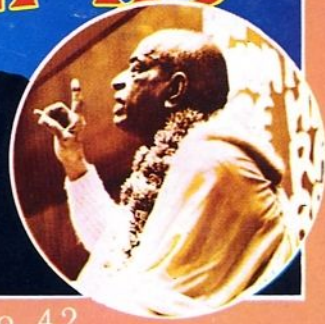


GODHEAD IS LIGHT, NESCIENCE IS DARKNESS. WHERE THERE IS GODHEAD THERE IS NO NESCIENCE.



BACK TO GODHEAD



THE MAGAZINE OF THE HARE KRISHNA MOVEMENT No. 42





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.

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TEACHINGS OF LORD CAITANYA The conditioned soul, being engrossed in the material body, increases the pages of the history of material activity. The teachings of Lord Caitanya,

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.

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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.

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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.

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ŚRĪMAD-BHĀGAVATAM

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The essence of religion, or, for that matter, the very purpose of life itself, is to develop love of God. We desire to provide for all people the gift of knowing how to love God, and we are dedicated to awakening the love of God which is dormant in the heart of everyone, regardless of race, creed or color. The program offered by the International Society for Krishna Consciousness is designed so that each and every person, while remaining in his occupation or station in life, may adopt the simple and direct methods of *bhakti-yoga* (devotion) under the direction of a bona fide spiritual master and offer whatever capacity or talent he has by utilizing it in the service of the Supreme Lord. The writer may write articles for Kṛṣṇa. Householders raise children in the science of God, and husband and wife live in mutual cooperation for spiritual progress. A businessman may enroll as a life member and thus participate in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement without abandoning his occupation.

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



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

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Lord Jagannātha, the Deity Incarnation of the Supreme Personality of Godhead Śrī Kṛṣṇa
Jagannāthaḥ svāmī nayana-paṭha-gāmī bhavatu me.
(O Lord of the universe, please be visible unto me.)

Indeed, You alone know Yourself by Your own potencies, O origin of all, Lord of all beings, God of gods, O Supreme Person, Lord of the universe! (*Bhagavad-gītā*, 10.15)

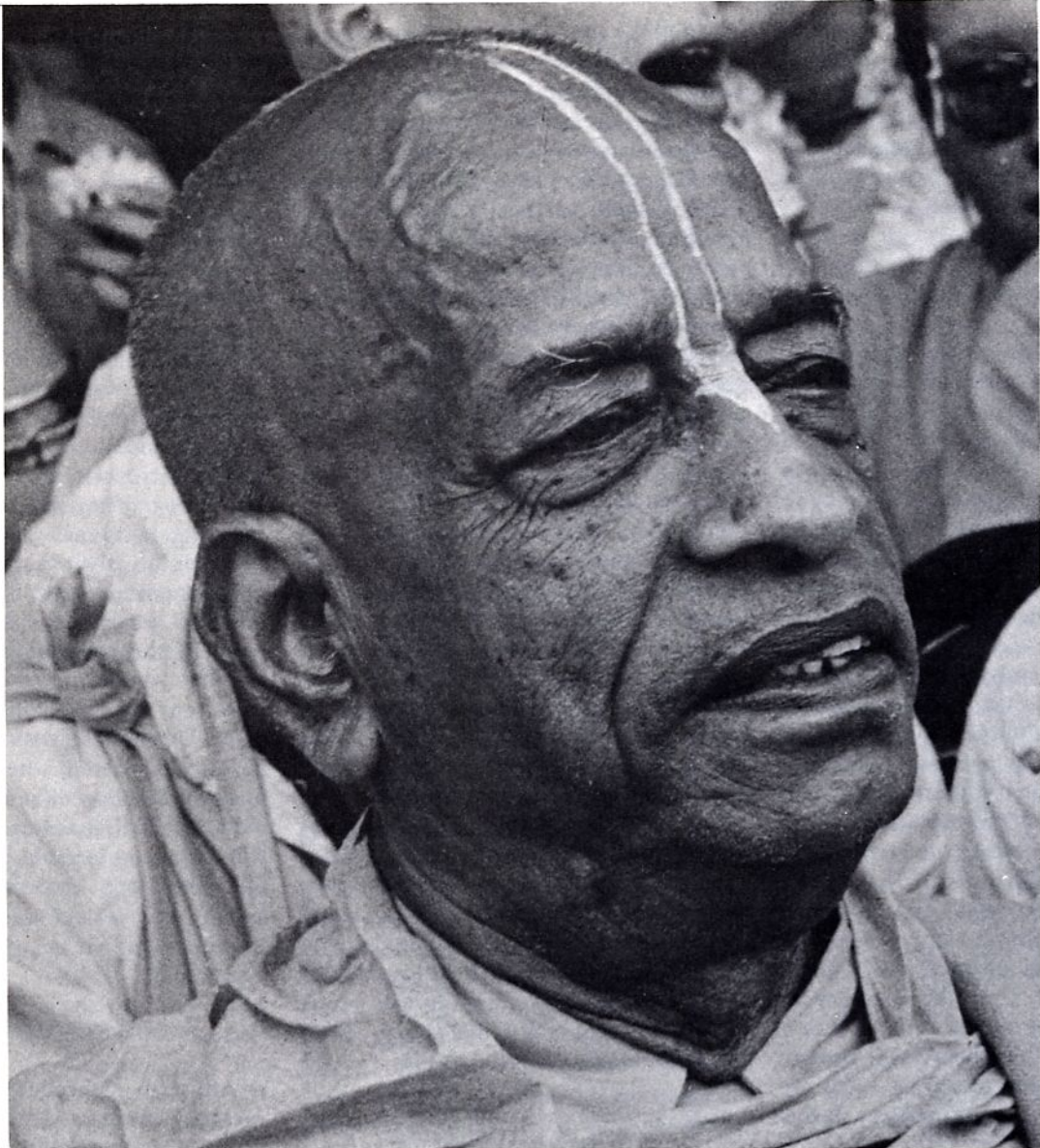


His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

*catur-vidha-śrī-bhagavat-prasāda
svādv-anna-ṭṛptān hari-bhakta-saṅghān
kṛtvaiḥ ṭṛptiṁ bhajataḥ sadaiva
vande guroḥ śrī-caraṇāvindam*

“The spiritual master is always offering four kinds of foodstuffs [analyzed as those which are chewed, those which are licked up, those which are drunk and those which are swallowed]. Four kinds of *prasādam* are offered to Kṛṣṇa, and when the spiritual master sees that the devotees are eating *bhagavat-prasādam*, he is satisfied. I offer my respectful obeisances unto the lotus feet of such a spiritual master.”



ELEVATION TO THE PURE LIFE
His Divine Grace
A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

*nāyaṁ deho deha-bhājāṁ nṛloke
 kaṣṭhān kāmānarhate vid-bhujāṁ ye
 tapo divyaṁ putrakā yena sattvaṁ
 śuddhyed brahma-saukhyāṁ tv anantam*

Mahārāja Ṛṣabhadeva, an incarnation of Kṛṣṇa who many years ago was emperor of the whole world, instructed this verse to his sons. In former ages there was only one king on this planet. In every planet, not only on this planet but on all others also, there is a predominating personality, who is commonly called a king or emperor, or in some cases a predominating deity.

For instance, on the moon the predominating personality is called Candra, and on the sun the predominating deity or emperor at the present moment is called Vivasvān. The predominating deities or emperors in each and every important planet are mentioned in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. This indicates that the author of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* has complete knowledge, not only of this universe but also of the spiritual sky which lies beyond this universe. In the spiritual sky there are many planets, and in those planets the predominating deity is the Supreme Per-

sonality of Godhead Himself. In the material universe the predominating personalities are human beings, as in our own planetary system, and their features are exactly like ours—two hands, two legs, one head, etc.—but they are very pious and God conscious.

On the various planets in the material universe there are different gradations of human beings. On this planet, for example, in some sections of the world there are slaves and uncivilized persons, and in some portions of the world there are civilized, God conscious and intelligent persons. Just as there are different types of human beings on this planet, so there are different living beings on other planets. The higher and lower statuses of the living entities are calculated in terms of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Of course consciousness is

everywhere; every living entity, including the animals, has some form of consciousness, but that consciousness which is not Kṛṣṇa consciousness is of a lower grade. When one is completely conscious of Kṛṣṇa, his consciousness is considered to be in the highest position.

INSTRUCTIONS TO HIS SONS

Mahārāja Rṣabhadeva was giving these instructions to his sons before his retirement. Mahārāja Rṣabhadeva had one hundred sons, and all of them assembled together so that their father, the king, could give them instruction. According to the Vedic system, it was the duty of the father to instruct his sons before his retirement. The Vedic system dictates that whether one is a king or an ordinary human being, at a certain age he must retire. The Vedic system does not recommend that just because one is a king and has ample opportunity for sense enjoyment he should indulge in sense gratification until the moment of death. The Vedic system is concerned with elevating oneself to the perfection of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, "I am seated in everyone's heart, and from Me come remembrance, knowledge, and forgetfulness. From all the *Vedas* I am to be known; indeed, I am the compiler of *Vedānta*, and I know the *Veda* as it is." (Bg. 15.15) Thus the whole Vedic system is designed to enable the living entity to know Kṛṣṇa, who is the author of the *Vedas*.

For one who follows the Vedic system, his ultimate objective is Kṛṣṇa consciousness, knowledge of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. This is the Vedic version corroborated by Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself. Because Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the actual compiler of the *Vedas*, His words should be accepted. The very purpose of studying the *Vedas* is to come to know Kṛṣṇa—that is all. Of course Mahārāja Rṣabhadeva did not have to instruct his sons in this way. He could have remained on the throne and enjoyed his kingdom. At the present moment a king or a family man does not retire, even though he may be struggling with great difficulty. There are many old men who are suffering, who are not happy with their family members, but who are working arduously until their death. They will not agree to join the Kṛṣṇa consciousness society or to take up Vedic training. No, they will stick to family

life until the very end. It is not uncommon to see politicians seventy-five and eighty years old continuing in the political arena until they are forced to vacate by death. Gandhi, for instance, was forced to retire when he was killed by a political opponent. When Gandhi attained independence, I wrote him a letter requesting, "Mr. Gandhi, now you have succeeded in your struggle with the British, and now India has attained its independence. Now we deserve to learn something about God. You have a great deal of influence, so now you should preach *Bhagavad-gītā*. You are known throughout the whole world as a very saintly person, and you also claim to be a great scholar of *Bhagavad-gītā*, so why don't you take up *Bhagavad-gītā* and preach?" He did not reply but continued to meddle with politics until his assistants became disgusted and his assassination followed. Although he was considered a *mahātmā*, still the intoxication of materialistic life caught him up. Although he got his desire, although the Britishers left India, still he would not give up politics. That is the way of material life. Men refuse to retire until they are killed by the laws of material nature. This is a disease. *Māyā* is so strong that even an old man who advertises himself to be very pious cannot give up politics because he is thinking that if he leaves the political field his country will suffer, so many disasters will ensue, etc. He does not realize that things will go on without him.

THE WORLD GOES ON

Many great politicians come and go, and the people are still living, and the world is still going on. Hitlers come and go, and Gandhis come and go, but still things are going on. This is explained in *Bhagavad-gītā*: everything is being carried out by the laws of nature, and no one can change this process. "Nature is said to be the cause of all material activities and effects, whereas the living entity is the cause of the various sufferings and enjoyments of this world." (Bg. 13.20) "This material nature is working under My direction, O son of Kuntī, producing all the moving and unmoving beings, and by its rule this manifestation is created and annihilated again and again." (Bg. 9.10) Thus no one can change the laws of material nature, for they are following a plan, God's plan. It is vain conceit to think that without

oneself everything will be topsy-turvy. Actually no one can do anything. We are always thinking that our leadership is very much needed, but this is conceit. For instance, when I was a householder my Guru Mahārāj gave indications several times that I should give up my family life and become a *sannyāsī* and preach this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Although in several ways there were hints from my spiritual master, still I was not willing, for I was thinking that if I went away my family, my sons and daughters, would suffer. Finally I left my family connections in 1954, and now I have found that in the past twenty years they are living and I am also living. They are neither dying nor suffering in my absence, and I am not suffering in their absence. Indeed, by Kṛṣṇa's grace I now have better family members, such nice children in a foreign country who are taking such good care of me that I could never expect such good care from my own children. This is God's grace. We should always depend on Kṛṣṇa. If Kṛṣṇa is pleased, wherever we go everyone will be pleased, and everyone will be kind. But if Kṛṣṇa is displeased, then one will be uncomfortable even in his family life. Therefore, according to the Vedic system, at a certain age one should retire from family life.

