

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

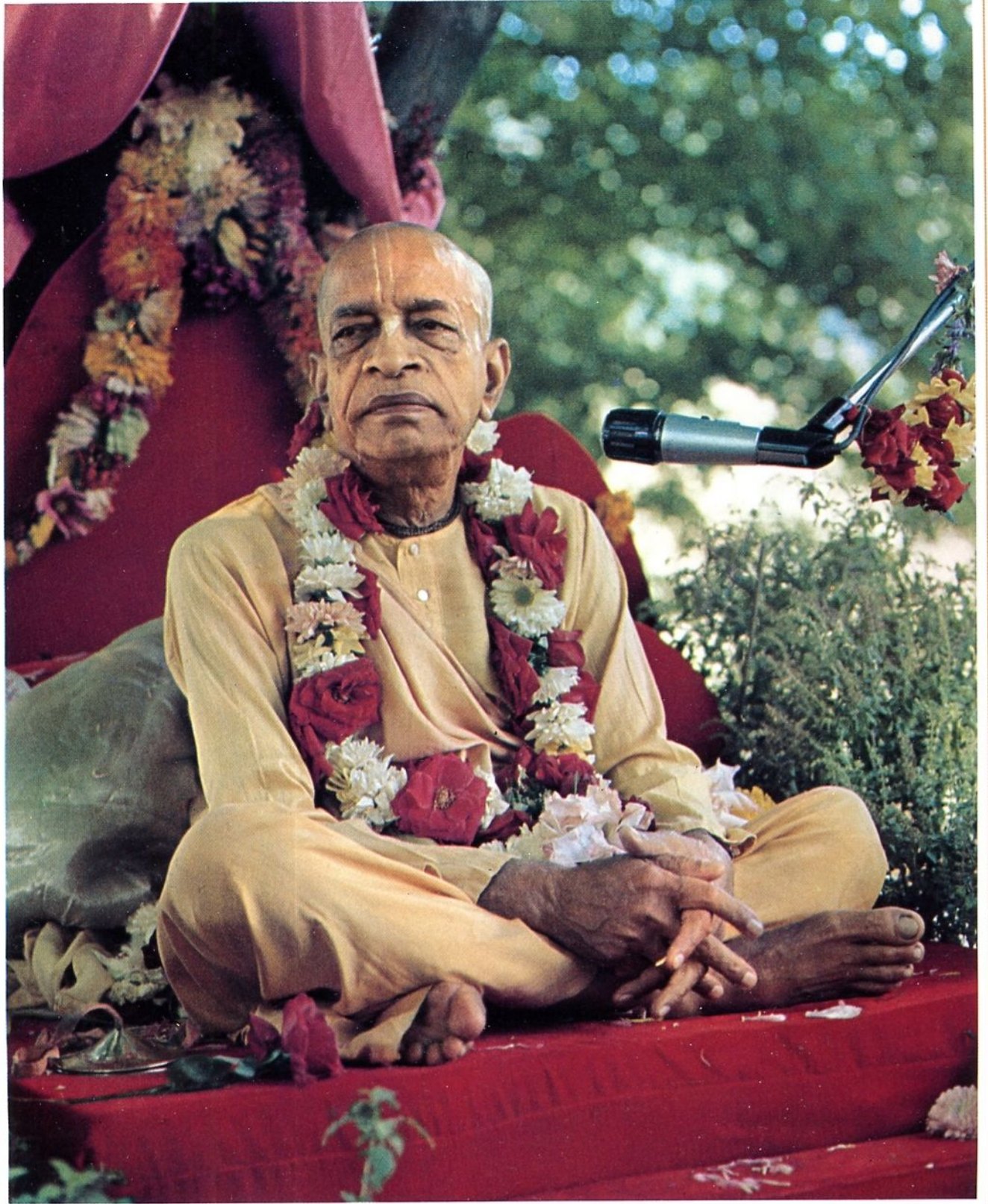


BACK TO GODHEAD

THE MAGAZINE OF THE HARE KRISHNA MOVEMENT

NO. 52





His
Divine Grace,
A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda
FOUNDER-ĀCĀRYA OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS



It is the purpose of *Back to Godhead* to present the transcendental standard of spiritual culture which is achieved when one revives his eternal relationship with Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Through singing, dancing, feasting, art, literature, science and philosophy—all inspired by the realization that the Supreme Lord is Kṛṣṇa, the all-attractive Supreme Person, and that all living beings are His eternal parts and parcels—the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is introducing a simple, practical and authorized method for the respiration of human society. The last few decades have witnessed wonderful progress in the fields of science, education, technology and economic development, but these progressive achievements will all be nullified unless they are accompanied by

HARE KṚṢṆA

HARE KṚṢṆA

KṚṢṆA KṚṢṆA HARE HARE

HARE RĀMA

HARE RĀMA

RĀMA RĀMA HARE HARE

similar advancements in the spiritual field. The responsible leaders of human society should therefore seriously take it upon themselves to learn the science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness in order

to give society proper guidance and direction not only materially but spiritually as well. To be truly progressive, humanity must be not only materially prosperous but spiritually peaceful, joyful and enlightened. Through the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*—the holy names of God most recommended

for spiritual realization in this age—and through the philosophical ideas of the Vedic culture, as presented in the pages of *Back to Godhead*, humanity can be reawakened to its divine nature, and these transcendental goals can become a tangible reality.



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 *ī* is pronounced like the *re* in the English word *fi*re. The *c* is pronounced as in the English word *ch*air, 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.

INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS / MEMBERSHIP

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 Watseka Avenue, Los Angeles, California.

ON THE COVER

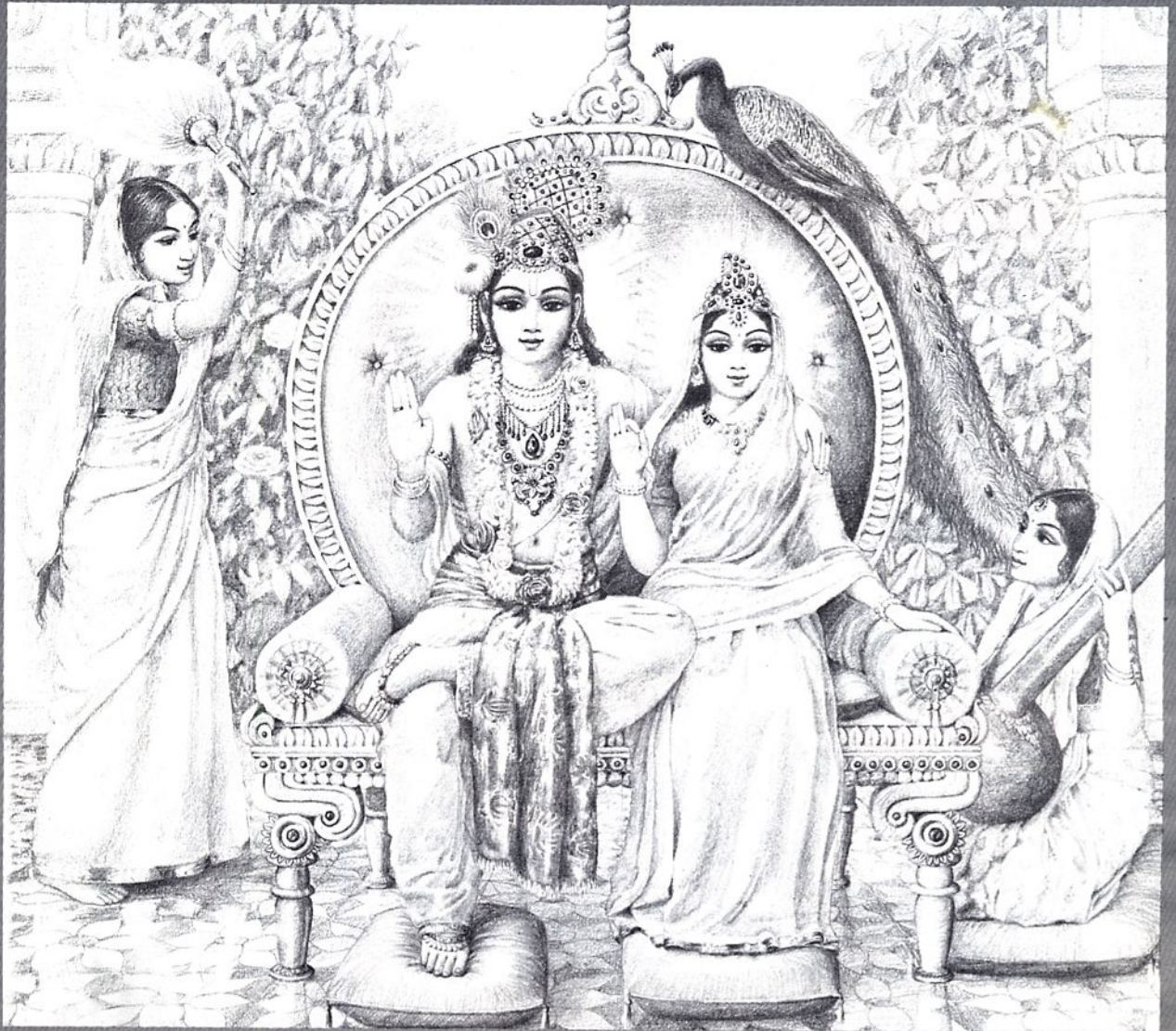
Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the fountainhead of all material and spiritual energies, is appreciated in the perfectional stage of beauty when He is associated with His spiritual pleasure potency, Śrīmatī Rādhārānī, who appears as His eternal consort in the transcendental world.

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The *Path to the* **HIGHEST** **PERFECTION**

an excerpt from "PRAYERS OF KING KULAŚEKHARA"



an unpublished manuscript by

His Divine Grace
A.C. BHAKTIVEDANTA SWAMI PRABHUPĀDA

First Prayer

श्रीवल्लभेति वरदेति दयापरेति
भक्तप्रियेति भवल्लुण्ठनकोविदेति
नाथेति नागशयनेति जगन्निवासेत्य्
आलापनं प्रतिपदं कुरु मे मुकुन्द

śrī-vallabheti varadeti dayāpareti
bhakta-priyeti bhava-luṅṭhana-kovideti
nātheti nāgaśayaneti jagannivāsety
ālāpanam pratipadam kuru me mukunda

Synonyms

śrī-vallabha—very dear to Lakṣmī (the consort of Godhead); *iti*—thus; *varada*—endower of benediction; *iti*—thus; *dayāpara*—causelessly merciful; *iti*—thus; *bhakta-priya*—very dear to the devotees; *iti*—thus; *bhava*—repetition of birth and death; *luṅṭhana*—plundering; *kovida*—expert; *iti*—thus; *nātha*—the Lord; *iti*—thus; *nāga-śayana*—one who sleeps on the serpent bed; *iti*—thus; *jagat-nivāsa*—resort of the cosmos; *iti*—thus; *ālāpanam*—constant reciter; *pratipadam*—beginning; *kuru*—please do it; *me*—unto me; *mukunda*—O Mukunda, my Lord.

Translation

O Mukunda, my Lord! Please enable me to constantly recite Your names, addressing You as very dear to Lakṣmī, as the endower of benediction, causelessly merciful, very dear to devotees, expert in plundering the status quo of repeated birth and death, and as the resort of the cosmos, the real Lord who lies down on the serpent bed.

Purport

A devotee of Godhead is he who glorifies the Personality of Godhead under the dictation of transcendental ecstasy. This ecstasy is a by-product of profound love for the Supreme which is attained by the process of glorification. In this age of quarrel and fighting, the process of chanting and glorification recommended here by King Kulaśekhara is the only proper way to attain perfection. Diseased persons who are infected by material attachment and who suffer from the pangs of repeated birth and death cannot realize the effect of such recitation of the glories of the Lord, just as a person suffering from jaundice cannot relish the taste of sugar candy. To a patient suffering from jaundice, sugar candy tastes utterly bitter, although by its nature it is sweet. However, sugar candy is the only medicine which cures jaundice. By regular treatment with doses of sugar candy one can gradually get relief from the infection of jaundice, and when the patient is perfectly cured the same sugar candy naturally becomes sweet to him.

Similarly, mundane philosophers, religionists and people in general who are constantly suffering from the three-fold miseries of material existence can get freedom from all such troubles simply by chanting and glorifying the

holy name, fame, etc., of the Supreme Lord. The Supreme Lord, the Absolute Truth, is all spirit, and therefore His name, fame, etc., are nondifferent from Him. All of them are identical. The holy name of the Lord is the Lord Himself, and this can be understood by realization. By chanting the holy names of the Lord, which are innumerable, one can actually personally associate with the Lord, and by such constant personal touch with the all-spiritual Lord, one can become spiritually self-realized. This process of self-realization is very suitable for the fallen souls of this age, when life is short and people are slow in understanding the importance of spiritual realization, prone to be misled by false association and by false spiritual masters, unfortunate in every respect, and continuously disturbed by the infection of variegated material problems.

King Kulaśekhara, who was an ideal pure devotee of the Lord, shows us by his own realization the way to offer prayers to the Lord. Since he is a *mahājana*, or an authority in the line of devotional activities, it is our prime duty to follow in his footsteps in order to achieve the highest devotional platform.

He first addresses the Lord as the very dear Lord of Lakṣmī. The Lord is the spiritual Personality of Godhead, and His consort, Lakṣmī, is the manifestation of His internal potency. By expanding His internal potency, the

Lord enjoys His spiritual paraphernalia. In the highest spiritual realization, therefore, the Lord is not impersonal or void, as empiric philosophers misconceive Him to be. He is not of this material world, but He is not simply a negation of material variegatedness. He is positively the supreme enjoyer of spiritual variegatedness, of which Lakṣmī, the internal potency, is the fountainhead.

The Lord is next addressed as Varada because it is He only who can deliver substantiality. When we detach ourselves from His association, we are always in the midst of want and scarcity, but as soon as we get in touch with Him, the gradual process of endowment of all bliss begins. The first installment of such bliss is the clearance of the layer of dust which has accumulated in our hearts due to hundreds of thousands of years of material association. As soon as the dust is brushed aside, the clear mirror of the heart reflects the presence of the Lord, and as soon as we see Him we are automatically freed from all kinds of aspirations and frustrations. In that liberated state, everything is blissful in relation with the Lord, and one has no desires and nothing for which to lament. Thus, following this benediction, full spiritual bliss comes upon us, ushering in full knowledge, full life and full satisfaction with all existence.

