

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



THE MAGAZINE OF THE HARE KRISHNA MOVEMENT No. 41





Books By His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

KṚṢṆA, The Supreme Personality of Godhead The supremely rich, powerful, famous and beautiful Personality of Godhead, who is free from all material attachment, is now available in book form. *KṚṢṆA, The Supreme Personality of Godhead*, 750 pages of transcendental reading matter, opulently illustrated with 82 full-color plates, presents the eternal, blissful pastimes of the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa as they are revealed in the Tenth Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the ripened fruit of all the Sanskrit Vedic literatures.

The activities of Kṛṣṇa, which appear to be like those of an ordinary man, can only be properly understood with the help of a bona fide spiritual master fully realized in the knowledge of the transcendental nature. His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda is such a spiritual master. *KṚṢṆA, The Supreme Personality of Godhead*, potent in message and rich in design, offers mankind the opportunity to attain the highest benefit by understanding the true nature of the pastimes of the Supreme Lord. Everyone would do well to procure this deluxe two-volume set to read and keep at home as a great treasure.

THE NECTAR OF DEVOTION Our loving propensity expands just as a vibration of light or air expands, but we do not know where it ends. The root cause of all despondency is that our dormant loving propensity has not been fulfilled despite our great advancement in the materialistic way of life. Our love can be fully satisfied only when it is reposed in Kṛṣṇa, and in this way it is very easy to immediately and simultaneously love every living being. This is the science of *The Nectar of Devotion*, which teaches us how to stimulate our original love for Kṛṣṇa and thus enjoy our blissful life.

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who is the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself appearing in the role of His own devotee, can help human society to stop such unnecessary and temporary activities and can elevate one to the topmost platform of spiritual activities, which begin after liberation from material bondage. *Teachings of Lord Caitanya*, the instructions of this most munificent incarnation of the Supreme Lord, thus opens the field of activities of the pure soul. Such liberated activities in Kṛṣṇa consciousness are the goal of human perfection.

ŚRĪ ĪSOPANIṢAD The knowledge that brings one nearer to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa. All the major scriptures of the world indicate that Godhead, or the Absolute Truth, is not impersonal, but is a person. From the most authoritative sources, the famed 108 *Upaniṣads* of India, *Śrī Īsopaniṣad* supplies revealed evidence that the Personality of Godhead is the creator, maintainer and destroyer of everything that exists. The author's lucid 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.

In the present age of discord, *Śrī Īsopaniṣad* revives the dormant hope of all living beings—to transcend this conditioned state and gain the eternal, blissful association of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

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 by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead and the supreme authority on the *Gītā*, and He initially delivered the *Gītā* so that all persons—workers, students, philosophers, and yogis—could reach

Try to Understand the Basic Principles of the Great Movement "Kṛṣṇa Consciousness"

the perfection of life and be liberated from all suffering. His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda is passing on Kṛṣṇa's teaching 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."

ŚRĪMAD-BHĀGAVATAM

CANTO ONE—CREATION The science of God is greater than all other sciences, and this spiritual technology is rationally and authoritatively explained in the 18,000 verses of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, India's sublime contribution of culture, philosophy, politics, sociology, religion and love. His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda has undertaken the mighty task of rendering this supremely potent work into the English language along with Sanskrit transliterations, word-for-word synonyms and elaborate English purports. Thus in each verse one will find new enlightenment regarding the Absolute Truth, the origin of all emanations. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is an important cultural presentation for the respiritualization of the entire human society.

The first of the twelve cantos of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, entitled "Creation," was written, edited, published and distributed in India by His Divine Grace prior to his coming to the Western world. The first two of the three volumes which comprise the First Canto are now unavailable until reprinting, but Volume Three is available in limited quantity.

ŚRĪMAD-BHĀGAVATAM

CANTO TWO—THE COSMIC MANIFESTATION The Second Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* describes the purpose of the entire *Bhāgavatam* and the different symptoms of this purpose. The ten chapters of the Second Canto are now being published in serialized small-book form so that one may very carefully study this scientific literature in small installments.

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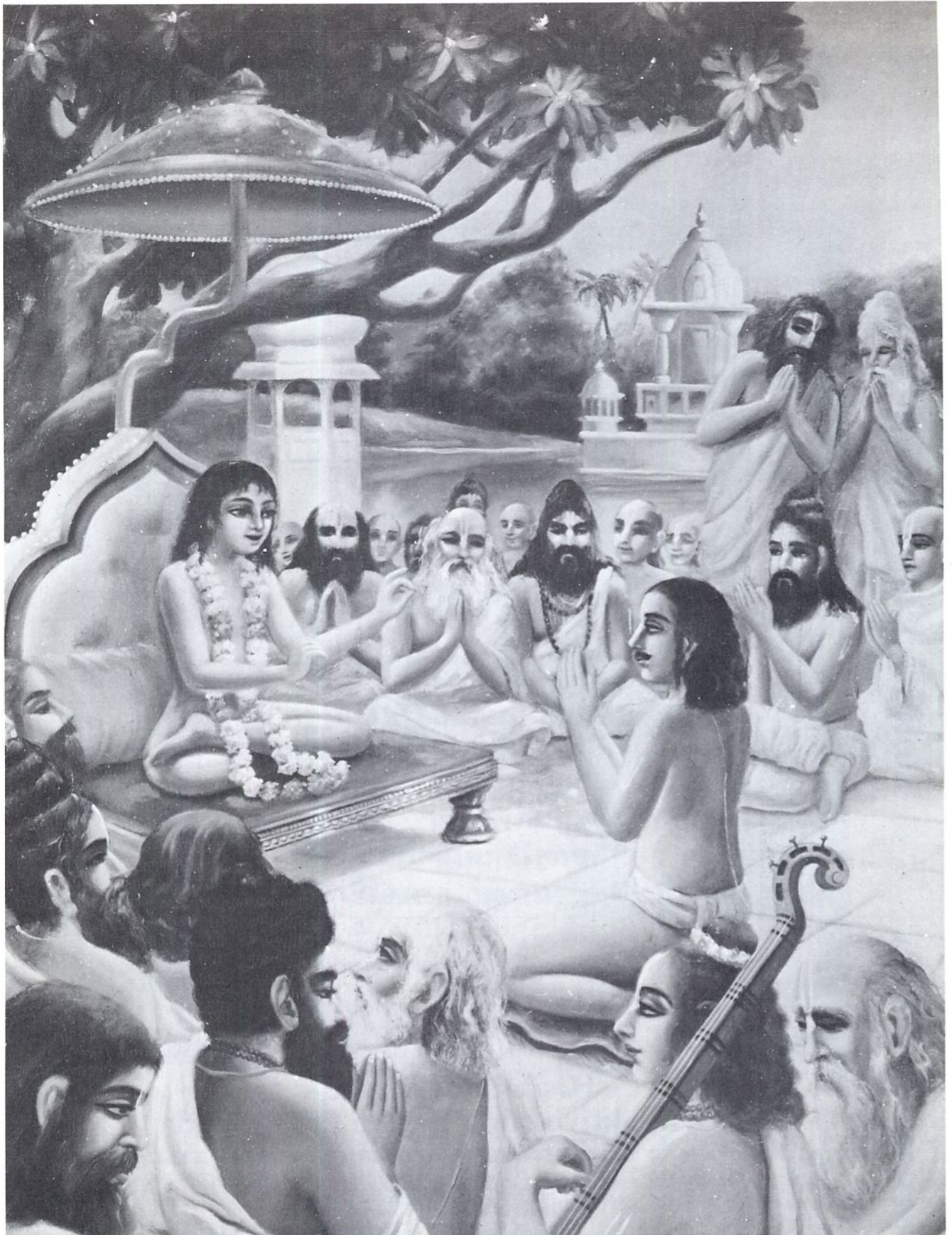


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When the great king Mahārāja Parīkṣit learned that he had only seven days to live, he immediately renounced his wealth, family and kingdom in order to spend his last days hearing the divine instructions of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* from the foremost spiritual master of that time, Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī.



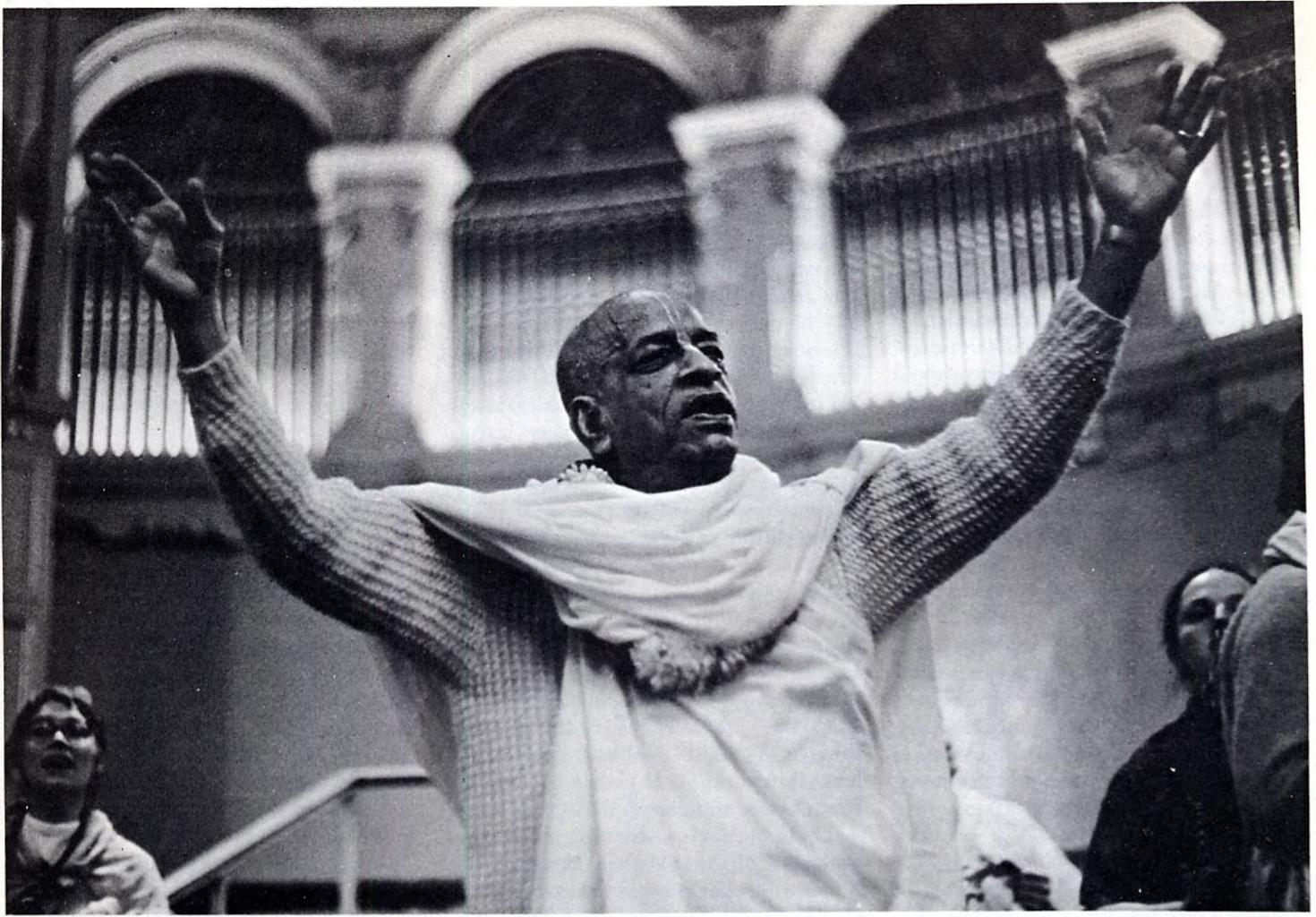
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FOUNDER—ĀCĀRYA OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS

*śrī-vigrahārādhana-nitya-nānā-
śṅgāra-tan-mandira-mārjanādau
yuktasya bhaktāṁś ca niyuñjjato'pi
vande guroḥ śrī-caraṇāvindam*

“The spiritual master is always engaged along with his disciples in the temple worship of Śrī Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. I offer my respectful obeisances unto the lotus feet of such a spiritual master.”

—from *Śrī Gurvaṣṭakam* (Eight Prayers Glorifying the Spiritual Master) by Śrīla Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakur.



WE ARE ALL ETERNAL SERVITORS OF KṚṢṆA

A LECTURE GIVEN AT CONWAY HALL, LONDON, BY

His Divine Grace

A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

Today's subject matter is our relationship with God. That is self-realization. The *saṅkīrtana* movement is the easiest process for self-realization because it cleanses the heart. Our misunderstanding of our identity is due to the dust covering the mirror of the mind. In a mirror which is covered with dust one cannot see himself. But if it is very clear, then one can see himself. So meditation is a process for cleansing the heart. Meditation means to try to understand one's relationship with the Supreme.

With everything with which we come in contact there is a relationship. Because I am now sitting on this cushion, the relationship is that I shall sit and the cushion will hold me. You have relationships. You are Englishmen or Indians, so there is a relationship with your society, with your

family, with your friends. So what is our relationship with God?

If you ask everyone, very few people will be able to explain their relationship with God. They say, "What is God? God is dead. I don't believe in God, not to speak of a relationship." Because these dirty things are covering their hearts, they cannot see. We have a relationship with everything—why do we not try to understand our relationship with God? Is that very intelligent? No. That is ignorance. All the creatures in this material world are covered by the three modes of material nature. Therefore they cannot see God. They cannot understand God, nor do they try to understand Him. But God is there. In England in the morning there is mist, so you cannot see the sun behind the fog. But does this mean that there is no sun?

You cannot see it because your eyes are covered. But if you send a telegram to another part of the world, they will say, "Yes, the sun is here. We can see it. It is very dazzling, full of light." So when you deny the existence of God or you cannot ascertain your relationship with God, that means that you are lacking in knowledge. It is not that there is no God. We are lacking. The sun is not covered. The sun cannot be covered. The fog or the cloud or the mist does not have the power to cover the sun. How big the sun is! It is so many times bigger than this earth. And the clouds can cover at most ten or twenty or a hundred miles. So how can the clouds cover the sun? No. The clouds cannot cover the sun. They cover your eyes. When an enemy comes and a rabbit cannot defend himself, the rabbit closes his eyes and thinks, "My

enemy is now gone.” Similarly, we are covered by the external energy of God and are thinking, “God is dead.”

The Lord has three kinds of energies. In the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* there are descriptions of the energy of the Supreme Lord. And in the *Vedas* also, in the *Upaniṣads*, there are descriptions of the energies of the Supreme Lord. *Parāśya śaktir vividhaiva śrūyate*. *Śakti* means energy. The Lord has multi energies. The *Vedas* say, “God has nothing to do.” We have to work because we have no other means to exist—we have to eat, we wish to enjoy this, that—but why should God work? God does not have to work. Then how can we say that God created this universe? Is it not work? No. Then how did it happen? His multifarious energies are so strong that they are acting naturally and are full of knowledge. We can see how a flower blooms and grows and systematically displays multi-colors: one side a little spot, another side a little spot, white on one side, more white on the other side. The butterfly also exhibits such artistic symmetry. So this is all being painted, but in such a perfect way and so swiftly that we cannot see how. We cannot understand how it is being done, but it is being done by the energy of the Lord.

HARE KṚṢṆA CLEANSSES THE HEART

It is due to a lack of knowledge that people say that God is dead, that there is no God, and that we have no relationship with God. These thoughts have been compared to the thoughts of a man haunted by a ghost. Just as a haunted man speaks all nonsense, similarly when we become covered by the illusory energy of God, we say that God is dead. But this is not a fact. Therefore, we need this chanting process to cleanse our heart. Take to this simple process of chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*. In that way, in your family life, in your club, in your home, on the road—everywhere—chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, and this darkness covering your heart, covering your real position, will be removed. Then you’ll understand your real constitutional position.

Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu recommended: *ceto-darpaṇa-mārjanam*. *Mārjanam* means cleanse, and *darpaṇam* means mirror. The heart is a mirror. It is like a camera. Just as a camera takes all kinds of pictures of days and nights, so also our heart takes pictures and keeps them in an unconscious state. Psychologists

knows this. The heart takes so many pictures, and therefore it becomes covered. We do not know when it has begun, but it is a fact that because there is material contact, our real identity is covered. Therefore *ceto-darpaṇa-mārjanam*: one has to cleanse his heart. There are different processes to cleanse the heart—the *jñāna* process, the *yoga* process, the meditation process, pious activities. *Karma* also cleanses the heart. If one acts very piously, his heart will gradually be cleansed. But although these processes are recommended for cleansing the heart, in this age they are all difficult. To follow the path of philosophical knowledge one must become a very learned scholar, one must read so many books, one must go to learned professors and scholars and speculate. One must search out a person who has seen the light. So these are all philosophical processes. Meditation is also a recommended process. One should question, “What am I?” Just consider: Am I this body? No. Am I this finger? No, this is *my* finger. If you contemplate your leg, you will see, “Oh, this is *my* leg.” Similarly, you will find everything to be “mine.” And where is that “I”? Everything is mine, but where is that “I”? When one is searching for that “I,” that is meditation. Real meditation means concentrating all the senses in that way. But that meditation process is very difficult. One must control the senses. The senses are dragging one outward, and one has to bring them inward for introspection. Therefore there are eight processes in the *yoga* system. The first is controlling the senses by regulative principles. Then sitting postures—that will help to concentrate the mind. If one sits leaning over, that will not help; if one sits up straight, that will help. Then controlling the breathing, then meditation, then *samādhi*. But today these are very, very difficult processes. No one can immediately perform them. The so-called *yoga* processes are fragmental—only the sitting postures and a few breathing exercises are practiced. But that cannot bring one to the perfectional stage. The actual *yoga* process, although a recommended Vedic process, is very difficult in this age. Similarly one can try to get knowledge by the speculative philosophical process: “This is Brahman, this is not Brahman, so what is Brahman? What is spirit soul?” Such empiric philosophical discussion is also recommended, but it is useless in this age.

Therefore Caitanya Mahāprabhu—not

only Caitanya Mahāprabhu but also the Vedic literature—says, *harer nāma harer nāma harer nāmaiva kevalam/ kalau nasty eva nasty eva gatir anyathā*. *Kalau* means in this age. *Nasty eva, nasty eva, nasty eva*—three times *nasty eva*. *Eva* means certainly, and *nasty* means not. “Certainly not, certainly not, certainly not.” What is that certainly not? One cannot realize oneself by *karma*. That is the first certainly not. One cannot realize oneself by *jñāna*. That is the second certainly not. One cannot realize oneself by *yoga*. Certainly not. *Kalau*. *Kalau* means in this age. *Kalau nasty eva nasty eva nasty eva gatir anyathā*. In this age one certainly cannot achieve success by any of these three methods. Then what is the recommended process? *Harer nāma harer nāma harer nāmaiva kevalam*. Simply chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*. *Kevalam* means only. Simply chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. It is the easiest and most sublime process. This is recommended, practical and authorized. So take it. Accept it in any condition of life. Chant. There is no expenditure, there is no loss. We are not chanting a secret. No. It is open. And by chanting you will cleanse your heart.

THE BLAZING FIRE OF PROBLEMS

In this material world no one wants misery, but it comes. Unexpectedly, like a forest fire that starts without anyone’s striking a match, it comes. No one wants a war, but war is fought. No one wants famine, but famine comes. No one wants pestilence, but it comes. No one wants fighting, but there is fighting. No one wants misunderstanding, but there is. Why? This is like a blazing fire in the forest. And it cannot be extinguished by fire engines. This blazing fire of problems cannot be extinguished by our so-called advancement of knowledge. No. That is not possible. Just as one cannot extinguish a forest fire by sending a fire engine or by bringing some water, similarly the problems of our life cannot be solved by material processes.

There are many examples. Prahlaḍa Mahārāja says, “My dear Lord, the father and mother are not actually the protectors of the children.” The father and mother take care of their children; that is their duty. But they are not the ultimate protectors. When nature’s law calls the child, the father and mother cannot protect him. Therefore although generally it is con-

sidered a fact that the father and mother are the protectors of the child, actually it is not a fact. If someone is drowning in the ocean and he thinks he has a very nice seat, will that protect him? No. Still he may drown. A nice airplane is flying in the sky, everyone is safe, but all of a sudden it crashes. Nothing material can protect us. Suppose someone is diseased. He may engage a good physician who gives good medicine, but that will not guarantee that he will live. Then what is the ultimate guarantee? Prahāda Mahārāja says, “My dear Lord, if You neglect someone, nothing can protect him.”

This is our practical experience. We can invent so many methods to solve the problems presented by the laws of material nature, but they are not sufficient. They will never solve all the problems, nor will they give actual relief. This is the fact. Therefore Kṛṣṇa says in *Bhagavad-gītā*, “*Māyā*, this external energy, is very, very strong. No one can surpass it. It is almost impossible.” Then how can one get free from this material nature? Kṛṣṇa says, “Simply by surrendering unto Me one can get relief from the onslaught of material nature.” That is a fact. So we have to cleanse the heart to learn what is our relationship with God.

KṚṢṆA AND WE ARE ETERNAL

In the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* it is stated, *nityo nityānām, cetanaś cetanānām*. The Supreme Absolute Personality of Godhead, or the Absolute Truth, is eternal. God is eternal, and we are also eternal. But the *Vedas* indicate that He is the supreme living creature. He is not dead. If He is not living, how is this world working? In *Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa says, “Under My supervision things are going on.” In the Bible also it is said, “God created.” That is a fact. Not that at one time there was a chunk and then this happened and then that. No. The *Vedas* tell us the actual facts, but we have to open our eyes to see. *Ceto-darpaṇa-mārjanam*. That is the process of cleansing our hearts. When we cleanse our hearts, then we will be able to understand what Kṛṣṇa and the *Vedas* say. We need to be purified. If a man is suffering from jaundice and you give him a piece of sugar candy, he will say that it is very bitter. But is sugar candy bitter? No, it is very sweet. And the medicine for jaundice is that

sugar. Modern science prescribes this, and it is prescribed in the Vedic literature also. So if we take a great quantity of this sugar candy, then we will be relieved from jaundice. And when there is relief, then one says, “Oh, this is very sweet.” So the modern jaundice of a godless civilization can be cured by this chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa. In the beginning it may appear bitter, but when one advances, then he will see how pleasing it is.

“I AM A SERVANT OF GOD”

As soon as one understands his identity, his relationship with God, then immediately he becomes happy. We are so full of miseries because we have identified ourselves with the material world. Therefore we are unhappy. Anxieties and fearfulness are due to our misidentifying with the material world. The other day I was explaining that one who identifies with this bag of bones and skin is like an animal. So by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa this misunderstanding will be cleansed. Cleansing of the heart means that one will understand that he does not belong to this material world. *Aham brahmāsmi*: I am spirit soul. As long as one identifies oneself with England, with India, or with America, this is ignorance. Today you are an Englishman because you were born in England, but in your next life you may not take your birth in England; it may be in China or Russia or some other country. Or you may not get this human form of body. Today you are a nationalist, you are a very great follower of your country, but tomorrow if you stay in your country you may be a cow being taken to the slaughterhouse.

So we have to thoroughly know our identity. Caitanya Mahāprabhu says that the actual identity of every living creature is that he is the eternal servant of God. If one thinks like that—“I am no one else’s servant; my business is to serve God.”—then he is liberated. His heart is immediately cleansed, and he is liberated. And after one has reached that, then all one’s cares and anxieties in this world are over because one knows, “I am a servant of God. God will give me protection. Why should I worry about anything?” It is just like a child. A child knows that his mother and father will take care of him. He is free. If he should go to touch fire, his mother will take care of him: “Oh, my dear child, don’t touch.” The mother is always look-

ing after him. So why don’t you put your trust in God? Actually, you are under the protection of God.

GOD IS SUPPLYING

People go to church and say, “God, give us our daily bread.” Actually, if He did not give it to us, we would not be able to live. That is a fact. The *Vedas* also say that the one Supreme Personality supplies all the necessities of every other living creature. God is supplying food for everyone. We human beings have our economic problem, but what economic problem is there in societies other than human society? The bird society has no economic problem. The beasts have no economic problem. There are 8,400,000 species of life, and out of that, human society is very, very small. So they have created problems—what to eat, where to sleep, how to mate, how to defend. These are a problem to us, but the majority of creatures—the aquatics, the fish, the plants, the insects, the birds, the beasts, and the many millions upon millions of other living creatures—do not have such a problem. They are also living creatures. Don’t think that they are different from us. It is not true that we human beings are the only living creatures and that all others are dead. No. And who is providing their food and shelter? It is God. The plants and animals are not going to the office. They are not going to the university to get technological education to earn money. So how are they eating? God is supplying. The elephant eats hundreds of pounds of food. Who is supplying? Are you making arrangements for the elephant? There are millions of elephants. Who is supplying?

So the process of acknowledging that God is supplying is better than thinking, “God is dead. Why should we go to church and pray to God for bread?” In *Bhagavad-gītā* it is said, “Four kinds of people come to Kṛṣṇa: the distressed, those who are in need of money, the wise and the inquisitive.” One who is inquisitive, one who is wise, one who is distressed and one who is in need of money—these four classes of men approach God. “My dear God, I am very hungry. Give me my daily bread.” That’s nice. Those who approach God in this way are recommended as *sukṛtina*. *Sukṛtina* means pious. They are pious. Although they are asking for money, for food, they are considered pious because

they are approaching God. And others are just the opposite. They are *duṣkṛtina*, impious. *Kṛtī* means very meritorious, but the word *duṣkṛtī* indicates that their energy is being misused to create havoc. Just like the man who invented atomic weapons. He has a brain, but it has been misused. He has created something which is dreadful. Create something which will insure that man will no longer have to die. What is the use of creating something so that millions of people will immediately die? They will die today or tomorrow or after a hundred years. So what have the scientists done? Create something so that man will not die immediately, so that there will be no more disease, so that there will be no more old age. Then you will have done something. But the *duṣkṛtinas* never go to God. They never try to understand God. Therefore their energy is misdirected.

THE DUTY OF HUMAN BEINGS

The gross materialists who ignore their relationship with God are described in *Bhagavad-gītā* as *mūḍhas*. *Mūḍha* means ass, donkey. Those who are working very, very hard to earn money are compared to the donkey. They will eat the same four *chapaties* daily, but they are unnecessarily working to earn thousands of dollars. And others are described as *narādhama*. *Narādhama* means the lowest of mankind. The human form of life is meant for God realization. It is the right of man to try to realize God. One who understands Brahman, God, is a *brāhmaṇa*, not others. So that is the duty of this human form of life. In every human society there is some system which is called religion and by which one may try to understand God. It doesn't matter whether it is the Christian religion, the Mohammedan religion, or the Hindu religion. It doesn't matter. The system is to understand God and our relationship with Him. That's all. This is the duty of the human beings, and if this duty is ignored in human society, then it is animal society. Animals have no power to understand what is God and their relationship with God. Their only interests are eating, sleeping, mating and defending. If we are only concerned with these things, then what are we? We are animals. Therefore *Bhagavad-gītā* says that those who ignore

this opportunity are the "lowest of mankind." They got this human form of life after evolving through 8,400,000 births and yet did not utilize it for God realization but simply for the animal propensities. Therefore they are *narādhama*, the lowest of mankind. And there are other persons who are very proud of their knowledge. But what is that knowledge? "There is no God. I am God." Their actual knowledge has been taken away by *māyā*. If they are God, then how have they become dog? There are so many arguments against them, but they simply defy God. Atheism. Because they have taken to the process of atheism, their actual knowledge is stolen away. Actual knowledge means to know what is God and our relationship with God. If one does not know this, then it is to be understood that his knowledge has been taken away by *māyā*.

ONE AND DIFFERENT

So in this way, if we try to understand our relationship with God, there are ways and means. There are books, and there is knowledge, so why not take advantage of them? Everyone should take advantage of this knowledge. Try to understand that in *Bhagavad-gītā* and other *Vedas*, everywhere, it is said God is great and that although we are qualitatively one with God, we are minute. The ocean and the minute particle of water have the same quality, but the quantity of salt in the drop of water and the quantity of salt in the ocean are different. They are qualitatively one but quantitatively different. Similarly, God is all-powerful, and we have some power. God creates everything, and we can create a small machine to fly, just like the small machines with which children play. But God can create millions of planets flying in the air. That is the qualification of God. You cannot create any planets. Even if you can create a planet, what is the benefit of that? There are millions of planets created by God. But you also have the creative power. God has power, and you have power. But His is so great that you cannot compare to it. If you say, "I am God," that is foolishness. You can claim that you are God, but what acts have you performed so extraordinary that you can claim that you are God? This

is ignorance. The knowledge of one who thinks himself God has been taken away by the spell of *māyā*. So our relationship is that God is great and we are minute. In *Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa clearly says, "All living entities are My parts and parcels. Qualitatively they are one with Me, but quantitatively they are different." So we are simultaneously one with and different from God. That is our relationship. We are one because we have the same qualities as God. But if we study ourselves minutely we will find that although we have some great qualities, God has them all in greater quantities.

JOIN WITH THE SUPREME LORD

We cannot have anything which is not in God. That is not possible. Therefore in the *Vedānta-sūtras* it is said that everything that we have is also found in God. It is emanating from God. So our relationship is that because we are small, because we are minute, we are the eternal servitors of God. In this material world also, in ordinary behavior, we see that a man goes to serve another man because the other man is greater than him and can pay him a nice salary. So naturally the conclusion is that if we are small, our duty is to serve God. We have no other business. We are all different parts and parcels of the original entity.

A screw which is connected with a machine is valuable because it is working with the whole machine. And if the screw is taken away from the machine, or if it is faulty, it is worthless. My finger is worth millions of dollars as long as it is attached to this body and is serving the body. And if it is cut off from this body, then what is it worth? Nothing. Similarly, our relationship is that we are very small particles of God; therefore our duty is to dovetail our energies with Him and cooperate with Him. That is our relationship. Otherwise we are worthless. We are cut off. When the finger becomes useless the doctor says, "Oh, amputate this finger. Otherwise the body will be poisoned." Similarly, when we become godless we are cut off from our relationship with God and suffer in this material world. If we try to join again with the Supreme Lord, then our relationship is revived.

END

KNOWLEDGE OF THE ABSOLUTE

by Kīrtanānanda Mahārāja

[Editor's note: This is the seventh of a series of eighteen essays on the chapters of *Bhagavad-gītā*.]

The Seventh Chapter of *Bhagavad-gītā* marks the beginning of the second great division of this work. In the first six chapters Śrī Kṛṣṇa has elaborately described the distinction between matter and spirit and the difference between the living entity and dead matter. And He has also described many *yoga* systems which are for elevating the living entity from material consciousness to spiritual consciousness. At the end of the Sixth Chapter it has been clearly stated that the steady concentration of the mind on Kṛṣṇa, or in other words Kṛṣṇa consciousness, is the ultimate end of all *yoga*. Only by concentrating one's mind upon Śrī Kṛṣṇa can one know the Absolute Truth completely. Moreover, impersonal Brahman and localized Paramātmā have been declared to be partial representations of the Supreme Person Kṛṣṇa. The different types of *yoga* are merely steppingstones to the path of *bhaktiyoga* or Kṛṣṇa consciousness. One who takes directly to Kṛṣṇa consciousness is called an intelligent man, for by practice of Kṛṣṇa consciousness one can know everything in full, namely the Absolute Truth, the living entities, material nature and their manifestations with paraphernalia.

IT IS NOT A CHEAP THING

In the Seventh through the Twelfth chapters Kṛṣṇa gives an elaborate description of the Supreme Personality Himself, His nature and manifestations. Here in the Seventh Chapter, the nature of Kṛṣṇa is fully described as being full of all opulences. How He manifests such opulences is also described in this chapter. The first three verses serve as a preface. "Out of many thousands among men, one may endeavor for perfection, and of those who have achieved perfection, hardly one knows Me in truth." (7.3) It is not an easy thing to become Kṛṣṇa conscious, nor is it a cheap thing. The stake is full knowledge or perfection, and Lord Jesus said, "Few

there be that find it." In the very first verse here Kṛṣṇa lays down the qualification: "By practicing *yoga* in full consciousness with mind attached to Me . . ." It is almost exactly the same thought found in the 47th verse of the previous chapter. "And of all *yogīs*, he who always abides in Me with great faith, worshiping Me in transcendental loving service, is most intimately united with Me in *yoga* and is the highest of all." Therefore, only by hearing of Kṛṣṇa from Kṛṣṇa Himself or from the pure devotee who repeats only what Kṛṣṇa has said, can one understand the science of Kṛṣṇa. That is the secret of Kṛṣṇa consciousness which was also explained in the Fourth Chapter when the Lord told Arjuna that He had originally spoken this science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness to the sun-god Vivasvān, who had spoken it to his son, and to his son, etc. And so it was coming down in disciplic succession, but somehow or other it was broken. This indicates that someone made a change. As soon as one interprets or puts his intellect between the message of Kṛṣṇa and the transmission, the message immediately becomes material.