THE STAGES OF LIFE

Although Mahārāja Rṣabhadeva had a hundred obedient sons and although he was the emperor and everything was at his command, he still chose to follow the Vedic system and retire. There are other instances of great kings' retiring. After Mahārāja Parikṣit retired, the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* was recited to him. Similarly his grandfather, Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira, also voluntarily retired. The Vedic system is very specific in regards to the particular courses one should take at various stages of life. At an early age, for instance, whether one is the son of a king or the son or an ordinary man, one must go to the *āśrama* of a spiritual master and live there as a servant. This is called *brahmacārī* life. A *brahmacārī*'s life is dedicated to serving the spiritual master as a menial servant. Whatever the spiritual master asks, the *brahmacārī* will do. This is such a strict system that whatever the *brahmacārī* collects in alms, he gives to the spiritual master, for he considers everything to

be the spiritual master's property, not his. And if the spiritual master forgets to call his disciple, "My dear son, come and take your *prasādam*," then the *brahmacārī* will not eat a morsel. He will starve. Of course the spiritual master does not forget, but these are the injunctions of scriptures which one has to follow at the beginning of life whether one is the son of a king or even the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself. Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself underwent this discipline when He was a *brahmacārī* for some time. After *brahmacārī* life, usually at the age of twenty-five, one marries and lives with his wife and children for twenty-five years at the most, and then one retires. After retirement, the husband and wife go on pilgrimages together, and when the husband is completely free from all family attachment, he takes *sannyāsa*. This is the process—*brahmacārī*, *gṛhastha*, *vānaprastha* and *sannyāsa*.

DON'T LIVE LIKE HOGS

Thus, looking to the spiritual advancement as well as the personal affairs of his sons, Mahārāja Rṣabhadeva instructed, "O my dear sons, do not think that this particular body, this human body, is the same as those bodies of the cats, dogs and hogs. Please do not think like that." Mahārāja Rṣabhadeva particularly mentions the word *viḍ-bhujām* which means a stool-eater. As in the human society the dog-eater is considered to be the lowest human, in the animal society those animals which eat stool are considered to be the lowest. The gradations of human beings and animals are also calculated according to their eating processes. Indeed, George Bernard Shaw has written one book entitled, "You Are What You Eat." So the eating process is very important. If one eats like the cats and dogs, then he'll become like a cat and dog, even in the human form of life. Similarly, if one works very hard like the animals, then what is the value of human life? Human life should be very sober, peaceful, full of knowledge and bliss. The devotee has a good sense of the real purpose of human life. One should not simply work hard like an animal and then eat like an animal.

Thus Mahārāja Rṣabhadeva is instructing, "My dear sons, everyone has a different body, but the body of the human being is to be considered different. It is not like the hog body. Day and night the hog is

simply eating stool for sense gratification. Similarly, if all day and night the human being is simply eating and gratifying his senses, then he is missing the real opportunity of human life." This is the instruction: Human life should be regulated. One should eat only specified foods, should have sex in such and such a way, should sleep for just so long, should act in this way, think in this way, etc. There are so many regulations. One should not simply act in an unrestricted way. In human society there are books of regulations, but this is not the case in animal society. Some people claim that human society becomes free when man somehow or other manages to abolish law and custom, but this only means that human society will become like animal society, for the animal society has no law book. For this reason Mahārāja Rṣabhadeva instructs his sons that they should not live like the hogs, for they have a human body, and the human form of life is specifically meant for austerity and penance. One should voluntarily accept some regulative principles, even though they may not be to one's liking. For example, the students in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement were accustomed to certain habits from the beginning of life, but now they are living under certain regulations and are accepting them. This is called *tapasya*. *Tapasya* means penance. For example, one may be habituated to smoking, and the spiritual master tells the student that he cannot smoke. When one tries to give up smoking, he feels some inconvenience and is put in an uncomfortable position. Nonetheless he gives up smoking because of the spiritual master's order. This is called *tapasya*. Despite inconveniences, one abides by the regulative principles set down by the spiritual master.

ACCEPT A SPIRITUAL MASTER

When one accepts a spiritual master, it is to be understood that one is voluntarily accepting a great personality whose rules and regulations must be obeyed. The attitude of the disciple should be "Whatever you say, I will accept." One with such an attitude is called *śiṣya*. In English this is called disciplined. In English the words discipline and disciple are related, so in both English and Sanskrit languages a disciple is one who accepts the discipline of the spiritual master. It is not that the spiritual master whimsically manufactures

his own rules and regulations for the disciples. He always refers to the *śāstras*, scriptures. Therefore, Narottama Dāsa Ṭhākur says *sadhu śāstra guru*, etc.: If one wants to know who is a spiritual master and who is a saintly person, then one should corroborate them with the *śāstra* to see if they are abiding by or following the *śāstra*. If the spiritual master says something that is not in the *śāstra*, that is not good. Similarly, a saintly person also, a *mahātmā*, cannot disregard the regulative principles of scripture. "Anyone, therefore, who acts whimsically, not caring for the regulations of the scriptures, can never have perfection in his life, nor happiness, nor the supreme destination. One should understand what is duty and what is not duty by the regulations of the scriptures. Knowing such rules and regulations, one should act so that he may gradually be elevated." (Bg. 16.23-24) Nor can one be happy in this life if one disregards the injunctions of the scriptures. "But ignorant and faithless persons who doubt the revealed scriptures go to ruin and perish. For the doubting soul there is happiness neither in this world nor the next." (Bg. 4.40) And what to speak of liberation? Thus *tapasya* means voluntarily accepting the rulings of the scriptures, the spiritual master and saintly persons and molding one's life in that way.

REGULATIONS WHICH PURIFY

Mahārāja Rṣabhadeva therefore instructed his sons not to waste their lives living like animals but to utilize their lives for *tapasya*, voluntarily accepting the regulations of *śāstra*, the spiritual master and saintly persons. One may question why one should not live like an animal and why it is necessary to live by regulative principles. Mahārāja Rṣabhadeva answers that if one accepts these principles of life, then his existence will become purified. At the present moment living entities in the material universe are contaminated by the modes of material nature, mainly the modes of ignorance and passion. By abiding by the rules of *tapasya*, the living entity can purify his existence. If one further questions "What is the use of purification?" the answer to this is also given. When the living entity's condition is purified, he will then be situated on the platform of transcendental, blissful life.

Everyone is hankering after happiness

and pleasure, and when one's existence is purified he will be placed on the transcendental platform and will be able to enjoy eternal happiness. Admittedly, we are all searching after happiness. Why are we struggling so hard in this material existence? For happiness. Why are we after sense gratification? For happiness. Why do we want to possess so many things? For happiness. Why do we want to become beautiful or rich or famous or powerful or knowledgeable? For happiness. Why do we want to eat so many things? For happiness. Thus we are working so hard for happiness, which is our ultimate goal. Unfortunately the happiness we are now deriving from the sources which we have manufactured is temporary. If one tries to become happy by indulging in sex, how long does that happiness last? That also is only for a few minutes, a few seconds. The fact is that if one wants eternal continued happiness, then one has to purify his position. He has to place himself in the transcendental position, and then he will feel that happiness.

In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* it is stated that the *yogīs* are also enjoying sense gratification. But where? *Ananta*—with the Supreme. Their senses are being grati-

fied by *Hṛṣīkeśa*, *Kṛṣṇa*, the master of the senses. Everyone wants to enjoy the senses. *Ramaṇa* means enjoyer. *Kṛṣṇa* is sometimes called *Rādhā-ramaṇa*, meaning He who enjoys *Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī*. Lord *Śrī Kṛṣṇa*'s sense gratification is with *Rādhārāṇī*, so sense enjoyment is there also in the spiritual world. Here in the material world sense gratification is a perverted reflection of the real spiritual sense gratification. Actually the whole devotional line of service is dedicated to the sense gratification of the master of the senses. *Hṛṣīkeśa hṛṣikena sevnam*. *Hṛṣīka* means senses, and *Hṛṣīkeśa* means the master of the senses. The master of the senses is *Kṛṣṇa*, and when one's senses are applied for his own gratification, that is material. That is the real difference. When one is situated on the transcendental platform, when one's conditions are purified by *tapasya*, voluntarily accepting austerities and penances under the guidance of a spiritual master, *śāstra*, and saintly persons, at that time it will be possible for one to satisfy the senses of *Kṛṣṇa* and become fully satisfied. How is this? In this connection the example of the body is often given. The different parts of the body cannot enjoy the senses or satisfy them in-

dependently. The parts depend upon the welfare of the whole body. One can pick up a piece of cake with the fingers, but the fingers alone cannot enjoy the cake. The fingers must put the cake into the mouth, and from thence the cake goes to the stomach and the stomach acts on it, and in this way the whole body receives nourishment. When the nourishment from the cake is transmitted to the various parts of the body, immediately the fingers and all other parts are benefitted. This is the process. The identification of the senses is there, but it is through *Kṛṣṇa*. One can then go ahead and enjoy and completely gratify the senses perfectly just as the *gopīs*, the transcendental associates of Lord *Śrī Kṛṣṇa*, gratified their senses perfectly by unalloyed devotion to the Supreme. This then is the process of human life indicated in the instruction of Mahārāja *Ṛṣabhadeva*. We must purify our present condition by voluntarily accepting the regulative principles given by the spiritual master and scriptures. Then our senses can be employed in the service of the Supreme, and in that way we can come to actually enjoy our senses in the perfectional state. END

ATTAINING THE SUPREME by His Holiness Kīrtanānanda Mahārāja

[This is the eighth in a series of eighteen essays on the chapters of *Bhagavad-gītā*.]

The Eighth Chapter of the *Bhagavad-gītā* begins with a series of seven questions. Arjuna asks, "What is Brahman?" "What is fruitive activity?" "What is the material manifestation?" "What are the demigods?" "How does this Lord of sacrifice live in the body?" "In which part does He live?" And finally, "How can those engaged in devotional service know You at the time of death?" Actually, these questions should not have been in the mind of Arjuna. Arjuna was a *kṣatriya*, a high caste man, supposedly well versed in the knowledge of the *Vedas*. He should have known all these things; besides, all these questions had already been dealt with by *Kṛṣṇa* previously in the first seven chapters: Brahman was analyzed and explained in 4.24, 6.27, and elaborately in 7.6-12; fruitive activities were discussed in every chapter, especially in 2.49, 3.19, 3.28,

3.31, 4.18-22, 5.3, and 6.1; the material manifestation is delineated in 7.4 and 7.30; the demigods are mentioned in 3.11-12, 4.12, 4.25, 5.29, and 7.20-23; the Lord of sacrifice, and where He lives, is explained in 3.9, 15, 4.23-33, 5.29, and 6.31; and even the last question is answered in 2.51, 6.47, and 7.23. For this reason, *Kṛṣṇa* is at once again addressed as *Madhusūdana*, the killer of the great Madhu demon, and Arjuna is indirectly asking *Kṛṣṇa* to kill these doubts that have arisen in his mind.

The first six questions the Lord deals with very summarily, although completely and authoritatively, because they have been dealt with at length previously. But the seventh question He answers at length and supplies much new information. Therefore almost the whole of the Eighth Chapter deals with how to quit the body at the time of death.

Arjuna also addresses *Kṛṣṇa* as *Puruṣottama*, which indicates that although he was *Kṛṣṇa*'s intimate friend, he

was not asking the questions on that basis, but he was asking them of the Supreme Personality of Godhead; therefore, the answers can be expected to be definitive. There is one more important point to note about these two addresses of the Lord. Because Arjuna recognizes doubts as demons and presents them to the Lord (*Madhusūdana* and *Puruṣottama*) for final liquidation, it is to be understood that Arjuna is not in illusion at all. Arjuna is not asking the questions for himself at all, but for us. This is also indicated in the Fourth Chapter, where the Lord indicated that Arjuna was one of His eternal associates present millions of years before at the first recitation of the *Bhagavad-gītā* to the sun-god, *Vivasvān*. The eternal associates of the Lord are certainly liberated persons; therefore Arjuna should not be taken as an ordinary conditioned soul. Rather, these questions were raised so that the Lord could speak *Bhagavad-gītā* and so that His pure devotee and intimate friend (*bhakta*) could become the first in the new *paramparā* (disciplic succession) and thus give practical example that it is by *bhakti* (devotion) alone that one can enter into

the understanding of the *Gītā*. Arjuna is asking the questions just like a conditioned soul, but he is not himself conditioned. That is the perfection of the *Gītā*: on all sides there is perfect knowledge. The questions are perfect, the answers are perfect, and if any conditioned soul will simply follow in the footsteps of Arjuna, he may also become perfect.

WHAT IS BRAHMAN?

What is Brahman? Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, “The indestructible, transcendental, living entity is called Brahman, and his eternal nature is called the self.” (8.3) Kṛṣṇa is repeating the Vedic aphorism *aham brahmāsmi*, “I am spirit soul.” Kṛṣṇa very elaborately explained in the Second Chapter that we are not these material bodies. “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.” (2.20) That eternal, all-pervading, immeasurable self is called Brahman, and Kṛṣṇa adds: “I am the Self seated in the hearts of all creatures.” (10.20) Can we then conclude that there is only one soul as the Māyāvādī impersonalists say? No, we cannot do that, for then we could not understand so many other verses in which the eternal individuality of the soul is clearly established. (2.12, 13.12, 14.27, 15.7, for example). Therefore, Lord Caitanya, who is Kṛṣṇa Himself disguised as a devotee, clarifies the whole matter by His sublime philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda-tattva*, inconceivable, simultaneous difference and non-difference. In other words, the living entity is inconceivably simultaneously one and different from Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Absolute. We are Brahman, and He is Parambrahman. We are the energy which is one in quality with the absolute whole, but which is not itself the energetic source.

