

BACK TO GODHEAD



INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS, INC.

H I S D I V I N E G R A C E



S W A M I A . C . B H A K T I V E D A N T A
FOUNDER ACHARYA
INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS INC.

This is the second issue of Back To Godhead, a publication devoted to promulgating bhaktiyoga, the science of God as expounded by Lord Sri Krishna in the Bhagavad-Gita. The International Society For Krishna Consciousness was incorporated in July, 1966. Over a short four months the Society has expanded sufficiently to warrant larger quarters than the small Second Avenue storefront temple. Therefore the Society is presently negotiating for the Temple Emanu-El building on Sixth Street (between First and Second Avenues). This building could provide living quarters for some 75 full time devotees, and would give the Society an auditorium for larger mass kirtan (singing and chanting) as well as provide space for other activities. To raise funds for the building and to acquaint more people with the kirtan movement and the philosophy of the Gita, the Society will hold kirtan at the Gate Theater, 162 Second Avenue (between 10th and 11th Streets) on the next three Sundays, November 13th, 20th, and 27th, and a kirtan and talk by Swami Bhaktivedanta at Judson Hall, 165 W. 57th Street (between Sixth and Seventh Avenues) November 15th at 8 p.m. The Gate Theater performances will be benefit performances for the new building, but admission is free for the Judson Hall concert. Many downtown New Yorkers have become acquainted with "kirtan" recently through the Tomkins Square Park meetings over the past four Sundays. Since the weather will not permit outdoor kirtan, we hope to be able to offer this program in a new building that will enable more people to participate, without being crowded into a small storefront.

Even more New Yorkers became acquainted with the "Hare Krishna" chant recently at the November 5th Peace Parade from Tomkins and Washington Squares up to Times Square. The New York Times approximated that some 10,000 parade participants were protesting the Vietnam war, though the number looked closer to 30,000. Poet Allen Ginsberg, a friend of this Society, led the "Hare Krishna" mantra during the three hour jaunt, and many in the parade took up the chant. The scene might have duplicated Lord Chaitanya's march some five hundred years ago when the Lord led thousands of people chanting "Hare Krishna" to the local magistrate's building because the magistrate forbade chanting the praises of Lord Krishna in the streets. Poet Ginsberg, wearing white Gandhi pyjamas and a stars and stripes top hat, sang the "Hare Krishna" chant to harmonium accompaniment at Times Square, and said that "Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare, Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare" was "a magic formula chant to the gods of preservation that calms peoples' hearts." We also feel that when mankind sings the transcendental praises of the Supreme Lord instead of the praises of nationalism and materialism, he will not only have "peace on earth" but will have peace in his heart and soul.

---The Editors

FROM THE LECTURES OF SWAMI A. C. BHAKTIVEDANTA

Notes transcribed by Woomapati Das Brahmachary (Wallace Sheffey)
From lectures given Sept. 13th and 20th, 1966.

We all begin our pursuit of the goal of life from a position of ignorance. Now, an ignorant person does not know of the science of God, but if he at least wants to hear of it, this is good. In fact, the Vedic literature is known as "Sruti," which means to learn by hearing. Spiritual science does not require a high education, nor a high intellect. Simply by hearing we can pass over the ocean of birth and death. Scriptures are intended to help us in the passage beyond death. The basic principle of spiritual education is that the soul is eternal, but it is constantly changing its bodily dress. Most people don't realize that they are eternal. The atheists say that if we want to be happy we should get money so that we can have more food and material pleasures. However, in spite of all our material comforts and scientific advancements, we have not been able to stop the miseries of birth, death, old age, and disease. It is these four painful, conditional states that prevent our having any real happiness. Only self realization can put an end to this suffering. How is this done?

There could not be a material world without God. God is the origin of all creation. Cars and buses do not move themselves; there must be a driver. Similarly, the body does not move without the soul. Living beings, as we find them here, are a combination of matter and spirit. Matter cannot develop into a living being without the presence of spirit soul. The mother and father cannot produce a baby unless the spirit soul

first enters into the womb to develop into the body of the baby. When cars, trucks, buses, people, animals, insects, or anything else moves, there is a combination of matter and spirit soul in operation. If these objects cannot move without the presence of the spirit soul, how can the universe move without the presence of the Super Soul, or God?

No material object moves by itself. Space satellites move with the help of the people on the ground. Machines need men at the controls. Without exception, whatever exists-- moving or non-moving-- is a combination of matter and soul.