HE IS THE SOURCE OF EVERYTHING

Kṛṣṇa repeats here in the Seventh Chapter: "I shall now declare unto you in full this knowledge, both phenomenal and noumenal, knowing which there remains nothing further to be known." Kṛṣṇa is the source of both phenomenal and noumenal knowledge. When one knows Kṛṣṇa, he knows everything spiritual and material, for one knows Kṛṣṇa with all of His variegated energies. When the cause of all causes becomes known, then everything knowable becomes known, and nothing remains unknown. That is the verdict of the *Vedas*. Again it is said that no one can know Kṛṣṇa as He is by the blunt material senses; He reveals Himself to the devotees, being pleased with them for their transcendental loving service unto Him.

Arjuna is an intimate friend and devotee of Kṛṣṇa, and Kṛṣṇa is here explaining in detail His own nature. As already stated, Kṛṣṇa is full of all energies, variegated

energies, and in the fourth and fifth verses these energies are divided into two great categories, the superior and inferior. "Earth, water, fire, air, space, mind, intelligence and false ego—altogether these eight comprise My separated material energies." Those are the inferior energies. "Besides this inferior nature, O mighty-armed Arjuna, there is a superior energy of Mine which are all living entities who are struggling with material inferior nature." Here it is clearly stated that the living entities are part of the Lord's superior energy. They are not part of the inferior energy, which is manifested in so many inert forms; it is clearly stated that they are the energy, not the energetic. Kṛṣṇa maintains that He is the energetic, and therefore the living entity, the energy, is always controlled by the Supreme eternally.

Philosophers who somehow think that the living entity somehow becomes God after liberation simply do not understand. Energies never become the energetic but are always controlled. The living entity, however powerful he may be, is still controlled by the supreme controller, Kṛṣṇa, under the agency of His superior or inferior energy. This concept is confirmed in the seventh verse, where Kṛṣṇa says, "There is no truth superior to Me. Everything rests upon Me as pearls are strung on a thread." Again in the Ninth Chapter, Kṛṣṇa says, "This material nature is working under My direction. The whole cosmic order is under Me. By My will it is manifested again and again, and by My will it is annihilated at the end." So this seventh verse is very important. Kṛṣṇa makes absolute claim to being the Absolute Person, and of course this is affirmed in so many other scriptures. For instance, the *Brahma-saṁhitā* says that the Supreme Absolute Truth, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is the primal Lord, the reservoir of all pleasures, Govinda, the eternal form of complete bliss and knowledge.

The impersonalists are convinced on the strength of the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* that the supreme absolute transcendence "has no material form and is free from all material contaminations, and one who can know Him also becomes transcendental, and those who do not know Him suffer the miseries of the material world." The impersonalists take it that the word *arūpam*, "no material form," means that

the Supreme Absolute is impersonal. But that is not logical. Because A is not B does not mean that A is C. Rather, what is indicated here is that the transcendental form of *sac-cid-ānanda*, or eternity, bliss and knowledge, as described in the *Brahma-saṁhitā*, is not material. The same *Upaniṣad* substantiates this as follows: "I know that Supreme Personality of Godhead who is transcendental to all conceptions of darkness. Only he who knows Him can transcend the bonds of birth and death." There is no way of liberation other than this knowledge of that Supreme Person. There is no truth superior to that Supreme Person because He is the supermost. He is smaller than the smallest, and He is greater than the greatest. He illumines the transcendental sky. As a tree spreads its roots, He spreads His extensive energies. Kṛṣṇa's form may not be material, but there can be no doubt that He has form. If Kṛṣṇa has no form, how can His energies have form? The energy can never supersede the energetic. So it is the conclusion of these verses that the Supreme Absolute Truth is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa.

HE IS ALL-PERVASIVE

In the eighth to the twelfth verses, Kṛṣṇa describes how He is manifested within everything. "I am the taste of water," He says, "the light of the sun and the moon, the syllable Om and the sound in ether. I am the strength of the strong, and I am sex life. I am the life of all that lives. All states of being, be they of goodness, passion or ignorance, are manifested by My energy. I am in one sense everything, but I am independent. I am not under the modes of this material nature." The Lord is thus explaining how He is all-pervasive by dint of His diverse energies, material and spiritual. As the demigod in the sun is a person and is perceived by his all-pervading energy, the sunshine, similarly the Lord, although in His eternal abode, is perceived by His all-pervading diffuse energies. Kṛṣṇa consciousness means to become aware that earth, water, fire—the active principles in all chemicals, all material elements—are due to Kṛṣṇa only. The duration of man's life is also due to Kṛṣṇa. By the grace of Kṛṣṇa man can prolong his life or diminish it. Kṛṣṇa is the active principle in every sphere. The conclusion, as stated in the twelfth verse, is that all

states of being, whether of goodness, passion or ignorance, are manifested by Kṛṣṇa's energy. "I am in one sense everything, but I am independent. I am not under the modes of this material nature." Here the word *nirguṇa* is used. *Nirguṇa* means not to be under the control of material nature, or to be without material contamination. It is sometimes translated to mean without material form, but here Kṛṣṇa asserts that He is manifesting this material nature yet He is independent. "They are in Me, but I am not in them." These *guṇas* of goodness, passion and ignorance are emanating from Kṛṣṇa, but they do not affect Him. That is one of the special characteristics of Bhagavān or the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

The thirteenth verse says, "Deluded by the three *guṇas*, goodness, passion and ignorance, the whole world does not know Me, for I am above the *guṇas* and am inexhaustible." Kṛṣṇa is never deluded. As stated in the Second Chapter, He remembers everything past, present and future. That is again stated in the twenty-sixth verse of this chapter. "I know everything which has happened in the past, or that is happening in the present, or of all things that are yet to come. I also know all living entities, but Me no one knows." Because Kṛṣṇa is never deluded, He is never under the control of the deluding energy. The fourteenth verse says, "This divine energy of Mine, consisting of the three modes of material nature, is difficult to overcome, but those who have surrendered unto Me can easily cross beyond it." As stated at the outset, Kṛṣṇa consciousness is open to the surrendered soul, to the devotee and friend of Kṛṣṇa, but for others it is very difficult.

FOUR CLASSES OF ATHEISTS

As explained in the succeeding verses, there are four classes of men who will never surrender to the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa; similarly, there are four classes of men who do surrender. The four classes of men who refuse to surrender to Kṛṣṇa, as explained in the fifteenth verse, are the grossly foolish, the lowest among mankind, those whose knowledge is stolen by illusion and those who partake of the atheistic nature of demons. The grossly foolish are called *mūḍhas* or asses, for they are simply like hardworking beasts of burden. They try to accumulate some enjoyment by working

hard, but they know neither the source of enjoyment nor the source of misery. The example used is that of the ass who, in India at least, works very hard for the washerman. The ass does not know for whom he is working; he simply remains satisfied with a little hay. He sleeps under the fear of being beaten and satisfies his sex appetite at the risk of being kicked by the obliging party. The ass sometimes sings poetry and philosophy, but this braying only disturbs others. This is the position of the foolish fruitive worker who does not know the meaning of work, *karma*, nor that work is meant for sacrifice, *yajña*. He is simply working very hard night and day to relieve himself from some self-imposed duties; he has no time to hear of the science of Kṛṣṇa. It is a strange paradox that to the grossly foolish *mūḍhas*, material gains which are so perishable are their sole objective. They are never disillusioned when they receive so little, and they spend sleepless days and nights in search of so-called material success, tolerating ulcers and indigestion, putting up with food and water that is hardly fit for the animals, serving every temporal master under the sun. But for the Supreme Master, they have no time. The stool-eating swine does not care for sweetmeats made of sugar and ghee, and similarly the foolish worker chews the chewed of mammon and leaves the succulence of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

THE LOWEST OF MANKIND

The second class of miscreants is called the "lowest of mankind." Out of 8,400,000 species of life, 400,000 are said to be human, but of these 400,000 most are uncivilized. Civilized means to be regulated in matters of social, political and religious life, and perfect regulation is exemplified in the system of *varṇāśrama-dharma*. The purpose of *varṇāśrama-dharma* is simply that society is so regulated that maximum facilities are given to each individual so that he may pursue his eternal course back to Godhead. To that end every society needs a head: *brāhmaṇas*. It needs arms for defense: *kṣatriyas*. It needs an abdomen for sustenance (*vaiśyas*) and legs for movement (*śūdras*). All head or all feet is equally bad, but a society nicely divided on the basis of qualification, not birth, is a society in which everyone

can revive his lost consciousness or his eternal relationship with the Supreme Truth, Kṛṣṇa.

The civilized human form of life is meant for reviving this lost consciousness or invoking this dormant love of God that is within all of us. And if the opportunity is lost, then life is wasted, and a person who wastes his valuable time is called *narādhama*, or lowest of mankind. By the grace of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, one can reawaken his Kṛṣṇa consciousness simply by submissively hearing the message and activities of the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa as contained in such great literatures as this *Bhagavad-gītā*. Even *narādhama*s or the lowest of human beings can be delivered by this submissive hearing process, by simply chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. Unfortunately they do not even listen to these transcendental vibrations, let alone surrender unto the will of the Supreme Lord. Therefore the *narādhama*s fully neglect the prime duty of the human being.

The next class of miscreants are those whose erudite knowledge has been nullified by the influence of illusory material energy. In mundane circles these are called very learned men, great philosophers, poets, PhD's, scientists, philanthropists, utopians, etc., but because of impure desires, the illusory energy of Kṛṣṇa misguides them, and therefore they disobey the Supreme Lord. A truly learned man has been described as one who sees all women as his mother, the property of others as so much refuse in the street and himself in all beings. And according to Kṛṣṇa's statement in the *Gītā*, "A learned man is he who sees on equal terms the learned *brāhmaṇa*, the dog, the cow, the elephant, and the dog-eater." But when the whole population becomes *narādhama* and when they thereby neglect the purpose of self-realization, their education has no such vision. What is circulated under the name of education is actually void of all eternal potency by the powerful illusory energy. Most intellectuals are more interested in the creature than in the creator, and ultimately their knowledge is frustrated because they are seeking for everything in the wrong place.

The *Gītā* clearly states in many places that Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead and that there is none equal to or greater than Him. He is said to be the

father of Brahmā, and He claims to be the father of all living entities. He declares Himself to be the ground of impersonal Brahman, and He states that Paramātmā or the Supersoul resides in every living entity by His expansion. In short, He is the fountainhead of everything, and everyone is advised to surrender unto Him. That is the ultimate conclusion of *Bhagavad-gītā*: "Simply surrender unto Me." But despite all these clear statements, those whose knowledge has been nullified by the influence of illusory energy consider Him merely another human being. They do not know that this human form of life is designed after the eternal and transcendental feature of the Supreme Lord. As the Bible says, "Man is made in the image and likeness of God." All the unauthorized interpretations of the *Gītā* by this class of so-called learned scholars who are outside the purview of the *paramparā* system, the disciplic succession of devotees, are so many stumbling blocks in the path of spiritual understanding.

The last class of miscreants are those of demonic principles. This class is openly atheistic. They sometimes maintain that the Supreme cannot descend to the material plane, but they are unable to give any valid reason why not, other than it does not conform to their reasoning patterns. Because it is their desire, Kṛṣṇa remains forever veiled from them. Śrī Yāmunācārya says, "O My Lord, You are unknowable to persons involved with atheistic principles, despite Your uncommon features, qualities, and activities, despite Your personality being strongly confirmed by all the revealed scriptures, and despite Your being acknowledged by the famous authorities renowned for their depth of knowledge and situated in godly qualities." Therefore, the grossly foolish, the lowest of mankind, the deluded speculators and the atheists, never surrender unto the lotus feet of the Supreme Personality of Godhead despite all scriptural authoritative advice.

FOUR KINDS OF PIOUS MEN

In verse sixteen Kṛṣṇa enumerates four kinds of pious men who render devotional service unto the Supreme: they are the distressed, the desirer of wealth, the inquisitive and the man in search of the Absolute Truth. These four classes of men come to the Lord to render some devo-

tional service under different conditions, but they are not pure devotees because they have some ambition to fulfill in exchange for devotional service. Pure devotional service is without material calculation or desire for material benefit. *The Nectar of Devotion* puts it this way: "One should render transcendental loving service to the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa favorably without desire for material profit or gain through fruitive activities or philosophical speculation. That is called pure devotional service." But when these four kinds of persons come to the Supreme Lord for devotional service, they become completely purified by association with the pure devotee, and thus they also become pure devotees. Even a miscreant, for whom devotional service is extremely difficult due to his irregular, nonspiritual life, can also become a pure devotee if by chance he comes in contact with a pure devotee. Actually how we come to Kṛṣṇa is not so important. Man may be distressed—he may have lost his wife or family, his business may have failed, some love relationship has gone haywire—and in that distress turn to the Supreme Lord. Somehow or other we get an inkling that our happiness is not to be achieved in material goals, but in the Supreme. And in that state, even though it is occasioned by a material event, we have an opportunity to associate with the Supreme Lord or with His devotee.

HE TURNS TO KṚṢṆA

Similarly, the man who is after some material wealth sometimes performs sacrifices or follows some scriptural injunction in order to achieve some desired goal. In the *Vedas*, there are many prescriptions for acquiring material wealth. Certainly one's desire at this stage is not pure, but the very fact that one has come to Kṛṣṇa to ask for it means that one has a chance to associate with Kṛṣṇa, and in that condition one can become enamored of the Supreme Person Himself. There is a prophetic poem in Sanskrit entitled "Govinda," which says, "My dear friend, if you still have an inclination to enjoy material life with society, friendship and love, then please do not see the boy named Govinda who is standing in a three-curved way, smiling and skillfully playing on His flute with His lips brightened by the full-moon shine."

One may not be very pure when he comes to Kṛṣṇa, but in the association of Kṛṣṇa or His devotee one becomes pure. Similarly, the man who comes to Kṛṣṇa because he is inquisitive finds in Kṛṣṇa his full satisfaction because Kṛṣṇa can satisfy all curiosity. Kṛṣṇa is all knowledge, and therefore those who are eager for knowledge can be satisfied only in Kṛṣṇa. And finally the man who is actually searching after Kṛṣṇa is, of course, most happy when he actually finds Kṛṣṇa. Actually Kṛṣṇa is everywhere, but unless we have eyes to see Kṛṣṇa, we cannot see Him. The eyes that can see Kṛṣṇa are the eyes that are smeared with love, and the process of cultivating love of Kṛṣṇa is known as devotional service. This can be taught by the pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa. It is something like the man who went searching after diamonds, and he went around the world here and there looking for diamonds, and when he returned home he found that his own backyard was full of diamonds. Kṛṣṇa is everywhere, but until we are awakened to Kṛṣṇa everywhere by love of Kṛṣṇa, we cannot recognize Him.

VERY DEAR TO THE LORD

Therefore the seventeenth verse says, "Of these, the wise one, who is in full knowledge in union with Me through pure devotional service is the best, for I am very dear to him, and he is very dear to Me." "All these devotees are undoubtedly magnanimous souls, but he who is situated in knowledge of Me I consider verily to dwell in Me. Being engaged in My transcendental service, he attains Me." Here Kṛṣṇa affirms that all four categories of seekers are great souls, *mahātmās*. They are great not because they are tinged with material desire, but in spite of it, or, more accurately, because they have come to the right source for the fulfillment of their desire. They have come to Kṛṣṇa for various reasons, but still they have come to Kṛṣṇa. That means they have come to the ultimate goal for whatever reasons; therefore they are *mahātmās* or great souls. But the devotee in full knowledge and in constant service is considered to be very dear to the Lord because his only purpose is to serve the Lord with love and devotion. Such a devotee cannot live a second without contacting or serving the Supreme Lord. Similarly, the Lord is very fond of His devotees and cannot be sepa-

rated from them. In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, 9.4.57, the Lord says, "The devotees are always in My heart, and I am always in the hearts of the devotees. The devotee does not know anything beyond Me, so I cannot forget the devotee. There is a very intimate relationship between Me and the pure devotees. Pure devotees in pure knowledge are never out of spiritual touch. Therefore they are very much dear to Me."

THE WISE SURRENDER TO KṚṢṆA

The conclusion of all this search is stated in the nineteenth verse, "After many, 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." This is the final vision. *Nirmama*. Nothing is mine; everything is Kṛṣṇa's. Because everything is Kṛṣṇa's, I am also Kṛṣṇa's. Therefore let me render loving service to Kṛṣṇa. Such a universal vision of the ultimate relationship of everything to Kṛṣṇa precipitates one's final surrender and ultimate union with Kṛṣṇa. "But those whose minds are still distorted by material desires," we are told in the next verse, "sometimes surrender unto demigods in order to achieve some temporary material result." Kṛṣṇa asserts that as the Supersoul within everyone's heart, He helps to fulfill such a desire for the living entity, but Kṛṣṇa does not advise that. He calls these men of small intelligence. Why? Because they desire fruits that are limited and temporary. And then He says, "Those who worship the demigods go to the various planets of the demigods, but My devotees ultimately reach My supreme planet." Some commentators say that one can worship anything—be it Kālī, Indra or Śiva or any other demigod—and will ultimately reach Kṛṣṇa or the Supreme, but that is here flatly denied. If this were so, Kṛṣṇa would not have called them men of small intelligence with perverted desires. He says outright: "Those who worship the demigods go to the various planets of the demigods, but My devotees ultimately reach My supreme planet."

