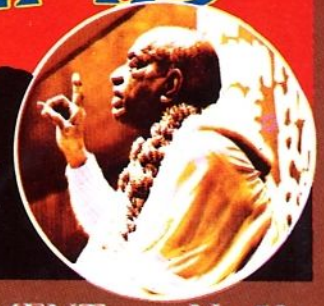


GODHEAD IS LIGHT. NESCIENCE IS DARKNESS. WHERE THERE IS GODHEAD THERE IS NO NESCIENCE.



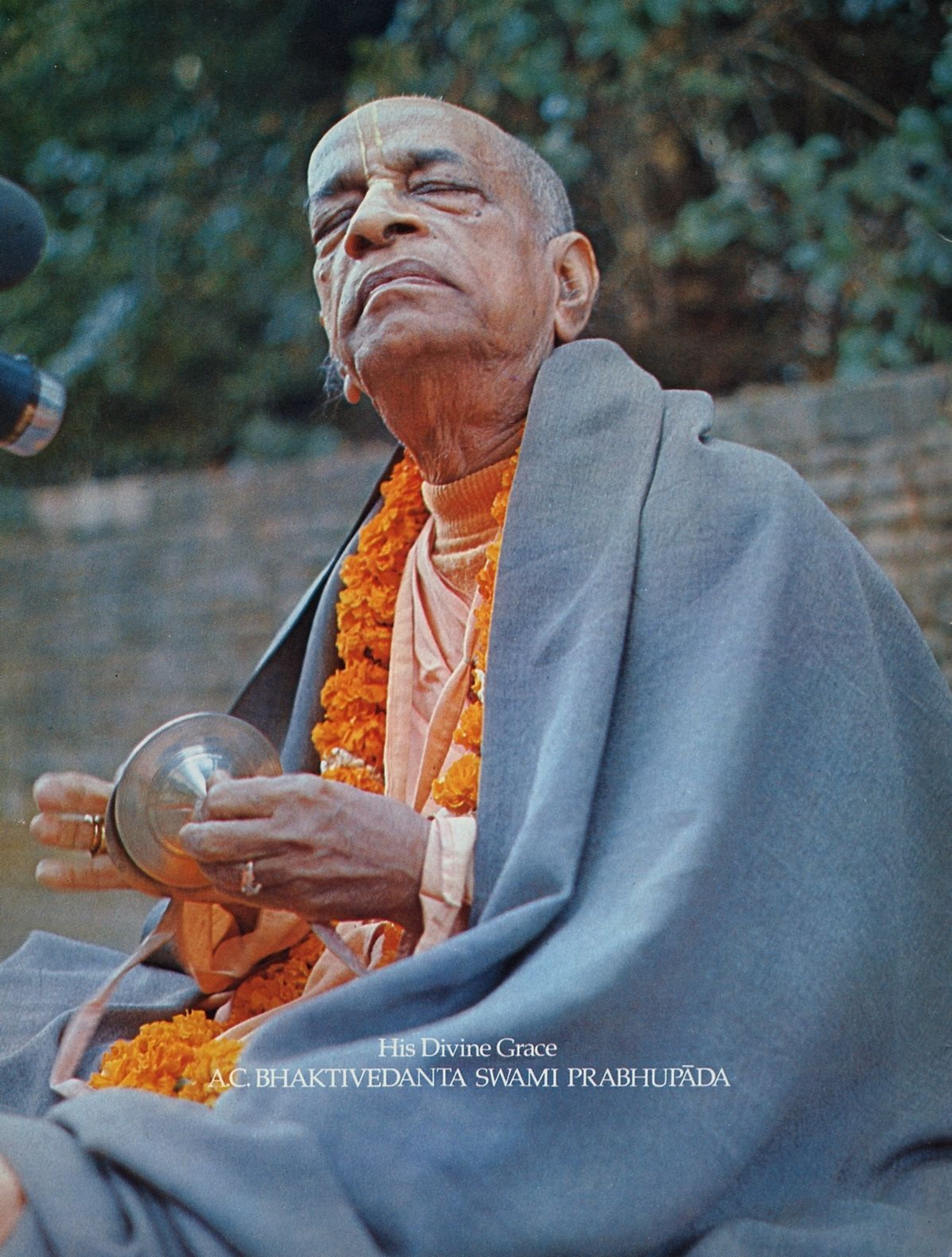
# BACK TO GODHEAD



THE MAGAZINE OF THE HARE KRISHNA MOVEMENT

No.53





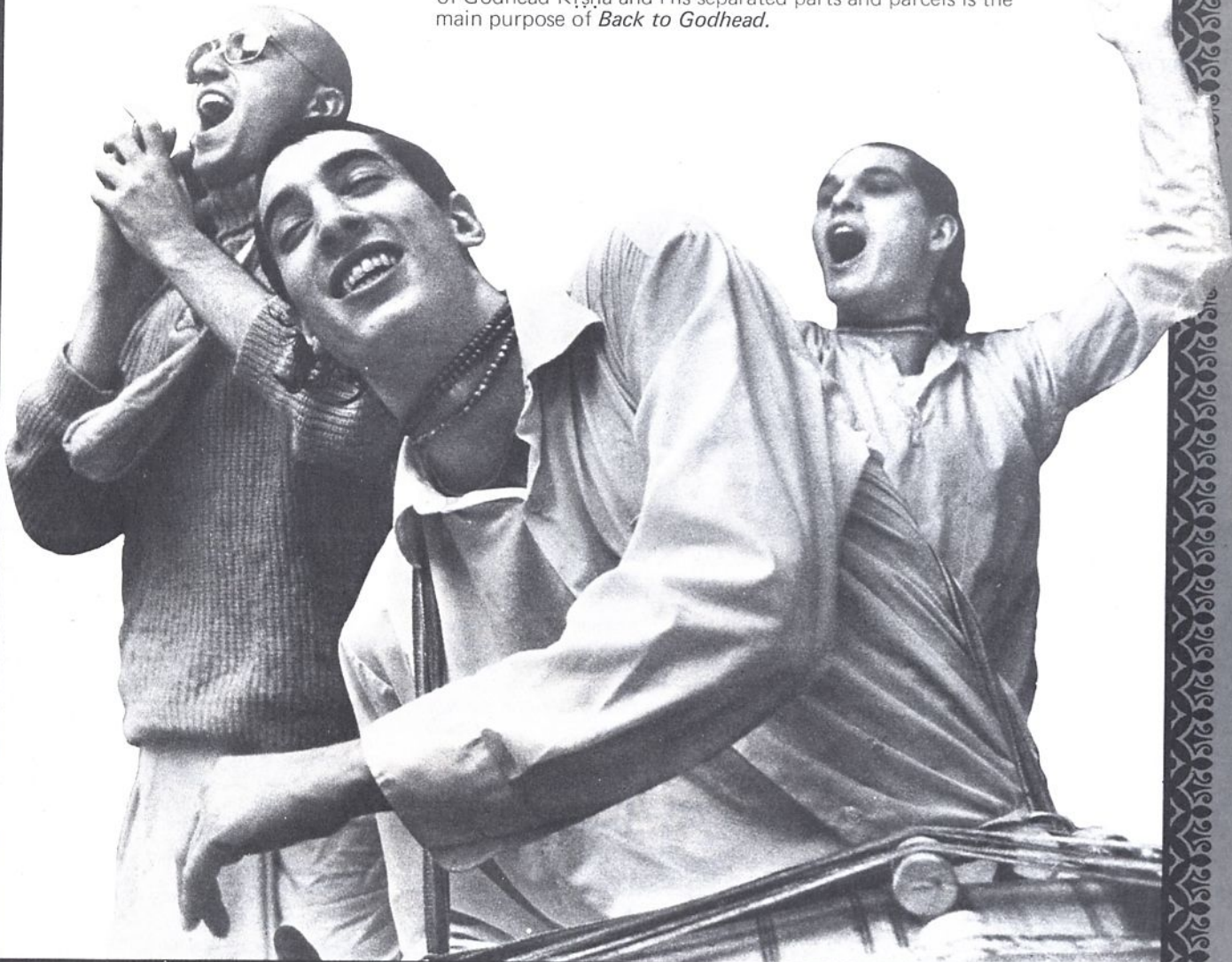
His Divine Grace  
A.C. BHAKTIVEDANTA SWAMI PRABHUPĀDA

**Hare Kṛṣṇa  
Hare Kṛṣṇa  
Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa  
Hare Hare**

**Hare Rāma  
Hare Rāma  
Rāma Rāma  
Hare Hare**

One of our most important purposes in publishing *Back to Godhead Magazine* is to teach the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*. Everyone can easily chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare and always be happy.

The philosophy of *Back to Godhead* is that every living being, whether he appears in a black body, white body, yellow body or even in an animal's or tree's body, is an eternal servant of God. All of these different bodies are only different kinds of outward dress. Just as a dramatic actor may appear continually in different costumes, so, although we are pure spirit souls, we appear in different bodies. Our real, joyful life begins as soon as we admit to our real identity as pure spirit soul, part and parcel of Kṛṣṇa or God. Anyone who is interested in his real spiritual identity should read *Back to Godhead* to clarify and perfect his philosophical understanding of himself and God, and also he should chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*. As he chants Hare Kṛṣṇa, the entire science of God will be revealed to him. If one seriously chants the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* and regularly reads *Back to Godhead*, he can live peacefully and blissfully in this life, and at the time of death he can go directly to associate with Kṛṣṇa in the spiritual sky. To promote this blissful reunion between the Supreme Personality of Godhead Kṛṣṇa and His separated parts and parcels is the main purpose of *Back to Godhead*.





**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 *fiire*. The *c* is pronounced as in the English word *chair*, and the aspirated consonants (*ch*, *jh*, *dh*, etc.) are pronounced as in *staunch-heart*, *hedge-hog*, *red-hot*, etc. The two spirants *ś* and *ṣ* are pronounced like the English *sh*; *s* is pronounced as in *sun*. Thus *Kṛṣṇa* is pronounced KRISHNA, *Caitanya* is pronounced CHAITANYA, etc.

## INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS / MEMBERSHIP

The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is presenting a scientific program for the spiritualization 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** When Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Lord, was playing like a child of this material world to manifest His eternal pastimes, He used to break the butter pots of His foster mother Yaśodā and distribute the contents to His friends. Out of her pure love, mother Yaśodā once decided to punish her transcendental son, and she took a rope and threatened to tie up the Lord, who then bowed His head and began to weep just like an ordinary child. This picture of the Lord is adored by pure devotees because they are conscious of the Lord's supreme position.

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# KNOWING AND SERVING THE ORIGINAL PERSON

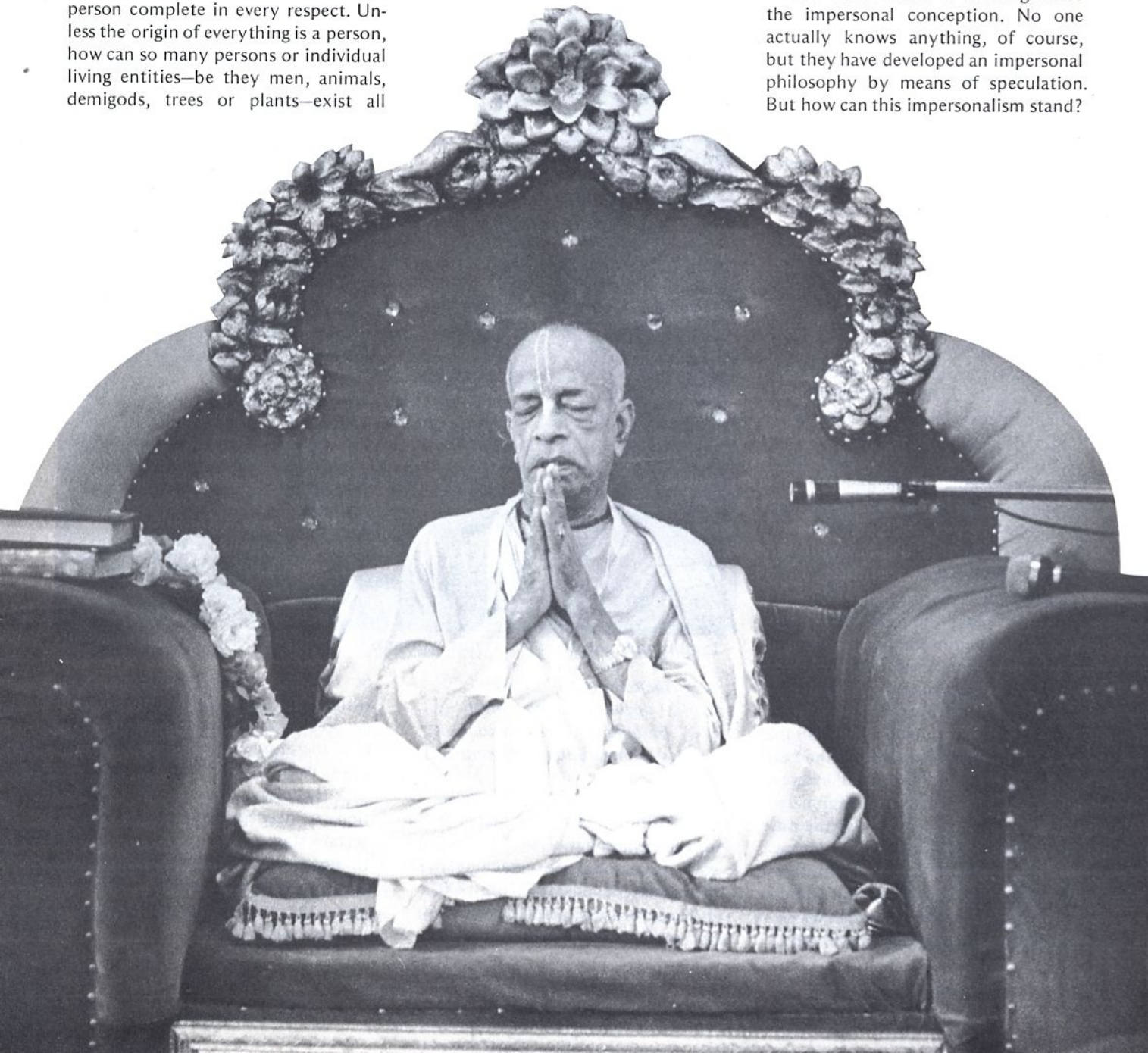
## His Divine Grace A.C. BHAKTIVEDANTA SWAMI PRABHUPĀDA

The word Govinda refers to one who gives pleasure to the cows and the senses. There are many incarnations of Godhead, but Govinda is the *ādi-puruṣa*, or the original person. As such He is not technically an incarnation of God but is God Himself, the source of incarnations. Govinda is not some impersonal effulgence or void but a person complete in every respect. Unless the origin of everything is a person, how can so many persons or individual living entities—be they men, animals, demigods, trees or plants—exist all

over the universe? Every living entity is an individual spirit soul, and every individual spirit soul is a person. How, then, can the origin of everything be impersonal and nothing more? Personal qualities must be there in Him, otherwise they cannot be reflected in this material world. This then is the con-

clusion of Lord Brahmā in the verse *Govindam ādi-puruṣaṁ tam ahaṁ bhajāmi*. Lord Brahmā is the original creature in this universe, and in *Brahma-saṁhitā* he states that his origin is also a person. "I worship that original person," he states throughout *Brahma-saṁhitā*.

The whole world is laboring under the impersonal conception. No one actually knows anything, of course, but they have developed an impersonal philosophy by means of speculation. But how can this impersonalism stand?



It is contradicted at every step of our experience, for every individual entity is a person, and the complete whole from which all entities emanate is also a person. *Ādi-puruṣam*. This is the verdict of Lord Brahmā, who, having created the universe, knows well what is within this universe. We have very little knowledge of what is within this universe, and what is beyond is totally unknown to us. This is not the case with Lord Brahmā, however. Lord Brahmā is *ādi-kavaye*, which means that he is the original learned person, the creator of this universe. *Tene brahma hṛdā ya ādi-kavaye muhyanti yat sūrayaḥ* (*Bhāg.* 1.1.1). The origin of everything, the Absolute, the *sum-mum bonum*, cannot be impersonal, for He is the origin of the person Brahmā. We have no experience of a person coming from something impersonal; because my father is a person, I am also a person. If we trace back through our family trees, we will find that one person comes from another person, and somehow, if it were possible to trace our origins back to the beginning of creation, we will find the original person whom Brahmā is praising. The origin of the universe is not void, nor is it some primeval muck, but the origin is a learned person.

