

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

BACK TO GODHEAD

THE MAGAZINE OF THE HARE KRISHNA MOVEMENT

No. 39





By His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

—1—

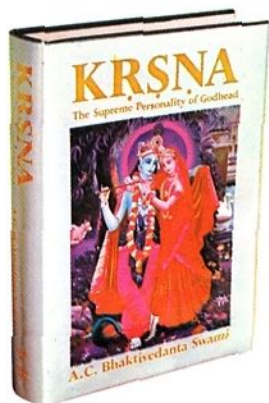
THE NECTAR OF DEVOTION

This book is especially intended for those who are engaged in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. The text is flooded with *nectarean stories, philosophy and poetic verses about Kṛṣṇa and His pure devotees*—all taken directly from the Vedic literatures. It is a summary study of *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, and it teaches us how to stimulate our original love for Kṛṣṇa so that we can enjoy our blissful life.

KṚṢṆA, The Supreme Personality of Godhead

The most comprehensive and authoritative Vedic scriptural literature is the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* ("The Beautiful Story of the Personality of Godhead"), the mature contribution of Śrīla Vyāsadeva, the compiler of the *Vedas*. Of the twelve cantos of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the Tenth Canto is considered the most confidential, since it describes all the transcendental pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. *Kṛṣṇa* is a summary study of the Tenth Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

The activities of Kṛṣṇa, which appear to be like those of an ordinary human being, can only be properly understood with the help of a bona fide spiritual master fully realized in the knowledge of their transcendental nature. His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda is such a spiritual master.



—2—

SRĪMAD-BHAGAVATAM

The *Vedas* are compared to a desire-tree because they contain all things knowable by mankind about both mundane necessities and spiritual realization. *Śrīmad-Bhagavatam* is the mature ripened fruit of this tree. It narrates the transcendental pastimes of the transcendental Personality of Godhead, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

—3—

TEACHINGS OF LORD CAITANYA

Lord Caitanya, the most munificent incarnation of Godhead, appeared 500 years ago to demonstrate by example how to live the teachings of *Bhagavad-gītā* in the present age. *Teachings of Lord Caitanya* recounts the words and deeds of this great saint. Lord Caitanya was famous as a scholar and spoke authoritatively on the highest aspects of the science of love of Godhead. He is the divine origin of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement and distributed love of God simply by singing the holy names.

—4—

ŚRĪ ISOPANISAD

From the most authoritative sources, the famed 108 Upaniṣads of India, *Śrī Isopaniṣad* supplies revealed evidence that the Personality of Godhead is the creator, maintainer and destroyer of everything that exists. The author's transparent commentaries reveal that the Supreme Lord is "unembodied" and "formless," since His form is not a material form which is subject to birth, disease, old age and death.

THE BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ AS IT IS

Now, for the first time, this renowned scripture is being brought to the West as it is—as taught by Kṛṣṇa Himself and understood by His disciple Arjuna—in a unique translation and commentary. Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead and the supreme authority on the Gītā, and He initially delivered the Gītā so that all persons could reach the perfection of life and be liberated from all suffering. His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda is passing on Kṛṣṇa’s mercy in its full potency, as it is, so that everyone can attain to his rightful position, full of bliss and knowledge.

From the Introduction: “The perplexities of life appear like a forest fire which takes place without being set by anyone. The man in material perplexities is he who does not understand the problems of life. Out of many many human beings, the Bhagavad-gītā is directed to the one who seeks to understand his position.”

EASY JOURNEY TO OTHER PLANETS

This book is an authentic discussion on the techniques and practice of the yoga system by which one can leave this body for travel to anti-material planets where life is blissful, eternal and full of knowledge.

KṚṢṆA CONSCIOUSNESS: THE TOPMOST YOGA SYSTEM

This book presents the most authorized process of yoga practice in God realization, without any deviation from the original Vedic scriptural literature. In this present volume, the author forcefully exposes the speculative systems which depart from love of God as the ultimate goal of yoga.

THE FIRST STEP IN GOD REALIZATION

This book marks the continuation of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda’s mighty task of translating all twelve cantos of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. The First Step in God Realization comprises the First Chapter of the Second Canto, in which the sage Śukadeva advises his disciple Mahārāja Parīkṣit to meditate on the universal form of God, in which the entire physical universes are seen as parts of the gigantic body of the Supreme Lord.

THE LORD IN THE HEART

The continuation of Sukadeva’s teachings: He advises his disciple to go beyond meditation on the universal form, to meditation on the transcendental form of Paramātmā, the localized representation of the Lord who resides in the hearts of all living entities.

BACK TO GODHEAD

The Magazine of the Hare Kṛṣṇa Movement

BACK TO GODHEAD is the only magazine in the Western world to present the authorized, transcendental science of God realization known only to the saints of India’s unbroken disciplic succession.

Each month BACK TO GODHEAD brings you the Hare Kṛṣṇa saṅkīrtana movement as it spreads throughout the towns and cities of the world, fulfilling the prediction of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu 500 years ago in India.

RECORDS

Govinda Album (33-1/3 rpm)—These sound vibrations praise Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Absolute Truth, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. They were first uttered millions of years ago by Lord Brahmā, the creator of this universe. Now they are sung by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, accompanied by sarod and tamboura, in a rare and unique recording. stereo \$5.00

Hare Kṛṣṇa Album (33 1/3 rpm)—His Divine Grace plays the holy mṛdāṅga drum with the Los Angeles Saṅkīrtana Party. Also, ande Ilam and Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya. stereo \$4.00

Hare Kṛṣṇa Mantra (45 rpm)—Recorded by London’s Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Temple and produced by George Harrison on the Apple label. stereo \$1.00

Govinda (45 rpm)—Recorded by London’s Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Temple on the Apple label. A beautiful arrangement of the sacred hymn first sung by Lord Brahmā. \$1.25

Hare Kṛṣṇa (45 rpm)—Recorded by the Los Angeles Saṅkīrtana Party in a new transcendental arrangement. stereo \$1.00

Incense—Finest quality incense, manufactured by devotees of Kṛṣṇa, large selection of fruit and flower flavors. Twenty sticks in each package. Each stick burns for one hour. \$1.00 per package .

SEND THIS COUPON OR FACSIMILE TODAY!

ISKCON PRESS, 38 N. Beacon St., Boston, Massachusetts 02134

Please rush me Postage Paid the following books by A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami checked below. Also please find enclosed \$___ in check or money order.

- KṚṢṆA, The Supreme Personality of Godhead \$8.00
- 1 The Nectar of Devotion \$3.95
- 2 Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (vol. 3 only) \$5.00
- 3 Teachings of Lord Caitanya \$5.95
- 4 Śrī Īsopaniṣad \$1.00
- Hardcover edition \$3.00
- 5 The Bhagavad-gītā As It Is \$2.95
- 6 Easy Journey to Other Planets *
- 7 Kṛṣṇa Consciousness: The Topmost Yoga System *
- 8 The First Step in God Realization *
- 9 The Lord in the Heart *
- 10 Back to Godhead (monthly magazine) per year *
- 11 Govinda Album \$5.00
- 12 Hare Kṛṣṇa Album \$4.00
- 13 Hare Kṛṣṇa Mantra (Apple label) 45 rpm \$1.25
- 14 Govinda (Apple label) 45 rpm \$1.25
- 15 Hare Kṛṣṇa 45 rpm \$1.00
- 16 Incense per pkg. \$1.00

Send more information about Kṛṣṇa consciousness
*Donations Requested

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____

WHAT IS THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS?

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness was formed in 1966 by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, who came from India on the order of his spiritual master to preach love of God to the people of the West. Śrīla Prabhupāda is in a line of disciplic succession going back directly 500 years to the time when Lord Caitanya appeared in India, and from there back still further—5,000 years—to the time when Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa first spoke *Bhagavad-gītā*.

Kṛṣṇa consciousness is experienced as a process of self-purification. Its means and end are an open secret, and there is no financial charge for learning Kṛṣṇa consciousness or receiving initiation into the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa. The gist of devotional service to Kṛṣṇa is that one takes whatever capacity or talent he or she has and dovetails it with the interests of the supreme enjoyer, the Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The writer writes articles for Kṛṣṇa, and we publish periodicals in this way. The businessman does business in order to establish many temples across the country. The householders raise children in the science of God, and husband and wife live in mutual cooperation for spiritual progress. These activities are done under the sanction of the expert spiritual master and in line with the scriptures. Devotional service in Kṛṣṇa consciousness means regular chanting in the temple, hearing talks about the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and taking foodstuffs prepared for and offered to the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

By books, literature and records, the Society is dedicated to awakening the worldwide public to the normal, ecstatic state of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, so that all may regain their eternal position of favorably serving the will of Kṛṣṇa. *Saṅkīrtana*—congregational chanting—is carried to the people in public parks, schools, on t.v., in the theater, and on the streets. Kṛṣṇa consciousness is not an idler's philosophy. Rather, by chanting and by engagement in the service of Kṛṣṇa, anyone who takes part will experience the state of "samādhi," ecstatic absorption in God consciousness, twenty-four hours a day!

Since the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is nonsectarian, any man, Hindu or Christian, will become better in his faith by chanting the holy name of God and by hearing the *Bhagavad-gītā*. Without knowledge and realization and loving service to the one Supreme God, there can be no religion. Let everyone rejoice in the *saṅkīrtana* movement, and we may see the fulfillment of the prediction made by Lord Caitanya 500 years ago that the chanting of the holy names of God, Hare Kṛṣṇa, would be carried to every town and village of the world. Only in this way can real peace prevail. It is sublime and easy.

HARE KṚṢṆA, HARE KṚṢṆA
KṚṢṆA KṚṢṆA, HARE HARE
HARE RĀMA, HARE RĀMA
RĀMA RĀMA, HARE HARE

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN BECOMING A MEMBER OF ISKCON, WRITE ISKCON—NEW YORK FOR FURTHER DETAILS.

Amateur and professional photographers who would like to offer photographs of Kṛṣṇa conscious activities for inclusion in *Back to Godhead* are invited to send them to ISKCON Press, 38 N. Beacon St., Boston, Mass. 02134. Hare Kṛṣṇa.

ISKCON CENTERS

Amsterdam	Holland	Frissenstein 292, Bijlmermeer
Atlanta	Georgia	24 13th St. 30309
Baltimore	Maryland	1300 N. Calvert St. 21202
Berkeley	California	2710 Durant Ave. 94704
Bombay	India	74 Marine Drive
Boston	Massachusetts	40 N. Beacon St. 02134
Boulder	Colorado	623 Concord St. 80302
Buffalo	New York	130-132 Bidwell Pkwy. 14222
Calcutta	India	37/1 Hindustan Rd., Ballyganj
Chicago	Illinois	2210 N. Halstead 60614
Columbus	Ohio	318 E. 20th Ave. 43201
Dallas	Texas	5108 Mission St.
Delhi	India	3514 Netashi Subash Marg
Detroit	Michigan	8311 E. Jefferson St. 48214
Gainesville	Florida	1915 NW Second Ave.
Hamburg	West Germany	2000 Hamburg 6, Bartelstrasse 65
Hamilton	Canada	122 Charlton Ave. W., Ontario
Hong Kong	China	c/o Warren Weinstein, American Express Union House No. 609
Honolulu	Hawaii	2016 McKinley St. 96822
Houston	Texas	406 Gray St. 77002
Laguna Beach	California	130 Woodland Dr. 92651
London	England	7 Bury Pl., Bloomsbury WC1
Los Angeles	California	3764 Watska Ave. 90034
Miami	Florida	2851 N.W. 159th St. 33054
Montreal	Canada	3720 Park Ave., Quebec
New Orleans	Louisiana	7827 Spruce St. 70118
New Vr̥ndāvana	W. Virginia	RD 3, Moundsville 26041
New York City	New York	439 Henry St., Bklyn 11231
Paris	France	c/o Fein, 8 Rue Lacage, 14e
Philadelphia	Pennsylvania	641 E. Chelton Ave. 19144
Pittsburgh	Pennsylvania	4514 Plummer St. 15201
Portland	Oregon	2325 E. Burnside St. 97214
Salt Lake City	Utah	774 E. 8th St., So. Salt Lake City
San Diego	California	3689 Park Blvd. 92103
San Francisco	California	455 Valencia St. 94103
San Jose	California	397 S. 11th St. 95112
Santa Barbara	California	613 E. Victoria St. 93103
Seattle	Washington	5516 Roosevelt Way NE 98105
Singapore	China	c/o American Express 6th S.I. AIA Bldg.,
St. Louis	Missouri	4544 Laclede Ave. 63108
Suva	Fiji Islands	44 Baniwai Rd.
Sydney	Australia	118 Oxford St., Paddington
Tallahassee	Florida	412 W. Jefferson Ave., Apt. 303 32301
Tokyo	Japan	3211 Minami Asakawa-cho Hachioji-shi 193
Toronto	Canada	187 E. Gerrard, Toronto 225
Trinidad	West Indies	2 Cipero St., San Fernando
Vancouver	Canada	260 Raymur St., No. 305, B.C.
Washington	D.C.	2015 'Q' St. NW 20008

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



Founder

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

Published monthly by ISKCON PRESS, a division of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, Inc., 38 N. Beacon St., Allston, Mass. 02134. Subscription rates for 12 monthly issues: \$5.00 (USA), \$6.00 (foreign).

Editors:

Hayagrīva Dāsa Adhikārī (ISKCON—New Vr̥ndāvana)
Satsvarūpa Dāsa Adhikārī (ISKCON—Boston)

Printed in Japan



Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the Absolute Truth, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. As confirmed by all the Vedic scriptures and by the great sages in the disciplic succession, He has a body made of eternity, bliss and all knowledge. God has infinite forms and expansions; He expands Himself through His impersonal bodily effulgence, which is called the *brahmajyoti*, and through His multifarious energies, and He also expands into all the material universes. But of all His forms, His original transcendental form is as a cowherd boy in Vṛndāvana, Gopāla-Kṛṣṇa, a form which He reveals only to His most confidential devotees.



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

Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

*saṁsāra-dāvānala-līḍha-loka
trāṇāya kārūṇya-ghanāghanatvam
prāptasya kalyāṇa-guṇārṇavasya
vande guroḥ śrī-caraṇāravindam*

(The spiritual master is receiving benediction from the ocean of mercy. Just as a cloud pours water on a forest fire to extinguish it, so the spiritual master extinguishes the blazing fire of material existence. I offer my respectful obeisances unto the lotus feet of such a spiritual master.)

—from *Śrī Gurvāṣṭakam* by Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura



LORD CAITANYA: THE GOLDEN AVATĀRA

His Divine Grace

A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the golden *avatāra*, appeared in India nearly 500 years ago. It is the custom in India that when a child is born, an astrologer is called for. When Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, appeared 5,000 years ago, Gargamuni was called by His father, and he said, "This child formerly incarnated in five complexions, such as red and golden, and now He has appeared in blackish color." Kṛṣṇa's color is described in the scriptures as blackish, just like a cloud. Lord Caitanya is understood to be Kṛṣṇa appearing in golden complexion.

There are many evidences in Vedic literature that Caitanya Mahāprabhu is an incarnation of Kṛṣṇa, and this is confirmed by scholars and devotees. In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* it is confirmed that the incarnation of Kṛṣṇa or God in this present age,

Kali-yuga, will always engage in describing Kṛṣṇa. He is Kṛṣṇa, but as a devotee of Kṛṣṇa He describes Himself. And in this age His bodily complexion will not be blackish. This means that it may be white, it may be red, or it may be yellow because these four colors—white, red, yellow and black—are the colors assumed by the incarnations for the different ages. Therefore, since the red, white and blackish colors were already taken by former incarnations, the remaining color, golden, is assumed by Caitanya Mahāprabhu. His complexion is not blackish, but He is Kṛṣṇa.

Another feature of this *avatāra* is that He is always accompanied by His associates. In the picture of Caitanya Mahāprabhu one will find that He is always followed by many devotees chanting.