Devotional service should never be confused with ritualistic worship. In the *Caitanya-Caritāmṛta* it is said that one who worships the Supreme Lord and at the same time desires material enjoyment is contradictory in his desires. Devotional

service of the Supreme Lord and the worship of a demigod cannot be on the same platform because worship of a demigod is material and devotional service to the Supreme Lord is completely spiritual. Also it is clearly stated here that worship of the demigods is temporary. The results are also temporary. That means that it is completely material, for only the material world is temporary, but when one chants Hare Kṛṣṇa and worships Kṛṣṇa, that is spiritual. One is factually seated on the transcendental plane in one's eternal position to the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa. As such, he is in a position to enjoy *sac-cid-ānanda*—eternity, knowledge, and bliss eternally. At the end of this material body such a person seated in Kṛṣṇa consciousness at once attains to the highest abode of Lord Kṛṣṇa, *Goloka Vṛndāvana*. That is here promised: "My devotee reaches My supreme planet."

In the twenty-fourth verse the category of unintelligent men is expanded from those who simply worship the demigods to those who cannot conceive of the Lord with a form and personality. "Unintelligent men who know Me not think that I have assumed this form and personality. Due to their small knowledge they do not know My higher nature, which is changeless and supreme." By philosophical speculation one may come to know something of Kṛṣṇa, but due to depending on limited knowledge, on the factory of the tiny brain, one cannot know Kṛṣṇa's higher nature, which is changeless and supreme, nor can one understand Kṛṣṇa as *sac-cid-ānanda-vigraha* in His full form of eternity, knowledge and bliss. Nor can one understand how Kṛṣṇa and His body are non-different nor how Kṛṣṇa can appear age after age in His same original body. Therefore it is stated in the *Brahma-saṁhitā* that the Supreme Lord cannot be understood simply by studying the *Vedānta* literature, but only by the mercy of the Supreme Lord or the devotee of the Supreme Lord can the Supreme Lord be understood. In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* it is stated that the supreme realization begins from the impersonal Brahman and then rises to the localized Supersoul, but the ultimate and last word of the Absolute Truth is the Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa.

IMPERSONALISTS LESS INTELLIGENT

Modern impersonalists are even less intelligent, for they do not even follow

Śaṅkarācārya, the greatest of the impersonalists, who has specifically stated that Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The fact is that one cannot understand Kṛṣṇa without rendering devotional service. Without developing Kṛṣṇa consciousness, one cannot understand the Supreme Personality of Godhead Kṛṣṇa, or His form, His quality, His name, simply by mental speculation or by discussing Vedic literature. One must understand Him by rendering devotional service.

When one is fully engaged in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, beginning with the chanting of the *mahāmantra* Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare, then only can one understand the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The twenty-fifth verse makes this still more clear when Kṛṣṇa says, "I am never manifested to the foolish and unintelligent. For them I am covered by My eternal creative potency, *māyā*. And so the deluded world knows Me not, who am unborn and infallible." Even when Kṛṣṇa was present personally on this earth 5,000 years ago, only a few people could recognize Him to be the Supreme Personality of Godhead. In the prayers of Kunṭī in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.8.18) it is said that the Lord is covered by His *yoga-māyā*, and thus ordinary people cannot understand Him. Kunṭī prays, "O my Lord, You are the maintainer of the entire universe, and Your devotional service is the highest form of religious principles. Therefore I pray that you will also maintain me. Your transcendental form is covered by *yoga-māyā*. The *Brahmajyoti* is the internal potency. May You kindly remove this glowing effulgence that impedes my seeing Your *sac-cid-ānanda-vigraha*, Your eternal form of bliss and knowledge." Similarly, Lord Brahmā prays, "O Supreme Personality of Godhead, O Supersoul, O master of all mystery! Who can calculate Your potency and pastimes in this world? You are always expanding your internal potency, and therefore no one can understand You." Learned scientists and learned scholars can examine the atomic constitution of the material world or even the planets, but still they are unable to calculate Kṛṣṇa's energy and potency, although Kṛṣṇa is present before them. No one can see Kṛṣṇa but the devotee. But by the grace of the devotee, one can see Kṛṣṇa. The supreme devotee, Lord Caitanya, Kṛṣṇa Himself, has appeared to spread

this love of Kṛṣṇa just to reclaim all the forgotten souls back into that loving relationship with the primal Lord, Govinda, Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is not only unborn but inexhaustible, and whose form is eternal, blissful and knowledgeable.

In the concluding four verses Kṛṣṇa affirms again that the only way out of the darkness is through worship of Him, by rendering transcendental loving service unto the Supreme. Only unintelligent persons worship the demigods or rely on their own mental speculation. The twenty-ninth verse says that intelligent persons "take refuge in Me in devotional service." They are actually Brahman because they entirely know everything about transcendental activities. As explained in the thirtieth verse, "Those who know Me as the Supreme Lord, as the governing principle of the material manifestation, who know Me as the one underlying all the demigods and as the one sustaining all sacrifices, can with steadfast mind understand and know Me even at the hour of death."

The beginning of Kṛṣṇa consciousness entails association with persons who are

Kṛṣṇa conscious. Such association is spiritual and puts one directly in touch with the Supreme Lord, either with His form, His activities, or His words, but most especially with His name. Hearing the name of Kṛṣṇa is not different from seeing Kṛṣṇa. Thus by His inconceivable potencies, simply by chanting the *mahāmantra*, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare, one can personally associate with Him. When one is actually associating with Kṛṣṇa, by His grace, one can understand Kṛṣṇa to be the Supreme God. At the same time one comes to understand the constitutional position of the living entity and how the living entity forgets Kṛṣṇa and becomes entangled in material activities. By gradual development of Kṛṣṇa consciousness in good association, the living entity can understand that due to forgetfulness of Kṛṣṇa he has become conditioned by the laws of material nature. He can also understand that this human form of life is an opportunity to regain Kṛṣṇa consciousness and should be fully utilized to attain the causeless mercy of the Supreme Lord. END



NEW VṚNDĀVANA: THE WEST'S FIRST KṚṢṆA CONSCIOUS COMMUNITY

by Hayagrīva dāsa Adhikārī (ISKCON–New Vṛndāvana)

“You have New York, New England, and so many ‘New’ duplicates of European countries in the USA—why not import New Vṛndāvana in your country?” (Śrīla Prabhupāda, Letter, 3/17/68)

Within the past three years communes have been popping up throughout America. They tend to sprout in the unlikeliest places, and they are conceived and nourished by the most diverse people. Practically all of them have “hippy” images and are inspired by current concern over ecology (O for a breath of—gasp!—air!) and a semi-Thoreauesque “let’s-get-back-

to-the-earth-and-live-cheaply-and-simply” longing. Many of the members are just tired of “hassling” with urban culture—too many peace marches, too many drug busts—and many are just tired of their own image as underground culture freaks. Most of them inspire one another and, ironically enough, manage to superimpose their urban life-style upon the country.

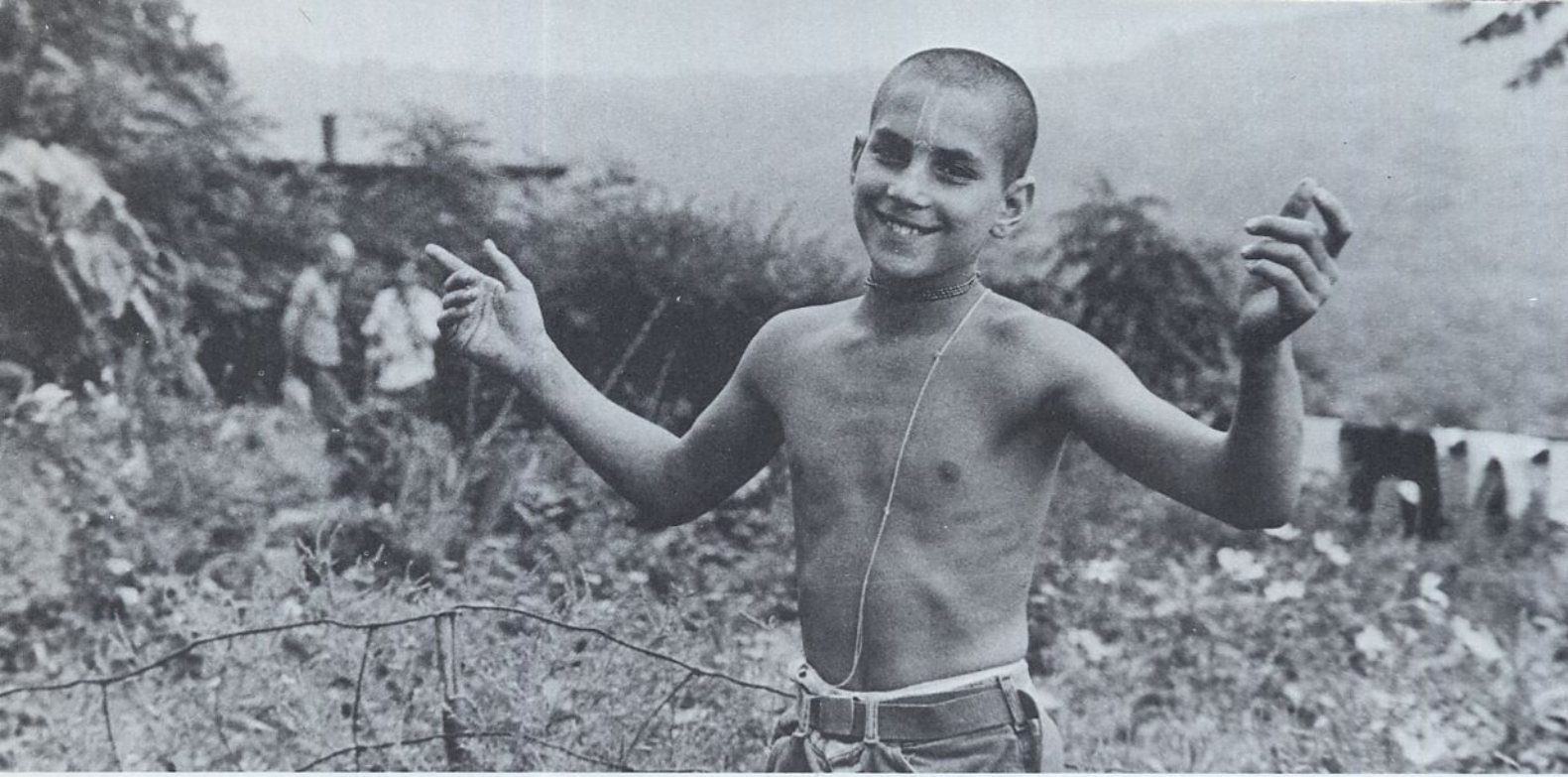
The hills of West Virginia, however, are a tough and tender cradle for a different type of communal project. Although New Vṛndāvana is not yet three years old, it is one of the oldest and largest communes of the crop which arose in the last

half of the Sixties. As fate has it, “hippy” communes sprout and die quickly—discouraged by the first winter, diversity of interests, drug and sex confusion, local inhabitants—but New Vṛndāvana, unique in conception and purpose, is expanding with a view to solidly establishing a genuine Vedic culture in America.

The “seed-giving father” is His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, founder-*ācārya* of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement in the West, who conceived of New Vṛndāvana before coming to America from India in 1965. In his prospectus for the movement printed in 1966, Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote that one of the five purposes of the International Society for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness is: “To erect for the members, and for society at large, a holy place of transcendental pastimes dedicated to the Personality Kṛṣṇa.”

Vṛndāvana is the forest where Lord Śrī

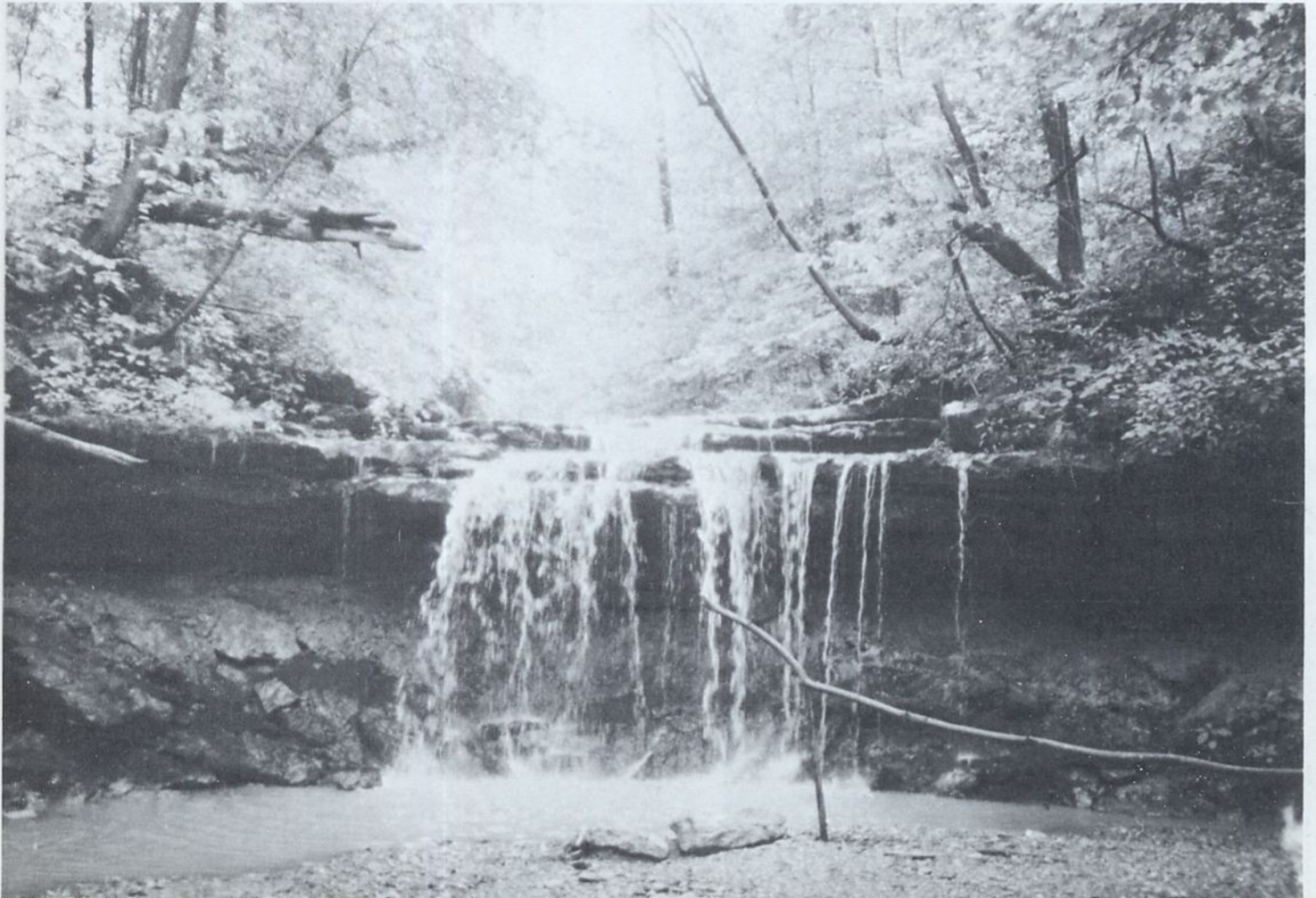




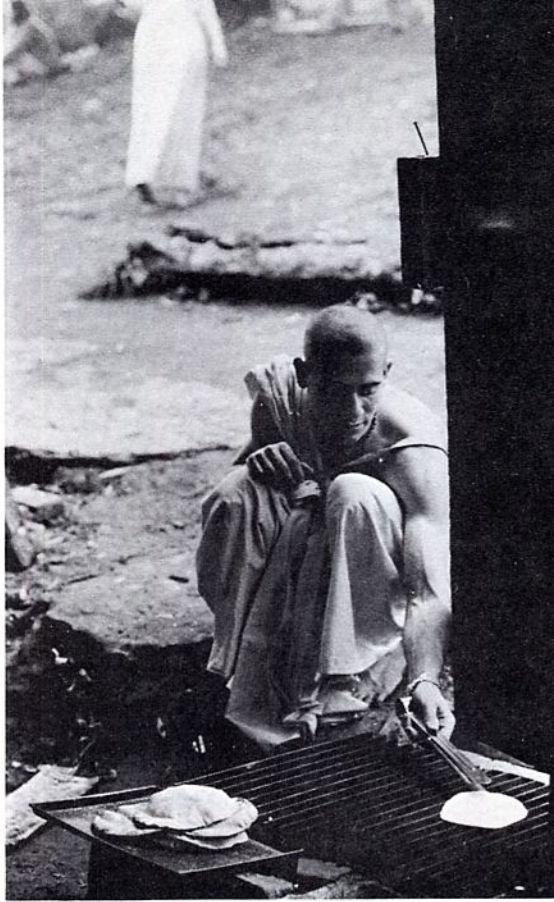
Kṛṣṇa sported as a boy and is also the name of the supreme planet in which the Personality of Godhead eternally abides. New Vṛndāvana is an implantation in the Western world of the ideals established five thousand years ago in Vṛndāvana, India, by Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The roots are ancient, but the fruits of the tree are ever new.

