas; *avekṣadhvam*—observe and wait; *bhaved*—may; *yāvat*—as long as; *iha*—in this world; *iśvaraḥ*—the Supreme Lord.

TRANSLATION

The Lord has already performed His duties to help the demigods, and He is awaiting the rest. You Pāṇḍavas may wait as long as the Lord is here on earth.

PURPORT

The Lord descends from His abode (Kṛṣṇaloka), the topmost planet in the spiritual sky, in order to help the demigod administrators of this material world when they are greatly vexed by the *asuras*, who are envious not only of the Lord but also of His devotees. As referred to above, the conditioned living beings contact material association by their own choice, dictated by a strong desire to lord it over the resources of the material world and become imitation lords of all they survey. Everyone is trying to become an imitation God; there is keen competition amongst such imitation gods, and such competitors are generally known as *asuras*. When there are too many *asuras* in the world, then it becomes a hell for those who are devotees of the Lord. Due to the growth of the *asuras*, the mass of people who are generally devoted to the Lord by nature and the pure devotees of the Lord, including the demigods in higher planets, pray to the Lord for relief, and the Lord either descends personally from His abode or deposes some of his devotees to remodel the fallen condition of human society, or even animal society. Such disruptions take place not only in human society but also amongst animals, birds or other living beings, including the demigods in the higher planets. Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa descended personally to vanquish *asuras* like Kaṁsa, Jarāsandha and Śiśupāla, and during the reign of Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira almost all these *asuras* were killed by the Lord. Now he was awaiting the annihilation of His own dynasty, called the Yadu-vaṁśa, who appeared by His will in this world. He wanted to take them away before His own departure to His eternal abode. Nārada, like Vidura, did not disclose the imminent annihilation of the Yadu dynasty, but indirectly gave a hint to the King and his brothers to wait till the incident happened and the Lord departed.

TEXT 51

धृतराष्ट्रः सह भ्रात्रा गान्धार्या च स्वभार्याया ।
दक्षिणेन हिमवत ऋषीणामाश्रमं गतः ॥५१॥

dhṛtarāṣṭraḥ saha bhrātrā
gāndhāryā ca sva-bhāryayā
dakṣiṇena himavata
ṛṣiṇām āśramaṁ gataḥ

dhṛtarāṣṭraḥ—Dhṛtarāṣṭra; *saha*—along with; *bhrātrā*—his brother Vidura; *gāndhāryā*—Gāndhārī also; *ca*—and; *sva-bhāryayā*—his own wife; *dakṣiṇena*—by the southern side; *himavataḥ*—of the Himalaya Mountains; *ṛṣiṇām*—of the ṛṣis; *āśramam*—in shelter; *gataḥ*—he has gone.

TRANSLATION

O King, your uncle, Dhṛtarāṣṭra, his brother Vidura and his wife Gāndhārī have gone to the southern side of the Himalaya Mountains, where there are shelters of the great sages.

PURPORT

To pacify the mourning Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira, Nārada first of all spoke from the philosophical point of view, and then he began to describe the future movements of his uncle, which he could see by his foreseeing powers, and thus began to describe as follows.

TEXT 52

स्रोतोभिः सप्तभिर्या वै स्वर्धुनी सप्तधा व्यधात् ।
सप्तानां प्रीत्ये नाना सप्तस्रोतः प्रचक्षते ॥५२॥

śrotobhiḥ saptabhir yā vai
svardhunī saptadhā vyadhāt
saptānām prītye nānā
sapta-srotaḥ pracakṣate

śrotobhiḥ—by currents; *saptabhiḥ*—by seven (divisions); *yā*—the river; *vai*—certainly; *svardhunī*—the sacred Ganges; *saptadhā*—seven branches; *vyadhāt*—created; *saptānām*—of the seven; *prītye*—for the satisfaction of; *nānā*—various; *sapta-srotaḥ*—seven sources; *pracakṣate*—known by name.

TRANSLATION

The place is called Saptasrota [divided by seven] because there the waters of the sacred Ganges were divided into seven branches. This was done for the satisfaction of the seven great ṛṣis.

TEXT 53

स्नात्वानुसवनं तस्मिन्हुत्वा चाग्नीन्ययाविधि ।
अभक्ष उपशान्तात्मा स आस्ते विगतैषणः ॥५३॥

snātvānūsavaṇaṁ tasmīn
hutvā cāgnīn yathā-vidhi
ab-bhakṣa upaśāntātmā
sa āste vigataiṣaṇaḥ

snātvā—by taking bath; *anūsavaṇam*—regularly three times (morning, noon and evening); *tasmīn*—in that Ganges divided into seven; *hutvā*—by performing the Agni-hotra sacrifice; *ca*—also; *agnīn*—in the fire; *yathā-vidhi*—just according to the tenets of the scripture; *ab-bhakṣaḥ*—fasting by drinking only water; *upaśānta*—completely controlled; *ātmā*—the gross senses and the subtle mind; *saḥ*—Dhṛtarāṣṭra; *āste*—would be situated; *vigata*—devoid of; *iṣaṇaḥ*—thoughts in relation with family welfare.

TRANSLATION

On the banks at Saptasrota, Dhṛtarāṣṭra is now engaged in beginning *aṣṭāṅga-yoga* by bathing three times daily, in the morning, noon and evening, by performing the Agni-hotra sacrifice with fire and by drinking only water. This helps one control the mind and the senses and frees one completely from thoughts of familial affection.

PURPORT

The *yoga* system is a mechanical way to control the senses and the mind and divert them from matter to spirit. The preliminary processes

are the sitting posture, meditation, spiritual thoughts, manipulation of air passing within the body, and gradual situation in trance, facing the Absolute Person, Paramātmā. Such mechanical ways of rising to the spiritual platform prescribe some regulative principles of taking bath daily three times, fasting as far as possible, sitting and concentrating the mind on spiritual matters and thus gradually becoming free from *viśaya*, or material objectives. Material existence means to be absorbed in the material objective, which is simply illusory. House, country, family, society, children, property, and business are some of the material coverings of the spirit, *ātmā*, and the *yoga* system helps one to become free from all these illusory thoughts and gradually turn towards the Absolute Person, Paramātmā. By material association and education, we learn simply to concentrate on flimsy things, but *yoga* is the process of forgetting them altogether. Modern so-called *yogīs* and *yoga* systems manifest some magical feats, and ignorant persons are attracted by such false things, or they accept the *yoga* system as a cheap healing process for diseases of the gross body. But factually the *yoga* system is the process of learning to forget what we have acquired throughout the struggle for existence. Dhṛtarāṣṭra was all along engaged in improving family affairs by raising the standard of living of his sons or by usurping the property of the Pāṇḍavas for the sake of his own sons. These are common affairs for a man grossly materialistic and without knowledge of the spiritual force. He does not see how this can drag one from heaven to hell. By the grace of his younger brother Vidura, Dhṛtarāṣṭra was enlightened and could see his grossly illusory engagements, and by such enlightenment he was able to leave home for spiritual realization. Śrī Nārada-deva was just foretelling the way of his spiritual progress in a place which was sanctified by the flow of the celestial Ganges. Drinking water only, without solid food, is also considered fasting. This is necessary for advancement of spiritual knowledge. A foolish man wants to be a cheap *yogī* without observing the regulative principles. A man who has no control over the tongue at first can hardly become a *yogī*. *Yogī* and *bhogī* are two opposite terms. The *bhogī*, or the merryman who eats and drinks, cannot be a *yogī*, for a *yogī* is never allowed to eat and drink unrestrictedly. We may note with profit how Dhṛtarāṣṭra began his *yoga* system by drinking water only and sitting calmly in a place with a spiritual atmosphere, deeply absorbed in the thoughts of the Lord Hari, the Personality of Godhead.

TEXT 54

जितासनो जितश्वासः प्रत्याहृतषडिन्द्रियः ।
हरिभावनया च्चस्तरजःसच्चतमोमलः ॥५४॥

jitāsano jita-śvāsaḥ
pratyāhṛta-ṣaḍ-indriyaḥ
hari-bhāvanayā dhvasta-
rajaḥ-sattva-tamo-malaḥ

jita-āsanaḥ—one who has controlled the sitting posture; *jita-śvāsaḥ*—one who has controlled the breathing process; *pratyāhṛta*—turning back; *ṣaḍ*—six; *indriyaḥ*—senses; *hari*—the Absolute Personality of Godhead; *bhāvanayā*—absorbed in; *dhvasta*—conquered; *rajaḥ*—passion; *sattva*—goodness; *tamaḥ*—ignorance; *malaḥ*—contaminations.

TRANSLATION

One who has controlled the sitting postures [the yogic āsanas] and the breathing process can turn the senses toward the Absolute Personality of Godhead and thus become immune to the contaminations of the modes of material nature, namely mundane goodness, passion and ignorance.

PURPORT

The preliminary activities of the way of *yoga* are *āsana*, *prāṇāyāma*, *pratyāhāra*, *dhyāna*, *dhāraṇā*, etc. Mahārāja Dhṛtarāṣṭra was to attain success in those preliminary actions because he was seated in a sanctified place and was concentrating upon one objective, namely the Supreme

Personality of Godhead (Hari). Thus all his senses were being engaged in the service of the Lord. This process directly helps the devotee to get freedom from the contaminations of the three material modes of nature. Even the highest mode, the material mode of goodness, is also a cause of material bondage, and what to speak of the other qualities, namely passion and ignorance. Passion and ignorance increase the material propensities of hankering for material enjoyment, and a strong sense of lust provokes the accumulation of wealth and power. One who has conquered these two base mentalities and has raised himself to the platform of goodness, which is full of knowledge and morality, cannot also control the senses, namely the eyes, the tongue, the nose, the ear and touch. But one who has surrendered himself unto the lotus feet of Lord Hari, as above mentioned, can transcend all influences of the modes of material nature and be fixed in the service of the Lord. The *bhakti-yoga* process, therefore, directly applies the senses to the loving service of the Lord. This prohibits the performer from engaging in material activities. This process of turning the senses from material attachment to the loving transcendental service of the Lord is called *pratyāhāra*, and the very process is called *prāṇāyāma*, ultimately ending in *samādhi*, or absorption in pleasing the Supreme Lord Hari by all means.

TEXT 55

विज्ञानात्मनि संयोज्य क्षेत्रज्ञे प्रविलाप्य तम् ।
ब्रह्मण्यात्मानमाधारे घटांभरमिवांभरे ॥५५॥

vijñānātmani saṁyojya
kṣetra-jñe pravilāpya tam
brahmany ātmānam ādhāre
ghaṭāmbaram ivāmbare

vijñāna—purified identity; *ātmani*—in intelligence; *saṁyojya*—perfectly fixing; *kṣetra-jñe*—in the matter of the living being; *pravilāpya*—merging; *tam*—him; *brahmani*—in the Supreme; *ātmānam*—pure living being; *ādhāre*—in the reservoir; *ghaṭa-ambaram*—sky within the block; *iva*—like; *ambare*—in the supreme sky.