Whenever God incarnates He has two missions, as stated in *Bhagavad-gītā*. There Kṛṣṇa says, "Whenever I appear, My mission is to deliver the pious devotees and to annihilate the demons." When Kṛṣṇa appeared, He had to kill many demons. If we see a picture of Viṣṇu we will notice that He has a conchshell, lotus flower, club and disc. These last two items are meant for killing demons. Within this world there are two classes of men—the demons and the devotees. The devotees are called demigods; they are almost like God because they have godly qualities. Those who are devotees are called godly persons, and those who are nondevotees, atheists, are called demons. So Kṛṣṇa, or God, comes with two missions: to give protection to the devotees and to destroy the demons. In this age Caitanya Mahāprabhu's mission is also like that: to deliver the devotees and to annihilate the nondevotees, the demons. But in this age He has a different weapon. That weapon is not a club or disc or lethal weapon—His weapon is the *saṅkīrtana* movement. He



dhara and Śrīvāsa. One simply has to keep this picture. One can keep it anywhere. It is not that one has to come to us to see this picture. Anyone can have this picture in his home, chant this Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra, and thus worship Lord Caitanya. That is the simple method. But who will capture this simple method? Those who have good brains. Without much bother, if one simply keeps a picture of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu at home and chants Hare Kṛṣṇa, then one will realize God. Anyone can adopt this simple method. There is no expenditure, there is no tax, nor is there any need to build a very big church or temple. Anyone, anywhere, can sit down on the road or beneath a tree and chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra and worship God. Therefore it is a great opportunity. For example, in business or political life one sometimes finds a great opportunity. Those who are intelligent politicians take a good opportunity and make a success of it the first time it comes. Similarly, in this age, those who have sufficient intelligence take to this *saṅkīrtana* movement, and they advance very quickly.

KṚṢṆA AS HE IS

Lord Caitanya is called the golden *avatāra*. *Avatāra* means descending, coming down. Just as one may come down from the fifth story or the one hundredth story of a building, similarly, an *avatāra* comes down from the spiritual planets in the spiritual sky. The sky we see with our naked eyes or with a telescope is only the material sky. But beyond this there is another sky, which is not possible to see with our eyes or instruments. That information is in *Bhagavad-gītā*; it is not imagination. Kṛṣṇa says that beyond this material sky there is another sky, the spiritual sky.

We have to take Kṛṣṇa's word as it is. For example, we teach small children that beyond England there are other places called Germany and India, and the child has to learn about these places from the version of the teacher because they are beyond his sphere. Similarly, beyond this material sky there is another sky. One cannot experiment to find it, any more than a small child can experiment to find England or India. That is not possible. If we want to get knowledge, then we have to accept authority. Similarly, if we want to know what is beyond the material world,

killed the demonic mentality of the people by introducing the *saṅkīrtana* movement. That is the specific significance of Lord Caitanya. In this age people are already killing themselves. They have discovered atomic weapons with which to kill themselves, so there is no need for God to kill them. But He appeared to kill their demonic mentality. That is possible by this Kṛṣṇa

consciousness movement.

Therefore, in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* it is said that this is the incarnation of God in this age. And who worships Him? The process is very simple. Just keep a picture of Lord Caitanya with His associates. [See picture on this page.] Lord Caitanya is in the middle, accompanied by His principal associates—Nityānanda, Advaita, Gadā-

then we have to accept the Vedic authority, otherwise there is no possibility of knowing. It is beyond material knowledge. One cannot go to the far planets in this universe, and what to speak of going beyond this universe? The estimation is that in order to go to the highest planet of this universe with modern machinery one has to travel for 40,000 years. So we cannot even travel within this material sky. Our lifetime and means are so limited that we cannot have proper knowledge of even this material world.

In *Bhagavad-gītā*, when Arjuna asked Kṛṣṇa, “Will you kindly explain the extent to which Your energies are working?” the Supreme Lord gave him so many instances, and at the end He finally said, “My dear Arjuna, what shall I explain about My energies? It is not actually possible for you to understand. But you can just imagine the expansion of My energies: this material world, which consists of millions of universes, is a display of only one-fourth of My creation.” We cannot estimate the position of even one universe, and there are millions of universes. Then beyond that there is the spiritual sky, and there are millions of spiritual planets. All this information is available from the Vedic literature. If one accepts Vedic literature, then he can get this knowledge. If one doesn’t accept it, there is no other means. That is our choice. Therefore, according to Vedic civilization, whenever an *ācārya* speaks he immediately gives references from the Vedic literature. Then others will accept it: “Yes, it is correct.” In a law court the lawyer gives references from past judgements of the court, and if his case is tight, the judge accepts. Similarly, if one can give evidence from the *Vedas*, then it is understood that his position is factual.

THE AVATĀRA

The *avatāra* for this age, Lord Caitanya, is described in Vedic literature. We cannot accept anyone as an *avatāra* unless he has the symptoms described in the scriptures. We do not whimsically accept Lord Caitanya as an *avatāra* on the basis of votes. Nowadays it has become a fashion that any man can come and say that he is God or an incarnation of God, and some fools and rascals will accept it: “Oh, he is God.” We do not accept an *avatāra* like that. We take evidence from the *Vedas*.

An *avatāra* must conform to descriptions in the *Vedas*. Then we accept him, otherwise no. For each *avatāra* there is a description in the *Vedas*: He will appear at such and such a place, in such and such a form, and He will act like this. That is the nature of Vedic evidence.

In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* there is a list of the *avatāras*, and there is mention of Lord Buddha’s name. This *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* was written 5,000 years ago, and it mentions different names for future times. It says that in the future the Lord will appear as Lord Buddha, his mother’s name will be Añjana, and he will appear in Gayā. So Buddha appeared 2,600 years ago, and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, which was written 5,000 years ago, mentioned that in the future he would appear. Similarly, there is mention of Lord Caitanya, and similarly the last *avatāra* of this Kali-yuga is also mentioned in the *Bhāgavatam*. It is mentioned that the last incarnation in this age is Kalki. He will appear as the son of a *brāhmaṇa* whose name is Viṣṇu-yaśā in a place called Śambhala. There is a place in India with that name, so perhaps it is there that the Lord will appear.

So an *avatāra* must conform to the descriptions in the *Upaniṣads*, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, *Mahābhārata* and other Vedic literatures. And on the authority of Vedic literature and the commentary of great, stalwart *gospvāmīs* like Jīva Gosvāmī, who was the greatest scholar and philosopher in the world, we can accept Lord Caitanya as an incarnation of Kṛṣṇa.

CAITANYA’S PURPOSE

Why did Lord Caitanya appear? In *Bhagavad-gītā* Lord Kṛṣṇa says, “Give up all other engagements and simply engage in My service. I will give you protection from all results of sinful actions.” In this material world, in conditional life, we are simply creating sinful reactions. That’s all. And because of sinful reactions we have received this body. If our sinful reactions stopped we would not have to take a material body; we should get a spiritual body.

What is a spiritual body? A spiritual body is a body which is free from death, birth, disease and old age. It is an eternal body, full of knowledge and bliss. Different bodies are created by different desires. As long as we have desires for different

kinds of enjoyment, we have to accept different kinds of material bodies. Kṛṣṇa, God, is so kind that He awards whatever we want. If we want a tiger’s body with tiger-like strength and teeth with which to capture animals and suck fresh blood, then Kṛṣṇa will give us the opportunity. And if we want the body of a saintly person, a devotee engaged only in the service of the Lord, then He will give us that body. This is stated in *Bhagavad-gītā*.

THERE IS NO LOSS

If a person engaged in *yoga*, the process of self-realization, somehow or other fails to complete the process, he is given another chance; he is given birth in a family of a pure *brāhmaṇa* or a rich man. If one is fortunate enough to take birth in such a family, he gets all facilities to understand the importance of self-realization. From the very beginning of life our Kṛṣṇa conscious children are getting the opportunity to learn how to chant and dance, so when they are grown up they cannot change that. They will not change, but instead will automatically make progress. They are very fortunate. Regardless of whether he is born in America or Europe, a child will advance if his father and mother are devotees. He gets this opportunity. If a child takes birth in a family of devotees, this means that in his last life he had already taken to the *yoga* process, but somehow or other he could not finish it. Therefore the child is given another opportunity to make progress under the care of a good father and mother so that he will again advance. In this way, as soon as one completes his development of God consciousness, then he no longer has to take birth in this material world, but returns to the spiritual world.

Kṛṣṇa says in *Bhagavad-gītā*: “My dear Arjuna, if one understands My appearance, disappearance and activities, simply because of this understanding he is given the opportunity to take birth in the spiritual world after giving up this body.” One has to give up this body—today, tomorrow or maybe the day after that. One has to. But a person who has understood Kṛṣṇa will not have to take another material body. He goes directly to the spiritual world and takes birth in one of the spiritual planets. So Kṛṣṇa says that as soon as one gets this body—it doesn’t matter if it is from India or the moon or the sun or Brahmāloka or

anywhere within this material world—one should know that it is due to his sinful activities. There are degrees of sinful activities, so according to the degree of sinfulness, one takes a material body. Therefore our real problem is not how to eat, sleep, mate and defend—our real problem is how to get another body which is not material but spiritual. That is the ultimate solution to all problems. So Kṛṣṇa guarantees that if one surrenders unto Him, if one becomes fully Kṛṣṇa conscious, then He will give him protection from all reactions to sinful life.

THERE IS ONLY ONE TEACHING

This assurance was given by Kṛṣṇa in *Bhagavad-gītā*, but there were many fools who could not understand Kṛṣṇa. In *Bhagavad-gītā* they are described as *mūḍhas*. *Mūḍha* means rascal, and Kṛṣṇa says in the *Gītā*, “They do not know what I actually am.” So many people misunderstood Kṛṣṇa. Although Kṛṣṇa gave us this message of *Bhagavad-gītā* so that we could understand Him, many people missed the opportunity. Therefore Kṛṣṇa, out of His compassion, came again as a devotee and showed us how to surrender unto Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa Himself came to teach us how to surrender. His last instruction in *Bhagavad-gītā* is surrender, but people—*mūḍhas*, rascals—said, “Why should I surrender?” Therefore, although Caitanya Mahāprabhu is Kṛṣṇa Himself, this time He teaches us practically how to execute the mission of *Bhagavad-gītā*. That’s all. Caitanya Mahāprabhu is teaching nothing extraordinary, nothing beyond the process of surrendering to the Supreme Personality of Godhead which was already taught in *Bhagavad-gītā*. There is no other teaching, but the same teaching is presented in different ways so that different kinds of people may take it and take the opportunity to approach God.

CAITANYA IS KṚṢṆA

Caitanya Mahāprabhu gives us the opportunity to reach God directly. When Rūpa Gosvāmī, the principal disciple of Lord Caitanya, first saw Caitanya Mahāprabhu, he was a minister in the government of Bengal but wanted to join Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s movement. So he gave up his position as a minister, and after joining,

when he surrendered, he offered a nice prayer to Lord Caitanya. This prayer says, *namo mahā-vadānyāya kṛṣṇa-prema-pradāya te/ kṛṣṇāya kṛṣṇa-caitanya-nāmne gaura-tviṣe namaḥ*. “My dear Lord, You are the most munificent of all the incarnations.” Why? *Kṛṣṇa-prema-pradāya te*: “You are directly giving love of God. You have no other purpose. Your process is so nice that one can immediately learn to love God. Therefore You are the most munificent of all incarnations. And it is not possible for any personality other than Kṛṣṇa Himself to deliver this benediction; therefore I say that You are Kṛṣṇa.” *Kṛṣṇāya kṛṣṇa-caitanya-nāmne*: “You are Kṛṣṇa, but You have assumed the name Kṛṣṇa Caitanya. I surrender unto You.”

So this is the process. Caitanya Mahāprabhu is Kṛṣṇa Himself, and He is teaching how to develop love of God by a very simple method. He says simply to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. *Harer nāma harer nāma harer nāmaiva kevalam/ kalau nāsty eva nāsty eva nāsty eva gatir anyathā*. In this age, simply go on chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra. There is no other alternative. People are embarrassed by so many methods of realization. They cannot take to the actual ritualistic processes of meditation or *yoga*; it is not possible. Therefore Lord Caitanya says that if one takes up this process of chanting, then immediately he can reach the platform of realization.

The chanting process offered by Lord Caitanya for achieving love of God is called *saṅkīrtana*. *Saṅkīrtana* is a Sanskrit word. *Sam* means *samyak*—complete. And *kīrtana* means glorifying or describing. So complete description means complete glorification of the Supreme, or the Supreme Complete Whole. It is not that one can describe anything or glorify anything, and that will be *kīrtana*. From the grammatical point of view that may be *kīrtana*, but according to the Vedic system, *kīrtana* means describing the supreme authority, the Absolute Truth, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. That is called *kīrtana*.

HEARING, CHANTING

This devotional service begins with the method of *śravaṇam*. *Śravaṇam* means hearing, and *kīrtana* means describing. One should describe, and another should hear. Or the same man himself can both describe and hear. He does not need anyone else’s help. Just as, when we chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, we chant and hear. This is complete.

This is a complete method. But what is that chanting and hearing? One must chant and hear about Viṣṇu, Kṛṣṇa. Not of anything else. *Śravaṇam kīrtanam viṣṇoḥ*: One can understand Viṣṇu, the all-pervading Absolute Truth, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, by the method of hearing.

We have to hear; if one simply hears, that is the beginning. One does not need any education or development of material knowledge. Just like a child: as soon as he hears, immediately he can respond and dance. So by nature God has given us these nice instruments—ears—so that we can hear. But we must hear from the right source. That is stated in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. One must hear from those who are devoted to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. They are called *satām*. If one hears from the right source, from a realized soul, then it will act. And these words of God, or Kṛṣṇa, are very relishable. If one is intelligent enough, he will listen to what is spoken by the realized soul. Then very soon he will be released from material entanglements.

This human life is meant for advancing on the path of liberation. That is called *apavarga*, freedom from entanglement. We are all entangled. Our acceptance of this material body means that we are already entangled. But we should not progress in the process of entanglement. That process is called *karma*. As long as the mind is absorbed in *karma*, we will have to accept a material body. At the time of death, our mind may be thinking, “Oh, I could not complete this work. Oh, I am dying! I have to do this. I have to do that.” That means that Kṛṣṇa will give us another chance to do it, and so we will have to accept another body. He will give us the chance: “All right. You could not do it. Now do it. Take this body.” Therefore *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* says, “These rascals have become madly intoxicated; because of intoxication they are doing something which they should not have done.” What are they doing? Mahārāja Dhṛtarāṣṭra is a very good example. Mahārāja Dhṛtarāṣṭra was cunningly planning to kill the Pāṇḍavas in order to favor his own sons, so Kṛṣṇa sent His uncle, Akrūra, to advise him not to do that. Dhṛtarāṣṭra understood Akrūra’s instructions, but he said, “My dear Akrūra, what you are saying is quite right, but it does not stand in my heart, so I cannot change my policy. I have to follow this policy and let whatever happens take place.”

So when men want to satisfy their senses, they become mad, and in this madness they'll do anything and everything. For example, there have been many instances in material life where someone has become mad after something and has committed a criminal action such as murder. He could not check himself. Similarly, we are accustomed to sense gratification. We are mad, and therefore our mind is fully absorbed in *karma*. This is very unfortunate because our body, although temporary, is the reservoir of all misfortunes and miseries; it is always giving us trouble. These matters are to be studied. We should not be mad. Human life is not meant for that. The defect of the present civilization is that people are mad after sense gratification. That is all. They do not know the real value of life, and therefore they are neglecting the most valuable form of life, this human form.

When this body is finished there is no guarantee what kind of body one will take next. Suppose in my next life I by chance get the life of a tree. For thousands of years I will have to stand up. But people are not very serious. They even say, "What is that? Even if I have to stand up, I shall forget." The lower species of life are situated in forgetfulness. If a tree were not forgetful it would be impossible for it to live. Suppose we were told, "You stand up for three days here!" Because we are not forgetful, we would become mad. So, by nature's law, all these lower species of life are forgetful. Their consciousness is not developed. A tree has life, but even if someone cuts it, because its consciousness is not developed, it does not respond. So we should be very careful to properly utilize this human form of life. This Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is meant for achieving perfection in life. It is not a bluff or exploitation, but unfortunately people are accustomed to being bluffed. There is a verse by an Indian poet: "If one speaks nice things, people will quarrel with him: 'Oh, what nonsense you are speaking.' But if he bluffs them and cheats them, they will be very glad." So if a bluffer says, "Just do this, give me my fee, and within six months you will become God," then they will agree: "Yes, take this fee, and I shall become God within six months." No. These cheating processes will not solve our problem. If one actually

wants to solve the problems of life in this age, then he has to take to this process of *kīrtana*. That is the recommended process. *Harer nāma harer nāma harer nāmaiva kevalam kalau nāsty eva nāsty eva nāsty eva gatir anyathā*: In this age, Kali-yuga, one cannot execute any process of self-realization or perfection of life other than *kīrtana*. *Kīrtana* is essential in this age.