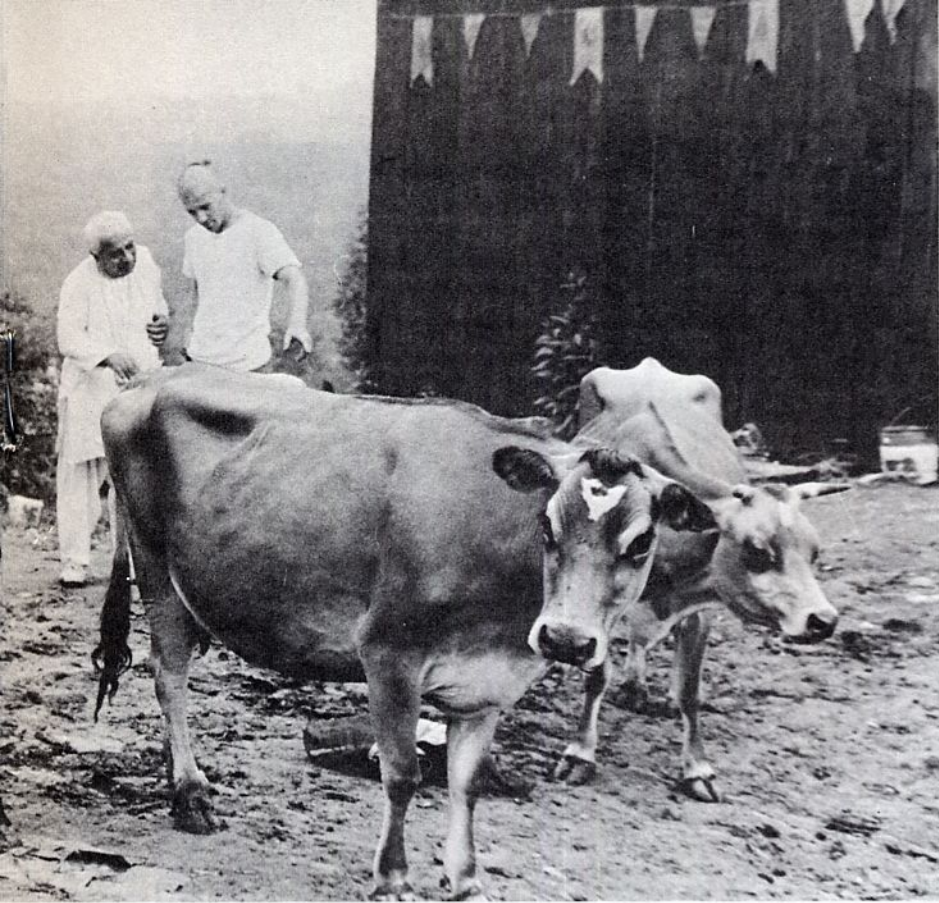
The integral or Utopian community is not new in American history. Indeed, it has been a most basic part of our history from the Puritan experiment at Massachusetts Bay in the 1630's to this New Vṛndāvana experiment today. Despite differences of dress and circumstance, the aim of most of these communal experiences has been basically the same: to find

a setting in which God consciousness can be pursued so that man's journey through this temporary sphere of material existence can be successfully completed to transfer his consciousness to the Absolute or to the realms of eternity. The conception of a community of souls is founded on the premise that such a transferral is easier collectively than individually.



Different experimenters have expressed the ideal community in different ways. Some have been more successful than others, largely depending on the authority on which the community is based. Some have been based upon a strong personal authority (Brigham Young or John Smith and the Mormons, or Humphrey Knolls and the Socialist Community at Oneida). New Vṛndāvana is different in that it is based on perfect authority. If one analyzes the various communities of the past, he can see that they have fallen apart because they could not agree as to what was the center of the community, what was its aim, what was its unifying point. The most successful communities tended to be those that were strongly religious. They could unify on the basis of the worship of God. And obviously where the concept of God is most agreed upon, that community will be most united and most harmonious. New Vṛndāvana is based on God, or "Kṛṣṇa," as revealed by the Spiritual Master and the information given by God Himself in the Vedic scripture *Bhagavad-gītā*. It is because these authorities are agreed upon that there is unity of purpose at New Vṛndāvana.





Communal living has currently provoked many articles by journalists and many essays by students. In a recent survey, one graduate student asked one of the New Vṛndāvana leaders: "What is your advice to beginning communes?" The reply was instant: "Don't try to start one without Kṛṣṇa." It was pointed out that the commune wouldn't have lasted its first winter without faith in the instructions of the Spiritual Master Śrīla Prabhupāda and a lot of Hare Kṛṣṇa chanting. Communal living isn't all honey and wildflowers, though there are plenty of both. First there is the seemingly eternal problem of finances, then manpower. There must be money to buy property and building materials; then the building must be carried out by members who know more about construction than just nailing. Thus far New Vṛndāvana has twelve cottages and one main farmhouse, barn and pavilion constructed. Wells must be dug, sewage disposed, roads built, land plowed, supplies brought in. Then there must be heat for the winter—stoves, firewood or oil—and hay and grain for the cows and horses, which are quite expensive for the winter when there're a dozen cows. And there's more to crops than just throwing in seeds. In brief, there is so much involved in getting a commune functioning that it is no wonder that most of them fold and die before the first spring flowers bud. The

advice: don't try to start one without Kṛṣṇa.

When Kṛṣṇa descended from the spiritual sky 5,000 years ago, He gave a practical example of the ideal life when He sported as a cowherd's boy. He showed that man can live very simply and reserve his main energies for what Emerson called "plain living and high thinking" by protecting and cultivating the cow. So one of the aims of New Vṛndāvana is protecting the cow and demonstrating the value of the cow in providing for the sustenance of man. At New Vṛndāvana, the cow is more than just an ordinary animal. Aside from the fact that Kṛṣṇa was very fond of cows and that the cow is considered man's second mother in the *Vedas* (*dhenu mātā*), the cow represents man's religion or man's yearning and love for God. When such yearning and love are slaughtered, then man is left with the empty shell of materialism, or life without principle and meaning. So one of the main functions of New Vṛndāvana is to demonstrate the humane practicality of cow protection.

THE PERFECT SOCIETY

Most of the full time members at New Vṛndāvana come from the big cities—New York, Los Angeles, etc. Although most come direct from the Kṛṣṇa temples, the only requirement for entrance is sincerity. The community serves as a training camp in Kṛṣṇa consciousness and, ideally, as an example of a perfect Kṛṣṇa conscious community to show the practicality and applicability of the philosophy to communal living. The temples established in various cities are able to work very effectively to a certain degree, but they are not able under the present situation to exhibit what a perfect society is like. For that reason New Vṛndāvana is envisioned as a society where all the residents are Kṛṣṇa conscious and where all of the activities are directed toward the ultimate goal. It is not that Kṛṣṇa consciousness is inactive in any sense. The practitioners engage in work which may appear to be ordinary work but is in fact devotional service due to the change in consciousness. Everyone in New Vṛndāvana is aware that his work is devotional in character and is directed to the Supreme Godhead because the factual proprietor of the land, of the buildings, of the temples, of the food, of the vehicles, tools and all the varied parapher-



nal is Kṛṣṇa. The awareness of Kṛṣṇa's proprietorship enables the devotee to advance in Kṛṣṇa consciousness while executing his daily chores.

In New Vṛndāvana this remembrance of the Supreme's proprietorship is facilitated because the atmosphere has been Kṛṣṇa-ized: by the mere touch of sound—Hare Kṛṣṇa—the hills, pastures, forests and streams are transported out of the State of West Virginia into the spiritual sky of Vaikuṅṭha. As the Spiritual Master, Śrīla Prabhupāda, writes: "We can remember Kṛṣṇa in every moment. We can remember Kṛṣṇa while taking a glass of water because the taste of water is Kṛṣṇa. We can remember Kṛṣṇa as soon as we see the sunlight in the morning, because the sunlight is a reflection of Kṛṣṇa's bodily effulgence. And as soon as we see moonlight in the evening we remember Kṛṣṇa because moonlight is the reflection of sunlight. Similarly, when we hear any sound we can remember Kṛṣṇa because sound is Kṛṣṇa, and the most perfect sound, transcendental, is Hare Kṛṣṇa, which we have to chant 24 hours.

So there is no scope of forgetting Kṛṣṇa at any moment of our life provided we practice in that way." (Śrīla Prabhupāda, Letter, 1/15/68)

The atmosphere of New Vṛndāvana is suitable for such remembrance process—it is cosmic, rural, woodsy. Under the Milky Way, *kīrtana* expands. Orion, the Pleiades, Sagittarius, Virgo—all vibrate to the cymbal rhythm, the chants broadcast from the mountains of planet earth. The firmament revolves about the *mahāmantra*, the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa. There is *kīrtana*, group chanting, every morning and evening. Offerings to the Deity are performed before dawn and five times throughout the day. The morning *kīrtana* is usually over before sunrise. Then morning *prasādam* is taken, usually cereal, and the day's chores begin. There is much to do at New Vṛndāvana, and all participate.

The conception and purpose of New Vṛndāvana are best set forth specifically in the letters of the Spiritual Master.

"Vṛndāvana conception is that of a transcendental village, without any bothera-

tion of the modern industrial atmosphere. My idea of developing New Vṛndāvana is to create an atmosphere of spiritual life where people in the bona fide orders of social divisions, namely, *brahmacārīs*, *gṛhasthas*, *vānaprasthas*, *sannyāsīs*, or specifically *brahmacārīs* and *sannyāsīs* and *vānaprasthas*, will live there independently, completely depending on agricultural produce and milk from the cows.” (Śrīla Prabhupāda, Letter, 8/17/68)

“To retire from activities is not a very good idea for the conditioned soul. I have very good experience, not only in our country, but also in your country, that this tendency of retiring from activities pushes one down to the platform of laziness, and gradually to the ideas of the hippies. One should always remain active in Kṛṣṇa’s service, otherwise strong *māyā* will catch him and engage him in her service. Our constitutional position is in rendering service; we cannot stop activity. So New Vṛndāvana may not be turned into a place of retirement, but some sort of activities must go on there. If there is good prospective land, we should produce some grains, flours and fruits and keep cows, so that those living there may have sufficient work and facility for advancing in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. In India actually Vṛndāvana has now become a place of the unemployed and beggars. Kīrtanānanda has already seen it. And so there is always a tendency toward such degradation if there is no sufficient work for service of Kṛṣṇa.” (Śrīla Prabhupāda, Letter, 7/14/68)

From the beginning, as Śrīla Prabhupāda suggested, the program at New Vṛndāvana is geared to enable the student to progress along the path of devotional service; so there is work going on all the time. And the program is sufficiently diversified to accommodate a variety of talents, dovetailing them in Kṛṣṇa’s service.

As in the many transcendentalist farms in 19th century America, the concept of life at New Vṛndāvana is that of plain living and high thinking.

NOT MUCH MODERNIZED

“Vṛndāvana does not require to be modernized because Kṛṣṇa’s Vṛndāvana is a transcendental village. They completely depend on nature’s beauty and nature’s protection. The community in which Kṛṣṇa preferred to belong was the *vaiśya* (agricultural) community because Nanda Mahā-

rāja happened to be a *vaiśya* king, or landholder, and his main business was cow protection. It is understood that he had 900,000 cows, and Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma used to take charge of them along with His many cowherd boy friends. Every day, in the morning, He used to go out with His friends and cows into the pasturing grounds. So, if you seriously want to convert this new spot into New Vṛndāvana, I shall advise you not to make it very much modernized. But as you are American boys, you must make it just suitable to your minimum needs. Nor should you make it too much luxurious as generally Europeans and Americans are accustomed. Better to live there without modern amenities and to live a natural healthy life for executing Kṛṣṇa consciousness. It may be an ideal village where the residents will have plain living and high thinking. For plain living we must have sufficient land for raising crops, and pasturing grounds for the cows. If there are sufficient grains and production of milk, then the whole economic problem is solved. You do not require any machines, cinema, hotels, slaughterhouses, brothels, nightclubs—all these modern amenities. People in the spell of *māyā* are trying to squeeze out gross pleasure from the senses, which is not possible to derive to our heart’s content. Therefore we are confused and baffled in our attempt to eschew eternal pleasure from gross matter. Actually, joyful life is on the spiritual platform; therefore we should try to save our valuable time from material activities and engage them in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. But at the same time, because we have to keep our body and soul together to execute our mission, we must have sufficient (not extravagant) food to eat, and that will be supplied by grains, fruits and milk.

“The difficulty is that the people in this country want to continue their practice of sense gratification, and at the same time they want to become transcendently advanced. This is quite contradictory. One can advance in transcendental life by the process of negating the general practice of materialistic life. The exact adjustment is in Vaiṣṇava philosophy, which is called *yukta-vairāgya*. This means that we should simply accept the bare necessities of our material part of life, and try at the same time for spiritual advancement. This should be the motto of New Vṛndāvana, if you at all develop it to the perfectional stage.” (Śrīla Prabhupāda, Letter, 6/14/68)

Regarding New Vṛndāvana’s cow protection program, Śrīla Prabhupāda writes: “We must have sufficient pasturing ground to feed the animals all year. We have to maintain the animals throughout their lives. We must not make any program for selling them to the slaughterhouses. That is the way of cow protection. Kṛṣṇa by His practical example taught us to give all protection to the cows, and that should be the main business of New Vṛndāvana. Vṛndāvana is also known as Gokula. *Go* means cows, and *kula* means congregation. Therefore the special feature of New Vṛndāvana will be cow protection, and by doing so, we shall not be the losers. In India, of course, a cow is protected, and the cowherdsmen derive sufficient profit by such protection. Cow dung is used for fuel. Cow dung dried in the sunshine is kept in stock for utilization as fuel in the villages. They get wheat and other cereals produced from the field. There is milk and vegetables, and the fuel is cow dung, and thus they are self-sufficient, independent, in every village. There are hand weavers for the cloth. And the country oil-mill (consisting of a bull walking in a circle around two big grinding stones, attached with yoke) grinds the oil seeds into oil. The whole idea is that people residing in New Vṛndāvana may not have to search for work outside. Arrangements should be such that the residents will be self-satisfied. That will make an ideal *āśrama*. I do not know whether these ideals can be given practical shape, but I think that people may be happy in any place with land and cow without endeavoring for so-called amenities of modern life—which simply increase anxieties for maintenance and proper equipment. The less we are anxious for maintaining our body and soul together, the more we become favorable for advancing in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.” (Śrīla Prabhupāda, Letter, 6/14/68)

CONSTRUCTING TEMPLES

As for the development of buildings, Śrīla Prabhupāda has given specific instructions for temples and living quarters. At present New Vṛndāvana includes 133 acres (more land will be available in the future) of pasture, forest, ponds, waterfalls, mountains and streams, so there are varied settings for numerous buildings. Śrīla Prabhupāda advises:

“Concentrate on one temple, and then



we shall extend one after another. Immediately the scheme should be to have a temple in the center and residential quarters for the *brahmacārīs* or *grhasthas* surrounding it. Let us go ahead with that plan at first.