Brahmā, being the first creature, received his knowledge from the original person, and that is described in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. The word Brahmā means *jñāna* or knowledge. One may question how Brahmā could learn from another person if he were the original creature in the universe. Who was the spiritual master who imparted knowledge to him? In *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* it is indicated that that knowledge came from within the heart of Brahmā. God is situated in everyone's heart, and although Brahmā was the first and only creature at the time, the other person, the *ādi-puruṣa*, was within his heart. It is also stated in *Bhagavad-gītā* that *īśvara*, the Supreme Lord, is situated within everyone's heart and is giving directions to everyone.



Lord Brahmā, seated on his lotus, worships the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

*īśvaraḥ sarva-bhūtānāṃ  
hṛd-deśe 'rjuna tiṣṭhati  
bhrāmayan sarva-bhūtāni  
yantrārūḍhāni māyayā*

“The Supreme Lord is situated in everyone's heart, O Arjuna, and is directing the wanderings of all living entities, who are seated as on a machine, made of the material energy.” (Bg. 18.61)

Those who are not devotees cannot understand how it is that Kṛṣṇa

or God is giving instructions from within the heart, but those who are devotees can understand. The devotees therefore are trying to hear the Lord from within, but in order to hear properly this special qualification is needed. One must be at a certain stage of spiritual advancement. In *Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa indicates that to those who are devoted to Him, He gives the means whereby they can understand Him:



The Supreme Personality of Godhead expands Himself in many incarnations.

*teṣāṁ satata-yuktānāṁ  
bhajatāṁ prīti-pūrvakam  
dadāmi buddhi-yogaṁ taṁ  
yena mām upayānti te*

“To those who are constantly devoted and worship Me with love, I give the understanding by which they can come to Me.” (Bg. 10.10)

The words *teṣāṁ satata-yuktānāṁ* mean “to be engaged.” The devotees of Kṛṣṇa engage full-time in devotional

service out of love (*prīti-pūrvakam*). The devotees always enjoy thinking, “Here is an opportunity to serve Kṛṣṇa.” The more they engage in service, the more they are pleased and the faster they make advancement in spiritual life. There is no question of retirement. When we perform some material service, we get tired and think, “Oh, I have worked so much. Now let me take a vacation.” However, when one performs spiritual service, he actually gets

more energy and says, “Let me serve more.” To such a sincere devotee, the Lord, sitting within the heart, gives instructions: “Do this, and you will very soon come to Me.” He also gives different instructions to others who do not want to turn to Him. “You want to do this? Here is your opportunity then. If you want to steal, then go ahead.” If we wish not to turn to Kṛṣṇa, if we wish to forget Him completely, He will give us that facility, for He is always satisfying our desires. Consequently it is stated in *Bhagavad-gītā* that He gives us remembrance of Himself and also allows us to forget, if that is our desire.

*sarvasya cāhaṁ hṛdi sanniviṣṭo  
mattaḥ smṛtir jñānam apohanaṁ ca  
vedaiś ca sarvair aham eva vedyo  
vedānta-kṛd veda-vid eva cāham*

“I am seated in everyone’s heart, and from Me come remembrance, knowledge and forgetfulness. By all the *Vedas* am I to be known; indeed I am the compiler of *Vedānta*, and I am the knower of the *Vedas*.” (Bg. 15.15)

Ordinary persons cannot understand how God can be a person because they think, “God must be a person like me.” Therefore in some of the scriptures a personality is denied, for as soon as the foolish accept a personality, they think, “God is a person like me.” Therefore it is said, “God is not a person,” and in some religions, like the Judaic religion, even images of God in the form of pictures or statues are not allowed. But this is not to say that God is not a person at all. When it is said that God is not a person, we should understand that He is not a person like us. In actuality, He is a person, but He is a different kind of person. *Īśvaraḥ paramaḥ kṛṣṇaḥ sac-cid-ānanda-vigrahaḥ*: His personality is eternal; His body does not die like ours. His body is full of bliss, whereas our body is full of misery. His body is full of knowledge, whereas ours is full of ignorance. And He is *Īśvara*, the con-

troller, whereas we are the controlled. How then can God be a person like us?

Because we are incapable of understanding how the Absolute Truth can be a person, we have to take lessons from Brahmā, the supreme poet and sage of the universe who is the first created person. We are all in the *Brahma-sampradāya*, or the disciplic succession starting from Lord Brahmā; therefore we accept Brahmā's statements and worship *ādi-puruṣam*, Govinda. We may not know that *ādi-puruṣa*, but if we follow in the footsteps of the *ācāryas*, great spiritual teachers, we will not have difficulty. Govinda gives Brahmā instructions from within his heart, and Brahmā gives instructions to his disciple Nārada, and Nārada gives instructions to his disciple Vyāsa. Vyāsa's disciple Madhvācārya repeats the same message, then Īśvara Purī, and then his disciple Caitanya Mahāprabhu, then the *gosvāmīs*, etc. In this way knowledge is received by *paramparā*, step by step in the disciplic succession. When the same message is repeated without deviation, the knowledge is transmitted perfectly.

From the *śāstras* or scriptures we learn that the *ādi-puruṣa* or original person expands Himself in many incarnations. These incarnations are diverse, and their activities are described in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. On one occasion Lord Kṛṣṇa incarnated as a boar, Varāha, and lifted the world up when it was merged within the waters of the Garbhodaka Ocean. The demon Hiraṇyākṣa pushed the earth within the watery half of the universe, and Lord Kṛṣṇa, in the shape of a boar, not only delivered the planet but annihilated the demon. On another occasion the Lord appeared as a small fish in a water pot, and as time elapsed this fish got bigger and had to be taken to a reservoir. The fish kept increasing in size, and when He was quite huge He informed Manu, "Devastation is coming. Take all the *Vedas* and put them in a boat, and I shall protect them." Therefore Jayadeva Gosvāmī sings in his prayer,

"My Lord, in the shape of a fish You saved the *Vedas* when there was devastation." The incarnations of Godhead are described in prayers offered by Jayadeva Gosvāmī, a Vaiṣṇava poet who appeared about seven hundred years before Lord Caitanya. Jayadeva was a great devotee, and he wrote a very famous song about the Lord called *Gīta-govinda*. He offers another prayer to the tortoise incarnation. Once the demons and demigods were using a great hill as a churning rod and were churning the ocean with it. The resting place of the churning rod was the shell of the tortoise incarnation. Jayadeva Gosvāmī therefore prayed: "You appeared as a tortoise just to be a resting place for the churning rod. Your back itched, and You accepted this hill as a rod to scratch the itch."

In another incarnation, Nṛsimha-deva, the Lord appeared in order to save Prahlāda Mahārāja, a five-year-old boy who was being tortured by his atheistic father. The Lord appeared from a pillar of the father's palace as a half-man, half-lion. Prahlāda's father, Hiraṇyakaśipu, had received benediction from Lord Brahmā that assured him that he would not be killed by any man or animal, so the Lord appeared neither as man nor as animal. We often think that we can thus cheat the Lord by our intelligence, but the Lord is more intelligent than we.

In another incarnation the Lord appeared as Vāmana, a dwarf. Lord Vāmana appeared before Bali Mahārāja, who had conquered all the universal planets and had thus disturbed the demigods. Vāmana said, "I am a *brāhmaṇa*, and I have come to beg from you." Bali Mahārāja said, "Yes, I'll give You what You want." The dwarf asked for only three feet of land, and Bali Mahārāja granted His wish. Vāmanadeva then took one step and covered half the universe, and then He took another step and covered the other half. Bali Mahārāja then said, "There is no place for You to take the third step, so please place Your foot

on my head." In another incarnation, as Paraśurāma, the Lord killed all of the *kṣatriya* kings twenty-one times because of the kings' dishonesty. From the history of the *Mahābhārata*, it can be understood that at that time some of the *kṣatriyas* fled and took shelter in Europe, and consequently modern Europeans are descendants of those *kṣatriyas*. As Lord Rāma, the Lord fought with Rāvaṇa, a demon with ten heads, and ruled the earth as an ideal king. As Balarāma, the elder brother of Kṛṣṇa and the incarnation of Saṅkarṣaṇa, the Lord was very beautiful, white in complexion, and He wore blue garments. Once He became angry with the Yamunā River, and He threatened to dry it up. Out of fear of Balarāma, the Yamunā agreed to cooperate with Him. As Lord Buddha, the Lord destroyed the Vedic principles with flawless logic and is therefore considered an atheist. Lord Buddha, however, was an incarnation of Kṛṣṇa, and he denied the *Vedas* in order to save animals which were being sacrificed according to the injunctions of the *Vedas*. In the name of Vedic sacrifice, people were improperly killing animals, and the Lord, as Lord Buddha, appeared to preach nonviolence.

At the end of this age, Kali-yuga, the Lord will appear as Kalki. According to the *Vedas*, Kalki will appear 427,000 years from now, and His mission will simply be to kill. Lord Kṛṣṇa gave instructions in the form of *Bhagavad-gītā*, but Lord Kalki will not give any instructions. At the end of Kali-yuga people will be so degraded that they will not be able to understand any instructions; therefore the only recourse will be to kill them. One who is killed by the Lord attains salvation. This is one of the Lord's all-merciful qualities; whether He protects or kills, the result is the same. Thus Kalki will appear at the last stage of Kali-yuga and annihilate everything, and after that time, Satya-yuga (the Golden Age) will begin again.





By chanting the holy names of God one can get all benefits.

In this way we can see that God is not only a person as the *ādi-puruṣa*, the original person, but that He manifests Himself throughout the universe in innumerable incarnations and expansions which are also personal in quality.

Despite all this, we often challenge the Lord and say, "There is no God," or "I am God," or even "I don't care for God." Despite this attitude, which is typical of this age, God is there, and

we can see Him at every moment. If we deny God's personality, then He will be present before us as cruel death. In *Bhagavad-gītā* there are instructions teaching us how we can gradually understand God and see Him personally, face to face. In *Bhagavad-gītā*, the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself states, "I am the taste of water, I am the sunlight, I am the moonlight, I am the vibration of sound in the sky, and amongst great personalities I am

the greatest." If anyone is actually serious about understanding God, or the science of God, he can follow the injunctions given in *Bhagavad-gītā* and realize God in so many ways. Everyone is tasting water daily, so if we remember that God is the taste of water, then God realization begins. Who has not seen the moon or the sun? And who has not heard sound vibrating in the air? In so many ways we can see, feel and hear God. Everyone sees God at every moment, but the atheists claim they do not see Him because He does not exist.

Without God consciousness, or without Kṛṣṇa consciousness, there cannot be any peace. Everyone is hankering after peace, but no one knows how to achieve it. Therefore this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is promoting the greatest welfare work in the world. The process of understanding this science of Kṛṣṇa is made very easy in this age by Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu through the chanting of the holy names of God, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. In the *Vedas* it is stated that in this age people are so fallen that they cannot realize God by any of the prescribed methods; therefore it is recommended that by chanting the holy names of God in this age one can get all the benefits derived in previous ages from meditation, temple worship and sacrifice. Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who is Kṛṣṇa Himself, instructs us that the holy name of God is nondifferent from the Supreme Lord; therefore all the energy that God has is also there in His holy name. Now on the absolute platform there is no difference between the word and its referent; therefore there is no difference between the holy name of God and God Himself.

Caitanya Mahāprabhu said that there are no hard and fast rules for chanting the name of God, and therefore the names can be chanted anywhere and everywhere. In this age the blind are following the blind, for no one knows the aim and objective of human society

or the perfection of human life. Life is perfected through self-realization and the reestablishment of our lost relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. This Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is attempting to enlighten human society on this important point. According to Vedic civilization, the perfection of life is to realize one's relationship with Kṛṣṇa. From *Bhagavad-gītā* we can understand that all living entities—not only human beings, but animals and lower life forms—are parts and parcels of God. The parts of anything are meant to serve the whole, just as the hands are meant to serve the body. Similarly, as living entities that are part of God, we are duty bound to serve Him.

Actually our position is that we are always rendering service to someone. We are always serving our bodies and the extensions of our bodies in the form of family, society, country and so on. If a person has no one to serve, he sometimes keeps a pet cat or dog and renders service unto it. Constitutionally we are made to render service to the Supreme Person, but when we deny that person we are forced to render service to something else. In any case, the rendering of service will be there, and that rendering of service is called *sanātana-dharma*, or the eternal activity or occupation of the living entity. On the material platform, despite rendering service to our best capacity, we are never satisfied, nor is the person to whom we are rendering that service satisfied. In the material conception, everyone is frustrated, because the service rendered is not properly directed. If we want to render service to a tree, we must water its roots, not just its branches and leaves. Similarly, if the stomach is given food, all the other parts of the body are nourished. We should understand therefore that if the Supreme Personality of Godhead is served, all His parts and parcels will be satisfied also. Therefore all welfare activities, including all service to society, family and nation,

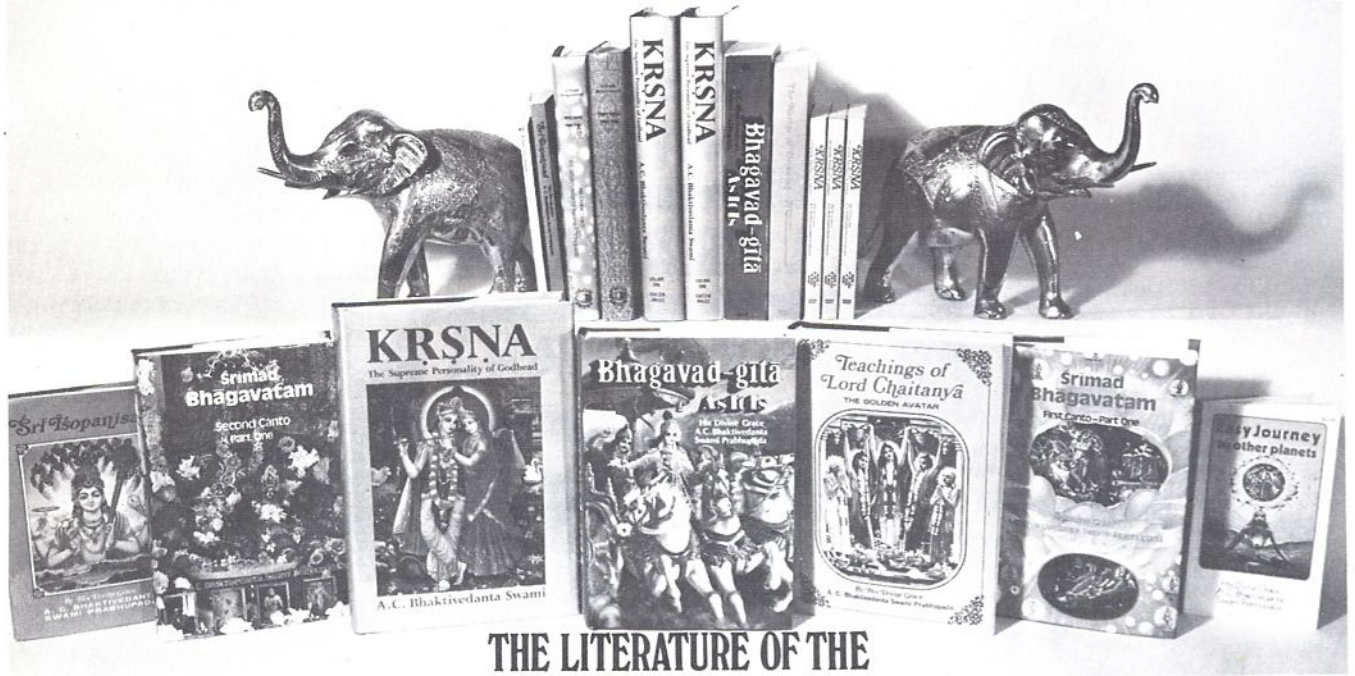


Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the supreme goal of life.

are perfected by serving the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

In a conversation with his disciple, Nārada Muni, Lord Brahmā made the following statement: "The Vedic literatures are made by and are meant for the Supreme Lord. The demigods are also meant to serve the Lord as parts of the body, the different planets are also meant for the sake of the Lord, and different sacrifices are performed just to please Him. All different types

of meditation or mysticism are meant for realizing Him. All austerities are aimed at achieving Him. Culture of transcendental knowledge is for getting a glimpse of Him, and ultimately salvation is in entering His kingdom." (*Bhāg.* 2.5.15-16) By following in the footsteps of Lord Brahmā, we can attain that ultimate salvation and glimpse that Supreme Person worshiped by Lord Brahmā and all other demigods in the universe. ❖



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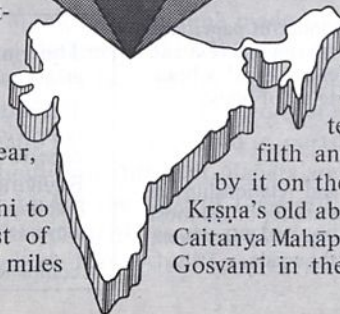
**by Hayagrīva dāsa**

Vṛndāvana, India, the land of Kṛṣṇa five thousand years after the disappearance of the Supreme Person, is invaded by eighty American and European disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda. The white and saffron robed pilgrims arrive in Vṛndāvana for Kārttika, a celebration of Kṛṣṇa's *rāsa* dance with the cowherd girls (*gopīs*) of Vṛndāvana. Yearly, Vṛndāvana is crowded with Kārttika pilgrims from October 15th to November 15th, the best time of year for Vṛndāvana, a month of clear, pleasant days and cool nights.