TRANSLATION

Dhṛtarāṣṭra will have to amalgamate his pure identity with intelligence and then merge into the Supreme Being with knowledge of his qualitative oneness, as a living entity, with the Supreme Brahman. Being freed from the blocked sky, he will have to rise to the spiritual sky.

PURPORT

The living being, by his desiring to lord it over the material world and declining to cooperate with the Supreme Lord, contacts the sum total of the material world, namely the *mahat-tattva*, and from the *mahat-tattva* his false identity with the material world, intelligence, mind and senses is developed. This covers his pure spiritual identity. By the yogic process, when his pure identity is realized in self-realization, one has to revert to the original position by amalgamating the five gross elements and the subtle elements, mind and intelligence, into the *mahat-tattva* again. Thus getting freed from the clutches of the *mahat-tattva*, he has to merge in the existence of the Supersoul. In other words, he has to realize that qualitatively he is nondifferent from the Supersoul, and thus he transcends the material sky by his pure identical intelligence and thus becomes engaged in the transcendental loving service of the Lord. This is the highest perfectional development of spiritual identity, which was attained by Dhṛtarāṣṭra by the grace of Vidura and the Lord. The Lord's mercy was bestowed upon him by his personal contact with Vidura, and when he was actually practicing the instructions of Vidura, the Lord helped him to attain the highest perfectional stage.

A pure devotee of the Lord does not live on any planet of the material sky, nor does he feel any contact with material elements. His so-called material body does not exist, being surcharged with the spiritual current of the Lord's identical interest, and thus he is permanently freed from all

contaminations of the sum total of the *mahat-tattva*. He is always in the spiritual sky, which he attains by being transcendental to the sevenfold material coverings by the effect of his devotional service. The conditioned souls are within the coverings, whereas the liberated soul is far beyond the cover.

TEXT 56

ध्वस्तमायागुणोदको निरुद्धकरणाशयः ।
निवर्तिताखिलाहार आस्ते स्थाणुरिवाचलः ।
तस्यान्तरायो मैवाभूः संन्यस्ताखिलकर्मणः ॥५६॥

*dhvasta-māyā-guṇodarko
niruddha-karaṇāśayaḥ
nivartitākhilāhāra
āste sthānur ivācalaḥ
tasyāntarāyo maivābhūḥ
sannyastākhila-karmaṇaḥ*

dhvasta—being destroyed; *māyā-guṇa*—the modes of material nature; *udarkaḥ*—aftereffects; *niruddha*—being suspended; *karaṇa-āśayaḥ*—the senses and the mind; *nivartita*—stopped; *akhila*—all; *āhāraḥ*—food for the senses; *āste*—is sitting; *sthānuḥ*—immovable; *iva*—like; *acalaḥ*—fixed; *tasya*—his; *antarāyaḥ*—hindrances; *mā eva*—never like that; *abhūḥ*—be; *sannyasta*—renounced; *akhila*—all sorts; *karmaṇaḥ*—material duties.

TRANSLATION

He will have to suspend all the actions of the senses, even from the outside, and will have to be impervious to interactions of the senses, which are influenced by the modes of material nature. After renouncing all material duties, he must become immovably established, beyond all sources of hindrances on the path.

PURPORT

Dhṛtarāṣṭra had attained, by the yogic process, the stage of negation of all sorts of material reaction. The effects of the material modes of nature draw the victim to indefatigable desires of enjoying matter, but one can escape such false enjoyment by the yogic process. Every sense is always busy in searching for its food, and thus the conditioned soul is assaulted from all sides and has no chance to become steady in any pursuit. Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira was advised by Nārada not to disturb his uncle by attempting to bring him back home. He was now beyond the attraction of anything material. The material modes of nature (the *guṇas*) have their different modes of activities, but above the material modes of nature is a spiritual mode, which is absolute. *Nirguṇa* means without reaction. The spiritual mode and its effect are identical; therefore the spiritual quality is distinguished from its material counterpart by the word *nirguṇa*. After complete suspension of the material modes of nature, one is admitted to the spiritual sphere, and action dictated by the spiritual modes is called devotional service, or *bhakti*. *Bhakti* is therefore *nirguṇa* attained by direct contact with the Absolute.

TEXT 57

स वा अद्यतनाद् राजन् परतः पञ्चमेऽहनि ।
कलेवरं हास्यति स्वं तच्च भस्मीभविष्यति ॥५७॥

*sa vā adya tanād rājan
parataḥ pañcame 'hani
kalevaraṁ hāsyati svam
tac ca bhasmī bhaviṣyati*

saḥ—he; *vā*—in all probability; *adya*—today; *tanāt*—from; *rājan*—O King; *parataḥ*—ahead; *pañcame*—on the fifth; *ahani*—day;

kalevaram—body; *hāsyati*—shall quit; *svam*—his own; *ta*—that; *ca*—also; *bhasmī*—ashes; *bhaviṣyati*—will turn into.

TRANSLATION

O King, he will quit his body, most probably on the fifth day from today. And his body will turn to ashes.

PURPORT

Nārada Muni's prophecy prohibited Yudhiṣṭhira Mahārāja from going to the place where his uncle was staying because even after quitting the body by his own mystic power, Dhṛtarāṣṭra would not be in need of any funeral ceremony; Nārada Muni indicated that his body by itself would burn to ashes. The perfection of the *yoga* system is attained by such mystic power. The *yogī* is able to quit his body by his own choice of time and can attain any planet he desires by turning the present body into ashes by self-made fire.

TEXT 58

दह्यमानेऽग्निभिर्देहे पत्युः पत्नी सहोदजे ।
बहिः स्थिता पति साञ्ची तमग्निमु वेक्ष्यति ॥५८॥

*dahyamāne 'gnibhir dehe
patyuh patnī sahoṭaje
bahih sthitā patim sādhvī
tam agnim anu vekṣyati*

dahyamāne—while it is burning; *agnibhiḥ*—by the fire; *dehe*—the body; *patyuh*—of the husband; *patnī*—the wife; *saha-ṭaje*—along with the thatched cottage; *bahih*—outside; *sthitā*—situated; *patim*—unto the husband; *sādhvī*—the chaste lady; *tam*—that; *agnim*—fire; *anu vekṣyati*—looking with great attention will enter the fire.

TRANSLATION

While outside observing her husband, who will burn in the fire of mystic power along with his thatched cottage, his chaste wife will enter the fire with rapt attention.

PURPORT

Gāndhārī was an ideal chaste lady, a life companion of her husband, and therefore when she saw her husband burning in the fire of mystic *yoga* along with his cottage of leaves, she despaired. She left home after losing her one hundred sons, and in the forest she saw that her most beloved husband was also burning. Now she actually felt alone, and therefore she entered the fire of her husband and followed her husband to death. This entering of a chaste lady into the fire of her dead husband is called the *satī* rite, and the action is considered to be most perfect for a woman. In a later age, this *satī* rite became an obnoxious criminal affair because the ceremony was forced upon even an unwilling woman. In this fallen age it is not possible for any lady to follow the *satī* rite as chastely as it was done by Gāndhārī and others in past ages. A chaste wife like Gāndhārī would feel the separation of her husband to be more burning than actual fire. Such a lady can observe the *satī* rite voluntarily, and there is no criminal force by anyone. When the rite became a formality only and force was applied upon a lady to follow the principle, actually it became criminal, and therefore the ceremony was to be stopped by state law. This prophecy of Nārada Muni to Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira forbade him to go to his widowed aunt.

TEXT 59

विदुरस्तु तदाश्चर्यं निशाम्य कुरुनन्दन ।
हर्षशोकयुतस्तस्माद् गन्ता तीर्थनिषेवकः ॥५९॥

*viduras tu tad āścaryam
niśāmya kuru-nandana*

*viduras tu tad āścaryam
niśāmya kuru-nandana*

harṣa-śoka-yutaḥ tasmād
gantā tīrtha-niṣevakaḥ

viduraḥ—Vidura also; *tu*—but; *tat*—that incident; *āścaryam*—wonderful; *niśāmya*—seeing; *kuru-nandana*—O son of the Kuru dynasty; *harṣa*—delight; *śoka*—grief; *yutaḥ*—affected by; *tasmāt*—from that place; *gantā*—will go away; *tīrtha*—place of pilgrimage; *niṣevakaḥ*—for being enlivened.

TRANSLATION

Vidura, being affected with delight and grief, will then leave that place of sacred pilgrimage.

PURPORT

Vidura was astonished to see the marvelous departure of his brother Dhṛtarāṣṭra as a liberated *yogī*, for in his past life he was much attached to materialism. Of course it was only due to Vidura that his brother attained the desirable goal of life. Vidura was therefore glad to learn about it. But he was sorry that he could not make his brother turn into a pure devotee. This was not done by Vidura because of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's being inimical to the Pāṇḍavas, who were all devotees of the Lord. An offense at the feet of a Vaiṣṇava is more dangerous than an offense at the lotus feet of the Lord. Vidura was certainly very liberal to bestow mercy upon his brother Dhṛtarāṣṭra, whose past life was very materialistic. But ultimately the result of such mercy certainly depended on the will of the Supreme Lord in the present life; therefore Dhṛtarāṣṭra attained liberation only, and after many such liberated states of life one can attain to the stage of devotional service. Vidura was certainly very mortified by the death of his brother and sister-in-law, and the only remedy to mitigate such lamentation was to go out to pilgrimage. Thus Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira had no chance to call back Vidura, his surviving uncle.

TEXT 60

इत्युक्त्वाथारुहत् स्वर्गं नारदः सहतुम्बुरुः ।
युधिष्ठिरो वचस्तस्य हृदि कृत्वाजहाच्छुचः ॥ ६० ॥

ity uktvāthāruhat svargam
nāradaḥ saha-tumburūḥ
yudhiṣṭhiro vacas tasya
hṛdi kṛtvājahāc chucaḥ

iti—thus; *uktvā*—having addressed; *atha*—thereafter; *āruhat*—ascended; *svargam*—into outer space; *nāradaḥ*—the great sage Nārada; *saha*—along with; *tumburūḥ*—his stringed instrument; *yudhiṣṭhiraḥ*—Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira; *vacas*—instructions; *tasya*—of his; *hṛdi kṛtvā*—keeping in the heart; *ajahāt*—gave up; *śucaḥ*—all lamentations.

TRANSLATION

Having spoken thus, the great sage Nārada, along with his *viṇā*, ascended into outer space. Yudhiṣṭhira kept his instruction in his heart and so was able to get rid of all lamentations.