“Also you will be pleased to note that I’ve asked Goursundar to make a layout of the whole land, and I shall place seven different temples in different situations, as prototype of Vṛndāvana. There will be seven principal temples, namely, Govinda, Gopīnātha, Madana-Mohana, Śyāmasundara, Rādhā-Ramaṇa, Rādhā-Dāmodara, and Gokulānanda. Of course in Vṛndāvana there are about, more or less, big and small, 5,000 temples; that is a far distant scheme. But immediately we shall take up constructing at least seven temples in different places, meadows and hills. So I am trying to make a plan out of the description of the plot of our land. And the hilly portions may be named Govardhana. On Govardhana-side, the pasturing grounds for the cows may be allotted.” (Śrīla Prabhupāda, Letter, 8/23/68)

New Vṛndāvana is a means for the sincere participants to please the Spiritual Master by progress in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and when the Spiritual Master is pleased, Lord Kṛṣṇa is pleased. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes:

“Now we can work with great enthusiasm for constructing a New Vṛndāvana in the United States of America. People who came from Europe to this part of the world named so many new provinces, just like New England, New Amsterdam, New York, so I also came to this part of the world to preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and by His grace and by your endeavor, New Vṛndāvana is being constructed. That is my great happiness. Our sincere endeavor in the service of the Lord, and the Lord’s assistants, to make our progressive march successful, are two important things to be followed in the spiritual advancement of life. I think it was Kṛṣṇa’s desire that this New Vṛndāvana scheme should be taken up by us, and now He has given us a great opportunity to serve Him in this scheme. So let us do it sincerely, and all

other help will come automatically. I am very glad to notice in Kīrtanānanda’s letter that he has realized more and more that the function of New Vṛndāvana is nothing physical or bodily, but purely spiritual and for the glorification of the Lord, Śrī Hari. If we actually keep this view before us, certainly we shall be successful in our progressive march.” (Śrīla Prabhupāda, Letter, 8/23/68)

Another important project in New Vṛndāvana is the development of a school, grades one through twelve, where children from the urban centers can come to learn reading, writing, mathematics, the basic sciences and Kṛṣṇa consciousness. At present children are being individually tutored, and official State approval is impending the construction of a schoolhouse to meet building regulations. “So you have now taken charge of the sunrise of New Vṛndāvana,” Śrīla Prabhupāda writes. “Our program there is to construct seven temples. One, Rūpānuga Vidyāpīṭha, is to be a school for educating *brāhmaṇas* and Vaiṣṇavas. We have enough techno-



logical and other types of educational institutions; there are none where actual *brāhmaṇas* and *Vaiṣṇavas* are produced. So we will have to establish an educational institution for that purpose in New Vṛndāvana.” (Śrīla Prabhupāda, Letter, 1/12/68) As soon as buildings are constructed, the school program can be swiftly executed: “I am encouraged to know that you are very enthusiastic about our projects for developing New Vṛndāvana. So far as the school goes, we have many qualified teachers, and they are all enthusiastic about going there and beginning their teaching work. The only thing is that there is as of yet no place to accommodate these teachers. So as soon as these facilities are constructed, we can at once start at full force in setting up our Kṛṣṇa consciousness school program.” (Śrīla Prabhupāda, Letter, 12/25/69)

In May and June, 1969, His Divine Grace Śrīla Prabhupāda stayed in New Vṛndāvana for six weeks and gave specific directions for construction and general management. After his visit, he wrote: “I am always

thinking of your New Vṛndāvana. The first thing I find is the taste of the milk. The milk which we are taking here is not at all comparable with New Vṛndāvana milk. Anyway, there must be a gulf of difference between city life and country life. As poet Cowper said, ‘Country is made by God, and city is made by man.’ Therefore my special request is that you should try to maintain as many cows as possible in your New Vṛndāvana. Regarding duties, the men should be engaged in producing vegetables, tilling the field, taking care of the animals, house construction, etc., and the women shall do the indoor activities: taking care of the children, keeping the temple and kitchen very clean, cooking and churning butter. If they cooperate with the boys, then surely very quickly New Vṛndāvana will develop as nicely as possible.” (Śrīla Prabhupāda, Letter, 6/24/69)

In August, 1970, New Vṛndāvana held its first annual Janmāṣṭamī celebration, a three day celebration of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s birth, and hundreds of devotees from as

far away as Australia attended. Śrīla Prabhupāda, who was in India at the time, sent a Janmāṣṭamī message, exhorting those interested in transcendental communal living to complete developing New Vṛndāvana into a village “one mile long and one mile wide.” “Regarding Janmāṣṭamī arrangement, it is going on nicely, and that is very encouraging. We have started New Vṛndāvana in America, and it must be finished in the American way. In Vṛndāvana there are so many temples, they say 5,000, or in Vṛndāvana every home, every cottage is a temple. As far as possible, try to develop New Vṛndāvana on this standard. In the coming meeting of Janmāṣṭamī, amongst other business you must have a resolution to finish the development of New Vṛndāvana in the right sense of the term.” (Śrīla Prabhupāda, Letter, 8/20/70)

Whoever is interested in helping—in whatever way—with this challenging project is requested to write: President, New Vṛndāvana, R.D. 3, Moundsville, West Virginia, 26041. END

THE CURE FOR ALL DESPONDENCY

by Satsvarūpa dāsa Adhikārī (ISKCON—Boston)

The original source of knowledge is the *Vedas*. From the *Vedas* emanate all the spiritual or scriptural writings known to this planet, and all material knowledge also has been passed down by exponents of the original *Vedas*. The original *Vedas* were known by the aural tradition, or simply by hearing. The knowledge contained in the *Vedas* actually has no origin in history; the *Vedas* are so ancient as to be untraceable, but we have it from authority that they were set into writing 5000 years ago, when they were compiled by a great sage, Śrīla Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsadeva. Vyāsadeva put this aural tradition into writing because, as a liberated sage able to see the future, he foresaw that in the coming age, the age of quarrel and hypocrisy, people would be interested only in that which is temporary and would lose their ability to retain the Vedic knowledge by memory. The people of the age of Kali, which is the present age in modern civilization, are characterized by a short duration of life, diminished memory, distraction from the spiritual path, and lack of seriousness in searching out the ultimate goal of life.

It is told in the Vedic literature *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* that Vyāsadeva was fully equipped in knowledge and could see by his transcendental vision that all the good qualities of people in the future would gradually deteriorate, up to the point where 99% of the population would be thoroughly atheistic. A sage like Vyāsadeva who is a devotee of the Supreme Lord is factually far more a friend of the people in general than the so-called public leaders who cannot even know what will happen five minutes ahead. Thus 5000 years ago this great philanthropist, Vyāsa, foreseeing the need to edit the *Vedas* and put them into writing, divided the *Vedas* and expanded them into histories and narrations so that the less intelligent people, who are interested only in hearing stories, could understand the purport of the scriptures and thus be delivered back to the eternal joyful home, back to Godhead.

When the scriptures are heard from a bona fide spiritual master, their real meaning comes alive. There is no special educational qualification for understanding God.

By the mercy of Vyāsadeva the Vedic literature is readily understandable when handed down by a bona fide spiritual master who has realized the truth of the scriptures. Vyāsadeva was therefore a great spiritual master for all people, and he is known to be a literary incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Vyāsadeva and Lord Kṛṣṇa are on the same transcendental platform, and they collaborated in a plan to benedict the fallen souls of this age by presenting scripture in the form of stories and histories, such as the *Mahābhārata* (in which appears the *Bhagavad-gītā*, which is the gist of the entire Vedic philosophical literature).

“I STILL FEEL WANTING”

After having worked so hard for the cause of humanity and after compiling so much transcendental literature, it would be expected that Vyāsadeva would be satisfied by his worthwhile activities. Yet as Vyāsadeva sat down in meditation one morning, he thought to himself that he was not very satisfied in mind or heart. Vyāsadeva considered, “I have certainly worshiped the *Vedas*, the spiritual masters and the altar of sacrificial fire under strict disciplinary guidance and without pretense, and I have also abided by the Vedic rulings. I have shown the import of the disciplic succession through the explanation of the *Mahābhārata*, in which even women, *śūdras* and others can also see the path of religion. Yet although I am already fully equipped with everything needed in the matter of Vedic principles, I still feel wanting. It may be that I did not direct myself enough to the devotional service of the Lord, which is dear both to the perfect beings and to the infallible Lord.” From these thoughts we can see that Śrīla Vyāsadeva was able to express to himself a hint of the lack that he felt. Somehow or other, although fully equipped in all the details of Vedic achievements, Vyāsadeva appeared to have lost the clue to his normal transcendental happiness. Therefore he felt dissatisfaction.

The despondency of Vyāsadeva must not be thought of as an isolated case

unrelated to our own lives. If every man and woman reading this essay would only examine himself with introspection, he would most likely find something akin to the lack felt at heart by Śrīla Vyāsadeva. Whether one has achieved great success in business, or has amassed great wealth, a nice family, fame, or any amount of worldly or mystical power, that dissatisfaction at the inner core of one’s being is liable to occur. This dissatisfaction is manifested in many ways, such as boredom, frustration, loneliness and disillusion, and in general it exists because our innermost desires for happiness and fulfillment are not being satisfied. This is certainly true for those persons who have made gross sensualism their purpose for living. As such a person grows older and increases in his career of sex enjoyment and intoxication, he realizes that it is hellish and that he is not satisfied. Any man who feels great hopes for a fulfilling life in this material world will find that his actual position falls far short of his wished-for happiness. We may have idealistic plans for our own enjoyment or our families’ enjoyment or for the improvement of our nation or humanity, but because of the nature of the material laws—such as old age, death, disease and other miseries—our ideals are never fulfilled in the material world. His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda has written in this connection: “Perfection is never attained until one is satisfied at heart, and this satisfaction of the heart has to be searched out *beyond the material world.*”

THE SPIRITUAL MASTER

Just as Vyāsa was trying to locate the defect in himself, Nārada Muni, his spiritual master, reached Vyāsa’s cottage on the bank of the River Sarasvatī. On seeing Nārada, Śrīla Vyāsadeva got up in respect and offered his master all worship. Nārada then took a comfortable seat and began to address his disciple. As Nārada spoke, he was smiling because he knew well the cause of Vyāsadeva’s disappointment. Nārada inquired, “Are you not satisfied with identifying the body or mind as the object of self-realization?” By his first words Nārada hinted that despite his compilation of sacred and instructive transcendental literature, Vyāsadeva had actually identified the body and mind with the

self. But the concept of the body and the mind as the self can never bring happiness because the body is subject to so many miseries and is only temporary, whereas the real self is eternal. How is it that Vyāsadeva, who was such a great sage, could miss the real point of spiritual life and spiritual happiness? Nārada admitted that Vyāsadeva had certainly studied fully and had with deliberation compiled a full explanation of the original knowledge of the *Vedas*. So why should he be disappointed just when he should be feeling satisfied by a full lifetime of great welfare work for all humanity? Vyāsadeva humbly submitted himself before his spiritual master and asked him to please point out the root cause of his despondency.

Śrī Nārada said, “You have not broadcast the sublime and spotless glories of the Personality of Godhead. Anything that does not satisfy the senses of the Lord is considered worthless philosophy.” That was Nārada Muni’s prompt diagnosis. Śrī Vyāsadeva was despondent because, despite writing so many books, he had deliberately avoided glorifying the Supreme Lord, but he gave more attention to religiosity, economic development, sense gratification and salvation, which are the material activities of civilization. Vyāsadeva had neglected to give his full attention to devotional service, which starts with hearing and glorifying the name and pastimes of Kṛṣṇa. Therefore Nārada concluded that Vyāsadeva had more or less wasted his time. Nārada was saying, in other words, that all the scriptures that Vyāsadeva had compiled up to this point had dealt mainly with material activities, and this was the reason for his despondency. Vyāsadeva was interested in regulating material activities so that people could gradually come to the spiritual platform. But if people simply perform the regulative material principles and do not come to the spiritual platform, that will not help them. The only point of regulating sense gratificatory activities is to gradually gain the transcendental taste of love of God. Only when one tastes transcendental pleasure can he abandon satisfying his own senses and be intent on satisfying the senses of Kṛṣṇa.

IN THE NAME OF RELIGION

It has been stated that Vyāsadeva had been concerned with religiosity, which

involves preparing oneself for being elevated to the spiritual platform. Vyāsadeva had outlined *dharma*, or religious faith, as meaning to very punctually go to a church or temple, execute all ritualistic ceremonies very rigidly and follow religious rules and regulations. In this way a materialistic man can gradually be purified. But if at the end a person does not develop love for God, then the rituals are simply useless labor and empty formality. The objective of religion is not material happiness. The objective of religion is Kṛṣṇa. When religious rituals are followed for the goal of material happiness, all the prescriptions and regulations are simply a waste of time. Thus Vyāsadeva could be said to have actually encouraged materialistic activities. The sacrifices he described in the scriptures were presented with the understanding that everyone comes into this material world in order to satisfy his senses. So in order for people to enjoy sense gratification while at the same time following the codes of religion, the *Vedas* were prepared. Now Nārada told Vyāsadeva that he had actually encouraged sense gratification in the name of religion. We commonly see that when someone is involved in some basically illicit activity, he may try to find sanction for it within his religion. “My religion says I can do it. I can eat meat. I can smoke. I can have sex. It is sanctioned in my religion.” If scriptures are presented in material terms, people who seek authoritative approval for their sinful activities will screw out false meanings from them. And he who compiles such scriptures is to blame. That sort of religiosity in which the object is to achieve material happiness by following regulative principles will not help one, and Nārada condemned this religiosity as abominable. “If you simply stick to this principle, because you are an authority, people will understand that this is religion. People will think that religion is nothing more than this.” Even if one becomes very expert in executing religious performances, that does not mean that he can be elevated to the spiritual platform. Such performances may be a little helpful for rising to the spiritual platform, but unless one actually engages in the service of the Lord he cannot achieve perfection. Nārada Muni said, “Therefore, now please write literature that will attract people to Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Lord. Thus far you have only given an official understanding of Kṛṣṇa. You have indicated that God is great or

all-powerful, but people are not attracted because you have distracted their attention to the improvement of their material condition.”

THE ANCHOR

In this connection there is a nice story told by our spiritual master, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, concerning a wedding party that was traveling to the bride’s home. In India the bridegroom and his father and other relatives go to the bride’s home, and the marriage ceremony takes place there in the presence of all the relatives. This particular marriage was to take place in a village miles away. In Bengal the land is full of rivers, and the rivers are used as highways. So it was settled that the bridegroom’s party would start out on the evening before the marriage day and would arrive the next morning. They could rest the whole day, and that evening the marriage would take place. The party hired a ferry and got into the boat, and as the boat started, all the members of the bridegroom’s party fell asleep. The breeze on the river was strong and very pleasing, but the next morning when the wedding party arose they saw that they were standing in the same place. They were surprised. “How is it,” the boatman was asked, “that we are still in the same place? We have not proceeded even a few yards. How is that?” The boatman said, “We were rowing the whole night. We don’t know how this has happened.” Then one boatman found that the anchor had not been raised. The whole night the men were plying the oars, but the boat was only going around the anchor and did not go forward an inch.

Similarly, our anchor in the material world is our desire for material happiness, for which we may even worship God, go to a temple and offer our respect. But if our goal is only material happiness and if that is accepted as the ultimate goal, then it is useless. We have to go above that position. If one approaches Kṛṣṇa and says, “My dear Lord, I am in distress, please help me,” that is good in the sense that somehow or other one has approached God. But his motive is not pure. The motive is material enjoyment. Therefore Nārada told Vyāsadeva, “This kind of instruction in your books will not help people to come to the standard of pure devotional service, which alone can save

them from all material bondage.”

If this criticism is actually valid for Vyāsadeva, who was at least trying to bring people to the spiritual level, then how severely Nārada’s criticism applies to those so-called authorities or teachers who do not even encourage that one follow the regulative principles of religion. Famous writers, poets and philosophers who are taken as authorities and are followed by people in general, but who present only their speculations or sinful motives in writing, may write books which are read by millions, but the effect is disastrous. Śrīla Vyāsadeva, by encouraging material sex life under the regulative principles of marriage but not stressing sufficiently that Kṛṣṇa is the center of married life and of all activities, may have been at fault in that way, but the mundane writer who presents sex life as virtuous and enjoyable, even outside of marriage, has an abominable influence.