Vṛndāvana is approached by train from Delhi to Mathurā, about ninety miles to the Southeast of Delhi. From Mathurā, one takes a bus some eight miles

to the village of Vṛndāvana bordered on three sides by the holy River Yamunā. As a cowherd boy, Kṛṣṇa sported in the Yamunā, and Vaiṣṇavas consider its waters more purifying than the Ganges itself.

In Kṛṣṇa's time, Vṛndāvana was a forest, as its name indicates. Today it is a congested holy-town forgotten by the tourist maps, a town of crumbling temples, memories, chanting devotees, filth and poverty-stricken masses. Tourists whiz by it on the Delhi-Agra Express, unaware of passing Kṛṣṇa's old abode. Vṛndāvana was rediscovered by Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu and His disciples Rūpa and Sanātana Gosvāmī in the early 16th Century. Many magnificent



temples were built in honor of Lord Kṛṣṇa, but despite the sanctity of the place, it has not been kept up.

Yet no one can deny the spirituality surcharging the atmosphere above the mud, above the forgetfulness.

The stars of Orion ascending. . . *mṛdaṅgas*, horns and bells wafted by the wind. . . the dogs quiet after a symphony of agonizing howls. . . the night before full moon *rāsa* dance night. . . the *samādhi* (tomb) of Rūpa Gosvāmī silent with the peace of four centuries. . . long branches of the eucalyptus swaying, rustling gently. . . a monkey scurrying across the roof of Rādhā-Dāmodara temple. . . forms iridescent, self-luminous it seems in the moonlight. . .

At six a.m. Śrīla Prabhupāda leaves Rādhā-Dāmodara followed by a half dozen disciples, steps lightly over refuse and walks quickly to *Parikrama* Path, a dirt road along the Yamuna which circles Vṛndāvana. The Yamunā meanders, leaving many *ghāṭas* beside the *parikrama* high and dry. Śrīla Prabhupāda strolls with his head high in the morning air. "The Yamunā was broken many places by Balarāma's plow," he says. *Mantras* from Raṅgajī Temple flow through the air. "You can learn such *mantras*," he says. Peacocks scurry along, unreal blueballs swaying on their heads. Śrīla Prabhupāda turns to me. "So how do you find Vṛndāvana?" he asks. "Beyond words," I answer. Śrīla Prabhupāda has his secretary gather a handful of water from the Yamunā and sprinkle it over his head. "This is as good as bathing in it," he says and walks on. We pass Imlitala Temple and the ancient tamarind tree in its courtyard. It is said that Caitanya Mahāprabhu meditated eight days on the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa beneath that very tamarind. A little further we come to the tall red-brick spires of Madana-mohana, Vṛndāvana's oldest temple, established by Sanātana Gosvāmī. Śrīla Prabhupāda asks the time, then turns back, taking care not to be late for the lecture at seven.

"From '56 to '65 I was in Vṛndāvana," he says. "I would sit at Rādhā-Dāmodara and chant Hare

Kṛṣṇa and see the *samādhi* [of Rūpa Gosvāmī]. And I would type and cook a little. These *samādhis* are the best in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. They gave me inspiration to go to the West. I have a hundred places to go now, but I still like it here." He turns to me. "What do you think, Hayagrīv?"

"I'm glad you asked me here, Śrīla Prabhupāda."

"I think the sanitation facilities are not up to your country's," he laughs. Then seriously: "Since I lived here the city has deteriorated. The sewage has spoiled it all. Instead of Vṛndāvana it is becoming a dungeon. Now there is no place to go in the Yamunā. Gradually they will pollute the whole city." As he speaks, love and regret for Vṛndāvana are in his voice. I recall his dream to renovate the town, rediscover it just as the Gosvāmīs did. "The ugliness that you see here is *yogamāyā*," he says. "It is Kṛṣṇa's covering. Vṛndāvana appears this way to drive away the atheists and impersonalists. For a devotee it is as good as Goloka Vṛndāvana [Kṛṣṇa's transcendental abode], but one must have the eyes to see."

Returning to Rādhā-Dāmodara we pass many white Brahman cows, which resemble the cows in the popular prints of Kṛṣṇa, lotus-eyed cows with long ears, dewlaps and humps. Despite a diet of paper, banana peels and other refuse, they seem surprisingly fat. Their eyes remind me of the jerseys in New Vṛndāvana, and I wonder how they would appreciate a diet of hay and grain. Vṛndāvana has a remarkably large population of cows, dogs, hogs and monkeys. The dogs snarl, howl, cower and starve. They are all small with pointed faces, and few wag their tails. The monkeys are large and aggressive, and they fare quite well. They are good thieves, not only of food but of cassette recorders and cameras, which, it is said, they trade in the marketplace for bananas. The hogs constitute the sanitation department of Vṛndāvana; their snouts plow right down the open sewers devouring stool and indescribable filth.

"It may not be very palatable to hear," Śrīla Prabhupāda says, "but

there is a reason for so many dogs, hogs and monkeys in Vṛndāvana. The *gosvāmīs* who live in Vṛndāvana and outwardly observe the religious forms but secretly commit all kinds of sinful activities take birth as dogs and hogs in Vṛndāvana. In this way, by touching the dust of Vṛndāvana, they become purified. Then after a life as a hog, they are liberated."

I watch a hog nose through an exceptionally fresh heap of stool. "There I go," I think to myself and promise to be more careful.

Śrīla Prabhupāda walks into the Rādhā-Dāmodara courtyard, offers obeisances before the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities of Jīva Gosvāmī, then passes through an archway to Rūpa Gosvāmī's *samādhi* and a smaller courtyard where his disciples are assembled chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. Vṛndāvaners circumambulate the Govardhana stone situated in the temple. Most stop to offer obeisances to Prabhupāda. The chanting stops when he enters, the disciples bow to the ground, Śrīla Prabhupāda sits on the *vyāsāsana*, looks at his audience with radiant smiling eyes, picks up cymbals and leads the chanting:

*jaya rādhā-mādhava kuñja-vihārī  
gopījana-vallabha girivaradhārī  
yaśodā-nandana, vraja-jana-rañjana,  
yāmuna-tīra-vana-cārī*

"Glory to Rādhā-Mādhava, enjoying in the bushes of Vṛndāvana. O protector of the *gopīs*, You are the lifter of Govardhana Hill. O son of Mother Yaśodā, You wander through the forests on the bank of the Yamunā just to please the inhabitants of Vraja."

The devotees sit before him, rapt. . . Vṛndāvaners continue to circumambulate the Govardhana stone. . . a devotee fans Prabhupāda with a silver handled yak tail, another with a peacock fan. . . the chanting reaches its climax. . . obeisances. . . Pradyumna begins reading from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. . . *Om namo bhagavate vāsudevāya*: "I offer my obeisances to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Vāsudeva," Pradyumna reads, and the disciples repeat in unison. "Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Personality of Godhead, who is the Paramātmā (Supersoul) in everyone's heart and the



In the streets of  
Vṛndāvana:  
“There is a speck  
covering your eye,  
and when it is removed  
you will see all this  
as Vaikuṅṭha  
[the spiritual sky].”

benefactor of the pure devotee, cleanses desire for material enjoyment from the heart of the devotee who relishes His messages, which are in themselves virtuous when properly heard and chanted.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda repeats the Sanskrit and begins his lecture. “To become Kṛṣṇa conscious is not a very difficult thing,” he says, “but people have no taste. They do not understand the importance of this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, yet this is the only way they can become peaceful and happy. This *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is like a sword in the hand. With it, intelligent men cut through the labyrinthine knot of *karma*. If you hear about Kṛṣṇa, think about Him, meditate on Him and worship Him, you become perfect. It is very simple. Here is God; we give

His name, address, phone number, everything. Simply qualify yourself to go there by thinking of Him. By thinking of Him you will become the greatest *yogī*, for Kṛṣṇa is the goal of all mystic *yoga*—Yogeśvara. You cannot serve Kṛṣṇa with these blunt material senses. Kṛṣṇa cannot be served with matter—only with spirit. There are so many impediments to worshiping the demigods, but there is no impediment to worshiping Kṛṣṇa. You simply have to offer Him love. In the material world people are always speaking about love, but there is no love in the material world. People are simply under the control of lust and are trying to satisfy their senses. But love is different. Love is the satisfaction of Kṛṣṇa’s senses.”

Prabhupāda lectures about forty-five minutes, and after the lecture the devo-

tees chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, and Prabhupāda returns to his room beside the main courtyard. He receives visitors in his room for thirty minutes or an hour after the lecture, then he goes upstairs to his quarters on the roof. The devotees return through the busy morning streets of Vṛndāvana to Rāṇī Lakṣmī Kuñja, a beautiful 200-year-old palace near Keśī Ghāṭa. The palace, belonging to the King of Bharatpur, is loaned to the devotees during their stay. A *pūjārī* maintains and serves Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities in the main courtyard. The walls of the palace are about three feet thick, and many of the rooms are inhabited by bats and lizards. Elaborate carvings adorn the walls surrounding the main courtyard. The River Yamunā flows outside, and many Vṛndāvaners wash their clothes beside the monstrous turtles that bob up and down in the holy waters. Sometimes the turtles steal the clothes.

Between Keśī Ghāṭa and Rādhā-Dāmodara is the field of the *rāsa* dance, surrounded by a wall ten feet high and guarded by packs of monkeys. Walking down the streets, one feels the fear of sinking in the ocean of Vṛndāvana. . . ragged urchins in the street. . . dark skin, shining black hair, radiant eyes, smiling. They stop to look at the foreigners and jabber in Hindi. Wizened old ladies bow. . . *jaya Rādhē*. . . *haribala*. . . Hare Kṛṣṇa. Everyone wears *tilaka*, and *tilaka*, beads and beadbags are sold in the market. On the *ghāṭas*, *gāñjā* smokers smear their bodies with ashes. After walking down the streets, a Westerner instinctively seeks an escape from the filth and squalor. There are no accommodations for Westerners. Only a devotee would remain in Vṛndāvana for more than a day. On the main street there are a couple of restaurants where a rupee (10¢) can buy a generous serving of rice, *dahl*, vegetables and *cāpātis*. Fruit stands on the streets are covered with flies. Transportation is primarily by bicycle and cycle rikshas. Old women are predominant, and everywhere are the shouts of children. Most people are gentle and friendly, but some are a little suspicious.

From Rāṇī Lakṣmī Kuñja one can

see the depleted state of the land. The wonder is that it feeds the people at all. Even the vegetables it yields cannot give sufficient nutrition. Despite these material conditions, there is an unseen and vibrant spirit that moves the people. I sense strongly that there is more to Vṛndāvana than meets the occidental eye.

In the evening from five to six Śrīla Prabhupāda lectures on Rūpa Gosvāmī's *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* (*Nectar of Devotion*) in the courtyard. Sometimes it is hard to hear him above the chatter of the birds, and sometimes a monkey fight temporarily interrupts the lecture.

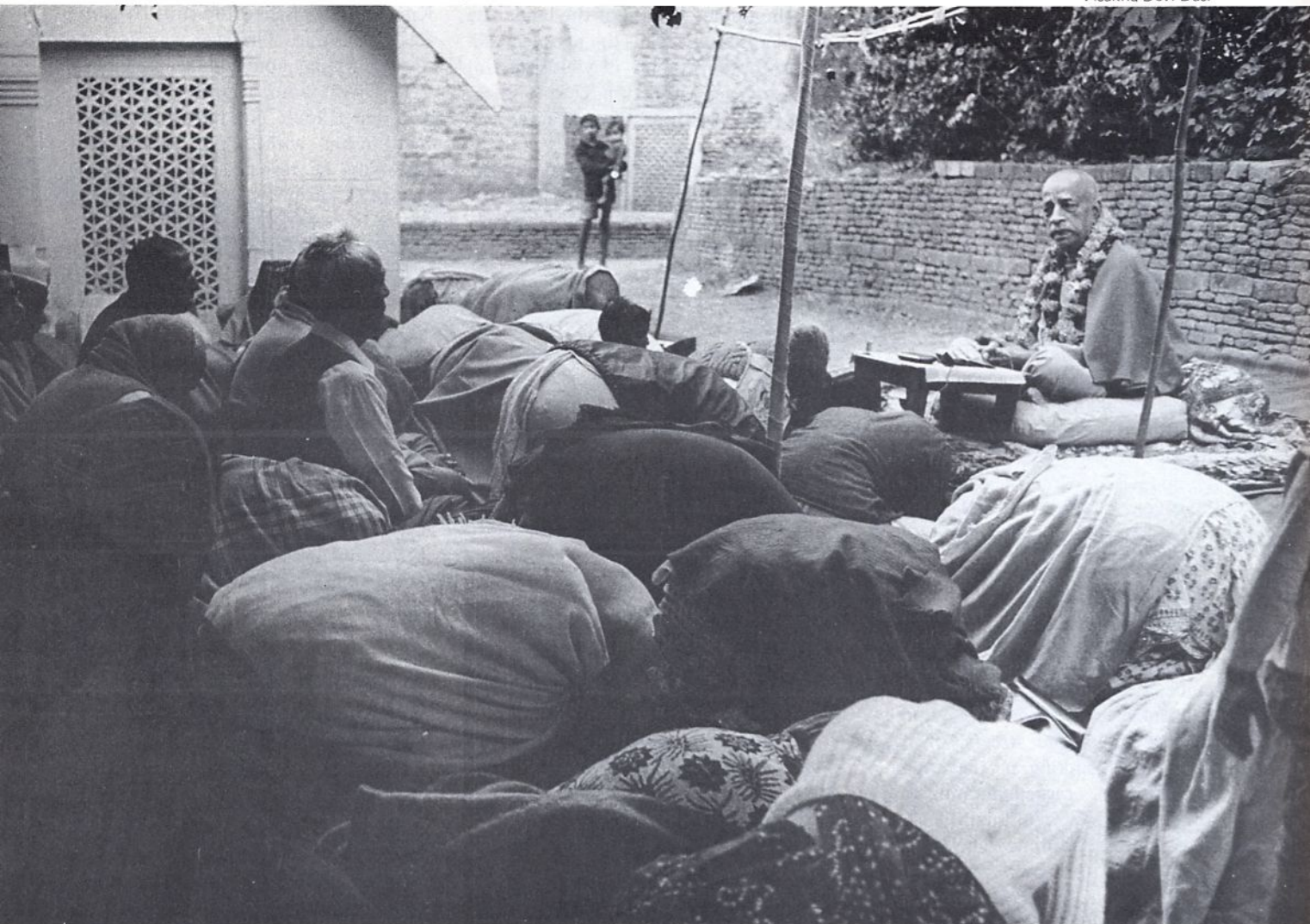
"When Kṛṣṇa comes," Śrīla Prabhupāda says, "He appears here in Vṛndāvana. Therefore this Vṛndāvana *dhāma* is so important to the devotees." I look about and consider the veil of *māyā* over my eyes. I recall years previous amidst the soot and traffic roar of New York's Lower East Side that Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "There is a speck covering your eye, and when it is removed you will see all this as Vaikuṅṭha [the spiritual sky]." Now he delivers the same message. "Everyone can see God," he says. "It is not very difficult. God is everywhere. In *Bhagavad-gītā* He describes Himself. Everyone drinks water, and Kṛṣṇa says, 'I am the taste of water.' Atheists are always saying, 'Show me God,' but if you have the eyes to see God, you can see Him everywhere. If you become saintly by austerities, you can see God everywhere. If you are a materialist, you can also see God in the sun and moon. Those who are impersonalists can see God in that way. Hiranyakaśipu challenged God, so God came before him as death. God is willing to reveal Himself according to our expectations. All *rasas* [relationships] are there in Kṛṣṇa. We can enjoy loving pleasure with Kṛṣṇa in any *rasa*, and Kṛṣṇa is ready to respond in any *rasa*. The *gopīs* came to Kṛṣṇa out of lust, but their lust became purified. Try to approach Kṛṣṇa in some way or another. Kaṁsa was also Kṛṣṇa conscious, but he thought of Kṛṣṇa as an enemy. Nonetheless he was liberated. So what to speak of those who are in love with

Kṛṣṇa? Kṛṣṇa is like the sun; He purifies everything. Whatever way you approach Kṛṣṇa, you will become purified. Divert your attention to Kṛṣṇa, and that is love. You have a particular relationship with Kṛṣṇa which will gradually be revealed as you follow the rules of the *ācāryas*. Just as the desire for sex is in all entities and becomes manifest at the right age, so *svarūpa-siddhi* [our constitutional position] becomes manifest at the right time. The sun becomes visible when it rises. You cannot force the sun to rise at midnight. Be patient, render devotional service and wait. Guru Mahārāja said, 'Don't try to see Kṛṣṇa. Just get Kṛṣṇa to see you.' Try to get His attention by serving Him under the orders of the spiritual master."