The Lord is addressed as Dayāpara



because there is no one but the Lord who can be a causelessly merciful friend to us. He is therefore called the friend of the needy. Unfortunately at times of need we seek our friends in the mundane world, not knowing that one needy man cannot help another. No mundane man thinks himself full in every respect; indeed, even a man of the greatest riches thinks himself needy. This is because he is devoid of a relationship with the Lord. Everything is zero without the Lord, who is the digit which transforms zero into ten, two zeros into one hundred, three zeros into one thousand, etc. A zero man cannot become a happy man without the association of the Supreme One. The Supreme One always wants to make our zero efforts valuable by His association, just as a loving father by all means wants an unhappy son to be in a prosperous position. A rebellious son, however, stubbornly refuses the cooperation of the loving father and thus suffers all sorts of miseries. The Lord, therefore, not only sends His bona fide representatives to all parts of the material creation, but He sometimes even comes Himself to reclaim His fallen sons. For this purpose He also exhibits the actual life in the transcendental world, which is characterized by relationships with Him in servitorship, friendship, parenthood and consortherhood. All relationships in the material world are but perverted reflections of these original reciprocations. In the mundane world we enjoy only the shadow of the reality which exists in the spiritual world. The Lord is so merciful that He is always mindful of our difficulties in the mundane world, and He is actually more anxious to get us to return home, back to Godhead, than we are anxious to go. He is by nature merciful toward us, despite our rebellious attitude. Even in our rebellious condition, we get all supplies from Him, including food, air, light, warmth, coolness, etc. Yet because we are detached from Him, we simply mismanage this paternal property which is so needed for our life. Despite their plans, the leaders of society are misleaders because they have no plan to revive our lost relation-

ship with the Lord. His bona fide devotees, however, try their utmost to retrieve the fallen souls and bring them back home, back to Godhead. Such stainless servants of Godhead who try to broadcast the message of our transcendental relation with Him are very dear to Him. They receive such special favor from the Lord for their compassionate work that they can even go back to Godhead in this very lifetime and not be forced to take another birth.

The Lord is therefore specifically addressed as *bhaktapriya*, or very affectionate to His devotees. The sublime and transcendental relationship between a devotee and the Lord in terms of affectionate loving service to the Lord is very nicely described in *Bhagavad-gītā*, where the Lord has declared that although He is undoubtedly equally kind to all living beings because all of them are His parts and parcels and His spiritual sons, those who are especially attached to Him by love and affection are particularly dear to Him because nothing is dearer to them than the Lord. Indeed, Lord Jesus Christ agreed to be mercilessly crucified rather than give up preaching on behalf of God. He was never prepared to compromise on the issue of believing in God. Such a son of God cannot be other than dear to the Lord. Similarly, Ṭhākura Haridāsa, when advised to give up the chanting of the holy name of God, refused to do so at the risk of being flogged in twenty-two markets in the open street, and Prahāda Mahārāja voluntarily accepted the cruelties committed against him by his mundane father, the great atheist Hiranyakaśipu, for disagreeing with his views. These are some of the great examples of the renowned devotees of the world, and we should simply try to understand how dear such devotees are to the Lord. The Lord has therefore emphatically declared that no one can vanquish His devotee under any circumstances. Sometimes, even at the risk of many stumbling blocks, a devotee relinquishes all family connections and homely comforts for the Lord's service. The Lord cannot forget all these sacrifices of His bona fide devo-

tee at any moment because the relationship is reciprocal, as clearly defined in *Bhagavad-gītā*. When the great mystic Durvāsā deliberately attempted to take the life of Ambarīṣa Mahārāja, he was suitably punished by the Lord, even though Durvāsā was a powerful *yogī* who in his natural body could approach all the demigods and even the Lord Himself.

A devotee is never as anxious to see the Lord as he is to render service to Him. Yet the Lord Himself appears before the devotee, for He is more anxious to see him, just as an affectionate father is more anxious to see his son than the son is to see his father. There is no contradiction in such a quantitative difference in affection. It exists in the original reality and is reflected here not only in the minds of mundane parents in human society but even in the animal kingdom. Paternal affection is exhibited even among lower animals because originally such affection in its fullness exists in God, who is the original father of all species of living beings. When an animal is killed by a man, God, the affectionate father, is perturbed and is pained at heart. Thus, the slaughterer of the animal is suitably punished by the material energy, just as a murderer is punished by a king through police action.

By the mercy of the Lord a devotee develops all the good qualities of God, for a devotee can never remain in the darkness of ignorance. A father is always anxious to impart knowledge and experience to his son, and it is the choice of the son whether to accept such instructions. A submissive devotee is automatically enlightened in all the intricacies of knowledge because the Lord from within dissipates his ignorance with the light of self-illumination. If the Lord Himself instructs a devotee, how can a devotee remain a foolish person like a mundane wrangler? A father is naturally inclined to act for the good of his son, and when the father chastises his son, that chastisement is also mixed with affection. Similarly, all living entities who have lost paradise due to disobedience are put into the hands of material energy

to undergo a prison life of threefold miseries, yet the Supreme Father does not forget the rebellious sons. He creates scriptures for them like the *Vedas* and *Purāṇas* in order to revive their lost relationship and awaken their divine consciousness. Intelligent persons take advantage of the knowledge contained in these scriptures and thus attain the highest perfection of life.

The Lord descends personally for His devotees to give them relief and save them from miscreants. It is foolish to impose the limits of an ordinary living being upon the unlimited potency of Godhead by obstinately maintaining that the Supreme Lord cannot descend. For the sake of His devotees He descends as He is, yet He is not infected by material qualities.

As soon as a devotee agrees to surrender unto Him, the Lord takes complete charge of Him. Being satisfied with the activities of such a devotee, He gives him instruction from within, and thus a pure devotee progressively advances on the path back to Godhead. The Lord is expert in guiding such a pure devotee who is not at all anxious for material superiority. A pure devotee does not wish to possess material wealth, nor does he want to have a great following, nor does he desire to have gold or a beautiful wife, for by the mercy of the Lord he knows the insignificance of material happiness. What he very sincerely desires at heart is to continue in the loving service of the Lord, even at the risk of repetition of birth.

When a neophyte devotee deviates from the path of devotion and wants to enjoy sense gratification, the all-merciful Lord very tactfully corrects the bewildered devotee by exhibiting before him the real picture of this material world. In the material world, love and affection are covered by an illusory curtain of mercenary relationships. The so-called wives and husbands, parents and children, and masters and servants are all concerned with reciprocal moneymaking business. As soon as the shroud is removed, the dead body of material lusty affection is at once manifest to the naked eye. The Lord therefore deals expertly with

the devotee by depriving him of his capitalistic assets, and thus the devotee finds himself alone in the midst of his so-called relatives. In this helpless condition, he can experience the awkwardness of his so-called relationships with his so-called wife and children. When a man is financially ruined, no one loves him, not even his wife or children. Such a seemingly poverty-stricken devotee more perfectly fixes his faith in the Lord, and the Lord then delivers him from the fate of frustration.

The entire cosmic creation is an expert arrangement of delusion for the living being who is a false enjoyer. The living being is instinctively a servant of the Lord, but in the transcendental relationship the servant and the Lord are also identical, for the Lord also serves the servant. The typical example is Śrī Kṛṣṇa's becoming the charioteer of His eternal servant Arjuna. Illusioned mundaners cannot understand this transcendental identity and therefore want to lord it over material nature or cynically merge with the Absolute. A living being who is forgetful of his constitutional position either wants to become a lord or a mendicant, but such illusions are arrangements of *māyā*. False life either as a lord or a mendicant meets with frustration until the living being comes to his senses. This is due to an expert arrangement to put a full stop to repeated birth and death. A sensible man understands this fact and thus molds his life in the right direction.

The Lord is therefore addressed as Nātha, or the real Lord. One can attain the perfection of life only by realizing the real Lord. The entire material atmosphere is surcharged with the unreal lordship of the living beings. The illusioned beings struggle for false lordship, and no one wants to serve. Everyone wants to be the lord, even though such lordship is conditional and temporary. A hardworking man thinks himself the lord of his family and estate, but actually he is a servant of desire and employee of anger. Such service of the senses is neither pensionable nor terminable, for desire and anger are masters which are never to be satisfied.

The more one serves them, the more service they exact, and as such the false overlordship continues until the day of annihilation. As a result, the foolish living being is pushed into degraded life and fails to realize the Lord as the Lord of the universe, friend of all entities and beneficiary of all. One who knows the real Lord is called a *brāhmaṇa*, but one who fails to know Him is called a *kṛpaṇa*, or number one miser.

The Lord of the creative energy is called Anantaśayana. The material energy is impregnated by the glance of this feature of the Lord and is then able to give birth to all organic and inorganic matter. The Anantaśayana sleeps on the bed of Śeṣanāga, who has a form like a serpent but is identical with the Lord. By His spiritual energy the Śeṣanāga sustains all the globes and planets upon His invisible hood, which is popularly known as Saṅkarṣaṇa, or "that which keeps balance by magnetic law." In the scientific world this feature of the Lord is referred to as the law of gravitation, but factually this law, which keeps all the planets and satellites floating in the air, is one of the energies of the Lord. Due to this function the Lord is celebrated by a name indicating that He is the supreme resort of all the universes. All the universes are born with the exhalation of the Lord as He lies on the Śeṣanāga, and all of them are annihilated with his inhalation. The Lord is therefore called Jagannivāsa, or the cosmic sustainer.

There are hundreds of thousands of other names of Lord Viṣṇu, and each one of them is as powerful as the Lord Himself. One can constantly chant any one of such names of the Lord and thereby constantly associate with Him. There are no hard and fast rules for chanting such names. At any time and any stage of life one can freely chant them, but we are so unfortunate that we are too misled even to adopt this simple process. This is the way of the misleading energy. However, one can avoid her ways simply by adherence to the lotus feet of the Lord. King Kulaśekhara prays for this facility from Mukunda, the Lord. [to be continued]



KESAVA



ACYUTA



NṚṢIMHA

BEYOND THE UNIVERSE



One should not limit himself within the boundaries of material vision. From the ancient Vedic literatures of India we learn of a world beyond the mind and senses, beyond time and space, and beyond even birth and death. It is the abode of Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The Kingdom of God is hinted at in the various

scriptures of the world, but in the Vedic literatures that transcendental world is vividly described in detail. Who is God? Where does He live? What does He do? How can we live with Him? These are the questions that are answered for all time in the books of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda.



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THE HISTORY OF A GREAT BOY DEVOTEE

Dhruva Mahārāja was born as a son of a great king. The king had two wives, and he begot children by each of them. One day, while Dhruva's stepbrother was playing on the lap of the king, Dhruva also wanted to play on his father's lap. We can picture the king, whose name was Uttānapāda, seated on the throne in a leisurely moment, in an affectionate mood, with one of the boys on his lap. His boy Dhruva, who was five years old, climbed up on his father's knee, but his father did not receive him with any particular attention or affection. Moreover, Dhruva's stepmother came forward and chastised Dhruva. "My dear boy," she said, speaking loudly so that everyone could hear, "you cannot sit on the lap of your father. Although you are his son, you are disqualified because you have not taken birth in my womb." Dhruva's stepmother was the favorite wife of the king, and since the king was more or less henpecked by her, he allowed her to speak out although she was inflicting pain on his little son. "If you want to sit on your father's lap," she went on, humiliating the boy and exploiting her own position as the king's favorite, "you must first worship

the Supreme Personality of Godhead by penances and austerities, and then in your next life you can take birth from my womb. Then it may be

DHRUVA MAHĀRĀJA

BY SATSVARŪPA DĀSA
GOSVĀMĪ

possible." Dhruva burst into tears and ran home, taking shelter of his mother, to whom he blurted out the whole story.

This history is from the Fourth Canto of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the ripened fruit of all Vedic scriptures, and we are presenting it just as it was narrated 5,000 years ago.

"My dear boy," said Dhruva's mother, "what can I do? Your father loves your stepmother as his favorite, and he does not even consider me. What the queen said was true. You must worship the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and then it might be possible for you to sit on the throne." Dhruva was of the warrior class and

therefore very fiery by nature. He wanted to get the kingdom which he deserved as the son of the king, and he would not settle for being reduced and insulted. "Who must I see?" he demanded. "What must I do to get the kingdom?" In a passionate mood, the boy was ready to do anything to get what he wanted, but because he was just a little boy, he had to ask his mother what steps to take. His mother answered him wisely: "You must worship the Supreme Personality of Godhead."

Since both his mother and stepmother had mentioned God, the Supreme Person, as the controller of his fortune, Dhruva intelligently asked about Him: "Where is God?" His mother replied that she only knew that saintly persons went to the forest to find Him. Thus Dhruva immediately left his father's city and went to the forest. A person may doubt that a five-year-old boy could enter the forest alone, but we shall see that we have no competency to judge a personality like Dhruva. His leaving home is only the beginning of his extraordinary exploits. As we will see, there is no one in history to compare with Dhruva for

personal fortitude, especially in executing spiritual life.

In the forest, Dhruva inquired of all the beasts, “Are you God? Are you God?” He traversed the jungle searching in the only way he understood. He interrogated all the creatures of the forest. “Where is God?” he called out. Although he knew nothing about spiritual discipline, he inquired from tree to tree and beast to beast as to where God could be found. Because Dhruva had a great desire to find the Supreme Absolute, Nārada Muni, the eternal spiritual master who travels in space to all planets in his mission to deliver love of Kṛṣṇa, appeared before him. According to Vedic scripture, when one is sincerely searching for God, or Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa sends that person a bona fide spiritual master to give instructions how to reach Him. The Supreme Lord is in the hearts of all living entities, and He directed Nārada Muni from within to go instruct Dhruva. Nārada was surprised to see how courageous Dhruva was in his demand to see God. He approached him in the forest and said, “My dear child Dhruva, I know of your situation. But you should not take seriously the insult your father has given. You have come to the forest to find God, but this requires very difficult and austere *yoga* which is impossible for you to perform. My advice is that you go home, and when you grow up you can try to follow this difficult process.”

Dhruva could not accept Nārada’s advice. “I have been insulted by my stepmother,” he said, “and I have come to find God to get the kingdom I deserve.” Nārada had instructed Dhruva not to take the insult seriously, but the boy replied, “I understand that your instructions are very valuable and good, but not for me. I am very disturbed and not very spiritually inclined. I am concerned with my material desire. If you cannot help me get what I want, then don’t tell me to go home, but you go home yourself!” Dhruva felt that if the sage were going to give him instructions which ruled out material desire, he was unfit to hear them. Similarly, out of curiosity many people approach the Kṛṣṇa con-

sciousness philosophy, but when they hear that Kṛṣṇa declares, “Give up all material attachments and just surrender to Me,” they feel it impossible because they are not able to renounce the material pleasures of life. The essential instruction of this history, however, will show that those who have material desires are not barred from worshiping the Supreme Personality of Godhead. On the contrary, they are encouraged, for by approaching the Lord, who can bestow the fulfillment of all their hearts’ desires, they will be purified and become eligible to receive the greatest of all rewards, love of God. Certainly, one is not discouraged from approaching Kṛṣṇa just because his thinking is material. God is the supreme benefactor of everyone, and one who approaches the Lord must be considered pious because he has gone to God for that which he desires.