In all Vedic literatures it is confirmed that one must meditate on the Supreme Absolute Truth, Viṣṇu, not on anything else. But there are different processes of meditation recommended for different ages. The process of mystic yogic meditation was possible in Satya-yuga, when men lived for many thousands of years. Now people will not believe this, but in a previous age there were people who lived for 100,000 years. That age was called Satya-yuga, and the meditation of mystic *yoga* was possible at that time. In that age the great *yogī* Vālmīki Muni meditated for 60,000 years. So that is a long-term process which is not possible to execute in this age. If one wishes to conduct a farce, that is another matter. But if one actually wants to practice such meditation, it takes an extremely long time to perfect. In the next age, Tretā-yuga, the process of realization was to perform the various ritualistic sacrifices recommended in the *Vedas*. In the next age, Dvāpara-yuga, the process was temple worship. In this present age the same result can be achieved by the process of *Hari-kīrtana*, glorification of Hari, Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

No other *kīrtana* is recommended. This *Hari-kīrtana* was started 500 years ago in Bengal by Lord Caitanya. So in Bengal there is competition between the Vaiṣṇavas and the Śāktas. The Śāktas introduced a certain type of *kīrtana* which is called *Kālī-kīrtana*. But in the Vedic scriptures there is no recommendation of *Kālī-kīrtana*. *Kīrtana* means *Hari-kīrtana*. One cannot say, "Oh, You are Vaiṣṇava. You can perform *Hari-kīrtana*. I shall perform *Śiva-kīrtana* or *Devī-kīrtana*, or *Gaṇeṣa-kīrtana*." No. The Vedic scriptures do not authorize any *kīrtana* other than *Hari-kīrtana*. *Kīrtana* means *Hari-kīrtana*, the glorification of Kṛṣṇa.

So this process of *Hari-kīrtana* is very simple: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma, Rāma, Hare Hare. Actually there are only three words: *Hare*, *Kṛṣṇa* and *Rāma*. But they are very nicely arranged

for chanting so that everyone can take it and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare. Since we have started this movement in the Western countries, Europeans, Americans, Africans, Egyptians and Japanese are all chanting. There is no difficulty. They are chanting very gladly, and they are getting the results. What is the difficulty? We are distributing this chanting free of charge, and it is very simple. Simply by chanting, one can have self-realization, God realization, and when there is God realization, then nature realization is included also. For example if one learns one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine and zero, then he has studied the entirety of mathematics because mathematics means simply changing the places of these ten figures. That's all. Similarly, if one simply studies Kṛṣṇa, then all his knowledge is perfect. And Kṛṣṇa is easily understood simply by chanting this *mantra*, Hare Kṛṣṇa. So why not take this opportunity?

Take this opportunity that is being offered to human society. It is very ancient and scientific. It is not that it is a concoction that will last for only three or four years. No. In *Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa Himself says, "This philosophy is inexhaustible and indestructible. It is never lost or destroyed." It may be covered for the time being, but it is never destroyed. Therefore it is called *avyayam*. *Vyaya* means exhaustion. For example one may have a hundred dollars, and if they are spent one after another, the next day it will come to zero. That is *vyaya*, exhaustible. But Kṛṣṇa consciousness is not like that. If you cultivate this knowledge of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then it will increase. That is certified by Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu. *Ānandāmbudhi-wardhanam*. *Ānanda* means pleasure, transcendental bliss, and *ambudhi* means ocean. In the material world we see that the ocean does not increase. But if one cultivates Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then his transcendental bliss will simply increase. *Ānandāmbudhi-wardhanam*. And I shall always remind everyone that the process is very simple. Anyone can chant, anywhere, without taxation or loss, but the gain is very great.

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu has explained this *kīrtana* movement in His *Śikṣāṣṭakam*. *Śikṣā* means instruction, and *aṣṭaka* means eight. He has given us eight verses to help us understand this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, and I shall explain the first of these instructions. The Lord says, *ceto-*

darpaṇa-mārjanam. I have explained this several times, but it does not become monotonous. It is just like the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa; it does not become tiresome. Our students can chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* twenty-four hours a day, and they will never get tired. They will continue to dance and chant. And anyone can try it; because it is not material, one will never get tired of chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. In the material world, if one chants anything, any favorite name, for three, four, or ten times, he will get tired of it. That is a fact. But because Hare Kṛṣṇa is not material, if one chants this *mantra*, he will never get tired. The more one chants, the more his heart will be cleansed of material dirt and the more the problems of his life within this material world will be solved.

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

What is the problem of our lives? That we do not know. Modern education never gives enlightenment about the real problem of life. That is indicated in *Bhagavad-gītā*. Those who are educated and are advancing in knowledge should know what is the problem of life. This problem is stated in *Bhagavad-gītā*: One should always see the inconveniences of birth, death, old age and disease. Unfortunately no one pays attention to these problems. When a man is diseased he thinks, "All right. Let me go to the doctor. He will give me some medicine, and I will be cured." But he does not consider the problem very seriously. "I did not want this disease. Why is there disease? Is it not possible to become free from disease?" He never thinks that way. This is because his intelligence is very low grade, just like that of an animal. An animal suffers, but it has no sense. If an animal is brought to a slaughterhouse and sees that the animal before him is being slaughtered, he will still stand there contentedly eating the grass. This is animal life. He does not know that next time it will be his turn and he will be slaughtered. I have seen it. In a Kālī temple I have seen that a goat was standing there ready to be sacrificed and another goat was very happily eating the grass.

Similarly, Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira was asked by Yamarāja, "What is the most wonderful thing in this world? Can you explain?" So Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira answered, "Yes. The most wonderful thing is that at every moment one can see that

his friends, his fathers and his relatives have died, but he is thinking, 'I shall live forever.' He never thinks that he will die, just as an animal never thinks that at the next moment he may be slaughtered. He is satisfied with the grass, that's all. He is satisfied with the sense gratification. He does not know that he is also going to die.

EVERYONE HAS DIED

My father has died, my mother has died, he has died, she has died. So I will also have to die. Then what is after death? I do not know. This is the problem. People do not take this problem seriously, but *Bhagavad-gītā* indicates that that is real education. Real education is to inquire why, although we do not want to die, death comes. That is real inquiry. We do not want to become old men. Why does old age come upon us? We have many problems, but this is the sum and substance of all of them.

In order to solve this problem, Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu prescribes the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa. As soon as our heart is cleansed by chanting this Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*, the blazing fire of our problematic material existence is extinguished. How is it extinguished? When we cleanse our heart we will realize that we do not belong to this material world. Because people are identifying with this material world, they are thinking, "I am an Indian, I am an Englishman, I am this, I am that." But if one chants the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*, he will realize that he is not this material body. "I do not belong to this material body or this material world. I am a spirit soul, part and parcel of the Supreme. I am eternally related with Him, and I have nothing to do with the material world." This is called liberation, knowledge. If I don't have anything to do with this material world, that is called liberation. And that knowledge is called *brahma-bhūta*.

A person with this realization has no duty to perform. Because we are now identifying our existence with this material world, we therefore have so many duties. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* says that as long as there is no self-realization, we have so many duties and debts. We are indebted to the demigods. The demigods are not merely fictitious. They are real. There are demigods controlling the sun, the moon

and the air. Just as there are directors of government departments, so for the heating department there is the sun-god, for the air department there is Varuṇa, and similarly there are other departmental demigods. In the *Vedas* they are described as controlling deities, so we cannot neglect them. Also, there are great sages and philosophers who have given us knowledge, and we are indebted to them. So as soon as we take birth we are indebted to so many living entities, but it is impossible to liquidate all these debts. Therefore the Vedic literature recommends that one take shelter of the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa. And Kṛṣṇa says, "If one takes shelter of Me, then he doesn't have to take shelter of anyone else."

Therefore those who are Kṛṣṇa conscious devotees have taken shelter of Kṛṣṇa, and the beginning is hearing and chanting. *Śravaṇam kīrtanam viṣṇoḥ*. So our fervent, humble request to everyone is to please accept this chanting. This movement of Kṛṣṇa consciousness was introduced by Lord Caitanya 500 years ago in Bengal, and now all over India and especially in Bengal there are millions of followers of Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Now this movement is starting in the Western countries, so just be very serious in understanding it. We do not criticize any other religion. Don't take it in that way. We have no business criticizing any other process of religion. Kṛṣṇa consciousness is giving people the most sublime religion—love of God. That's all. We are teaching to love God. Everyone is already loving, but that love is misplaced. We love this boy or this girl or this country or that society or even the cats and dogs, but we are not satisfied. So we must place our love in God. If one places one's love in God, he will be happy.

Don't think that this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is a new type of religion. Where is the religion which does not recognize God? One may call God Allah or Kṛṣṇa or something else, but where is that religion which does not recognize God? We are teaching that one should simply try to love God. We are attracted by so many things, but if our love is reposed in God, then we will be happy. We don't have to learn to love anything else; everything else is automatically included. Just try to love God. Don't try to love just trees or plants or insects. This will never satisfy. Learn to love God. That is Caitanya Mahāprabhu's mission; that is our mission. END

ON THE CONSTITUTION OF THE SOUL

by Hayagrīva dāsa Adhikārī (ISKCON—New Vṛndāvana)

“The soul can never be cut into pieces by any weapon, nor can he be moistened by the water, nor withered by the wind.” (*Bhagavad-gītā*, 2.23) Here Lord Kṛṣṇa begins to describe the properties of the spirit soul. These properties are antipodal to the properties of the body. We all know that the body can be cut to pieces, burned up, wetted, and so on, and because of this it is subject to pain and death. We are so certain of the killing abilities of fire that we use it to sterilize so that things will be germless. But we have information from Vedic literatures that there are living entities also in the fire. “This individual soul is unbreakable and insoluble, and can neither be burned nor dried.” (Bg. 2.24) Here Lord Kṛṣṇa is stressing the point that fire cannot kill the soul. All material attempts to annihilate the soul are futile. It is not possible to kill the soul by making a hotter fire, by using a sharper weapon, or by drowning it with any amount of water. The individual soul is *sanātana*, eternally situated.

ETERNALLY INDIVIDUAL

Because it is not possible to cut the soul, it is not possible to sever the individual soul from the Supersoul. Consequently, the *jīva*, or individual soul, has always been individual because if it had ever been homogeneously one with the Supersoul, it would never have been possible to break it or cut it away. Therefore, Lord Kṛṣṇa speaks of the *jīvas* as “eternal fragments of Myself.” “The living entities in this conditional world are My fragmental parts, and they are eternal. But due to conditioned life, they are struggling very hard with the six senses, which include the mind.” (Bg. 15.7)

Because the soul can live under any material means, it can go anywhere and live anywhere. And we have practical experience that living entities are everywhere and that they acquire suitable bodies for their particular environments. If we dig deep into the earth, for instance, we will find so many worms, and of course on the earth’s surface there are so many entities, and also in the air, and, of course, there are infinite creatures in the water.

And from Vedic sources we understand that even in fire there are many living entities that have particular bodies which are adaptable to living in fire, just as some souls can acquire bodies for living on a planet with no atmosphere. However, these bodies are more subtle and are difficult to perceive by the gross senses.

LIFE IS EVERYWHERE

Because the soul is not influenced by material condition and because it can grow in fire, water, air or earth, we can conclude that on all other planets there are also living entities because every material planet is made up of at least one of these five gross elements: earth, water, fire, air and ether. Some of the planets are principally composed of water and earth, like our planet, or of fire like the sun, or of air, ether and gases like Jupiter. Due to a poor fund of knowledge about the constitution of the soul, material scientists doubt that life can exist on any other planet in our solar system. They argue that there is no life on Mercury and Venus because Mercury is so close to the sun that the temperature on its sunlit side reaches as high as 700 degrees F, and that Venus, although almost twice as far from the sun as Mercury, has an even higher surface temperature of 800 degrees F, which is distributed uniformly by strong winds. They fail to understand the relativity of heat and the ability of organisms to adjust to any circumstance. Our mean earth temperature of 57 degrees F may be astoundingly hot or cold to other living entities who may argue that life is not possible on earth due to intense heat or cold. Man has landed on the moon, which has a temperature of 215 degrees F on its sunny side and minus 250 degrees on its dark side, and seeing no living entities he concludes that there is no life there. “A magnificent desolation,” he calls it upon landing, and from the gross material point of view he is right, but we should not conclude that there are no living entities on the moon because the soul can inhabit various subtle bodies which can endure lack of atmosphere and extreme temperatures. Similarly there is no scientist who would argue

on behalf of life existing on the sun. The surface temperature of the sun is 10,000 degrees F, and its average interior temperature is 25,000,000 degrees F, a temperature inconceivable from the material point of view, and yet we have information from *Bhagavad-gītā* that the sun-god Vivasvān is residing there, presiding over his entourage of sun dwellers. It is also stated in Vedic literatures that Vivasvān drives a chariot with horses which obviously must be able to withstand such heats. These bodies, then, are subtle in order not to be consumed, and, being subtle, they’re practically imperceptible to mundane vision.

WHY ONLY THE EARTH?

On the side of the earth away from the sun, the planets Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune and Pluto are, according to scientists, too cold to sustain life, and their surfaces are reportedly enveloped by layers of methane and ammonia, which are poisonous gases. Again using the earth conditions as a criterion for life possibilities, scientists speculate as to whether life exists on Mars, the planet most similar to earth. They have perceived seasonal color changes that appear to be some kind of vegetation, but they have discarded the idea that the Martian canals were dug by intelligent beings. Hence they conclude that in our solar system only the planet earth provides the proper condition for life. It does not follow logically that living entities can exist in the elements earth and water and not in the other elements. Most major scientists agree, however, that earth is not the only planet in the entire universe containing life. They claim that there are other innumerable solar systems with planets that duplicate the earth. No doubt there are, but their insistence that life can exist only on this particular type of planet is a conjecture ethno-, geo-, and ego-centrally based.

Here we are reminded of the example of Dr. Frog, PhD, an eminent scholar who lives in a well. One day a fellow frog went down to see the Doctor and inform him that there is such a thing as the Atlantic Ocean. Upon hearing about this ocean, Dr. Frog enquired, “Tell me, how big would you say it is compared to this well? Is it as big or twice as big?” “No, much, much bigger,” said the visitor. “Oh, much bigger then?” asked the Doctor. “Then tell me, is it five times as big, ten times as big?”

“Oh, no, much vaster.” “Vaster? How is that? Maybe a hundred times or a thousand—how can it be so much bigger?” In this way Dr. Frog goes on speculating about the breadth of the Atlantic Ocean, but it is obvious that he will never comprehend its vastness because it is totally outside his experience. It is natural to compare that which is unknown to that which is known, but it is narrowminded to insist that the unknown must correspond with the known.

So from *Bhagavad-gītā* and other Vedic literatures we can understand that in every planet and in every atmosphere there are living entities. All these living beings are numberless; the various species alone number over 8,000,000. These countless entities are being maintained by the singular entity, Kṛṣṇa or God. It is stated in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* that this is the major difference between the Supersoul and the individual *jīva*: the *jīva* is maintaining itself in its own body, but the Supersoul is maintaining infinite *jīvas* in infinite bodies all over the universe. It is illogical and contrary to experience to state that life is supported in one part of the universe and not in another.

WE ARE ALWAYS PERSONS

The parts of the Supreme Soul are thus scattered throughout the universe, and they remain parts eternally, taking on and shuffling off bodies. Even after being separated from the illusory identification with matter, the *jīva* remains a separate identity. After liberation from material contamination, the atomic soul may prefer to remain a spiritual spark in the effulgent rays of the Supreme Lord, and this stage is called Brahman realization. However, the more intelligent soul enters into the planets of the spiritual sky to associate with God's person, and this is one step beyond liberation.

Lord Kṛṣṇa further characterizes the soul in this way: “He is everlasting, all-pervading, unchangeable, immovable, and eternally the same.” (Bg. 2.24) Here the word *sarva-gata* (all-pervading) is significant. This gives additional evidence that there are *jīvas*, individual souls, pervading the entire creation, on land, on water, in air, in the earth, even within fire. Because it is stated that the soul cannot even be burned by fire, it is a misconception that fire can kill all living entities.

As mentioned before, *Gītā* gives evidence that there are inhabitants of the sun. If the sun is uninhabited, then the word *sarva-gata*—living everywhere—is meaningless.