At the conclusion of the lecture, Acyutānanda Svāmī says, "The people here in India are always accusing us of taking to Kṛṣṇa consciousness because we are American and have had sufficient sense gratification and material development. They say, 'First we will develop materially and then take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness.'"

"Then the hogs are best qualified to be devotees," Śrīla Prabhupāda quips. "The hogs have license for all kinds of sense gratification, and they do whatever they want. They have unrestricted sex life with their mothers and sisters. They are the most highly sense gratified animal in existence. And by this logic they will be the best devotees. The position that we first have to complete our materialistic sense gratification is rascaldom. It is like trying to extinguish a fire by pouring ghee on it."

When someone mentions Hinduism, Śrīla Prabhupāda says: "We are not preaching Hinduism. We are attempting to create a society of devotees all over the world, regardless of creed or color. One *jñānī* came to me yesterday and said, 'The Moslems used to convert the Hindus, and now the Hindus are converting the Christians. So what is the difference?' But we are not making Hindus. My Guru Mahārāja never said that Hinduism is better than Christianity. We are simply trying to convince people that their original position is with Kṛṣṇa. The word 'Hindu'



In the courtyard of Rādhā-Dāmodara: Devotees offer obeisances as Śrīla Prabhupāda concludes chanting and begins to speak. On the left is the *samādhi* of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī.

is given by the Moslems. It is not found anywhere in the *Vedas*. Actually our system is that of *varṇāśrama-dharma*, and it is applicable anywhere. The sun is the creation of God, and it is visible everywhere. Similarly, Kṛṣṇa is not the monopoly of India. Our system is not to change Christians into Hindus, but to revitalize our lost constitutional position as servants of Kṛṣṇa. These boys and girls are not working for any nation. They are working for Kṛṣṇa. They have understood that Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. They are not working for some Hindu god; they are working for the Supreme Lord Himself."

After the evening lecture, Śrīla Prabhupāda receives guests in his room. Most of these visitors are Indian, and they offer obeisances to Śrīla

Prabhupāda, touching his feet. Sitting on a dais in the center of the room, he receives respect even by his silence. From time to time people ask questions. Prabhupāda surveys his audience and waits. At length a new American devotee asks, "What is the relationship between the disciple and the spiritual master?" The silence resumes. It is not a question to ask Śrīla Prabhupāda personally, for the answer is found in every one of his books. Śrīla Prabhupāda turns to me. "How do you answer him, Hayagrīva?"

"The disciple does whatever the spiritual master asks. His relationship is that of the servant to the master."

"That of a *menial* servant," Śrīla Prabhupāda corrects. "Even if the spiritual master asks him to clean the stoolhouse, he will do so."



“It is said that the spiritual master is the well-wisher. What does this mean?”

“Kṛṣṇa is the friend of everyone,” Śrīla Prabhupāda says. “If I deliver the message to you that Kṛṣṇa is your friend, I also become your friend. This is friendship—preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness. When you are in danger, no one can give you protection but Kṛṣṇa. Therefore He is your only friend. Our business is only to deliver the message of Kṛṣṇa and point out that Kṛṣṇa is your friend. He is also the proprietor. Whatever you claim as your property will be taken by Kṛṣṇa when you die. To educate people that Kṛṣṇa is the proprietor is real friendship. Just spread this message of Kṛṣṇa and you become the friend and well-wisher of all people. To become a spiritual master is not very difficult; we simply have to carry the message of Kṛṣṇa with no adulteration. I am simply a peon delivering the message of Kṛṣṇa to you. Although I personally may be the greatest fool, since the message I am delivering is from your dearest friend, I also become your dearest friend.”

Guru dāsa, just arriving from Delhi, comes in and offers obeisances to Śrīla Prabhupāda. “I just want to sit at your feet, Prabhupāda,” he says.

Śrīla Prabhupāda laughs like a naughty boy. “But my feet are always moving,” he says.

That night I sleep on the roof of Rādhā-Dāmodara. . . throughout the night I periodically awake. The white-domed *samādhi* of Rūpa Gosvāmī glistens in the moonlight. A near full moon sets behind the eucalyptus tree. . . all night *kīrtana*. . . cymbals, *mṛdaṅgas*, voices in the temple courtyard. . . all night I watch the moon sink from the zenith. There is enough moonlight to write by. Dogs howling eerily like a human chorus, wailing a canine catharsis. A small 1940 style U.S. streetlight is dwarfed by the moon. The *samādhi* of Rūpa Gosvāmī! The lilt of *kīrtana* grows louder, the sway of voices together rowing. . . the good ship *harer nāma*. . . howls of dogs joining the *kīrtana*. . . the approach of dawn and robed figures gliding quietly to the courtyard. . . the presence of Kṛṣṇa slowly but un-

mistakenly making itself felt. . . the drapes of the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities open, voices grow louder. . . cacophony of bells. . . Vṛndāvaners standing in the courtyard before Their Lordships. . . the smoke of burning cow dung and incense wafts across the roof. . . people awake. . . lanterns. . . the clank of buckets. . . voices. . . figures bowing in the pale light and shadows. . . bells continuing, shouts. . . the moon, yellow, heavy, pregnant, descending. A voice sings *bhajana* over a loudspeaker. . . the dogs starting up again. . . the long, long howls. . . a woman’s voice sings *govinda jaya jaya/ gopāla jaya jaya/ rādhāramaṇahārī govinda jaya jaya*. All glories to Govinda, to Him who gives pleasure to the cows and the senses. All glories to Gopāla, the cowherd boy. Glories to Śrī Hari, the enjoyer of Rādhārāṇī. I see the fading Pleiades between Orion and the moon. The frightening vastness of space. . . the repose, the *presence* of Rūpa Gosvāmī. The voice of Śrīla Prabhupāda: “This *mahāmantra* is coming from Goloka Vṛndāvana. Just as you receive radio messages from distant places, you can also receive messages from Goloka Vṛndāvana by the radio of Guru Paramparā. You can receive messages from Kṛṣṇa by way of Brahmā, Nārada, Vyāsadeva, Lord Caitanya and the Gosvāmīs. And now this message is being broadcast by this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. The message is the same: give up everything and surrender unto Kṛṣṇa.” Messages from Goloka Vṛndāvana! Messages from outer space!

Bells, *mṛdaṅgas*, moon behind the eucalyptus, Orion at the zenith. . . a woo woo woo Comanche yell in the courtyard. . . Deities undraped. . . old ladies, the same in all religions, widows. . . old men standing before the Deities, now suddenly joined by young Americans. . . ding ding dong dong ke-lash ke-lash. . . old ladies scurrying with lanterns not to be late. . . *Rādhē-Govinda* chanted. . . early *māṅgalārati*. . . dozens circumambulating. . . Jīva Gosvāmī’s black Kṛṣṇa Deity. . . ghee lamp circulated. . . water. . . *Rādhā-Dāmodara ki jaya!*. . . people dance in a small circle to the right of the Deities. . . *kīrtana*. . . the infirm

bowing, touching the dust to their heads, rolling in the dust, eating the dust. . . indescribable. . . *kīrtana* groups dance in circles before the Deities. . . *Nitai-Gaura haribala!*

Just before sunrise we follow Śrīla Prabhupāda to the *parikrama*.

“If we present things as they are,” he says, “they will be accepted. People are saying that Prabhupāda is performing miracles, but he says that the miracle is in presenting things as they are.”

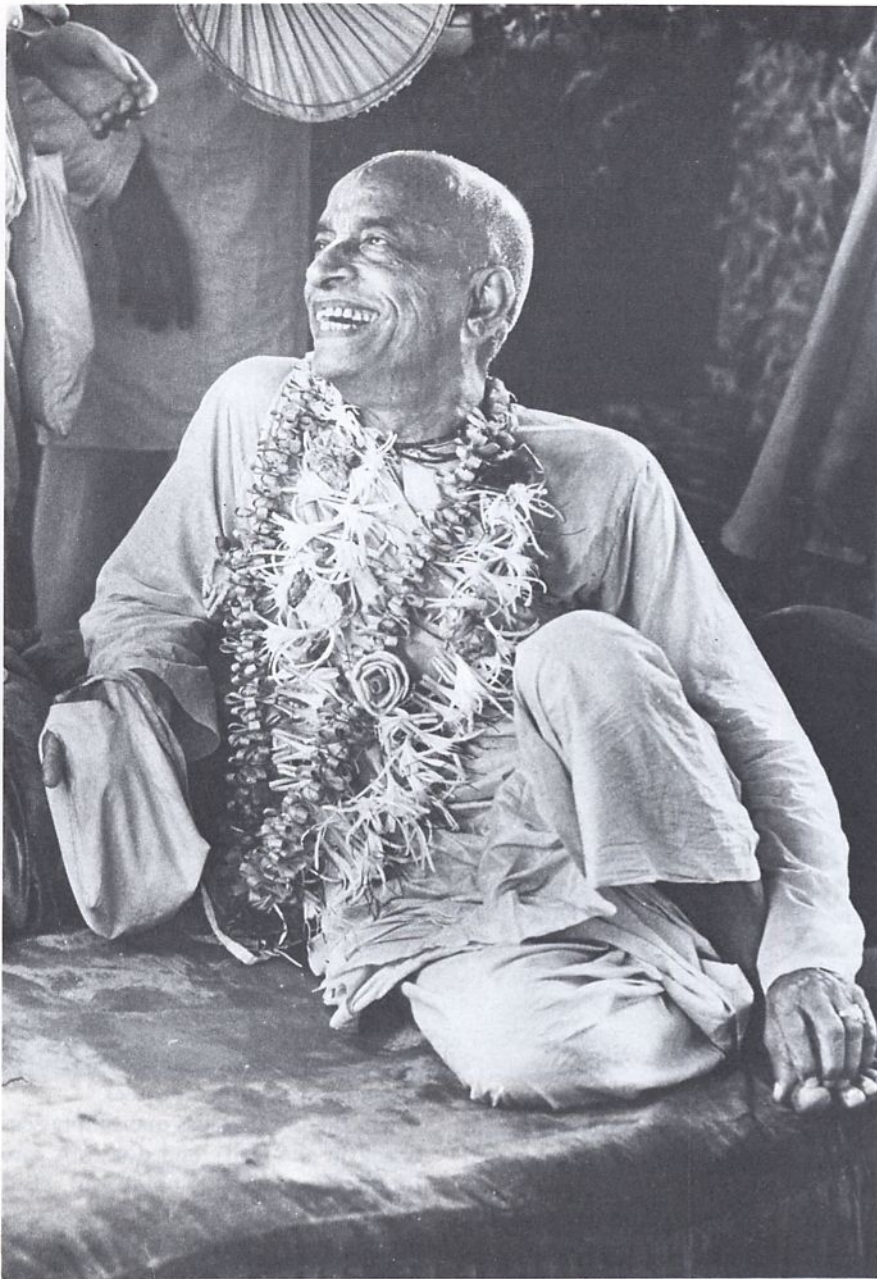
We pass by a group of women in an open temple chanting to Rādhārāṇī. On the side of the street lay little huddled forms covered by burlap bags and saffron cloth. They fear no burglars.

“In the U.S. they are saying that God is dead,” Śrīla Prabhupāda says. “They are saying this even in the churches. And in India they are saying there is no need to serve God—just serve the poor man loitering in the street. So you can see that there is a great necessity for Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the world. Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī said, ‘I don’t find any scarcity in this world except the scarcity of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.’”

Back in his room Śrīla Prabhupāda receives letters on the progress of the movement from all over the world. He reads them, makes comments and gives instructions on management. He stresses the importance of mutual respect amongst the devotees.

“In the lower stages one simply sees Kṛṣṇa in the Deity and does not care for the devotees,” he points out. “But the fact is that the devotees are always in the service of Kṛṣṇa, and they should be taken care of. The person who worships the devotees is more important than the person who worships Kṛṣṇa. An advanced devotee always gives respect to another devotee. Therefore we address one another as *prabhu* [master]. This should be realized, not just spoken. We should always be ready to offer respects to everyone because everyone is originally a devotee of Kṛṣṇa.”

Prabhupāda then outlines a program for Bombay, Delhi and Calcutta. He draws the rough sketch, and the devotees fill in the details. “If a temple



His Divine Grace  
A.C. Bhaktivedanta  
Swami Prabhupāda:  
“The answer is  
found in every one  
of his books.”

is occupied,” he says, “it must be kept up. Otherwise there is no need to occupy it just to hold property. Kṛṣṇa had no interest in worldly acts, but because the world belongs to Him, He wanted to establish good government.” Prabhupāda surveys his leaders and continues. “He wanted Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira to take charge, and later Parīkṣit Mahārāja. When such kings took charge, there was no scorching heat or freezing cold. Like such devotee kings, we should make people Kṛṣṇa

conscious; then from all points of view the people will be benefited. Kṛṣṇa conscious people are not sentimentalists. They want to reform the world. Kṛṣṇa consciousness is not just sitting and chanting for cheap adoration. Inactivity and silence are not perfection. Activity is perfection. Arjuna was not silent or inactive. He thought, ‘If I fight, my Lord will be pleased. I have to do this.’ His activity was spontaneous activity. When one knows the Lord and what He wants, there will be activity. Up to seventy years of age I was doing nothing, but by the grace of God I went to the United States to begin this movement. Now that we are becoming successful we can expect to meet with so much resistance. Although Gandhi used to use *Bhagavad-gītā*, now *Gītā* is not allowed in the schools in India. But now in the Western countries our *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* is selling more copies than any other edition. I have great hope for the Western countries, for they are taking up this movement seriously. Here we are seeing many temples, and we are also seeing the *pūjārīs* smoking. How can a person chant with one hand and smoke with another? It is ludicrous. Such a person cannot be a devotee. Unless we are free from sinful activities, we cannot actually engage in devotional service. Now everyone is claiming, ‘This is my country. This is my land.’ But the world belongs to Kṛṣṇa, so how can anyone claim it? We are simply guests here for a few years. The land was here before our birth, and after our death it will still be here. How is it ours? How can a mere visitor claim proprietorship? In this way we have to educate the people.”