PURPORT

Śrī Nāradaḥ is an eternal spaceman, having been endowed with a spiritual body by the grace of the Lord. He can travel in the outer spaces of both the material and spiritual worlds without restriction and can approach any planet in unlimited space within no time. We have already discussed his previous life as the son of a maidservant. Because of his association with pure devotees, he was elevated to the position of an eternal spaceman and thus had freedom of movement. One should therefore try to follow in the footsteps of Nārada Muni and not make a futile effort to reach other planets by mechanical means. Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira was a pious king, and therefore he could see Nārada Muni

occasionally; anyone who desires to see Nārada Muni must first be pious and follow in the footsteps of Nārada Muni.

Thus end the Bhaktivedanta purports of the First Canto, Thirteenth Chapter, of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, entitled "Dhṛtarāṣṭra Quits Home."

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

The Disappearance of Lord Kṛṣṇa

TEXT 1

सूत उवाच
सम्प्रस्थिते द्वारकायां जिष्णौ बन्धुदिदृक्षया ।
ज्ञातुं च पुण्यश्लोकस्य कृष्णस्य च विचेष्टितम् ॥ १ ॥

sūta uvāca
samprasthite dvārakāyām
jiṣṇau bandhu-didr̥kṣaya
jñātum ca puṇya-ślokasya
kṛṣṇasya ca viceṣṭitam

sūtaḥ uvāca—Śrī Sūta Gosvāmī said; *samprasthite*—having gone to; *dvārakāyām*—the city of Dvārakā; *jiṣṇau*—Arjuna; *bandhu*—friends and relatives; *dir̥kṣaya*—for meeting them; *jñātum*—to know; *ca*—also; *puṇya-ślokasya*—of one whose glories are sung by Vedic hymns; *kṛṣṇasya*—of Lord Kṛṣṇa; *ca*—and; *viceṣṭitam*—further programs of work.

TRANSLATION

Śrī Sūta Gosvāmī said: Arjuna went to Dvārakā to see Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa and other friends and also to learn from the Lord of His next activities.

PURPORT

As stated in *Bhagavad-gītā*, the Lord descended on earth for the protection of the faithful and annihilation of the impious, so after the Battle of Kurukṣetra and establishment of Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira, the mission of the Lord was complete. The Pāṇḍavas, especially Śrī Arjuna, were eternal companions of the Lord, and therefore Arjuna went to Dvārakā to hear from the Lord of His next program of work.

(continued in next issue)

Vaiṣṇava Calendar

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

Year 491, Caitanya Era Vaiṣṇava month of Nārāyaṇa (December 26, 1977–January 24, 1978)			
January 5 (Nārāyaṇa 11)	January 6 (Nārāyaṇa 12)	January 7 (Nārāyaṇa 13)	January 11 (Nārāyaṇa 17)
Saphala-ekādaśī (fasting from grains and beans).	Ekādaśī break-fast after sunrise, before 9:56 A.M. Disappearance of Śrī Devānanda Paṇḍita.	Disappearance of Śrīla Uddhāraṇa Datta Thākura and Śrīla Mahēsa Paṇḍita.	Disappearance of Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī and Śrī Jagadīśa Paṇḍita.
January 20 (Nārāyaṇa 26)	January 21 (Nārāyaṇa 27)	January 24 (Nārāyaṇa 30)	
Vyañjuli-mahādvādaśī (Ekādaśī fasting observed today).	Mahādvādaśī break-fast after sunrise, before 7:08 A.M.	Puṣyābhīṣeka-yātrā of Lord Kṛṣṇa.	



Every Town and Village

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

ISKCON Scientists Disclose Life's Origin

In mid-October, as the world's attention turned to the 1977 Nobel Prize science awards in Stockholm, a group of scientists met in the holy town of Vṛndāvana, India, to begin changing the direction of modern scientific research. The First International "Life Comes From Life" Conference, sponsored by ISKCON's Bhaktivedanta Institute, drew government and academic scientists from around the world. Also present was His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the founder-*ācārya* of both ISKCON and the Institute.

Meanwhile, in Stockholm, Russian-born Ilya Prigogine was receiving an award for his thermodynamic mathematical models, which other scientists have tried to use in their as yet fruitless attempts to prove that life comes from chemical combinations. (Despite Prigogine's models, no scientist has ever observed life coming from chemical combinations, either in nature or in the laboratory. Nevertheless, Prigogine received \$145,000 for his work.) On the other hand, the Bhaktivedanta Institute members at the "Life Comes From Life" Conference in Vṛndāvana conclusively proved that life can't possibly come from chemicals and that—as we see daily—life comes from life.

The members of the Bhaktivedanta Institute describe themselves as "a body of scientists and scholars who have recognized the unique value of the teachings of Kṛṣṇa consciousness brought to the West by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda." "One reason for the increasing interest of modern intellectuals in Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings," they explain, "is doubtlessly the growing awareness that despite great scientific and technological advancement, the real goal of human life has somehow been missed. The philosophy of the Bhaktivedanta Institute provides a meaningful answer to this concern by proposing that life—not matter—is the basis of the world we perceive." The members add, "The Institute is clearly demonstrating that the Vedic philosophy is not a matter simply of 'faith' or 'belief' but is scientific in the strict sense of the term."

The "Life Comes From Life" Con-



Speakers at the "Life Comes From Life" Conference: (foreground) Dr. Thoudam Damodar Singh and Dr. Michael Marchetti; (rear) D. J. Webb, Robert S. Cohen, and Dr. Richard Thompson.

ference took place in the pleasant surroundings of ISKCON's modern Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma temple complex, with its blend of traditional Indian architecture and Western conveniences. Guests stayed at the temple's International Guest House and dined on delicious vegetarian fare from the guest house restaurant, all free of charge. Mild sunshine during the day and cool breezes at night made for a serene atmosphere.

The main speakers at the conference were Dr. Thoudam Damodar Singh (Svarūpa Dāmodara dāsa) and Dr. Richard Thompson (Sadāpūta dāsa), both of the Bhaktivedanta Institute. Dr. Singh, the Institute's director, was born in Manipur, India, in 1941 and became a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda in 1970. He has written a book entitled *The Scientific Basis of Kṛṣṇa Consciousness* and holds a Ph.D. in physical organic chemistry from the University of California.

To support the conclusion that life comes from life, Dr. Singh presented his findings in the field of molecular biology. Modern science is based on quantum mechanics, which reduces physical phenomena to pushes and pulls among certain particles. Having made these assumptions, scientists go on to say that life and life symptoms result from complex combinations of molecules. But Dr. Singh showed clearly that such theories

do not adequately explain the varied phenomena of life (including thought, emotions, and will). Life is based on consciousness, he proposed, and this consciousness obeys higher-order non-physical laws imposed by the supreme consciousness described in the *Vedas*.

Born in 1947 in Binghamton, New York, Dr. Thompson received his Ph.D. in probability theory from Cornell University in 1974. In 1975 he became an initiated disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda. At the conference he delivered a well-received address called "Demonstration by Information Theory that Life Cannot Arise from Matter." A fundamental proposition of information theory states that the information content of a closed mathematical system cannot increase. Now, modern science describes physical nature in terms of mathematical models of low information content, and yet the physical structures of living organisms are so complex that they indicate a very high information content. So, according to information theory, it is impossible to suppose that life's high-information structures can arise from physical nature's low-information structures. On this basis Dr. Thompson discredited the now widely accepted theory that life forms do in fact evolve spontaneously from the ingredients of physical nature. Such evolution requires an outside source of information—namely, the supremely conscious controller of matter described in the *Vedas*.

Among other Bhaktivedanta Institute members who spoke was Dr. Michael Marchetti (Mādhava dāsa), who lectured on the philosophical foundations of science. Geologist Robert S. Cohen (Brahmatīrtha dāsa) demonstrated that fossil records actually give little support to Darwin's theory of evolution. Finally, Oxford's D.J. Webb (Jñāna dāsa) demonstrated how the laws of thermodynamics contradict current theories of chemical evolution.

At the end of the Vṛndāvana conference Dr. Singh announced that similar conferences will take place soon in Europe and North America. For further information about the Bhaktivedanta Institute, readers may write to 70 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, Massachusetts 02116, or Hare Kṛṣṇa Land, Gandhi Gram Road, Juhu, Bombay 400 054, India.

Śrīla Prabhupāda Speaks Out

On Christ, Christians, and Kṛṣṇa

The Tolerance And Compassion of Christ

The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* states that any bona fide preacher of God consciousness must have the qualities of *titikṣā* (tolerance) and *karuṇā* (compassion). In the character of Lord Jesus Christ we find both these qualities. He was so tolerant that even while he was being crucified, he didn't condemn anyone. And he was so compassionate that he prayed to God to forgive the very persons who were trying to kill him. (Of course, they could not actually kill him. But they were thinking that he could be killed, so they were committing a great offense.) As Christ was being crucified he prayed, "Father, forgive them. They know not what they are doing."

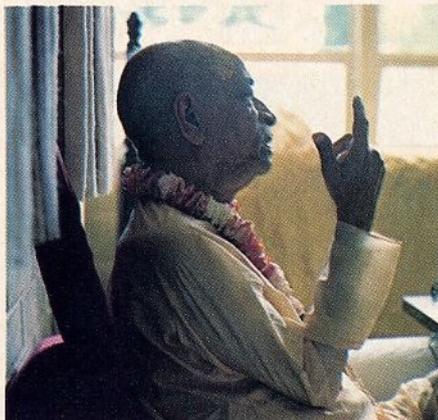
Christ, the Friend Of All Living Beings

A preacher of God consciousness is a friend to all living beings. Lord Jesus Christ exemplified this by teaching, "Thou shalt not kill." But the Christians like to misinterpret this instruction. They think the animals have no soul, and therefore they think they can freely kill billions of innocent animals in the slaughterhouses. So although there are many persons who profess to be Christians, it would be very difficult to find one who strictly follows the instructions of Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ Goes On Suffering for Your Sins?

A Vaiṣṇava [a pure devotee of the Lord] is unhappy to see the suffering of others. Therefore, Lord Jesus Christ agreed to be crucified—to free others from their suffering. But his followers are so unfaithful that they have decided, "Let Christ suffer for us, and we'll go on committing sin." They love Christ so much that they think, "My dear Christ, we are very weak. We cannot give up our sinful activities. So you please suffer for us."

Jesus Christ taught, "Thou shalt not kill." But his followers have now decided, "Let us kill anyway," and they open big, modern, scientific slaughterhouses. "If there is any sin, Christ will



suffer for us." This is a most abominable conclusion.

Christ can take the sufferings for the previous sins of his devotees. But first they have to be sane: "Why should I put Jesus Christ into suffering for my sins? Let me stop my sinful activities."