Nārada Muni, being a true spiritual master, is naturally kind and eager to see all souls go back to Godhead; therefore he mercifully agreed to accept Dhruva for instruction in how to find God. Dhruva told Nārada Muni, “I want a kingdom not only greater than my father’s but greater even than that of Lord Brahmā, the controller of the universe.” By the transcendental standards of Nārada, the boy should not have taken the family insult seriously, but Nārada reasoned, “Nevertheless, let him approach the Supreme Person, regardless of the reason.” Nārada then told Dhruva how to absorb himself in devotional service to the all-powerful Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Dhruva’s mother had said that saintly persons go to the forest for self-realization. What does this actually mean? What are the actual facts behind the talk of “*yoga*,” “penance” and “austerity”? And when Dhruva Mahārāja boldly declares to Nārada that he wants to find God, what does it mean? Is God an ordinary person that we can talk to? Does Dhruva himself want to become God? In the end will we find out that there is no God or that God is impersonal or that everything is one? All such questions and doubts are cleared up by the

explicit instructions which Nārada Muni gave to his new disciple.

Nārada asked Dhruva to perform the process of *yoga* known as the eightfold path, which begins with the practice of sitting postures and breath control for the purpose of subduing the mind. Control of the mind is necessary for meditation on the transcendental form of the Personality of Godhead. The *yoga* process is described in the scripture *Bhagavad-gītā*, where it is clearly stated that the goal of *yoga* is to find Kṛṣṇa. But Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself, the supreme authority, also asserts therein that this process cannot be executed today because the difficult rules and regulations are not possible to follow in the present day and age. For today, the Vedic scriptures recommend that we chant the holy names of God (Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Rāma). Men in the present age have but a short life duration and very little genuine interest in spiritual life; furthermore, even if they are interested, people today are not able to practice rigid spiritual discipline because they are constantly disturbed by the distractions of the present civilization. Because of the disadvantages of this age, it is not possible to control the mind by this *yoga* process, and therefore Arjuna, the great disciple of Lord Kṛṣṇa, rejected the mechanical eightfold *yoga* system as too difficult. This is discussed at length in Lord Kṛṣṇa’s famous treatise on *yoga*, *Bhagavad-gītā* (Chapter Six). One who wishes to inquire into the feasibility of *yoga* and the goal of *yoga* can consult that authoritative book. But whether long, long ago one practiced the mechanical *yoga* method or today one chants the holy name of God, the goal of *yoga* is the same—to meditate on the Supreme Lord and reach the point of performing active service in love of Kṛṣṇa. The only difference in the different *yoga* methods is that the breathing and sitting exercises are preliminary to obtaining love of God, whereas chanting is immediate glorification of the beloved object, the Supreme Person, Kṛṣṇa, the cause of all causes.

Nārada Muni described the form of the Lord: “The Lord’s face is perpetu-

ally very beautiful and pleasing in attitude. To the devotee who sees Him He appears to be never displeased. Every limb of the Lord is always youthful; both His eyes and lips are pinkish like the rising sun, He is always prepared to give shelter to the surrendered soul, and one who is so fortunate as to look upon Him feels all satisfaction. He is the ocean of mercy. Wearing a garland of flowers, He is eternally manifest with four hands which hold the conchshell, wheel, club and lotus flower." In addition to meditation on the eternal, blissful form of the Lord, Nārada also instructed Dhruva to chant the sacred *mantra*, pray to the Lord, and worship the Deity form of the Lord. As we shall see, Dhruva met with immediate success by taking to this process because he followed authorized instructions of Nārada, who was authorized by the Supreme Lord to teach a way which would bring the disciple to the right conclusion. One must act very seriously on the order of the spiritual master, and then there is no anxiety about reaching perfection.

The practice of *yoga* (*yoga* means "linking with the Supreme Personality of Godhead") is actually a necessity for all living beings, whether one is a housewife, student, businessman or whatever. In this age we are not expected to go off and practice meditation in the jungle, yet we must find our eternal relationship with God. The primary business of the human being should be to accept a bona fide spiritual master and execute his instructions for attaining devotional service to God even while performing one's regular activities. It is not enough to contentedly say, "I have my own religion." One must engage all day long in acts of *yoga* or linking with Kṛṣṇa if one hopes to fulfill the purpose of human life as distinct from the lives of lower animals like cats and dogs.

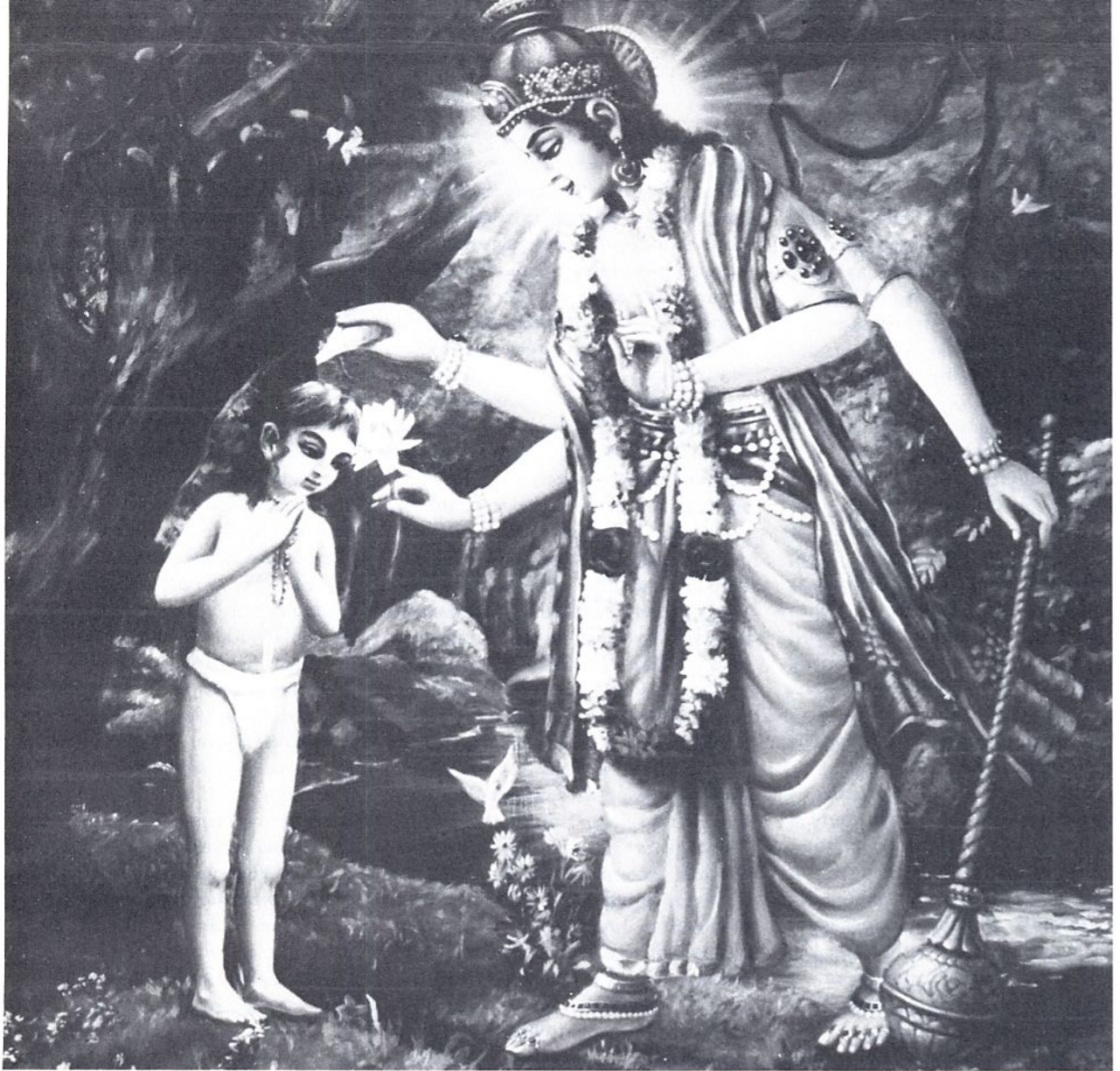
Dhruva Mahārāja undertook severe penances in order to realize God. During the first month of his *yoga* practice, he ate only fruit and berries every third day and that only to keep body and soul together. In this way his worship of the Supreme Personality of Godhead began. In the second month

Dhruva Mahārāja ate only once every six days, and he ate only dry grass and leaves. Thus he continued his worship. In the third month he simply drank water once every nine days, and he remained completely in trance, worshipping the Supreme Personality of Godhead who is adored by selected verses. He had no thought but God.

We must understand that in comparison with Dhruva Mahārāja we are insignificant in terms of practicing spiritual life. We cannot do anything difficult like the saintly Dhruva in order to reach self-realization. But, by the mercy of Lord Caitanya, in this present age we have been given all concessions possible. The International Society for Krishna Consciousness founded by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda is authorized to freely distribute this mercy. Śrīla Prabhupāda is a pure devotee coming directly in line from Lord Caitanya, who is in the disciplic succession originating with Nārada Muni, the very same spiritual master of Dhruva. Although we are not to imitate the process recommended long ago for Dhruva, we must not neglect the easy-to-execute practice of prescribed duties which is offered especially for persons in this age. If we fail to take up this easy and joyful practice, we will fail in the mission of life. It is the duty of all humanity to follow in the footsteps of Dhruva Mahārāja as far as his determination to reach God is concerned. One obtains a human life only after evolving through thousands of species of lower animal life, and human life is also very quickly spent. If we do not develop God consciousness while in the human form, we will fall down again on the evolutionary scale, and we cannot expect to rise to human life again until passing many lifetimes in miserable lower forms of life. Most people are not serious about this fact of the transmigration of the eternal soul, for they think that they can be perfectly happy by leading a life of temporary bodily pleasure. This is madness. One is urged to study the Vedic scriptures and hear from a bona fide spiritual master to understand the real situation. A great spiritual master in

this line from Nārada Muni, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura, writes, "Wake up! Wake up, human beings! How long will you remain asleep on the lap of illusion? You have been given the rare opportunity of the human form of life. Now use it to realize God." The entire Vedic instruction is addressed to human beings to urge them to wake up and use the human form of life properly. One should use human life to develop love of God to the perfectional point, for thus at the time of death one can take a spiritual body and enter the eternal kingdom of God. For this reason only—to develop love of God—one is advised to practice austerity. God is the most pure, and we must become pure in order to enter His eternal abode. Austerity entails going through any difficulty in order to carry out the orders of the spiritual master for obtaining love of Kṛṣṇa. Once one attains this love of Kṛṣṇa he no longer cares for anything material. In fact, he doesn't even desire liberation to the kingdom of God but simply prays to be able to perform loving service to the Lord in whatever species of life he may be put, whether in heaven or hell.

In the fourth month of his *yoga* practice, Dhruva mastered the breathing exercise, and he would inhale air only every twelfth day. In the fifth month, still controlling his breathing, he concentrated his mind fully on the Supreme Person and stood on one leg like a motionless column. In the next month, Dhruva Mahārāja became completely absorbed in trance upon Lord Viṣṇu, Kṛṣṇa. He suspended his breathing, closed all the holes of his body, and identified so closely with Lord Viṣṇu in consciousness that when he stopped breathing, the total universal breathing became choked up and all the big demigods of the universe felt suffocated. The technical explanation of this is given as follows. When a hundred people are sitting in an airplane, even though each person is an individual, each individual shares in the total force of the airplane, which runs at a speed of hundreds of miles an hour; so, when the unit energy is identified with the total energy in service, the unit energy becomes as powerful



as the total energy. Thus when Dhruva suspended his breathing, the breathing of the entire universe was suspended. Moreover, he also assumed the total weight of the universe, and as a result, when he pressed down his toe he pressed down the whole earth, just as an elephant enters a boat on the water and tilts it. This is the difference between ordinary consciousness and Kṛṣṇa consciousness—in ordinary consciousness a king's son might be refused something by his father; but when the same person becomes a fully Kṛṣṇa conscious personality, he can even tilt the earth with the pressure of his toe!

The demigods, the powerful administrators of the universe, turned to Lord Viṣṇu in fear, reporting that all breathing in the universe had been stopped.

The Supreme Lord assured them that they need not worry. "These calamities are due to the severe austerities and full determination of the son of King Uttānapāda," He said, "who is fully absorbed in thoughts of Me and who has obstructed the universal breathing process. You can return to your respective homes safely; I shall stop this boy from his severe acts of austerity." Lord Viṣṇu is ultimately independent of the austerities practiced by His devotees, but because Dhruva so much desired to see Him, Lord Viṣṇu went to speak with him.

As Dhruva engaged in his meditation, the form of the Lord in his heart in which he was fully absorbed all of a sudden disappeared, just like electric lightning. Being perturbed, Dhruva

broke his meditation, opened his eyes, and saw before him the Supreme Personality of Godhead—the very form on which he was meditating. When the vision in his heart disappeared, he thought that he had lost Him; but now he saw Lord Viṣṇu standing before him, and Dhruva fell flat before the Lord.

Dhruva wanted to offer prayers and profound respects, but because he was a small boy he could not adjust himself properly, nor could he even speak. The Lord, however, being situated within everyone's heart, could understand Dhruva's emotions, and out of His mercy He touched His conchshell to Dhruva's head. The artists in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement have painted a picture of this moment which

is like a window opening wide to the spiritual sky. The Lord appeared in a four-armed form, His effulgent, brilliantly ornamented body full of eternity, bliss and knowledge. He is seen touching the forehead of Dhruva as they stand in the transcendental light of the forest. Dhruva is a small boy wearing only a loincloth and submissively standing before the Lord with folded hands. That same picture is exactly described in literary form in the scripture *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

As a plucky young warrior child, Dhruva was looking for land in revenge for being pushed off the lap of his father. His cause was originally childish because he was asking God to become his order supplier. But the Supreme Lord is so kind that if one approaches Him even for land, he eventually gets the greatest opportunity—the chance to become a lover of God. Upon being touched by the Lord’s conchshell, Dhruva could finally pray, and he expressed his transcendental sentiments, which are cherished by all devotees. Since he could only speak when given the intelligence directly by the touch of the Lord’s conchshell, it can be understood that what he said was dictated by the Lord from within. This is transcendental inspiration. To glorify or offer prayers to the Supreme, one needs the Lord’s mercy. One cannot write or speak to glorify God unless one is endowed with His causeless mercy. Such glorification of God as the prayers of Dhruva or the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* does not consist of ordinary vibrations, although the ordinary letter combinations may be used, for these sounds can cleanse the heart of one who hears them submissively. Dhruva prayed, “My dear Lord, You are all-powerful, and by entering within me You have enlivened all my sleeping senses. Foolish persons such as me worship You for the sense gratification of the body, which is merely a bag of skin. Although You are a desire tree and cause liberation from birth and death, I am praying for things which are available even in a hellish condition.”