*om pūrṇam adaḥ pūrṇam idam
pūrṇāt pūrṇam udacyate
pūrṇasya pūrṇam ādāya
pūrṇam evāvaśiṣyate.*

This is a very beautiful *mantra* from Śrī *Īsopaniṣad*, one of the oldest of the *Upaniṣads*. It is translated by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda as follows: “The Personality of Godhead is perfect and complete. And

because He is completely perfect, all emanations from Him, such as this phenomenal world, are perfectly equipped as a complete whole. Whatever is produced of the complete whole is also complete by itself. And because He is the complete whole, even though so many complete units emanate from Him, He remains the complete balance.” It is just as if one has a bank account of one million dollars, and he withdraws one thousand dollars every hour. Now each withdrawal is qualitatively the same as the whole. A dollar is a dollar, either singly or in large groups. But suppose one could withdraw one thousand dollars every hour and the original million never diminished? The individual withdrawals have no such reproductive power—when they are spent, they are gone. Then that would be something like the difference between the original *pūrṇam*, which is the source of everything that be, and the individual parts and parcels, or the cosmic manifestation. We have energy, but are not the energetic.

WHAT ARE FRUITIVE ACTIVITIES?

What are fruitive activities? The Lord says, “And action pertaining to the development of these material bodies is called *karma*, or fruitive activities.” (8.3) In the Third Chapter, 28th verse, Kṛṣṇa says: “One who is in knowledge of the Absolute Truth, O mighty-armed, does not engage himself in the senses and sense gratification, knowing well the differences between work in devotion and work for fruitive results.” In the Fourth Chapter, 19th verse, He adds: “One is understood to be in full knowledge whose every act is devoid of desire for sense gratification. He is said by sages to be a worker whose fruitive action is burned up by the fire of perfect knowledge.” Fruitive activity, therefore, refers to all activities which have for their object self gratification, and conversely the path to freedom (freedom from the control of the senses, which are dragging us into one body after another to enjoy or suffer according to *karma*) leads to surrendering the results of all actions to Kṛṣṇa—and that is Kṛṣṇa’s final summary instruction in the *Bhagavad-gītā*: “Give up all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me; and in return I shall protect you from all sinful reactions.” (18.66) Thus from beginning to end, the teaching of the *Gītā* is one: that the living

entity should surrender to the Supreme Lord by engaging himself in full Kṛṣṇa consciousness according to his own particular talent or duty. Whatever he can do, just do it for Kṛṣṇa.

What is the material manifestation? The Lord says: “The physical nature is known to be endlessly mutable. The universe is the cosmic form of the Supreme Lord.” (8.4). In the Seventh Chapter, 4th verse, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says: “Earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, intelligence, and false ego—altogether these eight comprise My separated material energies.” So it is concluded that the material manifestation is the temporary manifestation of the Lord for the twofold purpose of giving the living entity a chance to fulfill his material desires and at the same time a chance to cultivate spiritual knowledge so that at the conclusion of this life he does not have to take birth again, but can go back to Godhead. This is very nicely stated in the eleventh *mantra* of Śrī *Īsopaniṣad*:

*vidyām cāvidyam ca yas
tad vedobhayaṁ saha
avidyayā mṛtyuṁ tīrtvā
vidyayāmṛtam aśnute.*

“Only one who can learn the process of nescience and that of transcendental knowledge side by side can transcend the influence of repeated birth and death, and enjoy the full blessings of immortality.” That is the perfection of the Vedic culture, that everything is so arranged to give every living entity maximum opportunity to advance in knowledge both material and spiritual so that everyone may make his life successful. To that end society is divided into four classes: the *sūdras* to provide manpower, the *vaiśyas* to provide productivity in the form of agriculture, commerce and banking, the *kṣatriyas* to give administration and protection, and the *brāhmaṇas* to give spiritual direction. There is no question of inequality—*aham brahmāsmi*. We are all part and parcel of the transcendental body of Kṛṣṇa. Without recognition of Kṛṣṇa, the system will never work. Without recognizing the father, how can there be brotherhood? Brotherhood means one father, and as soon as mankind recognizes Kṛṣṇa as that Supreme Father and all living entities as His parts and parcels, each with a particular talent to be used in the service of the whole, then the social organism will work just befitting the design of Kṛṣṇa—perfect-

ly. Such consciousness can be realized by the *āśramas*, or stages of life, provided in the Vedic system. As a *brahmacārī* one remains a celibate student and learns the principles of Kṛṣṇa consciousness; as a *gṛhastha* he practices those principles in day to day family living; as a *vānaprastha* he gradually retires from his worldly affairs; and as a *sannyāsī* he travels all over the world preaching this sublime message of love of God. Nothing is left out, but everything is dovetailed to serve the whole, Kṛṣṇa.

DEMIGODS

What are the demigods? That of course has been answered previously by Kṛṣṇa in the Third Chapter where He outlines the demigods' functions as universal managers in charge of supplying the various necessities of life (3.11-12). In the Fourth Chapter the Lord adds that one gets quick results from worshipping the demigods in the matter of fruitive activities (4.12), but in the Fifth Chapter the Lord clearly states that He alone is the Lord of all sacrifice, the Supreme Lord of all planets and demigods, the only benefactor and well-wisher of all living entities, and therefore He alone is the giver of peace and relief from the material miseries. And in the Seventh Chapter, 23rd verse, the Lord declares: "Men of small intelligence worship the demigods, and their fruits are limited and temporary. Those who worship the demigods go to the planets of the demigods, but My devotees reach My supreme abode." They are of small intelligence because they are accepting something temporary and insignificant in place of the highest, the reservoir of all pleasure, Kṛṣṇa. It is something like a little child, who, if one offers him the choice of some little trinket or a check for a million dollars, takes the worthless toy, never realizing that with a million dollars he could have countless playthings. There are some mental speculators who teach that it doesn't make any difference what or who is worshiped; the end is all the same. But that is clearly denied here by Kṛṣṇa. "Those who worship the demigods go to the planets of the demigods, but My devotees reach My supreme abode." And it is clearly stated that the demigods and everything connected with them are temporary, so how can they be equal to the supreme eternal abode of Kṛṣṇa, which is

sac-cid-ānanda, eternal, full of knowledge and bliss? Kṛṣṇa summarizes the whole matter here in the Eighth Chapter by saying, "The universe is the cosmic form of the Supreme Lord." (8.4) That means that the demigods (and everything else) are located within the body of the Lord, but the demigods are highly placed administrators for the purpose of universal management; but it is one body, and it belongs to Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, everything is meant for His satisfaction, and when one knows this and acts accordingly, he is called intelligent and enlightened.

Intimately connected with this discussion of the demigods are the next two questions. "How does this Lord of sacrifice live in the body?" and "In which part does He live?" The Supreme Lord says: "I am that Lord represented as the Supersoul, dwelling in the heart of every embodied being." (8.4) Similarly, in the Sixth Chapter the Lord told Arjuna: "The *yogī* who knows that I and the Supersoul within all creatures are one, worships Me and remains always in Me in all circumstances." (6.31) Actually there was no reason for these six questions, and we will only understand the situation thoroughly if we recall that Arjuna is being placed in forgetfulness (*yoga-māyā*) by Kṛṣṇa's superior yogic power (*Yogeśvara*) for our benefit. This repetition is not due to Arjuna's dullness, nor is it foolish redundancy. Rather, repetition in the scriptures indicates emphasis for the purpose of clarifying and stabilizing a concept. It is another example Kṛṣṇa's patience and mercy on His devotees.

AT THE TIME OF DEATH

The main topic of the chapter, however, is the final question, "How can those engaged in devotional service know You at the time of death?" On this point rests the remainder of the chapter. But in His typical fashion, the Lord states the whole position first, and then slowly elaborates. What is that complete statement? "Anyone who quits his body, at the end of life, remembering Me, attains immediately to My nature; and there is no doubt of this." (5.5) There are nine authorized processes of devotional service, beginning with hearing, then chanting, praying, remembering, worshipping, serving, rendering personal service, making friendship, and surrendering everything. Remembering Kṛṣṇa is the

central point of all nine. Therefore the instruction of Nārada Muni to King Yudhiṣṭhira is that "One has to fix his mind on Kṛṣṇa by any means." There is no other way. We have to remember Kṛṣṇa; then we will be successful. "There is no doubt of this," Kṛṣṇa says. That is the perfectional practice, and it may be begun at any time and at any place. It is at once the way and the goal, for at all times it is identical with Kṛṣṇa. But that final point must be Kṛṣṇa. That is most important. It is clearly indicated in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* that after following all the rules and regulations, performing all kinds of austerities, going to thousands of places of pilgrimage, or studying all the *Vedas*, or rigidly practicing the mystic *yoga* system, if one doesn't ultimately come to Kṛṣṇa, it is all useless, a colossal hoax and waste of time.

THE NEXT LIFE?

That much is clear; we must finally come to Kṛṣṇa if we want the ultimate goal, for He is the Absolute Truth. But what of the man who doesn't quite make it? Or the man who doesn't even try? What is his fate? "In whatever condition one quits his present body, in his next life he will attain to that state of being without fail." (8.6) There is no magic, no hokuspokus involved. It is completely scientific. Consciousness is a continuous flow. We can all see that the consciousness of the baby is flowing into the youth and that of the youth into the old man. There is no break. How one develops his consciousness in life will determine one's consciousness at death, and one's consciousness at death will determine his next birth. The *Gītā* teaches from beginning to end that the living entity should surrender unto the Supreme Lord; that will make him happy, both now and forevermore. Kṛṣṇa is adding here that whatever progress we make in that direction is permanent; it can never be lost. No one ever tries for Kṛṣṇa consciousness without being elevated. In the Second Chapter the Lord told Arjuna: "In this endeavor there is no loss or diminution, and a little advancement on this path can protect one from the most dangerous type of fear." (2.40) But one should not foolishly conclude that he need not do anything, that somehow or other everyone will make it. That is clearly denied by Lord Kṛṣṇa. Certainly the Lord is willing,

and certainly the Lord's grace is sufficient to save everyone. But because He is the well-wisher of every living entity, fulfilling each man's desire, He cannot help us until we desire it. The Lord is absolute and all-powerful, yet He is subservient to our desire; thus for the atheist who is envious of the Lord's existence, the Lord kindly hides Himself behind His curtain of *māyā*, so that the atheist can never find Him although all the Vedic literature informs us that He is everywhere.

In whatever condition one quits the body, the verse states, that state of being he attains in his next life. What is it that quits the body? It is consciousness. Any one can understand that the difference between a live body and a dead body is the presence or absence of consciousness. Nor do we all have the same quality of consciousness: one man is meek, another is quarrelsome, another is silent, and some are godly. The particular quality of the consciousness can be changed during one's life by his acts. That is fact. No one can dispute that. We have all seen a bright-eyed youth turn into a debauched addict, or a generous host become a mean old scrooge; or, on the other hand, we have seen so many ego-centered, sense gratifying young people take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness and become responsible, sober, intelligent parents and adults. The quality of the consciousness can be changed by changing the activity, and that is called *karma*. But at death no more change is possible, for activity has ceased; simply we reap the result. If by my activities I have developed cat consciousness or dog consciousness, then I am sure to be offered such suitable bodies by mother nature; if I have lived humanely, then I can again take a human birth, and if I have lived a godly life, I may go to the demigods. But Kṛṣṇa does not advise any one of these states, because they are all temporary, and from any one of them I will again have to take my birth, where I know not. Therefore, Kṛṣṇa advises, "Always think of Me, and . . . you will attain to Me without any doubt." Kṛṣṇa is eternal, His abode is eternal, and those who attain Kṛṣṇa consciousness are eternally happy.

Prahlāda Mahārāja prays to Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva as follows:

*tvat-sā kṣāt-karaṇāhlāda-
viśuddhābdhi-sthitasya me
sukhāni goṣpadāyante
brāhmāṇy api jagad-guro.*

"My dear Lord of the universe, I am feeling transcendental pleasure in Your presence, and I have become merged in the ocean of happiness. I now consider the happiness of impersonal liberation to be no more than the water in the impression left by a cow's hoof in the earth, compared to this ocean of bliss." (*Hari-bhakti-sudhodaya*) The idea is that any pleasure of the material world, even up to the realm of Brahmāloka, or even the pleasure of liberation itself, cannot compare with the pleasure that the devotees enjoy in the association of Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, Kṛṣṇa is recommending that everyone take to this process of devotional service and gain that supreme goal. It is the same thing that Nārada Muni instructed to Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira: "My dear King, one has to fix his mind on Kṛṣṇa by any means."