Suppose a man—the favorite son of his father—commits a murder. And suppose he thinks, "If there is any punishment coming, my father can suffer for me." Will the law allow it? When the murderer is arrested and says, "No, no. You can release me and arrest my father; I am his pet son," will the police officials comply with that fool's request? He committed the murder, but he thinks *his father* should suffer the punishment! Is that a sane proposal? "No. *You* have committed the murder; *you* must be hanged." Similarly, when you commit sinful activities, you must suffer—not Jesus Christ. This is God's law.

We Adore Lord Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ was such a great personality—the son of God, the representative of God. He had no fault. Still, he was crucified. He wanted to deliver God consciousness, but in return they crucified him—they were so thankless. They could not appreciate his preaching. But we appreciate him and give him all honor as the representative of God.

Of course, the message that Christ preached was just according to his particular time, place, and country, and just suited for a particular group of people. But certainly he is the representative of God. Therefore we adore Lord Jesus Christ and offer our obeisances to him.

Jesus Is Our Guru

Once, in Melbourne, a group of Christian ministers came to visit me. They asked, "What is your idea of Jesus Christ?" I told them, "He is our guru. He is preaching God consciousness, so he is our spiritual master." The ministers very much appreciated that.

Actually, anyone who is preaching God's glories must be accepted as a guru. Jesus Christ is one such great personality. We should not think of him as an ordinary human being. The scriptures say that anyone who considers the spiritual master to be an ordinary man has a hellish mentality. If Jesus Christ were an ordinary man, then he could not have delivered God consciousness.

Kṛṣṇa or Christ, The Name Is the Same

Christ comes from the Greek word *Christos*, and *Christos* is the Greek version of the word *Kṛṣṭa*. When an Indian person calls on Kṛṣṇa, he often says "Kṛṣṭa." *Kṛṣṭa* is a Sanskrit word meaning "the object of attraction." So when we address God as "Christ," "Kṛṣṭa," or "Kṛṣṇa," we indicate the same all-attractive Supreme Personality of Godhead. When Jesus said, "Our father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name," that name of God was *Kṛṣṭa* or *Kṛṣṇa*. "Christ" is simply another way of saying "Kṛṣṭa," and "Kṛṣṭa" is another way of pronouncing *Kṛṣṇa*.

Therefore, the Christian clergymen should cooperate with the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. They should chant the name Christ or Christos and should stop condoning the slaughter of animals. This is not some philosophy that I have fabricated; it is taught in the Bible. If the Christians follow these principles, the world situation will improve. If they simply stop killing animals and chant the holy name of Christ, everything will be perfect. The Bible also demands this. So the Christians should cooperate with us and chant.

Actually, it doesn't matter—Kṛṣṇa or Christ—the name is the same. The main point is to chant the name of God. The easiest way is to chant the *mahā-mantra*: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

ARE WE REALLY FREE?

by Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami

Freedom of thought, of religion, of assembly; freedom of speech; freedom of the press; freedom of movement both within and outside one's own country; freedom to take part in government: these are basic human rights that we Americans freely exercise and perhaps even take for granted. But oppressive governments throughout the world are presently denying their citizens even these basic human rights.

It is this grievance which has become the centerpiece in President Carter's foreign policy. The Carter administration wants to dissuade the Communist states and the Latin American rightist regimes, among others, from all unwarranted denial of their people's rights. In his March address before the United Nations, the President affirmed, "Because we are free, we can never be indifferent to the fate of freedom."

Now, for America to fly the banner of "human rights for the world" presupposes that human rights flourish in our own land. True, we have a representative government and the Bill of Rights, and we enjoy many civil liberties not found in other countries. But if we could lift our sights for a moment beyond the Carter administration and beyond the Bill of Rights—to the ageless and unchanging standard of ancient India's Vedic civilization—we would discover that we are still missing out on the most important human right of all. President Carter may plead for the rights of others, but the time-honored Vedic literatures say, "What are you doing about *your* human rights—your right to become self-realized and God-realized? You are still a prisoner. Wake up!" The Vedic literatures assert that the rights and freedoms that we Americans hold so dear today are actually not very important. The most important human right is the right to become self- and God-realized and thus gain freedom from all miseries.

Let's look closely at this most important human right. According to the Vedic literatures, the eternal soul transmigrates through millions of lower species of life before he gets a human body. Of all the varieties of species, the human form of life is the most developed—because only the human being can inquire into his ultimate spiritual identity. Of course, in our human life we still engage in the animal functions of eating, sleep-

ing, mating, and defending; but we have the added opportunity—the human right—to achieve perfection by becoming a self-realized soul. We can utilize the highly developed rational faculties of the human form of life to discover our eternal spiritual relationship with God. This is the ultimate human right, and with proper guidance we can easily take full advantage of it.

"I am not this body; I'm the soul within the body." Once we understand this simple fact, we become self-realized—and free from the miseries of transmigrating to another body at death. On the other hand, if we do not achieve self-realization, we will be forced at the time of death to take another birth and to go on transmigrating from one species of life to another, birth after birth. After all, no nation is so strong and no citizen so free as to be able to overcome the laws of nature.

Like many statesmen before him, President Carter contends that America is a free nation, but the Vedic literatures answer "No"—no one is free until he becomes liberated from the cycle of repeated birth and death. Neither the U.S. Constitution nor the Bill of Rights nor our awesome national defense force can protect us from the miseries of birth, death, disease, and old age. Even we Americans have to die, and we may die at any moment. It may be our karma to die in an auto or plane accident with more pain than can be inflicted by any political dictator. Or our karma may be to die of cancer, to be murdered, or to be burned alive in the sanctity of our own home. Even John F. Kennedy, in the topmost position in America, was not free to prevent his death.

"That's rather grim," we may say. "Sure, life has its share of miseries, but the rights and freedoms we Americans enjoy are real and satisfying."

Not really. If we think that way, we're overlooking some basic facts of life. For example, how long can we remain in our materially superior position as Americans? And who among us can guarantee that after death his good fortune will continue and he'll again be born as an American?

Here's what happens when somebody gets too attached to the idea of being an American and fails to become self-realized. According to the laws of transmigration, in his next life such a

person may again be awarded an American body, but perhaps not a human body. In his last life he didn't use his advanced human intelligence to inquire into his true, spiritual nature; he didn't take advantage of his most important human right. Instead of realizing that "I'm not this body—I'm a spirit soul, an eternal servant of God," he's figured that "I'm an American, and America is my beloved homeland." As a result, he may be born as an American cow or pig and suffer in the stockyards until he is slaughtered.

In other words, right now it's foolish for us to say, "Our national pride is that we exercise our human rights and we're free." After all, this world—with its stringent law of repeated birth and death—is a prison. So maybe we're privileged prisoners, because we exercise certain *relative* rights (the right to vote as we please and to have a fair trial, for instance) that lots of other people don't have. But we will not be really free until we exercise our *fundamental* human right to become Kṛṣṇa-conscious—only then can we escape nature's law of repeated birth and death.

Our position is exactly like that of a prisoner shackled in gold chains who looks at another prisoner's iron chains and says, "You are imprisoned, and I am free." Chains of gold are as binding as chains of iron. And since one who is bound cannot free anyone else, America's current crusade for human rights has no meaning.

Again, we all should feel concerned about human rights, but the problem is that very few of us today know what our real human rights are. So the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is urging that all people throughout the world exercise the priceless human right to become self-realized and free from all suffering—the right to revive our loving devotion to Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. To ignore this most important human right is the worst misuse of our human life.

As the Vedic literatures explain, human life is very precious and rare—because if we use it properly we can attain self- and God-realization, the perfection of our existence. The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement exists for the sole purpose of offering everyone nonsectarian, nonpolitical information about our most important human right.



Training Tomorrow's Leaders

Text by Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami

Photos by Viśākhā-devī dāsī



We all know that education is for training tomorrow's leaders. But today's schools are little more than training grounds for criminals. Last year's U.S. statistics bear witness to the horror: 100 school murders, 17,000 armed robberies, 200,000 aggravated assaults against teachers, 270,000 school burglaries, and \$600 million lost to vandalism. So where are we going to get tomorrow's leaders? From among these students at ISKCON's new academy in Vṛndāvana, India.

So many of today's social ills persist simply because we lack qualified leaders. Recently, of course, we have even seen many highly-posted political leaders exposed as complete incompetents. But then, if our society is materialistic and our education is materialistic and our leaders and teachers are all materialistic, how can we expect to produce a generation of spiritually strong adults—people competent to solve today's crises? True, we may hold technological know-how and university degrees in high esteem. But these things can't take the place of spiritual strength and purity of character.

If a young boy has no spiritual training, how can he have a sense of morals or know anything about God? And if such a spiritually ignorant person gets to be a leader, how can we expect anything but a criminal? So when His Divine

Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda came to the West, he brought the *gurukula*, "the school of the spiritual master"—the school for real leaders.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's first American disciples were eager to help him start the *gurukula*: we wanted our own children to get training in spiritual life from the very beginning. Most of us had come to Kṛṣṇa consciousness only after twenty years of being misled. We didn't want our children to follow us in watching all kinds of nonsense on television, or in being chronically addicted to liquor, drugs, and cigarettes, or in growing up with a taste for mere temporary happiness and no knowledge of the next life. Also, we wanted our children to escape the disgust that cheating religious and political leaders had produced in us. So under Śrīla Prabhupāda's guidance we started a school whose enrollment grew in a few



years to more than a hundred students. Recently, I visited this school (in Vṛndāvana, India, its new location) and spoke with the teachers and students.

Talking with the Teachers

First, I interviewed Jagadīśa dāsa, ISKCON's minister of education.

BACK TO GODHEAD: What is the purpose of *gurukula*, the school of the guru?

Jagadīśa dāsa: Śrīla Prabhupāda explains that in the Vedic culture, when a boy turns five he should go to the ashrama of the guru and gets training. Then when he's an adult he'll have a solid spiritual background.

The Vedic scriptures state that human life is not meant for working hard like the animals, just to satisfy the senses. Human life is meant for practicing austerity, by which we can escape the miseries of material existence. The Vedic scriptures emphatically state that no one should become a teacher, mother, father, or government leader unless he can free those under his charge from birth and death. So here in our Gurukula we are fulfilling our responsibility as teachers and parents: by training our Society's children in the principles of Kṛṣṇa consciousness given to us by Śrīla Prabhupāda, we're not only freeing the children from birth and death, but we're also helping them reach the ultimate goal of life—love of God.