Matter is characterized as impermanent, by nature mutable. Soul, our true identity, is eternal. We should not cling to what is temporary. Even the universe will pass away. We should persist in Krishna consciousness which will bring us to our eternal status and we should tell others about it so that they too can be freed. If they do not listen, still we should do our best. If we have done our best, it does not make any difference whether or not we have followers. Not everyone is ready for the perfection of human life. If we preach to animals, for example, they will not understand, because they are not ready. It is the same with people who do not listen. Lord Jesus Christ said, "Cast not your pearls before swine."

Our eternal lives should be devoted to that which is eternal. When everything else is gone, the Supreme Lord will still exist. Krishna says, "I existed before creation, and after the end of creation I will exist." The body vanishes when it dies, but the soul does not. When a baby grows, the baby eventually vanishes and a child appears in its place. The mother is not

disturbed about the disappearance of her baby. The child eventually disappears, and an adult appears in its place. Death and rebirth is a process similar to this.

God is present everywhere. However, this does not mean that love of God is an impersonal love. Love requires a person for an object and cannot exist without a beloved. When we love God, He is always present. We can see God everywhere, if we love Him. Spiritual development is the development of the love of God. It is a process of give and take, like courtship. Love of God develops like love between man and woman. We begin by giving everything to God. We should be willing to give everything to God, because everything is already His. Even our bodies and senses belong to God. He gave us senses because we wanted to enjoy sense gratification. If we give everything to Krishna, Krishna will give Himself to us. When we have Krishna, we do not want anything else.

We say, "My body," or, "my senses" because they are given to us to use, but we should know that they really belong to Krishna, and we should use them for His purposes. The fragmented consciousness should dovetail itself with the whole. Our body lives on food which is supplied by God, so why should we use it for purposes other than His? All our purposes should be spiritual, because spirit is the basis of all that is and seems to be. There is spirit in anything that grows, even mountains and stones. It is even confirmed by science that the universe is growing, so the universe must have spirit. A dead plant or animal no longer has the spiritual spark, so it does not grow. A child is supposed to grow, but a dead child, a

child without the spiritual spark, does not grow. We living beings are by constitution spiritual. Our very consciousness is the symptom of this. Krishna is the Supreme Spirit, and as such He is the natural and true abode. The real objective of all the strivings of consciousness is the Supreme Lord.

When the scriptures say that Krishna is formless, they mean that He has spiritual form, and that He is also present everywhere. The sun can be used as an example: although there is only one sun, and nobody will deny that it has form, it is still seen and felt in many places at the same time.

When it is said that Krishna does not have senses, it means that He does not have imperfect senses like ours. The difference between Krishna and the living entities is that Krishna is great, and the living entities are subordinate. We are like small grains of gold dust, while Krishna is a gigantic piece of gold. When Krishna indulges in sense pleasure, it is to please His devotees. Krishna Himself has no need of sense gratification. Krishna has no desire to exploit His devotees. He will kindly allow a devotee to be His servant for the sake of granting the devotee his wish to serve. Krishna indulges in sense pleasures in order to return His devotees' love. Of course, in His boundlessness, He always returns more than the devotee can give.

When the scriptures say that Krishna is beyond words, it means that He is infinite. It does not mean that He has no senses or speech. Krishna has all the qualities that we have, but His qualities are spiritual and pure and quite beyond measure. Our qualities are also spiritual, but they are covered

by material nature, and they are, therefore, evidently limited.

Although Krishna's planet is farther away than man can measure, He is also here, on this planet. He is always with His pure devotees. When we chant His name, He is on our tongues. Krishna is inside and outside everything. People say that Krishna cannot be born in a physical body. Why can't He? If He can manifest Himself everywhere, why can't He manifest Himself in a human womb and take birth like an ordinary child?

Krishna is simultaneously one and many. He is undivided but He appears to be divided. Those bound to material concepts say that when something is divided it cannot remain whole. They do not realize that Krishna is above the laws of material nature. In the spiritual realm it can be said that one minus one equals one. No matter how much you take from Krishna, He is always complete and perfect. That is His nature, as He Himself has revealed it to us.

SRIMAD BHAGAVATAM

by Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasadeva

The original and genuine commentary on Vedanta philosophy by the author of Vedanta himself, Vyasadeva, now available for the first time in English with authorised explanation by Swami A. C. Bhaktivedanta.