THE EXISTENCE OF THE SOUL

Lord Kṛṣṇa also gives more information about the soul's constitution. “It is said that the soul is invisible, inconceivable, immutable, and unchangeable. Knowing this, you should not grieve for the body.” (Bg. 2.25) The soul, being spiritual, cannot be perceived by material eyes. Even the most powerful microscope cannot see the spirit soul. It is experimentally impossible to establish the existence of the soul, and therefore *śruti*, or Vedic wisdom, must be accepted as proof. We do, however, perceive symptoms of the soul as life symptoms. We understand that when the soul has left the body, the body is dead. These are symptoms of the soul which can be perceived materially. Beyond this we have to accept the existence of the soul on the grounds of Vedic authority. Here the supreme authority Lord Kṛṣṇa states that the soul is beyond human conception, immutable and unchangeable. The body is everlasting and is always the same, although it may inhabit countless bodies.

Compared to the infinite Supreme Soul, the individual soul or *jīva* is atomic or finite. It is not possible for this infinitesimal soul to become equal to the infinite soul because it is stated here that it is unchangeable. Being unchangeable, it cannot expand to include everything. Therefore the theory of the Māyāvādī impersonalists that at death the individual soul leaves the body and merges into the great all-pervading spirit to become one with that spirit contradicts the *Gītā*. The totality of the *jīvas* is all-pervading, but the individual *jīva* is infinitesimal and remains so eternally. It partakes of the total ocean by swimming about. In the very beginning of the *Gītā*, Lord Kṛṣṇa asserts the eternal individuality of the soul: “Never was there a time when I did not exist, nor you, nor all these kings; nor in the future shall any of us cease to be.” (Bg. 2.12) It is not that at a certain point the individual soul cuts itself off from the Supreme Soul and merges into matter, or that at another point it will leave its association with matter and merge once again into the Supreme Soul. Such a process of

amalgamation is not possible. Even after liberation the individuality remains. The oneness mentioned here refers to oneness of interest. The common interest of all liberated individual souls is the Supersoul, Lord Kṛṣṇa. When the *jīvas* are in total agreement with Kṛṣṇa, then there is oneness. Oneness is therefore experienced when the *jīva* surrenders unto Kṛṣṇa, and diversity is experienced when the *jīva* rebels. When he surrenders, the *jīva* associates with Kṛṣṇa in the spiritual world, but when he revolts he is placed in the material world amidst diversity. It is stated in *Bhagavad-gītā*: “After many births and deaths, he who is actually in knowledge surrenders unto Me, knowing Me to be the cause of all causes, and all that is. Such a great soul is very rare.” (Bg. 7.19) Attaining this knowledge may take time, but this is the ultimate *Vedānta*. *Vedānta* means to know that Lord Kṛṣṇa is everything.

“I AM NOT MATTER, I AM SPIRIT”

This eternity of the soul apart from the body is the basis for Lord Kṛṣṇa's urging Arjuna to fight in the battle. “For the soul there is neither birth nor death, nor having once been does he ever cease to be. He is unborn, eternal, ever existing and primeval. He is not slain when the body is slain.” (Bg. 2.20) The consciousness that pervades the entire body is the consciousness of the soul that inhabits the body. When the soul is not in the body he cannot perceive bodily pleasures and pains. Because the soul may be addicted to the pleasures of the body, he may take on another body after leaving his present body. Lord Kṛṣṇa likens this struggling off and taking on of bodies unto changes of dress (Bg. 2.13). This constant change is senseless and very painful. Eventually, after so many changes, the conditioned soul becomes materially exhausted and so seeks a spiritual master who can teach him how to liberate himself from the constant repetition of birth and death (*saṁsāra*). It is at this point that the *jīva* decides to revive his ever dormant Kṛṣṇa consciousness in order to escape the miseries of reincarnation. Upon reestablishing his relationship with the Supersoul, the *jīva* attains the state of *brahma-bhūta*, realizing *ahaṁ brahmāsmi*: “I am not this material body. I am not matter, but spirit.” The first symptom of *brahma-bhūta* realization is joyfulness. Perceiving its eternity,

seeing that it can never be cut to pieces, burned, moistened, broken, dissolved or dried, the soul becomes instantly joyful. It at last identifies with its true essence. As long as it is in identity with matter, it will hanker and lament, as Arjuna was hankering and lamenting on the battlefield. The message of *Bhagavad-gītā*, then, is one of joy, for the lesson taught Arjuna provokes the conditioned soul to seek its eternal happy position.

In the material position, entangled in birth and death, the *jīva* tries to lord it over matter, and in his attempt becomes adverse to Kṛṣṇa. The conditioned soul, forgetful of his spiritual nature, engages in a hard struggle in the ocean of material existence, but all this time the love of Kṛṣṇa is dormant within him. This love is awakened by the spiritual master who engages the *jīva* in devotional service and so opens the way for liberation.

WONDERFUL BEYOND CONCEPTION

Concluding his initial statements on the soul in the Second Chapter of *Gītā*, Lord Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna that "some look on the soul as amazing, some describe him as amazing, and some hear of him as amazing, while others, even after hearing about him,

cannot understand him at all." (Bg. 2.29) It is not often that one finds a man who can understand the nature of the soul. However, we should take the statements of Kṛṣṇa in *Bhagavad-gītā* as authoritative and so learn of the constitution of the soul through Him. It is certainly wonderful that a minute particle smaller than an atom can sustain life in a body; without this atomic particle the body dies. It is also wonderful that this minute particle is eternal and that the totality of souls pervade the entire creation. Because this is beyond human conception, one should accept the authoritative statements of Kṛṣṇa.

Lord Kṛṣṇa tells His friend Arjuna that even if he thinks that the soul itself is perpetually being born and dying, still there is no need for his lamentation. "For one who has taken his birth, death is certain; for one who is dead, birth is certain. Therefore in the unavoidable discharge of your duty you should not lament." (Bg. 2.27) Certainly no one laments when he sees a skyscraper being erected. Nor does he lament when he sees it being dismantled. The dismantling is inevitable. In either case, even from the material point of view, one does not grieve over what is perfectly natural. "All created beings are unmanifest in their beginning,

manifest in their interim state, and unmanifest again when they are annihilated. So what need is there for lamentation?" (Bg. 2.28)

Vedic wisdom encourages self-realization based on the nonexistence of the material body. As far as the eternal spirit soul is concerned, the material body has no factual existence. One may dream of becoming a great king or a great general or even a pauper, but when one awakes, the body in his dream no longer has substantiality. Nor did it ever have substantiality. So identification with the material body is a sort of dream for the spirit soul.

The process of the awakening of the soul is joyful, and the dream of entanglement is painful. Just as one is awakened from sleep by sounds, the sleeping soul is awakened by the *śabda*, or sound incarnation, of the Lord imparted to the soul by the spiritual master. The *śabdas* which the spiritual master uses to awaken the sleeping souls are the sounds of *Bhagavad-gītā* and the holy names of Kṛṣṇa. Since it is inevitable that one who is sleeping will awake, one should not become disheartened if it seems that he continues to lounge even after hearing the call to arise. Eventually the *śabda* will enact, and the drowsy soul will enter into his blissful position. END

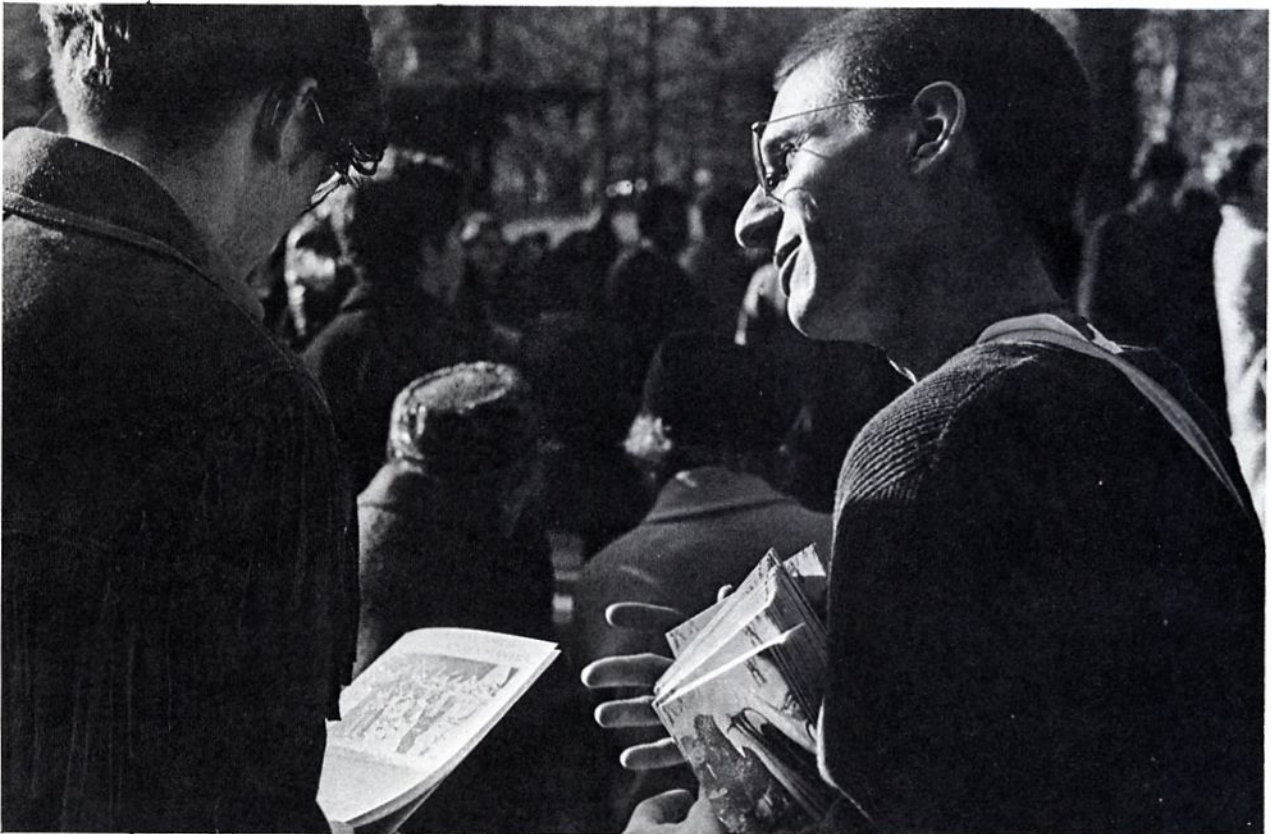


Photo by Terry Wrightson

CHILDREN IN KṚṢṆA CONSCIOUSNESS

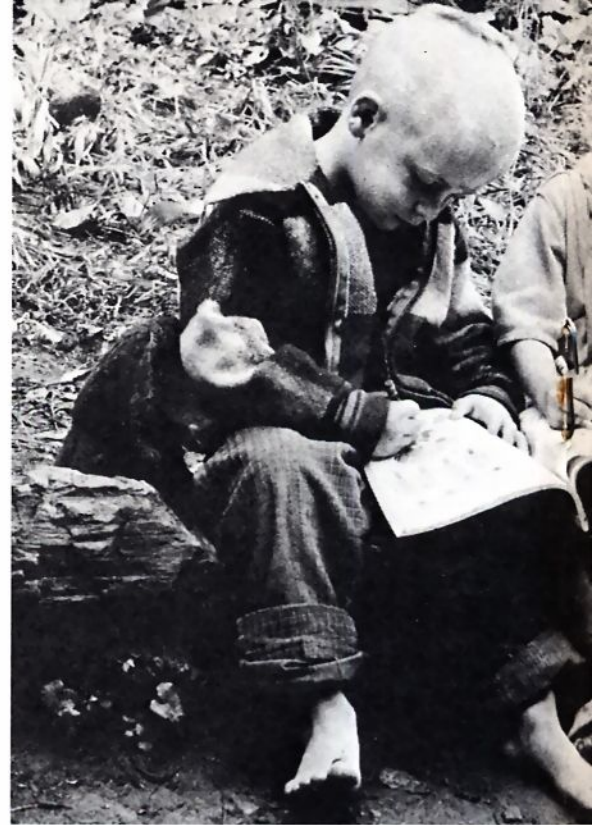
According to the Vedic scriptures no one should become a mother or father unless he can free his children from the clutches of death. This is real family planning: one should have sex life in marriage only for the purpose of producing nice children to be raised in God consciousness. It is a great service to God and to humanity if one can raise a child according to spiritual principles from the very start of his life, and that is the practice of the married disciples of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda.

As for the children themselves, they are fully participating in Kṛṣṇa conscious activities, as shown here. Any child can chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and dance and feel transcendental ecstasy. That is the special facility of Kṛṣṇa consciousness—even a child can perform it. We are all naturally part and parcel of God; we have simply forgotten this due to misuse of our free will. But by purifying his consciousness by



chanting God's names and following regulative devotional principles under the guidance of a bona fide spiritual master, anyone can gain spiritual enlightenment and relish the taste of spiritual bliss. Any child who is chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa on *saṅkīrtana* in the streets, or attending ISKCON school and learning that God is the source of all material and spiritual knowledge, is certainly a wise person. Indeed, age in years is not in itself the measure of wisdom. Certain trees, although obviously at a very low point of consciousness, have been growing for hundreds of years, whereas the great devotee Prahāda Mahārāja, when he was only five years old, was preaching the sublime teachings of Kṛṣṇa consciousness which he had heard while still in the womb of his mother. Prahāda heard from the sage Nārada, and similarly Śukadeva Gosvāmī, the great reciter of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, also heard of the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa from his father while Śukadeva was still in the womb. If age were measured in knowledge, then Kṛṣṇa conscious children would have to be considered already mature because they are Vaiṣṇavas, worshipers of the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The Vedic scriptures con-





firm that love of Kṛṣṇa is the ultimate goal of all knowledge.

Our spiritual master has said that a child's naughtiness is his beauty and is even a sign of intelligence. Lord Kṛṣṇa displayed unparalleled naughtiness when He was here on earth 5,000 years ago performing His childhood pastimes. But in ISKCON all a child's playful tendencies are dovetailed in dancing, singing the Lord's names and taking part in transcendental plays which please even the Supreme Personality of Godhead. One two-year-old girl, the daughter of married disciples of His Divine Grace Śrīla Prabhupāda, was playing childishly with Śrīla Prabhupāda by handing him a flower, and His Divine Grace said to the parents, "She is doing as much service as you."

That these children have been born into Kṛṣṇa conscious families indicates that they are not ordinary but have seriously strived for spiritual perfection in their past lives. According to *Bhagavad-gītā*, if one was a *yogī* in his past life but did not perfect his devotion up to the point of liberation, then in his next life he may "take birth in the family of transcendentalists who are surely great in wisdom. Verily, such a birth is rare in this world By virtue of the divine consciousness of his previous life, he automatically becomes attracted to the yogic





principles—even without seeking them.” (Bg. 6.42, 44) So these children have in the past practiced the principles of devotional service to the Supreme Lord, and now, having taken birth in the families of practicing devotees, they are being given the chance to become free from all material contamination and become eligible in this very life for eternal existence in the kingdom of God.

How is it that we can claim such children to be rare and wise? It is simply because they are following the *saṅkīrtana* practice of glorifying God introduced by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, who is a pure devotee coming strictly in the disciplic succession from Lord Caitanya, the incarnation of Kṛṣṇa for this age. The Vedic scriptures prescribe that in this present age of quarrel those people with sufficient brain substance should worship the Lord in exactly this easy manner, which even their children can fully perform—to sing the holy names of the Lord, to dance before the Deity of the Lord, to hear authorized readings about the pastimes of the Lord, and to take nourishing *prasādam* (food-stuffs offered to the Lord). It is easy and sublime, and the children in Kṛṣṇa consciousness can feel it and teach others how to perfect life by this natural Kṛṣṇa conscious method. END



KARDAMA MUNI, A FIRST-CLASS YOGĪ

by Satsvarūpa dāsa Adhikārī (ISKCON—Boston)

First let me offer my humble obeisances to my spiritual master, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the pure servant of God and thus the knower of the scripture. All transcendental knowledge contained in this essay emanates from his teachings, which are exactly in line with the disciple succession going back to Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Personality of Godhead and original source of this narration of Kardama Muni. The disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda has simply to present the teachings of the spiritual master intact; then there will be good benefit for the reader seeking self-realization and spiritual happiness.

