

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. 49



Rādhā Kṛṣṇa



*The Supreme
Personality
of Godhead
and His
Pleasure Energy*



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

Back to Godhead is for humans. Its subject matter is hearing and chanting about the Personality of Godhead, Lord Kṛṣṇa. According to the Vedic scriptures, which are the oldest known literatures on this planet, a human being's prime duty is to hear the glories of God. It is stated in the *Vedas* that persons who will not experience the joy of speaking and hearing about Kṛṣṇa are really not human beings but lower animals. The only crucial difference between the human body and those of other animals such as cats and dogs is that only the human species can inquire about and develop love for God.

We are all suffering in different ways only because we have forgotten our eternal relationship with the Supreme Lord. Containing topics meant exclusively for awakening our loving relationship with all-blissful Kṛṣṇa, *Back to Godhead* functions to release us from our morbid preoccupation with a temporary material life which inevitably ends in death. Hearing about Kṛṣṇa will guarantee us blissful eternal life, but it must be performed under the expert guidance of one who knows very well the science of love of God. Such a person is our spiritual master, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, a pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa. We earnestly request all intelli-

gent men to inquire into his authorized writings on Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Singing or speaking the Hare Kṛṣṇa chant printed on this page can by itself clean the heart and mind of a whole lifetime's accumulation of the dust of forgetfulness of God. Study our evidence for these claims, and at the same time please try to understand and take part in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Such inquiry is the real aim of human life.



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

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PRONUNCIATION OF SANSKRIT WORDS

Sanskrit words and names in *Back to Godhead* are spelled according to a system accepted by scholars throughout the world which indicates the exact pronunciation of each word. Vowels in Sanskrit are pronounced almost as in Italian. The sound of the short *a* is like the *u* in *but*, the long *ā* is like the *a* in *far* and held twice as long as the short *a*, and *e* is like the *a* in *evade*. Long *ī* is like the *i* in *pique*. The vowel *ṛ* is pronounced like the *re* in the English word *fibre*. The *c* is pronounced as in the English word *chair*, and the aspirated consonants (*ch*, *jh*, *dh*, etc.) are pronounced as in *staunch-heart*, *hedge-hog*, *red-hot*, etc. The two spirants *ś* and *ṣ* are pronounced like the English *sh*; *s* is pronounced as in *sun*. Thus *Kṛṣṇa* is pronounced KRISHNA, *Caitanya* is pronounced CHAITANYA, etc.

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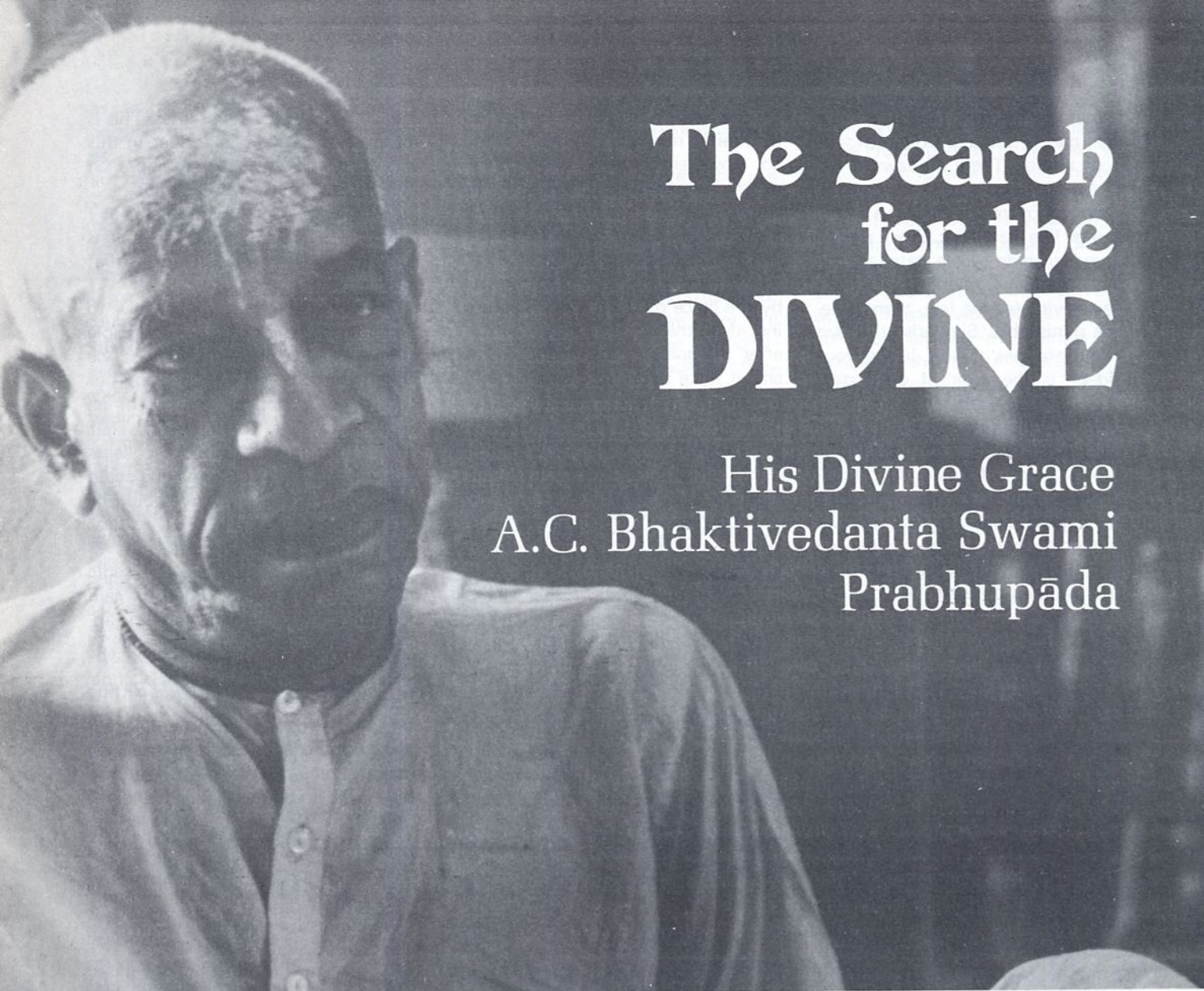
The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is presenting a scientific program for the respiration of all of human society. Although man has made rapid material progress, there is a need for a spiritual method by which all men can become one in peace, friendship and prosperity through a common cause. The greatest cause for all men is devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and this is being introduced all over the world by the International Society for Krishna Consciousness in a simple, practical and universal way that can be accepted by men of any race, religion or nationality. For information on how you can become a registered member of this important spiritual movement, please write to the Society's secretary at 3764 Watska Avenue, Los Angeles, California.

ON THE COVER

Sudāmā Brāhmaṇa is gloriously received by the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and His eternal consort Śrīmatī Rukmiṇī. (pg. 18)

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The Search for the DIVINE

His Divine Grace
A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami
Prabhupāda

[On his way from Los Angeles to London to attend the annual Jagannātha Car Festival, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the founder and spiritual master of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, paused for three days at ISKCON's East Coast Headquarters in New York City. There he delivered a short series of public lectures, initiated twenty new disciples, gave personal directions to many of his students, and granted audience to selected guests and visitors. The following is a conversation, held in Śrīla Prabhupāda's personal quarters on the second afternoon of his visit, between His Divine Grace and Mr. Paul Valliere, an Instructor of Religion at Columbia University in New York City.]

Mr. Valliere: I've been studying Russian elders in the Orthodox Church. Perhaps that's a tradition you're familiar with in some way. They seem to have found the Divine. I guess I'd define it in terms of a search for the Divine.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes. When you are searching with some goal, what is that goal? Why are you searching? When you are missing something, then there is a question of search. What is that missing point? You say that religion means searching after the Divine, so that means that you are missing the Divine. Do you follow?

Mr. Valliere: That's right.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Now, the next question will be, what do you mean by this Divine?

Mr. Valliere: Well, I'm not sure.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: The other day we were talking with a scientist. We came to this conclusion: that the big scientists are simply observing the laws of nature. The laws of nature are very stringent. For example, there is death. Everyone will die. One cannot check death, however great a scientist he may be. By the laws of nature one becomes old. By scientific advancement they cannot stop this. Through science they are trying to overcome the stringent laws of nature, but so far, in past human history they could not, and in the present also they are unable. They say that in the future they will be able, but in the past they could not, and in the present also they are unable, so how can they overcome the laws of nature in the future? History repeats itself. The same failure is there.

Therefore, as we define it, the Divine means the controller of the laws of nature. There are laws of nature, and everyone is under these laws. No one can overcome the laws of nature. Just like state laws. Every citizen is bound to abide by the state laws; he cannot overcome them. If he overcomes or violates the law, then he becomes punishable. Similarly, the laws of nature are laws of God. Just as your President is the giver of your state laws, similarly, as soon as you say "laws of nature," there must be a giver of those laws. In our *śāstra*, Vedic literature, it is said: *dharmam hi sākṣād-bhagavat-praṇītam*. *Dharma*, religion, means the codes given by God, and we have to abide by those codes. When we do not abide by those codes, then we violate the laws of nature or God, and we are punished. Now, who is that person or authority who is giving that law, who is controlling that law? That is the subject of the Divine search. But that Divine search can't be completed by the speculation of our imperfect senses.

Our senses are imperfect. Therefore whatever knowledge we gather by speculating with our imperfect senses is also imperfect. For example, the sun is very big—fourteen hundred thousand times bigger than this earth. But with our imperfect eyes we see it to be just like a disc. If we remain satisfied with this imperfect knowledge, then we will remain in darkness. We have to know the sun from the astronomers; they have calculated its size, so they know it. In this way, perfect knowledge can be attained—when it is received through the perfect knower, not by speculation.

Speculation means to speculate with the limited mind and imperfect senses. So, however carefully or expertly I search through these instruments, they are themselves imperfect. Therefore Vedic *śāstra* says that to understand the Divine, you must have Divine mercy. One can understand the truth by the grace of the Divine. So searching after the Divine means searching after the *grace* of the Divine. For example, take a very big man, just like President Nixon. I am speculating, "President Nixon is like that, like that, like this. His functions are like this, he eats like this, he sleeps like this." That is speculation. But if I hear directly from President Nixon or his very confidential representative, that is perfect knowledge. I cannot speculate and know about President Nixon with my imperfect senses. I must know about President Nixon when he speaks personally about himself or his personal associate speaks about him.

Mr. Valliere: If our senses are imperfect, then with what sense do we perceive the Divine that underlies these laws of nature?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: I've given you an example of how our senses are imperfect. I can see the sun, but I do not see the sun perfectly. I have the power to see the sun, but I do not know how big the sun is. In this way my senses are imperfect. But when I see the sun and hear about it from a perfect person who knows about the sun, then my knowledge becomes perfect, although I have imperfect senses. I cannot understand President Nixon by my speculation. But when the President speaks about himself, I can understand, al-

though I have imperfect senses. This is the process. We are imperfect in this way—that our senses cannot approach the ultimate point by speculation.

Mr. Valliere: I agree with that, but I still . . . The perfect person that is going to speak to me is God? Is that the analogy?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: That we will have to find later on. First of all the principle should be accepted—that unless we hear from the perfect person, our knowledge is imperfect. First of all we have to agree to this point. That is why one goes to schools, colleges and universities. If at home one could learn everything, then why should he go to schools, colleges and universities? It is not possible to get perfect knowledge by oneself. Therefore the Vedic injunction is that in order to gain perfect knowledge one has to approach the proper person, who is known as *guru*.

Mr. Valliere: That's what I was getting at.

[A newsman, with two assistants and electronic equipment, has been trying to see Śrīla Prabhupāda.]

Newsman (whispering to Śyāmasundara dāsa, Śrīla Prabhupāda's secretary): Can I ask a couple of questions, and then I'll leave?

Śyāmasundara: Please, ask, yes.

Newsman: Svāmī, please. I'm . . . If I may interrupt, I'd just like to ask a few questions. Then I'll go so that you can continue. Tell me, what do you think accounts for your popularity, the popularity of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement in America?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: It is not due to my



personality. It is because I am presenting the truth as it is. To give an example, if you prepare some food with nice ingredients, it will be appealing to everyone. And if you prepare something obnoxious, maybe it will appeal to a certain section but not to all.

Newsman: What can appreciation of Kṛṣṇa do for the Americans of this country?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: As I have repeatedly said, you Americans already have the grace of the Lord. According to our Vedic formula, when a man is born in a rich family, he is understood to possess the grace of the Lord. You Americans have sufficient riches. You are sons of rich men. So this is the grace of God. *Janma sabhya-sutaḥ*: to take birth in a high family, to possess riches. *Janma sabhya-sutaḥ*: to become a learned scholar. You are going to the moon. Your scientific knowledge is advanced. And *śrī-śrī* means beauty. You are beautiful also. So, considering all these points, it is to be understood that you are in a favorable condition; you have the favorable consideration of the Absolute Truth, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Now, if you take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, or God consciousness, then all of these material opulences—plus Kṛṣṇa consciousness—will make your life perfect.

Newsman: Do you foresee that the devotees will grow in number in this country?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: There is a possibility. Otherwise, why are these young men coming? There is a good possibility, but we have no facility. The government is spending millions of dollars to stop LSD intoxication. But our students—as soon as they become my students, I simply order them: “No intoxication.” So what to speak of LSD, they do not take tea, they do not take coffee, nor do they smoke. But the government will not help us. That is the difficulty.

Newsman: Do you seek government help?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes. If I get government help I can give protection to these confused, frustrated youth. I have no proper house to accommodate them, to feed them. With great difficulty I am pushing on this movement. But if the government comes forward and gives

me a little facility, I can turn the face of your country—immediately. There will be no problem.

Newsman: What is your cure? What can you make better?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: This is the cure—I am making men of good character. Don't you see their faces? Some of them were hippies in a frustrated, wretched condition. Now they are known as bright faced. See their character! They don't have illicit sex; they don't eat meat; they don't take any intoxicants; they don't indulge in gambling. These are the four pillars of sinful life. If you allow people to indulge in sinful life, how can you expect good citizens? That's not possible. Their character must be formed. So we have gone to the root. We are making men of character, knowledge, sincerity and God consciousness. Don't you appreciate it?

Newsman: Will they be able to function in the society as working individuals?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes. There is nothing prohibited. You simply have to change your consciousness. That's all. We are also eating. We are also sleeping. Many of our students are householders; they have sex. So there is nothing prohibited, but everything is regulated for higher achievement. That is our program.