The Srimad Bhagavatam is the post graduate study of the Gita, or the science of Krishna. This book of transcendental knowledge contains information of classical Hindu culture, philosophy, sociology, economics, politics, aesthetics and Divine love. Swami Bhaktivedanta's edition contains Sanscrit, Sanscrit transliteration, English equivalents, translation and elaborate commentaries. Published by the League of Devotees, New Delhi, 1962-65. Price: \$16.80 for 3 volumes (1200 pages). Postage paid by the Society. Available from The International Society For Krishna Consciousness, 26 Second Avenue, New York, N. Y.

KRISHNA: THE DIVINE LOVER

by Hayagriva Das Brahmachary
(Howard Wheeler)

Being your slave, what should I do but tend
Upon the hours and times of your desire?
I have no precious time at all to spend,
Nor services to do, till you require.
Nor dare I chide the world-without-end hour
Whilst I, my sovereign, watch the clock for you,
Nor think the bitterness of absence sour
When you have bid your servant once adieu.
Nor dare I question with my jealous thought
Where you may be, or your affairs suppose,
But, like a sad slave, stay and think of nought
Save where you are how happy you make those.
So true a fool is love that in your will,
Though you do anything, he thinks no ill.

(Shakespeare, Sonnet 57)

Krishna is the Divine Lover in the Bhagavad-Gita. This means little to most men today, but when we realize that the entire creation is the Bhagavad-Gita, then we can see that this applies to us. Krishna is our Lover. We are His creation, and He is the Lover of the creation. Like the clever Lover that He is, He hides Himself from us at times so we may long for Him and call to Him. His love for us is actually very great, so great that we cannot begin to comprehend it. It seems to have a tinge of the diabolic in it when He hides Himself from us, but actually He does not hide Himself from us. He is before us all the time. We are simply searching for Him always, but do not recognize Him when He is before us. He is the Lover who satisfies even our smallest needs. Even

our remotest desires come from and are directed to Him. His love is really not a matter of genitals, of material love-making, though that element is present. He is even a coarse, material Lover, if this is the way we want Him. But actually ^{material from desire} this is symbolic of His real love. If His real love were totally manifest to us, we would melt in its fire. His real love is there, but we have up to now been satisfied only with its symbols, with tokens of His love, and have interpreted these on the level of love between humans. Love between humans is on a finite, timely and limited plane. But love between man and Krishna is infinitely more complex. This courtship takes place over millions and trillions of years. For ^{sp} millenniums our individual souls have been wandering throughout the universe, following desire after desire, chaotic, lost to that eternal Lover who can truly satisfy us. For so many lives we have been confined to wandering in these endless rounds of birth, old age, disease and death. All this time our real Lover has been watching and waiting for us to turn to Him. Before the beginning of this particular creation He has been watching our progress, our purification, waiting until we finally face Him, until we finally put aside our play, make-believe lovers and turn to Him Whom we truly love and who can truly answer us.

Knowing Him, feeling His presence, is an excitement far greater than any teenager's excitement on her first date with the boy she loves. Krishna is not a one-night date, nor is He only a partner for a lifetime. He is the Eternal Lover. His love is not timely, finite or limited. His love is eter-

nal, infinite, and boundless as the great ocean of space. For the soul who loves Him, He plays endless carols of joy. He plays grand symphonies. He is the Lover with the flute. He sings rock and roll songs and strums a guitar. He plays piano, cymbals, drums. His symbolical manifestations are infinite, He sends numberless messengers, but His devotee is only made impatient by them. His devotee knows that these are only symbols of the Lover, that His avatars are only indications of His courtship. He drops signs and loveletters between cracks in the pavement. He writes His messages across the stars. Or He places them in little corners and crevices for us to stumble upon. These signs only drive the devotee madder for Him.

We really long to see His face, His true, eternal, spiritual form. We want Him to take us away, to devour us, to treat us as He likes-- cruelly or friendly-- anything rather than neglect or forget us. We would rather be cast in hell and have Him conscious of us than to be put in a paradise of material enjoyments and have Him forget us. For we know it is only He who can satisfy. Everything else is a mockery, a taunt. But then we begin to wonder how we can ever warrant His love. When we look at our miserable ^{poor} sinful lives, we wonder how we can ever be worthy of Him. A beloved must be worthy of the Lover. Our only hope is that our pitiable, hopeless condition makes us more lovable to Him. Our only refuge is in totally surrendering to Him, whether He wants us or not. One who loves someone does not wait for his Lover to move. He moves first, makes the first overtures to his Lover.