In the Sixth Chapter of *Bhagavad-gītā*, Lord Kṛṣṇa teaches the mystic *yoga* process complete with sitting postures and the method of meditation under strict regulations. At the conclusion of the chapter, in the last verse, the Lord describes the topmost *yogī*: “He who, full of faith, offers everything to Me and worships Me, is the most united with Me in *yoga*.” Nowadays the *yoga* system, as taught authoritatively in *Bhagavad-gītā* and the *Pātāñjali-yoga-sūtra*, is not being followed. Instead, false teachers are allowing their students to engage in all kinds of material sense gratification while collecting a fee from them and inducing them to think in their meditation that they are one with God. Such students of false teachers cannot actually be making spiritual progress in *yoga*.

ULTIMATE YOGA

The Vedic literature contains histories, however, of many great *yogīs* who were accomplished in full mystic perfection. But even these yogic perfections, such as to be able to influence anyone; to be able to attain whatever one desires from anyplace in the universe, to fly in space, etc., are all material perfections, and they are ultimately exhausted. *Yoga* ultimately means to find Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Lord, in His localized aspect seated in the heart and to engage in eternal loving union with Him through devotional service. *Yogīs* who are distracted from this path by material perfections have to return to the earth

after death and again take another material birth and engage in devotional service before reaching the perfection of liberation, completely spiritual devotional service.

The following narration is an incident from the life of a great devotee *yogī*, Kardama Muni, who was not only a *yogī* but a perfect *yogī*, a devotee of the Lord. The narration of his activities appears in the Third Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the most mature and spotless scripture of the entire Vedic literature. Kardama lived long, long ago, in the Satya-yuga, just after the dawn of the creation of the universe.

HIS MEDITATION ON THE LORD

At that time, Lord Brahmā, the original creator empowered by Kṛṣṇa, was ordering his sons to marry and beget children so that the universe might be populated with worthy offspring. Commanded by Lord Brahmā, Kardama practiced meditative penances on the bank of the Sarasvatī River for a period of 10,000 years. It is understood that the *yoga* system, in order to be rightly practiced, must be performed by persons who possess a very long duration of life; otherwise, there is no possibility of attaining real perfection. There is no point in attempting the preliminary practices of *yoga*, such as the different postures of sitting, unless one is able to practice until perfection. Kardama Muni was not one of the so-called *yogīs* of the present age of Kali (age of quarrel and bluffing) who sit for a paltry fifteen minutes a day in *yoga* postures and claim spiritual advancement. It may be noted here that in the age in which Kardama lived, *yoga* meditation was the process recommended by the Vedic literature, whereas today the Vedic literature clearly states that there is no alternative to the chanting of the holy name: *harer nāma harer nāma harer nāmaiva kevalam/ kalau nāsty eva nāsty eva nāsty eva gatir anyathā* (*Bṛhan-Nāradya Purāṇa*).

Why did Kardama practice meditation? It is stated in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*: “During that period of penance the sage Kardama devotedly waited upon the Personality of Godhead.” In other words, he practiced mystic *yoga* for 10,000 years just to please

the Supreme Personality of Godhead. That is stated in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Therefore he is the first-class *yogī*. His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda writes in his commentary to the Third Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*: “One has to surrender unto the lotus feet of the Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, in order to achieve real success. To attain perfection of the *yoga* practice or meditation, one must act in devotional service, namely hearing, chanting, remembering, etc. Certainly remembering is also meditation, but upon whom must one meditate? The Supreme Personality of Godhead. He must not only be remembered, but one must hear about the activities of the Lord, and chant His glories.” After engaging himself in different types of devotional service, Kardama Muni attained the perfection of meditation, which is attained only by those who are surrendered souls. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes: “Where there is no mention of the Personality of Godhead, then where is there *yoga* and surrender? And where there is no meditation upon the Personality of Godhead, then where is there any question of *yoga* practice?”

THE ETERNAL FORM OF THE PERSONALITY OF GODHEAD

Perfection means that Kardama actually saw the Personality of Godhead. The form he saw was not imaginary. It is not that one can concentrate his mind on some arbitrary form of the imagination in meditation. It is clearly stated in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*: “The form which the Lord showed to Kardama was consistent with Vedic principles and can be understood through the study of the *Vedas* from authoritative sources.” The eternal blissful form of the Lord is described in the *Bhāgavatam*: “Kardama Muni saw the Supreme Personality of Godhead in His eternal form, effulgent like the sun. The Lord was wearing a garland of white lotuses and water lilies. He was clad in spotless yellow silk, His lotus face fringed with slick dark locks of curly hair; adorned with a crown of earrings, He held His characteristic conch and disc and mace in three of His hands and played with a white lily while smiling. His smiling captivates the hearts of all devotees. Having set His lotus feet on the shoulders of Garuda, He stood in the air with a golden streak on His breast and the famous Kaustubha gem suspended from His neck.” The descrip-

tions given in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* are not products of the material energy. Kardama did not meditate for 10,000 years simply in order to see an imaginary vision concocted by his own brain. Rather, he attained a level of perfection by which the Lord was pleased with him and revealed His transcendental form, which is never revealed to impersonalists. Perfection of *yoga* does not end with voidness; on the contrary, perfection of *yoga* is attained when one sees the Personality of Godhead as He is in His eternal form.

When Kardama Muni saw the Lord, his transcendental desires were fulfilled, and he fell to the ground with head bowed and offered obeisances. He addressed the Supreme Personality of Godhead as follows: "O supreme worshipable Lord, You are the reservoir of all pleasure, and those who are advanced *yogīs* aspire, through many, many births of performance of deep meditation, to see Your transcendental form." Again it is seen that Kardama reached the ultimate in *yoga* and acknowledged the goal to which *yogīs* aspire after many lives of *yoga* practice. The point is not to see void but to see the spiritual form of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Clearly, then, Kardama was in the most advanced stage. His next words spoken unto the Lord are therefore difficult at first to understand: "Desirous of marrying a girl of like disposition who may prove a veritable cow of plenty in my married life, I too sought the center of Your lotus feet to satisfy my lustful desire."

It is startling to hear a *yogī*, who is supposed to be freed from all attachment to material life by meditating in solitary celibate penance for many thousands of years and attaining sight of the Personality of Godhead, only asking for a nice wife. But explanation reveals to us that Kardama was even more exalted than we have so far understood. Not only did Kardama Muni not actually seek marriage out of lustful desire, but his desire was the desire of Kṛṣṇa. As stated in the *Bhāgavatam*, "I shall accept this nice chaste girl as my wife until she bears a child born out of the ray of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Then I shall accept the life of devotional service which is practiced by the most perfect human beings. I know that this is the desire of Lord Viṣṇu and that it is a process free from envy."

It was the practice in former ages that great sages and saintly persons, after making their lives perfect, would beget

children in order to serve the Lord in that way, and but for engaging in sex life to produce exceptional progeny, they strictly observed the laws of celibacy. As for Kardama's statement about producing a child who would be a "ray of Viṣṇu," it may be told that Kardama Muni is the father of the incarnation of Godhead Lord Kapila, who is Viṣṇu Himself. Lord Kapila appeared as the son of Kardama Muni and Devahūti for the purpose of preaching the godly Sāṅkhya philosophy, which is a combination of mysticism and devotional service. His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda writes in this connection, "One should beget a child who can perform the duties of Viṣṇu, or else there is no need to produce children. There are two kinds of children born of good fathers. One is the child who is educated in Kṛṣṇa consciousness so that he can be delivered from the clutches of *māyā* in that very life, and the other is the child who brings forth the ray of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and who teaches the highest goal of life. Great householders pray to God to send His representative so that there may be an auspicious movement in human society, or they pray to the Lord for an opportunity to train a child in Kṛṣṇa consciousness so that he won't have to come back again to this miserable world. Parents should see to it that the child born of them must not enter again into the womb of a mother."

INSTRUCTIONS ON MARRIAGE

Kardama prayed to the Lord as if he were under the grip of lust and desired the Lord's mercy in the form of an ordinary marriage. By speaking in this way, Kardama, who was actually a liberated soul, brought out for all the future readers or hearers of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* many significant clarifications of marriage and married life. At his request, the Lord was able to show that a man should pray to the Supreme Personality of Godhead for whatever he wants, whether it be liberation, devotional service or the fulfillment of material desires. Material desires should be satisfied in accordance with the will of the Supreme Lord or the *Vedas* wherein there are prescriptions for a married life of regulated sense gratification. Even if one has lustful desires, if he takes his desires to the Supreme Lord and abides by His will, he will get far more than he

could imagine, and he will eventually gain spiritual purification and association with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Ultimately it is God who awards. Man proposes and God disposes. If one can accept what the Lord offers as his share, then he will find it a richer share than he had ever dreamed of attaining by his own endeavors. But if he strains to exploit under the illusion of winning by his own endeavor, he will lose on all counts. For example, Kardama was an austere penniless *yogī* with no facilities for gaining a beautiful wife, yet since he prayed to the Lord for a wife, he was granted the most beautiful and highborn princess in the world.

Lord Viṣṇu, who shone on the shoulders of Garuḍa, spoke to Kardama with transcendental words in accents as sweet as nectar. His eyebrows moved gracefully as He regarded the sage with a smile full of affection: "Having come to know what was in your mind, I have already arranged for that for which you have worshiped Me through the discipline of the mind and senses. My dear *ṛṣi*, O leader of the living entities, for anyone who serves Me in devotional service by worshiping Me, especially persons like you who have given up everything unto Me, there is no question of frustration." It is stated here that the Lord gives His devotees all pleasures and that He answers all their desires, although He never awards anything which might be detrimental to their devotional service. Even if the devotees approach the Personality of Godhead with material desires, there is no question of frustration in those desires.

THE LORD DISPOSES

The Lord then outlined His plan of benedicting His devotee Kardama with a perfect wife: "Svāyambhuva Manu is well known for his righteous acts. That celebrated emperor, who is head of religious activities, will come to see you with his wife Śatarūpā the day after tomorrow. His daughter, who is grown up and ready for marriage, has all good qualities; she is also searching for a good husband, and her eyes are black, My dear sir. Her parents will come to see you just to deliver their daughter as your wife." In his purports, His Divine Grace Śrīla Prabhupāda writes of the proper selection of a husband for a girl: "Girls are never thrown into the

public street to search out their husband. When girls are grown up and are searching after a boy, they forget whether the boy they select is actually suitable for them. Out of the urge of sex desire a girl may accept anyone, but if the husband is chosen by the parents, they can consider who is to be selected and who is not to be selected." For example, within the family of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, a husband or wife is selected by the spiritual master or by his representative, the temple president, and so it is by the proper sanction.

The Lord predicted that nine daughters would come from the union of the marriage and that through the daughters great sages would duly beget future children. Finally the Lord said to His devotee Kardama, "With your heart cleansed by properly carrying out My command and having resigned to Me the fruit of all your acts, you will finally attain to Me." Thus the Lord disclosed to Kardama that if he only acted under the direction of the Lord, then all his acts, even in married life, would be completely sanctioned, and he would finally attain the supreme abode. The Lord finally requested Kardama to be compassionate to all living entities. He asked him to please give assurance to all that the universe is identified in Kṛṣṇa and that Kṛṣṇa is in everyone.

KARDAMA ATTAINED REAL ONENESS

The Lord referred to Kardama's upcoming householder life as well as to the last days of his life, when Kardama would again take up the renounced order. He was not simply to receive the potency of the Lord's mercy and keep it for himself, but he was to distribute the knowledge of devotional service to everyone. By following the order of Viṣṇu, Kardama Muni attained real oneness with God because the Lord wants His devotee to always think of Him and worship Him. It is not that the Lord wants the transcendentalist to try to usurp His position and become God Himself, but to always offer obeisances to Him and offer Him unlimited service. The Lord wishes to reciprocate with His devotees and supply the fulfillment of their desires. The Lord revealed to Kardama that he would be the father of an *avatāra* of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. "Manifesting a part of My divine being through your wife Devahūti,

O great sage, I shall instruct her in the philosophy which deals with the ultimate principles or categories." This is the first reference to Kapiladeva, the first proponent of Sāṅkhya philosophy. This Sāṅkhya philosophy is not to be confused with the Sāṅkhya philosophy propagated later by an atheistic godless imposter who was also named Kapila.

Having spoken to His devotee, the Lord left the Bindusarovara Lake, on a pathway leading to Vaiṅkuṅṭha. The sage stood below looking up, and he listened to the hymns which emanated from the flapping of the wings of the Lord's carrier. The sage Kardama then waited for the time spoken of by the Lord, and he prayed.

As predicted, the great worldly leader Svāyambhuva and his wife Śatarūpā journeyed on a chariot all over the globe and reached the hermitage where the sage Kardama was completing his long vows of austerity. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* states that the holy lake Bindusarovara was filled with "the drops of tears fallen from the eyes of the Lord, who was overwhelmed by extreme compassion for the sage who had sought His protection." The lake area is described as resounding with the notes of overjoyed birds who were all pious, as were the fruit-bearing trees and the flowers. Svāyambhuva Manu and Śatarūpā entered the hermitage and found Kardama sitting before a sacred fire into which he was offering oblations. Clad in rags, of high stature, and his eyes as big as the petals of a lotus, he looked like an unpolished gem. In these *Bhāgavatam* descriptions of the *brahmacārī yogī*, it is stated that usually a *yogī* is skinny on account of his austerities and lack of comforts, but Kardama Muni had seen the Supreme Personality of Godhead face to face, and he looked healthy due to having received the nectar-like sound vibration.

THE KING AND THE YOGĪ

"Seeing that the monarch had come to his hermitage and bowing before him, the sage greeted him with benediction and received him with due honor." The *yogī* then addressed the King with words of praise because he understood that unless a pious king is ruling, the wicked elements in society can overthrow the whole aim of the society, which is to help the citizens go back home, back to Godhead. He addressed the King as the protecting energy

of Śrī Hari (Kṛṣṇa). After offering obeisances, the *yogī* then asked the King why he had come with a glad heart and how he, the *yogī*, could meet his wishes. The royal order formerly gave all protection to the *brāhmaṇas* so that they could advance the society in terms of spiritual culture, and the *brāhmaṇas* would give their valuable instructions to the royal order so that every citizen could become elevated to spiritual perfection.

Svāyambhuva said that he was most fortunate to be able to touch his head to the dust from the feet of the sage, and he thanked him for his words of instruction. "We are seeking a worthy match for our daughter in terms of age, character and good qualities." The father, Svāyambhuva Manu, confided to Kardama that "the moment she heard from the sage Nārada of your noble character, learning, beautiful appearance, youth and other virtues, she fixed her mind on you." So although Devahūti had not seen Kardama Muni, she had fixed her heart upon him after hearing of him from Nārada, and on the basis of that hearing she had decided to marry him. Svāyambhuva offered his daughter with all reverence as a worthy match for taking charge of household duties. By household duties he did not mean sense gratification but mutual execution of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, which is called, in Sanskrit, *gṛhastha*. There are two words in Sanskrit to describe married life. One, *gṛhamedhī*, means to accept a wife for sense gratification and to make one's apartment a center for executing the same propensities as the animals, whereas the other, *gṛhastha*, means to gain a helper in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Devahūti was eligible to offer such help, for she was equal in age, character and quality to the sage.

KARDAMA ACCEPTS DEVAHŪTI

Kardama at once agreed. "Certainly I have a desire to marry, and your daughter too has not yet married or given her word to anyone; therefore our marriage according to the Vedic system can take place." Kardama expressed appreciation of Devahūti's beauty. He too had heard of her, for she had attracted even the denizens of the heavenly planets by her personal beauty. Kardama had been ordered by his father Brahmā to produce progeny, but actually the goal of his life

was Viṣṇu, in whom even Brahmā originates, as do all living entities in all the worlds. Therefore, since it was the desire of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kardama would marry and father children in the spirit of devotional service. This story in the *Bhāgavatam* is related by the sage Maitreya to Vidura, and it continues. "The sage Kardama thus spoke very nicely regarding Devahūti. Then he became silent, thinking of his worshipable Lord Viṣṇu, who has a lotus on His navel. When he was silent and smiling, his face attracted Devahūti, and she began to think within herself of the great sage." As soon as Kardama Muni stopped talking and became silent, he at once began to think of Lord Viṣṇu. The devotee may seem to be engaged in things other than Viṣṇu, dealing and talking about other matters, but actually he is always thinking of Kṛṣṇa, and thus his smile is so attractive as to win many admirers and followers.