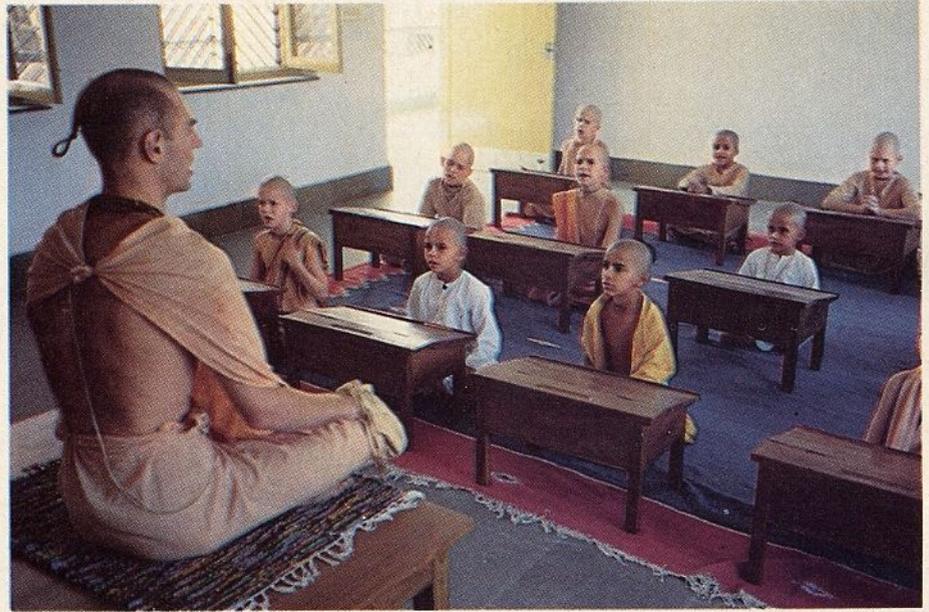
BTG: Is your moving to India a rejection of Western civilization? And if so, what is superior in Indian civilization?

Jagadīśa dāsa: As in all of ISKCON, ours is a rejection not of Western civilization but of materialistic civilization. We are certainly not opting in favor of modern Indian culture. We aren't interested in any materialistic culture—Western or Eastern. We live according to the Vedic scriptures, which recommend simple living and high thinking.

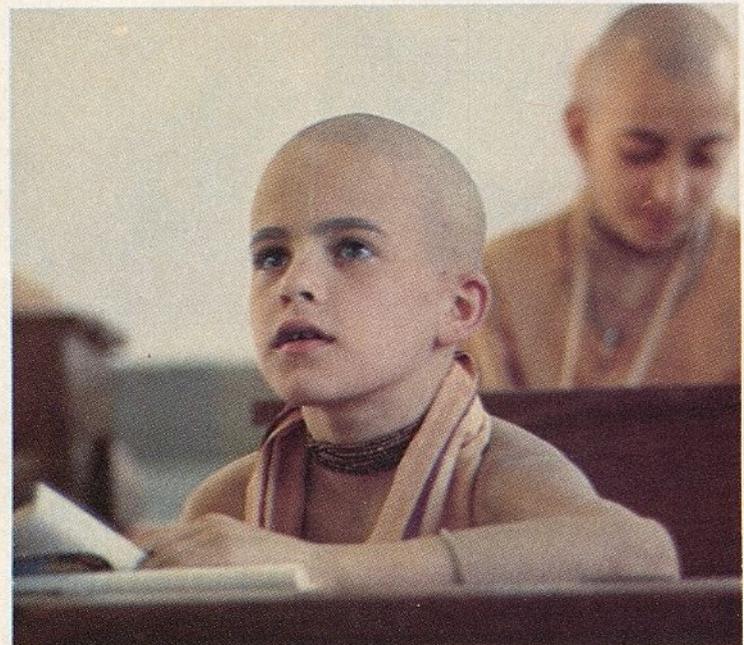
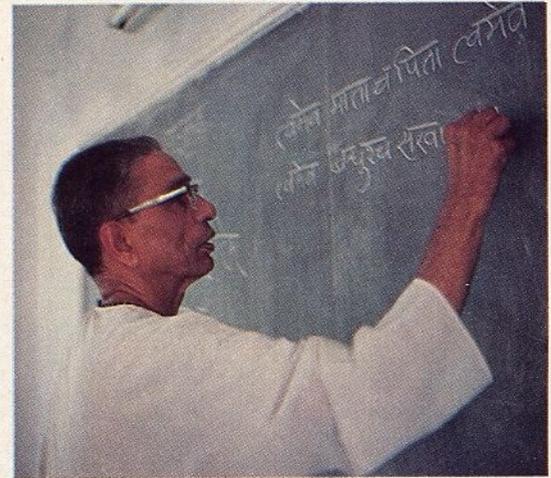
Of course, India is the home of the ancient Vedic culture, which is founded on spiritual values. Although that heritage has been abandoned now (chiefly because of the British influence), India is still the best place in the world for spiritual life. Here in Vṛndāvana no one will complain that we are chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa or wearing traditional garb.

BTG: Since India is the home of your culture, will the children stay here after growing up?

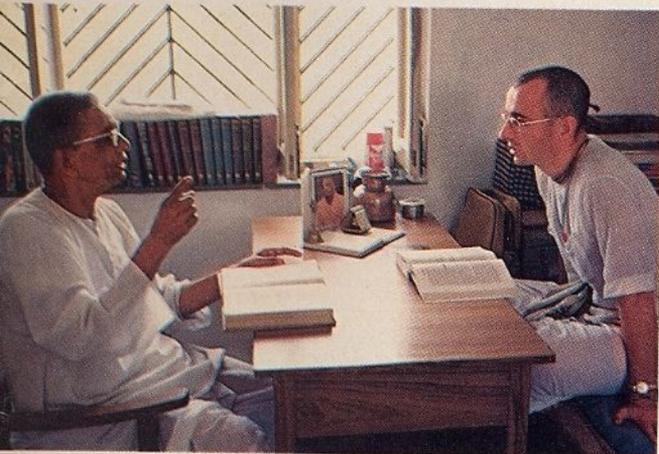
Jagadīśa dāsa: Not necessarily. The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is also known as the *saṅkīrtana* movement, which means that our mission is to spread the chanting of the holy name of Kṛṣṇa to every town and village in the



Above: headmaster Yaśodānanda Swami spends most of his time—both in class and out—guiding the boys. Here he's helping some ten-year-olds learn Sanskrit, so that they can dive deep into the ancient Vedas, "the eternal wisdom."
Right: Dr. Sharma, the principal, has a Ph.D. in Sanskrit and a reverence for gurukula, "the school of the spiritual master."



Bright-eyed Dhīroddhatta dāsa says he and his parents came to the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement when he was three. He was one of the Gurukula's first students.



Above: the new school building (adjoining the International Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma Temple) has classrooms and quarters for up to five hundred students. Left: Minister of Education Jagadīśa dāsa and Dr. Sharma the principal work together to train the boys in the spiritual vision that will make them real leaders.

world. This is the order of Lord Caitanya, an incarnation of Kṛṣṇa who appeared five hundred years ago in Bengal, and our spiritual master Śrīla Prabhupāda is part of the disciplic succession of pure devotees coming from Him. Lord Caitanya introduced the congregational chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra, and He ordered His followers to chant it publicly to give everyone a chance to come to God consciousness. So our missionary work—especially the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa and the distribution of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books—must go on in both the Western and Eastern countries. But as far as educating our children goes, we are doing that wherever we find it

most safe. After the children are trained, they can join in the missionary work.

BTG: How did you get this new place?

Jagadīśa dāsa: The land was donated by a good friend, Bishangar Dayal, who wanted to see a *gurukula* in Vṛndāvana. And the construction was funded by our Society and private donations. We now have facilities for five hundred students. We also have a qualified staff, headed by our principal Dr. Onkar Sharma, who is very experienced in education. All our teachers have teaching certificates and several years of practical experience.

Next, I interviewed Dr. Onkar Sharma, the principal of the Gurukula.

BTG: Dr. Sharma, you’d had a lot of experience in the educational field, both in America and in India, before you began teaching at our Gurukula here in Vṛndāvana. Can you tell us how you came to be associated with ISKCON?

Dr. Sharma: In 1973 I retired and came to Vṛndāvana to stay. One day I saw some very handsome devotees from the West chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa in the market. I was much impressed. Then I visited the devotees and one brought me to see the foundation for the present Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma temple and Gurukula school.

At that time I had plans to build my own ashrama. So I left Vṛndāvana and started an ashrama in Hardwar [a holy city at the foot of the Himalayas]. But I wasn’t satisfied with the atmosphere there—it was not very spiritual. So, in 1975 I returned to Vṛndāvana. It was in April of that year that I saw the opening of the Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma temple.

After the ceremony I requested to see Śrīla Prabhupāda, and I was brought into his presence. We talked for some time, and when he heard that I had been a principal for many years, he asked me what my thinking was on *gurukula*. I said, “A *gurukula* should be run on the old pattern, not the modern one. It should be based on the original Indian model.”

As I spoke with him, Śrīla Prabhupāda

listened to me very calmly and quietly. He was very pleased at my description of the old educational system. Then he asked me, "Why don't you become the principal of our Vṛndāvana Gurukula? You be the principal," he said, "I'll give you full charge." He also gave me a personal copy of his *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*.

BTG: How does an old-style *gurukula* education differ from a Western one?

Dr. Sharma: The main purpose of a *gurukula* is not, as in your colleges in the West, to obtain a degree and employment. The goal is more religious. Actually, a boy is allowed to stay in school up to his twenty-fifth year, studying the *Vedas* and *Upaniṣads*. In this way he becomes a first-class Vaiṣṇava [devotee of Kṛṣṇa].

BTG: How does this Vṛndāvana Gurukula compare with other *gurukulas* in India?

Dr. Sharma: This is the most authentic *gurukula* because it is the most Vaiṣṇava. It emphasizes Vaiṣṇava programs, and it devotes more than six hours a day to religious studies.

BTG: How are the Western boys adjusting to this old-style *gurukula*?

Dr. Sharma: Oh, they have adjusted nicely. They are happy. They are always inquiring. They are fully adjusted—to the Indian climate, to the customs of the local people, to everything.

Finally, I had a talk with Rūpa Vilāsa dāsa, who holds a masters degree in education from the University of Florida. He has been with the Gurukula since it began in America, and his experience is particularly valuable, since it includes living with the boys in their dormitory and guiding

them both in their classroom activities and in every aspect of their daily lives, including cleaning duties, recreation, worship, and meditation.

BTG: Rūpa Vilāsa, how do you feel the Gurukula here in Vṛndāvana compares to the way it was when it was in the West?

Rūpa Vilāsa: It's much nicer here. Here in Vṛndāvana Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the rule—there is no opposition—while in the West the whole culture is opposed to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Western culture is sinful—the people engage in animal slaughter, intoxication, and other such degrading activities. Of course, India has fallen far from her original Vedic standard, but there is still a favorable atmosphere here.