Newsman: Do you see yourself, then, as the saviour of the American youth?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes. Certainly. This movement is saving them already. It is not future. It is present, practical.

Newsman: Thank you very much. [The newsman, in a hurry to go, begins to gather his electronic equipment.] Good luck.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Thank you.

[A devotee escorts the newsman to the door, and Śrīla Prabhupāda resumes his discussion with Mr. Valliere.]

Śrīla Prabhupāda: So religion—it is simple—religion means the laws of God. Simple definition. And one who follows the laws of God pleases God. It doesn't matter whether he's Christian, Hindu, Muslim. It doesn't matter. Take for example your Christian religion. Lord Jesus Christ says, “Thou shalt not kill.” But I think that almost cent percent of the Christian people are very much engaged in killing. So

they are disobeying the laws of God. Don't you think so? What is right? [Śrīla Prabhupāda turns his head, waiting for an answer to his rhetorical question.] Then if you disobey the laws of God, what is your religion? It is simply show. God said, or God's representative, God's son, Jesus Christ, said, “Thou shalt not kill.” But in the whole Christian world the killing art is very much favored—maintaining slaughterhouses, shooting in sports and creating Vietnams. So many things—simply killing. And any film shown, when it is a killing film, is very popular. I see in your parks the soldiers killing. This park I was passing through? What is that park?

Śyāmasundara: Prospect Park.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Prospect Park. There is a big gate. There is a killing picture.

Śyāmasundara: Praising the soldiers.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes. Of course, soldiers' killing and ordinary killing are not the same. But my point is that God gives you the law that you should not kill. Now, if we are violating that law, then how can we be religious? That is my question.

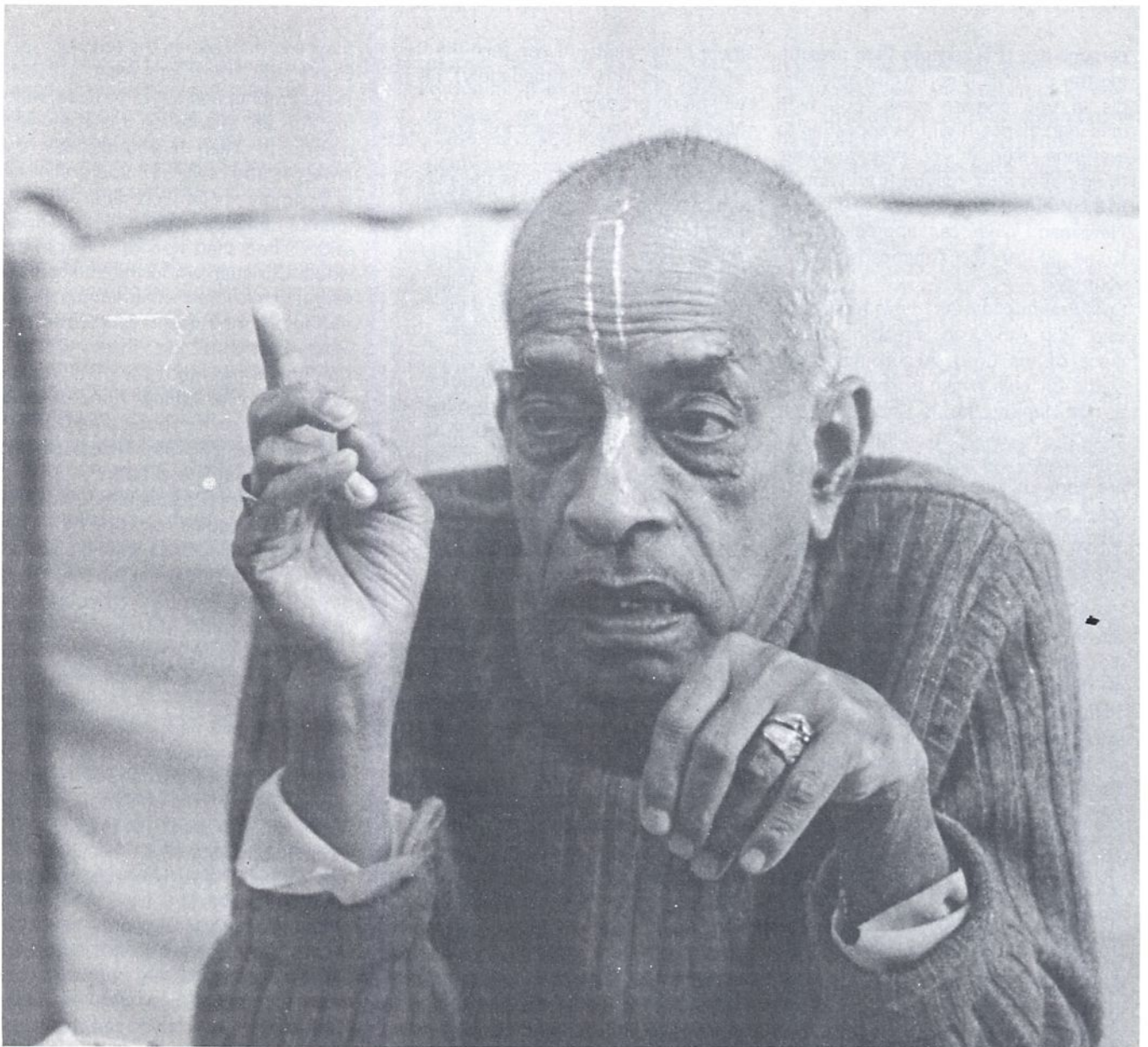
Mr. Valliere: Your Grace, is non-violence, not killing—that is part of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, isn't it?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes.

Mr. Valliere: What's the future of that in India today?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Not only in India—Kṛṣṇa consciousness is not meant for India or America. Of course, I have been deputed by my *guru mahārāja* [spiritual master] to spread this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement in the Western world. That is his grace. Since Western people are intelligent, he wanted them to learn what Kṛṣṇa consciousness is. So my mission is in the Western countries, but it is not meant for any particular country or nation. It is meant for every living entity.

Now, there are many unfortunate living entities, and there are many fortunate living entities. We are preaching this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement in American and the Western countries, and only the fortunate persons are coming. But if a few of them come and understand, then by their example and behavior the whole population will be favorably influenced. It is not expected that cent percent of the population will be able to understand this



philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. But by the example of a few . . . *yad yad ācarati śreṣṭhas*.^{*} For example, you'll find that our temple is always crowded to the fullest extent. We require a more spacious hall. But not all of them are initiated students. Out of them, say ten percent are initiated students. But still people are coming to see. They're following. Gradually they will also become students.

So this is a very important scientific movement. I therefore request learned scholars like you—government officials, scientists, philosophers—to study this. It is for them that we have written so

many books. Not only that . . . it is not that we are simply chanting and dancing. If you are a philosopher, if you are a scholar, if you are a scientist, we can give you food for thought in a scientific, philosophical, scholarly way. So my only request is that all the leaders of society come forward, study this movement and take to it. That will be beneficial. We don't ask that they do so blindly, just as one follows some type of faith or religion blindly and after some time gives it up. No. We say, *śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya-dayā karaḥa vicāra*. You just use your judgement about the mercy of Lord Caitanya, and

if you do that, then you'll find wonders in this movement.

[Bhagavāndāsa, a disciple, brings Śrīla Prabhupāda some water, and Śrīla Prabhupāda calls for some ice. Bhakti-janadāsa, a disciple engaged in preaching work in Harlem, enters the room with a dozen or so Negro devotees from the Brooklyn temple and Negro boys and girls who have been attracted to the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement in Harlem. Śrīla Prabhupāda welcomes them—"Hare Kṛṣṇa. Come on."—and they fall to the floor before him and offer their obeisances. A few more Negro devotees enter the room and

^{*}"Whatever action is performed by a great man (common men follow in his footsteps)." (*Bhagavad-gītā*, 3.21)

offer their obeisances, and again Śrīla Prabhupāda encourages them—“Hare Kṛṣṇa. Thank you very much.” They all join the devotees who are already sitting gathered around Śrīla Prabhupāda, and the conversation continues.]

Śrīla Prabhupāda: So you should accept this definition of religion. Religion means the law given by God. Simple formula. Do you have any objection, or do you accept it?

Mr. Valliere: I accept that. I think religion is what you're doing. I think religion is what I see right here.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Right religion.

Mr. Valliere: I think it's great!

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Thank you very much. Yes. So what is the object of this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement? The purpose of this movement is that we are trying to love Kṛṣṇa. If I love Kṛṣṇa or God, then naturally I will be obedient to the laws of God. Is it not? Just like my students. When—say four or five years ago—I came here, I had no students. I was loitering in the street; no one was caring for me. Now I have hundreds and thousands of students; they can do whatever I order. I did not pay them anything, nor did I bring any money from India. But they are executing my orders simply out of love. Is it not a fact? Because they have developed a love for me—the reason may be whatever it may be, but unless they have developed love for me, how could they execute my orders without any personal profit? Therefore this is the first thing required. Religion means to abide by the orders of God. Simple. And this obedience to the laws of God will be automatically performed if everyone revives his dormant love for God.

We have taken this science. We are teaching everyone how to love God. If one thinks that he has learned how to love God through some particular religion, we have no objection. Whether he is Christian or Hindu or Muslim or whatever he may be, if by executing the religious principles which he is professing he has developed his love of God, then we have nothing to preach to him. The result is there. But because we don't find that love of God is there, we are putting forward

a simple formula: here is the way by which—if you utilize or accept it—you'll very quickly love God.

If we are convinced that to love God is religion, and if that is our main concern in the human form of life, then this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is the genuine scientific movement which everyone should take. If someone thinks, “My aim of life is different; I don't care for God,” that is a different thing. But our philosophy is that human life is especially meant for developing that God consciousness or knowing the art of how to love God. I cannot preach Kṛṣṇa conscious philosophy amongst the animals because their consciousness is not so developed. But still, my movement is so perfect that I can do good even to the cats and dogs—by offering them *prasādam* and by giving them a chance to hear the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*. This vibration is transcendental. When it is chanted, it is good for everyone—all living entities. Therefore we go to the streets and chant so that everyone can hear the transcendental vibration.

So is it accepted that religion means the laws of God? Is that accepted? Now, we have to study what the special laws of God are and what the nature of God is. That is the Divine search. From *Bhagavad-gītā* we understand that it is the nature of God that He is the Supreme Father. Is there any objection? God is the Supreme Father. I think that in the Christian religion that is accepted. Is it not? Now, the Supreme Father says that all living entities—not only civilized human beings but even animals, trees, plants, insects, birds and fishes and other aquatics, irrespective of bodily features—are sons of God. What do you think of this conception?

Mr. Valliere: I think that it's probably a better and more universal notion of life than you'd have in the somewhat more “man-centered” Western philosophies.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: They are defective.

Mr. Valliere: The problem, of course, is that you don't want man to somehow get lost in it all. But still I think it would be safe to agree with what you're saying. This universality is very appealing.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: We are not manufacturing this idea; it is stated in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. *Sarva-yoniṣu kaunteya mūrtayaḥ sambhavanti yāḥ*. *God is the Father of all species and forms of life. Besides that, we take this body as a dress. For example, your white shirt is not you. You are different from the white shirt. Similarly, one may have a body, white or black, but he, as spirit soul, is different from the body. Now, we are taking account of the person who is possessing the dress—not the dress but the person. I am talking with *you*; I am not talking with your shirt. I don't look to see whether you have put on a white shirt or black shirt. That is not my concern. I am concerned with you as a living being. This is our philosophy. We don't take account of the outward shirt and coat. This body, this gross body, is just like a coat, and within this gross body there is a subtle body—mind, intelligence and ego. Within that subtle body, the spirit soul is there. And we are trying to deliver the spirit soul from these two kinds of entanglement, subtle and gross. That is our mission. National and religious movements are more or less on the basis of the outward dress. One is Christian because he is born of a Christian father. Is it not? One is American because he is born in the land of America. We say that we are neither Christian nor American, Hindu, Muslim or Indian. We are eternal servants of God. Try to understand this fact and mold your life in this way; then your life will be successful. This is our program. Simple. Now what is your comment on this statement?

Mr. Valliere: I like everything you're saying, and I think maybe I should listen to some other questions.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Then you agree with this?

Mr. Valliere: Yes. I like it.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Half-agree. “I like it” means half-agreement. That's nice. Something is better than nothing. If it is half-agreed, that is better than not agreed. So, what are the reactions of the other boys and girls present here to these statements?

[There is a thoughtful silence. No one has anything to say.]

Mr. Valliere: Are all spirit souls alike, or are they different?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Alike. The dress is different, but the spirit soul is the same. Therefore in the *Bhagavad-gītā* it is said, *vidyā-vinaya-sampanne brāhmaṇe gavi hastini śuni caiva śvapāke ca paṇḍitāḥ sama-darśinaḥ*: the really learned man sees everyone on the same level because he sees the spirit, and his view is that a learned *brāhmaṇa*, a dog, an elephant or a low-born person are all in the same category of spirit soul.* That is the vision of a learned scholar. He does not discriminate—"Here is a dog and here is a very learned scholar." His vision is this: "The dog is entangled by his body, and the learned scholar is also entangled by his body, but both the dog and the learned scholar are spirit souls." That is actual vision. We are concerned with the soul more than the outward body. That is our concern.

[One of the disciples raises a question.]

Lokamaṅgala: Śrīla Prabhupāda, in our fully developed state in the spiritual sky, are we still one ten-thousandth the tip of a hair, like we are now?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: You are a spiritual atom, and its measurement is one ten-thousandth the size of the tip of a hair. That is the seed or basic principle. Now, on that small particle of spirit soul we have developed this body. We have a human body, another has an elephant body, etc., but this is external.