PILGRIMAGE FOR CROWS

The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* deals with such literatures. In the First Canto, Chapter Five, it is stated, “Those words which do not describe the glories of the Lord, who alone can sanctify the atmosphere of the whole universe, are considered by saintly persons to be like unto a place of pilgrimage for crows. Since the all-perfect persons are inhabitants of the transcendental abode, they do not derive any pleasure there.” In his purport to this verse His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda has written: “Crows and swans are not birds of the same feather because of their different mental attitudes. The fruitive workers or passionate men are compared to the crows, whereas the all-perfect saintly persons are compared to swans. The crows take pleasure in a place where refused remnants of foodstuffs are thrown out, just as the passionate fruitive workers take pleasure in wine, women, and places for gross sense pleasure. The swans do not take pleasure in the places where the crows are assembled for conferences and meetings. They are instead seen in an atmosphere of natural scenic beauty where there are transparent reservoirs of water nicely decorated with stems of lotus flowers in variegated colors of natural beauty. That is the difference between the two classes of birds. Similarly, there are different kinds of literature for different

kinds of men. Mostly the market literatures which attract men of the crow’s category are literatures containing refused remnants of sensuous topics. They are generally known as mundane talks in relation with the gross body and subtle mind. They are full of subject matter described in decorative language full of mundane similes and metaphorical arrangements. Yet with all that, they are devoid of glorification of the Lord. Such poetry and prose, on any subject matter, is considered decoration of the dead body and the superficial agitated mind. Spiritually advanced men who are compared to the swans do not take pleasure in such dead literatures, which are sources of pleasure for men who are spiritually dead. These literatures in the modes of passion and ignorance are distributed under different labels, but they can hardly help the spiritual urge of the human being, and therefore the swanlike spiritually advanced men have nothing to do with such mundane remnants. Social literary men, scientists, mundane poets, theoretical philosophers and politicians who are completely absorbed in the material advancement of sense pleasure are all dolls of the material energy. They take pleasure in a place where rejected subject matters are thrown. According to Svāmī Śrīdhara, this is the pleasure of the prostitute hunters.”

THE BEST LITERATURE

The essence of human activities is to describe the glories of the Lord. Literature which does not engage people in the devotional service of Kṛṣṇa will not be substantially pleasurable. “On the other hand, literature which is full of descriptions of the transcendental glories of the name, fame, form, pastimes, etc., of the unlimited Supreme Lord is a different creation of transcendental words meant for bringing about a revolution in the impious life of a misdirected world civilization. Such transcendental literature, even though imperfectly composed, is accepted by purified men who are thoroughly honest.” (*Bhāg.* 1.5.11)

It is understood that by broadcasting the holy name and fame of the Supreme Lord, the polluted atmosphere of the world will change, and as a result of propagating transcendental literature, people will become sane in their transactions. Of course at first people are inclined

towards literature concerning sensuous topics, and they find this to be more entertaining and attractive than descriptions of the Supreme Lord. This is due to their diseased condition of thinking that the real self is the temporary body. The *Bhagavad-gītā*, however, points out that this body is just like a jacket and that the real self is the eternal soul. Until we realize this, we think that our happiness is in this body, and therefore we like to hear literatures describing the joys and pleasures of this body.

It is stated that reading literature glorifying God acts on the conditioned soul as sugar candy does upon a person affected with jaundice. Although in the beginning one who is suffering from jaundice is reluctant to take sugar candy because of his diseased state, it is well known that sugar candy is the remedy for jaundice. Sugar tastes bitter to a jaundiced person, but the symptom of his cure is that he tastes the sugar candy to be progressively sweeter. Similarly, when people develop a taste for transcendental literature, they will automatically cease to read other literature. When transcendental literature like *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is available for the reading propensity, the material literature, which is catering poison to society, will automatically cease to be popular. “There are thousands and thousands of literary men all over the world, and they have created many, many thousands of literary works for the information of the people in general for thousands and thousands of years. Unfortunately none of them have brought peace and tranquility on earth between men or between nations. This is due to a spiritual vacuum in those literatures; therefore Vedic literatures are specifically recommended for suffering humanity to bring about the desired effect of liberation from the pangs of material civilization, which is eating the vital part of human energy.” (Bhaktivedanta purports to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, 1.5.13)

CONCENTRATE ON KṚṢṆA

Nārada therefore advised his student Vyāsadeva, “Anything which you have described under any vision apart from that of the Lord will react and result in oscillating the mind as the wind rocks a boat which has no resting place.” Nārada stressed the effect of the Vedic literature compiled by Vyāsadeva and tried to em-

phasize to him that he should concentrate on describing everything in relation with the Supreme Lord and no one else. In fact, there is nothing existent but the Lord. The Lord is the root of the complete tree, and He is the stomach of the complete body. Pouring water on the root is the right method of watering a tree, just as feeding the stomach is the means of supplying energy to all parts of the body. Śrīla Vyāsadeva was an authority on the scriptures, and therefore Nārada condemned his compromising spirit and advised him to speak directly on the prime necessity of human life—to realize one's relationship with the Lord and thus surrender unto Him without delay. Nārada said, "The Supreme Lord is unlimited. Only expert personalities understand this knowledge of spiritual values. Therefore those who are not so well situated, due to being attached to material qualities, should be shown the ways of transcendental realization, by yourself, through descriptions of the transcendental qualities of the Supreme Lord." Nārada indicated that because Vyāsa actually knew about the Supreme Lord, he should compile scriptures according to the synopsis which Nārada had given him. Living beings must accept the supremacy of the Lord and agree to render loving service unto Him for whom they have been created. Without this there cannot be peace and tranquility in the world. Śrīla Vyāsadeva was advised by Śrīla Nārada to expand this idea in the *Bhāgavatam*. To surrender fully unto the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord is the only proper engagement of the living being. Therefore, intent on describing the Lord more vividly, Vyāsadeva set about to both wipe out his own despondency and to benefit all humanity by following the orders of his spiritual master.

VYĀSADEVA'S VISION

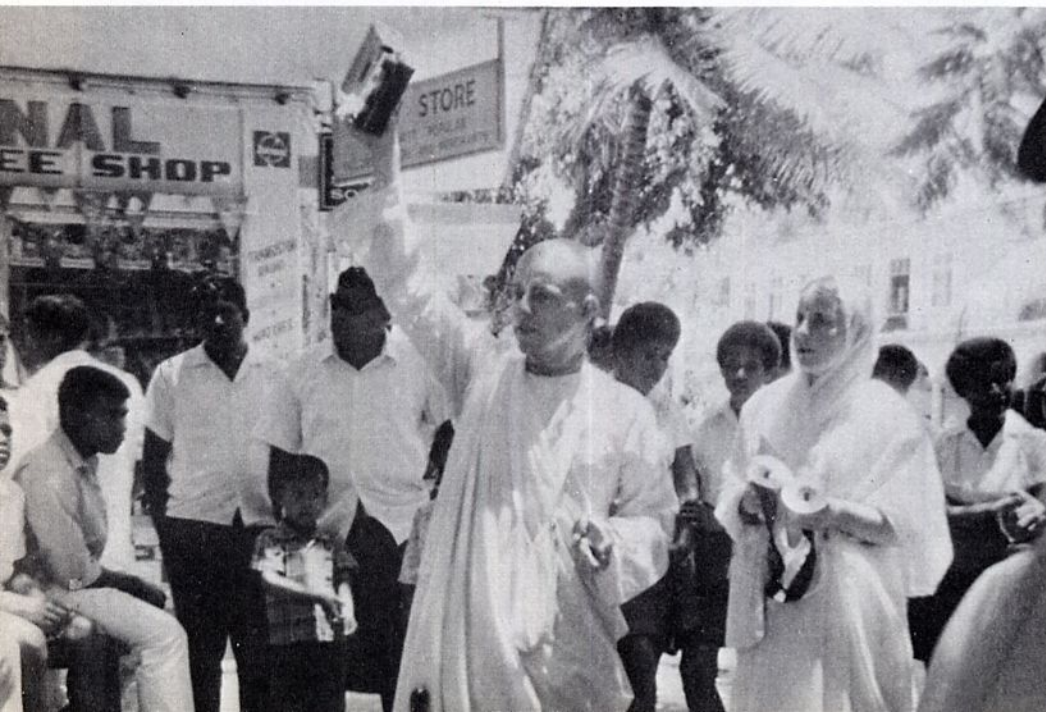
"On the western bank of the River Sarasvatī, which is very intimately related with transcendental subjects like the *Vedas*, there is a cottage for meditation. In that place Śrīla Vyāsadeva, in his own *āśrama*, which is surrounded by berry trees, sat down to meditate after touching water for purification. Thus he perfectly engaged his mind in the linking process of devotional service without any tinge of material affection, and he saw the Absolute Personality of Godhead along with His

external energy, which was under full control." (*Bhāg.* 1.5.2-4) By the instructions of his spiritual master, Vyāsadeva became absorbed in transcendental thought of the Personality of Godhead. He did not take notice of the impersonal effulgence coming from the body of the Lord, but concentrated on the Personality of Godhead who is personally controlling all energies. Upon seeing the all-perfect Personality of Godhead along with His energies, Vyāsadeva observed the unwanted miseries of the conditioned souls bewildered by illusion, and at last he saw the remedial measure for the conditioned souls, namely the linking process of devotional service. Thus, based on the instructions of his spiritual master and his subsequent meditation, Vyāsadeva understood that the process of hearing and chanting of the name, fame, and glory of the Supreme Personality will alone revive one's dormant love of God. The way this works is that when the Lord is satisfied with the efforts of the devotees, He endows them with His loving transcendental service. As soon as one takes up chanting and hearing in an attitude of service, at once his unwanted miseries disappear. There is no other requirement necessary but simply to give aural reception to the glorification of God.

The final result is that Vyāsadeva set to work compiling the mature work of his life, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, which contains full descriptions of the pastimes of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and His pure devotees. In this work there is no tinge of dry philosophical speculation, study of the impersonal nature, execution of sacrifices to the demigods, or the pursuit of sense gratification under the sanction of religiosity or mechanical *yoga*. Vyāsa compiled the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in twelve cantos of eighteen thousand verses. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* which is the narration of the Lord's activities, is the postgraduate study of *Bhagavad-gītā*, which is spoken by the Lord Himself. Often someone says, "God is great," but how great He is, what He is doing, what His energies are, what He is like, what His pastimes are, what His qualities are (His gentleness, gravity and beauty as well as His specific dealings with His intimate devotees) is all disclosed in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. This is the crowning glory of Vyāsadeva's compilation of the scriptures. Simply by reading *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and *Bhagavad-gītā*, one can assimilate all knowledge and reach the ultimate end of knowledge—to develop love for Kṛṣṇa. END



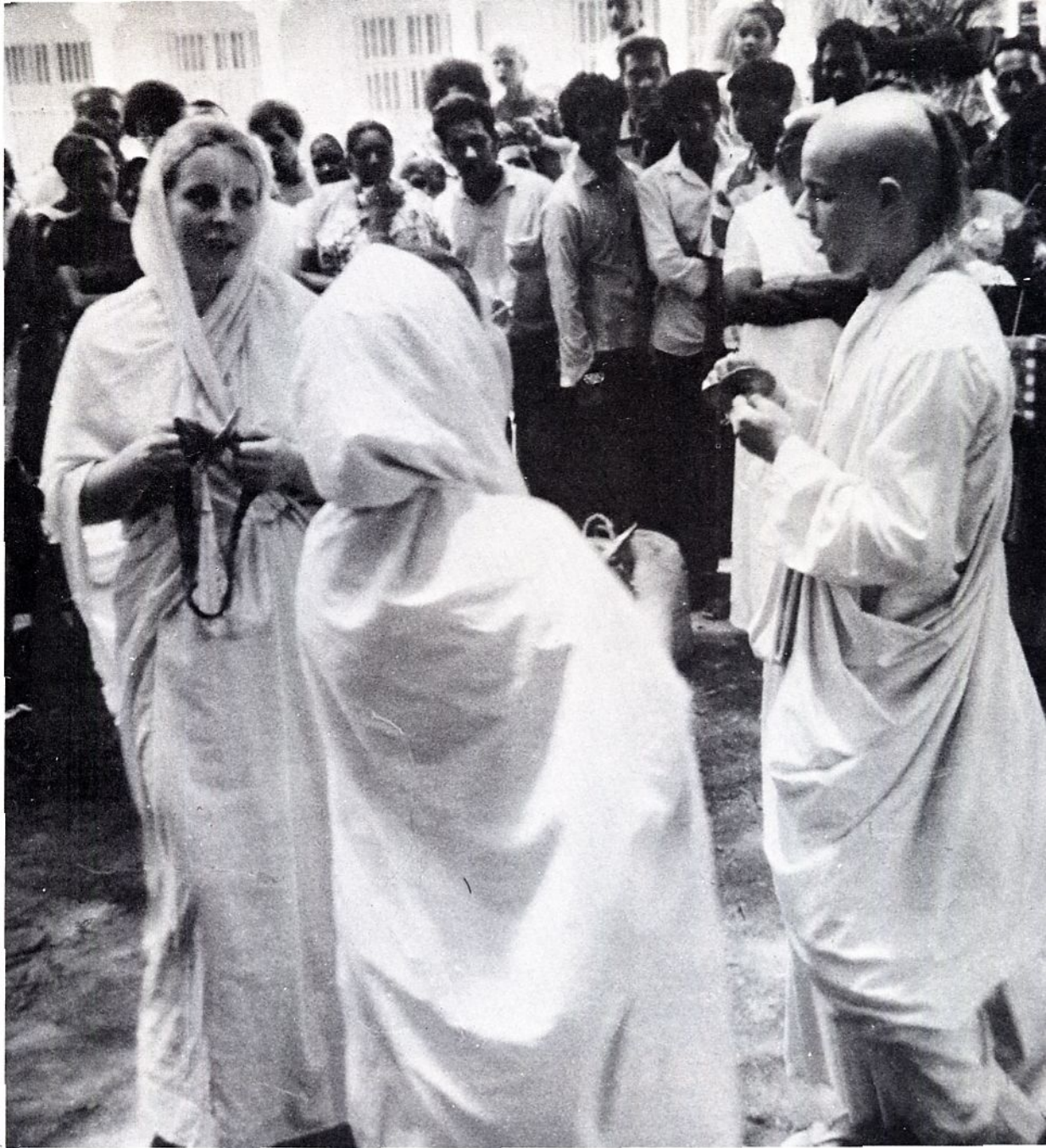
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His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda has sent his disciples to the Fiji Islands in the Pacific Ocean, north of New Zealand, to spread the chanting of the holy names, Hare Kṛṣṇa. Śrīla Prabhupāda has stated, "Lord Caitanya declared that the chanting of the holy name would be heard in every town and village. Lord Caitanya is an incarnation of Kṛṣṇa; that is, He is God Himself. Therefore His prediction will take place. But if you help to make it come about, then you can take credit for it, otherwise someone else will do it."

We have recently received a letter from Upendra dāsa Adhikārī, the young disciple of His Divine Grace who is leading the *saṅkīrtana* movement on Suva, the main island of the Fijis. He writes: "The young

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children flock to the sound of the holy name and shout with clarity and volume, 'Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare! Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare!' The temple is packed on Sundays. Fijian girls dance joyfully to Hare Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is so kind to us! Literally everyone who sees us says, 'Hare Kṛṣṇa,' and poor as people are, they are always willing to give us something to help us with our great work of spreading love of Kṛṣṇa."

In one letter Upendra dāsa describes that Fiji is not at all a paradise. "It is always humid, and if not cloudy and hot, then rainy and hot. There are flies, mosquitoes, flying cockroaches, etc., to contend with, yet even though all these minor things are there, Kṛṣṇa conscious-





ness is still strong." Upendra is in Fiji with his wife, new devotees are going there to join them, and the local Fijians are taking part more and more in the joyous *saṅkīrtana* movement. And why should it be any surprise? All living entities are parts and parcels of Kṛṣṇa. The chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa is an international language—anyone who takes part will feel his heart cleansed and will experience the ecstasy of spiritual life. END



THE SOURCES OF MISERY

by Kuruśreṣṭha dāsa Adhikārī (ISKCON–Boulder)

For the soul there is never birth or death. Nor having once been does he ever cease to be. He is unborn, eternal, ever-existing, undying and primeval. He is not slain when the body is slain.

(*Bhagavad-gītā*, 2.20)

Eternity—it is our nature to experience unceasing existence. Kṛṣṇa explains in *Bhagavad-gītā* that there never was a time when we did not exist and that therefore we were never born. Nor in the future will we ever die; we are eternally existing personalities untouched by the death of the body which encases our spirit. Our eternal nature is called the spirit self; this is our real identity.

One aspect of this eternal nature of ours is that we cannot exist without rendering some service to someone or something. We are eternally servants; this is also our nature. Upon hearing this, many of us become insulted and say, “No! I am free!” But if we examine our lives a little more closely we will see that it is true that we must always serve.

Firstly, we all serve these bodies and the unending stream of desires that accompany them. We feed them, wash them, decorate them, stimulate their senses, fix them when they are broken, and put them to bed when they are tired. So this is the most obvious example of our serving nature. We also serve a myriad of other masters, including parents, friends, teachers, governments, pets, children, lawns, cars, etc. We are all rendering service in one way or another. This eternal nature of rendering service is called *sanātana-dharma*, which means the eternal religion of the living entity—“that quality which remains always and which cannot be taken away.”

Since we are all eternally servants, we should be interested to find out who is the most merciful and benevolent master and in whose service we will be most satisfied.