There is a silence as everyone realizes that any comment would appear foolish. Prabhupāda looks at the young faces about him and sees agreement and anticipation.

“We must become one in Kṛṣṇa’s service. Oneness means individual opinions coincided in the service of Kṛṣṇa. Just as in a family all the individuals work for the family—that is oneness. It is a little something like national consciousness. In Kṛṣṇa consciousness all individuals agree to work

*continued on page 31*



# BHAKTI

## THE PERFECT SCIENCE

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**O.B.L. Kapoor, Ph.D.**

As commonly understood, *bhakti* and science are diametrically opposed. *Bhakti* (devotion) is supposed to rest on blind faith and absolute surrender of human reason and will, while science is supposed to rest on observation and experiment. The *bhakta* does not doubt, for he says, *saiṅśayātmā vinasīyati*—the man who doubts is doomed. Science feeds on doubt, for it says that doubt leads to true knowledge.

No wonder, therefore, that in this age of science *bhakti* is regarded as a sign of backwardness and an effort to escape from the realities of life. But what is strange is that the scientists who swear by truth and open-mindedness, and do not accept or reject anything unless it is scientifically proved or disproved, generally adopt the most unscientific attitude towards *bhakti*. They reject *bhakti* and all that it stands for without caring to test its propositions scientifically.

## BHAKTI AS A SCIENCE

The scientists argue that the propositions of *bhakti* are not amenable to scientific treatment. But they are mistaken. *Bhakti* is as much a science as physics, chemistry or any other science. It is based on observation and experiment, and its results are capable of verification. But *bhakti* is a transcendental science, and its experiments are of a different nature. They are also more difficult than the experiments of ordinary science, for while in ordinary science experiments are made on outside objects, in *bhakti* the object of experiment is one's own self. It is not easy to do with self what we ordinarily do with other objects in scientific experiments.

In a scientific experiment the object of study is taken in its pure and original form and in isolation from all other things. Since nature does not always present things in a pure and unmixed form, the object under study has first to be isolated from other things. After this is done, certain changes are made in it, and the results are carefully watched. Under different conditions the thing is found to behave in different ways. In this manner, the laws governing its behavior are discovered. The body of knowledge comprising those laws is called a science.

The science of *bhakti* deals with the self in relation to Bhagavān or Kṛṣṇa. The self also does not exist in its pure form. It is qualified by its association with the body and the sense objects. Its vision is blurred by egoism, greed, lust, anger, jealousy and hatred. The first condition of a scientific experiment in *bhakti*, therefore, is the purification of the self. This is not easy to attain. One can easily manipulate the objects outside the self. One can explode a hydrogen bomb or send an object to the moon. But when it comes to doing something that may change the age-old association of the soul with the things that are extraneous to it, that is a different matter.

It is human nature to find reasons to ridicule that which is difficult to attain. This partly explains the attitude of the scientist toward *bhakti*. But there are many persons who have performed the experiments in *bhakti* in spite of this apparent difficulty. The science of *bhakti* is the result of generalizations made by them which are described in such works as *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, *Ujjvala-nīlmaṇi*, *Bhakti-sandarbha*, *Prīti-sandarbha* and many others. The detailed, precise and systematic treatment in these works of the laws of *bhakti*, the stages of *bhakti*, the kinds of *bhakti* and the conditions of the various experiments in *bhakti* will easily convince anyone who goes through them that *bhakti* is, by all standards, a science.

### ORDINARY SCIENCE FAILS AS AN INSTRUMENT OF KNOWLEDGE

There are two questions one must ask while trying to ascertain whether a certain body of knowledge should be called a science:

- (1) How far has it succeeded in discovering the real nature of the object of its study?
- (2) How far are the laws it has discovered necessary or absolute?

Judging in the light of these questions, we find not only that *bhakti* is a science, but that it is the only science which deserves to be so called. For it alone gives us real knowledge, and its laws alone are necessary. Developments in modern science have compelled the scientists to acknowledge that they are not able to discover the real nature of anything, nor are the laws they discover necessary.

We may illustrate this with reference to the science of physics, which is not only the most advanced science today, but which also basically runs into all other sciences.

First, let us take the question relating to the knowledge of the real nature of the object of study and compare, from this point of view, the results obtained by the science of physics with those of *bhakti*.

The physicist, trying to discover the real nature of matter, found that the smallest piece of matter, smaller than even the point of a pin, was composed of millions of electrons. He tried to study the nature of electrons and found that they were "disembodied charges of electricity," that is, electricity existing apart from matter. But though they were disembodied charges of electricity, they seemed to behave sometimes like a particle and sometimes like a wave. Eddington, therefore, suggested that they should be called "wavicles" to indicate their dual character, but their real nature remained unknown. If they were not any *thing* charged with electricity, but electricity itself, the question remained, what ultimately is electricity? The reply was that it is energy or *śakti*. Energy, it was further explained, was a process. But energy or *śakti* always pertains to the *śaktimān* or possessor of energy, and a process is always the process of some *thing* moving or acting or doing something. What is that which possesses the energy? What is that thing of which the energy is a process? The physicist has not been able to answer these questions. And he will never be able to answer them, for he has reduced everything to energy, and nothing else remains to which he may point in answer to these questions. The real nature of matter thus remains unknown to him. He cannot say anything about it except that it is "he knows not what." Eddington says, "Something unknown is doing we do not know what—that is what our theory amounts to."

### BHAKTI HOLDS THE KEY TO KNOWLEDGE

All matter or unconscious things having been reduced by the scientist to some kind of energy or *śakti*, it is obvious that this energy can only be referred to some conscious principle. Scientists like Einstein, Eddington, James Jeans and J.B.S. Haldane have already recognized this. Eddington says, "Modern physics has eliminated the notion of substance. . . . I regard consciousness as fundamental. I regard matter as derivative from consciousness." J.B.S. Haldane says, "The material world, which has been taken for a world of blind mechanism, is in reality a spiritual world seen very partially and imperfectly. . . . The truth is that not Matter, not Force, not any physical thing, but Mind, Personality, is the central fact of the universe."

But the scientists can do no more than guess about the existence of the conscious principle underlying this uni-

verse, whereas *bhakti* provides direct, intimate and certain knowledge of it. The *bhakta* knows that the *śakti* which, according to the physicist, pervades the entire universe, is the *śakti* of *para-brahman* (the Supreme Absolute).

*ekadeśa-sthitasyaṅner jyotsnā vistāriṇī yathā  
parasya brahmaṇaḥ śaktis tathedam akhilaṁ jagat*

“Just as the rays of fire located at one place are spread all over, the *śakti* of *para-brahman* extends all over in the form of the world.” (*Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, 1.22.54)

principle of Mine.” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, 11.14.26)

This spiritual principle, which is fundamental to the science of *bhakti*, can be tested like any other principle of science. It has actually been tested a number of times by *bhaktas* like Prahāda and Mīrā Bai who have proved, by making such physical objects as a pillar and a cobra appear as Nṛsīṁha Bhagavān and Śālagrāma (forms of Kṛṣṇa), that the physical world is in essence the *śakti* of Bhagavān or Kṛṣṇa and that Bhagavān, as the possessor of that *śakti*, is present in it everywhere.



The principle behind the *śakti* manifesting itself in the form of the world is so subtle that it must always remain beyond the reach of the physical sciences. It can be apprehended only by the soul purified by *bhakti*.

*yathā yathātmā parimṛjyate 'sau  
mat-puṇya-gāthā-śravaṇābhīdhānaiḥ  
tathā tathā paśyati vastu sūkṣmaṁ  
cakṣur yathāivāñjana-samprayuktam*

“Just as by the application of good ointment the eye is slowly cleansed and made capable of seeing finer objects, the soul of a devotee is gradually purified by listening to My divine narratives and is able to see the subtle spiritual

#### THE LAWS OF ORDINARY SCIENCE ARE ILLUSORY

Now let us take the second question relating to the laws. Since the time of Galileo and Newton, scientists have believed that the world is a big machine governed purely by mechanical laws. By the end of the Twentieth Century even the human brain came to be regarded as an intricate machine, governed by the purely mechanical laws of cause and effect. The concept of the free will of man was destroyed, and religion and morality ceased to have any meaning for science.

But the emergence of the electron on the stage of science brought about a complete revolution. The myth of the mechanistic structure of the universe was exploded. The electrons, which were recognized as the ultimate units of the

physical world, were found not to be governed by mechanical laws. They seemed to be completely free in their behavior. The law of causation which is a presupposition of science was found to have no meaning for them.<sup>1</sup> If there was any law at all which governed their behavior, it was the Law of Indeterminacy, as Professor Heisenberg called it. The apparent determinism in events and the uniformity of nature were illusions, created by the functioning of electrons in crowds.

James Jeans explains this by means of the following illustration: "If we spin a half-penny, nothing within our knowledge will be able to decide whether it will come down heads or tails, yet if we throw up a million tons of half-pence, we know there will be 500,000 tons of heads and 500,000 tons of tails. The experiment may be repeated time after time and will always give the same result. We may be tempted to instance it as evidence of the uniformity of nature, and to infer the action of an underlying law of causation: in actual fact it is an instance only of the operation of the purely mathematical laws of chance."<sup>2</sup>

There is no determinism in events in which electrons are involved singly, but when a huge crowd of them is involved, as in the smallest piece of matter with which the earlier physicists could experiment, the illusion of determinacy creeps in. But this apparent determinism in large-scale events is of a statistical nature. Dirac describes it as follows: "When an observation is made on any atomic system. . . in a given state the result will not in general be determinate, i.e., if the experiment is repeated several times under identical conditions several different results may be obtained. If the experiment is repeated a large number of times, it will be found that each particular result will be obtained a definite fraction of the total number of times, so that one can say there is a definite probability of its being obtained any time the experiment is performed. This probability the theory enables one to calculate." The laws of the physical sciences are, thus, not fully determinate or necessary. They are only laws of probability based on the mathematical law of averages.

## THE LAWS OF BHAKTI ARE REAL

The science of *bhakti* does not, at first sight, seem to be in a more advantageous position than any of the physical sciences in respect of its laws, for it deals with man in loving relationship with God. Both man and God are free in their behavior like the electrons, and thus there can hardly be any laws regarding their behavior. But *bhakti* has nothing to do with man and God who are free. In *bhakti* both man and God are bound in love. The God of *bhakti* is not simply the creator, destroyer and controller of the universe, but the cowherd boy who loves to dance to the tune of

the milkmaids of Vraja. The God of *bhakti* is the God who says, *aham bhakta-parādhīno hy asvatantva iva dvija*: "I am wholly governed by My *bhaktas*. I am not free in the least." (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, 9.4.63) In the realm of *bhakti* it is not God who reigns but *premā*, which is but an advanced stage of *bhakti*. Both *bhakta* and Bhagavān (God) seek fulfillment in *premā*. *Premā* is the *summum bonum* for the *bhakta* as well as for Bhagavān. The *bhakta* does not seek Bhagavān but pure, selfless, dispassionate love for Him. Similarly, Bhagavān does not seek anything but love. He need not seek anything else, for there is nothing which, as the most perfect being, He does not already possess. But as Love He is never perfect. Love is nothing but incessant yearning for more love. Perfection in love means negation of love. Every fulfillment in love creates a gap which calls for further fulfillment. Love is, therefore, essentially dynamic, a vital upward surge through a necessary downward movement. It is self-fulfillment in self-abandonment, self-realization in self-effacement.

Since both *bhakta* and Bhagavān are fully bound by *bhakti*, the laws of *bhakti* are fully determinate. They are neither the laws of probability nor the mathematical and illusory laws of averages like the laws of the physical sciences, but they are objective and necessary. To take an example, there is a law of attraction in *bhakti* which may be compared to the law of gravitation in the physical sciences. According to this law, *bhakti* attracts Bhagavān as a magnet attracts a piece of iron.<sup>3</sup> So Kṛṣṇa says, *nāhaṁ tiṣṭhāmi vaikuṇṭhe yogināṁ hrdayeṣu vā tattat tiṣṭhāmi nārada yatra gāyanti mad-bhaktāḥ*. "I live neither in My celestial abode nor in the heart of the *yogīs*, but I go and sit wherever My *bhaktas* sing." (*Ādi Purāṇa*) And again: *anuvrajāmy ahaṁ nityaṁ pūyeyetaṅghri-reṇubhiḥ*. "I walk on the heels of My *bhaktas* so that I may be purified by the dust of their feet." (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, 11.14.16)

The law of gravitation may fail. There is nothing in modern science to guarantee that it will not. But the law of attraction in *bhakti* can never fail, for it is guaranteed by Bhagavān. It is possible that a fruit may leave the tree and not drop on the ground, but it is not possible that the flower of *bhakti* may blossom in the heart of a devotee and Kṛṣṇa may not be attracted by it.

As some other examples of laws of *bhakti*, we may cite the following:

- (1) The law of reciprocity, according to which Bhagavān fully reciprocates the devotional attitude of the *bhakta*.<sup>4</sup>
- (2) The law of total self-surrender, according to which Bhagavān fully absolves a *bhakta* of all his sins the moment he completely surrenders himself to Him.<sup>5</sup>
- (3) The law of exclusive meditation, according to which Bhagavān Himself provides the means and end of *bhakti*

1. "The concept of strict causation finds no place in the picture of the universe which the new physics presents to us, with the result that this picture contains more room than did the old mechanical picture for life and consciousness to exist within the picture itself."

James Jeans, *Mysterious Universe*, page 43

2. *Ibid*, page 42

3. *Mādhurya-kādambinī*, 8.

4. *ye yathā māṁ prapadyante tāṁs tathaiva bhajāmy aham* "All of them—as they surrender unto Me—I reward accordingly. Everyone follows My path in all respects, O son of Pṛṥṥtha." (Bg. 4.11)

5. *sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja ahaṁ tvāṁ sarva-pāpēbhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ* "Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reaction. Do not fear." (Bg. 18.66)



to a *bhakta* who exclusively and incessantly meditates on Him.<sup>6</sup>

### ABSOLUTE NATURE OF BHAKTI

Each of these laws is absolute. Anyone who tries them will find that the results are always the same. Thus the laws of *bhakti* as well as the knowledge obtained through it are absolute. The absoluteness of the laws of *bhakti* is due to the fact that *bhakti* itself is an absolute science. It is not conditioned by anything, not even by Bhagavān, who is the Condition of all conditions and Cause of all causes. On

6. *ananyās cintayanto mām ye janāḥ paryupāsate  
teṣāṁ nityābhīyuktānāṁ yoga-kṣemaṁ vahāmy aham*  
"But those who worship Me with devotion, meditating on My transcendental form—to them I carry what they lack and preserve what they have." (Bg.9.22)

the contrary, Bhagavān Himself is conditioned by *bhakti*.<sup>7</sup>

The laws of the other sciences cannot be absolute for the simple reason that those sciences are relative and conditioned, at least by the will of Bhagavān. But the knowledge the science of *bhakti* provides is ultimate and absolute because it is the knowledge of the real nature of Bhagavān, the center and source of all knowledge.

*bhaktiyā mām abhijānāti yāvān yaś cāsmi tattvataḥ*<sup>8</sup>

Truly the *bhakta* holds within his grasp the very heart and soul of Bhagavān.<sup>9</sup> ❀

7. *bhakti-vaśaḥ puruṣaḥ (Śruti)*

8. "One can understand the Supreme Personality as He is only by devotional service." (Bg. 18.55)

9. *sādhubhir grasta-hṛdayo (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, 9.4.63)*



# How to Eat in Bhakti-Yoga

Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the original energy of the eternal spirit soul. This devotional service or *bhakti-yoga* is not like a religion or *yoga* process in which one engages part-time, once every Sunday, or for an hour in the morning. Actually, it is the natural activity of the liberated soul. It concerns every sphere of life. There is a Kṛṣṇa conscious way to do everything—a way to eat and sleep, a way to mate and defend, a way to do physical labor, business and farming, a way to administer and govern, and a way to perform intellectual work. There is a Kṛṣṇa conscious way to be a student, a householder, a retired person or a renounced man. In all activities, in all statuses and classes of life, we can do things in the transcendental way of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Since eating is one of the most basic and important of all activities, this article discusses the Kṛṣṇa conscious way to eat.