TRANSCENDENTAL MARRIED LIFE

After their marriage and the departure of her parents, Devahūti began to serve her husband with great love. She pleased him by giving up all sorts of lust, pride, envy, greed, sinful activities and vanity by fidelity and purity of mind. These are some of the qualities of a great husband's great wife. Both were great by spiritual qualification. Devahūti was not proud because of her high birth. As can be seen from this narration, the union of Kardama and Devahūti is filled with pertinent instructions regarding how to live in transcendental married life with the goal of life, the center, being Kṛṣṇa. Householders wishing to benefit from their union may listen with an aim to raising their married life to the transcendental stage. Devotion of the wife to the husband is recommended. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "The wife is expected to be of the same category as the husband. She must be prepared to follow the principles of the husband; then there will be happy life. If the husband is a devotee and the wife is materialistic, then there cannot be any peace in the home." In the case of Devahūti, by following the strict vows of a chaste woman she became very skinny, and therefore her husband became compassionate. She had formerly been the daughter of a great king and was now serving him just like an ordinary woman. She had become reduced in health, and

her service was so selfless that she did not demand sense gratification even with her husband. She was simply acting to facilitate Kardama Muni's engagement in spiritual life. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "It is the duty of a faithful and chaste wife to help her husband in every respect, especially in Kṛṣṇa consciousness."

In the case of Devahūti, her husband rewarded her amply. Kardama told her, "My dear Devahūti, I have achieved the grace of the Lord in my discharging of my own religious life of austerity, meditation and Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I shall offer you all these achievements, which are free from lamentation, because you are engaged in my service, although you have not yet experienced these things. Now I am giving you transcendental vision to see how nice they are." By her husband's grace, Devahūti was able to feel practical realization simply by serving a great personality. Similarly, any sincere disciple of a bona fide spiritual master can achieve spiritual life simply by service.

DEVAHŪTI DESIRED OFFSPRING

Coming from a great royal family, Devahūti had much aristocracy and wealth, but the greatest treasure, love of God, she had been unable to fully appreciate. She therefore expressed her full satisfaction to her great husband, who was under the protection of the spiritual energy. But she reminded him, "One thing you promised may be fulfilled now by our bodily union, because for a chaste woman it is very glorious to have children of the same quality." Kardama Muni had certainly promised to her parents that he would stay with her until they had children. Since both were spiritually enlightened, a child was very desirable as an expansion of their qualities. Devahūti then asked her husband what arrangement should be made and what was required according to the scriptures in terms of conditions, time and place for the most suitable sex life. Sex life is meant for having good children. One must arrange everything so that the husband may be attracted by the beauty of the wife and a favorable mental situation may be created so that at the time of sex life the mental state may be transferred into the womb of the wife and nice children will come out of that marriage. Thus we see that the Vedic scriptures provide not only spiritual instructions but

instructions on how to prosecute material existence nicely with the ultimate aim of spiritual perfection. It is mentioned in the *Āyur-veda* that when the passion of a man is greater than that of a woman, then there will be a greater chance of a boy being born. And if the passion of the woman is greater, then there will be more chance of a girl being born. Devahūti wanted her husband to instruct her according to scripture so that his passion might be increased. She also requested a suitable house because the hermitage in which Kardama was living was very simple and completely in the modes of goodness, with little possibility of passion.

THE AERIAL MANSION

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam then describes the miraculous accomplishments effected by the yogic power of Kardama Muni. Since he was completely perfected in *yoga* practice and sought to please his beloved wife, Kardama exercised his yogic power and instantly produced an aerial mansion which was fully arranged according to his will. It was a huge and wonderful structure filled with opulent pleasurable rooms and decorated with rubies, furniture and all kinds of attractive wealth. It was such a magnificent castle that the *yogī* himself was astonished at what he had created. Devahūti, however, because she was so niggardly in her appearance, with matted locks and a dirty dress, seemed afraid of the marvelous castle in the air. Kardama Muni knew her mind, and with further yogic powers he requested that she simply step into the Bindusarovara Lake, where he had arranged for hundreds of beautiful female maid-servants to attend her and beautify her with ointments, scents, beautiful silks, etc. They offered her foods and drinks to improve her bodily condition, and they held a mirror for her, cleansed her, adorned her with garlands and marks of *tilaka*, and in general made much of her so that she finally emerged from the lake looking very beautiful with a smiling face and nice figure. She could understand that all this was taking place due to the yogic prowess of her husband and that nothing was impossible for such a *yogī*.

Husband and wife then travelled in the aerial mansion to the pleasure valleys of Mount Meru, which is frequented by the demigods. They travelled all over the universe and enjoyed pleasures together. Al-

though *yogīs* are known to display such wonderful powers, Kardama was more than a *yogī*, and his life is more praiseworthy than that of ordinary *yogīs*. Even in his travelling through the universe for pleasure with his wife, his actual motivation was to produce good progeny in the service of Lord Viṣṇu. It is stated in *Bhagavad-gītā* (6.47), "Out of many *yogīs*, he who is a devotee of the Lord is a first-class *yogī*." Kardama Muni is therefore understood to be an already liberated soul, better than the conditioned demigods, who also can travel in space. So although he was enjoying with his wife, he was above material conditional life and transcendental to all material limitations. That is the verdict of the *Bhāgavatam*.

HE RETURNED TO HIS HERMITAGE

After showing his wife the different arrangements throughout the entire extent of the universe, Kardama Muni returned to his own hermitage. Despite having such immense powers to travel all over the universe, Kardama did not claim that he was equal to God or comparable with the inconceivable energy of the Supreme Lord, as do some bogus *yogīs*, who cannot travel in outer space but who simply instruct sitting postures and take fees from students. Kardama Muni remained a devotee of the Lord, and that is the real position of every living entity. Finally by his yogic powers he at once produced nine daughters through the womb of Devahūti. Devahūti, the sage devotee, bore all these children on one day, and all were charming in every limb and breathed the fragrance of red lotus flowers. Having begotten children through his wife, Kardama then prepared to leave household life, home and his beautiful wife to prosecute Kṛṣṇa conscious life, as he had promised. His real business was always spiritual realization, and he did not forget this, even while travelling in the mansion.

It is described that Devahūti, seeing Kardama Muni about to leave, was smiling externally, but she was at heart very afflicted. The stories in the *Bhāgavatam*, such as this narration, are not told for entertainment's sake but are filled with instructions pertinent for spiritual advancement of life, even while one is within household life. In the *Bhagavad-gītā*, Śrīla Prabhupāda writes in a purport (p. 257): "As for detachment from children, wife

and house, it is not meant that one should have no feeling for these. They are natural objects of affection. But when they are not favorable to spiritual progress, then we should not be attached to them. The best process for making the home nice is to live in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. If one is in full Kṛṣṇa consciousness, he can make his home very happy because this process of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is very easy. It is just to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare, and to take and accept the remnants of foodstuffs offered to Kṛṣṇa, and have some discussion on books like *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and engage oneself in Deity worship. These four things will make one happy, and one should train the members of his family in this way. The family members can sit down morning and evening very nicely and chant together Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. If we can mold our family life in such a nice way for developing Kṛṣṇa consciousness by following these four principles, then there is no need to change from family life to renounced life. But if it is not congenial nor favorable for spiritual advancement, then family life should be abandoned. In all cases, one should be detached from the happiness and distress of family life because this world can never be fully happy or fully miserable. Happiness and distress are concomitant factors of material life." Devahūti asked her husband to wait before going out alone and entering the order of *sannyāsa* or renounced life. "My dear *brāhmaṇa*, as far as your daughters are concerned, they will find suitable husbands and go away to their respective places. But who will give me solace after your departure as a *sannyāsī*?" Devahūti began to lament that she did not know that her husband was so advanced in spiritual realization, and she had been, as a less intelligent woman, mostly prone to sense enjoyment in his association. She pleaded to him, however, that even though she did not appreciate his glories, because she had taken shelter of him he must therefore deliver her from material entanglement. It is a known fact that association with a great personality is most important, and by that means alone one can make great advancement in spiritual life. Devahūti finally realized with whom she was associating, and she wanted to utilize the advantage.

Devahūti pleaded so feelingly that Kardama recalled the words of Viṣṇu to be compassionate to all, and so he replied, "Do not be disappointed, O princess, and just take heart. You are praiseworthy, and I tell you that the infallible Supreme Personality of Godhead will come out from the womb of your body as your son." Kardama Muni advised his wife to just engage in devotional service. "The Personality of Godhead, being worshiped by you, will disseminate our name and fame. He shall be the vanquisher of the knot of your heart by becoming your son and spreading spiritual knowledge." Having received instruction from her husband, the bona fide spiritual master, Devahūti began to worship the master of the universe, the Supreme Personality of Godhead who is situated in everyone's heart. Concerning the appearance of the Personality of Godhead as the son of a couple of devotees, Śrīla Prabhupāda writes: "The Supreme Personality of Godhead is the father of everyone. No one, therefore, is His father, but by His inconceivable energy He accepts some of the devotees as His parents and descendants. The devotee may ask the Lord to appear as his son. The Lord is already sitting within the heart of everyone, and if He comes out from the body of a devotee it does not mean that the particular woman becomes His mother in the material sense. He is always there. But in order to please His devotee He appears as her son. In this way the Supreme Personality of Godhead Madhusūdana, the killer of the demon Madhu, after many, many years of worship by Devahūti, appeared as the son of Kardama Muni, just as fire comes out from wood in sacrifice." At the time of the appearance of the Lord, the demigods who fly freely in the sky dropped showers of flowers out of their good will, and everyone smiled and became very satisfied.

DESCRIPTION OF KAPILADEVA

Lord Brahmā, chief engineer of the universe and the father of Kardama, then appeared to the sage, and after praising his obedience and instructing him about the marriage of his nine daughters to nine great sages, he described the incarnation of God who had been born as the son of Kardama and Devahūti. "Your son, Kapila Muni, will be characterized by His golden hair and His eyes just like lotus petals.

Sitting in the yogic *āsana* called *padma-mudrā*, His feet resembling lotus flowers, this incarnation of Godhead, by practical application of knowledge from the scriptures, will uproot the deep-rooted desire for work in this material world." Kapiladeva's conclusion, after exhaustive analysis of the material elements, is the same conclusion arrived at in *Bhagavad-gītā*: devotional service. "Just become Kṛṣṇa conscious. Just worship Kṛṣṇa and become a devotee of Kṛṣṇa. That is real knowledge, and anyone who follows that system becomes perfect without doubt."

PRAYER TO KAPILADEVA

Kardama approached the Lord, who was Lord Viṣṇu Himself and had descended into his home, and he offered Him obeisances. Kardama said, "The householders are generally negligent, but in spite of that the Supreme Personality of Godhead has taken His appearance in their home, just to support His devotees." Devotional service to the Lord is so sublime that even a householder can have the Supreme Personality of Godhead as one of the members of his household, as his son, as Kardama experienced. This is due to the fact that the Lord is called *bhakta-vatsala*; He is inclined to His devotees. Kardama paid obeisances to the innumerable forms of the Lord, none of which are material. His prayer to Kapiladeva is here stated: "I surrender unto the Supreme Personality of Godhead who has descended in the form of Kapila and who is independently powerful and transcendental, who is the Supreme Person and the Lord of the sum total of matter and the time element, who is fully cognizant and who is the maintainer of all the universe via the three modes of material nature, and who absorbs the material manifestation after dissolution. Now I am liberated from the debts of my father, and all my desires are fulfilled. Now I wish to accept the order of a mendicant. Renouncing this family life, I shall always think of You, and thus I shall remain free from lamentation."

GOD ENTERED HIS HOME

It is described by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda that there are two kinds of devotees of the Lord. One is called *goṣṭyānandī*, which

means those preachers who have many followers for preaching the glories of the Lord and who live amongst those many followers just to organize missionary activities. The other devotees are *ātmanandī*, or self-satisfied, and do not take the risk of preaching work. In this class was Kardama Muni. He remained alone, free from all anxieties, always moving from door to door to enlighten people about Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The wonderful thing about Kardama Muni is that the Lord Himself, as Kapiladeva, had taken birth in his home as his own son, and yet he was preparing to leave that home to search out self-realization. God was present in his own home, so why should he leave? The answer is that Kardama was living an exemplary life just in accordance with the Vedic authority, which says that one who is a householder must leave home after his fiftieth year. Kardama had very rigidly practiced *yoga* before his marriage; then Lord Brahmā had ordered him to marry and beget children as a householder. Kardama did that also. He begot nine good daughters and one son, Kapila, so his householder duty was performed, and now his duty was to leave. Even though he had the Supreme Personality of Godhead as his son, he had to respect the authority of the *Vedas*. He would travel all over the world as a mendicant and always remember the Supreme Personality of Godhead within his heart and thereby be freed from all anxieties of material existence.

Kardama Muni was anxious about his good wife Devahūti, and so his worthy son promised that not only would Kardama be freed but Devahūti would also be freed by receiving instruction from Him. "My incarnation in this form is especially meant for persons who aspire to get free from the entanglement of this material body, and I mean to explain the philosophy of Sāṅkhya in order to disseminate the knowledge of self-realization to interested people. I shall also instruct this sublime knowledge to My mother so that she also can attain the stage of perfection and self-realization, ending all kinds of reactions of fruitive activities. Thus she also will become free from all fear."

After the departure of Kardama Muni, Kapiladeva extensively explained the principles of Sāṅkhya philosophy to His mother. The *Bhāgavatam* states, "By following the principles instructed by Kapila, Devahūti soon became liberated from ma-

terial bondage, and she achieved the Supreme Personality of Godhead, as Supersoul, without difficulty." There is a Vaikuṅṭha planet known as Kapila Vaikuṅṭha where Devahūti was promoted to meet Kapila and reside eternally, enjoying the company of her transcendental son.

THE ETERNAL ABODE

The sage Vidura concludes the story of Kardama, Devahūti and Kapila by describing the pastimes of the incarnation of Kapila. "Kapila, the great sage and Personality of Godhead, later went out from His father's hermitage with the permission of His mother and went toward the northern side. Even now Kapila is residing there in trance, and all great teachers of Sāṅkhya philosophy are worshiping Him. He is staying in that position for the deliverance of the conditioned souls of the three worlds." It is stated that these descriptions are the purest of all things, and whoever hears or reads these narrations will become a devotee of the Lord and enter the supreme abode. END



Photo by Terry Wrightson

TRANSCENDENTAL ART

One of the basic principles of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is that one may utilize whatever talent he has in the service of the Supreme Lord. And it is a symptom of a bona fide spiritual master that he is expert in engaging everyone in practical transcendental devotional service. His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda has thus engaged a number of very talented artists in the service of the Lord by asking them to use their natural artistic inclination in painting pictures of the Supreme Godhead. According to all the revealed Vedic scriptures, God is not formless or void, but on the contrary He has the most attractive personal form. In fact He has many transcendental forms. Kṛṣṇa appears and expands Himself in multi expansions and incarnations, and these are described in Vedic literatures such as *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda has written many books and continues to translate authoritative books about Kṛṣṇa for the benefit of all mankind, and he has requested that this transcendental literature be profusely decorated with illustrations. His Divine Grace has also founded many temples of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, and these are transcendental centers where men and women may come and engage in spiritual life by seeing the form of the Lord. Therefore paintings are needed in all the temples, as well as for illustrations in books. For these two reasons an art department has been set up in ISKCON for production of *Kṛṣṇa-kathā* art (art based on the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa).

If a painting is done according to authoritative descriptions, it has the same potency as the Deity. According to the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* such paintings, when painted under authorized direction, in devotional service, are also considered incarnations of the Lord. In other words, Kṛṣṇa is personally present in a picture of Kṛṣṇa.

His Divine Grace Śrīla Prabhupāda first came to this country in 1965, and he began at once to engage young artists in painting pictures to be hung in Kṛṣṇa conscious temples. Many of the artists began painting only in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, with no previous formal training. Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote a letter in April, 1968, to one such artist, Jadurāṇī Devī, who was feeling misgivings because she was not a highly





developed artist. Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote as follows: "I know that pictures in this country are sold not on the merit of the pictures but on the reputation of the artists. That system is also current in India. But to come to the point of being a reputed artist will require a long duration of time, and our time is very short. We have to finish our Kṛṣṇa consciousness during our lifetime, and we should not waste a single moment for anything else. According to *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* a man is famous who is known as a great devotee of Kṛṣṇa.

"Continue trying your best to make your pictures as nice looking as possible, but not to satisfy the senses of the rascal public. Yesterday I was in a Unitarian Church, and I saw there two pictures of logs and bamboos, and then it was explained to me by our artist Govinda dāśī that these are modern art abstract paintings. Anyway I couldn't see in them anything but a combination of logs and bamboos. There was nothing to impel my Kṛṣṇa consciousness. If you want to be a great artist in that way, I will pray to Kṛṣṇa to save you. If the public doesn't buy, we don't mind. Why are you anxious to sell? We shall distribute them to devotees without any price.