The real seed is that soul, which is one ten-thousandth of a hair in size. Similarly, as you have developed this material body under a particular consciousness, when one gives up the material connection, he develops a spiritual body. And in that spiritual body he will be able to enter the kingdom of God and go back home, back to Godhead. This body you will have to give up—today or tomorrow or one hundred years from now, you will have to give it up. The *Bhagavad-gītā* says, *tyaktvā dehaṃ punar janma naiti*—"After giving up this body, a Kṛṣṇa conscious person does not accept another material body." Then what happens to him? *Mām eti*: "He comes to Me [Kṛṣṇa]." For example, in your country one who



wants to become a citizen must possess particular qualities and fulfill certain conditions; then he'll be accepted as a citizen. Similarly, if we want to go back home, back to Godhead, then we must develop our dormant spiritual quality, and that is Kṛṣṇa consciousness. This movement trains one to go back home, back to Godhead. Others who are dying do not know what next life they'll get after giving up this body or after this death. Although they are proud of their education, they do not discuss what the constitution of the soul is or how he transfers from one body to another. This science is unknown to the modern educated men. Is it not? They do not

know. They simply speculate. This is the defect of the modern educational system. Actually, everyone is seeking for spiritual emancipation. Therefore in spite of so many big universities, your country is producing hippies, hopeless population. Am I speaking rightly or not? You are a university teacher. I have seen this in so many universities.

Mr. Valliere: I like my students. I think they are on the right track.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: I like your students *more* because I do not wish to see them in such a frustrated condition. That is my mission. I want to make them happy. I want to give them this information of Kṛṣṇa consciousness so that

*Bg. 5.18



they may get back their life. I have received thousands of letters from those who have come to this life from frustration, expressing how they feel obliged to me.

[After a short period of silence, one of the interested Negro boys speaks up.]

Student: Prabhupāda, you said in your last lecture that for one who wants to take up *bhakti*, the work that he is doing does not stop. This has been a source of confusion to myself and other people.

[The boy is sitting in back, so Śrīla Prabhupāda does not hear.]

Śrīla Prabhupāda: What does he say?

Bali Mardan Gosvāmī: He says that when you take up *bhakti* your work does not stop, so he is confused about this.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Therefore we are defining *bhakti*. Try to understand. Can you follow me? Come here, come forward. [The boy moves to the front.] Try to understand what *bhakti* is. *Bhakti* means to have no other desire than to satisfy Kṛṣṇa. That is *bhakti*. Just like Arjuna. Arjuna satisfied Kṛṣṇa by fighting, and he became a *bhakta* [devotee]. In the battlefield Arjuna was hesitating—"Ah, what is the use of my killing my own men, my family men, my brothers, my nephews, my grandfather?" They were all on the other side, and he was to fight with

them and kill them. So he was hesitating. He was a very great warrior. He knew that when they fought he would kill them. "Although they have come to fight with me," he thought, "they do not know. But I know. They are my men, so why shall I fight with them? Let them enjoy; I don't want killing." But after understanding *Bhagavad-gītā*, when he came to the understanding that it was his duty to satisfy Kṛṣṇa, he sacrificed his own determination not to kill his men. He satisfied Kṛṣṇa by the same art of war. He did not change his position. After hearing *Bhagavad-gītā*, he did not become a Vedāntist or go away to the Himalayas for *yoga* practice and give up his fighting in the battlefield. No, he did not change. But he changed his consciousness. That is all.

At the present moment our consciousness is that we are working for our own sense gratification. When this consciousness changes and we realize that we have to work to satisfy Kṛṣṇa, then our life is successful. You don't have to change your work or position. But when you understand that you have to work not for your personal sense gratification but for the satisfaction of Kṛṣṇa, that is *bhakti*. Is that clear?

Student: I have another question.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: First of all, is this clear? One simply has to change his consciousness, that's all. This is *bhakti*—change. One must change his consciousness in favor of Kṛṣṇa. I am now thinking, "I like this. I like to eat like this. I like to sleep like this." Our present material position is in terms of *our* liking. Therefore Kṛṣṇa consciousness means to change this mentality—"my liking"—but to accept the principle of satisfying Kṛṣṇa. *Bhakti* means to act according to Kṛṣṇa's likes. Is it clear? It does not mean change of place or change of occupation. Change of mentality. That's all.

Nitai dāsa: What if you are engaged in some occupation Kṛṣṇa does not like?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: That you have to learn from Kṛṣṇa's representative—what He likes and what He does not like. Therefore you have to accept a spiritual master. *Yasya prasādāt bhagavat-prasādah*. If your spiritual master is pleased, then you know that

Kṛṣṇa is pleased. If the spiritual master is displeased, then you know that Kṛṣṇa is displeased. You cannot be in contact with Kṛṣṇa at the present moment, in the beginning; therefore you require the help of Kṛṣṇa's representative to learn whether Kṛṣṇa is pleased or Kṛṣṇa is not pleased. But your business is to please Kṛṣṇa.

Devotee: I'm not living a temple life. I'm working, and I'm not married, so what should my activities be?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: You should make your home a temple. What is the difference between temple and home? This is a temple, and the next house is a house. This is made of brick and stone; that is also made of brick and stone. But this is called a temple because here our business is Kṛṣṇa. And that is called a house because there is none of Kṛṣṇa's business. So if you devote your house for Kṛṣṇa's business, then that is also a temple. Do the same thing that the members here are doing—in your apartment, in your house, with your wife and children. Work independently, spend independently—but do it for Kṛṣṇa. Then your house is a temple. We want that. Here the temple is simply giving an example of how to live, but this example can be followed everywhere. Every house can be turned into a temple. Here everything is Kṛṣṇa-centered; similarly, if you make your home Kṛṣṇa-centered, not "you-centered," then your home is also a temple. Yes?

Lokamaṅgala dāsa: In your books you explain that we are in the Kali-yuga age. Is the Kali-yuga age coming to a close now?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: No. It will continue for another 427,000 years. The duration of Kali-yuga is 432,000 years. Out of that, we have passed only 5,000 years. The balance is 427,000 years. And during this time the condition of society will be *worse*—not better but worse. In the last stage of Kali-yuga there will be no food grains, no milk, no fruits. It will be a very horrible time. People will kill their own children and eat them, just like animals. The last stage of Kali-yuga will be like that. So before coming to that stage, better to take Kṛṣṇa consciousness and go back to Kṛṣṇa. That is our program. We don't wish to wait for the worst

things. The worst things are already happening, and it will be still worse. Instead of waiting for that time, better to become perfect by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa and go back home, back to Godhead. That is our position.

Bali Mardana Gosvāmī: Śrīla Prabhupāda, may we take your leave?

[It is getting late, so Śrīla Prabhupāda nods in assent. The devotees offer their obeisances and begin to leave the room].

Śrīla Prabhupāda (to Mr. Valliere): You have our books?

Mr. Valliere: Nitai dāsa up at Columbia sees that we are well supplied.

[Śrīla Prabhupāda continues to speak to those who are clustered about him.]

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Just have a clean place like this, chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, read all these books, and try to inform your audience about Kṛṣṇa consciousness. There is no difficulty. We can open a center anywhere, and everyone will be pleased to hear about Kṛṣṇa. It is not difficult. The worker must simply be sincere. Then everything is all right. I came to your country alone. I had no place. I was sitting alone in Tompkins Square Park and chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. Gradually they came. So similarly you can do that. What is the difficulty? The process is already there. We simply have to execute it. It is not difficult. And it is not limited to any certain neighborhood or any kind of population. No. Kṛṣṇa is for everyone.

Mārkaṇḍeya Ṛṣi dāsa: There are two new temples being started—one in Harlem and another one in Bedford-Stuyvesant. The one in Harlem has an authority, a bona fide president to carry on the prescribed activities that are supposed to be performed in a Kṛṣṇa consciousness temple. What I wanted to know is if an authority could be recommended for the new temple being started, to give that particular temple a basic foundation in living up to brahminical standards.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes. Select among yourselves one who is most competent. Elect him as president.

Mārkaṇḍeya Ṛṣi dāsa: So that would be bona fide?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Select a man who is initiated. The president must maintain the discipline. Without discipline there





cannot be obedience. The president is the spiritual master's representative. Since the spiritual master is not present, one man is selected as president to look after the business of the temple on behalf of the spiritual master.

Student: I came to New York from Detroit with a recommendation from Bhagavān dāsa to be initiated. I have my letter with me.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: You'll be initiated. Any one of you—when you agree to follow the regulative principles and you are recommended by our men, then you can also be initiated. Initiation is a formality. First of all you have to decide whether you will abide by the rules and regulations and become Kṛṣṇa conscious. That is your consideration. You have to decide for yourself whether you are going to take this Kṛṣṇa consciousness seriously. That is your decision. Initiation is a formality. If you are serious, that is real initiation. If you have understood this Kṛṣṇa philosophy and if you have decided that you will take Kṛṣṇa consciousness

seriously and preach the philosophy to others, that is your initiation. My touch is simply a formality. It is your determination. That is initiation.

Student: There was some difficulty that occurred in Cleveland temple with some black-skinned devotees there. . .

Śrīla Prabhupāda: That is due to lack of knowledge. You see. These things will go on, so Caitanya Mahāprabhu has instructed that we should be a little tolerant. Suppose someone treats you improperly because you have a different colored skin. That is his ignorance. But when you feel insulted, that is also *your* ignorance. You should know that he has only insulted your skin, not you. Suppose I say, "Why are you wearing this blue shirt?" I may say that, but it is not very important to you. You may wear a blue shirt or white shirt; it does not matter. You are eternally Kṛṣṇa's servant. If you keep that consciousness, you won't feel insulted. Sometimes one cannot check such social goings on in the material world, so this has to happen.


Therefore Caitanya Mahāprabhu has said, *tr̥ṇād api sunīcena taror api sahiṣṇunā*. "If we are to go on working, then we have to learn how to be tolerant."

Another disciple: So now I'm here in New York. Would it be all right to begin to establish something in Pittsburgh?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes. In that way you'll be able to serve Kṛṣṇa very rightly. And as soon as you are recognized by Kṛṣṇa, your life is successful.

Girl: How can I please you most?

Śrīla Prabhupāda [smiling]: How do you want to please me? [laughing] Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. That will please me. Always, twenty-four hours a day, chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. There is no expenditure. Utilize the tongue Kṛṣṇa has given you. Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. That will please me. Is that all right? Thank you very much. END



“Lord Caitanya’s Mission and Precepts”

Part One

As foretold in Vedic scriptures, the Supreme Personality of Godhead appeared on earth 500 years ago in the form of Lord Caitanya, who is God Himself playing the role of a devotee of Godhead. The eight verses entitled *Śrī Śrī Śikṣāṣṭakam*, which were the only written instructions of Lord Caitanya, reveal the essence of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.

ŚRĪ ŚRĪ ŚIKṢĀSTAKAM

by
Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya
Mahāprabhu

translated by
His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta
Swami Prabhupāda
with purports by
His Holiness
Subaldāsa Svāmī

1.



*ceto-darpaṇa-mārjanaṁ bhava-mahādāvāgni-nirvāpaṇaṁ
śreyaḥ kairava-candrikāvitarāṇaṁ vidyāvadhūjīvanam
ānandāmbudhi-varḍhanaṁ pratipadaṁ pūrṇāmṛtāsvādanaṁ
sarvātma-snapanam paraṁ vijayate śrī-kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtanam*

TRANSLATION

lory to the Śrī Kṛṣṇa saṅkīrtana, which cleanses the heart of all the dust accumulated for years and extinguishes the fire of conditional life, of repeated birth and death. This saṅkīrtana movement is the prime benediction for humanity at large because it spreads the rays of the benediction moon. It is the life of all transcendental knowledge. It increases the ocean of transcendental bliss, and it enables us to fully taste the nectar for which we are always anxious.

PURPORT

The conditioned soul is covered from time immemorial by the dirt of the accumulated reactions of his sinful activities. Due to the reactions of his past sins, he becomes further engaged in sinful activities and becomes more and more forgetful of his constitutional position as part and parcel of the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Due to forgetfulness of his spiritual nature, he identifies himself with the temporary material body and its paraphernalia. Thus, rather than serving Kṛṣṇa in loving devotion, he is forced to serve *māyā*, the limited mundane potency of



the Lord. The living being is never independent in any stage of existence, either conditioned or liberated, but when he is under the control of *māyā* he suffers, and when he is under the control of Kṛṣṇa he enjoys life in the association of the Lord and His devotees.

The Śrī Kṛṣṇa *saṅkīrtana*, or the congregational chanting of the holy names of God, is able to immediately cleanse the heart of all the dirt that accumulates there for millions of years. This is the result of just the dim reflection of the holy name. During the night, there is fear of thieves, ghosts, murderers, etc. In the morning, before the sun even rises on the horizon, it dispels all such fears by its first rays of light. In the same way, before the holy name makes its full appearance, it dispels the darkness of material ignorance and clears away heaps of sinful activities which have not yet manifested themselves. Thus one is freed from *karmic* reaction and placed on the liberated platform of life. In this way, the door to devotional service is opened.

This *saṅkīrtana* movement inaugurated by Lord Caitanya is the special dispensation for this age of Kali. In previous ages the path of spiritual realization was long and difficult. In Satya-yuga, when men lived for one hundred thousand years and conditions were favorable for meditation, people could attain success by practicing *yoga* for thousands of years together. In Tretā-yuga, when the life span was reduced to ten thousand years and conditions were not as favorable, the recommended process of spiritual realization was by elaborate and costly sacrifices. In the Dvāpara-yuga, when man's life was reduced to one thousand years and conditions were still less favorable, the recommended process was temple worship. Now in this age of Kali-yuga, when life is reduced to a mere one hundred years and the living conditions are growing worse and worse, the one recommended and practical way of achieving success in spiritual life is by the congregational chanting of the holy name of God. This is the simplest and most effective means of reaching God. What was achieved in Satya-yuga by meditation, in Tretā-yuga by sacrifices and in Dvāpara-yuga by temple worship is now achieved in Kali-yuga simply by utterance of the holy name—Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. Therefore, great sages and saintly persons sometimes pray for the advent of Kali-yuga in order to take advantage of this simple and sublime process for going back home, back to Godhead.

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī prays to Lord Caitanya as follows:

*namo mahā-vadānyāya kṛṣṇa-prema-pradāya te
kṛṣṇāya kṛṣṇa-caitanya-nāmne gaura-tviṣe namaḥ*

"I offer my respectful obeisances unto the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, who is more magnanimous than any other *avatāra*, even Kṛṣṇa Himself, because He is bestowing freely what no one else has ever given—pure love of Kṛṣṇa."

All over the universe, Kṛṣṇa is worshiped with awe and reverence, but such a form of worship does not satisfy Him. He is actually attracted by the spontaneous loving service rendered to Him by the residents of Vṛndāvana. Seeing that He had not bestowed such loving service upon the world for a long time, the Lord came in His devotional aspect of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu and bestowed pure love of Kṛṣṇa upon the world by means of the *saṅkīrtana* movement. He personally inaugurated this Śrī Kṛṣṇa *saṅkīrtana* and overflowed the whole universe with love of God. This movement is carrying on still, and it gives us the highest realization of the transcendental life of full bliss and knowledge in eternity and allows us to enter into the loving exchanges of Śrī Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana.