I'll give you an example. In the West, when we went out on a walk we ran the risk of being spit at and jeered. But here in Vṛndāvana, when we go out on our daily excursion all the people encourage us. Everyone is favorable. There is nothing odd in having a shaved head here. In fact, many of the people look just like us. In India, and especially in Vṛndāvana, our Vaiṣṇava style of living is still accepted as the purest way of life.

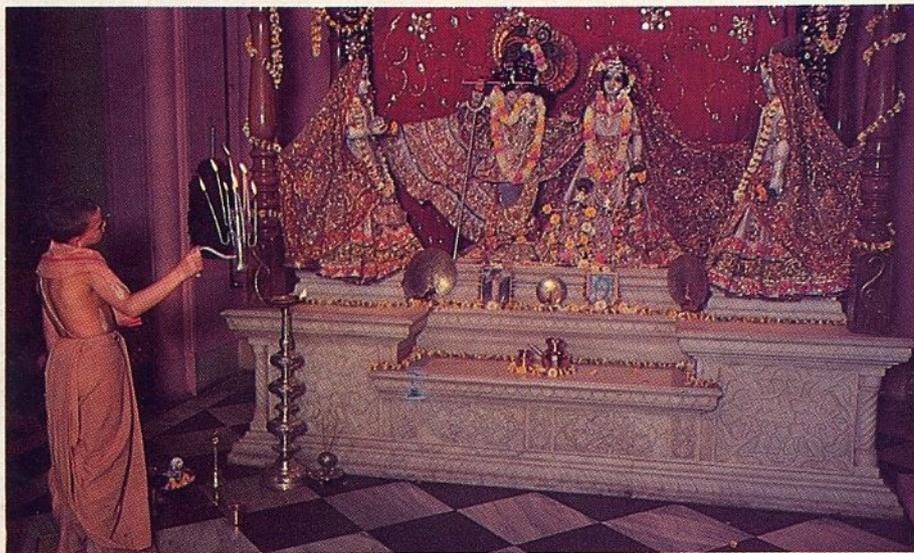
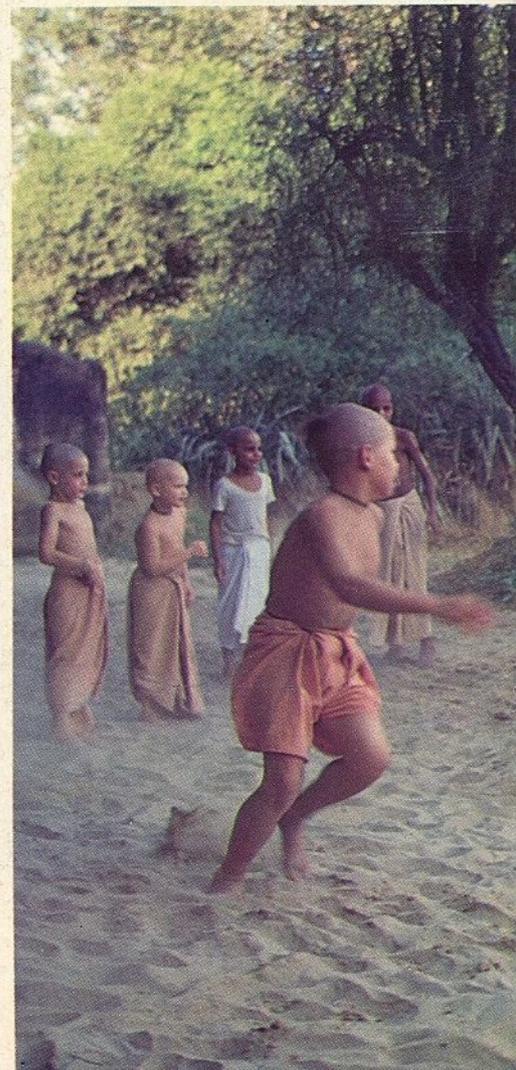
BTG: What change do you see in the boys that came with you from the West?

Rūpa Vilāsa: Well, they're more satisfied and peaceful, and their lives are simpler. For example, in America we used the laundromat, but here the boys wash their own clothes. This simple responsibility helps build their character.

Their health is better, too. For most illnesses they simply fast one or two days and drink water—and they get well. But

in the West I was always taking them to the hospital or giving them medicine.

But the main improvement I see is spiritual. The boys have become spiritually strong. If something goes wrong, they don't take it as an emergency. They're more enthusiastic to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. That's because in Vṛndāvana everyone is chanting. Here we may have fewer



Above right: the ideal classroom—Vṛndāvana forest, where Lord Kṛṣṇa enjoyed many pastimes. Here the boys can sense life's real goal, love of Kṛṣṇa. Above: the boys learn to act as spiritual leaders. Ekendra dāsa is worshipping the Deities in the temple.

material conveniences, but on the whole the boys are more peaceful without the hectic atmosphere they had in the West. In the West you have so many distractions, but here it's easier for the boys to be peaceful and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa.

BTG: Can you tell me something about why Vṛndāvana is such a special land for devotees?

Rūpa Vilāsa: Yes. Vṛndāvana is the land where Lord Kṛṣṇa displayed His most attractive pastimes. Most of our boys have been hearing about Kṛṣṇa since they

were three or four years old. So now that they've come to Vṛndāvana, they can see the very things they've heard about from the scriptures: the Yamunā River, the groves, the cows and peacocks. In fact, for a devotee, Kṛṣṇa and the spiritual world actually become manifest here in Vṛndāvana. So it's not surprising that all the boys have become much more attached to Vṛndāvana than they were to their old home. The scriptures confirm that anyone who becomes attracted to the beauty of Vṛndāvana loses all in-

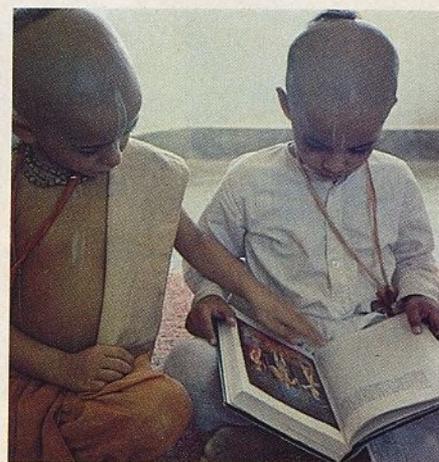
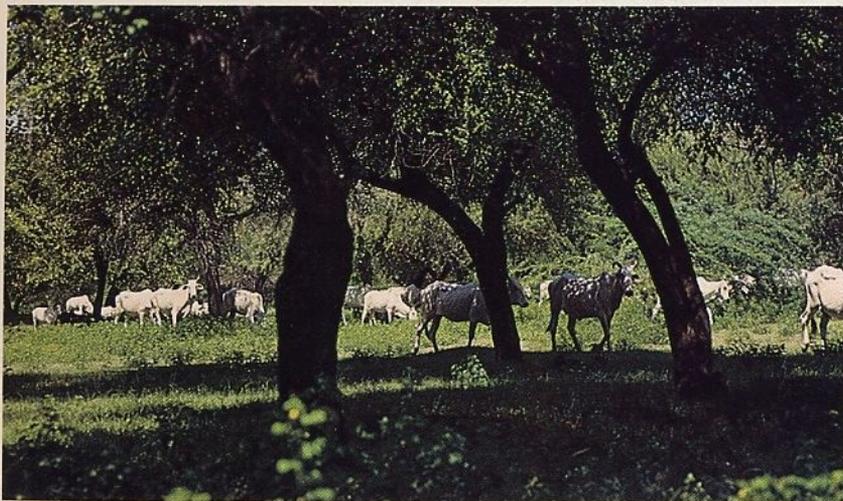
terest in ordinary landscapes within the material world.

BTG: People in the West sometimes object to our sending our children here to an exclusive training center. These critics claim that we want to make the children just like us—and that we neglect to put them in touch with reality.

Rūpa Vilāsa: Actually, the children are more in touch with reality here than in the West. Take death, for example; that's certainly a reality. Several times the boys have seen dead bodies taken on procession and cremated. When I ask them to explain what they're seeing, they say, "The body is being burned because the eternal soul is no longer there. The soul is the real person, and he has already gone back to Godhead."