**BY RAVĪNDRA SVARŪPA DĀSA**

## YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT [1]

Food is so important that the gradations of human beings and animals can be calculated according to their eating processes. In human society, for example, the dog-eater is considered to be the lowest, while among animals the stool-eater is likewise lowest. Indeed, George Bernard Shaw wrote a book called *You Are What You Eat*. The eating process is important, for if one eats like a cat or dog, he'll become like a cat or dog, even in this life.

In *Bhagavad-gītā* there is a discussion of food in terms of the modes or qualities of material nature. Material nature is said to be made up of three modes (*guṇas*), namely, goodness, passion and ignorance, and when the living entity or spirit soul comes into contact with the material nature, he becomes conditioned by the modes.

The mode of goodness is purer

than the others, and one in goodness develops knowledge and becomes conditioned by happiness. The mode of passion is born of unlimited desires and longings, and one in passion becomes bound to the fruits of his actions. Moroseness and sleepiness characterize a person in ignorance, and he becomes conditioned by madness.

Kṛṣṇa further explains to Arjuna in the Seventeenth Chapter of the *Gītā* that persons situated in different modes are attracted to different kinds of food. The Supreme Lord says: "Foods in the mode of goodness increase the duration of life, purify existence, give strength and increase health, happiness and satisfaction. Such foods are juicy and fatty, and they are very conducive to the health of the body. Food that is too bitter, too sour, too salty, too pungent, too dry or too hot causes distress, misery and disease. Such food is very dear to those in the mode of passion. Foods prepared more than three hours before

being eaten, which are tasteless, juiceless, decomposing, which have a bad smell, and which consist of remnants and untouchable things, are very dear to those in the mode of darkness." (*Bhagavad-gītā*, 17.8-10)

Thus a person eats according to his conditioned state. Whether one is situated primarily in goodness, passion or ignorance, he is still bound by the ropes of material nature. One may avoid untouchable things like meat and liquor and eat only milk products, sugar, rice, wheat, fruits, vegetables and other foods dear to those in the mode of goodness. He may take his animal fat from milk and his protein from peanuts, whole wheat, dahl, etc., thus avoiding the subhuman practice of slaughtering animals. Yet still he will remain situated within the material energy and will be bound by karmic reaction. Vegetarianism is not enough. It is necessary to transcend the modes of material nature, even in eating: "When he is able to transcend these



three qualities, the embodied being can become free from birth, death, old age and their distresses and can enjoy nectar even in this life.” (Bg. 14.20)

## ACTING WITHOUT ACTING

Kṛṣṇa points out, “No one can refrain from doing something, not even for a moment.” (Bg. 3.5) One has to act because the living force is by nature active. But, for an embodied being, each and every action produces a reaction, good or bad, that binds him to the material world. This is called *karma*. Yet how can we stop acting? If we want to eat we have to act, and eating is one of the necessities of life; if we stopped eating we would die. However, when we eat food prepared to satisfy our hunger, with each mouthful our involvement in the complexi-

ties of material nature deepens. The *karma* is there.

This is the dilemma of all embodied souls—how to act without entanglement. This is the same dilemma that perplexed Arjuna on the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra. There was no question of Arjuna’s not fighting in the battle, but Kṛṣṇa instructed him *how* to fight. The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: “O son of Kuntī, all that you do, all that you eat, all that you offer and give away, as well as all austerities that you may perform, should be done as an offering unto Me. Thus you will be freed of all reactions to good and evil deeds, and by this principle of renunciation you will be liberated and come to Me.” (Bg. 9.27-28)

This is the solution offered by the Supreme Lord to the dilemma of all embodied souls. When our actions are all done for Kṛṣṇa, and not for ourselves, such actions produce no *karma*. Neither desiring nor hating the fruits of activities, one should simply do everything for the satisfaction of Kṛṣṇa, and thus his consciousness will remain steadily fixed on the Supreme, though his actions appear to be ordinary.

## WITH LOVE AND DEVOTION

Thus Kṛṣṇa wants us to eat only food offered first in sacrifice to Him. He says: “The devotees of the Lord are released from all sins because they eat food which is offered first for sacrifice. Others, who prepare food for personal sense enjoyment, verily eat only sin.” (Bg. 3.13)

The Kṛṣṇa conscious person sees himself always as a servant of the supreme enjoyer. His meditation on Kṛṣṇa is uninterrupted and steady, and he does not need to drop down to the level of material sense gratification to eat. In the kitchen, he is thinking of Kṛṣṇa, for whom he prepares palatable dishes. He does not enjoy the food

while he is preparing it, nor does he taste it, even to adjust the spices. Kṛṣṇa is the first to enjoy. Then, with love and devotion, he offers the preparation to Kṛṣṇa, who is the pleasure reservoir of the senses, and says pleasing prayers asking Kṛṣṇa to please accept his offering. Kṛṣṇa says: “If one offers Me with love and devotion a leaf, a flower, fruit or water, I will accept it.” (Bg. 9.26)

It is not that God is hungry and comes begging some food. No, Kṛṣṇa is always self-satisfied, and whatever we offer Him is His to begin with. But He wants to set up a reciprocation, an exchange of feelings. He does not ask for an opulent feast—just a little water, a leaf or some fruit, which can be secured by any person under any circumstances. He does not say that He will accept meat, or fish, or eggs, and thus one who wants to satisfy Kṛṣṇa will refrain from offering Him these things. Just simple vegetarian dishes should be offered—the necessary ingredient is love and devotion—and Kṛṣṇa will accept them.

## HOW CAN GOD EAT?

Now one may think, “Well, all this sounds very nice, but one thing is missing. You’re assuming that God *eats*. But since God is spiritual, not material like us, how can He eat?” This is a good question. Kṛṣṇa *is* spiritual, of course. But we have to understand what that means. If we try to figure out God on the power of our own intelligence, we may arrive at our idea of God in this way: “Spiritual is just the opposite of material; as we have material bodies which limit us, so God must be spiritual and unlimited by any body. As I have hands and feet, so God must be without hands and feet; I have eyes, ears, a nose, and a tongue, and God must be eyeless, earless, noseless, tongueless and so on.” Nearly everyone speculates like this, and that’s why so many people have been led to believe that God is impersonal or void. Thus the idea of God’s eating becomes difficult to understand.

But we should consider, first of all, the worth of this speculative process. Since we are limited by our material bodies, how, by means of speculation,



are we to have knowledge about an area far beyond the scope of our senses? Since we are enclosed in these material forms, we are conditioned by defective senses, by a propensity for error, by a tendency to be illusioned, and by a propensity to cheat. With these defects we can hardly figure out God. Unless we meet an authority who can give us definite information about God, we cannot know anything about Him. We can only have vague negative ideas. Because we thus stand in need of aid, Kṛṣṇa Himself delivered positive knowledge about Himself to His disciples like Lord Brahmā and Arjuna and arranged to have such knowledge handed down through an unbroken chain of perfect spiritual authorities. We can therefore read in *Bhagavad-gītā* that Kṛṣṇa says to Arjuna, "I am unborn, and My transcendental body never deteriorates." (Bg. 4.6) He further states that the form which He displayed 5,000 years ago on this earth is His own original and transcendental form—not an assumed material form, like our own. Kṛṣṇa is not embodied; He is not a spiritual spark covered by a material body. Rather, He is His own spiritual form, eternal and always young.

Thus, according to information from the spiritual chain of authority, God is equipped with all senses—sight, touch, taste, smell, etc. But His senses are spiritual. If we think about it, we can understand how this teaching makes much more sense than the impersonal conclusion.

Kṛṣṇa is the Absolute Truth. This means that He is the origin or source of everything; whatever we can experience, spiritual or material, is an emanation from Him. Therefore our own mind, senses and intelligence are all creations of the Absolute Truth. This means that the Absolute Truth is not without mind, senses or intelligence. He is not impersonal. If He were lacking in senses or in intelligence, He would be less than His own creation. The very word "created" indicates that He has transcendental intelligence. Because Kṛṣṇa is a person, we are persons. When a father begets a child, that child is equipped with hands and legs

because the father has them. The child also has senses because his father has senses. Therefore sometimes it is said that man is made in the likeness of God. We have senses because Kṛṣṇa, the Original Father, has senses.

But because Kṛṣṇa's senses are spiritual, they are not limited in the way that ours are limited. In our material body, each sense can only perform its own proper function, but in the transcendental figure of Kṛṣṇa each and every limb possesses in itself the full-fledged functions of all the other organs. Each sense can perform the functions of all the rest. This means that He can walk with His hands, see with His hands, or eat with His eyes. In *Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa says that He impregnated all living entities into the womb of material nature by His glance.



This is the nature of the Lord's spiritual form. Thus when we offer food to the Lord and He hears our prayers and sees the food on the altar, that seeing and hearing are wholly identical with His eating and enjoying the food. In this way, Kṛṣṇa accepts our offering and eats it.

## YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT [2]

The remnants of food offered to Kṛṣṇa are called *prasādam*. *Prasādam*

means mercy. Kṛṣṇa accepts the offering of food and then returns it to His devotee as His mercy, for Kṛṣṇa Himself becomes the food which was offered to Him. Because the food is in contact with Kṛṣṇa, it becomes spiritualized, Kṛṣṇa-ized. Such food is transcendental, completely free from contact with the modes of goodness, passion and darkness. *Prasādam* is *karmaless* food, and anyone who takes Kṛṣṇa *prasādam* advances in spiritual life. One may try to attain the Supreme by an assault of mental speculation, or by drilling the respiration, etc., but what is so nice and so easy as reaching the supreme destination simply by eating?

Because food offered to Kṛṣṇa is prepared with love and devotion for the Supreme Personality of Godhead and is accepted by His mercy after it is

offered to Him, no *karma* attaches itself to the food because nowhere is there any sense gratification or material desire. In preparing, in offering and eating Kṛṣṇa *prasādam*, a person remains fixed in the transcendental position, absorbed in Brahman, spirit, and undeluded by the modes of nature. Eating in this way is the actual attainment of *yoga*. "A person is said to have attained to *yoga*," Kṛṣṇa says, "when, having renounced all material desires, he neither acts for sense gratification nor engages

in fruitive activities.” (Bg. 6.4)

Renunciation is essential for any person serious about spiritual advancement. If a person claims to be engaged in *yoga* or spiritual development but does not firmly engage in renunciation of fruitive activities and sense gratification, he is a cheater or is being cheated by a cheater. Somehow or other one must prevent the senses from engaging in material activities of sense gratification; this is taught by all authorities, including Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Lord Buddha, Lord Jesus

Christ, Śrīpāda Śaṅkarācārya, etc.

Once upon a time, many ages ago, a great devotee named Dhruva Mahārāja practiced very severe *yoga* to realize God in six months. First he ate only fruits and berries every third day, and in the second month he ate dry grass and leaves every sixth day; in this way he progressed to taking only a little water every sixth day, and finally, he was taking a breath of air every twelve days. In this way, Dhruva Mahārāja renounced sense gratification and realized God. Now, in this age, it

is impossible for us to practice such severe austerities to control the senses. Who can do it, or even take the first steps? Therefore Kṛṣṇa does not instruct, “Don’t eat.” Rather, He says, “Eat Kṛṣṇa *prasādam!*” Eat sumptuously, and in that way renounce sense gratification and fruitive activities.

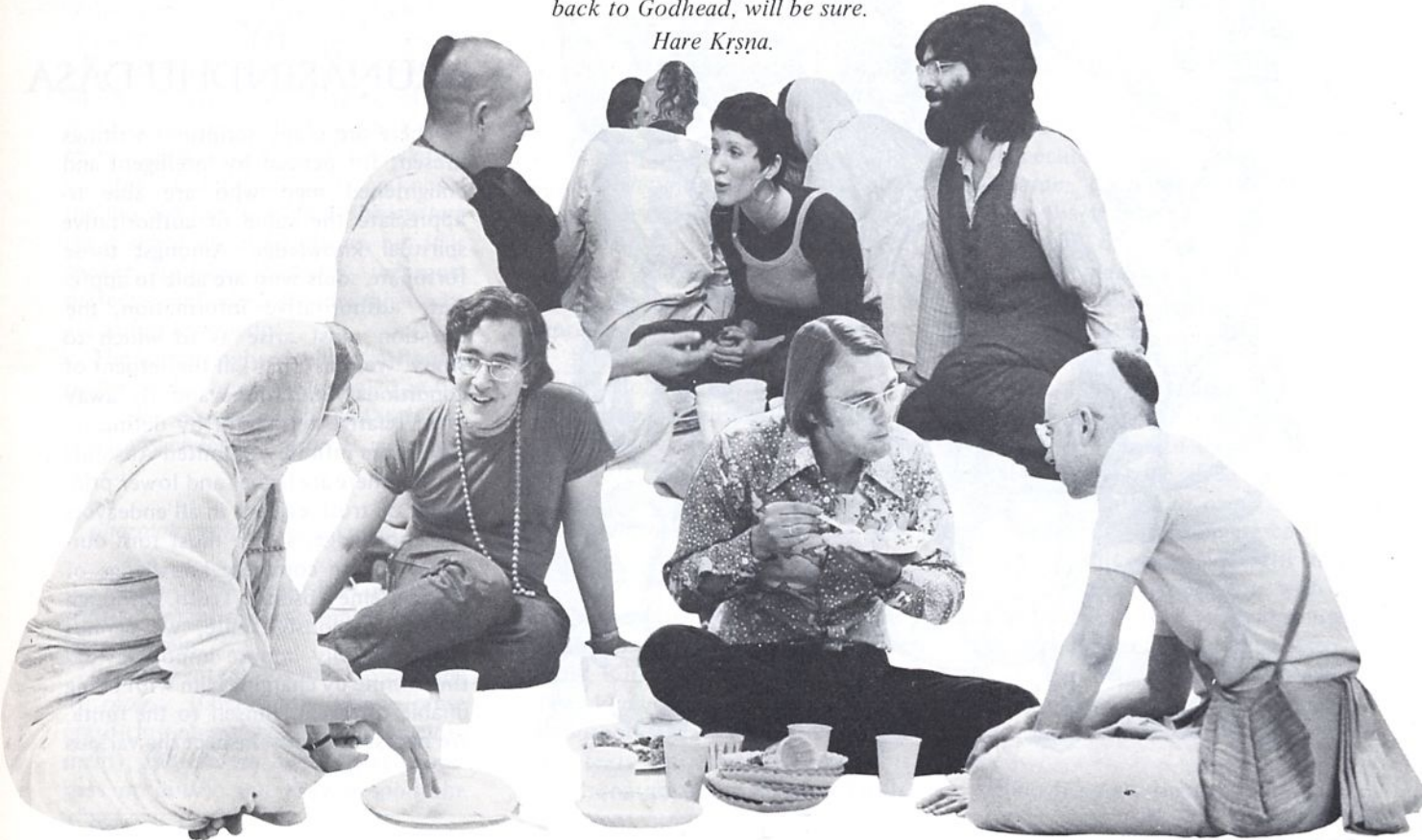
Any person can prepare, offer and eat Kṛṣṇa *prasādam* even at home, without inconvenience. Such a wonderful activity is very simple. It is the perfection of eating, and it is “everlasting and joyfully performed.”