50 ^{we} We must begin to make overtures to Krishna, to think of Him constantly, to pray to Him, to offer everything to Him, to deny all others but Him, to be satisfied with nothing, with no one but Him alone. We must disdain ^{all} any earthly facsimilies, all symbols. When we see beauty on this earth, any bodily beauty, we must remember that it really radiates from Him, that it is only a ~~symbol of His beauty~~, a minute fraction ^{reflection a small part} of His beauty. When we feel the slightest desire or love for anything, we must realize that this desire and love are really for Him. When we see splendor and magnificence, we must be all the more aware that these are but His footprints. ^P Many of us know what it means to be in love with another person-- the anxieties, the tremblings, the sudden heartbeats, the ^{loneliness} loneliness, the constant dwelling of the mind on the lover, the calling of the beloved's name, the hearing of the beloved in any piece of music, the seeing of the beloved in a painting, the impatience to have the beloved always near, the awful dread lest the beloved be secretly indifferent. ^{yet this takes place} All these are on a small, finite scale. All this can be felt by one person ^{for} to another. All this is felt by one fragment of illusory energy for another fragment of illusory energy. And such feelings only last comparatively short times. How much greater must these feelings, thoughts, passions be between the soul and the Divine Lover? Especially when we realize that love for others has really been love for Him-- disguised.

When we shake off the disguise, ^{that} our love stands naked and unashamed. ^{Even then} But our love is finite-- it can never compare to the love of the Divine Lover. That which He feels for us

we cannot comprehend. We can dissolve or swim or drown in His ocean of love, but we cannot comprehend it. It is limitless. We can rest or doze on His breast. It is limitless. His shoulders that lift us are mountains, His chest fields of grass and golden flowers. Resting on His Body we are carried eternally. There is no end to His glories and attributes. His glance is the creation, His voice the origin of all sound, His call our friendly awakening. How can we resist such a Lover? How unhappy we must be when He is not near, how small and miserable and incomplete, ^{and} ^{preferable} How much would we prefer death to being separated from Him. ~~But we do not really love Him.~~ That we live this miserable life on earth is testimony that we do not love Him. ^{instead of trying to be happy here, look up} But now we should prepare for Him, wait for Him ^{really} to call and take us out of this vile, loathsome, diseased bodily dwelling. ~~We must wait for Him, as He has waited so long for us.~~ ^{we too must wait for Him, and} ~~We must prepare for Him.~~ ^{and wait for Him,} We must prepare to be worthy to meet Him for whom we pine, the Lover True for whom we long, to meet Him finally, face to face.

When asked if he were a devotee of Krishna's, Lord Chaitanya said that he was a devotee in name only, that His crying for Krishna was only show for the masses, that if he were actually a devotee, he would have died long ago rather than have tolerated being separated from Krishna for even a moment. If we really love someone we don't sit in a room calling his name. We go after him, ^{and} sacrifice everything to be with him. We all know this to be true. It is in this way that the soul of man longs for Krishna. As long as we are separated from Him due to our entanglement in these physical

bodies, as long as we put wife, family, money, country, occupation before Him, we cannot have Him. Even the highest demi-gods do not long for Krishna as man can long for Krishna. The demi-gods enjoy fantastically long lives of material pleasure and, although they are subservient to Him, they do not long for Him. They have to take rebirth on earth in a human body for their final liberation into Krishna's Kingdom. But man's life is really ideal for seeking Krishna. His life is too short and too unstable to expect any real happiness on this earth. Yet he lives long enough and is sufficiently intelligent to realize all that is necessary for liberation. He ^{thus} gains liberation ^{is gained man} when he fully understands that Krishna is everything, the Fountainhead that brings into being the entire manifested universe and dissolves this universe, all within Himself. "By Me, in My unmanifested form, are all things in this universe pervaded. All beings exist in Me, but I do not exist in them." (Gita, 9/4) The man who does not enquire after Krishna is throwing away the most valuable prize in the universe, for he is actually throwing away a jewel for stones and committing suicide thereby. He foolishly tries to squeeze a brief seventy years of pleasure out of his body and says, "To hell with my eternal spiritual life, to hell with Krishna. Let me enjoy myself while I'm living here." Or, in his frustration he seeks after "void." Or he sleeps to forget everything. Such a man is not even on the level of the animal, for such a man betrays his own divine nature, whereas an animal is being true to its nature in leading its animal life. The ^{which} animal life is meant for an animal, but it is not meant for