LINK-UP—WITH KṚṢṆA

But still there are some men who will not take to this direct easy process. And so the Lord, who incarnates just to reclaim all the conditioned souls, explains other processes by which, ultimately, with more difficulty, one may come to the same goal, namely Himself. Kṛṣṇa now describes the mystic *yoga* system of body control through various sitting postures and breathing exercises in conjunction with bona fide meditation. Bona fide meditation is meditation upon the Viṣṇu expansion of Kṛṣṇa which resides in the heart of every living entity. The object of meditation is not void or formless, as is sometimes taught today. Actually, all paths of spiritual development, such as Kṛṣṇa describes in the *Gītā*, are *yogas*, either *karma-yoga*, or *jñāna-yoga*, or *bhakti-yoga*. *Yoga* means to contact or connect, literally to link up, with Kṛṣṇa, the Soul of all souls. Without reaching that end, the practice is all useless. There is a verse in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* which says that if after performing all the rules and regulations, observing all kinds of vows of austerity, studying all the *Vedas* and related holy literature, or practicing the *yoga* system, or visiting all the places of pilgrimage, or giving everything in charity, one does not come to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, it is all useless, a great waste of time. Similarly, Lord Kṛṣṇa tells his intimate friend Uddhava, in the same text: "These are, of course, very nice activities, but they are not as attractive to Me as the

transcendental loving service rendered by My devotees." (*Bhāg.* 11.12.1)

That is the way to attract Kṛṣṇa—by transcendental loving service. But we are now talking about those foolish persons who will not go that way. In verses 10-15 Kṛṣṇa explains how by practicing the mystic *yoga* system one can come "to the highest perfection." But what is the key to that perfection? "Without deviation in remembering Me" and "constant engagement in devotional service." In the five verses, thinking of or remembering the Lord is mentioned three times, and devotion or devotional service is also mentioned three times. What then is the possibility of reaching or "linking up" with the Lord by some fraudulent system which neglects these two necessities which are declared by the Lord Himself?

The Lord is very anxious for all His sons to leave this material universe, this place of miseries. The next four verses, 16-19, tell us that from the highest to the lowest condition within the material spheres, all are places of misery, because everywhere there is birth, old age, disease and death. No one wants these things, but they are always present even up to Brahmāloka, the planet of Lord Brahmā, creator of this universe. Kṛṣṇa, however, is contrasting this with His own abode, in verses 20-21. That nature, He says, is eternal. Actually, it is *sac-cid-ānanda*, eternal, full of knowledge, and always blissful. It is not void; it is not impersonal. It is only hinted at here by such terms as "My supreme abode," "never annihilated," and "infallible." But this transcendental abode of Lord Kṛṣṇa is elaborately described in the *Brahma-saṁhitā* as the *cintāmaṇi-dhāma*, called Goloka Vṛndāvana. "It is full of palaces made of touchstone. There the trees are called desire-trees, and the cows are called *surabhi*. And the Lord is being served by hundreds and thousands of goddesses of fortune. It is He whose name is Govinda, the primal Lord and the cause of all causes. There the Lord plays His flute. His eyes are like lotus petals, and the color of His body like a beautiful cloud; on His head there is a peacock feather. So attractive is He that He excels thousands of cupids."

THE HIGHEST TRUTH

There is yet one more process described by the Lord for attaining the Supreme,

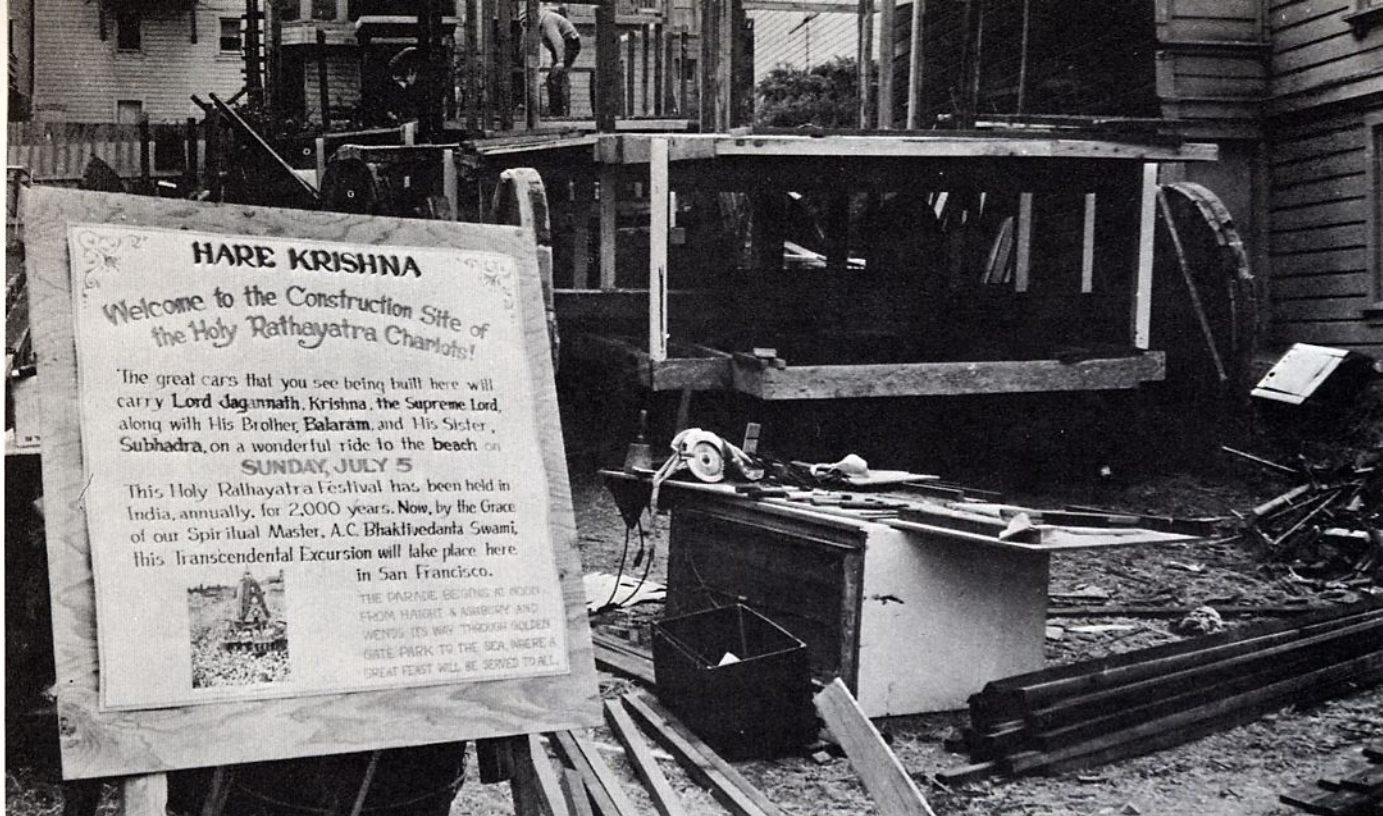
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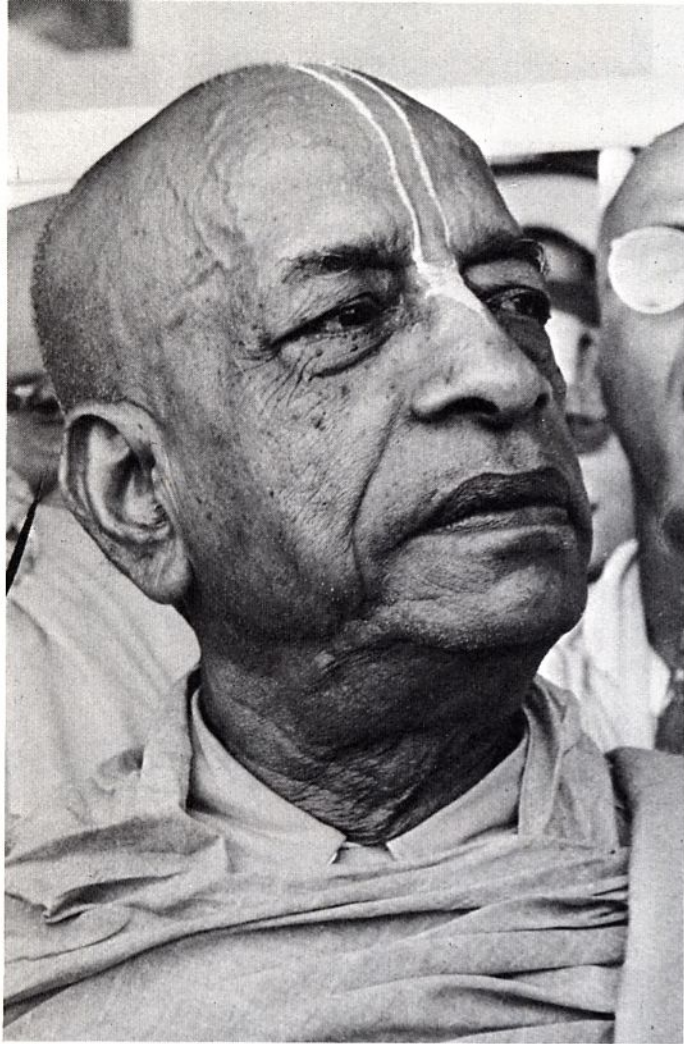
ISKCON'S HOLY RATHAYĀTRĀ FESTIVAL

In *The Nectar of Devotion* it is stated that if anyone just sees the Rathayātrā cart passing and stands up to receive the Lord, he can purge all sinful results from his body. And if anyone follows the Rathayātrā cart when the Deities pass in front or from behind, even if he is born of a

lowly family, he can achieve opulence equal to that of Viṣṇu (God). Although one may think such statements to be exaggerations, expert devotees who know the intricacies of transcendental science do not doubt them.





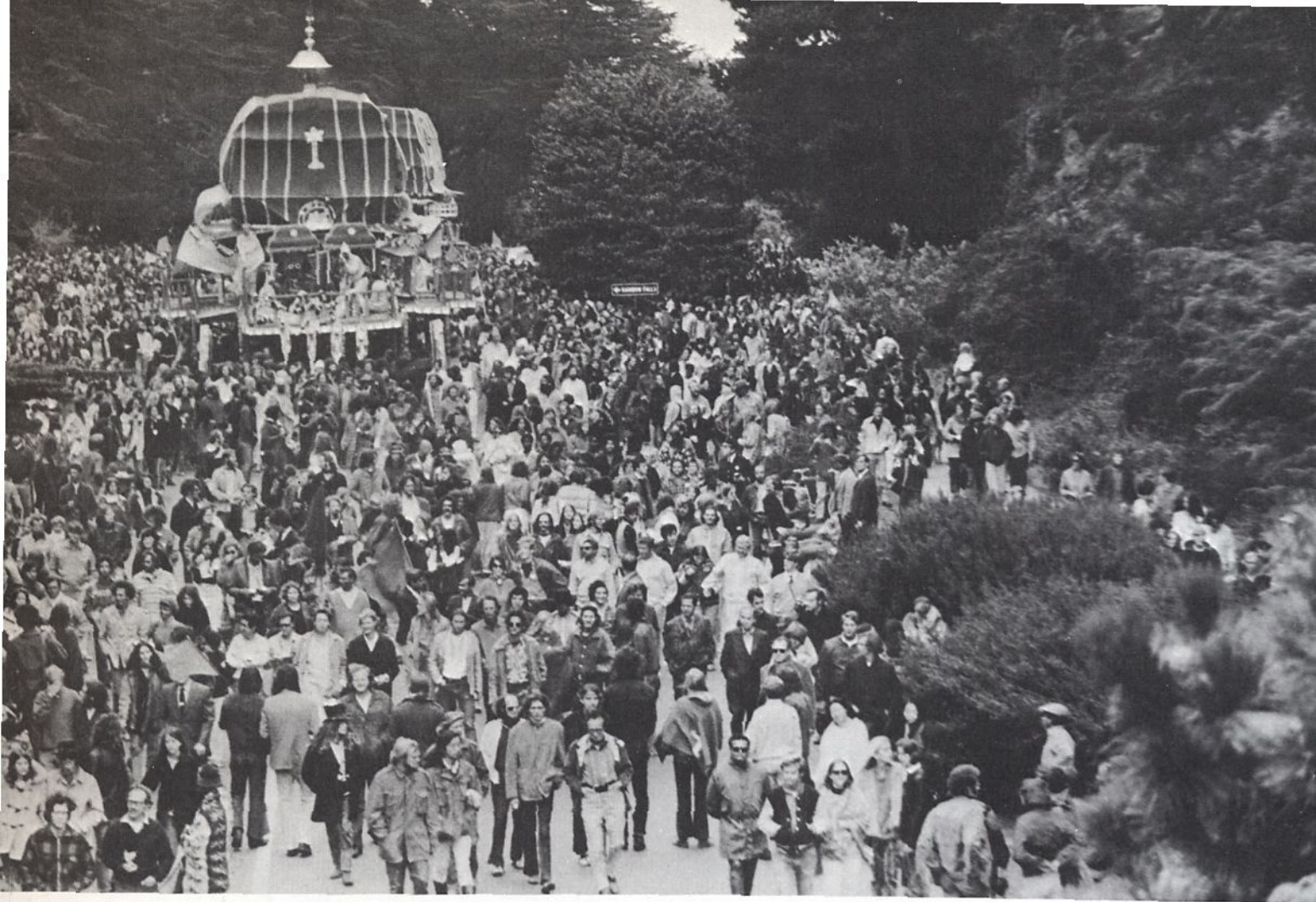


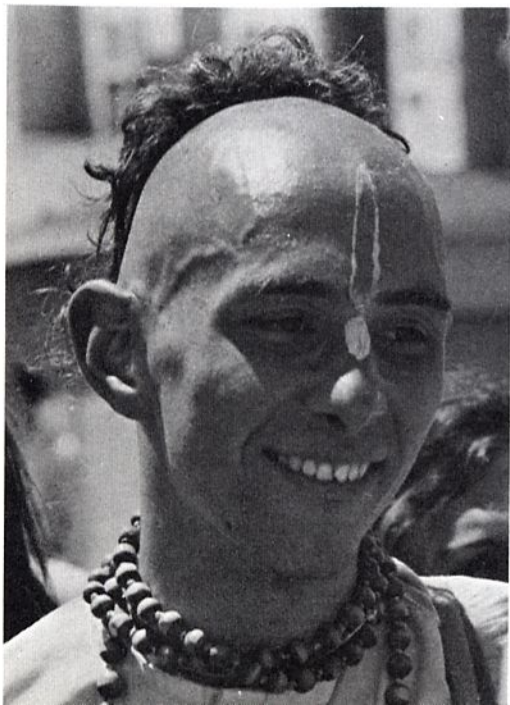
The potency of the yearly Rathayātrā Festival is inconceivably great. As pictured here, thousands and thousands of people participated in the 1970 Rathayātrā Festival, which was celebrated simultaneously in San Francisco and London by the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. In San Francisco the procession was personally led by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the founder and *ācārya* of ISKCON and a pure devotee of Lord Jagannātha. Those who joined in this sublime transcendental event by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, dancing in ecstasy and feasting on *prasādam*, spiritual food offered to the Supreme Lord, took part in the highest form of *yoga*.