Dhruva prayed in a repentant spirit, for he was sorry that he had sought the Lord for such insignificant things

as land and power. One who does not know what to ask of the Lord is considered to be bereft of all knowledge, and such was Dhruva’s original disposition. Dhruva Mahārāja prayed, “Please, Lord, bless me with the association of great devotees who engage in Your transcendental loving service. I am becoming mad to hear about Your transcendental qualities and pastimes, which are eternally existent.”

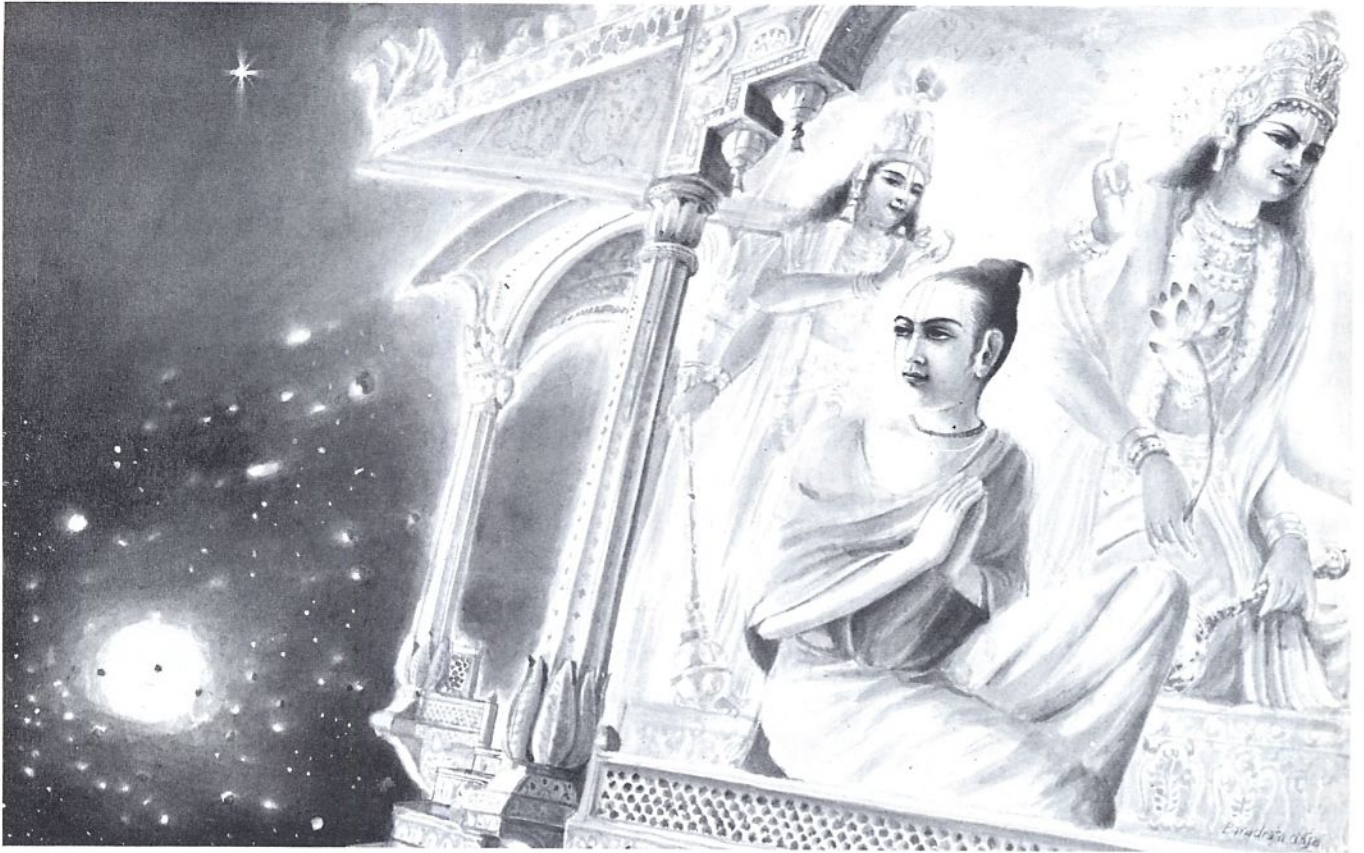
It is significant that after overcoming his material desires Dhruva prayed in this way. We can understand from this that the topmost asset is the association of devotees. Such association is essential. In this connection, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda writes: “Anyone who is trying to be aloof from the Kṛṣṇa Consciousness Society and yet engage in Kṛṣṇa consciousness is living in a great hallucination, for it is not possible.”

Dhruva’s demands before seeing the Lord were materialistic, but upon seeing the Lord he offered his prayers in the mood of pure devotional service. On hearing such sentiments from His pure devotee, the Supreme Personality of Godhead answered, “My dear Dhruva, I know your desires and your ambitions, and I shall fulfill them all.” Actually, Dhruva was very much afraid that his material desires would hamper him in attaining love of God, but the Lord assured him that he would not deviate from love of God and that his desires would also be fulfilled. “I shall award you the glowing planet known as the Pole Star,” the Lord said, “which will continue to exist even after the dissolution of the universe at the end of the millennium. No one has ever ruled over this planet, which is surrounded by all the solar systems, planets and stars.” The demands that Dhruva made in the beginning were childish, yet as a father fulfills the demands of his child, the Lord offered this unique imperishable planet to Dhruva. In asking material things from the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Dhruva compares himself to a person who wins the favor of a very rich man and is offered whatever he would like but foolishly asks for only a few grains

of rice. Dhruva most beautifully expresses his position when he says, “I came into this forest just looking for pieces of broken glass, but instead I have found a great jewel in You, my dear Lord, and now I am completely satisfied and don’t want anything.” Dhruva finally desired simply to be a servant of Kṛṣṇa, but for His part the Lord wished Dhruva to take a spiritual planet within this universe and be its ruler.

Meanwhile, King Uttānapāda heard from Nārada that his son was alive and that he had become a perfected being and was coming back home, but he doubted that it was true. He considered himself most wretched for having forced his small boy to leave for the forest, and he didn’t think that it was possible for him to obtain the good fortune of seeing his son again. He thought that his son had been eaten by foxes in the woods or had lain down in the jungle and been killed. But because he was told the wonderful news by Nārada, he took faith, and he prepared a great procession with chariots bedecked with golden filigree to meet his son. Upon their meeting among the citizens and family members, Dhruva’s father ran to embrace his son and saw to his wonder that he was not the same, for he had been completely sanctified by Kṛṣṇa consciousness. After offering obeisances to his father, Dhruva Mahārāja next threw himself at the feet of his stepmother, who raised him in her arms saying, “Long may you live!” Shortly later, King Uttānapāda enthroned Dhruva Mahārāja as the emperor of the planet, and he himself left for the forest for his own spiritual realization.

Dhruva ruled the earth as its king for 36,000 years and displayed all godly qualities. He was especially dear to the devotees and kind to the poor and innocent, and he protected religious principles. As promised by the Lord, his senses never became old, and after 36,000 years he handed over charge of the earth to his son, left his kingdom, wife, children and comfortable palace life and again went to the forest to perform the process of meditation on the form of the Lord that he had



practiced in his childhood. As he meditated upon Kṛṣṇa in a trance of devotional service, symptoms of ecstasy became manifest in his body, and as tears flowed from his eyes, his heart melted, and there was shivering all over his body. In that devotional trance he completely forgot his bodily existence and became liberated from material bondage.

As soon as the symptoms of liberation were manifest, Dhruva Mahārāja saw a very beautiful airplane coming down from the sky, as if the brilliant full moon were coming down, illuminating all directions. Dhruva saw in the airplane two associates of Lord Viṣṇu who possessed the same bodily features as Viṣṇu, with four hands and a blackish bodily luster. The two associates of Viṣṇu told Dhruva, "This unique airplane has been sent by the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Because of your unalloyed devotional service in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, you are quite ready to board this plane." After hearing the words of the associates of the Lord, Dhruva Mahārāja offered his respectful obeisances to the sages in

the forest and to the associates of Lord Viṣṇu and prepared to board the plane. In the meantime, his body became completely spiritualized and was now as brilliant and illuminating as molten gold.

As Dhruva Mahārāja prepared to board the plane, he saw death personified approaching him. However, unafraid, he took the arrival of death as an opportunity to put his feet on death's head and thus step into the plane. At that time, drums and kettle-drums sounded from the sky, voices began to sing, and the demigods showered flowers upon Dhruva Mahārāja.

The plane was just about to start, with Dhruva inside, when Dhruva thought to himself, "How can I go alone to the spiritual world and leave behind my poor mother?" However, the associates of Viṣṇu understood his mind, and they assured him that his mother was also simultaneously going to Vaikuṅṭha in another plane. Thus it is understood that the greatest asset in a family is a child who is a devotee and can liberate even his family members.

As Dhruva was passing through space, he saw all the planets of the solar system, and he also saw all the demigods in their airplanes showering flowers upon him like rain. Dhruva Mahārāja surpassed all the planetary systems and ultimately attained the Pole Star, which is an eternal spiritual planet where he now resides eternally.

The rapid sanctification by which Dhruva became a great spiritual personality in only six months was possible by the mercy of Dhruva's spiritual master and by the boy's determination to follow his *guru's* instructions. Hearing of the incidents of his life is valuable for all humanity. As expressed by Dhruva at the height of his awareness, "Association with devotees is the most valuable asset." The best way to begin spiritual life is to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*, associate with devotees and hear topics about Kṛṣṇa, such as this history of Dhruva Mahārāja, who was Kṛṣṇa's devotee. The Vedic literature is full of philosophy and stories, and the more one hears, the more he will feel transcendental pleasure and grow determined to reach Kṛṣṇa. ●

The Books of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda



BY BRAHMĀNANDA SVĀMĪ
ISKCON East Africa

“My books are more important than myself.” This was Śrīla Prabhupāda’s instruction to one of his disciples who was being sent from his personal service to open a temple in a distant place. When one considers how much time, energy and intelligence Śrīla Prabhupāda has utilized to single-handedly begin and spread the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement to an international scale, it is even more astonishing that he has written a score of unique books. Despite his responsibilities in guiding thousands of disciples who operate almost a hundred different centers, that he has produced these books—at substantial sacrifice—proves that the most important factor to the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is the books of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda.

While still in India, His Divine Grace inhabited two ordinary rooms in India’s most historic literary temple. This Rādhā-Dāmodara temple was built almost 500 years ago by Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī in the holy site of Vṛndāvana, where Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, appeared to display His transcendental pastimes 5,000 years ago. The Rādhā-Dāmodara temple, which has since fallen into disrepair, houses the *samādhi* (burial place) of Jīva Gosvāmī, one of the six prime disciples of Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Lord Caitanya gave His disciples in Vṛndāvana three important instructions: first, to discover the exact locations where Kṛṣṇa displayed His pastimes, as revealed in the *śāstras* (scriptures); then, to build temples where the Lord could be suitably worshiped; and, finally, to write books fully explaining the real science of devotional service to God. Lord Caitanya Himself wrote only eight *ślokas* (stanzas), but the six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana have left a vast body of literature for the inestimable benefit of all humanity.

When only ten years old, Jīva Gosvāmī wanted to join Lord Caitanya’s *saṅkīrtana* movement, but

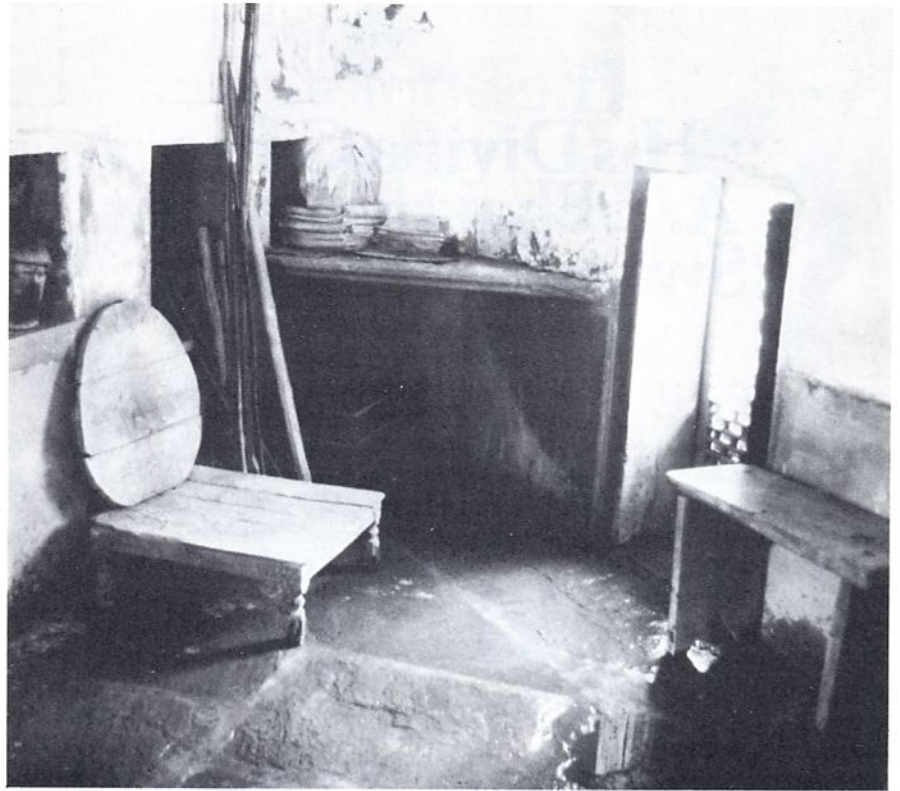


In Śrīla Prabhupāda's room
in the Rādhā-Dāmodara Temple.

first he prepared himself by becoming fully versed in Sanskrit in Benares. He was then able to write volumes of books, which have prompted one Indian authority to declare Jīva Gosvāmī the greatest philosopher that has ever lived. It is lamentable that due to the lack of qualified translators, the English-knowing world may never be able to take advantage of these books.

The Rādhā-Dāmodara temple is also the site of the *samādhi* of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja, the most important biographer of Lord Caitanya. Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja appeared after Lord Caitanya but was contemporary to the six Gosvāmīs. Directly inspired by Lord Nityānanda, one of Lord Caitanya's principal associates, he wrote his *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* at the age of ninety. This book recounts the teachings of Lord Caitanya more vividly than the biographical details which have been preserved by other authors.