"In the beginning I was seriously corresponding with some Indian friends to get some good *mṛdaṅga* players for our *saṅkīrtana* street chanting, but when I found it too difficult to get a man from India, some of my students were given the rudimentary lessons in playing, and simply by practice they are now pulling on with *saṅkīrtana* parties everywhere. My Guru Mahārāja used to say that in a foreign land where one cannot speak the language with the natives very nicely, what does he do to get help when there is a fire in his house? In such an emergency one must express himself somehow or other to his foreign friends and get their help to extinguish the fire. But if he wants to learn the language first and then talk with the foreign friends to get help, then everything in the meantime will be finished. Similarly, if we have to learn and then paint, it will be a long-term affair. But we want so many pictures immediately for all of our books. So all the artists may always engage in painting works, and that painting itself will gradually teach them how to make things nice. Regarding organization of the artists, there is no need to waste time learning art from studying

texts. We should always remember that our time is very short. I think that our artists should be satisfied with whatever they have learned already—that is sufficient. They should simply engage in painting pictures always, and that will sufficiently teach them the art.

“In this connection I may remark that you have sent one picture of Nārada Muni which I understand was copied from a so-called great artist, but Nārada Muni’s body appears to be very sensuous. But he was a first-class *brahmacārī*. He cannot have such a sensuous body. So you will do well not to work from the so-called well-known artists, but you should follow exactly the descriptions in the scriptures. The picture of Nārada Muni which you painted in my presence was very nice and good-looking, but this picture here doesn’t appeal to me. Better not to worry about this sort of technique and style now.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda has guided his artists to the transcendental level in art. It is only by the blessings of the spiritual master that one achieves any success in spiritual life. It is said in *Bhagavad-gītā* that the perfection of any prescribed duty is to please Kṛṣṇa, and one can please Kṛṣṇa by pleasing the spiritual master or the pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa. Therefore the artists who are pleasing the spiritual master are

using their talent for liberation. Moreover, the paintings shown on these pages, which can be seen in the various publications of ISKCON Press and in the temples of ISKCON, not only liberate the artists, but they also attract other people to the transcendental form of Kṛṣṇa. Up to date the most notable effort of the art department has been the production of the fifty-five illustrations of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s book, *Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead*. Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote that people are attracted to the book simply on the basis of the pictures, which very nicely explain the scriptural narrations.

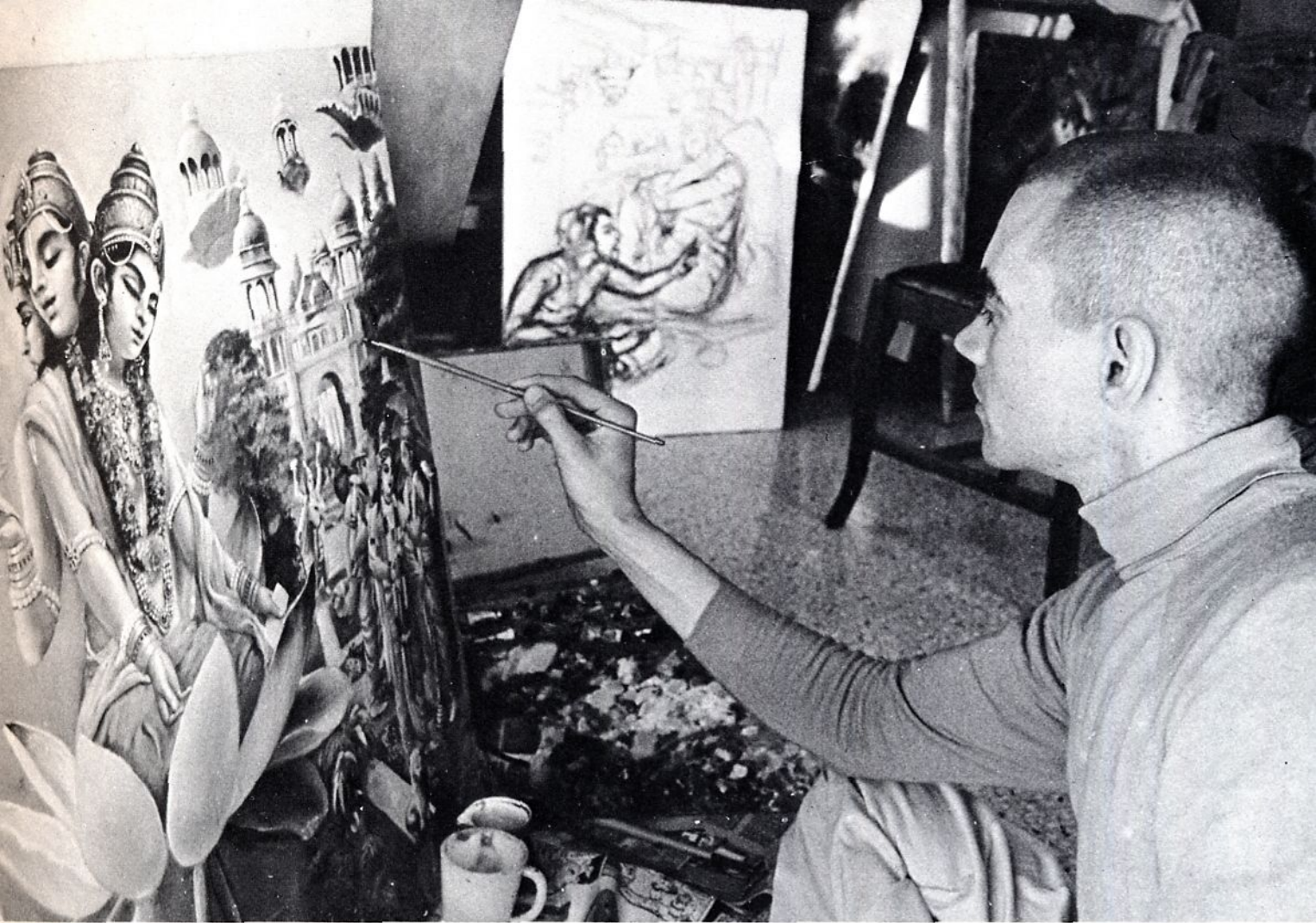
Kṛṣṇa consciousness is a personal philosophy, and the spiritual master is always personally thinking of his artists. Someone recently complimented Śrīla Prabhupāda on the fine artwork in his book *Kṛṣṇa*, and he said, “But the persons who painted these are even more beautiful than the pictures.” In another letter to one of his art students, Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote, “You may inform the artists that I am always satisfied by their work. I am satisfied only to see that everyone is always engaged in his respective duties. The teacher wants to see that the students are engaged in their handwriting work. As to who is writing with a nice hand, that is the secondary question. The teacher’s first

duty is to see that everyone is engaged in handwriting. So if all the artists are always engaged in painting, that will satisfy me, and that will gradually make them experienced in making good paintings.”

While *Kṛṣṇa* was being painted, Śrīla Prabhupāda was sent samples of paintings, and he commented in a letter to one of his artists: “The art department is doing very nicely, and surely the production will improve even more by the grace of Kṛṣṇa. You are all being inspired by Kṛṣṇa how to portray the Lord and His associates for the devotees’ eyes, so everyone who sees these transcendental pictures will turn to become a devotee, and that is our aim.” Śrīla Prabhupāda has seen from the beginning that Kṛṣṇa conscious art is a strong and convincing means to engage people in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He has described the paintings as shutters which open the spiritual world for view, and he has requested the artists to flood the world with their paintings.

The authenticity of the paintings depends on the devotees’ scrupulously following the scriptures. Descriptions of the Supreme Lord are given throughout the Vedic literature, where His beautiful form is described in detail. For instance, in a purport of *The Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* His Divine Grace Śrīla Prabhupāda, offer-





ing information from the *Brahma-saṁhītā*, says, "The ideal *yogī* concentrates his attention on Kṛṣṇa, who is called Śyāmasundara. He is as beautifully colored as a cloud, and His lotus face is as effulgent as the sun. His dress is brilliant, He is decorated with earrings, and His body is flower-garlanded. Illuminating all sides is His gorgeous luster, which is called the *brahmajyoti*. He incarnates in different forms like Rāma, Nṛsiṁha, Varāha and Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and He descends like a human being as the son of mother Yaśodā. He is known as Kṛṣṇa, Govinda and Vāsudeva. He is the perfect child, husband, friend and master, and He is full with all opulences and transcendental qualities. If one remains fully conscious of these features of the Lord, he is called the highest *yogī*."

Śrīla Prabhupāda has encouraged the artists to work nicely together. He has said that by painting together and discussing the subject matter of their work they will remain in *samādhi*, or absorption in constant thought of the Personality of Godhead. One cannot imagine how fortunate one must be to meet a bona fide

spiritual master, for it is only with the guidance of such a spiritual master that one can perfect one's life. The Kṛṣṇa conscious art students always scrupulously follow the descriptions in the scriptures. Also, the spiritual master, Śrīla Prabhupāda, has often given them additional descriptions. A team of four artists—Devahūti Devī, Jadurani Devī, Muralīdhara Dās, and Bharadrāja Dās—painted the illustrations for *Kṛṣṇa*, and they received many specific instructions. For example in the second volume of *Kṛṣṇa* there is a description in the text of prayers offered unto the Supreme Personality of Godhead by the personified *Vedas*, but there is not much reference to their appearance. So the artists asked Śrīla Prabhupāda, and in a letter of May, 1970, he replied: "The personified *Vedas* are just like great sages in appearance. Some of them may look like Vyāsadeva, Vālmiki, Nārada, etc. Some of them are older, some of them are younger, some of them have full hair like Vyāsa because they are householders, and others are *brahmacārīs*, with shaved heads, but they are all great souls; *paramahāṁsas*, highly elevated in the transcendental

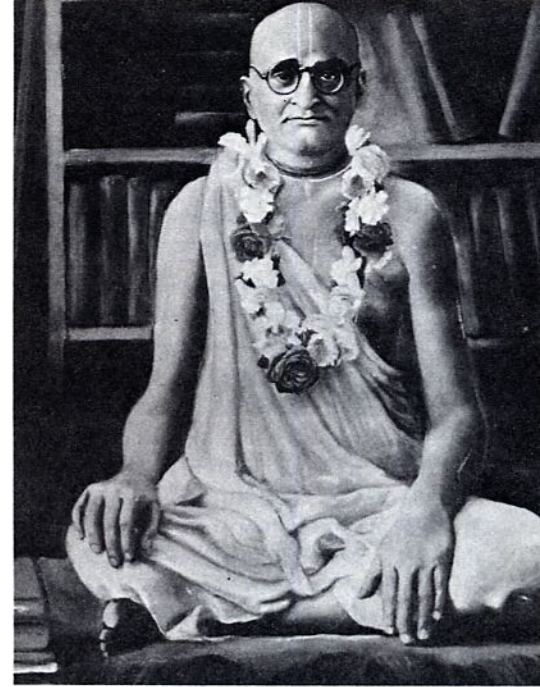
science. As you suggest, these pictures will be needed for illustrating a long portion of text describing the prayers. It is a very important chapter, and it should be appropriately illustrated. You are very able to choose suitable subject matter for the pictures, so please execute them carefully for Kṛṣṇa's satisfaction. If you need any other information, please write your inquiry to me, and I shall be glad to give you the proper direction." On occasion the spiritual master has corrected the artists, as in a letter of 20 August 1970 regarding a picture showing the great sage Śukadeva reciting *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* to the renowned King Mahārāja Parīkṣit: "This picture is not to the point. Śukadeva Gosvāmī should be offered a nice raised throne, and King Parīkṣit should be sitting along with the sages on the floor on the bank of the Ganges. King Parīkṣit has no beard. His face should be very nice looking. He is a young king, between thirty and forty years of age." Śrīla Prabhupāda, however, has also told the artists to work on their own: "The best thing will be that you paint pictures to your best discretion. The controversial points you can send to



me, and I will send instructions. All of you are expert painters, so your mutual decision for painting a picture is more valuable than my suggestion. The descriptions are already given in the books, so it should not be difficult to take out the points and prepare a sketch." Such instructions from the spiritual master, although seemingly dealing with artistic techniques, reveal something of the extent of his philosophical realization. One can acquire transcendental knowledge after thousands of years of yogic meditation, or one can receive it in a minute by submissively accepting the word of the self-realized

spiritual master. For example a letter of June 22, 1970, describes how to paint Lord Viṣṇu, the form of the Absolute Truth who is seen by a *yogī* at the very culmination of his meditation. "Regarding the cover for *The Lord in the Heart*, Lord Viṣṇu should be distinguished by Śrīvatsa on His chest. The Kaustubha jewel should be painted to look like a very precious jewel. Lord Viṣṇu should be surrounded by an effulgence emanating from His person. The first concentration should be on the lotus feet of the Lord. They should be very distinct and very nicely decorated with jewels, sandalwood and *tulasi*."

Transcendental art as shown on these pages easily attracts one to the form of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and this is the perfection of human life. This is confirmed in *Bhagavad-gītā*, Chapter Twelve, verses 1-2: "Arjuna inquired: 'Of those who are properly engaged in Your devotional service, and those who are engaged by the impersonal Brahman, the unmanifested—which is considered to be the more perfect?' The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: 'He whose mind is fixed on My personal form, always engaged in worshipping Me with great and transcendental faith, is considered by Me to be



most perfect.' ” Out of His infinite mercy, the Supreme Lord descends to this material world for the pleasure of His devotees and to rescue all living entities who are dragging on in this temporary world of miseries.

There is no one as successful as a disciple who uses his talent to serve Kṛṣṇa under the expert guidance of his bona fide spiritual master. A sincere seeker of God consciousness will never minimize the importance of the spiritual master. But someone may ask, “If God is everywhere, then what is the need of the spiritual master?” The answer is contained in a

comparison of the spiritual master to an electrician. Electricity is everywhere, but it is necessary for an electrician to come and make a connection before one can tap the electric flow for one’s telephone or radio. In the same way, God is present in His multi energies, but the pure devotee of God knows just how to use these energies of the Lord in His service. Particularly, the pure devotee spiritual master can show transcendental artists how to paint the personal form of the Personality of Godhead. Because he is completely conversant with the scriptures and is realized in love of Kṛṣṇa, the spiritual master knows all

the intricacies of the appearance of Kṛṣṇa. He can authorize an artist’s work so that it becomes transcendently worshipable as an *arcā* incarnation, or incarnation of the Lord in material elements, such as in the form of statuary or oil on canvas. As for the artists who accept such eternal employment, their work becomes transformed from aimless vanity or from a simple labor of love into the perfection of human existence—glorification of God through one’s occupation. Therefore we offer our respectful obeisances unto the spiritual master who is coming in disciplic succession from Lord Caitanya. END

THE TIME OF DEATH

by Dāmodara dāsa Adhikārī (ISKCON—Washington, D.C.)

I offer my most respectful obeisances unto His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, my spiritual master and the spiritual master of the universe, from whose lotus lips has sprung the eternal message of the *Vedas* in the purest line of disciplic succession from Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Absolute Truth, through Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and His Divine Grace Bhakti-siddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Mahārāja. He is spreading the teachings of Kṛṣṇa consciousness around the planet for the benefit of all living entities, and just by his kindness so many of his faithful disciples are being delivered from the clutches of impending death. Please allow me to address myself to this subject. The death of the body is an inevitable fact for each one of us, so let us find out what the Vedic literature says about this.

The final purport of the *Vedas* is stated by the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa in *Bhagavad-gītā*: “Just surrender unto Me.” (Bg. 18.66) But surrender is made difficult by our attachment to the gross and subtle bodily coverings of the soul. We must control the various senses and gradually extract ourselves from the predicament of material life. In *Bhagavad-gītā* the Lord states: “O mighty-armed son of Kuntī, it is undoubtedly difficult to curb the restless mind, but it is possible by constant practice and detachment.” (Bg. 6.35) For the *yogī* this practice is most severely tested at the time of death. The Supreme Personality of Godhead says, “Anyone who quits his body, at the end of life, remembering Me, attains immediately to My nature; and there is no doubt of this.” (Bg. 8.5)

For example, the Vedic literature cites the case of Ajāmila. Ajāmila, who had been born into a good *brāhmaṇa* family, fell into bad association after having seen a man and a woman embracing on a public road. His lust drew him into worse and worse circumstances, and finally, sick and wretched, he found himself dying and went to the house of the prostitute he was currently favoring. She threw him out mercilessly, seeing his abject state. He had no one present to help him, and so his thoughts turned to his son, and as he fell down to die, he called out his son’s name, Nārāyaṇa. Now, it so happens that Nārāyaṇa is a name of God, indicating Kṛṣṇa’s four-armed form. So just by the potency of the sound vibration of the

name of God, uttered even in this indirect manner by the dying Ajāmila, he was not taken away by the constables of the lord of death, Yamarāja, who were waiting for him, but instead was transported to the realm of Vaikuṅṭha, the abode of Lord Nārāyaṇa. On the other hand, Bharata Mahārāja, although advanced in spiritual understanding, thought of a stag at the time of his sudden death, and he became a stag in his next birth (although an extraordinary stag who could remember his previous life’s activities).