2.

*nāmnāmakāri bahudhā nija-sarva-śaktis
tatrārpitā niyamitaḥ smaraṇe na kālaḥ
etādṛśī tava kṛpā bhagavan mamāpi
durdaivamīdṛśamihājani nānurāgaḥ*

TRANSLATION

my Lord, Your holy name alone can render all benediction to living beings, and thus You have hundreds and millions of names like Kṛṣṇa and Govinda. In these transcendental names You have invested all Your transcendental energies, and there are no hard and fast rules for chanting these names. O my Lord, out of kindness You enable us to easily approach You by chanting Your holy names, but I am so unfortunate that I have no attraction for them.

PURPORT

There is no need to take to any process of spiritual realization other than the recitation of the holy name. In the *Vedānta-sūtras*, Fourth Chapter, 4th *adhikaraṇa*, 22nd *sūtra*, it is stated, *anāvṛttiḥ śabdāt*: "By sound vibration one becomes liberated." Simply by chanting the holy name constantly, one can go back to Godhead and never have to return to this miserable material world. It is also stated in *Bhagavad-gītā*, Eleventh Chapter, 36th verse: "The world becomes joyful hearing Your name, and thus do all become attached to You." Thus Arjuna also accepts the potency of the holy name.

In the *Nārada-pañcarātra* it is stated that all the Vedic rituals, *mantras* and understanding are compressed into the eight words Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare. Similarly, in the *Kali-santaraṇa Upaniṣad* it is stated that these sixteen words, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare, are especially meant for counteracting the degrading and contaminating influence of the materialistic age of Kali.

In the *Bṛhan-nāradya Purāṇa*, it is clearly stated that it is only chanting of the holy name of Hari (Kṛṣṇa) that can save people from the problems of materialistic existence, and there is no other alternative, no other alternative, no other alternative in this age of Kali. This automatically eliminates the usefulness of the processes *karma*, *jñāna* and *yoga*. Therefore this chanting process is the one simple and sublime process of achieving the desired goal of life. One need not take to any other process.

The Lord has thousands and millions of names for this purpose. Any name of God will do, but the ecstatic method, the easiest means for most people, is to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. If one feels that this is a sectarian name and prefers to chant any other authorized name of God, that is approved, but Lord Caitanya and His followers have chanted the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*, and therefore it is authorized for all people of all times and places.

The holy name of Kṛṣṇa is nondifferent from Kṛṣṇa Himself. In the material world we find a difference between the name and the object. If we are thirsty and simply chant "water, water, water, water," it will not satisfy us. But, if we want Kṛṣṇa and chant "Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa," He is personally present in His name, and we can feel that presence of the Lord even in the beginning stages of chanting of the holy name. As one becomes more advanced, by uttering the holy name he can see Kṛṣṇa dancing on his tongue. In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Kṛṣṇa says to Nārada, "I am not in the hearts of the *yogīs*, nor am I in Vaikuṅṭha, but, O Nārada, I am present wherever My devotees are engaged in chanting My holy name."

There are no hard and fast rules for chanting the holy names of Kṛṣṇa. Anyone can chant, anywhere and at any time. The chanting may be done loudly or softly, alone or in a group. Thus one can chant in the temple, while walking down the street, while working in the office, while attending school—even in dream one can chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. In this way, all the twenty-four hours of the day, one should be engaged in chanting the holy names. This does not mean that one must give up other activities, but whatever he is doing he should do in full consciousness of Kṛṣṇa. It is not recommended that one go off to a solitary place and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa; one should always be engaged in activities for the satisfaction of Kṛṣṇa, especially the preaching of His glories to others.

Thus the path of God realization is made easy and open to all. Anyone who is not attracted by the holy name of the Lord and does not feel ecstasy immediately upon utterance of the holy name is surely suffering the result of past sinful activities and is being punished by Yamarāja (the superintendent of sinful reactions). But even such a person, if he sincerely takes to the chanting of the holy name with determination, will become quickly purified and develop love of God.



3.

*tr̥ṇādapi sunīcena
taror api sahiṣṇunā
amāninā mānadena
kīrtanīyaḥ sadā hariḥ*

TRANSLATION

ne should chant the holy name of the Lord in a humble state of mind, thinking oneself lower than the straw in the street; one should be more tolerant than a tree, devoid of all sense of false prestige and should be ready to offer all respect to others. In such a state of mind one can chant the holy name of the Lord constantly.

PURPORT

It is only when we realize how truly insignificant and helpless we are that we can call upon the mercy of the All-merciful with true sincerity. It is surely due to our ignorance and not any act of intelligence that we have entered into the cycle of repeated birth, death, disease and old age, giving up the association of the Lord in eternity, bliss and knowledge. Although we are aspiring to be lords, we are constantly being kicked by *māyā*. The living being is an atomic particle of the Absolute. He has the same qualities as the Absolute but in minute quantity. It is said that if the living beings were all-pervading like the Lord, there would be no question of their being overcome by *māyā*. The Lord remains the supreme controller, but the living beings are eternally controlled.

In the *Upaniṣads*, the measurement of the spirit soul is given as one ten thousandth part the tip of a hair. In this respect, we actually are lower than the straw in the street. When we understand this in reality and give up the false notion of overlordship, then we can surrender ourselves to the Lord in true humility.

One who tries to approach the Lord but is puffed up by false prestige due to good birth, beauty, wealth and education will surely fail to evoke the true mercy of the All-merciful. What is the value of our offerings? What is our own value? Kṛṣṇa can create anything at His sweet will to fulfill any desire that He might possess. Yet He says in *Bhagavad-gītā* that if someone offers Him a leaf, a flower, fruit or even a glass of water, He accepts this offering if it is made with love. Kṛṣṇa wants our love, not our offerings. The most valuable offering made without love will not be accepted, but the simplest offering made with real love and devotion will be accepted by Kṛṣṇa.

Sanātana Gosvāmī was living in Vṛndāvana and keeping his Deity, *Madana-mohana*, hanging in a tree. One day, *Madana-mohana* spoke to Sanātana Gosvāmī and said, "All you offer Me is these dry *cāpāṭis*, and there isn't even any salt. How can I eat?" Sanātana said, "I am an old man and cannot move. Whatever I get I offer to You. So kindly accept." *Madana-mohana* had to accept those dry *cāpāṭis* because they were offered by His devotee with love. We are dealing with Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, so we should not become puffed up. Kṛṣṇa does not like His devotees to be proud.

A true devotee sees everyone as part and parcel of Kṛṣṇa and offers all respects to him as part of the Supreme. If we love Kṛṣṇa, automatically we love all of His parts and parcels. We cannot approach Kṛṣṇa directly, but through His devotees He can be approached. Therefore, Kṛṣṇa says in the *Ādi Purāṇa*, "One who claims to be My devotee is not My devotee. But one who claims to be the devotee of My devotee is actually My devotee." Therefore, the devotees of the Lord are to be treated with all due respect, and one should not desire to be honored by others above the devotees of the Lord.

The *Bhāgavatam* says, "One who worships God but abstains on principle from worshipping the devotees of God is not a worshiper of God but an abject sinner." Our Vaiṣṇava predecessors offered respects to everyone. Therefore, they were well liked by all.

A real devotee is busy finding his own defects so that he can correct them. Therefore he has no time to find out the faults of others. A *mahābhāgavata*, great devotee, sees everyone as being more devoted than himself. As it is said, "The greatest thinks himself the lowest." Nor is a mere outward show of humility the real quality of humility that is needed for progress in devotional service. Unless one is always mindful of his own degraded position, he becomes subject to the offense of thinking himself equal with the Lord and the true Vaiṣṇavas. This conceit will prevent us from approaching God. The devotee, therefore, always keeps himself in a humble state of mind by constantly remembering the lotus feet of Śrī Gurudeva (the spiritual master). This only can save us from all danger and is the one thing needful.

In addition, one must be more tolerant than the tree. The tree must tolerate extremes of heat and cold, rain and drought, and the offenses of so many living creatures. When one takes to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, it is expected

that he will receive abuse from many people and have to undergo many hardships in the execution of his devotional service. Prahlāda Mahārāja was just a five-year-old boy, and simply because of his becoming a devotee of Kṛṣṇa, his father became his number one enemy and tried to kill him in so many ways. Prahlāda simply tolerated all attacks by remembering his Lord. Of course, Kṛṣṇa always saved him and ultimately came as Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva to kill the demon father Hiranyakaśipu.

Whenever a devotee is in difficulty he has to always take shelter of Kṛṣṇa. The Lord takes special notice of a devotee who undergoes all difficulties in His service. Śrīmatī Kuntī devī and her five sons, the Pāṇḍavas, were placed in many difficulties by Duryodhana and his party. But, in feelingly offering her prayers to Kṛṣṇa, she said, "I wish that all those calamities might happen again and again so that we could also see You again and again, for this means that we would no more see repeated birth and death." Thus the devotee is always dependent upon the mercy of the Lord.

When a devotee is in difficulty, he also thinks that it is due to his past sinful actions and that Kṛṣṇa has kindly minimized his suffering, otherwise he would deserve to suffer much more. For such a devotee, there is never a lapse in his remembrance of Kṛṣṇa. He is able to chant the holy name of the Lord constantly and remember the transcendental form, pastimes, entourage, etc., of the Lord. Thus he becomes happy in this life and is assured of going back to Godhead in the very near future, never again to return to this miserable world of repeated birth and death.



4.

*na dhanam na janam na sundarim
kavitam va jagadisa kamaye
mama janmani janmanišvare
bhavatadbhaktir ahaituki tvayi*

TRANSLATION

almighty Lord, I have no desire to accumulate wealth, nor do I desire to enjoy beautiful women, nor do I want any number of followers. I only want Your causeless devotional service in my life birth after birth.

PURPORT

There are three kinds of happiness, namely (1) material happiness, (2) the happiness of liberation in the impersonal Brahman, and (3) the happiness of devotional service. The pure devotee has no desire for material happiness or the impersonal liberation because he is fully absorbed in the bliss of devotional service, which by far surpasses all other forms of happiness.

The conditioned soul is always hankering after wealth, women and followers. The devotee realizes the temporary nature of such happiness and therefore does not desire it because he is fixed in the eternal bliss of devotion—the pleasure of which is unimaginable to the materialist. Because he has experienced a higher taste, he no longer desires the mixed pleasures of the material world.

The desire for merging in Brahman (the impersonal Absolute) is another form of material desire. When one is frustrated in his attempts at sense gratification, he desires to become one with God. This is simply an extension of the material concept because in the material world everyone is trying to become the Lord in one form or another. This form of liberation is also temporary; due to its being an unconstitutional position of the spirit soul devoid of all forms of variegatedness, there is every chance of falling back down again into material existence. Because the seed of desire remains within the heart of the soul, the living being must again return to the material world due to lack of realization of spiritual variegatedness, which is only knowable by devotional service. Therefore, the devotee considers such liberation to be most insignificant. He will not accept it even if it is offered by the Lord Himself. In fact, such liberation is considered to be worse than hell by the devotee because there is no opportunity to remember Kṛṣṇa and serve Him in such a state of existence.

There are four other types of liberation which are compatible with devotional service, namely (1) to have the same bodily form as the Lord, (2) to live on the same planet as the Lord, (3) to have the same opulences as the Lord, and (4) to live near the Lord. The pure devotee does not even aspire for these four kinds of liberation. He simply desires to be able to serve the Lord birth after birth. He is already liberated although seemingly in the material world. In his prayers to Lord Kṛṣṇa, Lord Brahmā says: "A person who is already engaged in Your service sees no meaning in so-called liberation and bondage, just as a person who knows that a rope is not a snake is unafraid of it. A devotee knows that this material world belongs to You, and he therefore engages everything in Your transcendental loving service. Thus there is no bondage for him."

The devotee's only desire is to be able to serve the Lord without any personal motivation. He is even prepared to go to hell for the service of the Lord. That is real *bhakti*.

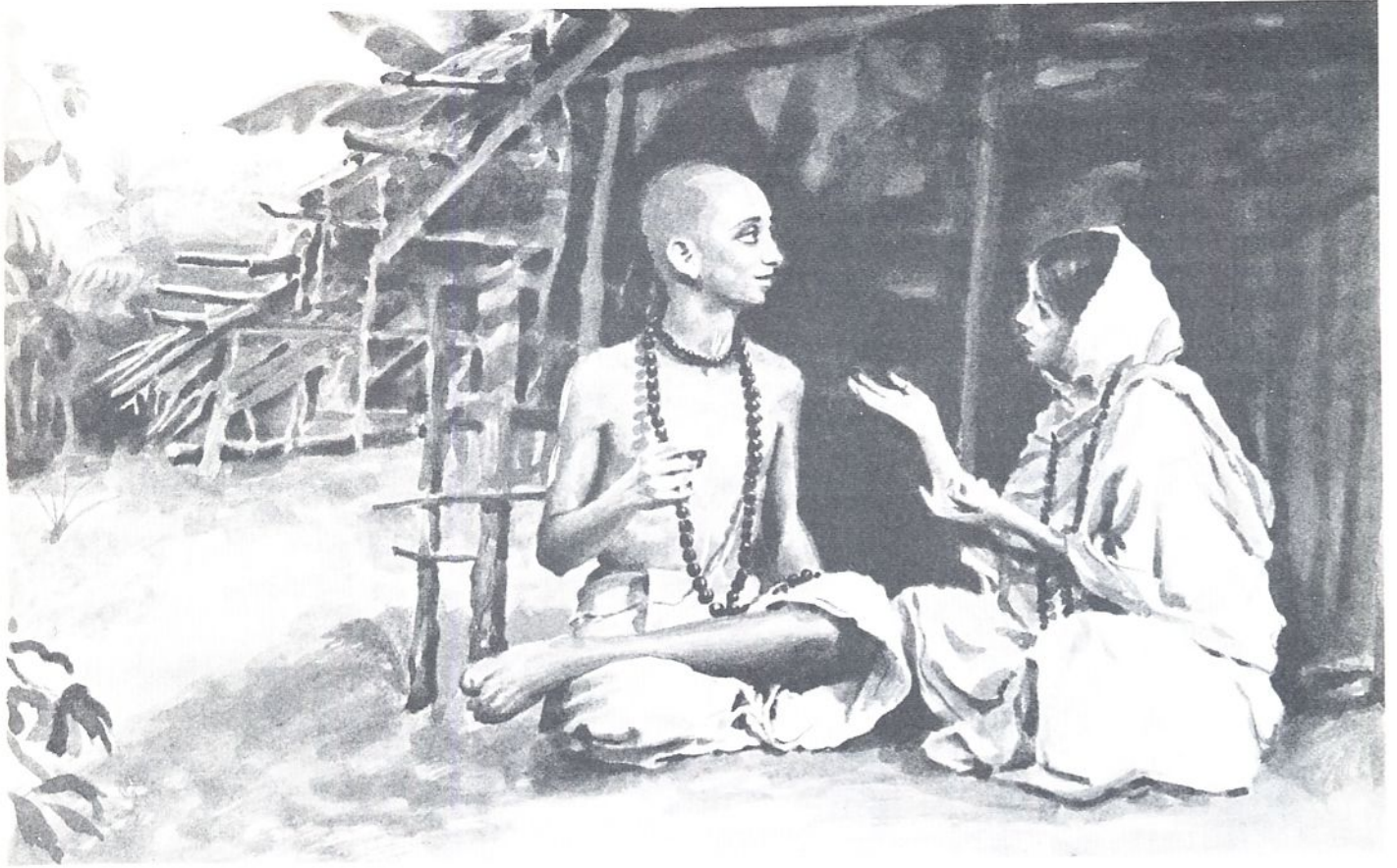
[to be continued]

Lord Kṛṣṇa's Friend Sudāmā

His Holiness
Satsvarūpa dāsa
Gosvāmī

The wonderful history of Kṛṣṇa and His friend Sudāmā is told in its entirety in the Kṛṣṇa Book, Volume II, by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swamī Prabhupāda. Śrīla Prabhupāda is kindly presenting to the western world the pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa, which can act as a merciful shower upon the hearts of all of us. It is true that we have forgotten our eternal, blissful and loving relationships as servants of Kṛṣṇa or God. The remedy to forgetfulness or ignorance of God is to hear about Him from the lips of His pure devotee. This is the view of authorized scriptures.

When Kṛṣṇa descends from His eternal abode in the spiritual world and appears to this mundane world, as He did 5,000 years ago, He engages with others just as if He were an ordinary human being. Although He is unborn, He appears to have a mother and father. In the village of Vṛndāvana Kṛṣṇa plays as a cowherd boy. He enacts these pastimes for His own transcendental pleasure and to attract all the suffering living entities back home, back to Godhead. Sudāmā was among those devotees who were childhood friends with Kṛṣṇa, and Sudāmā was also His intimate school friend.



Kṛṣṇa left Vṛndāvana at sixteen, and later He married and went to live as King of Dvārakā. Meanwhile Sudāmā was living as a *brāhmaṇa*, which means one who knows that the real self is spirit and who dedicates his life to being a spiritual guide for the whole society.

One cannot properly be called a *brāhmaṇa* simply because he is born the son of a *brāhmaṇa*; rather, there are qualities which one has to show before he can rightly be considered a *brāhmaṇa*. Such qualities are peacefulness, austerity, piety, knowledge and wisdom.

Sudāmā was also a householder, but he was not busy in accumulating wealth for very comfortable living. Whatever income came to him without difficulty, he accepted. He engaged his time in the service of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and thus showed himself to be perfect in knowledge. Externally Sudāmā appeared very poor because he had no rich attire and could not provide rich clothing for his wife. In fact they were not even eating sufficiently, and they were both very thin.

Often Sudāmā's wife used to address her husband, "My dear lord, I know that

Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Lord of all the universes, is your personal friend. You are also a devotee of the Lord, and He is always ready to help His devotee. Moreover, Lord Kṛṣṇa is always in favor of the *brāhmaṇas*. Kṛṣṇa is your friend, and persons like you have no other shelter but Kṛṣṇa. You are saintly, learned and in control of your senses. Please, therefore, go to Him in Dvārakā. I am sure that He will understand your impoverished condition.

"You are a married man, so for you to be without money means to be in a distressed condition. As soon as Kṛṣṇa sees your impoverished condition He will give you sufficient riches. Kṛṣṇa is known to give even His own Self to one who is His pure devotee, so there would be nothing wonderful in His giving you some material riches. He will not hesitate to award you some material benefit for the bare necessities of life."

Although the *brāhmaṇa*'s wife was not speaking out of anxiety for her own personal condition (she was, after all, dedicated to her husband, and she treasured his saintly values far above material riches), she nevertheless felt concerned that her husband, who was so

pious, was living below the minimum standards for proper physical maintenance. As a good wife, she did not like to dictate to her husband, yet on repeated occasions she would speak to Sudāmā in this way, suggesting that he go to the capital city, Dvārakā, to see the Supreme Lord there.

Sudāmā, however, thought there to be no need to ask material benefit from Lord Kṛṣṇa. But one time when she made this request, Sudāmā thought, "If I do go there, I shall be able to see the Lord personally. That will be a great opportunity, even if I don't ask any material benefit from Him." So he told his wife that he would go and that she should at once prepare some foodstuff that he could offer as a presentation to his friend.

Sudāmā's wife had nothing in the house, but she went out and collected some chipped rice, which is the lowest grade of rice, from her neighbors, and she tied it up in a handkerchief. Sudāmā took the presentation and started at once toward Dvārakā. As a devotee, he was always thinking of Kṛṣṇa, and now he became absorbed in the thought that he would soon be able to see the Lord.

The Dvārakā palace where Kṛṣṇa lived was not accessible to anyone and everyone, for it was a king's palace and was guarded all around. Sainly persons, however, were allowed to enter, and Sudāmā passed through three military camps and many gates until he finally entered the residential quarters of Kṛṣṇa.

“But we thought Lord Kṛṣṇa only embraced His Queen Rukmiṇī and His brother Balarāma,” they said among themselves. “Who is this poor *brāhmaṇa*? He is not even clean, and he is so skinny, yet Lord Kṛṣṇa has embraced him in His two arms, and now He is washing the *brāhmaṇa*'s feet.”

saying, “My dear friend, it is great fortune that you have come here.”

Seating Sudāmā on His own cushioned bed, Kṛṣṇa said, “My dear friend, you are most intelligent and know very well the principles of religious life. I know that after you finished your education at the house of our spiritual master you went back to your home and accepted a suitable wife. I know very well that from the very beginning you were never attached to the materialistic way of life, nor did you desire to be very opulent materially.”

Kṛṣṇa then began to remember their days together when they were both entrusted to the guidance of the same spiritual master. They were school friends living at the same house. Kṛṣṇa very highly praised those days and said, “Whatever knowledge we have received in our lives was accumulated in those days.” So important is the instruction received from a bona fide spiritual master that Kṛṣṇa, who is God Himself, and thus everyone's spiritual master, expressed great debt for what He learned in His youth at the house of the *guru*.

Sudāmā was sitting face to face with the Supreme Lord, who is also the selfsame Lord who is present in everyone's heart. He thrilled to hear Kṛṣṇa describe a particular adventure in which they shared when they were students.

“My dear friend,” Kṛṣṇa said, “I think you may remember our activities during the days when we were living as students. You may remember that once we went to collect fuel from the forest on the order of the *guru*'s wife. While we were collecting the dried wood, we by chance entered the dense forest and became lost. There was an unexpected dust storm and then clouds and lightning in the sky and the explosive sound of thunder. Then sunset came, and we were lost in the dark jungle.

“After this, there was severe rainfall; the whole ground was overflowed with water, and we could not trace out the way to return to our *guru*'s house. You may remember that heavy rainfall—it was not actually rainfall but a sort of devastation. On account of the dust storm and the heavy rain, we began to feel greatly pained, and in whichever direction we turned we were



At that time Lord Kṛṣṇa was sitting with His Queen Rukmiṇī, but when He saw His friend Sudāmā coming, the Lord got up and went forward to receive him, and He embraced him feelingly. This behavior of Kṛṣṇa toward His friend shocked the women attendants of the palace.

Kṛṣṇa, the source of all life, comes to this mortal world to enact His pastimes as a human being. He is actually the supreme pure, yet He sprinkled the water used to wash the *brāhmaṇa*'s feet on His own head, as if for purification. He welcomed the *brāhmaṇa* in many ways, giving him food and drink and

bewildered. In that distressed condition, we took each other's hand and tried to find our way out.

"We passed the whole night in that way, and early in the morning when our absence became known to our *guru*, he sent his other disciples to search us out. He also came with them, and when they reached us in the jungle they found us to be very distressed.

"With great compassion our *guru* said, 'My dear boys, it is very wonderful that you have suffered so much trouble for me. Everyone likes to take care of his body as the first consideration, but you are so good and faithful to your spiritual master that without caring for bodily comfort you have taken so much trouble for me. I am glad to see that bona fide students like you will undergo any kind of trouble for the spiritual master. That is the way for a bona fide disciple to become free from his debt to the spiritual master. It is the duty of the disciple to dedicate his life to the service of the spiritual master.

"My dear blessed ones, I am greatly pleased by your action, and I bless you: May all your desires and ambitions be fulfilled. May the understanding of the scriptures which you have learned from me always continue to remain within your memory so that at every moment you can remember the teachings and quote their instructions without difficulty. Thus you will never be disappointed in this life or in the next."

Kṛṣṇa continued, "My dear friend, you may remember that many such incidents occurred while we were in the house of our spiritual master. Both of us can realize that without the blessing of the spiritual master one cannot be happy. By the mercy of the spiritual master and by his blessing one can achieve peace and prosperity and be able to fulfill the mission of human life."

Sudāmā well understood that Kṛṣṇa was the supreme controller of both the material and spiritual worlds, and so he appreciated that Kṛṣṇa had played the role of a student and now was acting as King of Dvārakā simply as part of His pastimes, for His transcendental pleasure. Even the pure devotee does not know everything about the Supreme Lord, but he definitely relishes hearing

about His transcendental pastimes—how He creates, maintains and destroys the material world, how in His form or incarnation He personally descends into the material world and enacts pastimes, and how He eternally engages in blissful affairs with His devotees in the spiritual planets far beyond this material universe. The scientists have no information of the spiritual sky beyond this material universe, but the devotee, by performing devotional service, and hearing from bona fide authority, very soon has knowledge of Kṛṣṇa, and the spiritual kingdom is revealed to him from within his heart.

Lord Kṛṣṇa talked a long time with His friend Sudāmā. Then, just to enjoy His friend's company, He began to smile and asked, "My dear friend, what have you brought for Me? Has your wife given you some nice eatables?"

Sudāmā hesitated out of shyness to bring forth the chipped rice. The Lord assured him that He was in need of nothing, but that He would gladly accept any offering given in love.

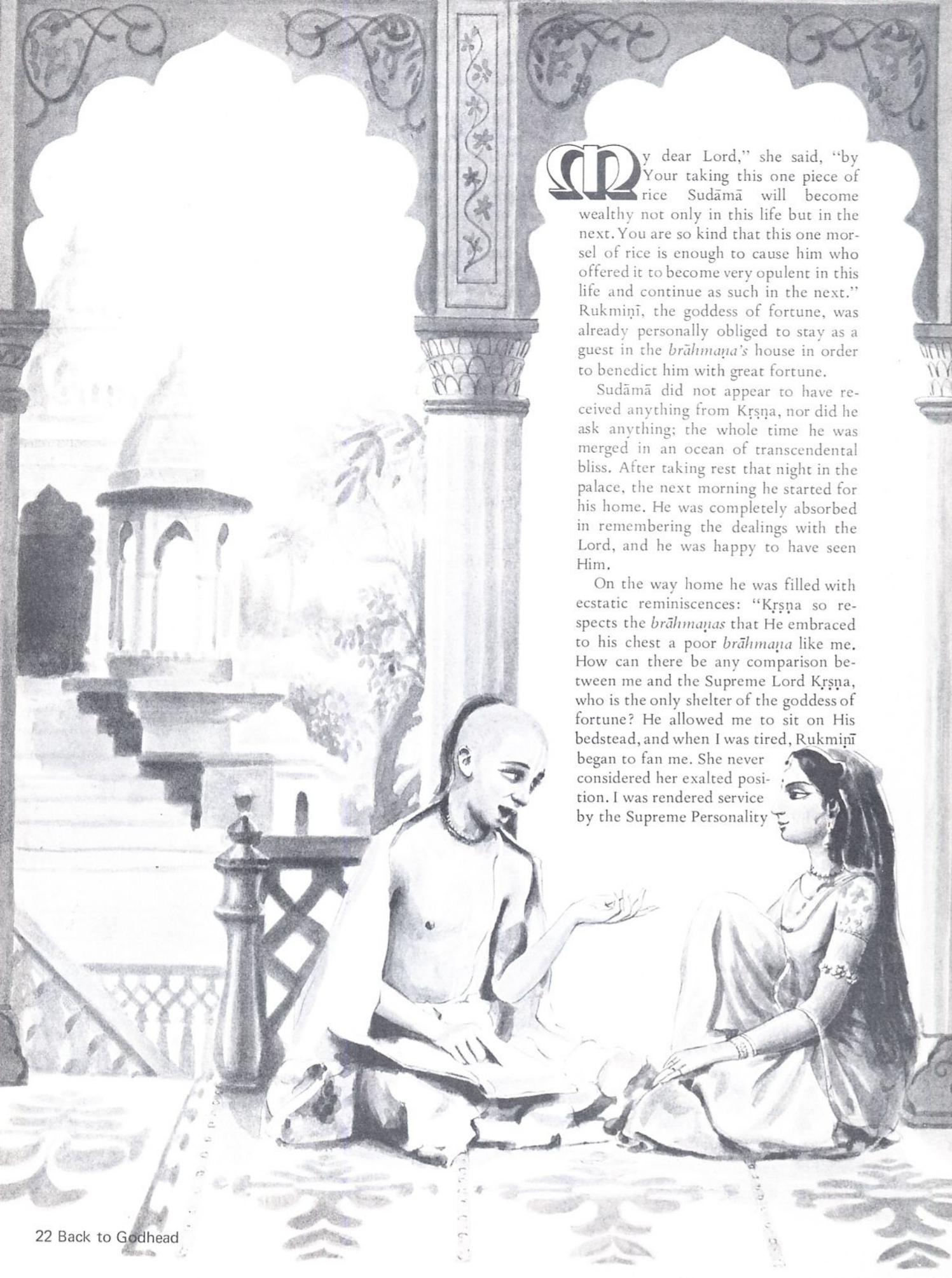
"How can I offer such an insignificant thing?" thought Sudāmā. But the Lord knew his heart. He knew very well, since He is situated in everyone's heart, that

the *brāhmaṇa* had come to see Him on the instigation of his wife to get some material opulence. Moreover, He knew fully well that Sudāmā's love for Him was not tainted by any desire for material benefit. Kṛṣṇa then decided He would very lavishly award Sudāmā.

"What is this?" Lord Kṛṣṇa snatched the bundle of chipped rice, which was tucked in a corner of Sudāmā's shoulder pack. "Oh My dear friend," Kṛṣṇa went on enthusiastically, "you've brought Me such nice palatable chipped rice. It will please not only Me but the whole creation." It is understood from this statement that Kṛṣṇa, being the original source of everything, is the root of the entire creation. As watering the root of a tree immediately distributes water to every part of the tree, so an offering made to Kṛṣṇa or any action done for Kṛṣṇa is to be considered the highest welfare work for everyone. The benefit of such an offering is distributed throughout the creation.

While speaking in this way, Lord Kṛṣṇa ate a morsel of the rice, but when He attempted to eat a second morsel, Rukmiṇī, the goddess of fortune, checked the Lord by taking hold of His hand.





My dear Lord," she said, "by Your taking this one piece of rice Sudāmā will become wealthy not only in this life but in the next. You are so kind that this one morsel of rice is enough to cause him who offered it to become very opulent in this life and continue as such in the next." Rukmiṇī, the goddess of fortune, was already personally obliged to stay as a guest in the *brāhmaṇa*'s house in order to benedict him with great fortune.

Sudāmā did not appear to have received anything from Kṛṣṇa, nor did he ask anything; the whole time he was merged in an ocean of transcendental bliss. After taking rest that night in the palace, the next morning he started for his home. He was completely absorbed in remembering the dealings with the Lord, and he was happy to have seen Him.

On the way home he was filled with ecstatic reminiscences: "Kṛṣṇa so respects the *brāhmaṇas* that He embraced to his chest a poor *brāhmaṇa* like me. How can there be any comparison between me and the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is the only shelter of the goddess of fortune? He allowed me to sit on His bedstead, and when I was tired, Rukmiṇī began to fan me. She never considered her exalted position. I was rendered service by the Supreme Personality

of Godhead because of His high regard for the *brāhmaṇas*, and by massaging my legs and feeding me with His own hand, He practically worshiped me! Yet the Lord was so kind to me that He did not give me even a penny, knowing very well that I am a poverty-stricken man who, if I got some money, might become puffed up and mad after material opulence and so forget Him.”

Thinking in this way, Sudāmā reached his home. But when he looked for his cottage he saw in its place a huge, gorgeous palace made of valuable stones and jewels and glittering like the sun.

“What is this?” he thought. “How am I seeing these changes? Does this palace belong to me or to someone else? Surely this is where I used to live—it is the same place—but how wonderfully it has changed!” Then one dazzling opulence and beauty after another was revealed to Sudāmā Brāhmaṇa. His old neighborhood had become transformed into an area of parks with nice lakes full of lotus flowers and lilies and flocks of multicolored birds. Beautiful men and women were strolling in the parks, and musical chanters who looked like demigods came forward to greet him. On hearing of her husband’s arrival, the wife of the *brāhmaṇa* ran out of the palace to greet him. She appeared so beautiful that it seemed as if the goddess of fortune herself had come to meet him. The *brāhmaṇa* was surprised to see his wife so beautiful and so greatly affectionate, and without saying a word he entered the palace with her. His inner chambers were like the residence of the king of heaven. The palace was surrounded by many columns of jewels, rich canopies of velvet and silk hung in various places, and everything was opulent.

He could not determine what had caused the change, but then he began to consider: “I have always been poor—what could be the cause of this? It could only have come from the all-merciful glance of my friend, Lord Kṛṣṇa. Surely these things are the causeless mercy of my friend Kṛṣṇa.” Sudāmā could understand that the Lord considered such an insignificant offering as a handful of chipped rice, offered in affection by His devotee, a great thing and that He had

given him riches more wonderful than any seen on earth, or even possessed by the demigods in the heavenly planets.

Sudāmā then offered his prayers to Kṛṣṇa, praying that he did not want any opulence. He prayed that all he wanted was that he might not forget to offer eternal service to Kṛṣṇa. Whatever opulence he received from the Lord should not be used for his own extravagance but for the service of the Lord, and so he accepted everything that happened as *prasādam* (God’s mercy).

Anything which we receive from the Lord—any facility, wealth, fame, power or education—should thus be used for His service and not for our sense enjoyment. In that way, Sudāmā remained in opulent surroundings without detriment to his spiritual life, and his affection for Kṛṣṇa increased day after day. He was made more aware of his friend at every moment and of the Lord’s mercy.

One may ask, “But how did the *brāhmaṇa*’s wealthy surroundings make him more conscious of Kṛṣṇa? Why did Kṛṣṇa award him with material things?”

The answer is found clearly in the *Kṛṣṇa Book* narrative: “The *brāhmaṇa* accepted his newly acquired opulence, but he did so in a spirit of renunciation, unattached to sense gratification, and thus he lived very peacefully with his wife, enjoying all the facilities of opulence as *prasādam* (God’s mercy). He enjoyed varieties of foodstuffs by offering it to the Lord and then taking it as *prasādam*. Similarly, if by the grace of the Lord we get such opulences as material wealth, fame, power, education and beauty, it is our duty to consider that they are all gifts of the Lord and must be used for His service, not for our sense enjoyment. The learned *brāhmaṇa* remained in that position, and instead of deteriorating due to his great opulence, his love and affection for Lord Kṛṣṇa increased day after day.

Material opulence can be the cause of degradation and also the cause of elevation, according to the purposes for which it is used. If opulence is used for sense gratification it is the cause of degradation, and if it is used for the service of the Lord it is the cause of elevation.

If money or wealth can be used in Kṛṣṇa’s service, if it can be used to in-

crease remembrance and revive love of Kṛṣṇa, then it must be used. We cannot mistake Sudāmā’s motive. Even at the point of receiving riches he thought, “I do not want any opulence. I only desire not to forget His service. I simply wish to associate with His pure devotees.” Sudāmā was just as happy when he was very poor because he always engaged in the devotional service of the Lord.

Similarly, in the modern age, the great *gosvāmī* followers of Lord Caitanya, Rūpa and Sanātana, were very highly placed wealthy government officials, but they gave up everything in order to follow Lord Caitanya’s Hare Kṛṣṇa movement, and they lived as mendicants without even a dwelling place. Yet they became richer and richer thinking of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa’s pure devotees, and they never lamented over having given up their wealth.

Rich or poor, the criterion for eternal happiness is to remember Kṛṣṇa in any condition. The point is made, however, that if one does give something to Kṛṣṇa, no matter how little it be, he will not be the loser! What the devotee actually offers to the Lord is not needed by the Lord, for He is self-sufficient. But if the devotee offers something to the Lord, it acts for his own interest because whatever a devotee offers to the Lord comes back in a quantity a million times greater than what was offered. Sudāmā gave a few grains of chipped rice, and in return he received heavenly opulence. As a pure devotee, Sudāmā was expert in accepting the wealth and using it as more facility for serving Kṛṣṇa.

It is related that by his constant association with the Lord, Sudāmā had wiped away from his heart whatever contamination was remaining, and he was very shortly transferred to the eternal spiritual kingdom, which is the goal of all saintly persons in the perfectional stage of life. It is stated in the *Kṛṣṇa Book* that whoever hears this history will become qualified like Sudāmā and will be transferred to the spiritual kingdom of Lord Kṛṣṇa.



ON SPIRITUAL LIFE
IN
THIS
AGE

Problems of the Present Age

It is not surprising that a significant number of young people, and some of their elders as well, have taken an interest in spiritual life in recent years. Having heard from many sources—from the Bible to the various spiritual texts and teachers of the East—that there is a spiritual existence, beyond the temporary and changing material face of the world, which can be experienced by men who seek after it, they are looking into the possibility, often very seriously, as an alternative to the troubled future they see before them in the present world situation. If there is such an unchanging spiritual reality, they would like to experience it, for the promise that is held forth in most of these teachings is one of unending, eternal existence, full of knowledge and transcendental bliss.

Unfortunately, these spiritually inquisitive persons who can see the bewildering problems facing the gross materialists are faced with an equally bewildering array of religious and spiritual teachings, masters and movements when they turn toward spiritual life. There are many men and movements claiming to know and present the easiest and most direct path to the Supreme, all proposing their various promises, teachings, methods and goals. Some are institutionalized, some claim the authority of scriptures like the Bible or the *Vedas* of India, and some claim divine knowledge simply by direct revelation and promise similar experiences. Some men even claim to be God Himself or accept such assertions of their followers. There have been literally hundreds of such sects, men and movements in this century alone, and at present there is such a confusing variety that sometimes intelligent seekers eventually throw up their hands in disgust and bewilderment, concluding that spiritual life is all a hoax and turning back either to

establishment material life or hippy life.

One cannot condemn them very harshly, but at the same time one should look carefully into the matter of discriminating between truth and falsehood in these many movements and teachings. If there is an Absolute Truth, an eternal, noumenal Reality beyond the superficial face of the phenomenal world, it must be one and not many. Therefore, we can know that because these different sects and teachings differ in so many ways on spiritual issues, not all of them are actually presenting the whole truth about spiritual life, and many of them must be false manifestations of ignorance or even deception. It is therefore the first business of one who is interested to advance in spiritual life to try and find out which, if any, of these sects are actually offering bona fide knowledge of spiritual life; then he will not waste his valuable term of human life in futile, misdirected endeavor.

Accepting Authority

Whenever we wish to know something in fact, we always accept some kind of authority, and so a person wishing to discriminate between conflicting views on spiritual life and find out the real truth in the matter must first decide what authority he will go on. Generally we rely on our own sense perception and intelligence for acquiring knowledge, and when this is insufficient we turn to parents, teachers, scientists, etc., accepting them as authorities. They have learned what they profess to know by their experience and intelligence, or they have in turn learned from some previous authority, but ultimately the method for gaining knowledge of the world which is accepted in this age is sense perception and conclusions based thereon. We make our senses—or someone else's (like a scientist's)—the authority, and on the basis of this authority we live

our temporary and often anxious lives.

The difficulty here is that every embodied being in material consciousness manifests four principal defects due to his imperfect body: (1) he has imperfect senses which function only within a limited range and which sometimes fail or deceive him, (2) he is subject to mistakes and errors in drawing his conclusions and making plans, (3) he sometimes becomes illusioned, developing completely false conceptions of life because of acceptance of mistaken sense perceptions and erroneous conclusions, and (4) he has a tendency to cheat, taking advantages and shortcuts at the expense of others in order to artificially enhance his position, whether in business, games, philosophy, spiritual mastership or whatever. It is doubtful whether we will find anyone living in this material world who will honestly and sanely claim that he is not subject to these four defects, and clearly such defects disqualify anyone from independently acquiring perfect knowledge even of this world.

Our scientists are very proud of their big brains and complex instruments, but the instruments can be no better than their fallible builders. Because of these imperfections, the conclusions the scientists draw are no more than speculative fancies (“it may be like this, it may be like that”) which they call “laws.” That their speculations sometimes correspond to material reality is a fact, but from time to time they discover errors and have to revise their laws, just as Newton’s laws had to be revised in the face of Einstein’s theories. Meanwhile, the real problems of life, like old age, disease, and death, remain unsolved, along with great world problems like overpopulation, exploitation and disasters due to weather, war, etc.

If even the biggest brains of this age are unable to gain perfect knowledge even of this world by sense perceptions and speculation, how do we think that anyone, by his imperfect endeavor, will



gain knowledge of the Supreme—the spiritual, perfect Reality which is transcendental and thus beyond the farthest range of material sense perception? To be our own guide in spiritual life, or to accept another person, however clever, as a guide, if he is on the sensual-mental platform, will not help us to attain knowledge of that Truth which is beyond the range of the material senses to see or know.

One may then say, “That is all right. I won’t rely on my mind or senses or anyone else’s. I will sit down and meditate and rise beyond the limitations of my mind to perceive the Supreme.” That may be a solution, but first we have to consider the meaning of meditation. Meditation simply means to fix the mind steadily on some object—to attain one-pointed concentration. Therefore, to meditate on the Supreme, two things are required—we must know the nature of the Supreme in order to know where to concentrate our attention, and we must be able to fix our mind steadily and constantly on that objective.

If the mind is too unsteady and distracted, we cannot even successfully apply it to our material problems. What then to speak of attaining the supreme perfection with it? We may be able to nicely cross our legs and sit with semi-closed eyes and straight back for some time, and by so doing we may be able to acquire some respect and status in certain social circles—perhaps even some followers if we make a good show of it—but we should honestly look to see whether we can factually

control our restless minds, detaching them from temporary material affairs and fixing them on the Supreme.

And do we really know what that Supreme upon which we propose to meditate is? We may have heard that the Supreme is this or that—peace, light, void, or whatever—and we may have our own opinion. But this reliance on sense perceptions, opinions, hearsay, etc., is a risky, fallible business, especially for knowing the Supreme Infallible. If we are serious to advance in spiritual life, we should look for more solid authority than our whimsy and the conflicting views of men of this age. We should not think that the sublime perfection of God consciousness will come so cheaply that we can more or less haphazardly stumble upon it.

Dubious Claims

We have seen that the ascending process—which is what we can call this method for acquiring knowledge by building upward from our present position and trying to draw conclusions from our sense perceptions, psychological dispositions, etc.—is a very unlikely way to attain self-realization. There is, however, another process for attaining knowledge of spiritual life, which we may call the descending process. It may be very difficult to reach the Supreme by our limited tools and means, and certainly there are many examples of big *yogīs* and philosophers who have failed to do this in the past, but if the Supreme reveals Himself to us by descending in some form or representation, then where is the difficulty? If the Supreme, from His transcendental position of perfect knowledge, reveals Himself and the path by which He can be attained, then what would have been almost impossible to achieve—that is, transcendental knowledge—becomes readily available, having descended from the Supreme Transcendence.