The treasure of Rādhā-Dāmodara is the *samādhi* and *bhajana* (place for executing devotional service) of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī. Of the six Gosvāmīs, he is the most important. Rūpa Gosvāmī constructed the largest temple in Vṛndāvana, Rādhā-Govindajī, and he wrote the most important book on the science of devotional service, *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, which was completed in the year 1552. He and



Śrīla Prabhupāda's seat, overlooking the courtyard

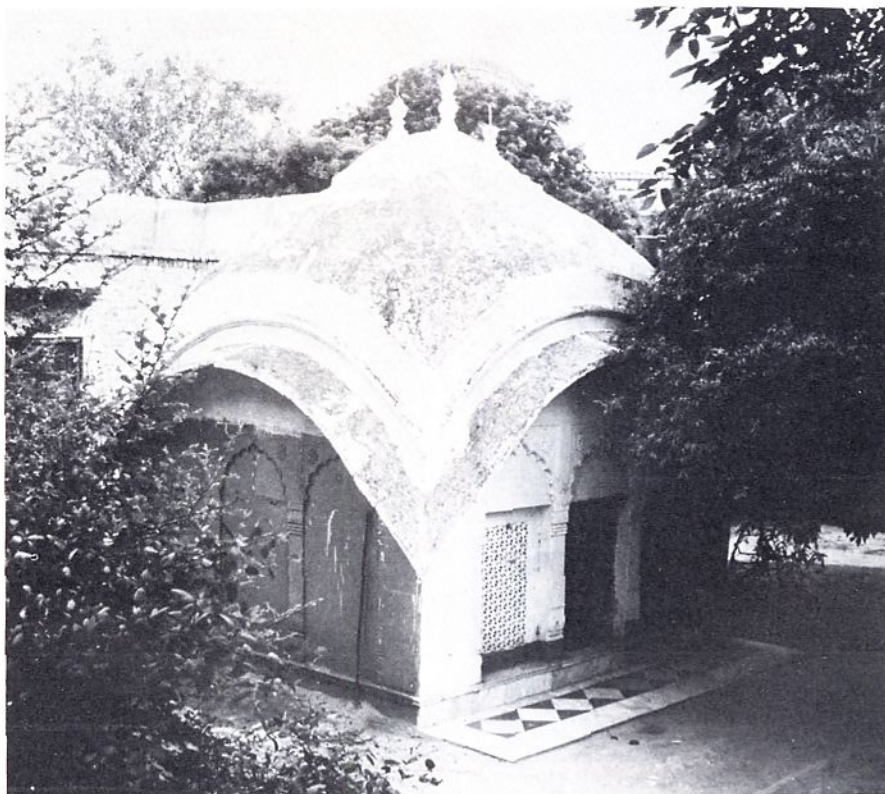
his elder brother Sanātana Gosvāmī were among the chief government administrators of their time and were highly learned in Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit. Lord Caitanya personally instructed Rūpa Gosvāmī for ten consecutive days, and *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* codifies these teachings, with supporting evidence from scores of supplementary Vedic texts.

One great *ācārya* (teacher) in the *paramparā* (disciplic succession) has offered obeisances to the six Gosvāmīs in the following manner: "They are very expert in scrutinizingly studying all the revealed scriptures with the aim of establishing eternal religious principles for the benefit of all human beings. Thus they are honored all over the three worlds, and they are worth taking shelter of because they are absorbed in the mood of the *gopīs* and are engaged in the transcendental loving service of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa." In one of Śrīla Prabhupāda's rooms in the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple there is a window that overlooks the shaded courtyard where the two tomblike structures that honor Rūpa Gosvāmī stand. Just before

this window is a bare wooden *āsana* (seat) where Śrīla Prabhupāda sat to receive inspiration from the greatest of the Gosvāmīs. From the other room, where he wrote his books, Śrīla Prabhupāda could look out and see Jīva Gosvāmī's own worshipable Deities, Rādhā-Dāmodara.

For more than five years Śrīla Prabhupāda lived and worked alone in the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple. From the volume of manuscripts and letters he left behind, it is evident that he was constantly writing. He wrote by hand in notebooks, in school lesson pads, and even on the reverse side of mimeographed news releases from the Soviet news agency which was located in nearby Delhi. These releases during the early 1960's were filled with reports of sputnik achievements, and it was these reports that probably prompted Śrīla Prabhupāda to write the most famous of his shorter books, *Easy Journey to Other Planets*.

Many of these Rādhā-Dāmodara manuscripts are incomplete and as yet unpublished. They include *Science of Devotion*, *Practical Theism*, *Message of*



The samādhi of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī

Godhead, Prayers of King Kulaśekhara and a lengthy verse to verse translation and purport of the first part of the *Cāitanya-caritāmṛta*. Also, there is Śrīla Prabhupāda's voluminous correspondence, addressed to many prominent men in the fields of religion, letters, politics, business and medicine. These letters reveal Śrīla Prabhupāda's gift for soliciting people to help spread scientific knowledge of God consciousness.

In addition to books and letters, during this time Śrīla Prabhupāda also edited *Back to Godhead*, a fortnightly paper begun in 1944 in fulfillment of an order by his spiritual master, His Divine Grace Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Mahārāja. At the very first meeting he had with Śrīla Prabhupāda in 1922, as well as in a letter written only weeks before his demise in 1936, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī specifically requested Śrīla Prabhupāda to propagate the teachings of Kṛṣṇa consciousness through the medium of the English language. A devotee takes the orders of his spiritual master as his very life, and this is what has impelled His Divine Grace to

write prolifically despite many hindrances. Due to spiritual potency, a perfectly executed order received from a higher transcendental authority benefits not only the performer of the duty but also the whole world. Śrīla Prabhupāda's accomplishment is exactly in the line of the six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana. Śrīla Prabhupāda's books are, to put it quite simply, authorized.

Back to Godhead contained timely articles, essays, book reviews and selections from full-length works in progress such as the *Śrī Īsopaniṣad*. It should be noted that this paper was entirely the effort of Śrīla Prabhupāda. He wrote all the material, edited it, typed it for the printer and checked the galley proofs. Then he sold the copies. Each fortnight he would take batches of *Back to Godhead* into Delhi. To save a few cents bus fare he sometimes had to walk for miles, and often he would sit in tea parlors until late at night, himself not even taking a glass of water there, preaching and distributing his paper and collecting one cent per copy.

At this time Śrīla Prabhupāda also wrote outlines of his dream. It was a worldwide association of God conscious devotees who actively preached the eternal religion of love of God in all fields of society at large and who used all the modern means at their disposal. The League of Devotees, the forerunner of the now worldwide ISKCON, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, was thus formally registered. From international *saṅkīrtana* parties, to *gośālas* (cow protection reserves), to authorized teaching of Sanskrit, to a printing press solely for flooding the marketplace with Kṛṣṇa conscious literature, ISKCON is today the reality of that dream.

The most important work Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote while in Vṛndāvana was his translation, with purports, of the First Canto of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* ("The Beautiful Story of the Personality of Godhead"). This work was published by the League of Devotees, but, as with *Back to Godhead*, it was solely by the effort of Śrīla Prabhupāda. It appeared in three volumes—the first in 1962, the second in 1964, and the third in 1965—all in preparation for the trip to the United States of America which Śrīla Prabhupāda had conceived as the crucial factor in fulfilling his spiritual master's sacred mission.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is said to be the postgraduate study of *Bhagavad-gītā*. Of course, in the West *Bhagavad-gītā* is well known. Each year finds several new editions on the American market. Every college graduate knows the *Gītā's* influence on Walt Whitman, Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson. Albert Einstein also was a regular student of the *Gītā*, and I am told that Robert Oppenheimer, the atomic physicist, quoted a verse from the Eleventh Chapter upon seeing the first test explosion of the atomic bomb in 1945. Yet there have been no English editions of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, which is more advanced than *Bhagavad-gītā*.

Bhagavad-gītā is spoken by Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, to His disciple Arjuna, and there un-

folds the entire Vedic philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. But who is Kṛṣṇa? A prophet? A philosopher? An incarnation of God? *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* answers this question. Like *Bhāgavad-gītā*, it was written 5,000 years ago by Śrīla Vyāsadeva, a literary incarnation of Kṛṣṇa. In twelve cantos containing 18,000 verses, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* presents complete information about the Lord, how His energies work, the nature of the living entities or spirit souls, our relationship with God and how to develop love for Him. When one has grasped *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, then he can fully understand Kṛṣṇa's ultimate instruction of *Bhāgavad-gītā*: "Just give up everything and surrender unto Me."

In virtually every one of the hundreds of available editions of *Bhāgavad-gītā*, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the speaker of the *Gītā*, is obscured. Either He is relegated to the position of a historical personage, a mere literary device, or He is conceived as an impersonal ever-existing state of being. This allows the commentator himself to replace Kṛṣṇa as the speaker of the *Gītā*, and he is then free to present his own interpretations and mental speculations instead of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

In the opening sentences of Śrīla Prabhupāda's introduction to the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, he affirms that the word "God" refers to the supreme controller and that a controller cannot be impersonal. In the first *śloka* of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, obeisances are offered to the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ।

om namo bhagavate vāsudevāya

om—O my Lord; *namaḥ*—my respectful obeisances unto You; *bhagavate*—unto the Personality of Godhead; *vāsudevāya*—unto Lord Kṛṣṇa, the son of Vasudeva.

O my Lord, the all-pervading Personality of Godhead, I offer my respectful obeisances unto You.

Whereas others have translated the Sanskrit scriptures conveniently to suit their interpretations, Śrīla Prabhupāda

always gives word-for-word English equivalents for each Sanskrit verse, and thus the translations cannot be disputed. This is a painstaking process, considering the length of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, but it is in keeping with the heritage of the Gosvāmīs to present the literature of devotional service authoritatively and scientifically. Furthermore, the English-reading public can easily learn the meanings to the Sanskrit words from this format.

S*rīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the most mature work of transcendental science written by Śrīla Vyāsadeva. Vyāsadeva had compiled the four *Vedas* and written the *Vedānta-sūtra*, the *Purāṇas* and the *Mahābhārata* (which includes *Bhāgavad-gītā*), yet he was not satisfied with his work. Therefore his spiritual master, Nārada Muni, instructed him to specifically glorify the transcendental activities of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Thus the famous Tenth Canto of the *Bhāgavatam* reveals the most intimate of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes with His devotees. It should be cautioned that there are many professional *Bhāgavatam* reciters who indulge in reading only this most confidential portion of the book, not caring for transcendental realization either for their innocent audiences or for themselves. However, Vyāsadeva purposely placed these stories in the later portion of the text so that by reading through the first nine cantos the reader would be spiritually elevated and be able to understand the transcendental nature of these activities. Therefore Śrīla Prabhupāda presents the *Bhāgavatam* in a complete manner, beginning from the very first verse and progressing systematically to the most elevated portion of this great literature.

When Śrīla Prabhupāda finally arrived in America in 1965, he did not come empty-handed. His baggage was a yellow tin box filled with sets of his *Bhāgavatams*. Upon first setting foot on American soil, he wrote a poem addressed to Lord Kṛṣṇa in Bengali, one passage of which reads as follows: "The words of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* are Your incarnation, and if people repeatedly hear them in submissive

aural reception, then they will be able to understand Your message."

Śrīla Prabhupāda then commenced his legendary preaching, first in the rural towns of Pennsylvania and then in New York's Bowery and Greenwich Village. He was practically supporting himself from the sales of his books until ISKCON was incorporated by some interested students and the first center was opened in July, 1966. (Even up until the present, the entire financial growth of the Society depends upon the distribution of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books by street sales, store distribution, and the Society's Life Membership program. All major donations and sales proceeds are used for printing books).

On two mimeograph machines personally purchased by Śrīla Prabhupāda, we, his American students, began putting out *Back to Godhead*, which consisted mostly of Śrīla Prabhupāda's lectures and some articles and poems by his students. Now that we had started it, we were instructed to publish an issue every month without fail, regardless of our financial situation—even if we could only afford one page. Upon seeing us putting together the first issue, Śrīla Prabhupāda announced that ISKCON Press had been born. In the streets and through shops, we sold as many copies as we were able to run off and staple.

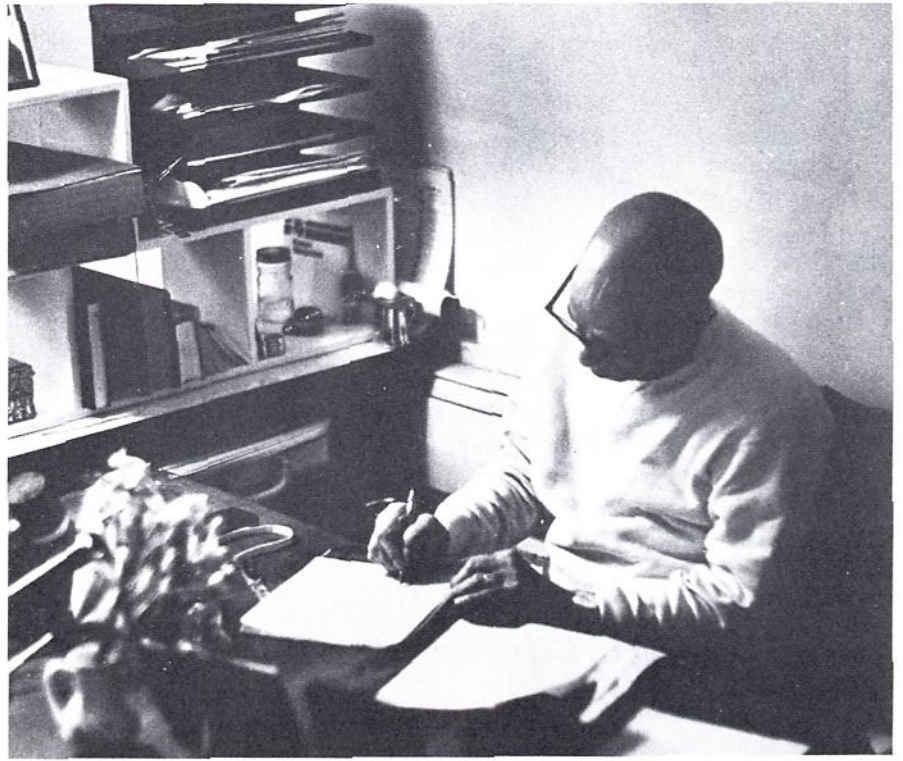
Śrīla Prabhupāda was at that time delivering his lectures three evenings a week and every morning in the storefront assembly hall. One morning he titled his lecture, "Introduction to *Bhāgavad-gītā As It Is* by A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami." That lecture was transcribed as the present introduction to his book. We learned that Śrīla Prabhupāda was taking rest at 10:00 p.m. and rising at 2:00 a.m. to write his verse by verse translations and purports to the *Bhāgavad-gītā*. He would write all morning and then come down and speak on the verses upon which he had commented.