Everyone, from the smallest germ, known as *indra-gopa*, up to Lord Indra, the King of heaven, is subject to the stringent laws of material nature. We are attempting to win over these laws, but in fact we are simply becoming more and more entangled in illusion’s complexities. Even Lord Indra himself was once subject to the influence of the deluding potency. Indra once became captivated by the superior facilities for sense gratification available on his heavenly planet, and therefore when his spiritual master, Bṛhaspati, the *guru* of the demigods, scolded him, Indra acted offensively toward him. Bṛhaspati then decided to teach his student a lesson. He cursed him to take birth on a lower planet as a pig. Sloshing around in mud and stool, Lord Indra as a pig felt that he was enjoying life very much. He thought to himself, “I am very fortunate. Here I have my nice sow for sex life, so many nice piglets, and the farmer serves me daily with a nice big bucket of stools to eat. How lucky I am!” Meanwhile the upper planets fell into confusion in Lord Indra’s absence, and Lord Brahmā flew down to Indra’s farmyard on his swan to bring the King of heaven back to his post. But Indra would not leave: “I am very happy here, thank you.” So, with controlled intelligence, Lord Brahmā took his sword and killed the sow and piglets. “No! No! What are you doing?” cried Indra. “My beautiful wife and children! You have mercilessly killed them!” Brahmā then reminded Lord Indra that his death was going to come next anyway; at that very moment the farmer was sharpening his knife for the kill. The King of heaven was shocked into awareness, and he gladly returned to his duty as administrative head of the demigods.

The death of the body is approaching

for all of us. But Lord Kṛṣṇa begins *Bhagavad-gītā* by teaching that we are *not* the material body, but pure spirit soul. After confirming the eternal character of the individual soul (Bg. 2.12), the Lord says: “As the embodied soul continually passes, in this body, from boyhood to youth and then to old age, similarly the soul also passes into another body at death. The self-realized soul is not bewildered by such a change.” (Bg. 2.13)

Later in the *Gītā*, the Supreme Personality of Godhead elaborates on this: “From the highest planet in the material world, down to the lowest, all are places of misery where repeated birth and death take place. But one who attains to My abode, O son of Kuntī, never takes birth again.” (Bg. 8.16)

Why should we go to Kṛṣṇa’s abode? We should go there because that is our natural home. As confirmed in *Bhagavad-gītā*, this material world is a foreign place for us, for the soul is made of the same spiritual energy as Kṛṣṇa is, and he belongs in the spiritual sky. Therefore, in order to enter into the abode of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, we must be delivered from the womb of material nature. We have been impregnated into this womb by Kṛṣṇa because we desire to lord it over dead matter. This is confirmed in *Bhagavad-gītā*: “The total material substance, called Brahma, is the source of birth, and in that Brahma do I create pregnancy. Thus come the possibilities for the births of all living beings. It should be understood that all species of life, O son of Kuntī, are made possible by birth in this material nature, and that I am the seed-giving father.” (Bg. 14.3-4) After the living entities, or *jīvas*, are injected into *māyā*, they lie dormant for some time. Since the living entities come into material existence due to envy of Kṛṣṇa, it can be said that they are in a state of spiritual death. Spiritual death means to forget that one is spirit. The conditioned living entities come into the material world due to a desire to identify with the deluding energy. Therefore they lie dormant in this state of spiritual death. Then, after some time, “those *jīvas* who had lain dormant during the cataclysm are awakened.” (*Brahma-saṁhītā* 5.20)

But it must be admitted that this awakening is itself illusory, since we are still within the womb; we have not actually been born yet. Nor are we awake. Śukadeva Gosvāmī says in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, “The conditioned souls hover in a dream of heavenly illusory pleasures,

but actually they do not relish any tangible happiness in this way.” (Bhag. 2.2.2)

What is needed is known as *dvija*, or second birth. This second birth occurs when we are initiated by a bona fide spiritual master. He can deliver us from illusion, just by his causeless mercy. After this kind of birth, there is no death any more—just eternal, blissful life in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

The great saints and spiritual masters can give us advice on the proper method of passing out of this present body. One illustrative account is found in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, First Canto, Thirteenth Chapter. The gist of the narrative is as follows.

In the course of losing the Battle of Kurukṣetra, King Dhṛtarāṣṭra’s one hundred sons, led by Duryodhana, had all been killed, and so the aged father was living in the palace of the victor, King Yudhiṣṭhira. Yudhiṣṭhira was very kind to his former enemy, and, according to the Vedic custom, he allowed him all the privileges of a member of his family, regularly paying his respects to the elderly king every morning. Dhṛtarāṣṭra, who had been blind throughout his life, was thus living in Yudhiṣṭhira’s palace in peace and friendliness, along with his wife Gāndhārī.

This placid domestic scene was not to continue for long, however. Dhṛtarāṣṭra’s brother Vidura, who had left Duryodhana’s palace just before the great battle, now at last returned from a long pilgrimage to holy cities and temples. He had sat at the feet of his spiritual master, Maitreya Muni, and thereby received the gracious gift of absolute knowledge. Vidura was not an ordinary human being. Actually he was a demigod, Yamarāja, the lord of death, who had taken birth on this planet as the result of being cursed by the sage Māṇḍavya Muni. So Vidura was particularly qualified to ascertain the flaws in his aged brother’s present way of life.

Vidura’s arrival at the court of Yudhiṣṭhira was filled with gaiety. For the members of the royal family, it was like regaining consciousness after a long period. They had been distressed by Vidura’s absence, and now they all offered their most respectful obeisances to the great saint and embraced him heartily, crying affectionately due to their long separation. King Yudhiṣṭhira arranged for a nice place for Vidura to sit, and a festive reception was offered, with sumptuous food-stuffs for the brother of Dhṛtarāṣṭra. After taking sufficient rest, Vidura was

given a comfortable seat, and, after paying his respects, King Yudhiṣṭhira asked him about Lord Kṛṣṇa and the Lord’s immediate relatives, the Yadus.

Now, it so happened that the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa had brought His earthly pastimes to a close, and He and His relatives had departed for the spiritual sky. But Vidura did not disclose this unbearable news to the assembled devotees. They were to find out soon enough just by the laws of nature, and Vidura did not want to hasten their inevitable distress. Instead he turned to Dhṛtarāṣṭra and addressed his remarks to him directly:

“My dear King, please get out of here immediately. Do not delay. Just see how fear has overtaken you. This frightful situation cannot be remedied by any person in this material world. My lord, it is the Supreme Personality of Godhead as eternal time that has approached us all. Whoever is under the influence of supreme eternal time must surrender his most dear life, and what to speak of other things, such as wealth, honor, children, land, home, etc.

“Your father, brother, well-wishers and sons are all dead and passed away. You yourself have expended the major portion of your life, your body is now overtaken by invalidity, and you are living in the home of another. You have been blind from your very birth, and recently you have become hard of hearing. Your memory is shortened, and your intelligence is disturbed. Your teeth are loose, your liver is defective, and you are coughing up mucus.

“Alas, how powerful are the hopes of a living being to continue his life. Verily, you are living just like a household dog and are eating the remnants of food given by Bhīma. There is no need to live a degraded life and subsist on the charity of those whom you tried to kill by arson and poisoning. You also insulted one of their wives and usurped their kingdom and wealth. Despite your unwillingness to die and your desire to live even at the cost of honor and prestige, your miserly body will certainly dwindle and deteriorate like an old garment.

“He is called undisturbed who goes to an unknown, remote place, and freed from all obligations, quits his material body when it has become useless. He is certainly a first-class man who awakens and understands, either by himself or from others, the falsity and misery of this material world and thus leaves home and

depends fully on the Supreme Personality of Godhead residing within his heart.

“Please, therefore, leave for the North immediately, without letting your relatives know, for soon that time will approach which will diminish the good qualities of men.” (Bhag. 1.13.18-28)

Because Vidura spoke the truth from the platform of direct realization, Dhṛtarāṣṭra followed his brother’s advice, and he and his wife both left at once for the Himalayas and took up *yoga* practice under Vidura’s guidance in order to purify their consciousness so that they could be liberated from the attachments of material life. After perfecting their austerities, they voluntarily accepted death in the fire of mystic *yoga*. The *yoga* which they performed, however, was not sufficient for attaining the highest knowledge. Mere liberation is not sought after by pure devotees of Kṛṣṇa. It is not such a great achievement. Even the most demonic of all living entities, Hiranyakaśipu, was also liberated at his death, simply because he was *killed* by the Personality of Godhead in His form as Nṛsiṃhadeva. Such is the grace of Kṛṣṇa that He awards salvation even to the lowest of the low, if, through their atheistic activities, they are so corrupt as to necessitate their being annihilated by God Himself.

Mere impersonal salvation is not considered worthwhile because it is temporary. Thus it is on the same level as religion, economic development and sense gratification. Only pure devotional service of God can render the living entity completely free from birth, death, disease and old age. Śukadeva Gosvāmī says in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, “For those who are wandering in the material universe, there is no more auspicious means of deliverance than what is aimed at in the direct devotional service of Lord Kṛṣṇa.” (Bhag. 2.2.33) His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada writes in his purport to this verse, “Śrīla Śrīdhara Svāmī and all other *ācāryas*, like Jīva Gosvāmī, etc., agree that *bhakti-yoga* is not only easy, simple, natural and free from trouble, but that it is the only source of happiness for the human being.”

Commenting on the kind of *yoga* practiced by Dhṛtarāṣṭra, His Divine Grace writes: “In olden days such practice was very common for the transcendentalist, for the mode of life and character in those days were favorable. But in modern days, when the influence of the age of Kali is so disturbing, practically everyone is un-

trained in this art of bodily exercise. Concentration of the mind is more easily attained in these days by the chanting of the holy name of the Lord. The results are more effective than those derived from the inner exercise of the life air." (Bhag. 2.2.19, purport)

So here is a hint for all of us not to be dissuaded from attempting for spiritual emancipation. The human form of life is given to us as a chance to surpass the hurdle of birth and death. How, then, can we transcend the material nature at the time of death? Let us take the example of King Parīkṣit.

King Parīkṣit had offended a sage, Śamīka Muni, and the son of that holy man had subsequently cursed the King to be killed in seven days by the bite of a snake-bird. Having been informed of this by the Muni, the King was in the unique position of knowing exactly when he would die, and therefore he immediately prepared for death. He accepted the news of his death as "well and good for its being the cause of his indifference toward worldly attachments." (Bhag. 1.19.4) He left his palace and sat down tightly on the bank of the most holy Yamunā River, observed fasting, and simply depended on Lord Kṛṣṇa. As he sat there, the most auspicious saints and mystics arrived on the scene; they could foretell what was going to happen. The demigods, seeing the great assemblage, scattered flowers over the earth. Then at last, Śukadeva Gosvāmī arrived, and he took the most exalted seat as the chief guest of Parīkṣit. He is described in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* as "surrounded by saintly sages, demigods, and kings, just as the moon is surrounded by stars, heavenly bodies, and planets in the sky. He was gorgeously represented in that manner, and factually he was also respected by all of them." (Bhag. 1.19.31)

The King then put a question to Śukadeva Gosvāmī: "You are the spiritual master of great saints and devotees. I therefore beg to inquire from you the way of perfection for all persons, and especially for one who is just about to die." (Bhag. 1.19.37)

Śukadeva answered: "The highest perfection of human life, achieved either by complete knowledge of matter and spirit, by practice of mystic powers, or by perfect discharge of occupational duty, is to remember the Personality of Godhead at the end of life." (Bhag. 2.1.6) "Those who drink through aural reception, fully filled

with the nectarean message of Lord Kṛṣṇa, the beloved of the devotees, purify the polluted aim of life known as material enjoyment and thus go back to Godhead, to the lotus feet of the Personality of Godhead." (Bhag. 2.2.37) In the remainder of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Śukadeva Gosvāmī tells the King about Śrī Kṛṣṇa, His energies, His opulences and His activities; and just by hearing this transcendental sound vibration, the King was transferred to the spiritual sky at his death.

Here is the conclusion of the *Vedas*. The first principle of spiritual life is hearing, and Śukadeva Gosvāmī assures that this is the most important factor at death. The hearing must be submissive. One should not hear in a challenging spirit. In *Bhagavad-gītā* Lord Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna: "Because you are never envious of Me, O Arjuna, I shall give you this most secret wisdom, knowing which you will be relieved from the miseries of material existence." (Bg. 9.1) Elsewhere the Lord says, "That very ancient science of the relationship with the Supreme is today told by Me to you because you are My devotee as well as My friend; therefore, you can understand the transcendental mystery of this science." (Bg. 4.3)

Our attitude towards Kṛṣṇa and the spiritual master must not be envious, but favorable and devotional. Lord Caitanya prays, "In such a humble state of mind one can chant the holy name of the Lord constantly." (*Śikṣāṣṭakam* 3) In the *Gītā* the Lord tells us how to act in relationship with the spiritual master: "Inquire from him submissively and render service unto him." (Bg. 4.34)

So, with this in mind, let us hear something of that supreme destination, the goal of the *bhakti-yogīs*, described nicely by Śrīla Prabhupāda in *Bhagavad-gītā*:

"The supreme abode of the Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, is described in the *Brahma-saṁhitā* as the *cintāmani dhāma*. That abode of Lord Kṛṣṇa, known as Goloka Vṛndāvana, is full of palaces made of touchstone. There the trees are called desire trees, and the cows are called *sura-bhi*, and the Lord is served by hundreds and thousands of goddesses of fortune. He is Govinda, the primal Lord and the cause of all causes. There the Lord plays His flute; His eyes are like lotus petals, and the color of His body is like a beautiful cloud. On His head is a peacock feather. So attractive is He that He excels thousands of Cupids." (Bg. 8.21, purport)

The real meaning of eternal deathlessness is to perform devotional service for the eternal Supreme Lord, and therefore pure devotees do not even desire to attain to the Lord's eternal abode, Kṛṣṇaloka, as just described. Lord Caitanya prays, "O almighty Lord, I have no desire to accumulate wealth, nor have I any desire to enjoy beautiful women, nor do I want any number of followers. What I want only is that I may have Your causeless devotional service in my life birth after birth." (*Śikṣāṣṭakam* 4) Similarly the great *ācārya* of modern times Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, offering a poem on the death of a great devotee, says:

He reasons ill who says that Vaiṣṇavas
die

When thou art living still in sound.

The Vaiṣṇavas die to live and living try
To spread the holy life around.

Devotional service to Kṛṣṇa is eternal and cannot die. So the devotees pray, "Whether I attain to Vaikuṅṭha, the spiritual sky, or whether You wish to send me to hell, whatever You desire is all right. I simply pray to always remember You." Therefore when the Lord grants devotional service, it means that deathlessness is assured. When a devotee takes up Kṛṣṇa consciousness seriously he becomes very dear to Kṛṣṇa, and although the devotee may not desire it, his going back to Kṛṣṇaloka is assured.

We urge our readers to consider these topics seriously and with all reason and cool logic. Śrīla Prabhupāda has said that actually our desire to live eternally is indirect evidence that we are actually eternal by nature. These propositions on how one can go beyond death by performance of devotional service unto the Supreme Personality of Godhead are not mere word jugglery. Death is not the most wonderful thing; it is life that is most wonderful, and Kṛṣṇa consciousness is real life. Death can be conquered. Kṛṣṇa promises that this freedom from death can most assuredly be attained by His devotees. By becoming purified through hearing of the Lord from the spiritual master and by chanting the holy name of God, the devotees learn to take everything as the mercy of God, and thus they become eager to serve Him. That change from material consciousness to God consciousness makes one eligible to enter the kingdom of God for eternal blissful life.

END