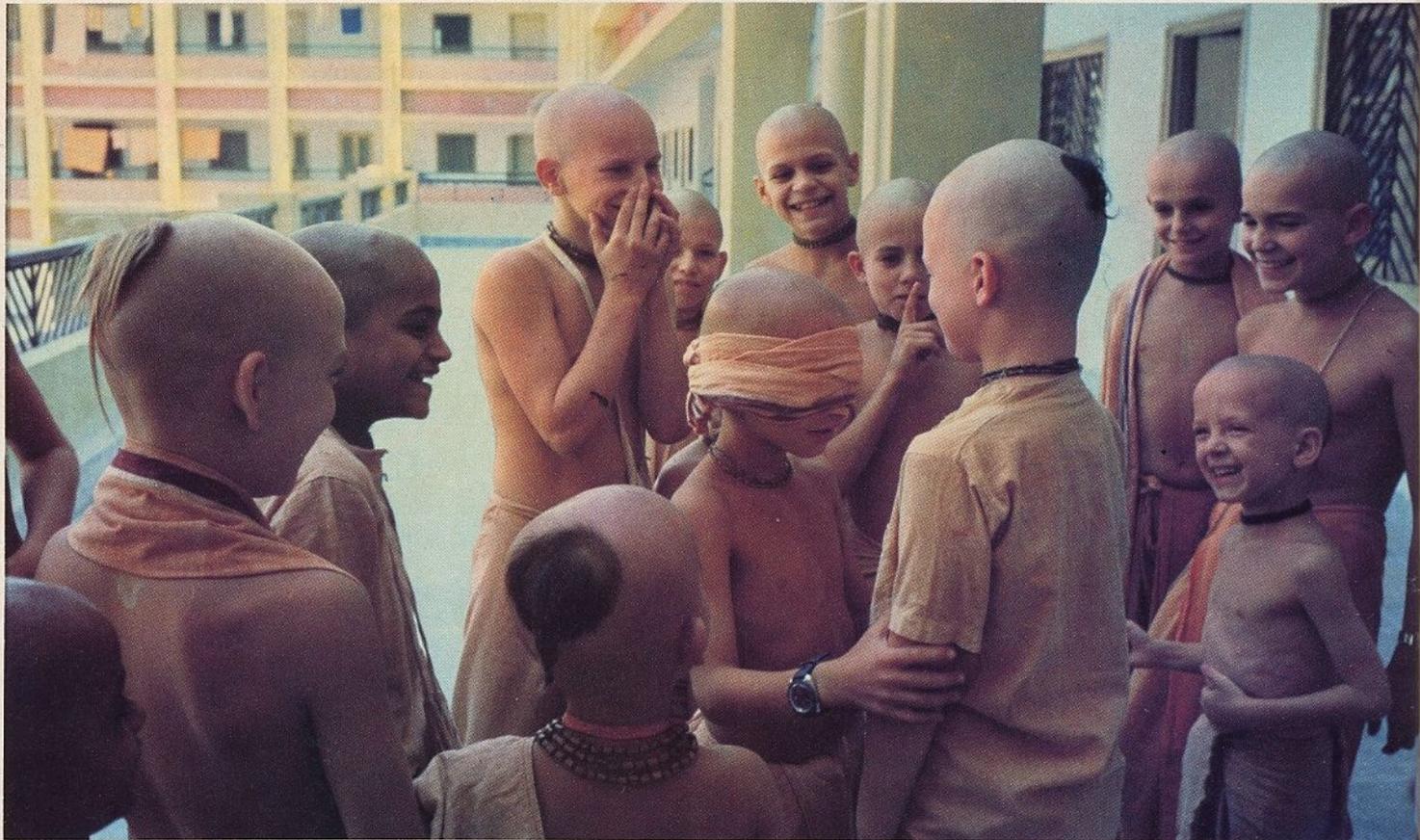
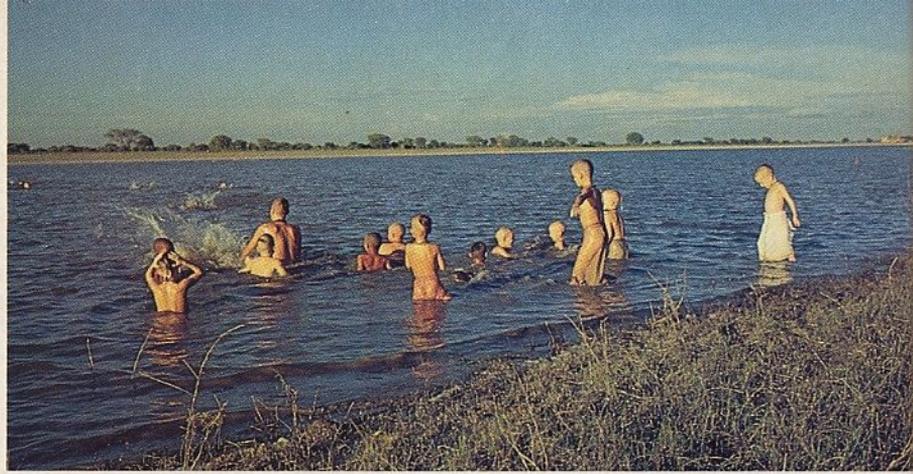
I can give you another example. Śrīla Prabhupāda often compares particularly lusty people to stool-eating hogs. Here in Vṛndāvana the boys see stool-eating hogs daily, and the boys understand that they are the epitome of degradation. They understand that within that abominable hog body is a spirit soul who thinks he is enjoying the most, while in reality he is suffering the most. So they see the pitfalls of materialistic life.

Another example Śrīla Prabhupāda gives is the ass loaded down with huge bundles by the washerman. He works hard all day so that in the evening his master will feed him some grass. He can't see that he doesn't have to work for his master and that there is an



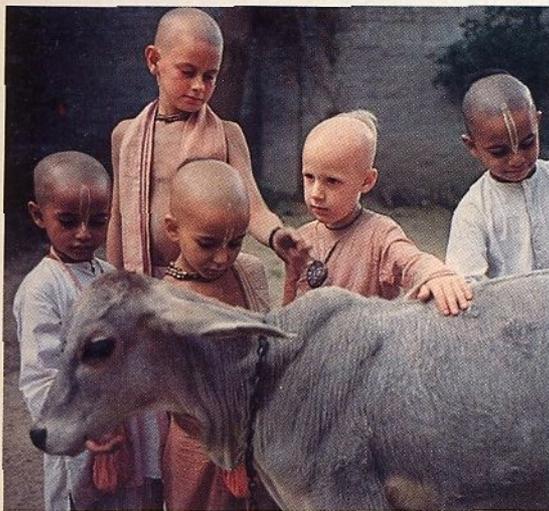
Left: the boys like playing transcendental tag—as long as you keep chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, nobody can touch you. **Above left:** cows seem to love living in Vṛndāvana, because Lord Kṛṣṇa and the local Kṛṣṇa-conscious leaders have always protected them. **Above:** from the Vedic literatures the boys learn how to spread the peaceful, Kṛṣṇa-conscious Vṛndāvana atmosphere over the whole world.

Right: "Cleanliness is next to Godliness." Lord Kṛṣṇa used to play in the River Yamunā, so when the boys take their daily swim here they find it marvelously cleansing, for both body and soul. And just as Kṛṣṇa once sported in the Yamunā's waters, the boys like to horse around and wrestle. Far right: en route they carry sticks, so that hogs, dogs, and monkeys will keep their distance.



Above: here, on the second-floor veranda of the new building, the boys play blind man's bluff. It brings to mind what the Vedic literatures say: "In this age the so-called leaders are blind to God-realization, life's real goal." Right: on your way to take a dip in the Yamunā, you can walk barefoot through the soft, beachlike sands of the lush Vṛndāvana forest. At 4 P.M. or so, you're likely to meet the cows coming home. A simple life for the spiritually-minded.





Left: the boys look on the cow as their mother—her milk gives them the intelligence they'll need to become brāhmaṇas, spiritual leaders. And in a world rife with cow slaughter and spiritual ignorance, they await the day when everyone bows to Kṛṣṇa, the protector of the cows and brāhmaṇas and the real leader of us all.

endless supply of grass growing all along the roadside. That's the way it is with people who don't know that their real master is Kṛṣṇa: they work hard day and night for material necessities—just like the ass. So it seems to me that if anyone says these Gurukula boys are not in touch with reality, *that* is a fantasy.

BTG: You and Jagadīśa both mentioned austerity. Could it be fairly said that there's too much austerity here in India—that by coming to India you've overdone it in your attempt to impose austerity upon the children?

Rūpa Vilāsa: No. We don't force the boys to undergo harsh austerities. Of course, by the artificial Western standards their lives do seem simple and austere, but the boys are all very healthy and happy.

Actually, the building here is nicer than the one in the West; it's a new three-storey complex with spacious living quarters. We have modern showers and toilets. And the *prasāda* [vegetarian food offered to Lord Kṛṣṇa] is excellent.

BTG: What about general cleanliness

and personal hygiene?

Rūpa Vilāsa: We do our own cleaning; that's a brahminical quality. Śrīla Prabhupāda said that the boys should clean their own clothes and eating utensils. "Cleanliness is next to Godliness."

Here the boys are more physically active than they were in the West, and they get sick less. They swim and wrestle every day. They're just happier. In the West we used to go to a nearby lake, and we'd see people floating in life rafts and drinking beer. Sometimes someone would speed by in a motorboat and shout at us or throw something. But here I take the boys to the Yamunā River every day. And what do they see? They may see some old lady chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa on her beads, or they may see a ricksha driver. But in Vṛndāvana even a ricksha driver is more pious than some big Western aristocrat.

BTG: What about the children's relationships with their parents? Are they completely cut off here in India?

Rūpa Vilāsa: No. They often get packages from their parents. They like to get

letters and hear what's going on in the West. But they're not preoccupied with their families. They have a full life and a full schedule here, though they're very glad to see their parents when they come.

A Leader To Look Up To

The boys have a day-to-day guide and friend in headmaster Yaśodānandana Swami. In his extensive travels throughout India, Yaśodānandana has addressed large gatherings and talked with local scholars on the science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. And though an American, Yaśodānandana has won wide respect for his erudition and strict spiritual discipline. As the title "Swami" signifies, he is one of a select number of disciples to whom Śrīla Prabhupāda has given *sannyāsa*, the highest order of spiritual life—awarded for scholarship and purity. In other words, Yaśodānandana Swami teaches both by what he says and by what he does.

Although a *sannyāsī* usually spends his time traveling and preaching, Śrīla Prabhupāda specifically asked Yaśodānandana Swami to live with the Gurukula boys and tutor them. This way they benefit from both his academic instruction and his personal example. So while their counterparts in the West are idolizing some sports hero, rock star, or local gang leader, the Gurukula boys look up to Yaśodānandana and hope to be like him some day.

A *sannyāsī* stays free of family life just to devote all his energy to preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness to the larger family of mankind. Yaśodānandana Swami hopes that in this respect some of the boys will follow his lead. But thanks to the spiritual background they gain at the Gurukula, even the students who marry will go on learning and speaking about the science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Yaśodānandana Swami says that one of the most important qualifications of a spiritual leader is conviction, and that the Vṛndāvana Gurukula is the best place in the world to develop it. "In India it's very easy for these children to become convinced that Kṛṣṇa consciousness is genuine. In the West, where Kṛṣṇa consciousness seems to be something new, this conviction doesn't come so easily. But here in India, where the roots of Kṛṣṇa-conscious culture go back thousands of years—and especially here in Vṛndāvana, where everyone is practicing (to some extent) the devotional principles—this conviction becomes strong. With this strong conviction these children will make solid spiritual leaders and benefit all humanity."

The Royal Road to Kṛṣṇa

From the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, translation and commentary by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. (Adapted by Drutakarma dāsa.)

“It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.” Yet even a king—the richest man—can enter into God’s kingdom if he knows the science. . . .