On a portable typewriter given by one of his students, Śrīla Prabhupāda typed out the manuscript page after page. He would

spend the remainder of the day writing correspondence, managing the center, speaking to visitors and teaching his students. Despite the threat of immigration difficulties, financial straits and the problems in teaching his fledgling students spiritual life, we watched the manuscript grow day by day. It was a labor of love which continued until one day serious illness struck Śrīla Prabhupāda and he was unable to operate the typewriter. When our shock and confusion cleared away, we managed to purchase a dictaphone, and Śrīla Prabhupāda was able to write by dictating tapes. One day a college student on leave who was an expert typist appeared and offered his services to Śrīla Prabhupāda. Not long afterwards, the manuscript, over one thousand pages, was completed.

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is stands as a challenge to all the mental speculators who depart from the *Gītā's* central teaching of devotional service to the Personality of Godhead, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Even Mahātmā Gandhi stands accused, since his ingenious metaphorical interpretation is simply designed to support his mundane political movement of nonviolence. In India Śrīla Prabhupāda personally requested Gandhi to preach the *Gītā* for what it teaches, Kṛṣṇa consciousness, just as Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Mahārāja had personally requested the most famous Indian poet of his time, Rabindranath Tagore.

In the *Gītā's* Ninth Chapter Lord Kṛṣṇa categorically advises Arjuna to surrender to Him and to love and worship Him only. He specifically uses the Sanskrit word *mām*, meaning "unto Me." Yet one commentator, a renowned Indian philosopher and political leader, begins his commentary on this crucial verse, "It is not to Kṛṣṇa that we have to surrender. . ." It is very clear that Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna are standing on the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra and that Kṛṣṇa is telling Arjuna to surrender unto Him. But this scholar wants to turn the reader away from Kṛṣṇa by insidiously implying that Kṛṣṇa actually means to surrender to the eternal unmanifested essence within Himself. But Kṛṣṇa didn't say



this. Significantly, Śrīla Prabhupāda entitles his comments "purports," not interpretations. In his purports he gives the actual significance of the verses. Śrīla Prabhupāda informs all deluded scholars that because Kṛṣṇa is absolute, there is no qualitative difference between His within and His without as there is with conditioned living entities like ourselves.

Only Śrīla Prabhupāda can title his edition of the *Gītā* "As It Is." The reason why is readily understood from Kṛṣṇa's statement to Arjuna in the beginning of the Fourth Chapter regarding Arjuna's qualification for receiving the teachings of the *Gītā*. It is not that Arjuna was a great *yogī*, scholar or ascetic. Kṛṣṇa said, "You are My devotee and My friend; therefore you can understand this science rightly." As unusual as it may seem, Śrīla Prabhupāda is virtually the only devotee of Kṛṣṇa who has commented on *Bhagavad-gītā*. Kṛṣṇa also disclosed that the *Gītā* can only be understood by those who are in the line of authorized devotees and *ācāryas* (teachers) known as *paramparā* (disciplic succession). Of the four such successions, the line from Lord

Brahmā yet remains intact, and Śrīla Prabhupāda is the thirty-second teacher in that line. Vedic knowledge is not unlike a family secret that has been carefully handed down through many generations. Even though the present family descendants were not personally present, they know precisely what took place generations ago.

After it was completed, the *Gītā* manuscript was placed in our hands for publication. We approached several big New York publishers, but even with the help of the poet Allen Ginsberg, there was no success. However, Śrīla Prabhupāda had some time previously recorded an album of the hypnotic Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*, and we happened to receive an order for a copy from an executive at the Macmillan Company. Śrīla Prabhupāda, who was in New York at the time, instructed me to deliver the album personally and inform them that we had books they might be interested to publish. In the executive office, I sat before a man in the accounting section who had nothing to do with publishing books. But then he stepped his colleague, a chief editor. I was intro-

duced, and then I repeated Śrīla Prabhupāda's offer. Believe it or not, he was just looking to publish an edition of the *Gītā* to fill out their religion section. "Bring in the manuscript tomorrow morning," he said, "and we'll publish it."

The next book, *Teachings of Lord Caitanya*, was then dictated. It is a summary study of the historic *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. Instead of the exhaustive format of verse to verse translation and purport, Śrīla Prabhupāda presented this book in a shortened but more essential manner. "My books are for my students," he told us, and so he wanted to write as many as possible. If *Bhagavad-gītā* could be considered the undergraduate study of spiritual life and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* the master's study, then *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* is the doctorate course. It recounts Lord Caitanya's teachings to the only five disciples He personally taught. In *Teachings of Lord Caitanya*, the incomplete philosophy of impersonalism is fully analyzed and forcefully defeated by Lord Caitanya in His discussions with the two biggest impersonalists of His time, Prakāśānanda Sarasvatī and Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya. Also, the quintessence of all detailed knowledge of Kṛṣṇa and how He acts both in the spiritual and material worlds is disclosed to Rāmānanda Rāya.

The book was published by Prabhupāda's students, who met the costs by donations of all their personal monies. We decided to print it overseas, in Japan, and ultimately in 1968 it came off the presses of one of the world's largest printing organizations. ISKCON Press was then given full responsibility to publish all of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books and to develop *Back to Godhead* to the scale of *Time and Life*. By this time it was being printed by offset at five thousand copies per month. At Prabhupāda's request, the issues included more articles by his students. He wanted to see how we were realizing what he was teaching, and he was not concerned for outward polish or sophistication in the articles. He said that for a father

whose child is first learning how to speak, there is great pleasure even though the child mispronounces the words.

Śrīla Prabhupāda considered *Back to Godhead* the backbone of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. He had us give it to a Japanese printer who, to our dismay, could print a minimum of 20,000 copies per issue. "Kṛṣṇa will distribute them," Śrīla Prabhupāda assured us. At present, over half a million copies are distributed each month in English, Spanish, French, German, Dutch, Japanese, Hindi, Bengali and Swahili.

Macmillan's *Gītā* also came out in 1968 in an abbreviated 300 page edition, which included appreciations by several well-known authors for commercial appeal. One author who was very well known for his books on Eastern philosophy and was solicited with a copy of the manuscript for appreciation wrote back a hot letter to Macmillan. He denounced the *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* by saying that not to interpret the *Gītā* was itself an interpretation. "Our book is successful," declared Śrīla Prabhupāda. The word juggler had properly understood *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* and was properly offended.



In 1969 ISKCON Press composed and printed with its own machinery the *Śrī Īsopaniṣad*, subtitled "The Knowledge that Brings One Nearer to the Supreme Personality of God-

head, Kṛṣṇa." It is an elementary book written in verse to verse format and fits as a bridge between the impersonal stress of the *Upaniṣads* and the distinct personalism of *Bhagavad-gītā*. Its remarkable introduction, "Teachings of the *Vedas*," originally delivered as a lecture in Conway Hall in London, explains how one should best approach a study of the Vedic literature.

Also in 1969, the lawbook for the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement was finished. Śrīla Rūpa's *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* ("The Ocean of the Nectar of Devotion") was presented as a summary study entitled *The Nectar of Devotion*. In the first "wave" of the ocean of nectar, all the Kṛṣṇa conscious rules, regulations, devotional practices, ceremonies and so on are codified and explained with abundant scriptural evidence. *The Nectar of Devotion* is greatly responsible for maintaining the spiritual atmosphere and upholding all the devotional discipline in ISKCON's temples, for it is written in such a way that almost any question in the day to day problems encountered in prosecuting Kṛṣṇa consciousness can be authoritatively solved. The second "wave" contains incredible details about Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead—His form, personality, abode and pastimes with His devotees. The book concludes with a detailed analysis of the variegated relationships of devotion that the living entities have with God, or Lord Kṛṣṇa. *The Nectar of Devotion* was printed entirely by ISKCON Press. When the first copy was presented to Śrīla Prabhupāda, he requested that we read aloud from it. When asked which portion he would like to hear, he replied, "Read from any part you open. Sugar tasted on any side is sweet."

One day when several of Śrīla Prabhupāda's leading disciples were assembled before him, he announced that he had been requested to write a summary study of the Tenth Canto of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. If Śrīla Prabhupāda proceeded translating canto by canto, some students feared, he might not be able to complete the confidential Tenth Canto in his life-



All of Śrīla Prabhupāda's larger books have been illustrated by his disciples with full-color paintings.

*Top: Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu embracing His disciple Sanātana Gosvāmī in spiritual ecstasy. (from *Teachings of Lord Caitanya*)*

*Left: Lord Kṛṣṇa as a child liberating the sons of the demigod Kuvera by pulling down the twin trees in which they were imprisoned. (from *Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead*)*

time. Because this portion had been so misrepresented by materialistic religionists, he wanted to leave behind an edition which presented this important portion in its proper transcendental perspective. He took our approval and then began dictating *Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead*. This work is the most entertaining of all of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books. He conceded that he was writing it in such a way that the reader would not detect the philosophy. In the *Bhāgavatam*, Śukadeva Gosvāmī, its principal reciter, has declared that there are three classes of men who will be attracted to Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. Those very advanced in transcendental realization, the liberated souls, will relish the pastimes. Those who are on the path to achievement of liberation will automatically be purified, and even the gross materialist will enjoy them because of the resemblance between Kṛṣṇa's affairs with the *gopīs* and the love affairs between ordinary men and women.

The book was printed in Japan in 1970 in two volumes of 750 pages, with the addition of 82 full-color plates. Several talented disciples had labored for almost six months to produce magnificent paintings depicting the pastimes. Virtually every detail was referred for Śrīla Prabhupāda's approval because the paintings also had to be "as it is." A welcome introduction by musician George Harrison, who contributed the entire cost of printing the first volume, completes the set of books. Although more expensive than all other of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books, the *Kṛṣṇa Books* are the most popular, having gone into three printings to date, as well as publication in a three-volume paperback edition.

Śrīla Prabhupāda had never been entirely satisfied with Macmillan's edition of his *Gītā* because they had drastically shortened it for business reasons. However, when the book was well into its fifth printing, Macmillan informed him that they would be honored to bring out the complete edition, including the Sanskrit *ślokas*. All other published editions of the *Gītā* were decreasing in sales, they reported, whereas Śrīla Prabhupāda's was steadily

increasing. Therefore, in the fall of 1972, the Macmillan Company released the complete edition of *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, containing the entire text of Śrīla Prabhupāda's original manuscript, fully indexed and cross-referenced, along with more than fifty color plates. Finally, this was indeed the complete and authoritative edition of *Bhagavad-gītā* that we had hoped for. The paintings dramatically portray the ideas of the *Gītā's* verses and Śrīla Prabhupāda's purports. Simply from the pictures the reader will be able to understand the great transcendental message of *Bhagavad-gītā*.

Soon to be released from Japan are eight fully illustrated volumes comprising the first three cantos of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in verse to verse format. The Fourth Canto is still in the manuscript stage. Also still in manuscript is a large two-volume work in which Śrīla Prabhupāda discusses the ideas of major ancient and contemporary philosophers—from Aristotle and Plato to Jean-Paul Sartre and modern theoretical physicists—in the light of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

We do not know what Śrīla Prabhupāda's literary program will be for the future. Since his last books, he has been extensively traveling and preach-

ing, especially throughout India and Africa. He is now in Japan on his way back to the United States on his fifth tour around the world since 1965. It is the hope of his disciples that while in the USA he will be able to retire from active management of ISKCON to completely devote himself to his writing, which he has wanted to do for a long time. There are eight cantos of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* remaining, as well as the manuscripts started in Vṛndāvana and one incomplete manuscript of the *Vedānta-sūtra*.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, as a pure devotee free from all defects, can transmit the Absolute Truth as it has been carefully set down in the Vedic literature, like a mailman who delivers a letter without opening it to add or subtract something. Because Śrīla Prabhupāda is qualified to receive the king of all education, he is empowered to pass it on purely. His books are considered Vedic literature because they are in pursuance of Vyāsadeva's original intentions. Thus Śrīla Prabhupāda's translations and purports are nondifferent from the original instructions delivered 5,000 years ago by Lord Kṛṣṇa.

The mission of Lord Caitanya to defeat impersonalism and establish the Personality of Godhead, Lord Kṛṣṇa, as the supreme has fully fructified for



the benefit of the modern world in the books of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. *The Nectar of Devotion* figuratively states that impersonalists dwell in the rivers of liberation which gradually lead down to the ocean of nectar to merge with it. They do not know that devotees are in a better position. Devotees don't care at all for the rivers of liberation, for they are like sharks who dwell eternally in the deep ocean of transcendental loving service.

Not having fully realized God, the impersonalist concludes that He is formless, nameless, without personality or abode, and does not engage in activities. Then, who is God? To say He is not this, not this, and not that means that He is nothing—which is to say that there is no God. Thus, impersonalism has given great impetus to the atheism which characterizes modern civilization. God cannot be formless, because if He were less than anything in His creation, how could He be the complete whole? God, the complete whole, must have everything within and beyond our experience.

From the statements of virtually every Vedic source, Kṛṣṇa is accepted as Bhagavān, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. As Bhagavān, "possessor of opulences," Kṛṣṇa exhibits all beauty, all fame, all wealth, all knowledge, all strength and all renunciation. Since the very word "Kṛṣṇa" means "all-attractive," Śrīla Prabhupāda explicitly explains all of God's all-attractive features. Whereas the scriptures of other religions terminate with the conclusion that God is great, Śrīla Prabhupāda begins from that realization to explain *how* He is great. The science of the Absolute Truth transcends sectarian religious principles. One who reads Śrīla Prabhupāda's books will know God perfectly, regardless of sectarian conceptions of God to which he may adhere. No other literature in philosophy, religion or *yoga* is as complete as the body of work that Śrīla Prabhupāda has dutifully presented to the English-speaking world. This is due to the perfection of the main theme in Śrīla Prabhupāda's books—devotional service—which far



exceeds the four perfections of material life: sense gratification, economic development, pious activities and liberation. The superb quality of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books is due simply to his glorifying the Supreme and presenting Him as He is.

Although the sales figures for Śrīla Prabhupāda's books approach those of consistent best sellers due to the vigorous efforts of ISKCON, critics have mainly ignored them. There does not seem to be any solution to this problem due to the lack of critics who are qualified to understand and explicate transcendental knowledge. The Macmillan *Gītā* received only a handful of reviews, with the nation's largest reviewing syndicate criticizing Śrīla Prabhupāda for treating *Bhagavad-gītā* as the literal word of God.