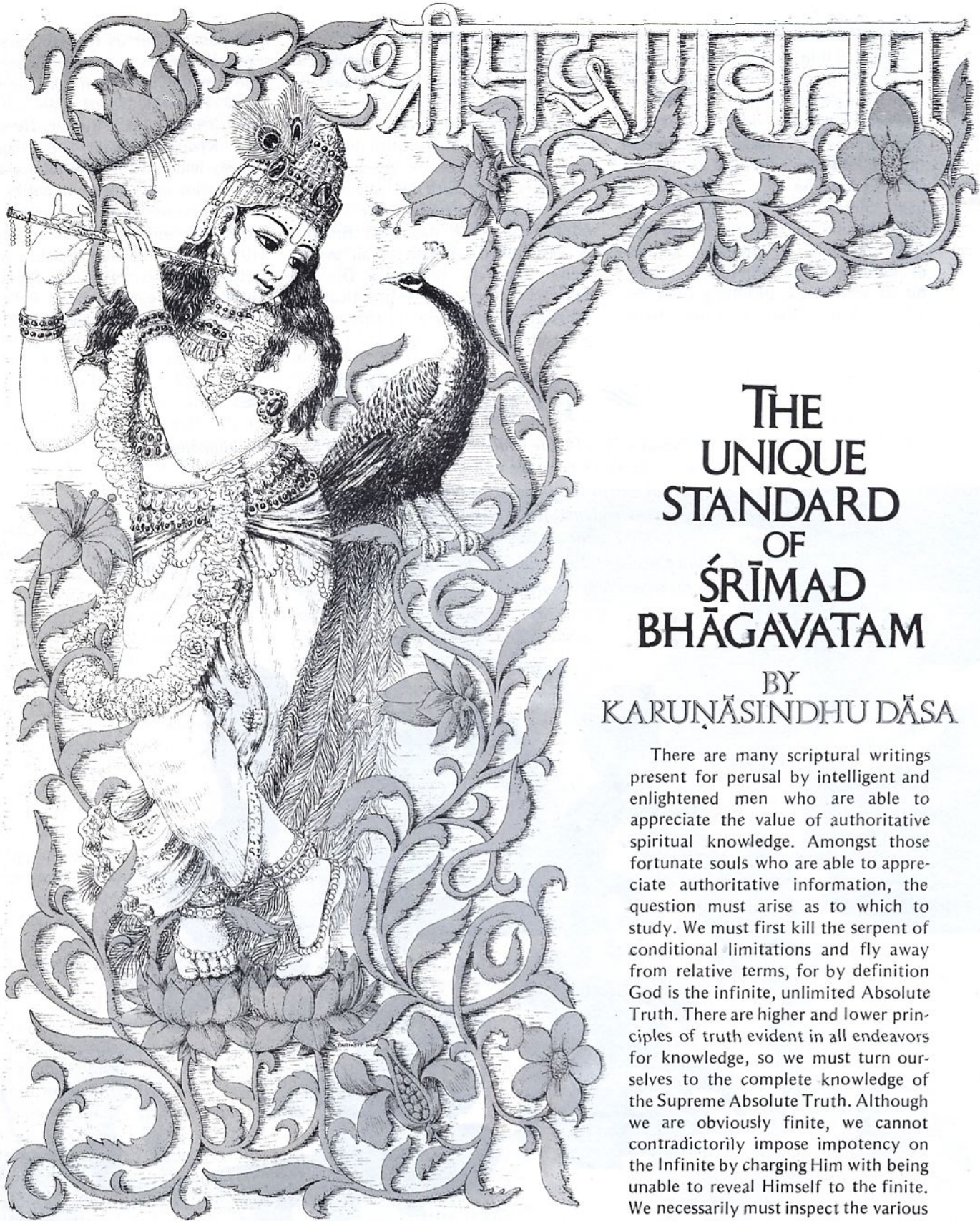
## INVITATION

*On behalf of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, we invite you to partake of a sumptuous feast of Kṛṣṇa prasādam every Sunday at any of the Hare Kṛṣṇa Temples listed in the front of this magazine. The Sunday transcendental festival and love feast usually begins around four p.m.*

*Please come and enjoy a whole feast of karma-less food and advance wonderfully in spiritual life. The devotees will be more than pleased to show you how to offer all your food to Kṛṣṇa, so that your eating may always be simply wonderful and your advancement on the path back home, back to Godhead, will be sure.*

*Hare Kṛṣṇa.*





THE  
UNIQUE  
STANDARD  
OF  
ŚRĪMAD  
BHĀGAVATAM

BY  
KARUNĀSINDHU DĀSA

There are many scriptural writings present for perusal by intelligent and enlightened men who are able to appreciate the value of authoritative spiritual knowledge. Amongst those fortunate souls who are able to appreciate authoritative information, the question must arise as to which to study. We must first kill the serpent of conditional limitations and fly away from relative terms, for by definition God is the infinite, unlimited Absolute Truth. There are higher and lower principles of truth evident in all endeavors for knowledge, so we must turn ourselves to the complete knowledge of the Supreme Absolute Truth. Although we are obviously finite, we cannot contradictorily impose impotency on the Infinite by charging Him with being unable to reveal Himself to the finite. We necessarily must inspect the various

types of information available, with a view toward capturing a grasp on the Absolute Truth.

In the various scriptures there are various indications that God is the most powerful, the supreme creator, the most intelligent, and so forth. The conclusion is that God is the Supreme Entity. In the Sanskrit language He is therefore termed *Bhagavān*, which means the possessor of all opulence in full—that is, unlimited strength, unlimited intelligence, and unlimited beauty, wealth, fame and renunciation. Without such complete opulence there is no meaning to the nomenclature “God.” With the goal of meeting a complete understanding of the Complete, let us search out the authorized information which delivers that knowledge.

The standard of the scripture *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* fulfills all the requisites of even the most demanding and intelligent inquirer, for it is factually the acme of literature for the theistic pursuit. This literature was delivered in response to a need for guidance in self-realization. The endeavor for self-realization necessitates a complete ontology which is properly derived from scriptural sources. One inquiry which prefaces the speaking of the *Bhāgavatam* is the request for a summary exposition of the essence of all scriptures and the various duties known therein. Not only is *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* the essence of all scriptures, but it is spoken by *paramahamsas*, the most perfect swanlike transcendentalists who are in full knowledge.

The surpassingly excellent attributes of the *Bhāgavatam* are revealed in the second verse of this unrivalled standard for transcendental study. It is therein stated:

*dharmāḥ projjhita-kaitavo'tra*

“All so-called religiosity covered by fruitive intentions is completely rejected herein.”<sup>1</sup>

Fruitive intentions take the shape of *mokṣa* (liberation), *kāma* (sense gratification), *artha* (economic development), and *dharma* (worldly religiousness or duty), and they despoil the

attempt at true religion. The motive for them all is self-aggrandizement. *Dharma* in the sense of worldly religiousness is accepted by those who aspire after *artha* or economic development, for an intelligent man, recognizing that he is not the independent source of his own support, realizes the necessity for worship of a higher source to fulfill his desires. Economic development, in turn, is pursued for *kāma* (sense gratification), which lies as the ultimate goal for all materially infected beings. Sense gratification is a carousal in the animal propensities of eating, defending, sleeping and sex life and, more subtly, mental speculation. None of these affairs of the mundane world actually delivers the nectar of complete ecstasy which the soul demands by its nature. Thus in course of time the living being becomes frustrated with religiosity, acquisition and sense gratification, and he desires *mokṣa*, liberation from them. *Mokṣa*, liberation, must also be relegated to the mundane platform because it is simply a reaction (though quasi-spiritual) to the modes of material existence.

Taken together, religiosity, economic development, sense gratification and liberation summarize the mundane goals. These, however, must be abandoned as pollutions covering the *bhāgavata-dharma* or the essential function of the soul. By and large, beings of this world are exclusively engaged with these fruitive intentions and are therefore without the qualification to comprehend the highest truth. Therefore the *Bhāgavatam* rejects these motives *in toto* as unworthy.

Beyond merely discarding mundane ethos, the *Bhāgavatam* directs us to the highest goal.

*paramo nirmatsarāṇām satām  
vedyaṁ vāstavam atra*

“The highest truth, which is understandable by those who are fully pure in heart, is inculcated herein.”<sup>2</sup>

The *Vedānta-sūtras* given by the same author, Vedavyāsa, distill the vast Vedic texts into concise statements about the nature of the Absolute Truth.

These *sūtras* impress transcendence from their very onset with the aphorism:

*athāto brahma-jijñāsā*

“Now [when one is equipped with vast previous preliminary understanding and the facilities of the rare human frame endowed with sufficient intelligence], it is time to inquire about the nature of the Absolute Truth.”<sup>3</sup>

The human life is uniquely valuable, for it alone offers the opportunity to become enlightened about the Absolute Truth, leaving aside the secondary mean concerns of eating, sleeping, defending and mating, which are available in all aspects of living beings down to the lowliest insects and bacteria. The absurd dance of sensuality and mental speculation which dissipates one's precious energy into the ever-muting reservoir of mundane elements is abandoned herewith. The *sūtras* continue:

*janmādyasya yataḥ*

“The Absolute Truth is that from which all is emanating, by which all is maintained, and by which all is conserved in its unmanifested state.”<sup>4</sup>

The same aphorism, *janmādyasya yataḥ*, is echoed in Vedavyāsa's *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, his own bona fide exposition of the *Vedānta* texts, which are in the form of codes full of great meaning. In dealing with codes, one needs some access or key to understanding, since the compactly concentrated statements imply far more than their apparent simple meanings. Upon inspection, the *Vedānta-sūtras* give rise to volumes of transcendental indications, and one need only approach the author's own *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* for the complete crystallization of this knowledge. In this work Vedavyāsa benedicts us with a view of all aspects of the Absolute Truth, especially of the original essential feature of *Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa*, who supports all other features and energies as the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Although purely theistic, this topic

1. *Bhāg.* 1.1.2

2. *Bhāg.* 1.1.2

3. *Vedānta-sūtra*, 1.1.1

4. *Vedānta-sūtra*, 1.1.2

is completely nonsectarian. The Absolute Truth knows no limit, for it is He from whom everything emanates and who is the cause of all causes and possessor of infinite opulence and energies (both minute and grand). No one can claim an interest separate from the quest of understanding the Absolute Truth Śrī Kṛṣṇa, for all entities and states of existence have their source in Him. Therefore, the intelligent inquirer will recognize that study of the Absolute Truth is the prime function of life. There can be no question of validity in accusations of sectarianism because when one realizes the nature of God as the Absolute Truth from whom all emanates, there is no possibility of relegating Him to a realm of eclipsed thought.

Vedavyāsa states clearly at the beginning of his great *Bhāgavatam* that the Absolute Truth is known in three features: *brahmeti paramātmēti bhagavān iti*.<sup>5</sup> The feature of Bhagavān or Kṛṣṇa, the Personality of Godhead, is supreme. The other two features—Brahman (impersonal raw effulgence) and Paramātmā (all-pervasive Supersoul)—are supported by Him, just as light and heat are inseparably supported by the filament of an incandescent electric bulb. Bhagavān, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, is thus the *summum bonum* in the quest for the Absolute Truth.

Although the source and support of all categories of existence, Śrī Kṛṣṇa still remains aloof. In the first verse of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* He is described as *svarāṭ* or fully independent. The understanding of Kṛṣṇa's position in this matter was bestowed by Kṛṣṇa Himself in His divine appearance as Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu in the guise of His own perfect devotee. Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya put forth the sublime doctrine of *acintya-bhedābheda-tattva*, or the inconceivable, simultaneous oneness and difference of the Lord. As in the example of the light bulb, one cannot separate the energy from the energetic. (There is no meaning to a light without its radiant energy.) Still, the energetic source at the same time remains distinct. Similarly, Kṛṣṇa manifests all varieties of energies, yet He

remains the Supreme Transcendental Entity.

The intelligent soul must therefore seek his relationship with the Absolute Truth as his quintessential purpose. However we exist, there are always relationships and functions. We are now encased in gross and subtle forms of matter—specifically, the body, mind and intelligence—but by careful examination we find that we are not the body, for we identify it as our possession (“my” hand, “my” mind, etc.). It is properly owned by the “I,” and there is a distinction between “me” and what is “mine.” We should therefore accept all corporeal functions as corollary to embodiment and thus not at all primary. Although there are many codes prescribed in the Vedic scriptures and elsewhere for the conduct of ordinary activities, they should be executed properly in relation to the Absolute Truth. Similarly, mundane knowledge must also be regarded in the same light.

All duties or essential performances are known as *dharma*, or sustainers of the living beings. The living beings are described as *nitya*, eternal,<sup>6</sup> and thus possessing *sanātana-dharma*, an eternal function. As part and parcel of the Absolute Truth,<sup>7</sup> all souls are serving Śrī Kṛṣṇa,<sup>8</sup> but some, in forgetfulness of their true nature, serve Him only through His external potency, according to their degree of surrender to Him. *Yogīs* and those who worship the formless Brahman effulgence also appreciate some part of Kṛṣṇa, but Kṛṣṇa Himself is called *param brahma* (the Supreme Spirit), *paramātmā* (the all-pervading Supersoul) and *bhagavān* (the Supreme Personality of Godhead). *Sanātana-dharma* is also known as *bhāgavata-dharma*, or one's function in relation to Bhagavān, the Supreme Person. Thus all phases of spiritual realization are climaxed by the attainment of *bhāgavata-dharma*. Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the substance of the discrete existence of all categories, mundane and transcendental; thus in all circumstances the ultimate reality underlying all outward manifestations and changes is *bhāgavata-dharma*, the

true subject of predication.

The effect of pursuing the knowledge of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is stated:

*vastu śivadam tāpatrayonmūlanam*

“The highest truth is described to uproot the threefold miseries for the welfare of everyone.”<sup>9</sup>

The motive and result are disclosed here as being universal welfare. There are numberless attempts to benefit the public and free them from the miseries of existence, which are described as threefold: (1) miseries inflicted by other living beings, (2) miseries inflicted by natural phenomena (floods, heat and cold, etc.), and (3) miseries due to one's own self (mental anxieties, old age, etc.). These miseries are inherent in the condition of embodiment and cannot be compromised or surpassed by any amount of planmaking. The solution is to relieve the suffering soul from embodiment by enlightening him to his true nature as part and parcel of God and the Lord's eternal servitor. By experiencing himself as aloof from the gross and subtle (mental and intellectual) bodies, the suffering soul becomes free from the inescapable miseries of these coverings. This can be perfected even in the embodied state by advancement of transcendental knowledge, which relieves the soul of the false sense of lordship over his bodily designation and its relations and establishes him by degrees in his true position of loving servitorship to the eternal Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Thus, *bhakti-yoga* or devotional service is clearly the most attractive proposition, surpassing all flickering pleasures of the mundane platform and even the conception of liberation from the material world (which is no more than mere negation of the innate miseries of mundane existence). One situated in transcendental service is already liberated from the woes of false identification, and above that, he experiences the ecstatic mellow taste of loving exchange with the unlimited Supreme Personality of Godhead. This service is truly beneficial for universal welfare.

Since all souls are equipped with the facility simply to hear the message of

5. *Bhāg.* 1.1.11

6. *Bhāgavad-gītā*, 2.17-20

7. Bg., 4.35

8. Bg., 4.11

9. *Bhāg.* 1.1.2

Godhead and advance in transcendental understanding, the foundation of enlightenment is called *śravaṇam*, or authorized hearing, which is counted as the primary process of the devotional ennead. The application of devotional service is followed causelessly by knowledge and renunciation.<sup>10</sup> The ultimate goal must be surrender to the Absolute Truth, and necessarily one must be equipped with *bhakti*, devotion, and its corollaries, *jñāna*, knowledge (of the mundane and transcendent natures), and *vairāgya*, detachment from the mundane platform. All requisites are bestowed simply by authorized hearing of the great literature *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the authentic transcendental science given by the foremost spiritual authority, Śrī Vyāsadeva, the author of all the Vedic literature, which encompasses the entire spectrum of knowledge, both transcendental and mundane. The higher division of knowledge, of course, deals with the higher aspect of existence, generally referred to as spiritual or *sac-cid-ānanda*—that is, existence full of truth and eternity, unadulterated consciousness and pure cognition, and full uninterrupted bliss. Vedavyāsa's transcendental expositions deal with all the numerous categories and climax in delivering the substance in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. After compiling all of his vast writings, he was not fully pacified even by such great contributions as *Vedānta-sūtra* until on the order of his spiritual master he carried out the mission of writing *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, which deals directly with the glories of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and His devotees. Thus it is said that the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the fully ripened fruit of the Vedic tree of wisdom<sup>11</sup> and in fact the literary incarnation of Godhead given by the incarnation of Godhead Himself.<sup>12</sup> Vedavyāsa's *Bhāgavatam* is the full treatise on the Absolute Truth beyond the indications and suggestions of his other discourses, and it is thus intended for the fully mature transcendentalist and inquirer.