The question then arises, “Is such a revelation available?” Certainly, in this age, there are many men who claim to have seen or be seeing God by some kind of divine revelation or yogic perception, but are they full of bliss and

satisfaction? If one is an associate of the Supreme Being, he should display complete satisfaction without material attachment; but these men who claim to see God and know God still display attachment and love for many mundane objects, and they continue to work hard for their material facilities just like anyone else. So we may think, “If this is God consciousness, what good is it?”

The same goes for the many so-called incarnations of God. In major cities around the world, it is a fact that at least three or four times a year another man comes to town who claims to be God—or, more exactly, his followers claim it, and he accepts: “Yes, they have guessed it.” If we are skeptical, we may see that he himself is not always displaying satisfaction (here we have to be careful—he may be a good actor), nor does he fill us with unlimited bliss and knowledge, nor can he display the unlimited power, beauty, and opulence of the Supreme Being. If we are serious about solving the problems of life by actually attaining the spiritual platform of existence, we then go away thinking, “That was all very interesting, but what tangible benefit have I gained?”

The so-called prophets, masters and incarnations do us little good. But there is another source of revelation of the Supreme which we can consider. It is not so flashy or romantic, but is at the same time much more profound and substantial. This source of descended knowledge is the *Vedas*.

The Position of the Vedas

The Vedic scriptures, found today primarily in India, are a group of related Sanskrit literatures which deal fully with all aspects of knowledge, both material and spiritual, and which, according to the *Vedas* themselves, are revealed knowledge coming directly from the Supreme Being. They were compiled in written form about 5,000 years ago for the benefit of inquisitive people in this disturbed age of shortened memory. They were previously handed down by word of mouth, and according to internal refer-

ences within the texts themselves, they date back much further than this, even to the very origin of the universe.

In an age of scanty knowledge and short scope of recorded history, these may seem like amazing claims, but if one looks into the knowledge itself ("*Veda*" literally means knowledge), he will find that it is truly vast and impressive in terms of scope, detail and consistency, being without gaps, flaws and internal contradictions. In many instances, points of Vedic wisdom can be verified by scientific experimentation, and some Indian scientists in this century (notably Jagadish Chandra Bose) have become notable successes simply by devising experiments to confirm already known Vedic facts. This scientific verifiability is found even in the spiritual portions of the *Vedas*, which can be directly confirmed through experience by the proper practice of *yoga*.

It is true that there are other scriptures and spiritual texts found in different parts of the world which may also be valid, but the qualities which set the *Vedas* apart from all other scriptures are their wonderful breadth and depth of knowledge and their logical philosophical construction. Because of these unique qualities, they are satisfying and enlightening not only to the faithful reader but also to the philosophically inclined and the aspiring transcendentalists; and, fortunately, they are still available in the original Sanskrit texts, to be studied as they are or directly translated from the original form.

For those who have concluded that material life is undesirable even at its best because it ends always in old age, disease and death, the most important portions of the *Vedas* are those which deal with the nature and practice of spiritual life, and which thus offer the promise of deliverance of the eternal spirit from the mire of material nescience. Of these sections, the most important in the present age is the *Bhagavad-gītā*, or Song of God, which is accepted by all great authorities on the Vedic scriptures as being the condensed essence of all the *Vedas* and the portion dealing most directly and

completely with the nature and practice of spiritual life.

The speaker of *Bhagavad-gītā* is Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is accepted throughout the *Vedas* as the eternal, original Supreme Personality of Godhead and who is therefore the ultimate authority. This is therefore eternal knowledge, and it was most recently spoken about 5,000 years ago when the Lord manifested Himself as an *avatāra* (incarnation) on this planet for the benefit of the materially conditioned souls of this bewildering age. From it one can get an unsurpassed understanding of all essential points of knowledge, both material and spiritual, which are useful for awakening one's transcendental consciousness. Since we are seeking authoritative knowledge, we can now begin to examine these *Vedas*, and particularly *Bhagavad-gītā*, as a potential source of divine revelation which comes down by a descending process, from supreme authority, and which is therefore free from disqualifying mundane imperfections.

Disciplic Succession from Kṛṣṇa

Since the *Vedas* are potential sources of perfect knowledge which can show us the path of deliverance from all the troubles of temporary material life, we will not want to spoil their message by submitting them to the interpretation of our defective conditioned minds. Such a speculative approach would insure misunderstanding of the message and consequent loss of spiritual benefit. However, if one goes into a big bookstore anywhere in the West, he will often find twenty or more translations and commentaries on *Bhagavad-gītā* written by scholars, *yogīs*, poets, proclaimed incarnations, etc. If he then reads in a few of these, he will simply become bewildered because they all proclaim different meanings. Each commentator contradicts the others and often himself as well, and how can one know who if any among these authors has access to the real meaning of *Bhagavad-gītā*?

The real meaning of the *Gītā* is the one intended by Lord Kṛṣṇa when He spoke it, and therefore only one who

can actually represent Kṛṣṇa can authoritatively explain this book of transcendental knowledge. Now, we cannot hear the *Gītā* and understand it directly from the lips of the Lord as Arjuna did on the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra, but we may be able to hear it as it is from a bona fide spiritual master coming down in a line of disciplic succession from Lord Kṛṣṇa. One should hear the message of the Lord from a perfect master who has become perfect by understanding and following the instructions of his spiritual master; if one goes back in this way, master by master, the original master is Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself.

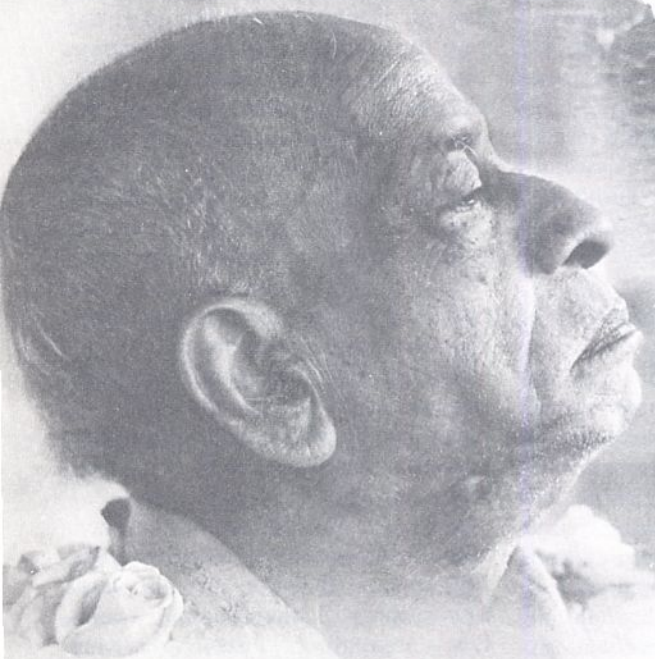
If we have a mango tree, the most luscious mangos will be found at the very top, and if we want to distribute these most perfect mangos to others, we have to find some way to get the delicate fruits down from the top of the tree without damaging them. If we put them in a bag they will be bruised, and if we drop them they will smash, so the best method is that several men should climb the tree, one above the next, and then gently pass the mangos down hand-to-hand to the ground.

The disciplic succession is like that: the perfect fruit is the association of Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme, and if one attains perfection by the grace of perfect instruction, he will be very anxious to pass on the instructions as they are, without unnecessary tampering, to his followers, so that they can also taste association with the Supreme. This is the descending process—receiving knowledge of spiritual life coming down from the source of all knowledge. If one can get access to a bona fide spiritual master in a line coming down from the Supreme Lord, he can understand the real meaning of *Bhagavad-gītā* and all the *Vedas* without flaw.

The Brahman Platform

Of course, someone could claim such authority of disciplic succession falsely, or he could be an imperfect disciple, and so there must be more tests for recognizing a bona fide spiritual master beyond this important matter of credentials. If a physics pro-

(continued on page 30)



NECTAR FOR THE SWANLIKE MEN

The swan is a beautiful creature, gliding gracefully with poised and delicate motions across the clear waters of a lotus-filled pond. As if to enhance the swan's beauty, nature has given her a wonderful ability, for from a mixture of milk and water, the swan can skillfully drink only the milk, without taking any water. Similarly, the most elevated transcendentalists are called *paramahamsas*, or swanlike men, because of their ability to imbibe only the most sweet and essential nectar of spiritual knowledge from the midst of the water of the material world. Now, for swanlike men, there is an unlimited reservoir of spiritual pleasure in the Vedic translations, commentaries and summary studies of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. Clear, fresh and nectarean, these books of spiritual knowledge contain the true essence of life for which all swanlike men are searching.



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fessor has a degree in physics, that is good, but we must be sure that he actually knows physics and can teach it before we enroll in his course. The *Vedas* instruct that the spiritual master must also be situated in “Brahman,” or perfect spiritual realization, and in *Bhagavad-gītā* many symptoms of true self-realization are listed.

These symptoms fall into two categories, the first being complete detachment from all material affairs of sense enjoyment. One who is satisfied by spiritual realization should not exhibit desire for material enjoyments of a transitory nature, like women, wealth, followers, intoxication, etc. If someone claims to be a spiritual master but also exhibits attachment for such material benefits, we can understand that he is a deceiver. Because of his full spiritual realization on the absolute platform, a true spiritual master should be detached even from the basic comforts and discomforts stemming from the dualities experienced in this material world, such as heat and cold, pain and pleasure, happiness and distress, etc. These are all affairs of the temporary world, and one who is beyond this mundane platform should go on with his transcendental activity of delivering the materially absorbed fallen souls; he should be undisturbed by superficial conditions.

This brings us to the second characteristic of one who is situated in Brahman, or the Absolute Truth, which is that he exhibits spiritual activity at all times. The characteristics of material activity are easy to recognize. A materialistic person always tries to make the world conform to his plans for self-centered enjoyment of the gross body and subtle mind. Therefore he always busily engages in varieties of fruitive activities aimed at avoiding material pains and enjoying mundane pleasures. Sometimes we see that such persons extend their conception of self-interest to the interest of family, country, humanity, etc., seeing themselves at the center of such groupings and thinking, “If my wife, family, country, etc., are happy, I will be happy automatically.” Unfortunately, the fruits of such ego-centered

activities (be they very selfish or extended) are always limited and temporary, and no one, including the performer, is satisfied by them. The symptoms of one who is acting as a spirit, on the Brahman platform, are different from this, and according to *Bhagavad-gītā*, a *mahātmā*, or pure spirit, can be recognized by the fact that all his activities are not only renounced but also Kṛṣṇa or God centered rather than basically self-centered. Kṛṣṇa explains in the *Gītā* that He is the Absolute Truth and the source of everything, including eternal happiness, and that the living entities, such as ourselves, are His eternally fragmental parts and parcels. As expanded parts and parcels of the Supreme Person, our eternal occupation is to render service to the Whole, to Kṛṣṇa, for by thus being linked with the Supreme, we can enjoy perfect happiness on the Brahman platform.

Kṛṣṇa confirms that those who have awakened their Kṛṣṇa consciousness in this way have no more material attachment or duty and that in fact they can quit the temporary body at will to join the Lord in the spiritual kingdom. The characteristic of such pure devotees of the Lord is, however, that they never go anywhere for their own enjoyment, even to the eternal spiritual kingdom; rather, they remain wherever the Lord has situated them, accepting their position as His mercy and fully engaging themselves in His service in a factually liberated state. So long as the Lord situates them in the material world, they remain there executing blissful activities meant to attract others out of material illusion and back home, back to Godhead. These are the bona fide spiritual masters—detached, liberated, yet always engaged with their bodies, minds and words in the service of the Lord. This fact is confirmed in *Bhagavad-gītā* when the Lord says: “Those who are not deluded, the great souls (*mahātmās*), are under the protection of the divine nature. They are fully engaged in devotional service because they know Me as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, original and inexhaustible. They are always engaged in chanting My glories. Endeavoring with great deter-

mination, offering homage unto Me, they worship Me with devotion.” (Bg. 9.13-14)

And later He says: “For anyone who explains this supreme secret (devotional service) to My devotees, devotional service is guaranteed, and at the end he will come back to Me. There is no servant in this world more dear to Me than he, nor will there ever be one more dear.” (Bg. 18.68-69)

So if we can find a person who is constantly engaged in the devotional service of the Lord, always chanting and speaking about Him with great devotion, and at the same time displaying no symptoms of mundane desire and attachment, we can conclude that he is situated in Brahman. He will be a fit guide to explain to us the meaning of the *Vedas* and lead us into spiritual life.

Divine Instructions

Of course, it may not be immediately possible to meet a person who promises to be a bona fide spiritual master, and it may be even more difficult to carefully examine his behavior over some time to ascertain whether he consistently manifests all these symptoms of spiritual perfection. Fortunately, there is a third way to judge the qualification of a potential spiritual teacher, and that is simply to examine his teachings to see whether they are sensible, all-encompassing and practical. The *Vedas* say that the Absolute Truth is the source of everything, including knowledge, and that He is perfect and complete. Nothing is beyond the Supreme Truth, or God, and therefore one who claims to know the Supreme should be able to present his philosophy so nicely that everything is completely explained and nothing occurs that is outside his scope of knowledge. What is this material world? What is the spiritual nature? What are the living beings? What is the nature of the Supreme Being? What is time and its effect? What is activity, and what are the results of action? These are questions that a bona fide spiritual master should be able to answer with a perfect and complete ex-

planation which neither contradicts itself nor leaves any question unanswered.