Yoga means to link with God in loving exchange. Lord Kṛṣṇa teaches in *Bhagavad-gītā* (6.47) that the highest *yogī* is “he who always abides in Me with great faith, worshiping Me in transcendental loving service.” The Rathayātrā Festival is a potent transcendental stimulus for developing love of Godhead. The Rathayātrā procession—the gigantic, opulently decorated Deity cars and thousands of people chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa and dancing ecstatically—can attract even the materialistic person. By becoming attracted to the Supreme Lord in His form as Jagannātha one loses his attachment to the illusory happiness of the mundane world. Thus simply by seeing the Deities, simply by hearing the transcendental sound vibration of Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare, or simply by tasting foodstuffs offered to Kṛṣṇa, anyone can begin his progress back to Godhead

without difficulty. And by applying his energy in understanding the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement and participating in glorifying the all-blissful Lord of the universe, one can revive one’s eternal loving relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Rathayātrā is a love festival. God, Kṛṣṇa, is the ultimate object of love, and we are meant to love Him. Such spiritual loving ecstasy as was felt by the thousands who took part in the Rathayātrā Festival does not come from idol worship, but is an authorized transcendental feeling. Only a stone-hearted man could not react with delight to see the Deity of Lord Jagannātha drawn on His huge cart, surrounded by hundreds of chanting devotees. Idol worship means to pay obeisances to some whimsical material object, like a wood carving or stone sculpture of an imaginary God created within the mind. The Christian scripture, for example, declares that one should not worship any graven image. Lord Jagannātha, however, is certainly not in the category of imagination. *Jagat* means universe, and *nātha* means Lord, so *Jagannātha* means the Lord of the universe—Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is accepted by all the followers of the *Vedas*, the oldest scriptures known to man, as the Absolute Truth, the Personality of Godhead. As stated in the *Brahma-saṁhitā*, “Kṛṣṇa, who is known as Govinda, is the Supreme Godhead. He has an eternal, blissful spiritual body. He is the origin of all. He has no other origin, and He is the prime cause of all causes.”









In India there are thousands of Kṛṣṇa temples, and millions of people acknowledge Him to be the original God, the one without a second. Kṛṣṇa Himself declares in *Bhagavad-gītā* that He is the father of all living entities. So He is nothing like "a Hindu deity," but He is the source and sustainer of all entities, be they Christian, Hindu, atheist, or lower animals and plants. Moreover, it is stated in Vedic scripture that Kṛṣṇa appears in the incarnation known as *arca-vigraha*, the Deity form, just so the devotee

may worship Him easily in His personal form. Because in our conditioned state we cannot see Kṛṣṇa in His original spiritual form, with two hands holding a flute, He kindly appears in the natural elements such as wood or brass or oil paint. The Deity incarnates in this way just so the devotees can worship Him, dress Him, offer Him foodstuffs and look upon His grace-giving countenance. This is not a matter of imagination; rather, it is Kṛṣṇa's grace. God is so kind that He becomes pliable to the devotees' worship, He allows the devotees to feed Him, and whatever they offer Him with love and prayers, He accepts (Bg. 9. 26). Similarly, the Lord is pleased to ride on the Rathayātrā cart and be seen by thousands of His subjects.

We request everyone to try to under-

18 Back to Godhead



stand the transcendental nature of the Rathayātrā Festival. God is actually able to ride on the Rathayātrā cart, and in His form as the Deity, bestow His blessings upon all. Who can deny God if He wishes to appear before us? According to all authorized statements and the experience of great devotees and scholars of spiritual love, Lord Jagannātha is Kṛṣṇa Himself. We may believe or not believe; that is a different matter. But Lord Jagannātha rides on, and the devotees feel pleasure at heart, and all persons factually receive His blessings on the occasion of Rathayātrā.

END

Back to Godhead 19



HOLY RATHAYĀTRĀ FESTIVAL IN LONDON

The mammoth chariot lumbered down through the heart of London, while on all sides thousands chanted and danced in ecstasy. Piccadilly Circus overflowed with the masses who lined the streets and sidewalks. The giant tower, over 50 feet high, swayed precariously as Lord Jagannātha's Rathayātrā car moved slowly towards Trafalgar Square. From between the buildings of disbelieving window-watchers, the challenging stature of the red, yellow and blue chariot, bedecked with flowers and gems, lotus petals and sparkling ornaments, appeared most imposing. And seated on the huge chariot, His golden cape blowing gracefully in the midsummer air, Lord Jagannātha, accompanied by His sister, Subhadrā, and His brother, Balarāma sat regally surveying the phantasmagoria of banners and flags, festoons and drums. The devotees sat reverently at the lotus feet of Their Lordships and led the teeming crowds in the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. The multitudes responded with an incredible procession of singing and dancing that extended for a thousand yards around the chariot—all in glorification of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa.

The second annual London Rathayātrā festival happened just like that. Two years before, when six disciples of the Hare Kṛṣṇa Movement first invaded British soil, the newspapers declared: "KṚṢṆA CHANT STARTLES LONDON." Londoners still haven't recovered from that initial shock of transcendental sound vibration. The Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Temple (London) hasn't let them. The devotees there (now numbering near thirty) have continued to bombard England with Hare Kṛṣṇa on records on television and radio, in the movies, in newspapers and magazines, and daily the *saṅkīrtana* party of saffron-clad chanters dance their way down Oxford Street.

The founder-*ācārya* of the International Society for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness is His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. All knowledge of the topmost *yoga* system known as *bhakti-yoga*, propagated around the world by the Hare Kṛṣṇa Movement, has come from him. On



the order of his spiritual master, Śrīla Prabhupāda has introduced this sciencē of God realization in the Western world. So perfect is the science of Kṛṣṇa, so blissful is its execution, that in just four years over

50 centers of Kṛṣṇa consciousness have been established by His Divine Grace, and the entire Western world has recognized the absolute authority of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*.





Public festivals held for the glorification of God are a unique, happy process by which many, many people can achieve *bhakti-yoga*, devotion to the Supreme Lord. If the festival is pleasing and people respond to nice chanting, decorated carts and *prasā-*

dam (spiritual foodstuffs offered first to the Supreme Lord), then they are actually appreciating Kṛṣṇa Himself, and by such appreciation all can attain pure devotional service. That is the transcendental meaning to the Rathayātrā Festivals.



GOVINDA: THE PRIMAL CAUSE

(Analysis of the First Verse of *Brahma-saṁhitā*)

by Hayagrīva Dāsa Adhikārī

īśvaraḥ paramaḥ kṛṣṇaḥ
sat-cid-ānanda-vigrahaḥ
anādir ādir govindaḥ
sarva-kāraṇa-kāraṇam

īśvaraḥ—Godhead; *paramaḥ*—Supreme; *kṛṣṇaḥ*—Kṛṣṇa; *sat*—eternal; *cit*—knowledge; *ānanda*—bliss; *vigrahaḥ*—body; *anādir*—having no origin; *ādir*—prime cause or origin of all; *govindaḥ*—Govinda; *sarva*—all; *kāraṇa*—of causes; *kāraṇam*—the cause.

Kṛṣṇa, who is known as Govinda, is the Supreme Godhead. He has an eternal, blissful spiritual body. He is the origin of all. He has no other origin, and He is the prime cause of all causes. (*Brahma-saṁhitā*, verse 1)

This *Brahma-saṁhitā*, which was often quoted by Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the inaugurator of the current Hare Kṛṣṇa movement, was sung by Brahmā, the first created entity in this universe. Brahmā, who was born out of a lotus flower sprouting from the navel of the Garbhodakaśāyī Viṣṇu, a plenary expansion of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, is the greatest of the demigods, being directly empowered by Lord Kṛṣṇa to create the solar and planetary systems and all life that dwells therein. Despite his great power, at his birth Brahmā knew neither his whereabouts nor his identity. Therefore the Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, imparted Vedic knowledge into his heart, and these hymns of the *Brahma-saṁhitā* are Brahmā's articulation of that knowledge. It is not surprising then that the *Brahma-saṁhitā* is in praise of Govinda (Kṛṣṇa), the primeval Lord who is the very origin of Brahmā.

From the very first verse, the *Brahma-saṁhitā* asserts that of all the gods and the demigods, Lord Kṛṣṇa, also called Govinda, is the Supreme. This is also stated in *Bhagavad-gītā* by Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself: "Neither the hosts of demigods nor the great sages know My origin, for in every respect, I am the source of the demigods and the sages." (10.2) In the *Gītā*, Arjuna also proclaims the supremacy of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa: "You are the father of this complete cosmic manifestation, the worshipable chief, the spiritual master. No one is equal to You, nor can anyone be one with You. Within the three worlds, You are immeasurable." (11.43)

The word Govinda (one who gives pleasure to the cows) also establishes that the Supreme Godhead is a personality who has characteristic pastimes, such as cowtending. When Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa descended on this earth some 5,000 years ago. He exhibited His eternal transcendental pastimes in Vṛndāvana, where He herded and tended cows along with His many cowherd boy friends. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī explains the appellation "Govinda" in this way: "Kṛṣṇa, as truly envisioned in His variegated pastimes as the owner of transcendental cows, chief of cowherds, consort of milkmaids, ruler of the terrestrial abode Gokula and the object of worship of the beautiful transcendental

residents of Goloka, is Govinda." (Purport to Verse 1 of *Brahma-saṁhitā*) Indeed, the cow is very dear to Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. In *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* the cow and the bull represent the earth and religion respectively. Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa is also called Govinda because He not only gives pleasure to the cows but to all other living entities as well, being that He is the reservoir of all pleasures. The word *go* also means senses. The senses are always craving some satisfaction, and to get some satisfaction, the senses are always roving from one object to another, but only Kṛṣṇa, Govinda, can give the senses unlimited satisfaction, for only Kṛṣṇa is unlimited. Through the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa, the living entity participates in the infinite bliss of Kṛṣṇa, and thus his senses are automatically satisfied. It is Lord Brahmā who laments that he has only four heads with which to praise Kṛṣṇa. Brahmā feels he can not adequately chant His praises with even a thousand heads and thousand tongues.

Of all the demigods, Brahmā is considered to be the chief, being directly empowered by Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa to create all beings within the universe. Brahmā himself is an *īśvaraḥ* (controller), but in the first verse Lord Brahmā says *īśvaraḥ paramaḥ kṛṣṇaḥ*, which means that the supreme (*paramaḥ*) controller is Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Because living entities have some controlling capacity, however great or minute, they are always trying to control one another. One animal tries to devour or conquer another animal, one man tries to conquer another man, or the husband tries to control his wife or children, or one nation tries to control another nation, or the inhabitants of one planet may try to "conquer space," or the demigods may control a variety of phenomena such as wind, rain, fire, water, etc., but ultimately there is a limit to the control of living entities. There is a point, despite a living entity's power, beyond which he has no control. In *Bhagavad-gītā* Lord Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna: "There are two classes of beings, the fallible and the infallible. In the material world every entity is fallible, and in the spiritual world every entity is called infallible. Besides these two, there is the greatest living personality, the Lord Himself, who has entered into these worlds and is maintaining them. Because I am transcendental, beyond both the fallible and the infallible, and because I am the greatest, I am celebrated both in the world and in the *Vedas* as that Supreme Person." (Bg. 15.16-18)

SUPREME CONTROLLER

In numerous places throughout the *Gītā*, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa confirms that He is the supreme controller: "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. This material nature is working under My direction, O son of Kuntī, producing all the moving and unmoving beings, and by its rules this manifestation is created and annihilated again and again." (Bg. 9.8&10) Similarly, *Īsopaniṣad* testifies: *īśāvāsyam idaṁ sarvam*. "Everything animate or inanimate that is within the universe is controlled and owned by the Lord." (*Mantra* 1) Both material nature (*aparā prakṛti*) and the individual spirit souls (*parā prakṛti*) are emanations from the Lord, and therefore He is ultimately the controller of everything that exists. The first verse of *Brahma-saṁhitā* establishes that this supreme controller is not an impersonal entity or concept but is a person having an eternal name, an eternal form, eternal attributes, and eternal pastimes.