man. Man's life is intended for enquiring after God. ^{and} Man's life is intended for ^(pursuing) the pursuit of Ultimate Knowledge, which ^{is} God. Krishna, the Personality of Godhead, is Bliss-Knowledge-Absolute. Our enquiry after these things finally leads us to Him. "At the end of many births the man of wisdom seeks refuge in Me, realizing that Vasudeva is all. Rare indeed is such a high-souled person." (Gita, 7/19) Man is intended to ask, "Whence this earth and these heavens? And these lands and seas and countries? And myself? My body? How is it formed from this earth, air, water and soil? How from the progeneration of my parents? Did I exist before my body? If so, how? And what about after death? How is the mind, the intelligence, different from the body? And how is the soul different from the body? I have heard that my soul is immortal, but what part of me is my soul? And this part of me that is my soul, is this also the Supersoul? Is this God? Or is it part of God? And if it is part of God, what then is its relation to God? And how is the soul different from the mind and ego? Does the mind die? Does the ego die? Certainly the body dies, but what about myself? What about my individuality, that which makes me different from all other beings in the universe? Does that individuality die? And what is it in me that makes me like every other living entity in the universe? And how is it that I am made in the image and likeness of God?" These are the questions that should be asked by man. They are not impossible questions without answers. They can be answered simply and lucidly. Many of the answers are explicitly given in the Bhagavad-Gita. And many

of the answers are shown to us by Krishna, for the answers cannot be given in words.

It is therefore man's duty, if he is at all interested in his happiness, to turn to Krishna for knowledge. Krishna is the great Lover and Friend of all. He refuses no soul that honestly and humbly turns to Him. "For those who take refuge in Me, O Partha, though they be of sinful birth-- women, vaisyas, and sudras-- even they attain the Supreme Goal." (Gita, 9/32) But those who do not turn to Him, He casts again and again into diabolic wombs. "These cruel haters, these evil-doers, these vilest of men, I hurl always into the wombs of the demons in the cycle of births and deaths. Having fallen into the wombs of the demons and being deluded from birth to birth, they never attain Me, O son of Kunti, but go farther down to the lowest state." (Gita, 16/19-20) Such souls suffer countless migrations in the ^{8,400,000} ~~84~~ lacs species of life. Just because man and the world do not offer the individual soul hope, it does not follow that there is no hope. Much of the desperation and unhappiness in this age, especially ^{amongst} in the youth, is due to this sense of hopelessness. Hopelessness is the dominant theme of man in the twentieth-century, ^{particularly} especially after two major wars, and now, on the brink of an atomic conflagration, man thinks, "Oh hell, let me live it up while there's still time. They might blow it all up tomorrow." This desire to "live it up" is but a shadow of the real desire-- the desire for eternal happiness and bliss. But due to material contact, this desire has become perverted. Man directs his desire for happiness to the earth and not to God.

When the subject of God arises most men think it is time for a funeral or a horrible catastrophe. The last words of the Old Testament, "Lest I come down and smite the earth with a curse" seem to echo, in most men's minds, as the last words of God. But man's conception of God as something remote and even possibly malevolent is due to man's alienation from Him. Once man sees Krishna as the Eternal Lover of the creation Who only wants to see His children happy and with Him, all these fears, resulting from a sense of severance, ^{and guilt,} vanish. *Then man will begin to long to see the* Then man will not hesitate to look at the Lord face to face and yield to the overtures He has so long been making. Krishna consciousness is the beginning of this transcendental renaissance.

Again I am alone,
 Again I sit and wait.
 Where is the heavenly muse?
 Where is my Lotus Lord tonight?

Are my senses dead
 That I do not see the Lord of Light?
 That I do not clasp His arm and rest on His sweet-scented
 breast?
 My ears are worse than deaf
 That at the sound of "Krishna"
 I do not sink away and die.

Govinda, Krishna-- awaken me, I plead.
 Cut off these ears,
 Pluck out these eyes,
 That I might hear and see indeed.

Take all I have, my brief life,
 And then I shall live in Thee.

--Kirtanananda Das Brahmachary
 (Keith Ham)

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