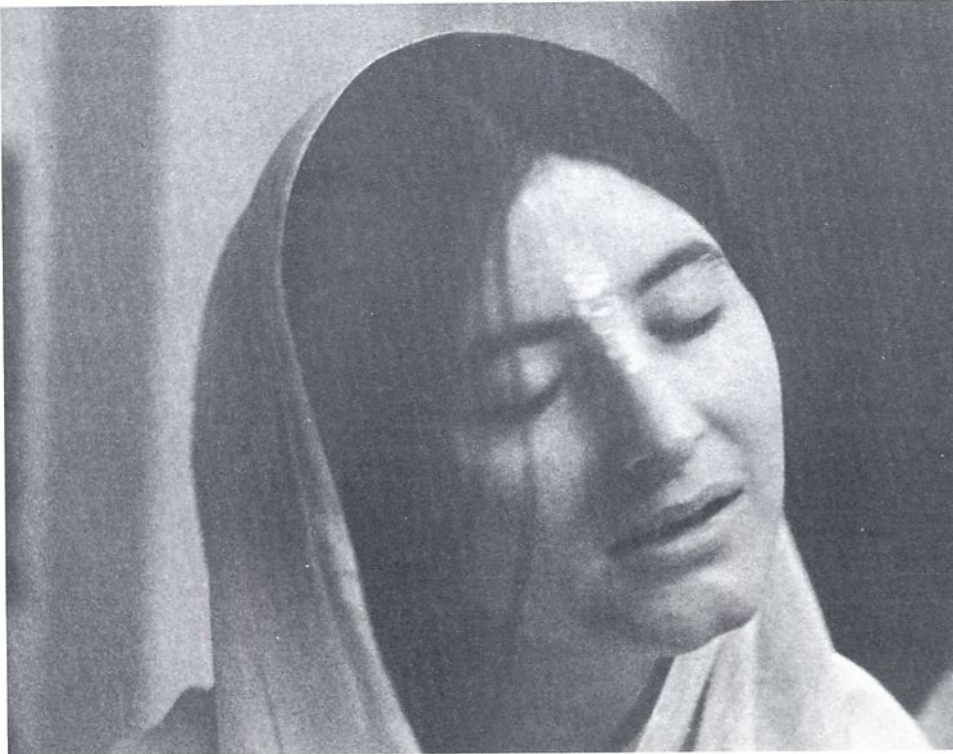
In these days there are many men who claim to be spiritual masters or even God Himself. What do they teach? Most of them have no coherent teachings at all. They simply present a very impressive bearing and an appearance of spirituality, or they promise some direct experience of light, sound or sensation from "beyond." How can one know that they are not simply actors, clever talkers, hypnotists, or fallen *yogīs* who have no real knowledge of the Supreme but are misusing a little yogic power to dazzle us? We can simply examine their teachings, and if they have none, or their teachings are limited and self-contradictory, we should not put our invaluable spiritual lives in their hands.

This is an age of actors and cheaters, and clearly so in the field of spiritual life also. In this age of the professional *guru*, we should be careful to whom we surrender. As far as we can judge, the real spiritual master should be in a line of pure masters coming down from the Lord Himself, and he should be situated in Brahman. Beyond these two points, in which we could be mistaken, he should be able to answer all questions relating to the nature of reality and spiritual life, for one who is actually in knowledge of the Absolute Truth knows everything by the grace of the Absolute. Since we require an authority, someone who can explain the Vedic message to us without any trace of fallible mental speculation, we should accept only one who appears to be actually on the divine platform of pure God consciousness—consciousness of Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. If we do find a person who appears in every way to be a bona fide spiritual master, we should learn from him the practical techniques of *yoga*, or linking up with the Supreme, as they are recommended in the *Vedas* for this day and age. We should then practice these techniques

very diligently and see if we do not develop the symptoms of spiritual advancement. The primary symptom of spiritual advancement is the cessation of self-centered fruitive activities, which are heavily binding to the material nature and which cause the sure repetition of birth and death in this material world.

Of all such material activities, the most detrimental are the eating of animal food obtained through slaughter, the taking of intoxicants of any kind, engagement in illicit sex life, and gambling and idle sporting. One who is

in enjoying this body's senses through sex—and in that way affirm by a strongly conditioning activity that I am this body—then I am defeating my own purpose. A transcendentalist who engages in these four sinful practices is acting like an elephant who takes bath in a river, carefully cleanses himself, and then comes out of the water and rolls around in the dirt. Of course, in this frustrated age almost everyone is engaged in at least one of these four practices, which according to the Vedic authority are the root cause of all degradation in human society. Because



engaged in any or all of these grossly sensual activities, which are against all Vedic regulations even for materialists, should understand that he is negating any attempt he may make at spiritual realization, just as one who is attempting to ignite a fire negates his attempt if he pours on water at the same time.

If I want to realize that I am an eternal spirit and not the material body but at the same time I always engage

no one is satisfied spiritually, no one can give up these strong experiences without getting something better. There are many members of so-called spiritual organizations who do not and cannot stop these sinful activities, let alone develop the symptoms of self-realization listed in *Bhagavad-gītā*. This is an indication that their so-called spiritual masters are not actually guiding them to experience the higher taste of spiritual life. If a process of *yoga*, or

*There is one mystic perfection sometimes attained by aspirant *yogīs* which is called *vaśītā*. This is an almost irresistible kind of hypnotism by which such a *yogī* can bring anyone under his control. Such mechanically attained yogic powers can be used for any purpose, good or bad, and sometimes *yogīs* who have attained a little bit of advancement in this *vaśītā* perfection use it to bring people under their sway for selfish motives. Such powers are extremely difficult to develop in this age but are not impossible, and their development by no means indicates true God consciousness.

spiritual awakening, is to be accepted in this age, it must enable one to curtail all sinful activities from the very beginning of its sincere practice, and beyond that it should enable one to gradually realize the association of the Supreme Being.

Kṛṣṇa Consciousness

The objective of *yoga* practice is Kṛṣṇa Himself, and this is confirmed in *Bhagavad-gītā* when the Lord says:

into the Kingdom of God.” (Bg. 18.55)

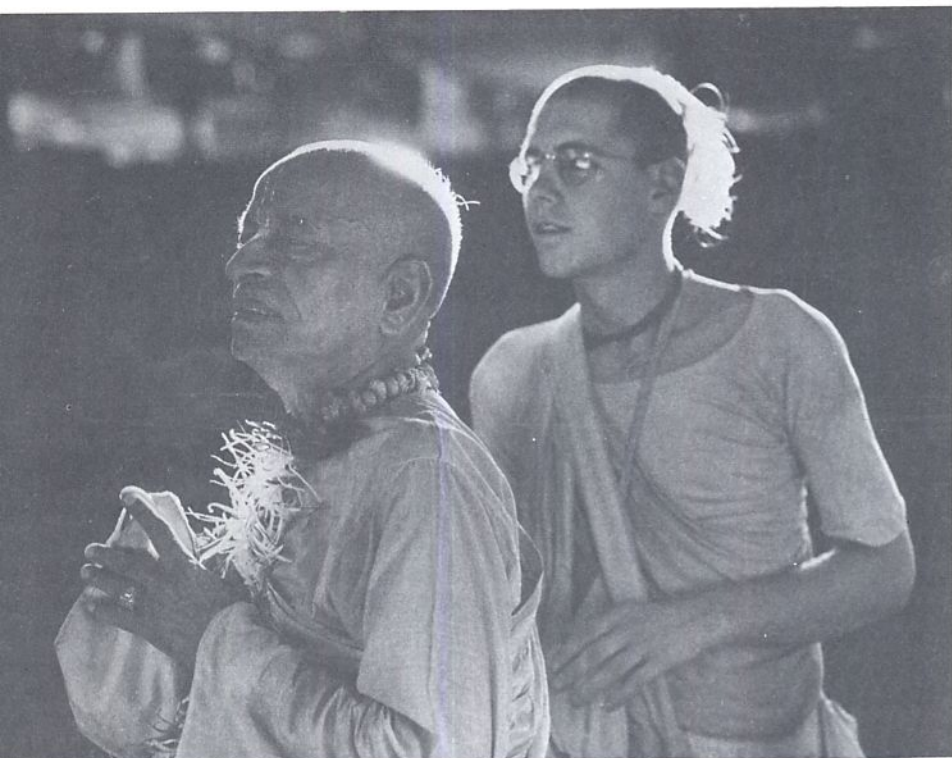
As one begins to associate with Lord Kṛṣṇa through this process of devotional service, or *bhakti-yoga*, practicing it carefully under the guidance of a bona fide spiritual master, according to the rules and regulations mentioned in different Vedic literatures, he should in fact begin to experience a complete transformation of his consciousness. Easily leaving off all sinful activities, he can progress on the transcendental path back to Godhead, and as he goes he will experience the following symp-

and most direct method for attaining this perfectional stage of eternal, fully blissful association with the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa—and it can be practiced by anyone, regardless of material qualifications, provided he has proper guidance. The members of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness are happy to submit that our spiritual master, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, is such a qualified guide. He can trace his line of disciplic succession back master by master to Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself, in a line called the Brahma-Mādhva-Gauḍīya-Sampradāya, and his personal associates (the author included) can confirm that he manifests all the blissful symptoms of a fully God-realized master discussed above.

Of course, you may not be willing to take our word on this point, but you certainly can study scrutinizingly his instructions, which are printed in his many books. If you are then inclined to begin to practice this process of *bhakti-yoga*, putting his philosophy to the practical test, you will find its practice very simple and sublime. It begins simply by chanting the omnipotent, all-spiritual names of the Lord—Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare—and then tasting the spiritual remnants of nicely prepared vegetable foods offered first to the Lord, which are called *prasādam* (Kṛṣṇa’s mercy).

Beginning in this very authorized way, anyone can enter into a fully knowledgeable and blissful life which culminates in the Supreme and permanently terminates all troubles due to repetition of birth, old age, disease, death and the many other miseries of life in this material world.

Please stop in this Sunday afternoon at a center of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. Try chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, dancing, tasting *Kṛṣṇa-prasādam*, hearing more about Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and reading one of the wonderful books by A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. This may completely convince you about the validity of this all-attractive movement. END



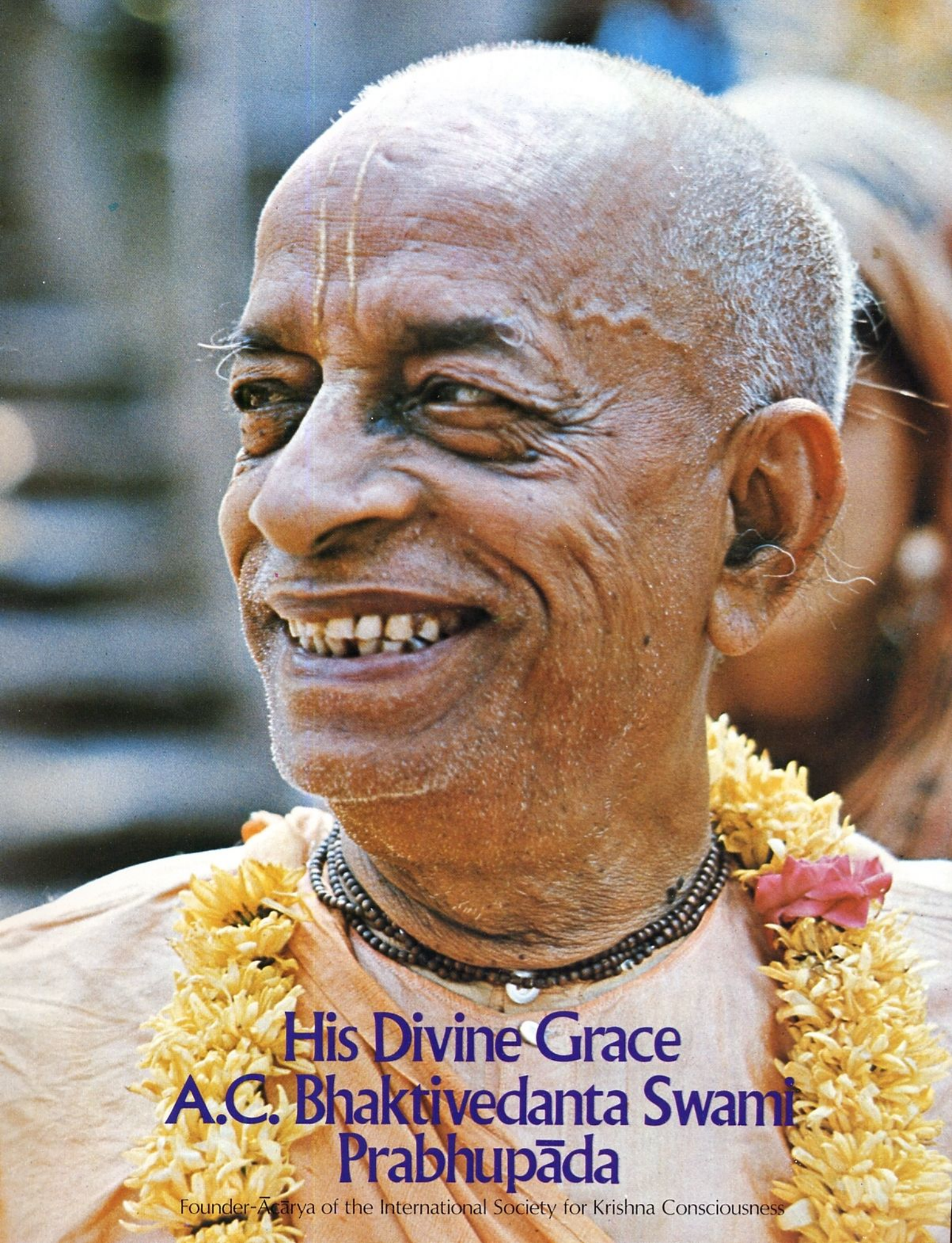
“A true *yogī* observes Me in all beings and also sees every being in Me. Indeed, the self-realized man sees Me everywhere.” (Bg. 6.29)

The method of approaching Him is also explained there: “My dear Arjuna, only by undivided devotional service can I be understood as I am, standing before you, and I can thus be seen directly. Only in this way can you enter into the mysteries of My understanding.” (Bg. 11.54)

And again: “One can understand the Supreme Personality as He is only by devotional service, and when one is in full consciousness of the Supreme Lord by such devotion, he can enter

toms: (1) his mind, once restless and agitated by material anxieties, becomes very steady; (2) as he begins to experience the higher reality of spiritual life in relation with Kṛṣṇa, he develops complete detachment from all kinds of material conditions, both pleasurable and painful; and (3) he experiences the unlimited happiness of pure devotional service, becoming increasingly joyful and ultimately enjoying the highest transcendental bliss, which is called *Kṛṣṇa-premā*, or pure love of God.

According to *Bhagavad-gītā* and many other Vedic literatures, this path of *bhakti-yoga* is the simplest



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

Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness



KṚṢṆA

The Supreme Personality of Godhead

When the gopīs understood that Uddhava had a message from Kṛṣṇa, they became very happy and called him to a secluded place to sit down. While talking about Kṛṣṇa with Uddhava, they forgot all about their household business. They even forgot about themselves as their interest in Kṛṣṇa increased more and more.

“One of the gopīs, namely Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, was so much absorbed in

thoughts of Kṛṣṇa by dint of Her personal touch with Him that She actually began to talk with a bumblebee. While the other gopīs were talking with Kṛṣṇa’s messenger Uddhava, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī took that bumblebee to be a messenger from Kṛṣṇa and began to talk with it. ‘My dear friend, I welcome you,’ She said. ‘You have come to take Me to Kṛṣṇa.’”

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