Kṛṣṇa explains in *Bhagavad-gītā*, Chapter Seven, verse six, that He is the “origin and dissolution” of all energy. Everything that we receive and give away has its origin in the Supreme Lord. So whether or not we recognize this fact, Kṛṣṇa is already giving us everything, and therefore He is the most benevolent of all masters. Our most natural position, therefore, is to render service to Him.

When the Supreme Lord appears in the material world, He does so in His original, eternal, transcendental form, which always remains untouched by the illusory material energy. This is confirmed in Chapter Four, verse six, of *Bhagavad-gītā*, where Kṛṣṇa says:

Although I am unborn and My transcendental body never deteriorates, and although I am the Lord of all sentient beings, I still appear in every millennium in My original transcendental form.

Kṛṣṇa is eternally a person, and this personality is the source of all energy, both material and spiritual. This fact is confirmed in all the Vedic scriptures, especially in *Bhagavad-gītā*, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and *Śrī Īsopaniṣad*. His form is completely spiritual, and the nature of this form is *sac-cid-ānanda-vigraha*; it is eternally full of knowledge and bliss.

Therefore another aspect of our eternal nature is that we also have *sac-cid-ānanda* forms. In *Bhagavad-gītā* (15.7) Kṛṣṇa says that we are eternally His fragmental parts. As parts and parcels of the Supreme Lord, we enjoy qualitative oneness with the Lord. So just as Kṛṣṇa’s nature is eternally full of bliss and knowledge, it is also our nature to be eternally full of bliss and knowledge. But whereas Kṛṣṇa possesses these qualities infinitely, we possess them infinitesimally. Thus there is a quantitative difference.

ASKING THE QUESTION

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda has given a nice example in this connection. The nature or quality of sea water is that it is salty. Whether one examines an entire ocean of sea water or just one drop, this quality of saltiness does not change; both the drop and the ocean are salty. The difference is in the quantity of sea water, not in the quality.

The question now comes to mind, “If we are by nature full of bliss and knowledge, why are we experiencing something temporary and miserable?” Everyone should ask this most important question; otherwise he has not actually reached the

human form of life. This human form of life is meant for solving this question. Every activity we perform which is not directed at solving this question is simply a waste of time. It is not an extremely difficult question either, if we simply take the time to examine it.

The most prominent reason for failing to experience our real nature of eternity, bliss and knowledge is that we have a body which 1) exists only temporarily, 2) is completely unconscious, and 3) is always either partially or completely miserable. This body is produced of material nature, and these three aspects are qualities of the material energy.

The Supreme Lord expands himself into infinite energies, which can generally be divided into three groups. One energy, which we have previously described, is called the superior, spiritual energy of the Lord. Another energy is the lower, inferior energy, called matter. And our nature is called marginal because we are one of the superior energies of the Lord but are now in contact with the inferior, material energy.

In *Bhagavad-gītā* Lord Kṛṣṇa describes this material energy:

Earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, intelligence, and false ego—altogether these eight comprise My separated material energies. (Bg. 7.4)

This material form of energy is the exact opposite of the superior energy and therefore has the quality of being temporary. This fact can be easily understood if we just examine the history of our father or our father’s father. Some of us have seen pictures of them when they were young, and then again when they were married, and then again when they were old. And now many of these persons have died, and their bodies are rotting. So the body is temporary, and all the different forms which it takes are also temporary.

The next quality of the material energy is that it is not conscious. This material world is nothing but a great lump of dead, ignorant energy which lacks the capacity for movement or awareness. This fact can be observed in these material bodies. As long as the superior energy is situated within the body, there is motion and consciousness. But at the point of death, when the spiritual living entity or life force leaves the body, suddenly the movement and consciousness which were present also

leave the body. At this point we can see that the material elements of which the body consists have nothing to do with consciousness; these bodies are completely unconscious.

The third quality of the material energy is that it is full of unhappiness. In *Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa mentions this fact:

From the highest planet in the material world, down to the lowest, all are places of misery, where repeated birth and death take place. (Bg. 8.16)

No matter which position one holds within this entire material world—whether one is rich, famous, beautiful or talented—he must be miserable here. That is the nature of this place. It is full of miseries; it is a place for suffering.

MISERIES ATTACK

In *Bhagavad-gītā* it is stated that the spiritual energy (internal) is covered by the material energy (external). It is this covering of material energy that is the cause of all miseries and sufferings. It is our natural position to experience full pleasure and knowledge. In *Teachings of Lord Caitanya* it is said that the more we identify with and are attached to this covering, the greater is the degree of our suffering. In the material world, “those who are a little enlightened suffer less, but on the whole, everyone is subjected to material misery due to being covered by the material energy.” (TLC, pg. 50)

The miseries which attack these material bodies are from three main sources: 1) from the very nature of the body, 2) from the nature of the environment, and 3) from other living entities.

These bodies are under the stringent laws of material nature, and this nature is undergoing a continuous process of transformation. We have all noticed the seasonal changes and have heard them glorified in various literatures. The entire material nature, including these bodies, must always evolve through six stages of existence: 1) birth, 2) growth, 3) duration of life, 4) transformation, 5) deterioration or old age, and finally 6) death. Nowhere in the entire material world is anyone free from this cycle of birth and death.

The first source of misery is contact with these material bodies. These bodies are always suffering in so many ways, but

due to the illusory nature of the material energy, we sometimes think that we are enjoying. In *Teachings of Lord Caitanya* our existence in this material world is compared to sitting on a dunking seat: “Formerly a king used to punish a criminal by dunking him in the river, and then raising him again for a breath, and then again dunking him once more in the water. Material nature punishes and rewards the individual entity in just the same way.” Sometimes we are above water and it seems that we are enjoying, and sometimes we are submerged and therefore suffering. Neither position is very desirable. Every embodied being goes through birth, death, disease and old age due to this material body. If we identify with this birth and death cycle, we are immediately placed upon the dunking stool, sometimes up and sometimes down.

The environment in which these bodies live is the second source of material misery. Sometimes the weather is too hot, and sometimes too cold. Portions of the planet have no rainfall at any time during the year, whereas in other places it rains every day. These bodies are very delicate and are constantly being cut, bruised, broken or smashed by different calamities within the environment. It is impossible to make these bodies completely comfortable at all times within this material environment.

Finally there are those miseries inflicted upon these bodies by other living entities. Examples of this are the insects such as mosquitoes, lice and poisonous spiders. On a larger scale there are snakes and other wild or tame animals; even dogs and cats may sometimes inflict pain upon us. In human society the continuous wars that we are fighting is a great example of misery from other living entities. Thousands of men, women, children and other living entities have been maimed or destroyed by the weapons of war.

Thus the entire material world is full of intense danger in the form of the threefold miseries.

PLACE OF DANGER

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda has said that if someone were invited to an apartment where he knew there would be the danger that he might lose his life, then naturally he wouldn't go there. Similarly, these bodies are places of great danger. Why are we

accepting them? It is obvious that these bodies are causes of misery, danger and suffering, and they only prevent us from experiencing our eternally joyous and cognizant nature. Since this is true, why have we decided to take these bodies? Also, what is the process of liberation from them?

Kṛṣṇa Himself says in *Bhagavad-gītā*:

An intelligent person does not take part in the sources of misery, which are due to contact with the material senses. O son of Kuntī, such pleasures have a beginning and an end, and so the wise man does not delight in them. (Bg. 5.22)

Intelligence is, as stated by the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the prerequisite for deciding not to take a material body. This intelligence is described by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda as “the power to analyze things in their proper perspective.” If we understand that the contact with the senses of the material body is the source of our suffering, then we have the proper perspective described as intelligence.

Intelligence is necessary in order to understand the difference between matter and spirit and to become aware of the incompatible situation which occurs when they come in contact. “When one fails to take advantage of intelligence he becomes a deranged man, so a living being is dependent on intelligence, or the direction of a superior being.” (*Bhāg.2.2.35*, purport) The process by which we become trapped in this illusory consciousness and subsequently lose intelligence is also clearly described in *Bhagavad-gītā*:

While contemplating the objects of the senses, a person develops attachment for them, and from such attachment lust develops, and from lust anger arises. From anger, delusion arises, and from delusion bewilderment of memory. When memory is bewildered, intelligence is lost, and when intelligence is lost one falls down again into the material pool. (Bg. 2.62-63)

When we fail to distinguish between spirit and matter and falsely think that we are these bodies or minds, then we are in ignorance of our true spiritual nature. “Ignorance is like animal existence. The

animal's life is full of suffering, but the animal does not know that he is suffering." (*Kṛṣṇa, the Reservoir of Pleasure*, pg. 10) It is due only to this ignorance of our true eternal nature that we suffer. We have all forgotten that our natural position is to engage in loving service to the Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

There is a nice story in *Teachings of Lord Caitanya* in this connection. "The story involves the instruction of Sarvajña to a poor man who came to him to have his future told. When Sarvajña saw the horoscope of the poor man, he was astonished that the man was so poor, and he said to him, 'Oh, why are you so unhappy? I see from your horoscope that you have some hidden treasure left to you by your father. The horoscope, however, states that your father could not disclose this to you because he died in a foreign place. But now you can search out the hidden treasure left by your father and be happy.'" (TLC, pg. 55)

Because of ignorance and forgetfulness of our true nature and of our relationship with Kṛṣṇa, we continually take new material bodies, due to the force of our material consciousness.

That upon which a person meditates at the time of death, quitting his body absorbed in the thought thereof, that particular thing he attains after death. (Bg. 8.6)

If, therefore, one spends an entire lifetime thinking of material nature as experienced by the senses and the mind, what else can one think of at the point of death but material nature? *Śrī Īsopaniṣad* says:

Those who are engaged in the culture of nescient activities shall enter into the darkest region of ignorance. Worse still are those engaged in the so-called culture of knowledge.

(*Śrī Īsopaniṣad, Mantra Nine*)

Within our modern civilization it can be said that a great percentage of the population is engaged in "the so-called culture of knowledge." Today it is common for one to have a college degree, the standard symbol of education. But what kind of education is it which ignores our spiritual nature? Because we ignore our spiritual nature, we experience that instead of becoming happier, as modern science and education have promised, ". . . the result

is that people are more unhappy than before on account of too much stress on material advancement without any taste of the most important aspect of life, the spiritual aspect." (*Śrī Īsopaniṣad*, pg. 45)

THE SOLUTION

Modern education, which teaches how to manipulate and exploit material elements for an increase in sense gratification, is simply creating more and more problems rather than solving the original ones. "There is no need of machines and tools or huge steel plants for creating artificial comforts of life." (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.2.37, purport). We have seen the result of this kind of thinking—an environment which is so polluted that it makes life intolerable rather than more comfortable. Rather than wasting time trying to lord it over this material nature, we should engage in finding a solution to the miseries of material life, namely birth, death, disease and old age.

"The miseries of the material world are also indirect reminders of incompatibility with dead matter, and intelligent living entities generally take note of these reminders and side by side engage themselves in the culture of *vidyā*, or transcendental knowledge." (*Śrī Īsopaniṣad*, pg. 56) This transcendental knowledge, as delivered by such literatures as *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, is the way to get out of this dark hole of material life. We are, by nature, eternally blissful and fully cognizant. The transcendental knowledge of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the way to revive that consciousness.

In this world, there is nothing so sublime and pure as transcendental knowledge. Such knowledge is the mature fruit of all mysticism. And one who has achieved this enjoys the self within himself in due course of time. (Bg. 4.38)

The Supreme Absolute Truth is the goal of such transcendental knowledge. Lord Kṛṣṇa describes in *Bhagavad-gītā* how to acquire this knowledge.

Just try to learn the truth by approaching a spiritual master. Inquire from him submissively and render service unto him. The self-realized soul can impart knowledge unto you

because he has seen the truth.
(Bg. 4.34)

When one is standing in the darkness of ignorance, which hangs like night over this material world, one cannot see in which direction to turn to get out of the darkness. One who is not blinded by the illusory energy can see and can also easily lead us across this ocean of birth and death. This is why the acceptance of a bona fide spiritual master is so essential for understanding which path to take to get out of the material entanglement.

There are undoubtedly many paths which lead in the direction of self-realization. In our present position it is very difficult to see which is the best, but we can get authorized knowledge from the transcendental Vedic literature. In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* Śukadeva Gosvāmī tells King Parīkṣit:

For those who are wandering in the material universe, there is no more auspicious means of deliverance than that which is aimed at in the direct devotional service of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

In all the Vedic scriptures this devotional service to the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa is recommended as the ultimate perfectional state of all existence. Kṛṣṇa confirms this in *Bhagavad-gītā*:

And of all *yogīs*, he who abides in Me with great faith, worshiping Me in transcendental loving service, is the most intimately united with Me in *yoga* and is the highest of all.

(Bg. 8.47)

Just by fixing one's mind on the all-attractive transcendental form of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and engaging in His service, one immediately becomes free from all reactions to past activities and enjoys unlimited happiness, even within this life. Kṛṣṇa is the reservoir of all pleasure and the only shelter from the pangs of material existence, and by becoming situated in pure Kṛṣṇa consciousness one can be assured of never taking birth again in this miserable material world.

Only the purified soul can attain the perfection of associating with the Personality of Godhead in complete bliss and satisfaction, in his constitutional state, and whoever is able to

renovate such devotional perfection is never again attracted by this material world, and he never returns. (Bhāg. 2.2.31)

Purification: this is the only way one can end this material entanglement. In the *Vedas* there are thousands of sacrifices, rituals and *mantras* which can be performed to achieve this state of purified consciousness. In *Teachings of Lord Caitanya* it is said that Lord Caitanya, the highest perfectional figure in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, quoted the following verse

from the *Bṛhan-nāradya Purāṇa* in this connection:

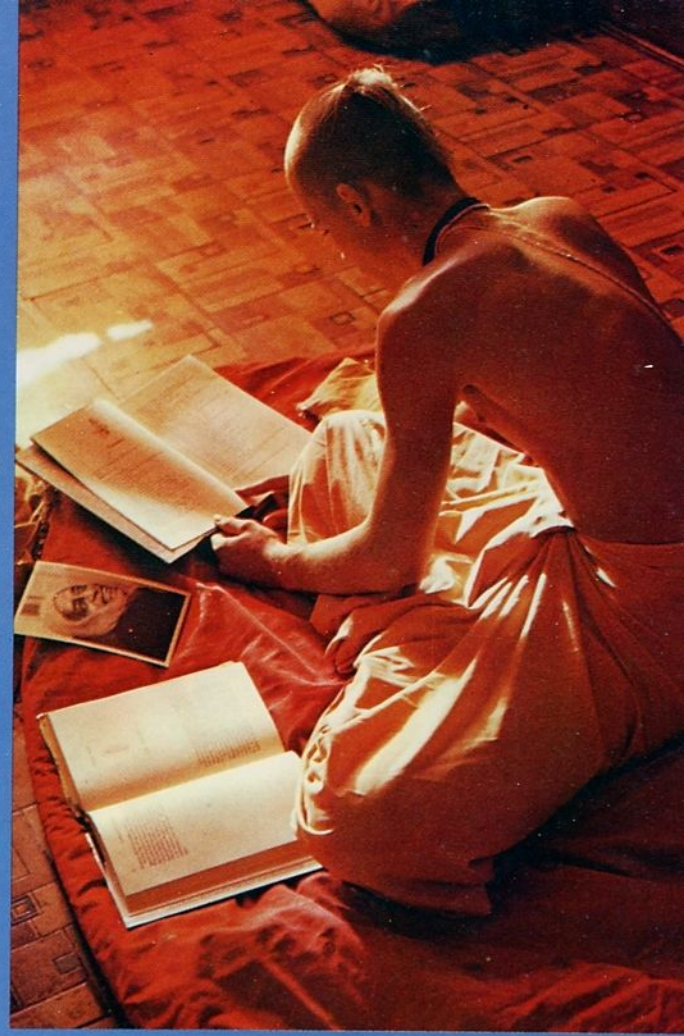
*harer nāma harer nāma
harer nāmaiva kevalam.
kalau nāsty eva nāsty eva
nāsty eva gatir anyathā.*

In this age of quarrel and hypocrisy [Kali yuga], the only means of deliverance is to chant the holy name of the Lord. There is no other means of success. (B.N. 38.126)

In this age, just by chanting and hearing

the sound vibration of these sixteen words—*Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare*—one can achieve the result of performing all the sacrifices and rituals prescribed in the *Vedas* for purification. In *Teachings of Lord Caitanya* it is stated, “To save oneself from the contamination of Kali (the present age) there is no other alternative than these sixteen words.” END





Back cover: As a child, Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, almost daily fulfilled His promise that He would always protect His devotees. In one instance He rescued the entire village of Vṛndāvana and its inhabitants from a disaster by lifting Govardhana Hill and holding it in the air for seven days as a great umbrella during a storm sent by Indra, the King of heaven.