The very name Kṛṣṇa indicates His all-attractive qualities, which are indicated in the second line: *sac-cid-ānanda-vigrahaḥ*. “He has an eternal, blissful, spiritual body.”

HIS OWN TRANSCENDENTAL FORM

One may have a great deal of difficulty accepting the *sac-cid-ānanda-vigrahaḥ* aspect of the Supreme Person, or accepting the Supreme Personality of Godhead, but this is largely due to the frailties of human conceptualization. We think that because Kṛṣṇa has a body or because He has form He is limited. This is because in the material world all forms have some limitation. I can run just so fast, or I can reach just so far, but the *Vedas* assert that Kṛṣṇa’s body is not like this. Although located in one place, His hand can extend anywhere, and He can personally accept what is offered to Him. In *Īsopaniṣad* it is stated that the Supreme Lord “although fixed in His abode, is more swift than the mind, and He can overcome all others running. The powerful demigods cannot approach Him. Although in one place, He controls those who supply the air and rain. He surpasses all in excellence.” (*Mantra 4*) In *Bhagavad-gītā* Arjuna sees all the universes contained within the body of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and in *Brahma-saṁhitā* it is said that any one of the organs of the body of the Supreme Person can perform all the actions of all the other parts and that Kṛṣṇa impregnated material nature simply by glancing at her. In *Īsopaniṣad* the Supreme Lord’s body is described as *asnāvīram*, which means that it is without veins. His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda comments: “The Supreme Lord is not formless. He has His own transcendental form which is not at all similar to those of the mundane world. The living entities of this world have their forms embodied by the material nature, and they work like any material machines. The physiological and anatomical structure of the body of a living being must have a mechanical construction, with veins and so forth in the embodiment. But in the transcendental body of the Lord there is nothing like veins. It is clearly stated here (*Īsopaniṣad, Mantra 8*) that He is unembodied. That means that there is no difference between His body and soul. Nor does He accept a body by the law of nature. In the material concept of life, the soul is different from the gross embodiment and subtle mind. The Supreme Lord is apart from any such departmentalized arrangement, however. There is nothing like a difference of body and mind in the Supreme Lord. He is the complete whole, and His mind and body, and He Himself are all one and the same. In the *Brahma-saṁhitā* there is a similar description of the body of the Supreme Lord. He is described there as *sac-cid-ānanda-vigrahaḥ*. This means that He is the eternal form fully representing existence, knowledge and bliss. The Vedic literature states clearly that He has a different kind of transcendental body, and thus He is sometimes described as formless. This formlessness means that He has no form like ours and that He is devoid of a form which we can perceive. In the *Brahma-saṁhitā* it is further said that the Lord can do anything and everything with any one of the parts of His body. It is said there that with each and every one of the parts of His body, such as the hand, He can do the work of the

other senses. This means that the Lord can walk with His hands, He can accept a thing with His legs, He can see by His hands and feet, and He can eat by His eyes. In the *śruti mantras* it is said that He has no hands and no legs like us, but that He has a different type of hand and leg by which He can accept all that we offer Him, and walk faster than anyone anywhere.”

In the Judaic-Christian tradition, God is sometimes pictured as an old man, but Vedic literatures give quite different information. The Lord is described in the *Vedas* as ever-youthful and ever-fresh. He never grows old. Although Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa was a grandfather on the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra, He still appeared as a beautiful youth around sixteen years of age. Although He is described as “the oldest” because He existed before everyone else in the creation, He should not be thought of as an old man. All of these misconceptions arise from habitual materialistic thinking. Because our bodies are temporary, full of ignorance, and miserable, we think these to be attributes of all bodies. But Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s body is *sac-cid-ānanda*, eternal and unchanging (*sat*), all-knowing (*cit*), and full of bliss (*ānanda*).

THE UNSEEN FORCE

Next, Brahmā states that Kṛṣṇa, who is the Supreme Godhead, who possesses an eternal, blissful, spiritual body and individual pastimes, is the origin of everything (*anādir ādir govindaḥ*). This is also stated by Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself throughout *Bhagavad-gītā*. Being the origin of everything, He Himself has no origin, which means that He is beginningless. This is a reassertion of His eternity. And not only is He the origin of everything, but He is the prime cause of all causes, or the ultimate cause. In Western philosophy, there has been much speculation on this subject of cause and effect. The philosopher Hume asserted in his classic thesis that external objects, as they appear to the senses in the material world, have no necessary connection with one another. “There is not, in any single, particular instance of cause and effect, anything which can suggest the idea of power or necessary connection.” (David Hume, *An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, section 7) This posits that the connection between objects in the material universe is simply perceived in the mind; in actuality, there is no real connection between objects and events. “This connection, therefore, which we feel in the mind, this customary transition of the imagination from one object to its usual attendant, is the sentiment or impression from which we form the idea of power or necessary connection . . . When we say, therefore, that one object is connected with another, we mean only that they have acquired a connection in our thought, and give rise to this inference by which they become proofs to each other’s existence.” (*Ibid.*) This implies that materially one object cannot give impetus to another object or cause another object to come into existence. It then follows that the cause of objects in the material universe must be a force which is nonmaterial, a force which is outside the material universe. Many scientists today also agree that because everything in the universe is subject to creation and annihilation, that which causes the universe must be beyond creation and annihilation and must therefore be a nonmaterial or spiritual force.

Dr. John Cleveland Cotran, Professor of Chemistry and Chairman of Science & Mathematics Division, University of Minnesota, writes: "Chemistry discloses that matter is ceasing to exist, some varieties exceedingly slowly, others exceedingly swiftly. Therefore the existence of matter is not eternal. Consequently matter must have had a beginning. Evidence from chemistry and other sciences indicates that this beginning was not slow and gradual; on the contrary, it was sudden, and the evidence even indicates the approximate time when it occurred. Thus at some rather definite time the material realm was *created* and ever since has been obeying *law*, not the dictates of chance. Now, the material realm not being able to create itself and its governing laws, the act of creation must have been performed by some nonmaterial agent. The stupendous marvels accomplished in that act show that this agent must possess superlative intelligence, an attribute of *mind*. But to bring mind into action in the material realm, as, for example, in the practice of medicine and the field of parapsychology, the exercise of *will* is required, and this can be exerted only by a *person*. Hence our logical and inescapable conclusion is not only that creation occurred but that it was brought about according to the plan and will of a person endowed with supreme intelligence and knowledge (omniscience), and the power to bring it about and keep it running according to plan (omnipotence) always and everywhere throughout the universe (omnipresence). That is to say, we accept unhesitatingly the fact of the existence of 'the supreme spiritual Being, God, the Creator and Director of the universe' . . ." (*The Evidence of God In An Expanding Universe*, pp. 41-42, edited by John Clover, Monsma, G.P. Putnam's Sons, N.Y., 1958). Similarly, Dr. Marlin Books Dreider, an eminent physiologist, University of Maryland, writes; "I see at the beginning of the cosmic road not eternal energy or matter, not 'inscrutable fate,' not a 'fortuitous conflux of primordial elements,' not 'the great Unknown'—but the Lord God Almighty." (*Ibid*, p.68)

REVIVAL OF KṚṢṆA CONSCIOUSNESS

Lord Brahmā, then, predates the current discoveries of science in asserting that the cause of the universe is not only non-material but that it has personality and a body that has no origin and is eternally situated in its abode. The name Kṛṣṇa, as stated before, denotes that this supreme entity is all-attractive, and this implies that He is the object for loving affections. Being the origin of all, He maintains control over all plural created entities by dint of the charm of His original contact. Lord Kṛṣṇa speaks of the plural spiritual entities as "eternal fragments of Myself," which are thrown into the material spheres. These fragments appear to have some individuation, and yet they are unified in their origin. "Although the Super-soul appears to be divided, He is never divided. He is situated as one. Although He is the maintainer of every living entity, it is to be understood that He devours and develops." (Bg. 13.16)

When Brahmā establishes the supremacy of Lord Kṛṣṇa, he simultaneously asserts the three potencies of the Godhead—omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence. By His omni-

potence He can be present by His name alone. Therefore it is said that Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa's name are nondifferent. This is the meaning of absolute. In the relative world, someone may call me in my apartment, but if I am not there, I will not suddenly appear just because my name is called. But Kṛṣṇa, being absolute, is different. He is always present, and the invocation of His name revives our awareness of this fact. This revival of awareness of Kṛṣṇa's presence is called Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The omnipresence of Kṛṣṇa is like the sunlight which pervades everything. Wherever there is sunlight, there is no darkness, and wherever there is Godhead, there is no nescience. His omnipresent potency, by which He is present in every atom of the creation, is called *Paramātmā*. The omnipresent effulgence emanating from His spiritual body is called *Brahman*. Omniscience refers to His total knowledge. Being present everywhere, He automatically knows everything. And being the origin and cause of everything, He is naturally intimately acquainted with the functionings of everything. Apart from all these potencies, which are impersonal, He has a personality known as Govinda or Kṛṣṇa.

Brahmā is establishing this fact in the way of praise, for Brahmā is created by Kṛṣṇa, and *Brahma-saṁhitā* is his *kīrtana*, or celebration of the Supreme. Since Lord Kṛṣṇa is the origin of all, it is He who originates the words of the *Brahma-saṁhitā* as spoken by Brahmā. When Lord Brahmā says that Kṛṣṇa is the origin of all, it is to be understood that He is the origin of Lord Brahmā. Brahmā himself is the cause of this material universe, being the creator god, but Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is the "prime cause of all causes," is the cause of Brahmā. Brahmā is born out of the stem of the lotus flower that comes from the navel of the Garbhodakaśāyī Viṣṇu, and this Garbhodakaśāyī Viṣṇu is the second Viṣṇu incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa. A description of Lord Brahmā given in the *Brahma-saṁhitā* (Chapter 5, verse 49) likens Brahmā to valuable stones reflected in the rays of the sun, and the sun is likened to the Garbhodakaśāyī Viṣṇu. This sun in its turn expands from the supreme sun, which is Kṛṣṇa.

ETERNAL FATHER

We all acknowledge the origin of this body to come from our parents, who acknowledge the origin of their bodies to come from their parents, and so on. The ultimate origin of all our bodies is lost in time. But even if we have the knowledge to trace back to the remotest times, we can not find a causeless material origin for this material body. We could regress to a hypothetical first man called "Adam," or whatever, but we are always left with the fact that Adam also has a father. It is at this point that we must make the leap from the material to the spiritual. Thus Christian theology holds that Adam, or the first man, has no material father, just as Brahmā, the first created entity, has no material father. "And God said, 'Let us make man in Our image, after Our likeness . . .' So God created man in His own image . . ." (*Genesis*, I, 26-27) Thus man, created by God out of nothing, was not born by material parent. Conceding that God is the father of the first man, one might question the origin of the Godhead, to which all scriptures answer that God is the eternal father without beginning, and that which is eternal

is nonmaterial by definition. Thus God is the eternal spiritual father who is the origin of all material beings.

KṚṢṆA; ORIGIN, SOURCE, PRESERVER

Being the origin of all, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, is necessarily greater than His creation. He is the ultimate reality, the ultimate perfection. An effect cannot possess a greater reality than the cause that produces it, nor can it possess more perfection than its cause. Again the speculations of Western philosophy echo the Vedic conclusions: "It follows not only that what is cannot be produced by what is not, but likewise that the more perfect—in other words, that which contains in itself more reality—cannot be the effect of the less perfect. . ." (René Descartes, "The Meditations of God: that He Exists") It is interesting that the philosopher Descartes accepted as proof of God the very idea of God Himself. He maintained that, being finite, man could not even have an idea of the infinite unless that idea were given to him by the infinite. The nature of the infinite is that it cannot be comprehended or intellectualized by the finite. Therefore the very fact that we can predicate an infinite or even speak of an infinite is proof that this infinite exists. "By the name God, I understand a substance infinite, eternal, immutable, independent, all-knowing, all-powerful, and by which I myself, and every other thing that exists, if any such there be, were created. But these properties are so great and excellent, that the more attentively I consider them, the less I feel persuaded that the idea I have of them owes its origin to myself alone. And thus it is absolutely necessary to conclude from all that I have foresaid that God exists: for though the idea of substance be in my mind owing to this, that I myself am substance, I should not, however, have the idea of an infinite substance, seeing I am a finite being, unless it were given me by some substance in reality infinite." (Descartes, "The Meditations," *Ibid.*)

Kṛṣṇa is not only the origin of the creation, but is the preserver as well. ("The conservation of a substance in each moment of its duration requires the same power and act that would be necessary to create it." Descartes, *Ibid.*) In *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* Lord Kṛṣṇa tells Brahmā that He is not only the cause of the creation but is, in fact, the creation itself. And it follows that being the force that brings about the appearance of an object and that maintains that object during its duration, Kṛṣṇa is also the cause of the annihilation of that object by dint of His withdrawing potency. Therefore it is said that when Lord Kṛṣṇa wants someone killed, there is no possibility of his being saved, and when He wants someone to live, there is no possibility of killing him. This is what is meant by ultimate controller.