Simply by eager aural reception of

*Bhāgavatam*, the candidate for understanding transcendental knowledge becomes qualified to realize the Absolute Truth to full capacity. If one submits to the Absolute Truth he can know the Absolute Truth. The transmission of the messages of Godhead contains complete transcendental potency by the absolute omnipotency of the Supreme, and by proper association with these messages, the path is cleared for the aspirant. Kṛṣṇa actually becomes the well-wisher of the devotee and vanquishes all inauspiciousness and defectiveness within him. The mood of challenge divorces the defiant soul from any entrance into truth, for the truth stands aloof from challenge or doubt. The sublime and uncomplicated means of success is simply to flood the self with the companionship of the truth, thus annihilating the darkness of ignorance, which is fraught with the agonized writhings of the faithless mind. The prime qualification is to hear conscientiously.

Although the method of hearing is direct and free from complication, it is not cheap; rather, it must come in a strictly authorized manner. According to spiritual authorities, the aspirant must receive his instruction from a *guru* or spiritual master who is himself qualified by proper hearing and is situated according to the instruction that originates from the Absolute Truth Himself. The precepts are activated by the preceptor; one must receive the literature *Bhāgavatam* from the person *Bhāgavatam*, or the representative of the line of disciplic succession. The understanding is not accessible in any other manner; the transcendental method must be employed above all mundane attempts. Often mundaners will attempt to understand or present this great literature according to their own erroneous interpretations, but the method of transmission and the literature itself are both of the same quality as Godhead—*pūrṇam*, perfect and complete. Thus the need for adopting some new dichotomy is simply a superfluous concoction. The author, Vyāsadeva, is fully qualified by disciplic succession to render the sublime topics, and the

audience of his messages should receive them from Vyāsa's representative without adulteration.

The Supreme Absolute Truth is revealed by degrees in Vyāsadeva's systematic presentation. The full appreciation of the substance is uncovered by grades of categorical revelation in the first nine cantos, and when these are fully assimilated the candidate becomes God realized. Thus when one can understand the nature of the Supreme Person he can take to hearing the succeeding accounts of Kṛṣṇa's intimate activities with His closest associates. Often unscrupulous men make a pretense of study of the *Bhāgavatam* and immediately leap to the Tenth Canto, which they are unqualified to enter. Transcendental enlightenment, however, is bestowed by the Supreme Transcendence Himself in His full presence in the form of sound vibration which comes through His authorized representatives, His transparent *via media*. There is no means to circumvent the Lord's agency of His pure devotees and approach Him in any other way. Souls contaminated by mundane affinity are unfit to contact the transcendental nature, but by Divine Grace the pure devotees are available just to engage the diseased souls in the service of the Transcendence and purify them. The primary qualification is the urge to hear *Kṛṣṇa-kathā* (topics related to Kṛṣṇa or His own words), and thus Kṛṣṇa Himself cleanses such sincere souls from all affinities for material enjoyment. One who falls into the mire becomes covered by muck. Similarly, one's body made of the material elements bears irrevocable evidence to the desire for material enjoyment. Without purification, we must act on the platform of pollution and distraction from the Supreme Absolute Truth Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The cleansing process which allows our dormant desire for the Supreme to come forth is available only in humble selfless service to the lotus feet of the Lord's pure devotees.<sup>13</sup>

By gaining the standard of purity by the grace of the Lord's devotees, the soul becomes qualified to compre-

10. *Bhāg.* 1.3.8

11. *Bhāg.* 1.1.3

12. *Bhāg.* 1.3.40

13. *Bhāg.* 1.2.16-20

hend the nature of the Absolute Truth and enter into that nature. When one is no longer diverted by any affinity for the combination of the mundane modes, he is able to fix his mind in undeviating attention on the supermost feature of the Absolute Truth, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa declares that He is known according to the surrender of the individual,<sup>14</sup> but the ability to surrender demands enlightenment gained by service. It is said, as noted previously, that the highest truth is understandable by those who are fully pure in heart, free from all mundane contaminations.<sup>15</sup> The purification process must be adopted because the goal is supreme. The means of purification are not unreasonable or artificial impositions, but they simply change one's association in such a way that his attention is turned to transcendence.

Everyone is engaged in some service by hearing, glorifying, questioning, desiring or other bodily activities, for service is the innate function of the finite living entities. Within the mundane field, however, the eternal living beings are enmeshed in the service of their temporal and ignorant environment (the transitory material body and mind and their relationships). However, by the practice of *vaidhi-bhakti-yoga* (regulated devotional life), the individual's function of service is turned to the completely ecstatic activities of loving the eternal Supreme Lord. All beings are attracted by greatness, and thus they serve greatness according to their appreciation. But Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the person of infinite greatness, and when the individual can grasp Kṛṣṇa's supremacy, he engages in his original pure service. The process is therefore not dry, but is a progressive awakening of the attraction for God that is dormant within all conditioned beings. It is simultaneously simple and sublime; the means are the same as the end, for service to Kṛṣṇa is the so-called practice and also the culmination.<sup>16</sup>

The most accessible mode of service is simply to hear about Kṛṣṇa's glories, for thus the natural affinity of the minute souls for the Supreme Soul is invoked:

*Īsvaraḥ sadyo hr̥dy avarudhyate 'tra  
kṛtibhiḥ śuśrūṣubhis tatkṣaṇāt*

"As soon as one applies his attentive and submissive aural reception to the message [of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*], he becomes attached to the Supreme Lord at once."<sup>17</sup>

As discussed previously, once one is purified and free from the distractions of mundane existence, he can turn full proper attention to culturing knowl-



edge of the Absolute. As the fully potent Absolute Truth, Kṛṣṇa is fully present in the accounts of His glorious attributes and pastimes, and thus anyone can relish his constitutional ecstasy in the holy service of hearing these glories. Govinda (Kṛṣṇa) is the reservoir of unlimited spiritual bliss, and by His full presence in His pastimes they remain everfresh, as confirmed by the sages of Naimiṣāraṇya:

*vayaṁ tu na vitṛpyāma  
uttamaśloka-vikrame  
yac chṛṇvatām rasa-jñānām  
svādu svādu pade pade*

"We shall never tire of hearing the transcendental pastimes of the Personality of Godhead who is glorified by transcendental prayers. Those who have developed a taste of their transcendental relationship with Him relish hearing of His pastimes at every moment."<sup>18</sup>

Thus the natural fully blissful state of the soul (*ānanda*) can be experienced, undiminished; one need only accept the proper method of receiving

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. We therefore humbly beg the reader to seize this most fortunate opportunity by turning his attention to the message of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, which fixes within one's heart the Absolute Truth, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

"This *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* is as brilliant as the sun, and it has arisen just after the departure of Lord Kṛṣṇa to His own abode, accompanied by religion, knowledge, etc. Persons who have lost their vision due to the dense darkness of ignorance in the age of Kali shall get light from this *purāṇa*."<sup>19</sup> ❖

14. Bg. 4.11  
15. Bhāg. 1.1.2  
16. Bg. 10.7-9

17. Bhāg. 1.1.2

18. Bhāg. 1.1.19  
19. Bhāg. 1.3.43



continued from page 16

for the satisfaction of Kṛṣṇa. That is oneness. We are preaching love of God, but most people do not know how to love God. They do not know because they are ignorant of God's form. The fact is that most people do not want to proceed past impersonal Brahman realization. You have to go beyond that to realize God, for you cannot love mere air and sky. There must be a form to love. *Īśvaraḥ paramaḥ kṛṣṇaḥ sac-cid-ānanda-vigrahaḥ*. *Vigraha* means form, and it is that form that invokes our love."

It is time to go to the courtyard. All problems cleared, the devotees offer obeisances to the Master.

"The path of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is just like a sharpened razor," Prabhupāda warns. "If you are expert, you get a clean shave. But if you slip, you get cut."

We follow him into the courtyard where *kīrtana* is going on. *Kīrtana* stops, obeisances are offered, Śrīla Prabhupāda chants and then begins to talk of the expansions of Kṛṣṇa. At length the subject turns to Vṛndāvana.

"We should try to make Kṛṣṇa happy like the *gopīs* of Vṛndāvana. In Vṛndāvana everyone is trying to please Kṛṣṇa—the birds, trees, cows, the river and all His associates. It is not that Vṛndāvana is only here. We can have Vṛndāvana everywhere. Kṛṣṇa is not limited. We should not think that Kṛṣṇa is far away in Goloka Vṛndāvana and cannot accept food from us. If you offer food with love, Kṛṣṇa eats. Kṛṣṇa does not leave Goloka Vṛndāvana, but His expansion goes and accepts food. This Vṛndāvana, which so happens to appear in India, is as worshipable as Kṛṣṇa. As Kṛṣṇa is worshipable, His *dhāma* [residence] is also worshipable. So we cannot offend His *dhāma*. If we live in Vṛndāvana, we are living with Kṛṣṇa, for Vṛndāvana is nondifferent from Kṛṣṇa. There is no difference between the original Vṛndāvana and this Vṛndāvana. Vṛndāvana is so powerful."

I stifle sudden outrage. My comprehension is staggered as I consider that in Kṛṣṇa's abode there is no distress, no death. There everything is full of knowledge, bliss and eternity. Who could walk through the squalor and



Bhārgava Dāsa

suffering of Vṛndāvana and claim it to be nondifferent from Kṛṣṇa and His abode? My American sense of propriety and logic demands an explanation. I hold my tongue throughout Prabhupāda's lecture and afterwards hurry to his reception room to question him before the crowd presses in. He sits regally on his dais, and I feel myself shrink a little and my outrage drop.

"Prabhupāda," I venture timidly.

"Yes?" He looks straight at me.

"I'm a little confused by what you said in your lecture. You said that this Vṛndāvana is nondifferent from Goloka Vṛndāvana, and I'm a little confused by that because—"

"You must be confused," he says,

Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities:

"Most people do not know how to love God. . . because they are ignorant of God's form. . . and it is that form that invokes our love."

looking down at me. "You are not perfect." Silence. My heart stops. "Are you perfect?"

"No," I answer, feeling about two inches high.

"Then you must be confused."

"I'm not the only one who's confused," I say stupidly.

"If you're not perfect, you must be confused. That is the only answer."

"There is no other answer?" I ask, crestfallen.

"If you are not perfect, how can you get the right conclusion?"

"Most things I can understand, at least intellectually, but—"

"That means you are not completely perfect. As far as you are perfect, you understand. Because our senses are imperfect, we understand in an imperfect way. This means that we must understand from the authorities. Caitanya Mahāprabhu says that Vṛndāvana is as worshipable as Lord Kṛṣṇa."

"I can understand that," I say, "but there's birth, old age, disease and death here. . . all the material miseries."

"This is not Goloka Vṛndāvana. This Vṛndāvana is a replica, but the laws of this material world are working here. We are worshiping Deities in the temple, and everyone is seeing that they are made of stone and wood, but still the Deities are not different from Kṛṣṇa. They are Kṛṣṇa. We are not worshiping wood and stone, but to the naked eye they appear so. When Caitanya Mahāprabhu went to Puṛī and saw Jagannātha, He immediately fell down and said, 'Here is Kṛṣṇa.' It is a question of vision."

"The other thing I understood—maybe incorrectly—was that when Kṛṣṇa departed from this earth, He took His paraphernalia and His *dhāma* with Him to the spiritual sky."

"You can use what is called a circuit house as an example here. A governor may come and go from a circuit house and take his paraphernalia with him.

He may come and go with his things, but his house is still there. Whenever Kṛṣṇa comes to this planet, He comes to this place. So this Vṛndāvana is as good as Goloka Vṛndāvana."

"But He won't come here again in this age?"

"No, not in Kali-yuga. But when He comes, this is the place."

"But it wasn't like this when He was here."

"That may be. But that doesn't mean the place is less important. It is our offense that we are keeping the place not so nice. And we have to suffer for it. Those who are responsible for keeping up this place are neglecting their duty, and they have to suffer. They have to take another life as dogs and hogs here. The hogs, dogs and monkeys here are not ordinary. They are devotees who have committed offenses, so their offenses are being compensated by accepting another life in Vṛndāvana. In this way they will be purified and liberated. Although they may be hogs, they are not losers. So Vṛndāvana is even more important because even the hogs and dogs here are going to be liberated. Life here is not polluted because even the most polluted are being purified."

The Vṛndāvana system, which had been veiled to me, begins to clarify. Still I think of the clean, well manicured lawns of bourgeois America.

"Is there any particular reason Kṛṣṇa allows His own home to deteriorate?" I persist.

"It is not deteriorated. If even the dogs are going to be liberated, how is it deteriorated?"

"But it is not nicely kept up."

"Not nicely kept up in *your* eyes. But if it were not nicely kept up, how could the dogs and hogs be liberated?"

I consider this point, and the fog begins to roll away.

"Just like some people try to find fault in Kṛṣṇa," Prabhupāda continues,

"but a devotee sees that despite all these things, Kṛṣṇa is Kṛṣṇa. Even if the people here do not appear Kṛṣṇa conscious, they are most fortunate because they are on the land of Kṛṣṇa. *Jaya jaya vṛndāvana-vāsī yata jana*. All glories to all the inhabitants of Vṛndāvana! There is no discrimination that just the devotees here are glorified. Everyone. Even the hogs. It is more fortunate to be born in Vṛndāvana than in a rich or aristocratic family, for in the next life one will return back to Godhead. Even the hogs are devotees and are liberated. Unless one is a devotee, he cannot take birth here. They may take a hog's or dog's body for a few years, but that is not an impediment. They are simply getting rid of their sinful activities."

"Isn't there another way to do it?"

"Why do you want another way? What other way do you suggest? Suppose one is not born as a dog or hog? Does that mean he is very elevated? In a hog body at least you don't have a chance to commit more sins. Because you're an animal, you don't have to be bound up again by another *karma*. Animals have no *karma*. They are finishing their *karma*, not making new *karma*."

"The hogs seem happier than the people," I admit.

"Yes. They only have one life to suffer. A hog only eats stool, but a man eats everything. He becomes more implicated."

"Even though the people here don't have a bona fide spiritual master, can they still be liberated?" someone asks.

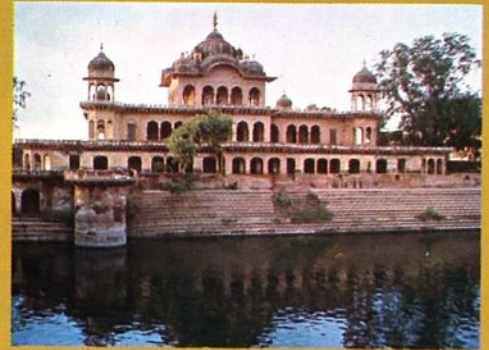
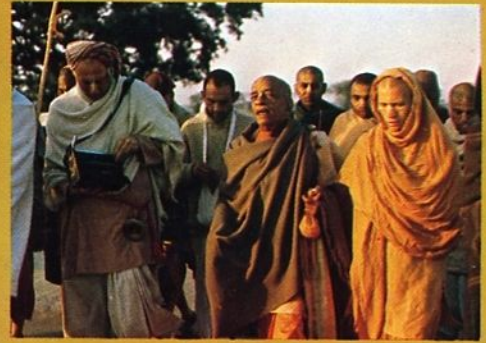
"Yes. They are liberated without a spiritual master because Vṛndāvana is directly under the supervision of Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is their spiritual master."

"It is a lot clearer now, Śrīla Prabhupāda," I say. "Thank you very much."

I offer obeisances and leave. As I walk out into the street, a new and sanctified Vṛndāvana lies before me. ❏

Vṛndāvana, the transcendental abode of Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is depicted here. On the upper left Lord Kṛṣṇa dances on the heads of the demoniac Kāliya serpent whose venom had polluted the waters of the River Yamunā. The Lord subdued the demon simply by dancing on his heads and drove him away from the Yamunā's waters. Pure devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa derive transcendental pleasure from visiting the sites of the Lord's pastimes. On the upper right

Śrīla Prabhupāda leads disciples on an early morning walk in this transcendental land. On the lower right is a temple of worship at Govardhana Hill. When torrents of rain once threatened to flood Vṛndāvana, Lord Kṛṣṇa lifted this entire hill as an umbrella to protect His devotees. Below, devotees of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement celebrate *saṅkīrtana*—congregational chanting of the holy name of the Lord—in the streets of present-day Vṛndāvana.



“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