Be that as it may, the lives of several thousand young men and women from all over the world have been dramatically changed either by their coming into personal contact with Śrīla Prabhupāda or simply by their reading his books. There is an instance of one boy who was stationed in the US Air Force in Spain. He was so impressed by *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* that he immediately took leave to visit the ISKCON center in London. Soon afterward, upon his military discharge, he surrendered himself as a disciple and servant. In accordance with the teachings of Kṛṣṇa in *Bhagavad-gītā*, Śrīla Prabhupāda teaches the technique for practicing real spiritual life. He does not give only theoretical knowledge. In

Bhagavad-gītā Kṛṣṇa first imparts to Arjuna knowledge of what is material and what is spiritual and who he is, but ultimately He instructs Arjuna to fight on the battlefield. Although this has been variously interpreted by commentators, the true significance of this is that in order to realize the spiritual instructions given to him by Kṛṣṇa, his *guru*, Arjuna had to render devotional service without material attachment and thus satisfy Kṛṣṇa. Thus the message of the *Gītā* is to surrender oneself to God.

It should be noted that all of Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples, many of whom are college graduates and former teachers, social workers, etc., find that they have ceased reading other books after reading those by Śrīla Prabhupāda. This is perhaps best explained by the preface to *Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead*, where Śrīla Prabhupāda says that people love to read various kinds of fiction, but now, with this book, this tendency can be directed toward Kṛṣṇa, or God. "The result will be the imperishable satisfaction of the soul, both individually and collectively. . . . One will find that by reading one page after another, an immense treasure of knowledge in art, science, literature, philosophy and religion will be revealed, and ultimately by reading this one book, *Kṛṣṇa*, love of Godhead will fructify."

Śrīla Prabhupāda teaches the most difficult and sublime science—the science of how to serve God—in such a way that anyone can understand it. The concepts are presented over and over again, for repetition is a time-tested learning technique in transcendental study. Thus in whichever of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books one reads first, one will find the entire science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness presented, yet each succeeding book reveals something more, and with each rereading one will find new light. Śrīla Prabhupāda's books are the most wonderful vehicle because they swiftly transport the reader to a timeless and ever-green world where everyone is joyfully awakened to the Absolute Truth of Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. ●

Letters

The editors of *Back to Godhead* welcome correspondence pertaining to the subject matter of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. All letters will be personally replied, and correspondence of special interest will be published regularly.

Dear Sir:

Let me first say that I am deeply moved by the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement, and as a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa it makes me feel overjoyed to see so many of you, all members of ISKCON, all under one spiritual leader, doing so much to spread the good name of the Lord.

If you do not mind, I should like to ask you some questions. Firstly, it has been said in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* that in this age of Kali-yuga one who calls upon the Lord with a true heart, who calls upon Him sincerely, shall surely get His "darśana" [personal audience]. And yet how many of you, or for that matter, how many of us, have had it? I am sure that when you all chant the *mahā-mantra*, that chant is sincere; I know this because some of your fellow brothers and sisters have performed *kīrtana* at our house in Bombay. Then why does the Lord not appear? Or is He too busy and has forgotten His children?

One more thing I have noticed is that in this world the people who lie, who cheat and who are atheists are the ones successful, whereas those who are the opposite suffer. You may argue that after death it shall be a different story, but you cannot simply explain that to the atheists because they do not believe in what they cannot see. So it makes it hard to teach them to worship God. Why is God making it hard for people to follow Him? Why does He make it appear that those who worship Him will suffer hardships? Why not make it the other way around?

Yours very truly,
Sham Daswami
Manila, Philippines

Dear Sham Daswami:

Hare Kṛṣṇa! I was very glad to receive your letter, especially because you have appreciated the sincere chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees. You have asked two questions in your letter which I shall try to answer. First you ask why the Lord does not appear to the devotees who chant His name. But you should know that the holy name of Kṛṣṇa is nondifferent from Kṛṣṇa Himself. This is the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness as taught by Lord Caitanya and indeed all the previous spiritual masters, including Vyāsadeva, the compiler of the Vedic literatures.

Kṛṣṇa Himself declares this when He says in the *Ādi Purāṇa*. "I am not in the heart of the *yogī* meditating, I am not to be found in the forest, but I am present where My devotees are chanting My holy name." The Supreme Personality of Godhead further states, "Anyone who chants My transcendental name must be considered to be always associating with Me. And I may tell you frankly that for such a devotee I become easily purchased."

The sincere chanter of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* does receive the Lord's blessings, for the Lord appears by sound vibration. Lord Caitanya prays in His *Śikṣāṣṭakam* prayers, "O my Lord, Your holy name alone can render all benediction to living beings. . . . You have invested all Your transcendental energies in Your name. . . ." Kṛṣṇa is coming in His holy name, and all the benefit that one can derive from the personal association of the Lord can be had simply by vibrating the holy name: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

You are overjoyed to see so many members of ISKCON spreading the name of the Lord. But how is it that these devotees are able to give up all material pleasures and take to this selfless service? The answer is that they are getting the Lord's blessings by chanting the holy names and serving their spiritual master, who is himself always chanting the Lord's glories. Indeed, the Hare Kṛṣṇa chant is the Lord's blessing, His "prime benediction." There is no question of the Lord's being "too busy." One can have His association twenty-four hours a day simply by chanting His holy name. You have to try it! One cannot simply look on and say, "The Lord is not appearing. He is too busy. He is forgetting." In *Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa promises that when one becomes His devotee, "He is never lost to Me, and I am never lost to him." There is no question of the Lord's "forgetting" His children. There is no question of neglect on the part of the Lord; rather, the neglect is ours. If we at all desire Kṛṣṇa's association, we just have to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa.

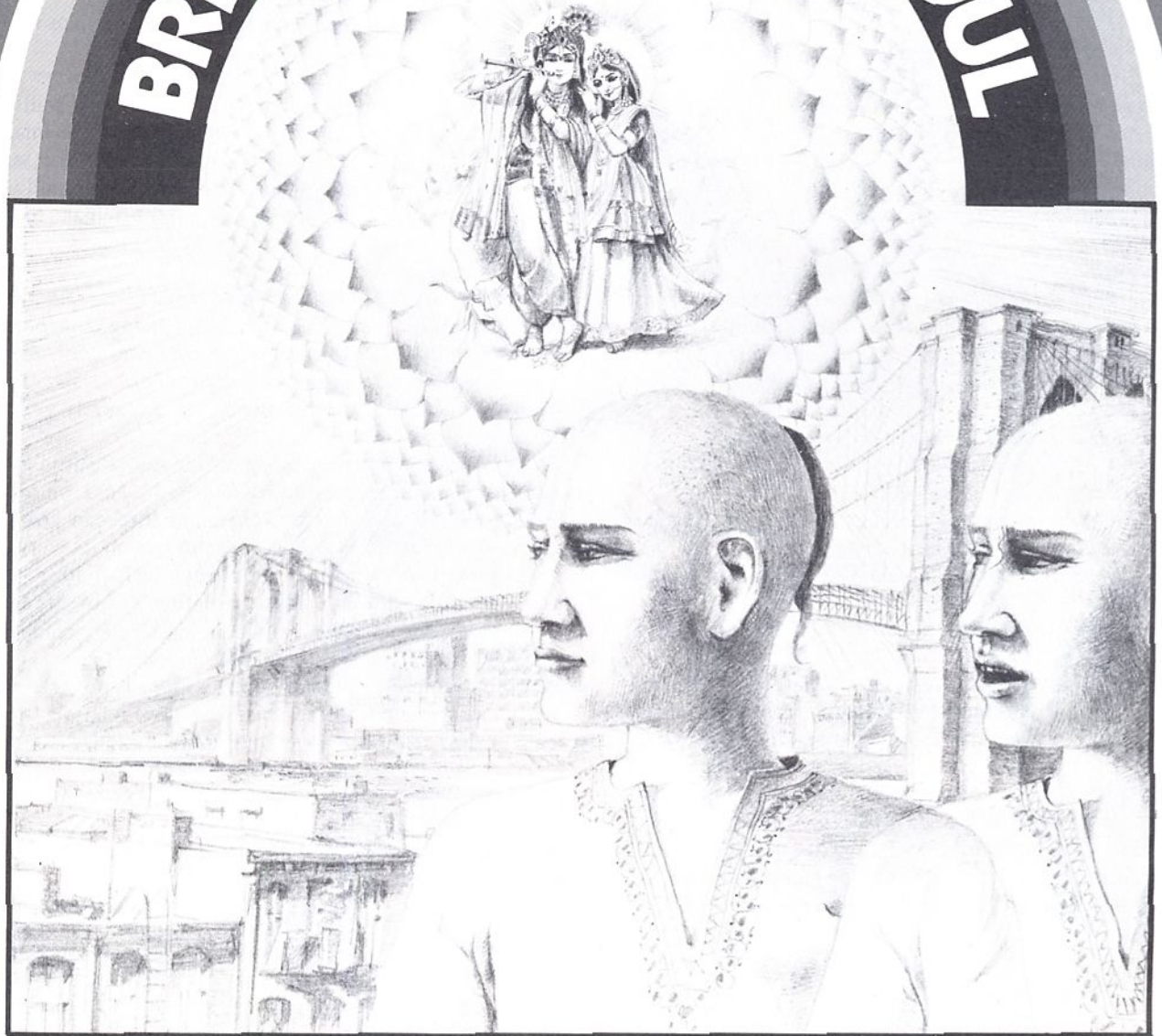
Regarding your second question, actually we devotees in the Society for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness are experiencing that as soon as we take to devotional service there is no lack in any facility at

all. We have many nice buildings, the ISKCON temples in which we reside to perform our devotional service, and if you have ever visited these temples you must have experienced that devotees eat very nice food (*prasādam*). On Sunday hundreds of guests always visit to taste the sumptuous feasts. There are nice marriages in Kṛṣṇa consciousness for raising children as devotees of the Lord, and we are traveling all over the world to distribute the *saṅkīrtana* movement. So there is no question of our being bereft of material necessities upon taking to devotional service.

It is true that sometimes if a sincere devotee maintains some material attachment, Kṛṣṇa will crush his material success so that he is left only with his attachment to Kṛṣṇa. After all, material opulence in this world is temporary. We may keep something in this world for ten or twenty years, but then we have to give it up. So the real importance to life is not whether one is materially opulent. The cheaters and atheists may amass a lot of wealth, but this does not make one successful in the true sense. For example, despite its advancement, the richest country in the world, the United States, is turning out disturbed and unhappy people such as hippies. We cannot say that an atheist is successful just because he has some wealth or a big position. We have to know how to actually judge happiness and success. Real success is to develop self-realization, become a devotee of Kṛṣṇa and within this lifetime go back home, back to Godhead. But even while on the path of devotional service, we devotees in the International Society for Krishna Consciousness feel no difficulty for lack of material necessities. If we suffer any hardships, we can understand that it is Kṛṣṇa's mercy that we are only receiving token suffering for all the wrongdoings that we have committed in so many lifetimes. Once one surrenders to Kṛṣṇa through the bona fide spiritual master, all past sinful activities are washed away, and the Lord protects him personally. This can be personally realized by one who takes to devotional service.

Your servant,
Satsvarūpa dāsa Gosvāmī

BRIGHT DAY OF THE SOUL



Adialogue

by Hayagrīva dāsa (ISKCON New Vṛndāvana)

We stood on a rooftop in Manhattan,
gazing out over the East River and the Brooklyn Bridge toward Brooklyn.
His friend for many years, I asked him, "Do you actually love Kṛṣṇa?"
He thought for a second. "I love pleasure," he said finally. "To be truthful."

"Is Kṛṣṇa giving you that pleasure?" I asked.

"Theoretically I admit that He is," he said. "For I know that Kṛṣṇa is the reservoir of all pleasure. But I often feel that the pleasure I'm taking is not to His liking."

"To what do you attribute this?"

"Envy," he said unhesitatingly. "He is infinite, and I am finite; He is powerful, and I am weak; He is opulent, and I am poor; He is beautiful, and I am brutish; He is famous, and I am insignificant; He is wise, and I am foolish; He can renounce everything, but I can deny myself nothing. Is there no wonder I am envious?"

"If He has all these qualities," I asked him, "why don't you love Him?"

"Because I cannot see Him," he said.

"Why not?"

"Because I'm so unfortunate that I don't want to. Because I'm so polluted that I can't," he said.

"Your position is pretty sorrowful," I said. "What can I do about it?"

"Pray for me," he said.

We fell silent for a moment. I watched the seagulls pivot about the bridge in white circles. We had come up dark and narrow stairs to the bright day at the top of the roof. I noticed that he automatically felt his back pocket.

"What are you looking for?" I asked.

"Checking," he said. "My wallet."

"Why?"

"I'm afraid of losing it," he said. "It's my life savings."

"But you said everything belongs to Him," I laughed.

"How can you lose anything that is not yours?"

"It's not really mine," he said. "It's His. I'm simply afraid that He'll take it from me."

"Then you're a thief," I said. "A thief afraid of being caught."

"You might say that," he relented. "Whatever I have He's slowly taking back because I've stolen it from Him. I have some beauty, but every day He is slowly taking that away. I have some strength, but the longer I live the less strength I have. When I was in college I felt that I was acquiring knowledge, but now not a day passes when I don't feel myself more and more foolish. I used to think of myself as the center of the universe, the most important person alive, but now I only feel my insignificance as one of three billion people on a tiny planet destined to live only three score year and ten and to be buried in a grave that hardly lasts any longer. As you see, my friend, my position is not very enviable; therefore I envy."

"But what of love?" I asked. "What of your capacity to love?"

"Whatever I love is simply a reflection of Him," he said. "Because I can't see Him, I love only reflections of Him. He is youthful, and therefore I love youth. He is all-knowing, and therefore I love knowledge. He is eternal; therefore I love life. He is blissful, and therefore I love pleasure. I would love only Him if I could but see Him, but I don't deserve that benediction."

"You seem conscious of Him," I said. "Isn't that at all

auspicious?"

"Would you consider the position of one holding but a faded photograph of his lover an enviable position?" he asked. "I may see Him in the beauty of the sky, in a landscape, or in another person, or I may hear Him in a voice or in the lyrics of a popular song, or I may smell Him in the fragrance of gardenias or the musky twilight, or I may taste Him in the freshness of water or a just-cut melon, or I may touch Him when I feel someone beside me—but these are just memories. These are not Him."

"Perhaps they are Him," I suggested. "But perhaps He is teasing you."

"Then He is a good teaser," he admitted. "I often see myself running in circles like a dizzy schoolgirl, just waiting for Him to pay me a little mind." He laughed at the image he had conjured of himself. "We are all female," he said finally, "at least in respect to Him. He is the enjoyer, and we are the enjoyed. Isn't it the position of the female to be enjoyed?"

"It is," I agreed.

"Then in relation to Him we are all female," he said. "He is always controlling, and we are always being controlled. Now what we have to learn is to enjoy being controlled. That is what the *gopīs* enjoy—being controlled."

"No one enjoys being controlled," I said. "Surely you're mistaken."