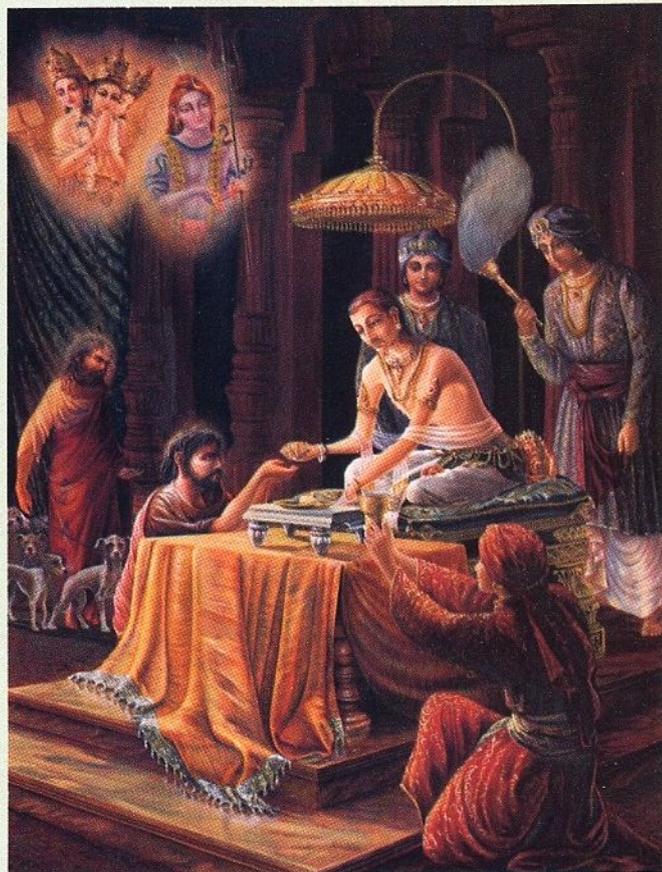
The Generosity of King Rantideva

For himself, King Rantideva was always satisfied and depended completely on the Lord’s providence. At the same time, when guests came to his palace the generous king would personally look after their every comfort, as if it all depended not on providence but on him. Once King Rantideva fasted for forty-eight days, but he never complained or made any attempt to get food. On the morning of the forty-ninth day, he received a sizeable quantity of well-prepared food. But just as he was about to take his meal, a learned *brāhmaṇa* priest arrived as a guest.

King Rantideva was very advanced in spiritual knowledge, so he could see that the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa dwells in the heart of every living being. As a result, he received his guest with faith and respect and gave him a share of the food. The *brāhmaṇa* ate to his satisfaction and went away.

Now King Rantideva again prepared to break his long fast, but just as he was about to take his first bite, a low-class laborer entered the palace. King Rantideva could also see Kṛṣṇa dwelling in the heart of this *sūdra*, so he gave him a portion of the food as well.

After the *sūdra* had gone away, a bearded and bedraggled man surrounded by a pack of dogs arrived before King Rantideva. “O King,” he said, “my company of



Though he was nearly dead from hunger and thirst, King Rantideva shared his food and drink with beggars.

dogs and I are very hungry. Please give us something to eat.” With great respect King Rantideva gave what was left of his food to the dogs and their master.

Now only some drinking water remained, and there was only enough for one person. When the king was just about to drink it, a *caṇḍāla* (a dog-eater, the lowest of men) appeared before him and said, “O King, although I am lowborn, kindly give me some drinking water.”

Touched by these pitiable words, the good-hearted King Rantideva said, “By offering water to maintain the life of this poor *caṇḍāla*, I shall not be the loser—by this act of charity I shall free myself from all hunger, thirst, fatigue, and illusion.

“I do not pray to the Supreme Personality of Godhead Kṛṣṇa for the powers of mystic yoga, nor for salvation from repeated birth and death in the material world. I want only to stay on this earth among all the living creatures and suffer all their pains for them. In that way they may be freed from all distress.”

The ravages of hunger and thirst had brought King Rantideva to the verge of death, and yet he gladly gave even his last drop of water to the wretched *caṇḍāla*. Just then Lord Brahmā, Lord Śiva, and other great demigods appeared before the king and revealed that it was they who had presented themselves as the *brāhmaṇa*, the

śūdra, the *caṇḍāla*, and the man with the dogs.

The demigods were very pleased with King Rantideva and wanted to bestow great wealth and opulence upon him. But the king had no desire to enjoy such things. He simply wanted to keep his mind focused on the lotus feet of Lord Kṛṣṇa and render devotional service unto Him. Rantideva knew that Kṛṣṇa is the eternal master of all the demigods and that the demigods' gifts are temporary—they pass away with the passing of time. A pure devotee, King Rantideva cared only about his eternal loving relationship with the Supreme Lord.

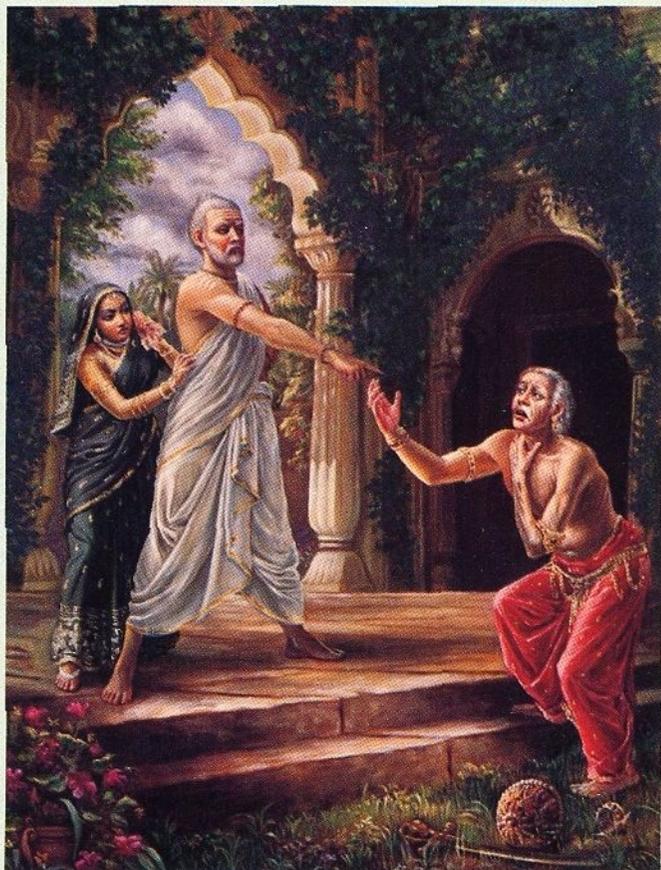
King Yayāti Regains His Youth

King Yayāti was much inclined to sex and once had a child by his wife's maidservant. His wife, Devayānī, was frenzied with anger and returned to the house of her father, Śukrācārya. Śukrācārya possessed great mystic powers, and when he saw Yayāti tagging along pathetically after Devayānī, he cursed him to immediately become an old man. But he also gave the king a way out. "You may get back your youth," said Śukrācārya, "if you find someone who will agree to take your old age and transfer his youth to you."

King Yayāti wanted desperately to regain his youth, so that he could enjoy many more years of sex indulgence with young women. So he went to his eldest son Yadu and asked him to make the trade of youth for old age. But Yadu replied, "I do not welcome your old age and invalidity now, father, for unless I properly fulfill my material desires in my youth, I will not be ready to devote myself fully to spiritual life in later years." King Yayāti similarly requested his sons Turvasu, Druhyu, and Anu to exchange their youth for his old age, but their response was not as admirable as Yadu's. They refused to carry out their father's order because they thought their fleeting youth was eternal. King Yayāti then approached Pūru, his youngest son.

Pūru replied, "O your majesty, who in this world can repay his debt to his father? By the mercy of one's father one gets this human body instead of an animal body. Thus one gets the chance to become a devotee of Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Lord." Pūru was more than pleased to accept his father's old age. So King Yayāti took his son's youth and began to enjoy life once again. He became emperor of the entire world and enjoyed as much material happiness as he desired. Especially, he enjoyed the company of his young and beautiful wife, Devayānī.

For some years King Yayāti enjoyed himself in this way, but somehow he never felt satisfied. Finally, he became completely disgusted with sex life and everything connected with it—power, prestige, wealth, and so forth. One day he told Devayānī, "O my dear wife with



Because lusty King Yayāti had been unfaithful to his wife, her father cursed the king with old age and invalidity.

beautiful eyebrows—I am so poor in intelligence that I am no better than a lusty goat. I was bewildered by your beauty and forgot my real task of realizing my eternal spiritual identity. I never succeeded in satisfying my lusty desires, no matter how much so-called enjoyment I had. Pouring butter on a fire does not put the fire out—it blazes higher and higher. Sexual desires are difficult to give up, but I must and will learn to give them up. Henceforward I shall not even sit in the same room with my mother, sister, or daughter. Sex desire is so relentless that even the greatest sages become disturbed by the slightest sexual stimulus. For years I have tried in vain to satisfy my desires, but now I shall give them all up. I will go alone to the forest and meditate upon the lotus feet of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Kṛṣṇa."

Having given up all his lusty material desires (and having inspired Devayānī to give hers up, also), King Yayāti called for his son Pūru, returned Pūru's youth, and took back his own old age. Then, although Pūru was younger than all his brothers, Yayāti enthroned him as emperor of the world. The king and his wife Devayānī had enjoyed sense pleasure to the fullest extent, but now they gave it all up in an instant. At last, Yayāti and Devayānī became great devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa. 🙏

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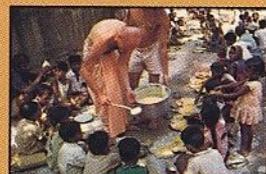
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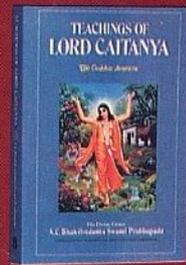
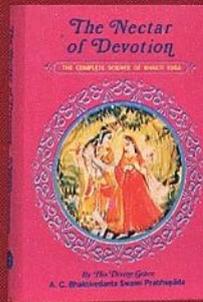
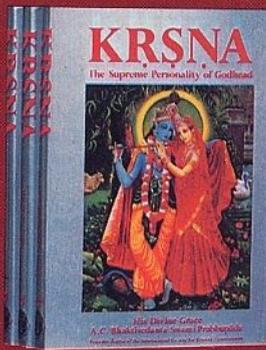
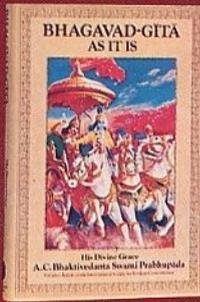
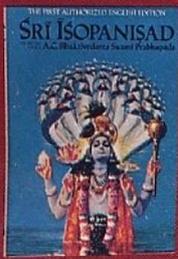
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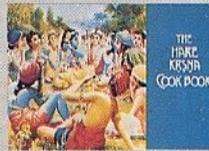
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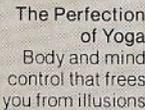
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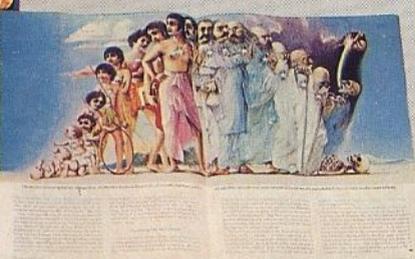
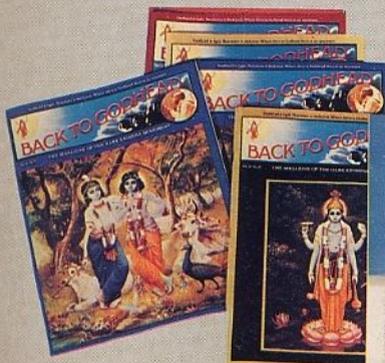


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