The conception of origin also implies separation. Etymologically the word "origin" comes from the Latin word *oriri*, meaning to rise or to arise out of. The word "source," coming from the word "surge," has its origin in the Latin word *surgere*, also meaning to rise. Therefore the idea of origin or source can be compared to the rising of waves from the ocean, the surging of the billows, their brief manifestation, and their lapsing and

falling back into the ocean. The waves never exist outside the ocean, yet they are distinct from the ocean which is their source. Nor do the waves effect the ocean in any substantial way. They are simply the surface play of the ocean, as the material creation is but one of the manifestations of Kṛṣṇa's incidental energies, one of His waste products or gratuities. The play of the waves on the surface is forever removed from the great depths inhabited by the mighty denizens, the great souls swimming in the effulgence of the Lord. "Again everything that is created does not rest on Me. Behold My mystic opulence: although I am the maintainer of all living entities and although I am everywhere, still My Self is the very source of creation." (Bg. 9.5)

The absurdity of any created entity maintaining that he is God is obvious here. To extend the simile, it is as ridiculous as asserting a wave to be the entire ocean. One should notice that the existence of waves is very brief, that they appear to have no individuality, that they are countless, that they seem to have been appearing from time immemorial, that their motion cannot be stopped, that they never perish, that they return to the ocean to eventually become another wave and that each wave in its own right is infinite, having arisen from infinite waves, composed of infinite bubbles. One of the wonders of God's creation is that one particle, like the wave or bubble, can reflect the totality.

HARE KṚṢṆA

No one can understand who or what Kṛṣṇa is or the extent of His creation, but we can come to some finite understanding of the limitlessness of His being and of our finite relation to Him. He communicates to us by *śabda*, His sound potency, utilizing the orthodox symbols of the Sanskrit language, which for us are translated into English and entitled "The Song of the Opulent One," or, in Sanskrit, *Bhagavad-gītā*. These words, symbols, give us mental impressions of the cosmic situation and eventually exhort us to make an emotional-spiritual conviction, which is to surrender to Him who is beyond our knowledge and to whom the *Gītā* points—Kṛṣṇa. Once surrendered, we can come to understand that the *śabda* of Kṛṣṇa (Hare Kṛṣṇa) is nondifferent from Kṛṣṇa Himself and that He is contained in it in His full potency.

This first verse of the *Brahma-saṁhitā*, like the *Gītā*, proclaims the supremacy and eternity of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Once one accepts this verse, his next logical course of action is to direct his worship to Kṛṣṇa. "I am the source of everything: from Me the entire creation flows. Knowing this, the wise worship Me with all their hearts." (Bg. 10.8) Simply by realizing the knowledge of the first verse of *Brahma-saṁhitā*, one can enter into the spirit of *Brahma-saṁhitā* and *Bhagavad-gītā* and thus join Brahmā in his praise: *Govindam ādi-puruṣam tam aham bhajāmi*. "I worship Govinda, the primeval Lord, who is inaccessible to the *Vedas* but obtainable by pure unalloyed devotion of the soul, who is without a second, who is not subject to decay, who is without a beginning, whose form is endless, who is the beginning, the eternal soul, and who is a person possessing the beauty of blossoming youth." (*Brahma-saṁhitā*, 33) END

KṚṢṆA, OUR DEARMOST FRIEND

by Girirāja Dāsa Brahmācārī (ISKCON-Delhi)

“Friend: One joined to another in intimacy and affection; sympathizer, helper.” A friend is very hard to define; therefore, arbitrarily, we refer to *The Little Oxford Dictionary*, the only dictionary at hand. And utilizing this definition we can seek still further and ask, “Who is our dearmost friend?” And even by this definition, we are in agreement with the verdict of *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*: Our dearmost friend is Kṛṣṇa!

Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is our dearmost friend. By Kṛṣṇa is meant God. Kṛṣṇa means all-attractive, for how can God be God if He does not have all attractive qualities in full? Kṛṣṇa is full in the six opulences of wealth, power, fame, beauty, wisdom and renunciation. If someone has a little wealth or if someone is beautiful, he is attractive for that reason. But Kṛṣṇa is all-attractive because He possesses all attractive qualities in full. We may find someone wealthy, but if we look further we will find someone with more wealth than him. Or we may meet someone who is very learned, but if we look further we will find someone with more knowledge still. But when we get to Kṛṣṇa, we become at once satisfied and seek no further because no one has more wealth or knowledge than Him. Therefore Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, called Bhagavān, our dearmost friend. He possesses all opulences in full.

Since a bona fide spiritual master is the direct representative of Kṛṣṇa, he shares in Kṛṣṇa’s qualities of excellence. Thus for the devotees of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, Śrīla Prabhupāda is also our dearmost friend. He is the external representative and the mercy incarnation of Kṛṣṇa. Practically he is the only authorized source of bona fide information about the Personality of Godhead because he is instructing us according to revealed scriptures how we can revive our eternal relationship with God. By hearing such information from the bona fide spiritual master one can at once become detached from one’s inferior engagement with matter and attach oneself to the transcendental loving service of the Lord. In this way one attains God. Therefore we consider the real friend to

be he who can direct us to God, the supreme friend and well-wisher for all living entities, not he who merely claims to be our friend and asks us to tell him our problems. His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda can direct us to God and is therefore our dearmost friend.

Returning to our definition of a friend, we find that he is one who is joined to another in intimacy. Let us now seek out who is joined to us most intimately, and we shall find—Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa, according to Śrīla Prabhupāda, is “closer to us than our jugular vein.” This is confirmed by Kṛṣṇa Himself in *Bhagavad-gītā*: “I am seated in everyone’s heart, and from Me come remembrance, knowledge, and forgetfulness.” (Bg. 15.15) Śrīla Prabhupāda affirms that only Kṛṣṇa knows the volume of our suffering, and only Kṛṣṇa knows how nice we are.

HE KNOWS OUR HEARTS

The next point in the definition is that a friend offers help and sympathy. Again let us seek out who is most helpful and sympathetic to us, and we shall find—Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa, situated in our hearts, is so helpful that He guides us and gives us determination in pursuing our goals. Permeating the universe, Kṛṣṇa is so sympathetic that He fulfills our every desire. Only Kṛṣṇa can really help us or be sympathetic to us because only He has perfect knowledge of our desires, and He alone has the omnipotency to fulfill them for us. In other words, God is so kind that He gives us whatever we desire. Seated in our hearts, He knows what we actually desire, and directly or indirectly He fulfills that desire. Thus He is called in *Śrī Īsopaniṣad* the “self-sufficient philosopher who is awarding everyone’s desire since time immemorial.” (*Mantra* 8) Kṛṣṇa says, “If you want to forget Me, you can forget Me forever; if you want to merge with Me, here is My effulgence, the *brahmajyoti*; and if you want to love Me, come—we shall play as cowherd boys.” God is kind to everyone.

The science of God and His relationship

with us is elaborately explained in *Bhagavad-gītā* and other Vedic literatures. These literatures are designed to help the living entity realize his eternal relationship with the Supreme so that he can live happily in life. The factual relation between the Supreme Lord in the heart and the minute living entity, both of whom are spiritual and individual, is compared to that of two birds in a tree. The tree is the material body of the living entity. The living entity “bird,” captivated by the fruits of the material tree, is tasting both the bitter and the sweet, while the Supreme Lord “bird” is witnessing the activities of His friend, fulfilling his desires by His omnipotence. This example is given in the *Muṇḍaka* and *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣads*, where the living entity is called “*ātmā*,” while the Supreme Lord in the heart is called “*Paramātmā*.” Though both are spiritual, the Supreme Lord is accepted as superior; therefore the Lord is simply witnessing the activities of His friend, waiting for him to surrender to Him.

ETERNAL KINSHIP

Thus we see that the living entity is individual, and he has some minute independence, though he is always associated with and subordinate to the Lord, however forgetful or unconscious he may be of that relationship. Who could be a better friend than Kṛṣṇa, staying with us in every circumstance? While we are changing from tree to tree, or body to body, Kṛṣṇa, who is not affected whatsoever by this mundane world, accompanies us lifetime after lifetime. He is waiting for us to intelligently use that independence He has given us by surrendering to Him, thereby ending the cycle of repeated birth and death. Even in the liberated state He stays with us. The living entity and the Supreme Lord, though distinct from one another, always remain together. “The same living entity is eternal and is joined to the Supreme Lord by the tie of an eternal kinship.” (*Brahmasamhitā*) They are joined intimately, as two distinct individuals, eternally. The living entity must simply agree to accept the supreme will of the Supreme Lord; then he will be happy. The Lord, having given us independence, is so kind that He will fulfill our desires no matter what they may be. Man proposes and God disposes. The Lord is neutral toward all His sons

and daughters, and He never interferes with the way in which we use our independence. If a son insists on doing something nonsensical, the father will reluctantly give his sanction. "All right, if you insist, go ahead." Similarly, the Supreme Lord allows us to exercise our minute independence, and since we are helpless to fulfill our desires, He fulfills them for us.

For example, in *Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa says, "Men of small intelligence worship the demigods, and their fruits are temporary and limited." (Bg.7.22) But "I am in everyone's heart as Paramātmā. As soon as one desires to worship the demigods, I make his faith steady so that he can devote himself to some particular deity." (Bg.7.21) Then, present in the heart of the demigod, the Supreme Lord arranges for the demigod to fulfill the desire of the living entity. Both the demigod and the living entity are dependent on the Supreme Will. Even the fruits awarded by the demigods are created of Kṛṣṇa's energy. So Kṛṣṇa says that "in actuality these benefits are bestowed by Me alone." (Bg.7.22) Therefore, from beginning to end, Kṛṣṇa is fulfilling our every desire. Who could be a better friend than Kṛṣṇa?

WHATEVER WE DESIRE

Birth after birth, body after body, Kṛṣṇa grants whatever we desire. Thus the body we take is created according to our desire. As long as we desire a material body, Kṛṣṇa will give us one. "The living entity in the material world carries his different conceptions of life as the air carries aromas. Thus does he take one kind of body and again quit it to take another. The living entity, thus taking another gross body, obtains a particular type of ear, sense of touch, tongue, and nose, centered about the mind. He thus enjoys a particular set of sense objects." (Bg.15.8-9) Kṛṣṇa gives us our body, and then He accompanies us inside of it; but He is not responsible for how we utilize it. We get a particular body and various circumstances of birth according to our actions (*karma*) and what we are thinking of at the time of death—in other words, according to our own desires. "Those who worship the demigods will take birth among the demigods; those who worship ghosts and spirits will take birth among such beings; and those who worship Me will live with Me." (Bg.9.25)

By thus understanding that God grants material facilities according to *our* desires, we can understand that our suffering in the material world is due to us, not the Lord. The Lord is neutral to all His children, giving us whatever we want. God never interferes with the desires of the living entities, for if He did, what would be the meaning of the minute independence He has given us, and where would there be any possibility for love? In ignorance we think we are God or that we can enjoy independently of God, and so the Lord gives us this material body and material world. But the Lord is hoping that we will give up our material desires and come to Him. In the material world, the state provides both prisons and universities. Although wishing for everyone to enter the universities, it provides the prisons because it knows that some individuals will misuse their freedom and thereby merit entrance into the prisons. Similarly, God is kind even to the demons. As stated in the *Vedānta-sūtra*, "The Lord neither hates nor likes anyone, though He appears to." Atheistic persons who are envious of God and wish to forget Him undoubtedly suffer, but even this suffering is God's kindness. Since demons are desirous of forgetting Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa simply gives them the particular birth and body just suited to their forgetting Him, which is actually what they want: "These do I put into the ocean of material existence, into various demoniac species of life. Gaining repeated birth among the species of demoniac life, such persons can never approach Me, and gradually they sink down to the most abominable position of existence." Such an abominable position is actually the desire of the demon, and it is the mercy of God that such a desire is fulfilled. Desire is a subtle form of conditioning. The demon initially puts himself into demoniac conditions by misusing his independence, and only then does the long chain of material actions and reactions begin. Falsely identifying with such temporary situations, the bewildered demon wrongly blames the Lord for his condition, which in actuality is due to his own desire: "The living entity is the cause of the various sufferings and enjoyments in this world." (Bg.13.20)

PURE DEVOTEE

But God is so kind and merciful that

He will sometimes pull a demon out of his suffering, even though such a demon may be attached to his demoniac position. For example, sometimes God Himself will descend to kill a demon, and so great is God's mercy that just by being killed by the Lord, the demon gains liberation. Or sometimes the Lord will send His son or representative, so that even the most abominable person can be elevated to the platform of transcendental loving service to the Lord simply by being graced by the dust of the lotus feet of such a pure devotee. Devotional service to the Lord is the perfection of life, and such service can be attained only by the mercy of the Lord and His pure devotee; there is no other way. The pure devotee is considered even more merciful than the all-merciful Lord because while the Lord will give us whatever we want, His pure devotee will give us the Lord only. If one is graced by a pure devotee such as His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, one has every possibility of himself becoming a pure devotee and thereby attaining the special mercy of God.

IMPARTIAL OR PARTIAL?

As kind as God is even to the demons, He is kinder still to the devotees. Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Mahārāja, the spiritual master of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, states in his *Brahma-saṁhitā* commentary: "It is a great wonder that Kṛṣṇa, being impartial, is fully partial to His devotees." Kṛṣṇa Himself hints at this seeming contradiction when He says in the *Gītā* (9.29), "No one is envied by Me, nor am I partial to anyone. I am equal to all. Yet whoever renders service unto Me in devotion is a friend, is in Me, and I am a friend to Him." The presence of simultaneously contradictory qualities in Kṛṣṇa is a further feature of His completeness, for how could God be God if He did not have all qualities and if He could not bewilder our limited brains with His inconceivable greatness. But God is so kind that He has provided a self-realized spiritual master who can impart knowledge of this great science of Kṛṣṇa to our conditioned souls so that we may penetrate a little into the mystery of Kṛṣṇa.

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda directs us back to

Chapter Four, Verse 11, of the *Gītā*, to understand this seeming contradiction: "All men, as they surrender unto Me, I reward accordingly." In other words, as the demon is busy ignoring Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa similarly ignores the demon; and as the devotee is actively trying to care for the interests of Kṛṣṇa in devotional service to the Lord, the Supreme Lord Himself takes special care of His devotee. This reciprocation is natural. In the material world a man may be very charitably disposed toward all living entities, yet it is expected that he will take a special interest in his own children. Similarly the Supreme Lord, while kindly disposed toward all His parts and parcels, reciprocates in love with His devotees, who are engaged cent percent in His transcendental loving service.

HE SUPPLIES OUR NEEDS

While kindly fulfilling the needs of all His parts and parcels, God takes special supplies the necessities of life to all His sons and daughters. From the tiny ant to the great elephant, all receive His mercy in the shape of food, sunlight, air and whatever else is required by them for their maintenance. The impartial raincloud abundantly pours rain everywhere, be it on the rocks, the land, or the sea. Similarly God impartially fulfills the desires of all living entities through the agency of material nature. But in the case of devotees He takes special, personal care. Brahmā, the creator of this universe, prays, "I worship Govinda, the primeval Lord, who burns to their roots all the fruitive activities of those who are imbued with devotion, and who, in accordance with the chain of their previously performed actions, impartially ordains for all those who walk in the path of work the due enjoyment of the fruits of their activities, no less in the case of the tiny insect named 'indragopa' than that of Indra, King of the demigods." (*Brahma-saṁhitā*, 5.54) In other words, God impartially rewards those who indirectly serve Him by serving His material energy, and the agency for such rewarding is the mechanical working of material nature. But God takes personal charge of the life of His devotee, who serves Him directly as the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

In the *Gītā* Kṛṣṇa states that out of many thousands of men, few will seek

perfection, but that in return, "I will give them the understanding by which they can come to Me. Out of compassion for them, I, dwelling in their hearts, destroy with the shining lamp of knowledge the darkness born of ignorance." (Bg.10.10-11) In this way God is both partial and impartial. He gives us whatever we want. He shines like the sun for everyone, but those who wish to remain in the closet of material nature receive no tangible benefit. Still, He impartially offers the possibility of His special care to all, and we take shelter of Him or of His material energy, *māyā*, as we choose. Kṛṣṇa confirms, "I am never manifest to the foolish and unintelligent. For them I am covered by My eternal creative potency, and so the deluded world knows Me not." (Bg. 7.25) "O son of Pṛthā, those who are not deluded, the great souls, are under the protection of the divine nature. They are fully engaged in devotional service." (Bg. 9.13)

SURRENDER TO KṚṢṆA

Thus Kṛṣṇa, whether we take shelter of Him or not, is always our dearest friend, since He always takes care to fulfill our desires. And beyond merely fulfilling our desires, He encourages us to desire for Him. Then, when we surrender to Him, we become happy, and He takes special care of us. He knows us and fulfills our desires by His expansion as Paramātmā, or Viṣṇu. But superior to the realization of Paramātmā is realization of Kṛṣṇa engaging in loving affairs with His pure devotees in His original form in His spiritual abode. At the end of *Bhagavad-gītā*, Kṛṣṇa gives His final instruction to Arjuna: "Surrender to Me." He has previously stated that He and Paramātmā within are one, so His instruction is that somehow or other we surrender unto Him—within or without. "The Supreme Lord is situated in everyone's heart, O Arjuna, and is directing the wanderings of all living entities, who are seated as on a machine, made of the material energy. O scion of Bharata, surrender unto Him in all respects, so that by His mercy you can have transcendental peace and eternal abode. Thus I have explained to you the most confidential of all knowledge. Deliberate on this fully, and do what you wish to do." (Bg. 18.61-63) Kṛṣṇa, being so kind, invites us to serve Him, but He never forces us, nor does He interfere. And at once Arjuna

replies, "I have regained my memory by Your mercy, and now I am fixed without any doubt, prepared to act according to Your instructions." By the mercy of Paramātmā one gets the intelligence to attain Kṛṣṇa. The living entity "bird," having surrendered to his dearest friend the Paramātmā "bird," becomes free from the entanglement of the material tree and is available to associate directly with Kṛṣṇa in pastimes of love in the spiritual world.

KṚṢṆA IS REAL

Kṛṣṇa stands before Arjuna as a person on the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra—as his dearest friend and helper—and we can understand that Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead and is talking to His friend. There are many pictures of Kṛṣṇa in His original transcendental form standing and talking to Arjuna on the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra. But how are we to understand that God is in our hearts? He is there in His beautiful four-handed form as Viṣṇu, and He is just as real as if He were standing before us and talking to us. He is there within the heart, and we must purify ourselves in order to see Him. Do not think that "God is in our hearts" is simply a truism. He is there and can be seen by a pure devotee.

This investigation of the friend within our hearts—when based on the scientific information regarding the living entity and the Supreme Soul presented by Kṛṣṇa in *Bhagavad-gītā*—culminates in the realization of Paramātmā, as experienced by great sages like Nārada Muni and described in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. From these descriptions we can understand that Kṛṣṇa is actually there, in our hearts, and that when we fully surrender to Him we become completely satisfied and can see Him face to face. And what do we see? We see the all-attractive transcendental form of our dearest friend.

The meditation on this dearest friend in our hearts is explained in the Second Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*: "The process of meditation should begin from the lotus feet of the Lord and progress to His smiling face. The meditation should be concentrated upon the lotus feet, then the calves, then the thighs, and in this way higher and higher. The more the mind becomes fixed upon the different parts of the limbs, one after another, the more the intelligence becomes purified." (Bhāg. 2.

2.13) Thus is revealed the beautiful form of "the Personality of Godhead residing within the body in the region of the heart and measuring only eight inches, with four hands carrying a lotus, a wheel of a chariot, a conchshell and a club respectively." (Bhāg.2.2.8) "His lotus feet are placed over the whorl of the lotuslike hearts of great mystics. On His chest there is the Kaustubha jewel engraved with a beautiful calf, there are other jewels on His shoulders, and His complete torso is garlanded with fresh flowers. He is well decorated with an ornamental wreath about His waist and rings studded with valuable jewels on His fingers. His leglet, bangles, oiled hair curling with a bluish tint, and His beautiful smiling face are all very pleasing. The Lord's magnanimous pastimes and the glowing glancing of His smiling face are all indications of His extensive benedictions. One must therefore concentrate on this transcendental form of the Lord as long as the mind can be fixed on Him by meditation." (Bhāg. 2.2.10-12)

SUPERSOUL

"Thus being fixed, one must render service unto the Supersoul situated in one's heart by His omnipotency. Because He is

the Almighty Personality of Godhead, eternal and unlimited, He is the ultimate goal of life, and by worshiping Him one can end the cause of the conditioned state of existence." (Bhāg. 2.2.6) This is the final instruction of Kṛṣṇa in the *Gītā*: to surrender unto Him and render service unto Him. This is God's greatest kindness, even though He is always fulfilling our desires, He allows us to fulfill His desires in transcendental loving service. Of course God is *ātmarāma*, self-satisfied, and in no way does He need our service, but out of His causeless mercy He allows us to render service to Him, and through the medium of the bona fide spiritual master He accepts our so-called service.

BHAGAVĀN

Actually in this age the meditation on God in the heart as described in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is not possible. Our duration of life is too short and living conditions troubled. Even Arjuna, who was superior in all spiritual and material attributes, and who lived at a time much more conducive to spiritual realization than our own, rejected this system of *yoga*. "The system appears impractical and unendurable to me, for the mind is restless and unsteady. O Kṛṣṇa, and to subdue it, is, it seems to me,

more difficult than controlling the wind." (Bg. 6.33-34) And Kṛṣṇa replied: "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 highest of all." (Bg. 6.47)

Thus the best way to realize Paramātmā, especially in this age, is to realize Bhagavān, the highest realization of Godhead, which automatically includes all other realizations. Bhagavān, Kṛṣṇa in His original form, is our dearest friend. And what is the process for attaining Bhagavān realization? It is simply to render service to His pure devotee and to chant His name. This is the process recommended by Śrī Kṛṣṇa in *Bhagavad-gītā* and made especially practicable by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu in this age. Kṛṣṇa says: "The sages, knowing Me as the ultimate purpose of all sacrifices and austerities, the Supreme Lord of all planets and demigods, and the benefactor and well-wisher of all living entities, attain peace from the pangs of material miseries." (Bg.5.29) So it is up to us. We can do as we like; Kṛṣṇa never interferes. "Yet whoever renders service unto Me in devotion is a friend, is in Me, and I am a friend to Him." Now what do you want to do?

END

HOLY RATHAYĀTRĀ IN TOKYO

Śrīla Prabhupāda has written the President of the Tokyo, Japan, temple of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness: "Your temple can be named New Gayā. Gayā is the province in India where Lord Buddha flourished. Japan is a Buddhist country, and we accept Lord Buddha as an incarnation of God. Also, it was at Gayā that Lord Caitanya was initiated by His spiritual master, Śrī Iśvara Purī Mahārāja." Just in the tradition of Lord Caitanya, the Rathayātrā Festival was celebrated by ISKCON devotees in New Gayā. The Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa's realm is everywhere, and the chanting of the holy name Hare Kṛṣṇa is universal because it is transcendental to all material designations such as country, race and sectarian religion. Devotional service, as taught by Lord Caitanya and exemplified in Rathayātrā, is simply transcendently joyful.





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and that is described in verses 24-26. This process is also connected with the mystic *yoga* system and is dependent on passing away at certain auspicious moments. The expert *yogī* is not forced to vacate his body like an ordinary human, and so he may, if he chooses, leave at certain prescribed times and thus attain the spiritual realms. But this is not possible for the ordinary man, and therefore Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna in the 27th verse: "The devotees who know these different paths are never bewildered. Therefore be always fixed in devotion." The devotee does not have to take any thought about how or when he is leaving this material world. The example of Mahārāja Bharata is very instructive. Śukadeva Gosvāmī told Mahārāja Parīksit: "The great soul of King Bharata was so much attracted to the service of the lotus

feet of Kṛṣṇa that he very easily gave up his lordship over the earthly planet and his affection for his children, society, friends, royal opulence, and beautiful wife. He was so very lucky that the goddess of fortune was pleased to offer him all kinds of material concessions, but he never accepted any of this material opulence. Any person whose heart is attracted by the transcendental quality of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Madhusūdana, not to speak of material opulence, does not care even for the liberation which is aspired to by many great sages." (*Bhāg.* 5.14.43) Similarly, Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu prays in His Śikṣāṣṭakam: "My dear son of Nanda, I do not want any kind of material happiness in the shape of many followers, nor immense opulence in wealth, nor any beautiful wife, nor do I want

cessation from material existence. I may take birth many times, one after another, but what I pray is that My devotion unto You may always remain unflinching."

This same highest truth is now confirmed by Lord Kṛṣṇa in the final verse of the chapter: "A person who accepts the path of devotional service is not bereft of any result of studying the *Vedas*, performing austere sacrifices, making charity, and pursuing philosophical and fruitive activities. And at the end he reaches the supreme abode." Nothing is lacking; nothing left out. Kṛṣṇa and His name are identical, and if one will simply chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare, his mind will become fixed at that absolute point, and his human form of life will become successful. END



Hare Krishna Hare Krishna
Krishna Krishna Hare Hare
Hare Rama Hare Rama
Rama Rama Hare Hare

श्री कृष्णाय नमः