"In all cases but love you're right," he said. "But in love we secretly want to be controlled. This is because we need direction, and we feel that the object of love can give us direction. Therefore love always concentrates on its eternity. When we love someone, we always feel, 'I love you forever.' In other words, 'Love's not time's foot, though rosey lips and cheeks within his bending sickle's compass come. Love alters not with these brief hours and weeks, but bears it out even to the edge of doom.' If love is not forever, then it is not love. We all feel this in our love relations, and we ask no less from our lover but that he pledge eternal love. Practically speaking, though, isn't this unreasonable to ask? Eternal love. Who is capable of that?"

"The eternal lover," I smiled.

"Then that's who we actually love," he said. "Anyone other than that is but a poor substitute."



"Who is the eternal lover?" I asked. "And what is He like?"

"He is male," he said. "And He is but a youth."

"The eternal father?"

"The eternal father," he repeated. "He is a youth, and yet He is the eternal father. We think of Him as old, and indeed He is the oldest, but because of this we think that He is an old man, and this is all due to our thinking of Him as an ordinary person. He *is* the oldest, but He is eternally young, just like an adolescent boy."

"You speak of the Eternal Boy," I said, "but I want

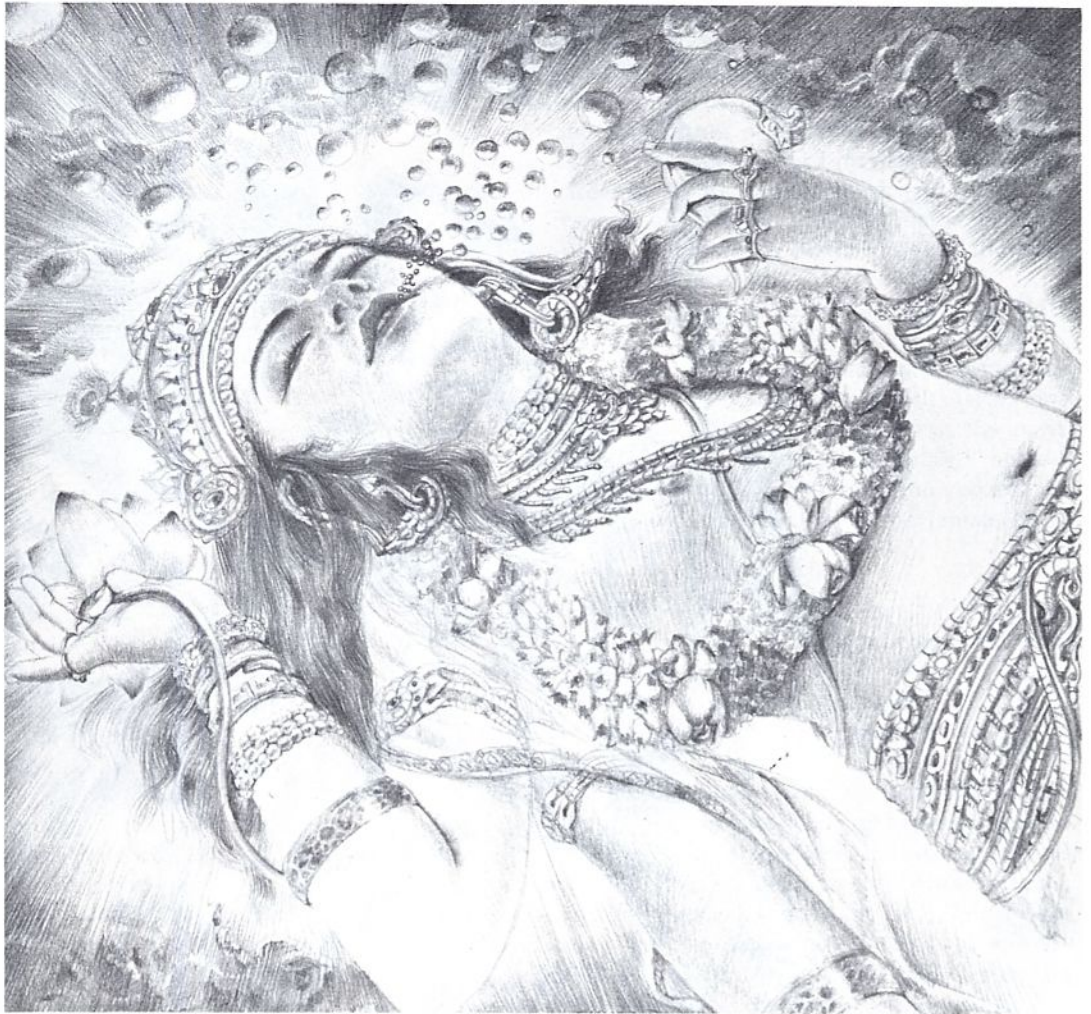


to see the eternal girl. It is she who interests me."

"She is His," he said. "Why should she be interested in you when she has Him?"

I did not answer. We looked a long time at the long rows of buildings before us and through the hot haze saw streams of cars moving slowly along the shores of Brooklyn.

“These bodies of ours are like flashes,” he mused. “We no sooner cultivate them but they grow old and diseased, and they die. We no sooner learn to enjoy ourselves here than we are quickly taken away. All we need know is that whatever we see in the world that is beautiful or magnificent is but a reflection of Him. We need not even think in terms of him and her, as Śukadeva Gosvāmī did not even perceive sexual distinctions but saw all creatures as living entities, intimately part of Him. The great sages travel through life without losing a glimpse of His presence. In comparison to them, we are like confused children, running from this object to that for satisfaction. Instead of satisfaction, all we find is pain, pain inflicted by other living entities, by nature and



by our own minds and bodies. All we want is to drink the waters of satisfaction, but all we get are the waters of discontent. All we seek is the nectar of His lotus feet, but all we get is the bile of our own doubt. Because we are weak, we have ceased to even search for Him. Because we are deaf, we have ceased to even hear of Him. Because we are callous, we have ceased to even feel Him. Because we are poor, we have ceased to even hope for Him, and because we are not renounced, we have forgotten Him. Our only hope is that out of pity He will turn His lotus eyes to us, and out of pity He will allow us to glimpse the waters of the Yamunā River where He bathed and splashed with His feet. Our hopes may not seem realistic, but they are great because they are directed to the great. We have no conception of how great He is. We can only think of this one body, or one nation, or one planet, or one universe. But simply with one exhalation innumerable universes emanate from the pores of His skin, and with one inhalation they all return to His body, and in this way the entire cosmic creation is manifest and annihilated according to a time cycle beyond our powers of comprehension, for universal time loses all significance in the face of what we have to call eternity.”

“He exists in eternity?” I asked.

“Eternity exists in Him,” he said, “for it was never without Him. We cannot imagine His beginning. That is not possible, for He is *ādi-puruṣa*, the primeval person, the first progenitor, the unmoved mover, the cause of all causes, the beginning, middle and end of all beings, the mighty God and everlasting Father of all. His greatness we cannot imagine, but we should not be concerned with this. The *gopīs*, the cowherd girls of Vṛndāvana, do not recognize Him as such, as the almighty Godhead, but as a boy beloved by them. For them He is not Yahweh, whose name is unspoken, nor a burning bush, nor a voice from the mountain, nor a thunderbolt, nor the multi-handed Mahā-Viṣṇu, nor Nārāyaṇa with all opulences, nor the great Allah, nor the triumphant Messiah, but a young boy named Kṛṣṇa who simply tends the cows, plays His flute and dances. For the *gopīs* there is no one more beautiful than He, nor anyone as merry, or, for that matter, as wise. Above all, He knows how to make them mad for Him. During the *rāsa* dances He would disappear, and the *gopīs* would wander about the forests of Vṛndāvana calling for Him. How little they cared about God! Being young country girls, they did not

even think of God. Their thoughts were always with Kṛṣṇa, their friend. Once, when they found Him in the woods waiting for Rādhārāṇī, He played a trick on them by spouting two extra arms and appearing in His form as Lord Nārāyaṇa. When the *gopīs* approached Him, they offered their obeisances out of formality and then quickly excused themselves to run off and continue looking for Kṛṣṇa. They saw Nārāyaṇa, God, in the woods, but they were so eager to find Kṛṣṇa that they simply passed Him by. The *gopīs* were not great theologians or philosophers, though we understand that in their previous lives they were great sages, and they manifested themselves as cowherd girls in Vṛndāvana in order to relish a love relationship with Kṛṣṇa. As *gopīs* their one obsession was Kṛṣṇa. Nor did they think of Him philosophically as the embodiment of all spiritual qualities. To them He was just Kṛṣṇa, the boy with the lotus eyes, the friend whose flute charmed them, Kṛṣṇa, their most dearly beloved. Their only reward for loving Him was that love itself and the anguish of separation, but separation was even more relishable than meeting, if such could be, for in separation they thought of Him constantly. Every object that met their gaze reminded them of Him. Their minds pondered His form and recalled His words. Upon hearing a flute they would swoon, and the sight of a peacock would make them mad with ecstasy. For Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who longed for Kṛṣṇa as Rādhā, every stream and rivulet was the River Yamunā, and every flower and bee had a story to tell about Kṛṣṇa. The animals somehow knew of Him secretly, but they would not divulge His whereabouts or their own knowledge of Him. Who can imagine the ecstasy of the *gopīs* when Kṛṣṇa left Vṛndāvana? Some even threw themselves under the wheels of His chariot, imploring Him not to leave for the city life of Mathurā. In the absence of Kṛṣṇa, the *gopīs* constantly wept, wondering when He would return and discussing His activities amongst themselves. Lord Viṣṇu was always being worshiped by demigods like Śiva, Brahmā, Indra, Candra and others, but when Kṛṣṇa walked through the forests of Vṛndāvana, only the cowherd boys walked with Him. He took pleasure in calling the cows and in playing His flute and sometimes in running and wrestling with the cowherd boys. When He walked the banks of the Yamunā, He was always garlanded with many forest flowers, and His body was smeared with the pulp of sandalwood and *tulasī* leaves. The aroma surrounding Him attracted the bees, and they would hum about Him when He played His flute so that it seemed they were performing together. When His flute sounded in the woods, all the animals would stand still and even cease chewing grass to listen carefully. Even the fish and birds appeared stunned by the sounds. Sometimes Kṛṣṇa was accompanied by Balarāma, His elder brother, who appeared almost as attractive as Kṛṣṇa Himself. After a day in the fields with the cows, Kṛṣṇa would return home like the moon arising in the evening. Sometimes it would appear that He was a little fatigued from His vigorous day, but He would swagger into His home with a large stride, and all men, women and cows would immediately forget their hardships. After Kṛṣṇa had

left Vṛndāvana for Mathurā, the cowherd girls would remember how He embraced them and talked with them, smiling sweetly, after the *rāsa* dance in the forests of Vṛndāvana. Sometimes His face would be smeared with the dust raised by the hooves of the cows, and this made Him all the more attractive to them. What did they care for Nārāyaṇa and all His jeweled opulence? They only thought of Kṛṣṇa and His moving eyes and remembered His words and their sweet times with Him. The *gopīs* wept throughout the night before He left, and they watched His chariot as long as possible until it faded from sight. They remained standing still like painted pictures, watching the dust of His chariot in the distance. Then they returned to their homes and simply thought of Him day and night. Of all the *gopīs*, Rādhārāṇī was most grief-stricken. Once She took a bumblebee to be Kṛṣṇa's messenger and began to talk to it. She accused the bumblebee of being like his master Kṛṣṇa, in that the bee's habit was to sit on a flower, take a little honey from it and immediately fly away to taste another flower. 'Kṛṣṇa gives us the chance to taste the touch of His lips, and then He leaves us altogether,' Rādhārāṇī lamented. Thus the *gopīs* pined like school girls while Kṛṣṇa was away from them. Now He is gone from us, or somehow we have lost Him, and it's our great tragedy that we cannot even remember or long for Him. If we cannot shed tears for Him, then we should shed tears because we cannot weep. Now we are suffering because we're trying to find some way to forget Him completely. We run from object to object to avoid Him, but eventually everything parts from us, and we are left with either the thought of Him or the thought of our own death. Yes, if we are left without a thought of Him, He comes for us as death. He Himself says that for those who have forgotten Him, He comes as death to take everything away. But even then we have the freedom to turn from Him, for that freedom He never denies us."

"The freedom to turn to Him or avoid Him?" I asked.

"The freedom to love Him or not," he replied. "For without freedom there can be no love. If I were God, I could certainly force you to love me, but that would not be love. Love is not forced by someone exterior. Love is response, relationship, communication. Love is the assertion of our being, of our essence as living entities. If we were not allowed freedom to love, we would be puppets only. There is Kṛṣṇa and His creation; Kṛṣṇa is complete in Himself, and the creation is complete in itself. All the qualities that are in Kṛṣṇa, including the quality of freedom, are also in the creation in minute quantity. Now we must understand that as His creation, we are meant to give Him pleasure, and in giving Him pleasure, we receive it in return. But who knows of this? We have fallen, and our concern is now just with ourselves. We are like the chained prisoners of Socrates' cave, enjoying the pageant of shadows about us, content with squinting in the darkness."

"We need direction," I said. "Without it we're bound to the cave and the cycles of birth and death."

"The spiritual master has come within the cave singing His names," he said. "And now he's leading us out. We must



be careful not to hide in the crevices or to lose his voice around the dark corners. We have to listen, not lose his voice, and hasten in the dark after him, trusting that he is leading us out into the light, for he has come from the light and knows the way. Is there any other who knows our destination? We may think we know our position on a map, but who knows the destination of mankind? Where are we going? What was our past? We can't even remember the past events in this our present life, but Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna, 'Many, many births both you and I have passed. I can remember all of them, but you cannot.' And He also tells Arjuna that there was never a time when He did not exist, nor Arjuna, nor all the kings at Kurukṣetra, nor that in the future any of them shall cease to exist. Kṛṣṇa tells us clearly of our eternity and destination, and if His song is too lofty for our comprehension, if we cannot hear it in the depths of the cave amidst the panoramas of shadows

projected by desire, the spiritual master actually descends to guide us. Our destination is beyond the irreversible succession of events through which we pass out of that cave. Our destiny indeed is to leave that cave, and to arrive. Our journey is our actual evolution, our soul's evolution through material bodies that but serve us in our escape. Our soul's progress is symptomized by consciousness, and in its highest state the soul is conscious of Kṛṣṇa, of its ultimate destination, of its home."

We looked out again across the rooftops toward Brooklyn. The city was hot and seemed to be roaring in pain about us, like an enraged bull. A blast of heat from the streets, of deadly fumes, swept up like an angry sigh.

"After all," he said, "Home is not so different from what we expected—a quiet and simple place in the country with lots of trees and cows, and Him there, ready to play, stopping and waiting for us." ●



“This knowledge is the king of education, the most secret of all secrets. It is the purest knowledge, and because it gives direct perception of the self by realization, it is the perfection of religion. It is everlasting, and it is joyfully performed.”

--Bhagavad-gītā 9.2



BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ AS IT IS
 His Divine Grace
 A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda