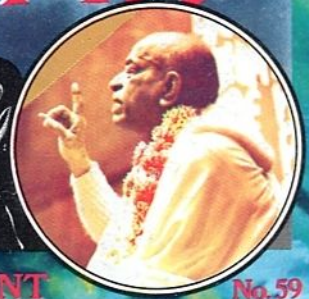


Godhead is light. Nescience is darkness. Where there is Godhead there is no nescience.



BACK TO GODHEAD

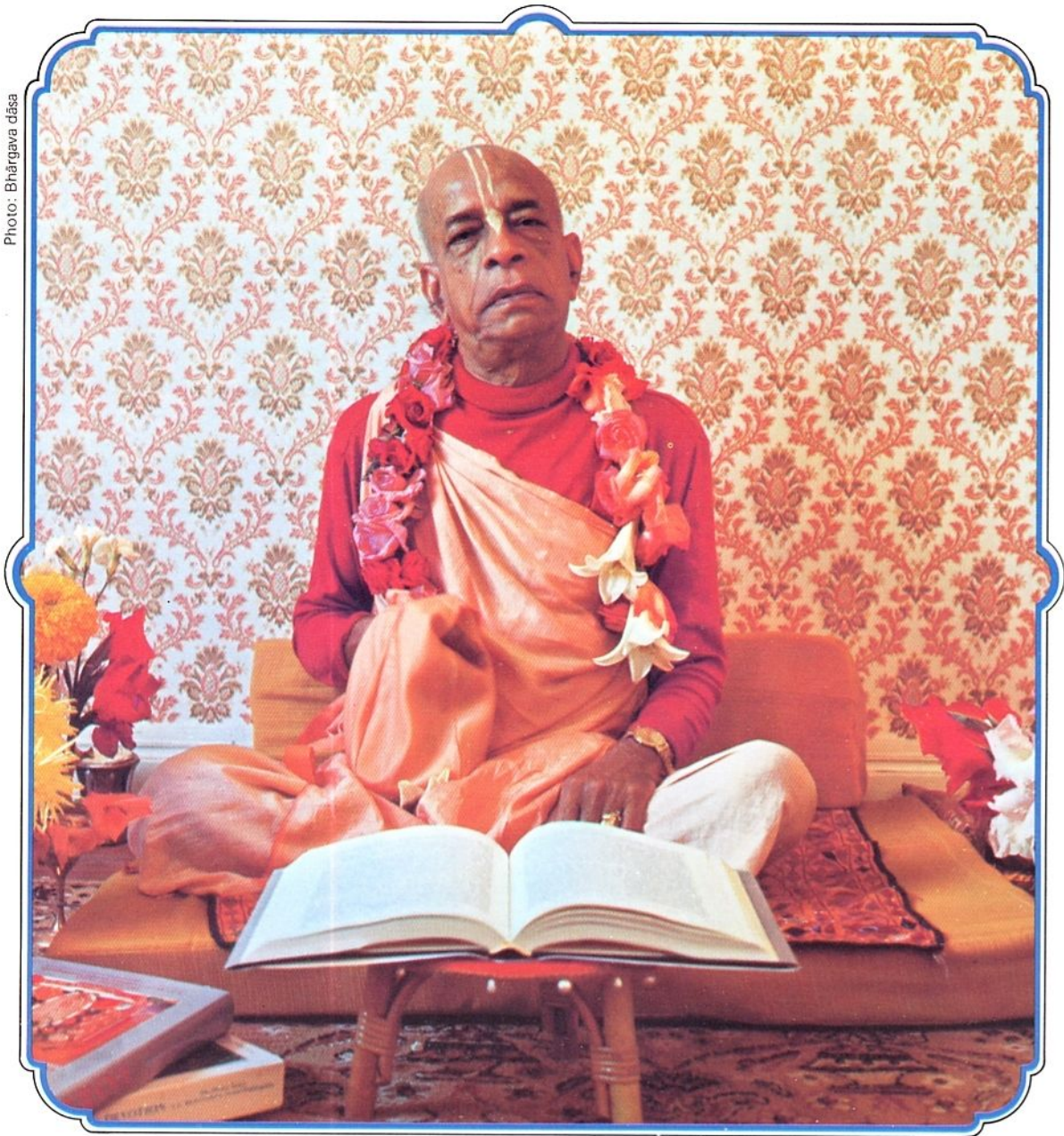


THE MAGAZINE OF THE HARE KRISHNA MOVEMENT

No. 59



Photo: Bhārgava dāsa



His Divine Grace

A.C. BHAKTIVEDANTA SWAMI
PRABHUPĀDA

Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

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

Back to Godhead magazine is for intelligent people only. To be intelligent, one need not have a university degree or engage in intellectual word jugglery because the higher intelligence required for understanding *Back to Godhead* is not a matter of mundane academic research. The really intelligent person is one who will accept information about God from higher authorities and regard the science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness as valuable and important.

The Vedic scriptures state: "In the Age of Kali [our present age of quarrel and hypocrisy], people who have sufficient intelligence will worship the Supreme Lord by performing congregational chanting of His holy names." This refers to the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* printed on this page. Chanting this *mantra* is recommended as the easy and sublime method for becoming free of all the contamination of this materialistic age and attaining the highest bliss of love of God.

People who are too attached to acquiring temporary material possessions and pleasures, as well as people who take a narrow sectarian view of religion, will not have the intelligence to comprehend the value of chanting the names of God. Their disinclination to understand it is a sign of impurity of heart, which has covered their real intelligence. But whoever is innocent and truly intelligent will be attracted to chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa—and he or she is the most learned member of society.

There are many names of God throughout the world and the universe, but according to Vedic knowledge Kṛṣṇa is the supreme name. Therefore this chanting is recommended as supreme. Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Intelligent Being, and when we associate with Him by His holy name, all ignorance and suffering are dissipated. We therefore invite everyone to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and be happy.

Photo: Muralīvadana dāsa





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under the direction of His Divine Grace
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ON THE COVER

In Vṛndāvana, the transcendental abode, even the cows, the deer, the birds, the trees—everyone—is enchanted by the sweet vibration of Kṛṣṇa's flute and the fascinating beauty of His person. This is one of the qualities which only the Supreme Personality of Godhead can possess—His superexcellent beauty cannot be matched by anyone.

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

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For information on how you can become a registered member of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, please write to the Society's secretary at 3764 Watseka Avenue, Los Angeles, California, 90034.



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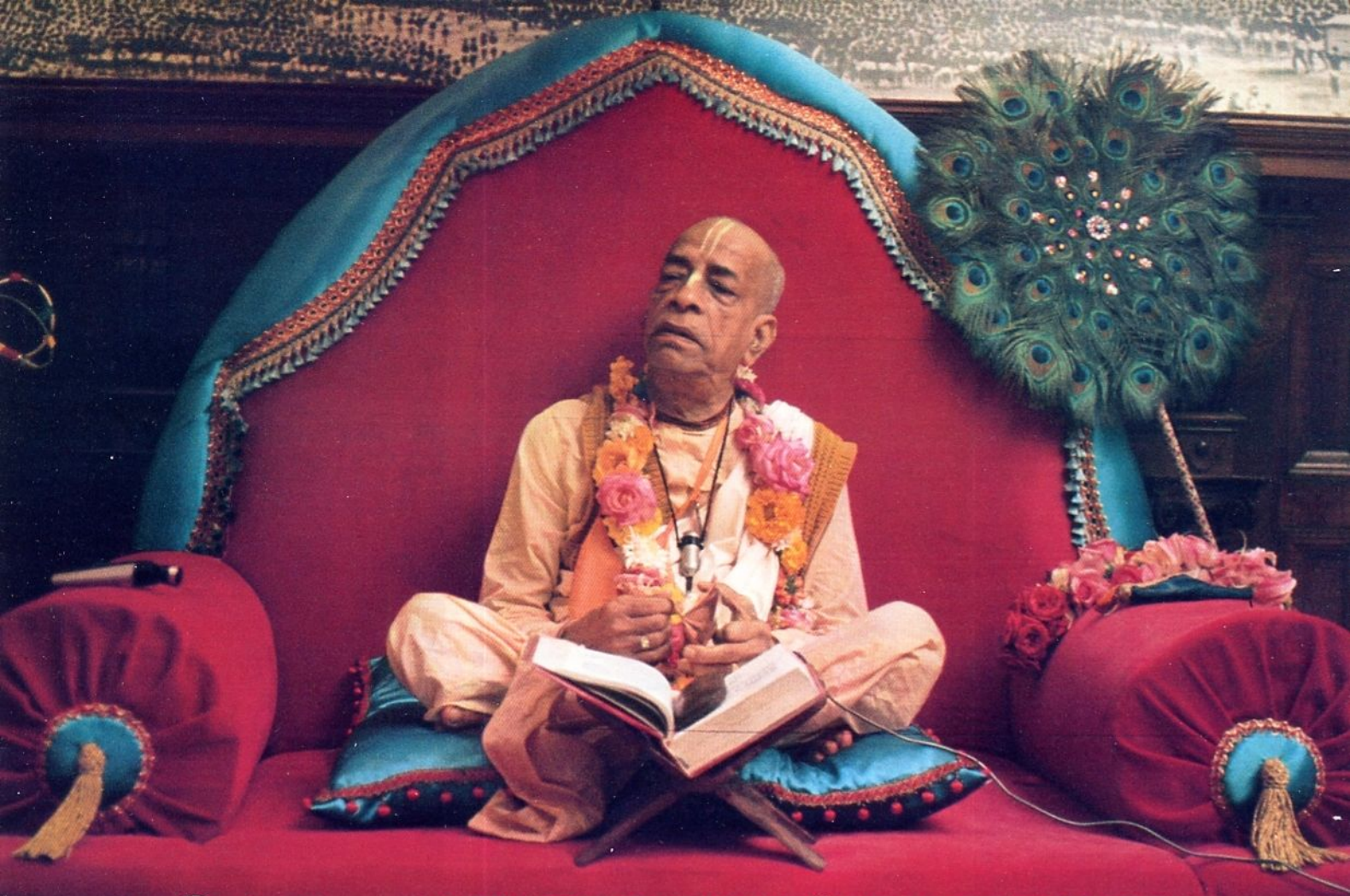
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His Divine Grace A.C. BHAKTIVEDANTA ŚWAMI PRABHUPĀDA

Photo: Bhārgava dāsa

ŚRĪLA RŪPA GOSVĀMĪ was one of six exalted devotees especially chosen through the Kṛṣṇa conscious chain of spiritual masters to teach the devotional service of the Supreme Lord in a scientific manner. Although all of these six great devotees were erudite scholars and prolific writers, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī is the most prominent, for he most greatly appreciated the nectar of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. His Upadeśāmṛta (Nectarean Instructions), a short work of only eleven verses, teaches the basic principles for arousing one's dormant love of Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Lord. Written in Sanskrit some 400 years ago, it has now been translated into English, with an illuminating explanation of each verse, by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda.]

OBSTACLES ON THE PATH OF ETERNITY

An Excerpt from Śrīla Rūpa
Gosvāmī's Upadeśāmṛta.

much neglect); *jana-saṅgaḥ*—bad association; *ca*—and; *laulyam*—ardent longing or greed; *ca*—and; *ṣaḍbhiḥ*—by these six; *bhaktiḥ*—devotional service; *vinaśyati*—is destroyed.

TRANSLATION

Becoming too entangled in these six kinds of activities spoils the development of one's devotional service: (1) eating more than necessary or collecting more than necessary or collecting more funds than required; (2) over-endeavoring for mundane things that are very difficult to attain; (3) talking unnecessarily about mundane subject matters; (4) practicing the scriptural rules and regulations only for the sake of following them, with no resultant benefits of spiritual advancement, or rejecting the rules and regulations of the scriptures and working independently or whimsically; (5) associating with worldly-minded persons who are not interested in Kṛṣṇa consciousness; and (6) being greedy for mundane achievements.

PURPORT

Human life is meant for plain living and high thinking.

*atyāhāraḥ prayāsaś ca | prajalpo niyamāgrahaḥ
jana-saṅgas ca laulyam ca | ṣaḍbhir bhaktir vinaśyati*

atyāhāraḥ—overeating; *prayāsaḥ*—too much endeavor; *ca*—and; *prajalpaḥ*—idle talk; *niyama*—for rules and regulations; *āgrahaḥ*—too much attachment (or *agrahaḥ*—too

This material world is designed so that one is obliged to work, for all conditioned living beings are under the control of the Lord's third energy. The Supreme Personality of Godhead has three primary energies or potencies. The first is called *antaraṅga-śakti*, or the internal potency, the second is called *taṣṭha-śakti*, or the marginal potency, and the third is called *bahiraṅga-śakti*, or the external potency. The living entities constitute the marginal potency, and they are situated between the internal and external potencies. Being subordinate as eternal servants of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the *jīvātmās*, or atomic living entities, must remain under the control of either the internal or external potency. When they are under the control of the internal potency they display their natural, constitutional activity, namely, constant engagement in the devotional service of the Lord. This is stated in *Bhagavad-gītā*, Chapter Nine, verse 13:

*mahātmānas tu mām pārtha
daivīm prakṛtim āśritāḥ
bhajanty ananya-manaso
jñātvā bhūtādim avyayam*

“O son of Pṛthā, those who are not deluded, the great souls, are under the protection of the divine nature. They are fully engaged in devotional service because they know Me as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, original and inexhaustible.”

Mahātmā refers to persons who are broad-minded, not cripple-minded. Cripple-minded persons, always engaged to satisfy their senses, sometimes expand their activities for doing good to others through some “ism” like nationalism, humanitarianism or altruism. They think that personal sense gratification is not good but the sense gratification of other persons like the members of their family, community and society, either national or international, is very nice. All this extended sense gratification, from personal to communal and social, may be very good from the material point of view, but such activities have no spiritual value. The quality of such activity is sense gratification, whether personal or extended. Only when one gratifies the senses of the

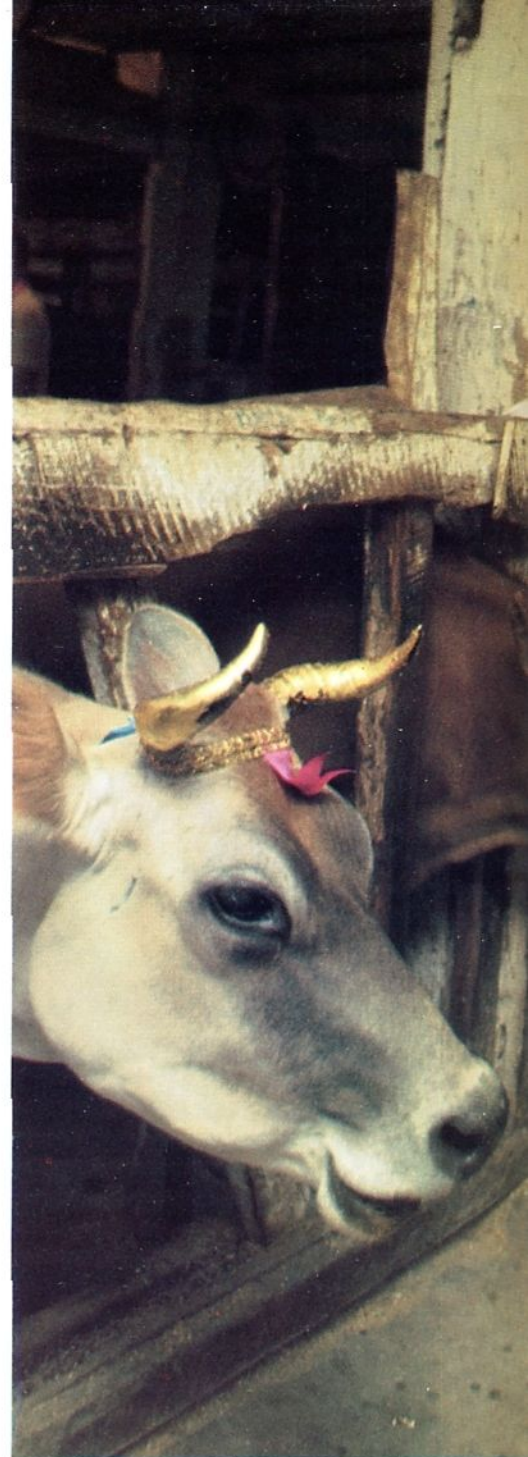
Supreme Lord can he be called a *mahātmā*, or broad-minded person.

In the above verse from *Bhagavad-gītā*, *daivīm prakṛtim* refers to the control of the internal potency, or pleasure potency, of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, which is manifest as Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī or Her expansion Lakṣmī, the goddess of fortune. When the individual *jīva* souls are under the control of the internal energy their only engagement is to satisfy Kṛṣṇa, or Viṣṇu. This is the position of a *mahātmā*. Otherwise one is not a *mahātmā* but a *durātmā*, or cripple-minded person. Such mentally crippled *durātmās* are put under the control of the Lord's external potency, *mahāmāyā*.

All the living entities within this material world are under the control of *mahāmāyā*, whose business is to subject them to the influence of threefold miseries: *adhidaivika-kleśa* (sufferings caused by the demigods, such as droughts, earthquakes and storms), *adhibhautika-kleśa* (sufferings caused by other living entities like insects or enemies), and *adhyātmika-kleśa* (sufferings caused by one's own body and mind, such as mental and physical infirmities). *Daiva-bhūtātma-hetavaḥ*: the conditioned souls, subjected to these three miseries by the control of the external energy, suffer various difficulties, which are called *adhayo vyadhayaḥ kleśāḥ*.

The problem confronting the conditioned souls is the repetition of birth, death, old age and disease. In the material world one has to work for the maintenance of the body and soul. But how can one perform such work in a way favorable for the execution of Kṛṣṇa consciousness? Everyone requires possessions such as food grains, clothing, money and other things necessary for maintenance of the body, but one should not collect more than his actual basic needs. If we follow this natural principle there will be no difficulty in maintaining body and soul together.

By the arrangement of nature, living entities lower on the evolutionary scale than human beings do not eat or collect more than necessary. As such, there is generally no economic problem



or scarcity of necessities in the animal kingdom. If a bag of rice is kept in a public place, the birds will come, eat a few grains and go away, but a human being will take more rice from the bag than he requires. He will try to collect more and keep it in store. This *atyāhāra*, overeating or collecting more than necessary, is prohibited, for the entire world suffers because of it.

Collecting and eating more than necessary also causes *prayāsa*, or unnecessary endeavor. By God's arrangement anyone in any part of the world



Photo: Bhārgava dāsa

"There is no need for a man to move from one place to another to earn a livelihood, for one can produce food grains locally and get milk from cows. That will solve all economic problems." (Photos taken at New Vṛndāvana, ISKCON's 1,000-acre farming community near Wheeling, West Virginia.)



Photo: Viśākhā devī dāsa



Photo: Viśākhā devī dāsa

can live very peacefully if he has some land and a milk cow. There is no need for a man to move from one place to another to earn a livelihood, for one can produce food grains locally and get milk from cows. That will solve all economic problems. Fortunately, man has been given higher intelligence for the cultivation of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, or understanding of God, one's relationship with Him, and the ultimate goal of life, love of God. But unfortunately, so-called civilized man, not performing such activities, desires to

get more than necessary and eat simply to satisfy the tongue.

By God's arrangement there is sufficient scope for producing milk and grains for the human beings all over the world. But instead of using his higher intelligence for cultivating God consciousness, the so-called intelligent man misuses his intelligence to produce many unnecessary things, and for this purpose he opens factories, slaughterhouses, brothels, liquor shops, etc. If people are advised not to collect or eat too much or work unnecessarily to possess artificial amenities, they think that such advice is meant to take them back to a primitive way of life because they do not like to accept plain living and high thinking. That is their unfortunate position.

Human life is meant for realization of God, and the human being has been given higher intelligence for this purpose. Those who would use this higher intelligence to attain a higher state should follow the instructions of the Vedic literatures, for taking instructions about the advancement of human civilization from higher authorities actually situated in perfect knowledge gives real meaning to human life.

In *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, First Canto, Second Chapter, ninth verse, Śrī Sūta Gosvāmī describes the *dharma* (occupation) meant for cultivation by human beings:

*dharmasya hy āpavargyasya
nārtho 'rthāyopakalpate
nārthasya dharmāikāntasya
kāmo lābhāya hi smṛtaḥ*

“All occupational engagements [*dharma*] are certainly meant for ultimate liberation. They should never be performed for material gain. Furthermore, one who is engaged in the ultimate occupational service [*dharma*] should never use material gain to cultivate sense gratification.”

Dharma, religion, the first step in human civilization, consists of occupational engagements performed according to the scriptural injunctions. The

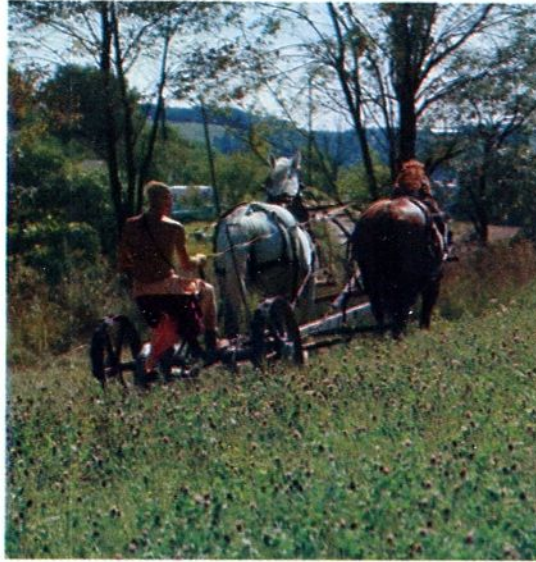


Photo: Viśakha devī dāsi

higher intelligence of a human being should be trained to understanding this basic *dharma*. In human society as a whole there are various concepts of religion, designated as Hindu, Christian, Hebrew, Mohammedan, Buddhist, etc., for without religion human society is no better than animal society.

As stated above, *dharmasya hy āpavargyasya nārtho 'rthāyopakalpate*: religion is meant for attaining emancipation, not for getting bread. Sometimes human society manufactures a system of so-called religion aimed at material advancement, but that is far from the purpose of true *dharma*. Religion entails understanding the laws of God because the proper execution of these laws ultimately leads one out of material entanglement. That is the true purpose of religion. But generally people accept religion only for material prosperity because of *atyāhāra*, or an excessive desire for material prosperity.

True religion instructs people to be satisfied with the bare necessities of life while cultivating spiritual consciousness. Even though we require economic development, it is required only for supplying the bare necessities of material existence. *Jīvasya tattvajijñāsā*: the real purpose of life is to inquire about the Absolute Truth. Our *prayāsa*, or endeavor, should be to inquire about the Absolute Truth, otherwise we will simply increase our endeavor to satisfy our artificial needs. A spiritual aspirant should avoid this kind of mundane endeavor.

“Human life is meant for plain living and high thinking.”

Another impediment is *prajalpa*, unnecessary talking. Generally when we mix with a few friends we immediately begin unnecessary talking, just like croaking toads. If we must talk we should talk about the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Persons outside of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement are interested in reading heaps of newspapers, magazines and novels, solving crossword puzzles and doing many other nonsensical things. In this fashion they simply waste their valuable time and energy. In the Western countries we have seen old men retired from active life who engage in playing cards, fishing, watching television and debating about useless socio-political schemes. All these and similar frivolous activities are included in the category of *prajalpa*. Intelligent persons interested in Kṛṣṇa consciousness should never take part in such activities.

Jana-saṅga refers to associating with persons not interested in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. One should strictly avoid such association. Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura has therefore advised us to live only in the association of Kṛṣṇa conscious devotees (*bhakta-sane vāsa*). One should always engage in the service of the Lord in the association of the Lord's devotees.

Association with persons engaged in a similar line of business is very much conducive to advancement in that line. Consequently materialistic persons form associations and clubs to enhance their various types of business. For example, in the business world we find such institutions as the stock exchange and chamber of commerce. We have therefore opened the International Society for Krishna Consciousness to give the opportunity for spiritual association to persons who have forgotten Kṛṣṇa. This spiritual association offered by our ISKCON movement is increasing day by day. Many people from different parts of the world are joining this Society to awaken their dormant Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura writes in his *Anuvṛtti* commentary that for mental speculators or

The spiritual association offered by the International Society for Krishna Consciousness to persons who have forgotten Kṛṣṇa is increasing day by day. Here, the founder and spiritual master of ISKCON, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, meets a group of disciples at Kennedy International Airport in New York.



dry philosophers too much endeavor to acquire knowledge also comes within the category of *atyāhāra* (collecting more than needed). According to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the endeavor of philosophical speculators to write volumes of books on dry philosophy devoid of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is entirely futile. *Karmīs* who write volumes of books on economic development also fall within the category of *atyāhāra*. People who have no desire for Kṛṣṇa consciousness and are simply interested in possessing more and more material

assets, either in the shape of scientific knowledge or monetary gain, are all included under the heading of *atyāhāra*.

Karmīs labor to accumulate more and more money for future generations, without knowledge of their own future position. Only interested in getting more and more money for their sons and grandsons, such foolish persons do not even know what their position is going to be in the next life. There are many incidents that illustrate this point. Once a big *karmī* accumulated a vast fortune for his sons and grandsons.

Later, according to his *karma*, he took his birth in a cobbler's house located nearby the same palatial building he had previously constructed for them. It so happened that this very cobbler came to his former house, and his former sons and grandsons beat him with shoes. Therefore, unless such *karmīs* and *jñānīs* become interested in Kṛṣṇa consciousness they are simply wasting their time in fruitless activities.

Accepting some of the scriptural rules and regulations for immediate benefit, as utilitarians advocate, is

called *niyama-āgraha*, and neglecting the rules and regulations of the *śāstras* meant for spiritual development is called *niyama-agraha*. *Āgraha* means “eagerness to accept,” and *agraha* means “failure to accept.” By the addition of either of these two words to *niyama* (“rules and regulations”) the word *niyamāgraha* is formed. Thus *niyamāgraha* has a two-fold meaning that is understood according to the particular combination of the words. Persons interested in Kṛṣṇa consciousness should not be eager to accept the rules and regulations meant for economic advancement, but, on the other hand, they should very faithfully accept scriptural rules and regulations for the advancement of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. They should strictly follow the regulative principles like no illicit sex, no eating of meat, fish or eggs, no gambling and no habits of intoxication.

One should avoid association with *Māyāvādīs*, persons who blaspheme *Vaiṣṇavas* (devotees). *Bhukti-kāmīs* interested in material happiness, *mukti-kāmīs* desiring liberation by merging in the existence of the formless Absolute (Brahman), and *siddhi-kāmīs* desiring the perfection of mystic *yoga* practice are classified as *atyāhāras*. To associate with such persons is not at all desirable.

Desires to expand the mind by perfection of mystic *yoga*, to merge in the existence of Brahman, or to achieve whimsical material prosperity are all included within the category of greed, or *lauhya*. All attempts to acquire such material benefits or so-called spiritual advancements are impediments on the path of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

The modern warfare between the capitalists and communists is due to their avoiding the advice of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī regarding *atyāhāra*. The modern capitalists accumulate more wealth than necessary, and the communists, envious of them, want to nationalize all wealth and property. The communists, however, also do not know how to solve the problem of wealth and its distribution. Therefore when the wealth of the capitalists comes into the hands of the communists, that is not the solution to the problem.

According to the Kṛṣṇa conscious ideology, all wealth belongs to Kṛṣṇa. Therefore unless wealth comes under the administration of Kṛṣṇa there can be no solution to the economic problem, neither by wealth’s being in the hands of the communists nor by its being in the hands of capitalists. There is a nice example in this connection. If a one-hundred-dollar note is lying in the street, someone may pick up the note and put it in his pocket. Such a man is not honest. Another man may see the note and decide to let it remain there, thinking he should not touch another’s property. Although this second man does not steal the note for his own purposes, he is unaware of the proper use of the note. But when a third man sees such a note, he may pick it up, find the man who lost it and deliver it to him. This third man does not take the note for his own expenditure nor neglect the note lying in the street. He takes it and delivers it to the man who lost it. This man is therefore both honest and wise.

Simply transferring wealth from capitalists to communists cannot solve the problems of modern politics because it has been practically seen that when a communist gets money he utilizes it for his own sense gratification also. The wealth of the world actually belongs to Kṛṣṇa. Every living entity, man or animal, has the birthright to use God’s property for his maintenance. When he takes more than his maintenance requires, whether he is a capitalist or communist, he is a thief, and as such he is liable to be punished by the laws of nature. The wealth of the world should be utilized for the welfare of all living entities, for that is the plan of mother nature.

Everyone has the right to live by utilizing the wealth of the Lord. When people learn this art of scientifically utilizing the Lord’s property and no longer encroach upon others’ rights, they can form an ideal society. This basic principle of a spiritual society is stated in the first *mantra* of Śrī *Īśopaniṣad*, the primer of spiritual culture, as follows:

*tṣāvāsyam idaṁ sarvaṁ
yat kiñca jagatyām jagat*

*tena tyaktena bhunñīthā
mā grdhaḥ kasya svid dhanam*

“Everything animate or inanimate that is within the universe is controlled and owned by the Lord. One should therefore accept only those things necessary for himself, which are set aside as his quota, and one must not accept other things, knowing well to whom they belong.”

Kṛṣṇa conscious devotees know very well that this material world is designed by the complete arrangement of the Lord to fulfill all the necessities of life for all living beings without their having to encroach upon the life or rights of one another. This complete arrangement affords the proper quota of wealth for everyone according to his real need, and thus everyone may live peacefully according to the principle of plain living and high thinking. On the other hand, materialistic persons who have no faith in the plan of God nor any aspiration for higher spiritual development misuse their God-given intelligence only for the augmentation of their material possessions. They devise many systems such as capitalism and materialistic communism to advance their material position without reference to the laws of God or a higher goal of life. Always anxious to fulfill their unlimited desires for sense gratification, they are conspicuous by their ability to exploit their fellow living beings.

When human society gives up these elementary faults of character enumerated by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī (*atyāhāra*, *lauhya*, etc.) all enmity will cease between men and animals, capitalists and communists, as will all problems of economic or political maladjustment and instability. This pure consciousness is awakened by the proper spiritual education and practice offered scientifically by the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.

The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is a spiritual community that can bring about a peaceful condition in the world. Every intelligent man should purify his consciousness of the above-mentioned six hindrances to devotional service by taking wholehearted shelter of this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. ❧

THE SCIENCE OF PURITY

IF ANYONE SAYS, "I don't believe in God," he's either a madman or a number one fool. Not a single scientific advancement has lessened the existence or potency of God, and none ever will. Nor has science made man any more secure in his position or powerful in conquering the stringent laws of nature that attack him at every moment. Employing an air conditioner to cool a few square yards is not controlling the sun's heat, and enclosing oneself in a plate-glass house is not the same as stopping the rain; nor is struggling through drought relief the same as making the rain come according to one's will. These are simply measures to ward off the blows of material nature. Yet these feeble measures of defence are being mistaken for "man's conquest of nature." And, at any rate, sitting in an air-conditioned room with a television, radio and plate-glass windows but having a mind distressed by worry, envy and anger is useless.

At a meeting in Bengal, when I was invited to speak to a large group of Muslim scholars about scientific proof of God, I said, "Look at this watch. It has twelve numbers on the face. Why? Why not eleven, thirteen or fifteen? Why doesn't it change every day? It's because the day and night are each divided into twelve parts according to the movements of the sun, which for millions of years has been coming and going within a twenty-four hour period so predictably that scientists and watch-makers believe it will continue to do so for millions of years in the future." Like the moon and other planets, the sun moves with such precision that science accepts it as a guide by which to tell time. Now, if manufacturing an accurate watch requires a very intelligent brain, how much more developed the brain must be that created the sun! It is definitely a brain superior to any man's.

To paint a picture of a flower on a table, an artist must work for several hours, and to copy it takes many more hours on a printing press built and operated by many intelligent men. Still, the flower has no fragrance, nor is it as perfectly formed as a real flower. If one were to bury such a flower in the ground, it would not grow because it would have no seeds. But if I put real flowers in the earth, more flowers would grow, without help from machines or brains, and these flowers that grew would contain seeds and be able to go on producing flowers forever. "Oh, that's just nature," say the scientists. And we answer them, "Yes, it is nature. But nature is not working without a supreme and inconceivably vast intellect operating it."

Actually, we don't "create" anything. Take our houses,

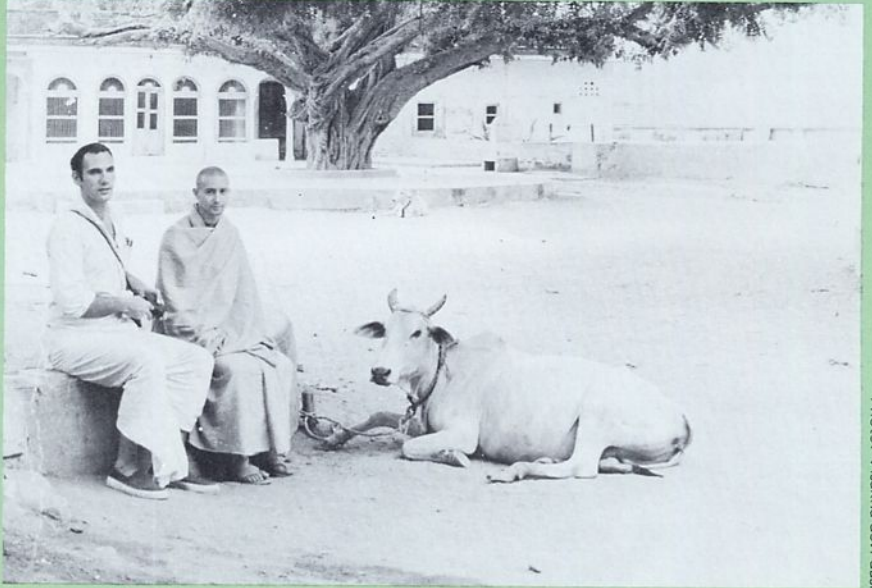


Photo: Viśākha devī dāśī

by HIS HOLINESS
Acyutānanda Svāmī

His Holiness Acyutānanda Svāmī, shown above (center) in Vṛndāvana, India, the site of Lord Kṛṣṇa's transcendental pastimes, is an American svāmī actively preaching in India since 1967. He has gained considerable recognition in Bengal and Uttar Pradesh for his abilities in chanting and lecturing in Bengali and English. He has edited a book of songs by great Kṛṣṇa conscious spiritual masters, soon to be published, and is now working on an English translation of Caitanya-bhāgavata, an important Bengali epic describing the activities of Lord Caitanya Mahārabhu.

for example. Air conditioned or not, they are composed of many building materials, such as cement, steel, sand and bricks. The elements for these materials were found already formed in the earth, and then man changed their forms by mixing them with water, fire, etc. That is not creation; it is only the changing of forms. We can change the form of the material, but what is it that produces the basic elements we are handling? Science has no answers, but only speculations. The scientists have only theories, but they speak like authorities. A true scientist, however, will admit his inability to explain the facts of creation and the happenings of nature.

For the entire Twentieth Century our view of history has been based upon the discoveries of archaeological findings. Only recently, however, the carbon 14 dating method, the main chemical system for tracing the age of ancient finds, has been proven faulty and imperfect. This also means that all the history books are faulty and imperfect. Darwin says that early man was unintelligent, undeveloped and uncivilized. But *Bhagavad-gītā*, spoken over five thousand years ago, reveals the supreme philosophy of life. Were Kṛṣṇa, Arjuna, Vyāsadeva and Vālmīki cavemen? Could such a highly cultured language as Sanskrit be the creation of the grunts and groans of highly developed apes? I challenge any follower of Darwin to study the Sanskrit language with his proudly developed intellect, or even read the *Vedas*, aside from understanding them, to say nothing of equaling the Vedic writings.

Let us face the facts that our so-called scientific education has given quite a hazy picture of the past and nothing about the future. This has left us in a very precarious present. Why are the Vedic literatures rejected as unscientific? They were written by the most advanced super-intellec-tuals, whose laboratories were their *āśramas*, the Himalayas and the process of regulated sense control. Material scientific experiments are performed blindly on the strength of imperfect tools, imperfect data and imperfect senses by those who have no control over the mind and its tendencies of illusion. A true scientist should make an experiment with the materials gathered from a given field and realize the results. One should not accept the conclusions of the imperfect senses.

Therefore we, who are also scientists, accept the authority of the perfect, infallible authors of the *Vedas*. Their names should be known—Vyāsadeva, Devala, Asita, Mārkaṇḍeya, Vālmīki and the supreme authority, Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself. Blind faith? No! In the beginning many doctrines may not be understandable, but it is not long before their meaning is completely revealed. If I cannot understand something now, it is not to be rejected as false until proven false. There are many scientific doctrines we accept without full understanding; in fact, material scientists really know very little about the why's and why not's of most of their principles.

When a scientist does not understand a phenomenon, he simply puts his own name on it, such as "gravity." What is gravity? It is an inconceivable energy that attracts material objects. But what is it? What they cannot explain they hide

by applying a new name. Try it! What is crystallization? It is only a name of a phenomenon we cannot understand. Actually, the scientist, utterly baffled at the transformations of the world, tries to bluff the public with a smoke screen of names. Even the most authoritative of theorems will contain terminology like "maybe," "probably," "it might have been" and "as far as we know." But how far *do* you know?

A case in point: From my collegiate studies of Darwin's theory of evolution (which is still just that, a theory, not a law), I clearly remember an interesting occurrence. In the textbook of 1962 an illustration depicted the stages of development from the ape to modern man according to Darwin. First was the common ape, then a stone image of the Piltdown man, then the Neanderthal man, then the Cro-Magnon man and modern man. This was all well and good, and for the time it was fashionable to accept it. But in 1963 in the same textbook's illustration depicting "man's growth from the ape," the rather dumb-looking Piltdown chap was not gloriously seated next to the ape but was absent from the "great line of evolution." Why? The "missing link" between animal and rational man had been found to be a hoax! Mind you, all the leading paleontologists, archaeologists and "what-notists" accepted this humbug, which they considered such reliable evidence of the progress of evolution that it found a place in every textbook. Thus the clever man in Piltdown, England, who had carved a limestone image of a caveman, buried it in his backyard and cashed in had successfully pulled the wool over the eyes of the whole scientific world.

The spiritual masters who prepared the Vedic literature, and the Supreme Lord who descended to earth, were all infallible, nonenvious well-wishers to human society who were transcendental to material nature and had no intent to cheat. They did not hoard their unlimited wisdom; they distributed it to us in the *Vedas*, and men who have followed it have achieved the highest destination. We can certainly have faith in these Vedic masters, at least enough faith to begin their process of self-purification. Once the process begins, it is not long before the neophyte experiences the results of spiritual advancement, which are pure knowledge (*jñāna*) and detachment from material limitations (*vairāgya*). Then the student, his faith confirmed, continues on the path unrestricted.

The path for all men, regardless of age, sex, religion, community or race, is the path of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. One obtains this consciousness by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare, not by arguing or pondering over philosophical doctrines. When men's minds are corrupt, there is no use in their programs for peace, prosperity and the pursuit of happiness. In India, for example, there is a vehement interest in politics. There are innumerable journals, even of a spiritual nature, that devote many pages to discussing the impure topics of politicians. This has only misdirected people's attention from their real duty, self-realization or God-realization.

Do not expect anything just and right to be a product of

someone who has not controlled his senses and mind through *bhakti-yoga*. First purify the mind by *mantra*, and then you will see pure spiritual energy develop and purify the environment. If there is a boil on the skin due to impure blood, no skin ointment will help. But as soon as the blood is purified, the sore heals. Cleanse the consciousness that is the root of our existence, and you will cleanse the world thoroughly. If one speck of contamination is in the consciousness, the result will appear on the surface of society in gross form as one of the many problems we face. These problems are only symptoms of the disease of lack of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. If you want peace, justice, prosperity, satisfaction, knowledge and harmony between men, you must take up the process of internal cleansing by *bhakti-yoga*.

There are ample resources in the world, but they are being exploited by people with neither knowledge nor detachment, selfish individuals with ulterior motives. A person must be without selfishly motivated interests if he really wants to do good in the world. One quickly achieves this purity by practical application of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The immediate fruits of *bhakti-yoga*, devotional service to Kṛṣṇa, are knowledge and sobriety. A man who is attached to money and the enjoyments of the body cannot be a trusted leader or even a worthy associate. One must be above the influences of these temptations to achieve complete composure and equilibrium. In such a peaceful state, one's knowledge can be accurate and effective.

Every day our senses are bombarded by material experiences that invoke the most abominable desires. Obtaining the satisfaction of these desires is not possible, for they lead one on and on to hanker for the unattainable. If we see a picture of a mountain and then see some gold, the uncontrolled mind will push us to want a mountain of gold. If we see sweets, we will think of eating a mountain of sweets. But a mountain of gold or sweets is never to be achieved, and the mind gets more and more agitated. In this state, one becomes enraged at his inability to serve the senses and loses memory of the true reality. There is then no hope of regaining sanity, and he is destroyed.

How does Kṛṣṇa consciousness help? The nine processes of Kṛṣṇa consciousness forcibly direct the mind towards Kṛṣṇa. By having the slightest true experience of Kṛṣṇa, the senses lose their poisonous desire for enjoyment, and their thirst is quenched. The nine processes begin with hearing and chanting the names and glories of Kṛṣṇa. When one has heard sufficiently, he can also repeat what he has heard. In so doing, his mind recalls again and again the names, qualities, forms and pastimes of Kṛṣṇa, which are exciting, enchanting and sweet. Then nothing else can attract his mind.

Kṛṣṇa's pastimes and form are not *māyā* (illusion); to meditate upon them is to absorb the mind in the Supreme in *samādhi* (true ecstasy)! Therefore the mind absorbed in Kṛṣṇa is truly safe, detached from bombardment by matter. The safest place for the mind to dwell is in *kīrtana-rasa*, the mellow quality of glorification of Kṛṣṇa, in the ecstasy of chanting the names of Kṛṣṇa and hearing attractive descrip-



Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead

tions of Kṛṣṇa from the lips of the eloquent deliverers of *hari-kathā* (topics of Kṛṣṇa consciousness). Formless, abstract meditations are condemned in the *Gītā*, Twelfth Chapter:

*kleśo 'dhikataras teṣām
avyaktāsakta-cetasām
avyaktā hi gatir duḥkham
dehavadbhir avāpyate*

“For those whose minds are attached to the unmanifested, impersonal feature of the Supreme, advancement is very troublesome. To make progress in that discipline is always difficult for those who are embodied.” (Bg. 12.5)

It is not possible for meditation on formlessness to satisfy anyone for very long. The mind and senses, starved of their sense enjoyment, will force the meditator to the material world, just as they conquered Viśvāmitra, a great *yogī* who meditated for thousands of years but was disturbed when a beautiful woman attracted him. A person relishing the ecstasy of Kṛṣṇa's sweet smile and form, however, will never want to look at ordinary flesh and blood again. Therefore our course of action should be to follow the words of the authorities, who say:

*śṛṇvatām sva-kathāḥ kṛṣṇaḥ
puṇya-śravaṇa-kīrtanaḥ
hṛdy antaḥ-stho hy abhadrāṇi
vidhunoti suhṛt-satām*

“Śrī Kṛṣṇa is a disinterested friend of the virtuous, and His praises sanctify those who listen to or sing them. He abides in the hearts of those who hear His stories. He uproots the evil propensities of their minds.” ☐

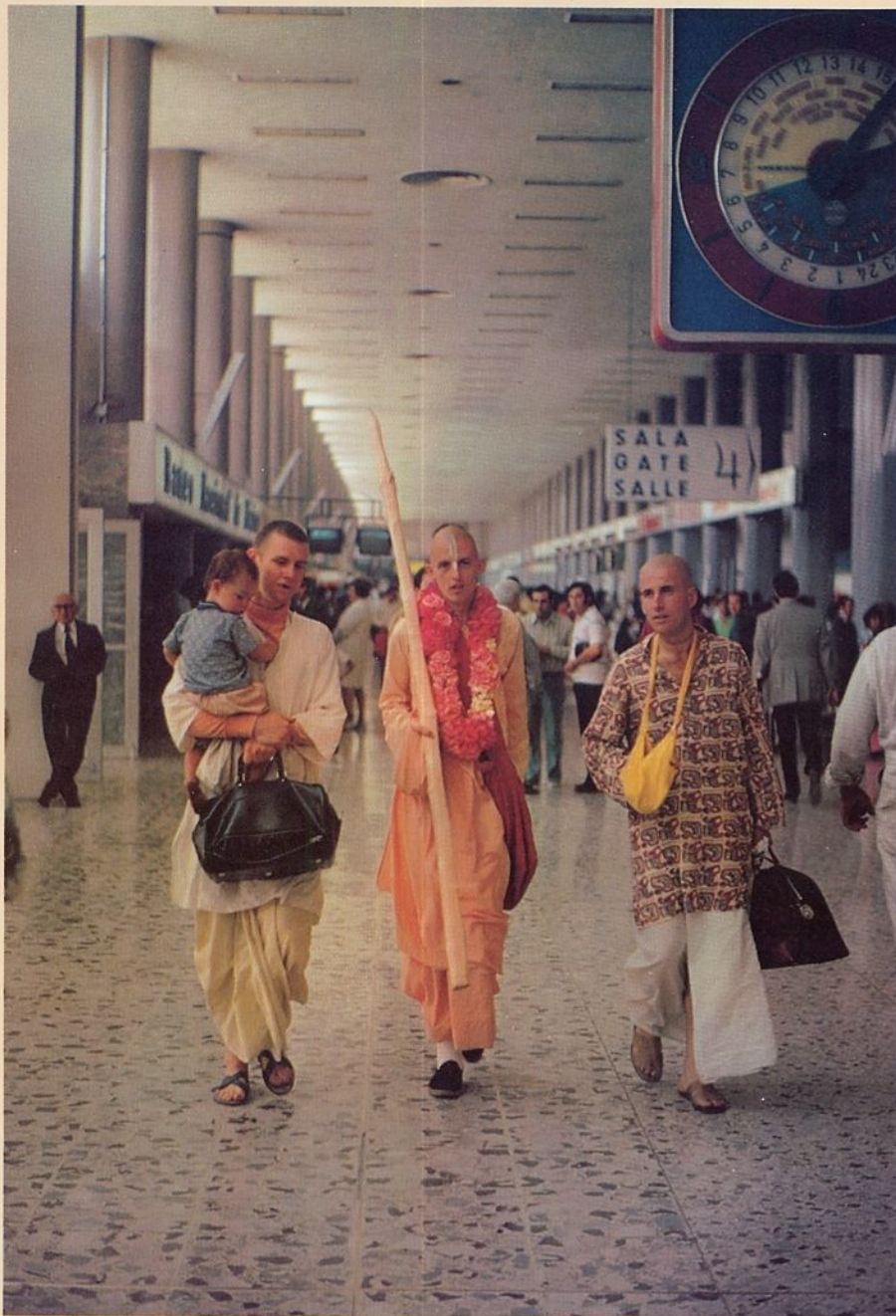
by His Holiness
Satsvarūpa dāsa Gosvāmī

Haihaya dāsa, the President of the Mexico City Hare Kṛṣṇa center, invited me to come speak to the people of Mexico at the installation festival for their center's Deities of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. At the time I was in Dallas, Texas, and so was Muralīvadana dāsa, an ISKCON Press traveling photographer. Taking the invitation as a transcendental opportunity, we decided to fly together to Mexico City, hopeful that through writing and pictures we could share our experience with *Back to Godhead* readers.

Of course, Mexico City is actually just another illusion. The world is filled with many famous countries and cities advertised as adventures or paradises to lure world travelers. But we can understand, seeing things through the eyes of the Vedic scriptures, that this whole material world exists only as a dream and only because of our attachment to it.

In the commentary to his *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* translation, His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda writes: "The great ocean of material nature is tossing with the waves of time, and the so-called living conditions are something like foaming bubbles that appear before us as bodily self, wife, children, society, countrymen, etc." In other words, not only our bodies but also our nations and our entire planet itself exist only for a period of time that is relatively short when viewed from eternity. The living soul is actually different from matter, but because of our lack of knowledge

His Holiness Satsvarūpa dāsa Gosvāmī, the chief Editor of *Back to Godhead*, joined the International Society for Krishna Consciousness in 1966, after graduating from Brooklyn College and serving as a social worker in New York City. One of the personal secretaries to His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, he is now on a tour of colleges in the midwestern United States.



MEXICO

**TAKES TO KRSNA
CONSCIOUSNESS**

of the self and the Supreme Spirit, the force of ignorance victimizes us, spoiling the valuable energy of our human life.

We are searching after permanent living conditions that are not possible in this material world. However the idea of traveling to a foreign land like Mexico exhilarates us, such havens are all within the kingdom of illusion, known in Sanskrit as *māyā*. Not only is life in the material world temporary, but it is full of misery for all. Whether in Mexico speaking Spanish, in France speaking French, or wherever one may be, everyone in the material world must suffer birth, death, disease and old age. Therefore whether we travel or sit in one place the real purpose of human life is to seek enlightenment from the illusion and pain of identifying with the material world.

We should be interested in Mexico, therefore, only in terms of the enlightenment of the people there. For example, Kṛṣṇa spoke His sublime philosophy in the scripture *Bhagavad-gītā* at a place known as Kurukṣetra. Now, transcendental scholars and devotees of Kṛṣṇa are interested not only in Kṛṣṇa but also in Kurukṣetra, the place where He spoke; but they are interested in Kurukṣetra only because of its relation to Kṛṣṇa and the enlightenment He gave there.

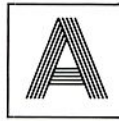
The idea of finding permanent happiness by going to Mexico (or France, Hawaii, or India) is actually illusion. But on the other hand, even though any place in this material world is a place of illusion, every place is also the property of God, for everything that exists, whether material or spiritual, belongs to God. One who sees things as they are is interested in everything in terms of its relation to God. He does not reject anything. If one can revive his God consciousness, this will dispell all illusion, and then for him any place, even within the material world, will be fully spiritual, like the eternal, blissful kingdom of God. The center for Kṛṣṇa consciousness in Mexico City is attempting to free the whole city from the false idea that the body is the self and help everyone regain his original eternal place in the spiritual sky.

During the plane trip we met a young

Mexican boy named Octavio who was traveling with his family. He spoke English and was very interested in what we had to say about Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He took some spiritual food (*prasāda*) that we offered and was very open and friendly. His mother would ask him questions about Kṛṣṇa in Spanish, and he asked us in English. Very agreeable to the concept of being vegetarian, he remarked, “Yes, you do not like to kill animals!” Our first meeting with a Mexican encouraged us. We noticed that at least one family found it enlivening to speak to devotees, and we were also very pleased to speak with them.

Thinking in this way about our trip to Mexico as a transcendental opportunity, we flew down through the clouds past large mountain ranges and descended upon Mexico City, a sprawling metropolis of ten million people.

After the plane landed, we kept chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* on our beads, not knowing what to expect of Mexico City. As we approached the officials for immigration and customs, one airport worker waved his hand and greeted us loudly, “Hare Kṛṣṇa!” Soon we passed through a large crowd of incoming passengers and met our Godbrothers Haihaya and Bahulāśva. In the truck riding to town, Haihaya told us that at least one hundred Mexicans regularly attended the temple’s activities day and night and at least another fifty boys and girls were full-time devotees.



about a year ago, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda visited the Mexico temple and stayed for five days. Haihaya explained that Śrīla Prabhupāda was widely acclaimed just on sight as a great saint; although some of the people were not even aware of the Vedic philosophy, they still recognized him as a very saintly person. And many of them went to see him, eager to receive benediction from Śrīla Prabhupāda.

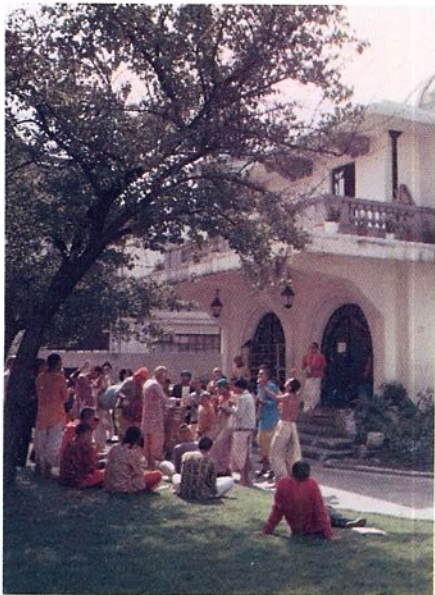
I asked Haihaya about the claim that the ancient Mayan culture that existed thousands of years ago in Mexico was imported from the Vedic civilization of India. When Śrīla Prabhupāda was

there, Haihaya said, he stated that there was much in Mexico reminiscent of the Vedic culture. One who lives there can see this in the people’s eating, parades, natural fruits, etc. There is also much archaeological evidence such as art work in temples, and archaeologists can more seriously study this for further evidence.

When Śrīla Prabhupāda was in Mexico he primarily stressed the importance of enlightening people about their spiritual nature by distributing Kṛṣṇa conscious literature in Spanish. I asked Haihaya whether the people of Mexico City were taking Kṛṣṇa consciousness seriously. He replied, “Many of them come with beads and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa just like full-time devotees. After they buy books, they always read them and ask for more. Also, many of them take to a vegetarian diet after hearing our philosophy.”

It was not long before we arrived at the temple, which is on Gobernador Tiburcio Montiel, just two blocks away from the house of the nation’s President. We drove through a decorated iron gateway into the yard of the Hare Kṛṣṇa temple, a three-story white building with domes on the roof that looked Vedic. There was a large lawn in the courtyard, where many guests were sitting under trees. There were also many devotional activities underway, such as sewing, preparing flowers, building, painting and washing.

As we entered the yard a chanting party started singing Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. The chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa washes away all material designations by which one thinks his real self to be Mexican, American, black or white. One feels his happy, pure identity as a spirit soul, servant of God, by chanting this *mantra*. We felt immediately that we were in our true home, the shelter of Kṛṣṇa, and joined with everyone who was singing and dancing. Afterwards, we were offered flower garlands and a dish of fruit *prasāda*. According to Vedic hospitality, whenever a guest comes to visit, one must offer him nice things to make him feel at home. Any local culture in the world can adopt this philosophy and way of



life, in any language, and it always comes out pure and natural.

This way to live in transcendental life (*bhakti-yoga*) is natural because it applies everywhere. Therefore Śrīla Prabhupāda, as a devotee of Kṛṣṇa in disciplic succession, has had great success in establishing Kṛṣṇa conscious centers as oases of relief in the midst of the materialistic cities. In the mood of a humble Vaiṣṇava, our spiritual master never claims credit for his achievements of opening over one hundred centers all over the world; he says the credit goes to the Lord Himself and the previous spiritual masters, whose instructions he has followed without deviation. Nevertheless, because of his personal instructions, once again we saw a living community of men and women, this time in a culture foreign to us, who were peaceful and happy in the execution of devotional activities.

Since the next day was to be the festival and installation of the forms of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, many devotees and guests were involved with projects of sewing, painting, electrical work and cleaning, and were also talking about Kṛṣṇa. The temple building opens with a large hall with a winding staircase that dramatically sweeps up to the second floor, which is actually a balcony with rooms off it. The main hall can accommodate hundreds of guests for chanting and feasting, the main activities of *bhakti-yoga*.

Eager to show us the forms of the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa and His eternal

consort, Rādhārāṇī, Haihaya took us to a private room where devotees were sewing dresses for the Deities. He uncovered the forms of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, and we bowed down and paid our obeisances. Kṛṣṇa is a young boy holding a flute, and Rādhārāṇī is a young girl. Atheists deny the existence of any spiritual form or spiritual life, and even beginners in transcendental life



ṛṣṇa says in *Bhagavad-gītā* that although He is unborn and His transcendental body never decays, He nevertheless appears in this world in every age. In our present state we cannot see the spiritual form of Kṛṣṇa, which is eternal bliss and knowledge, yet out of His mercy He appears in the incarnation of the Deity, which may be a form of metal,



Devotees sewing garlands for the installation of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities.

do not understand that the Supreme Spirit is the Supreme Person. But this is the conclusion of the most authorized and complete philosophy of God consciousness. The Absolute Truth from which all varieties of life, both temporary and eternal, emanate is the supremely conscious Supreme Person, Kṛṣṇa. All His forms, incarnations and emanations are originally present in His transcendental form.

The Vedic literatures describe that Kṛṣṇa actually appeared on this planet as a cowherd boy five thousand years ago. As described in *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, although He appears in human society to rescue souls who have fallen into the ignorance of material life, He never comes under the material laws nor accepts a material body.

stone or wood. The worshipers of Kṛṣṇa do not worship wood or stone, but they worship Kṛṣṇa in this form, which is visible even when one has conditioned, material vision. The exchange between the Lord and the devotees in the Deity worship is fully authorized, and one should scientifically understand it by reading ISKCON books such as *The Nectar of Devotion*, which discuss thoroughly this transcendental science. It is a scientific transcendental fact that the Lord appears in the form of a Deity just to accept food and decorations offered in the clean and spiritual atmosphere of the temple.

On the evening before the festival day, about one hundred guests gathered. Haihaya kindly allowed me to lead a class in *Bhagavad-gītā*. After reading from the *Gītā* first in Sanskrit,

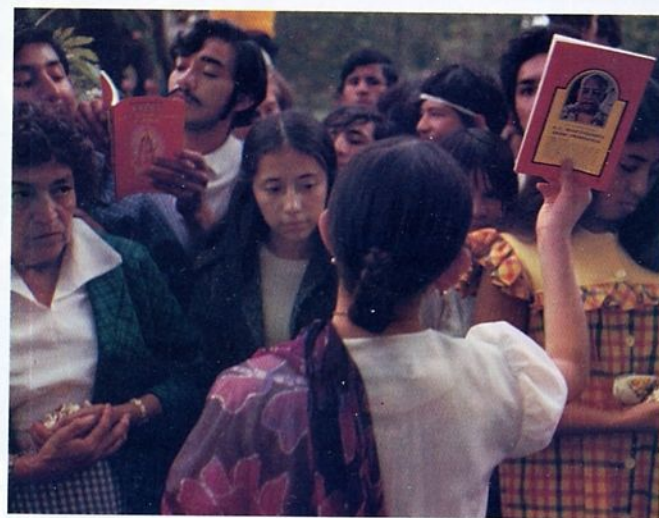


Above: A bi-lingual devotee translates Bhagavad-gītā As It Is for the benefit of a Mexican audience. Right: The books of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, distributed in over ten languages around the world, are seen here in Mexico City.

I spoke in English, and a bi-lingual devotee immediately translated my words. Seated on the temple floor, devotees and guests listened with obvious attention and absorption to the words of *Bhagavad-gītā*. I read from the Twelfth Chapter, where, in the first verses, Arjuna asks Kṛṣṇa, "Upon which is it more perfect to meditate—the impersonal or the personal form?" Kṛṣṇa then clearly says that whoever worships His personal form is the most perfect. The temple is also stated to be the ideal place for such perfect worship of God.



Of course, God is not present only in a Hare Kṛṣṇa temple; He is all-pervading. But it is recommended that while one should increase his taste for singing and chanting the glories of the Lord, he should also increase his inclination to live in a place where Kṛṣṇa lives. Kṛṣṇa certainly lives everywhere. This is the vision of the highest devo-



tees. But because we are in a lower condition, still attached to material life, and we cannot see Kṛṣṇa everywhere, we should learn to see Kṛṣṇa in the temple. It is stated in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* that especially for worldly householders it is necessary to come to the temple to enjoy musical *kīrtana*, worship the form of the Lord and appreciate the spiritual atmosphere. This is the only thing that will save the common man from hellish movies, naked nightclub dancing and other materialistic endeavors. Everyone is encouraged to dovetail his propensity for social gatherings, festivals and singing by

taking part in glorifying Kṛṣṇa, the Absolute Truth; otherwise one will waste his life and have to go down in the next life to some lower form of life, seeking pleasure in dead material things. And in every form of material life from king to insect there is always suffering.

By speaking *Bhagavad-gītā* and answering the questions of the assembled devotees, I could understand that the Mexicans were accepting Kṛṣṇa consciousness in a nonsectarian spirit. Haihaya explained to me later that attraction for Kṛṣṇa is very great in Mexico because the people are looking

very seriously for God, although they often regard their past religious education as frustrating. Many of them see the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement as the answer to their search. The devotees are very respected in the streets, and people very often inquire about the philosophy. People respect the movement more and more as they hear more about it.

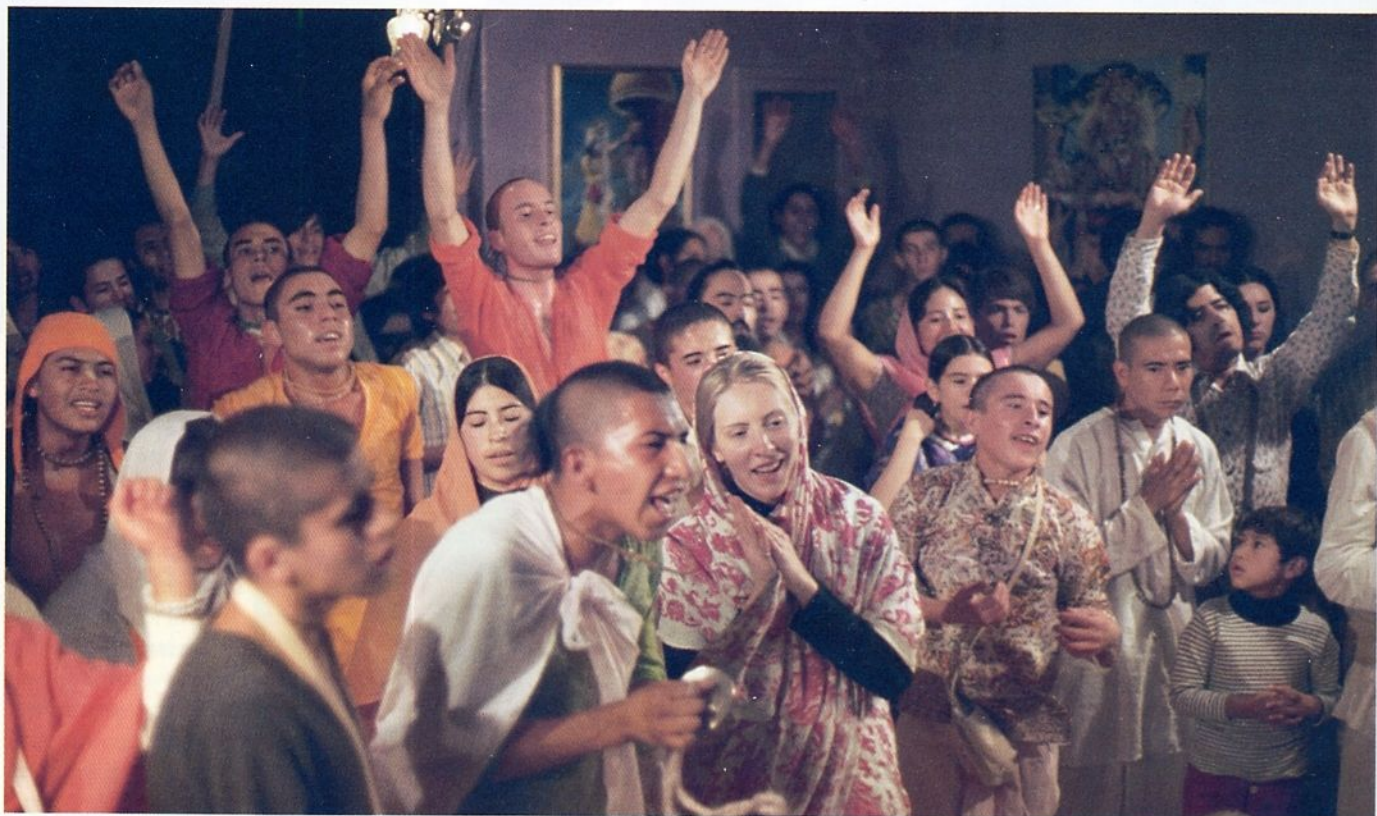
As phrase by phrase of my English was translated into Spanish, I tried to remember exactly the words of my

more opportunity to elevate their consciousness higher and higher in love of God.

After the class we had another *kīrtana*, chanting the names of God. In this congregational chanting the Mexican temple is practically unexcelled in the world. Accompanied with the traditional Vedic *mṛdaṅga* drum and *karatālas*, as well as congo drums and guitars, the singing was full of enthusiasm and pleasure. A small group of singers and musicians gathered in the

mantra. This chanting went on literally hour after hour without stopping. No one became tired; the enthusiasm increased more and more until it was ten o'clock and the temple managers had to end the *kīrtana*. This chanting goes on every evening, and it is always a great success.

The next morning everyone rose an hour and a half before sunrise, which the Vedic civilization recognizes as the best time for spiritual advancement. After the early-morning gathering for



"In this congregational chanting the Mexican temple is practically unexcelled in the world."

spiritual master: "We should be inclined to live in the circle of temple life and increase our inclination to chant more and more. If at the time of death we can think of Kṛṣṇa, then we can go and associate with Him eternally in His spiritual abode." Young boys and girls, respectable ladies and gentlemen, old men and women—all listened with great respect. They were mostly regulars who come daily to the temple to worship the Deity and take spiritual food. Now they could understand that with the appearance of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa the temple activity would be more blissful and there would be

center, leading the chanting, while others danced around in a circle, chanting these universal names of the Lord—Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. Sometimes the lead singer would switch to other chants, chanting the name of the spiritual master, "Śrīla Prabhupāda! Śrīla Prabhupāda! Śrīla Prabhupāda!" or chanting "govinda jaya jaya" or the names of the Lord's merciful incarnation Lord Caitanya—*śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya prabhu nityānanda śrī-advaita gadādhara śrīvāsādi-gaura-bhakta-vṛnda*—and then back again to the Hare Kṛṣṇa

chanting in the temple, everyone turned to the last preparations before the installation of the Deities, putting last-minute light fixtures in place and painting and sewing for the Deities. There was no distinction between devotees and guests; everyone was busily serving, sweeping, mopping, cooking, decorating and so on. Some devotees had been up all night cooking a feast and cleaning. Everyone engaged his senses in some kind of preparation to please the Lord. Haihaya dāsa's greatest aspiration is to engage everyone, old and young, in some kind of work for Kṛṣṇa.



Above: "In our present state we cannot see the spiritual form of Kṛṣṇa, which is eternal bliss and knowledge, yet out of His mercy He appears in the incarnation of the Deity." Below: His Holiness Satsvarūpa Gosvāmī, second from the left, meets with guests on the front lawn of the Mexico City Temple.

The time for the beginning of the ceremony finally arrived, and simultaneously all preparation was completed. The procedure for installing the Deities in a bona fide Kṛṣṇa conscious temple is to bathe Them in milk, yogurt and water while reciting the devotional prayers of the *Brahma-saṁhitā* and then to hold a fire ceremony in which grains and ghee (clarified butter) are offered in the fire while more *mantras* are chanted. The first verse of the prayers of Lord Brahmā's *Brahma-saṁhitā* are as follows: "I worship Govinda, the primeval Lord, the first progenitor, who is tending the cows, yielding all desire, in abodes built with spiritual gems, surrounded by millions of purpose trees, always served with great reverence and affection by hundreds and thousands of goddesses of fortune."

During the installation of the Deities, the priest leading the ceremony is supposed to speak about the worship of the Deity. I spoke on a chapter I had

read from Śrīla Prabhupāda's *Kṛṣṇa Book*. In the chapter "Prayers by the Demigods for Lord Kṛṣṇa" there are 5,000-year-old prayers offered by demigods who knew that the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, was about to descend to the material world to vanquish the demons and give pleasure to His devotees.

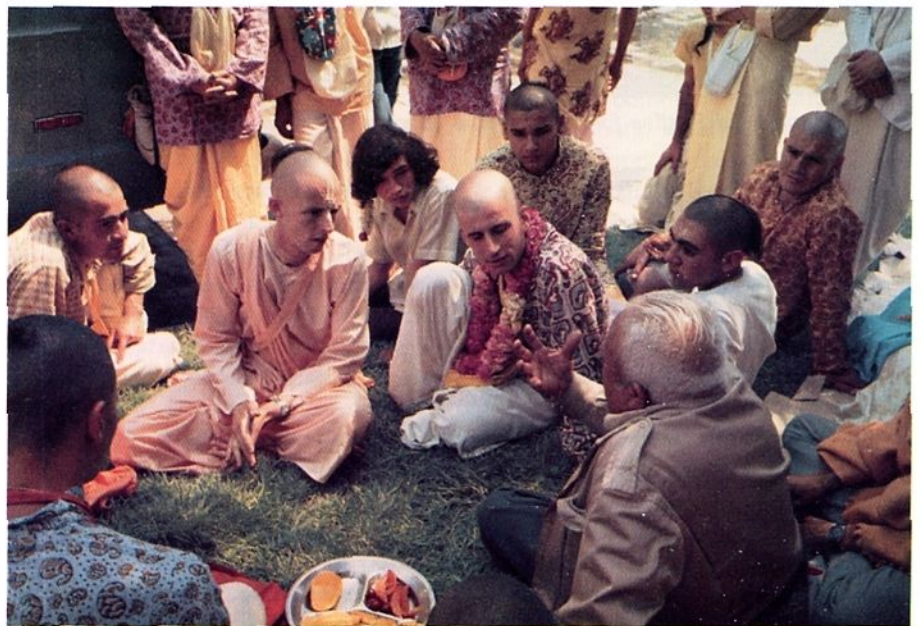
Different classes of people speculate about God. Atheists say there is no God, and some transcendentalists say God is void, impersonal or formless because they cannot grasp the idea of a spiritual form. Sometimes *yogīs* realize God as the form of Viṣṇu in the heart, which they see in trance. But according to the Vedic literatures all these aspects of the Absolute Truth are included in the highest realization, which is called Bhagavān realization of the Personality of Godhead in His original spiritual form as Kṛṣṇa.

The demigods described that when Kṛṣṇa actually appears in the world He puts an end to all imaginative iconography about what God is. Some philosophers speculate that because God is the oldest person, He must be an old man with a beard. According to the *Brahma-saṁhitā* prayers chanted

during the Deity installation, however, although He is the oldest, Kṛṣṇa appears as a fresh youth. He has a light blue hue, and He appears like a young boy, never older than sixteen, a cowherd boy who always plays His flute. This is the same form of Kṛṣṇa described in the Vedic literature, as He actually appeared five thousand years ago and as He appears in the Deity form.

In a court case discussing whether a certain man is alive or dead, there will be various speculative opinions. But if the man being discussed actually walks into the courtroom, upon his appearance all speculation vanishes. In the same way, Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, demonstrated clearly by His appearance what He is really like. The whole disciplic succession of great spiritual masters and all the great authorities of the *Vedas* accept Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Truth. Kṛṣṇa says Himself in *Bhagavad-gītā* that whoever considers Him an ordinary material person is "mūḍha," which means a rascal or ass.

We are all originally eternal servants of Kṛṣṇa. But, because of our dirty desires, we have left His service and are now trying to act like the Lord ourselves. To help us back to our original position, Kṛṣṇa comes Himself or sometimes sends His incarnation, son, representative or pure devotee—and He also appears in material forms such as stone



or metal as the Deity. In such forms He accepts offerings of food and decorations, provided such offerings are made in loving devotion. Devotees who worship Him in this form are not performing idol worship, but are worshipping Kṛṣṇa in an authorized manner. Although He is very difficult to understand, He comes before us as the sound of His holy name, as the words of *Bhagavad-gītā*, as *prasāda* (spiritual food) and as the Deity, and none of these forms are material. Kṛṣṇa has so

Śrīla Prabhupāda was placed on the seat, reminding devotees of his presence. Near Mexico City a pure marble stone called onyx is abundantly available, and the devotees had arranged an onyx altar with onyx dishes and cups for offerings to the Deity. Their Lordships were dressed very beautifully with golden garments. Everyone was chanting and dancing in appreciation of Their Lordships, and the chanting went on for hours. Then there was feasting. On the front lawn under

within a few hours. But while the illusory struggle for pleasure went on in the material world of Mexico City, a hundred or so people gathered in the courtyard of the Kṛṣṇa Temple, enjoying real life. Every day in the Kṛṣṇa Temple there is not only feasting but hard work, but it is all done for Kṛṣṇa, for it is the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness that one should stay in his position as a householder, businessman or whatever and yet perfect his life simply by chanting and hearing Hare Kṛṣṇa and offering food to Kṛṣṇa.

After chanting and feasting for some time, a large party gathered to chant downtown. We drove to various spots and chanted the holy names. Large crowds gathered, and we profusely distributed Spanish translations of Vedic literature.



As the afternoon progressed, we noted regretfully that we had to return to our duties in the United States.

As Muralīvadana and I finally left our Godbrothers to head for the plane, we both felt we had visited the real Mexico, not the illusory Mexico known to most travelers. The permanent, pure essence of human consciousness is to practice love of God in a society of peace, prosperity and loving relationships. Everyone desires this universal brotherhood, but the different “isms” that have been formed are not satisfying because their center is not universal. Because Kṛṣṇa is the Absolute Truth and source of all emanations, the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement has a universal center and can be universally auspicious for all.

It is not a sectarian idea. Our visit to another nation convinced us by experience that Kṛṣṇa consciousness can successfully adapt to any mundane culture and “Kṛṣṇa-ize” it. Just as an iron rod in a fire gets hotter and hotter and finally acts as fire, so anyone or any place becomes pure by association with Kṛṣṇa consciousness. One can practice this perfect life anywhere by following the Vedic scriptures under the direction of an expert spiritual master. As long as there are sincere souls, they will gather to hear the message of Kṛṣṇa consciousness and purify their lives. ❧



“After chanting and feasting for some time, a large party gathered to chant downtown.”

kindly made Himself available. Therefore, we can clearly comprehend why the Lord declares that whoever doesn’t accept Him as He is but thinks Him an ordinary person of the material world is “*mūḍha*,” a rascal.

The devotees in Mexico City had taken great pains to decorate their temple. They had painted all the walls to look like Vṛndāvana, the forest setting where Kṛṣṇa plays in the spiritual world. The *vyāsāsana*, or seat of the spiritual master, was very nicely situated also, just awaiting the arrival of Śrīla Prabhupāda. The picture of

a big tree in the shade, I sat with Haihaya and met various friends of the temple.

As far as the mundane Mexico City is concerned, we could see that it is geared, like the United States, towards material goals. The worker is very much pressured to work to increase his pay and enjoy sensual life. Everywhere billboards promise: “Come, you’ll be happy if you buy this beer.” “Buy these pants and you’ll be satisfied.” Cars rush back and forth, and on the way to the temple from the airport we had seen several accidents

Letters

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

Revered Svāmijī,

The residents of the twin cities are happy to have this opportunity to meet you and your esteemed followers. You may be aware that due to inadequate rainfall during the last two years and its complete failure this year, more than half of our state [Andhra Pradesh, a state in central India] is in the grip of a serious drought. With a view to supplement governmental efforts to combat this evil, a Central Voluntary Organization of citizens drawn from various walks of life has been set up. The members of this organization surveyed the areas affected by drought. The situation is pathetic. There are villages where drinking water is not available for miles. Due to scarcity of fodder, the cattle owners are parting with their cattle for a nominal price. Many of the stray cattle are dying away due to unavailability of fodder and water. The food problem is also very serious. Due to high prices of food grains on the open market, purchase of grains at market prices is beyond the reach of poor villagers, with the result that at least five to six million people are hardly having one meal a day. There are many who are on the verge of starvation. The entire situation is most pathetic and heart-rending.

We therefore appeal to your revered self to consider how your Society could best come to the rescue of these millions of souls who are in unimaginable distress. The Committee would like to suggest that members of your Society appeal to the *bhaktas* [devotees] attending your discourses to contribute their might to the Andhra Pradesh Relief Fund.

The Committee is prepared to send some of its representatives along with members of your Society wherever you wish to distribute *prasāda* [food] to the hungry millions in the state.

As *mānava-sevā* is *mādhava-sevā* ["Service to man is service to God"], the Committee is confident that even a little effort by your gracious Society

will go a long way in mitigating the sufferings of hundreds and thousands of people.

*Yours ever in the service of the Lord,
T.L. Katidia, Secretary
Andhra Pradesh Relief Fund Committee
Hyderabad, India*

* * *

My dear Mr. Katidia,

Please accept my greetings. With reference to your letter and your personal interview, I beg to inform you that without pleasing the Supreme Personality of Godhead no one can become happy. Unfortunately people do not know who God is and how to make Him happy. Our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is therefore meant to present the Supreme Personality of Godhead directly to the people. As stated in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, 7th Canto, 6th Chapter: *tuṣṭe ca tatra kim alabhyam ananta ādye kiṁ tair guṇavyatīkarād iha ye svasiddhāḥ* (Bhāg. 7.6.25).

The idea stated in this verse is that by pleasing the Supreme Personality of Godhead, we please everyone, and there is no question of scarcity. Because people do not know this secret of success, they are making their own independent plans to be happy. However, it is not possible to achieve happiness in this way. On your letterhead I find many important men in this country who are interested in relieving the sufferings of the people, but they should know for certain that without pleasing the Supreme Personality of Godhead all their attempts will be futile. A diseased man cannot live simply on the strength of the help of an expert physician and medicine. If this were so, then no rich man would ever die. One must be favored by Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Therefore if you want to perform relief work simply by collecting funds, I think that it will not be successful. You have to please the supreme authority, and that is the way to suc-

cess. For example, due to the performance of *saṅkīrtana* here, the rain has begun to fall after a drought of two years. The last time we performed a Hare Kṛṣṇa Festival in Delhi, there was imminent danger of Pakistan's declaring war, and when a newspaper man approached me for my opinion, I said there must be fighting because the other party was aggressive. However, because of our *saṅkīrtana* movement, India emerged victorious. Similarly, when we held a festival in Calcutta, the Naxalite [Communist] Movement stopped. These are facts. Through the *saṅkīrtana* movement we can not only get all facilities for living, but also at the end can go back home, back to Godhead. Those who are of a demoniac nature cannot understand this, but it is a fact.

I therefore request you as leading members of society to join this movement. There is no loss on anyone's part for chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*, but the gain is great. According to *Bhagavad-gītā*, what is accepted by leading men is also accepted by common men:

*yad yad ācarati śreṣṭhas
tat tad evetaro janaḥ
sa yat pramāṇaṁ kurute
lokas tad anuvartate*

"Whatever action is performed by a great man, common men follow in his footsteps. And whatever standards he sets by exemplary acts, all the world pursues." (Bg. 3.21)

The *saṅkīrtana* movement of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is very important. Therefore, through you I wish to appeal to all the leading men of India to accept this movement very seriously and give us all facility to spread this movement throughout the world. Then there will be a very happy condition, not only in India but all over the world.

*Hoping this will meet you in
good health,
Your ever well-wisher,
A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami*



KṚṢṆA CONSCIOUSNESS THE WORLD RELIGION

by His Holiness Subala dāsa Svāmī

*sa vai puṁsāṁ paro dharmo yato bhaktir adhokṣaje
ahaṁtuky apratihataḥ yayātmā suprasīdati*

“THE SUPREME OCCUPATION [dharma] for all humanity is that by which men can attain to loving devotional service unto the transcendental Lord. Such devotional service must be unmotivated and uninterrupted to completely satisfy the self.” (Bhāg. 1.2.6)

This verse of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam clearly defines the

His Holiness Subala dāsa Svāmī, a frequent contributor to Back to Godhead, is the founder of ISKCON's Philadelphia center. Having recently returned from a long stay in Vṛndāvana, India, he is now on a speaking tour of colleges in the northeastern United States and Canada.

proper path of spiritual advancement in life as well as the desired goal to be attained. Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Śrīmad-Bhagavad-gītā and other allied scriptures of the Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇava-sampradāya (the disciplic succession of Kṛṣṇa consciousness) give proper directions in spiritual knowledge to deliver suffering humanity from the darkness of ignorance. Such directions are free from all the mundane concepts of religion that are prominent throughout the world. This transcendental religion, authorized by the Supreme Lord Himself, is meant to uplift those who are actually intelligent and ready to take up the direct process of loving devotional service unto Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa under the guidance of the Lord's representative, a bona fide spiritual master.

From the very beginning *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* immediately rejects all cheating processes of so-called religious action and puts forward in the clearest terms the true religion of all living entities:

dharmāḥ projjhita-kaitavo 'tra paramo nirmatsarāṇāṁ satāṁ vedyāṁ vāstavam atra vastu śivadaṁ tāpa-trayonmūlanam śrīmad-bhāgavate mahāmuni-kṛte kiṁ vā parair īśvaraḥ sadyo hṛdy avarudhyate 'tra kṛtibhiḥ śuśrūṣubhis tatkṣaṇāt

“Completely rejecting all religious activities that are materially motivated, this *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* propounds the highest truth, which is understandable by those devotees who are pure in heart. The highest truth is reality distinguished from illusion for the welfare of all. Such truth uproots the threefold miseries. This beautiful *Bhāgavatam*, compiled by the great sage Śrī Vyāsadeva, is sufficient in itself for God realization. As soon as one attentively and submissively hears the message of *Bhāgavatam*, he becomes attached to the Supreme Lord.” (*Bhāg.* 1.1.2)

What generally passes under the name of religion is not a spiritual culture but a material progression of *dharma* (religiosity), *artha* (economic development), *kāma* (sense gratification) and *mokṣa* (liberation). People engage in pious activities so they may advance in economic development. By economic development they are able to satisfy the senses, but when they fail to become happy by sense gratification, they seek liberation. This progression is based not on the satisfaction of God but on the satisfaction of the individual, who wants to make God his order supplier and offer a few prayers as payment. Such a concept of religion is not based on love; it is a sort of business arrangement. We often find that if the Lord fails to satisfy the demands of such worshipers, they decry the very existence of God and become agnostics or atheists.

This is a cheating process because the living entities are meant for the service and satisfaction of God, not vice versa. One should never try to make God his order supplier, but should always be ready to carry out the orders of the Lord faithfully, like Śrī Arjuna, the hero of *Bhagavad-gītā*. Therefore *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* begins from the point of pure devotional service, the true religion, which is where *Bhagavad-gītā* leaves off:

*sarva-dharmān parityajya
mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja
ahaṁ tvāṁ sarva-pāpebhyo
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)

Upon hearing this statement of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, we may wonder how it is that Kṛṣṇa, who earlier said in *Bhagavad-gītā* (4.8), *dharma-saṁsthāpanārthāya sambhavāmi yuge yuge* (“To reestablish the principles of religion, I advent Myself millennium after millennium”), is now telling us to give up all varieties of religion. Therefore we must

know the difference between real religion and apparent religion.

Since God is one, religion must also be one. There is one common religion of all living entities, and that is Kṛṣṇa consciousness, or *sanātana-dharma*. This Kṛṣṇa consciousness is not a sectarian concept that artificially tries to decry other religions and establish its supremacy on the basis of mundane superiority and inferiority concepts; it is the natural urge of the spirit soul for engaging in the loving service of God.

We are not Christians, Jews, Hindus or Moslems, for these are all bodily designations. Because I have taken my birth in a Christian family I think I am a Christian, but I do not know that in my next life I may be a Buddhist or something else. A Christian may convert to become a Jew, or a Hindu may become a Moslem. These are all temporary designations having to do with the body. Therefore, they are not the one true eternal religion of all.

Then what is that true religion that is common to everyone? It is service to God. Whether one is Christian or Jew, Hindu or Moslem—or even dog, cat or demigod—everyone is an eternal servant of God. When Sanātana Gosvāmī asked Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu about the *svarūpa*, or constitutional position, of every living being, the Lord replied that the *svarūpa* of the living being is the rendering of service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead (*jīvera 'svarūpa' haya kṛṣṇera 'nityadāsa'*).

In the conditioned state of material existence the living entities serve the Lord indirectly and unfavorably, whereas in the unconditioned state of spiritual existence the living entities serve the Lord directly and favorably. To give an example, everyone in the State serves the State. Some serve favorably as policemen, soldiers, politicians, taxpayers, etc., while others serve unfavorably as prisoners. Trapped within the prison house of material nature under the supervision of Durgādevī (the material energy), the conditioned souls are forced to serve *māyā*, or illusion, and in return for their service they are kicked by the cruel laws of nature. But the liberated souls living in the supreme abode of the Lord serve the Lord directly in one of five transcendental *rasas*, or mellow relationships, and they enjoy a life of eternity, knowledge and bliss in the association of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the reservoir of all pleasure.

Submissive hearing of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* or *Bhagavad-gītā* from the lips of a pure devotee is the proper means of understanding this great science. In the Tenth Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Fourteenth Chapter, in his prayer of regret before Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Brahmā said, “O my Lord! Those devotees who completely give up the attempt to become one with You by the culture of empiric knowledge but simply try to hear about Your glories from the mouths of self-realized saints and live a virtuous life can easily achieve Your favor, although You are unconquerable by anyone within the three worlds.” Lord Caitanya approved this direct culturing of devotional service in His discourses with Rāmānanda Rāya. The Lord rejected many other processes of spiritual realization, but He completely approved the process of pure de-

votional service executed under the guidance of a bona fide spiritual master.

In *Bhagavad-gītā* also, the Lord recommends:

*tad viddhi praṇipātena
paripraśnena sevayā
upadekṣyanti te jñānaṁ
jñāninas tattva-darśinaḥ*

“Just try to learn the truth by approaching a spiritual master. Inquire from him submissively and render service unto him. The self-realized soul can impart knowledge unto you because he has seen the truth.” (Bg. 4.34)

In the conditioned state of ignorance we cannot approach Kṛṣṇa directly, but He is so kind that He manifests Himself before us in the form of the spiritual master, who in turn instructs us regarding the devotional service of Kṛṣṇa. As stated in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*:

*naivopayanty apacitiṁ kavayas taveśa
brahmāyusāpi kṛta-mṛddha-mudaḥ smarantaḥ
yo 'ntar bahis tanu-bhṛtām aśubhaṁ vidhunvann
ācārya-caitya-vapuṣā svagatiṁ vyanakti*

“O my Lord! No one, not even a devotee who has lived as long as an age of Brahmā, can sufficiently acknowledge his obligation unto You, for You manifest Yourself in two features—namely, externally as the *ācārya* (spiritual master) and internally as the Supersoul—to deliver the embodied living being by giving him directions as to how he can go unto You.” (*Bhāg.* 11.29.6)

Therefore, everyone who is serious about spiritual realization should seek the lotus feet of a bona fide spiritual master and learn the science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness from him. As it is said in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, “By the mercy of Kṛṣṇa one gets a bona fide spiritual master, and by the mercy of the spiritual master one gets Kṛṣṇa.”

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam further states:

*vāsudeve bhagavati
bhakti-yogaḥ prayojitaḥ
janayaty āśu vairāgyaṁ
jñānaṁ ca yad aḥaitukam*

“The immediate result of applying devotional service unto the Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, is that causeless knowledge and detachment follow.” (*Bhāg.* 1.2.7) *Bhakti-yoga* is the topmost of all transcendental activities. By its practice one achieves all the good results of other *yoga* processes automatically, without having to endeavor for them separately. And the highest goal, *kṛṣṇa-premā*, or pure love of God, is attained exclusively by means of *bhakti-yoga*. *Bhakti-yoga* is open to everyone, and its practice can elevate one to the highest stage of God realization.

The principles of knowledge and detachment are two important factors on the path of transcendental realization. By attaining perfect knowledge of everything material and

spiritual one can become detached from material life and become attached to the transcendental loving service of Kṛṣṇa.

*bahūnāṁ janmanām ante
jñānavān mām prapadyate
vāsudevaḥ sarvam iti
sa mahātmā sudurlabhaḥ*

“After many births and deaths, he who is actually in knowledge surrenders unto Me [Kṛṣṇa], knowing Me to be the cause of all causes and all that is. Such a great soul is very rare.” (Bg. 7.19)

Unless one gets a taste of higher enjoyment, how can he give up the enjoyment of material pleasures? Some philosophers artificially renounce the world as false and accept the impersonal Brahman as the only reality (*brahma satyam, jagan-mithyā*). But, because they fail to achieve a higher taste of transcendental activities, they cannot give up their material affection, and they again fall down to the mundane plane of humanitarianism, philanthropy, altruism, politics, etc.

On the other hand, by engaging in the supermost human occupation, devotional service, a pure devotee certainly retires from all inferior occupations of material life and attains a higher taste so that he does not have to come down again. In the *Hari-bhakti-sudhodaya* it is stated that Prahlāda Mahārāja, a great devotee of the Lord, prayed to Nṛsimha-deva (the half-lion, half-man incarnation of the Lord) as follows: “My dear Lord, I repeatedly pray unto Your lotus feet that I may simply be stronger in devotional service. I simply pray that my Kṛṣṇa consciousness may be more strong and steady because happiness derived out of Kṛṣṇa consciousness and devotional service is so powerful that with it one can have all other perfections of religiousness, economic development, sense gratification and even the attainment of liberation from material existence.”

Whatever the pure devotee does he does by the grace of the Almighty. Therefore he progresses smoothly and overcomes all impediments on the path. The conclusion is that one who is a pure devotee has all good qualities—knowledge, detachment, etc.—but one who has only knowledge or detachment may not be well acquainted with the principles of *bhakti*, which is the supreme occupation for a human being.

The present Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement inaugurated by Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu is the true religion of all living entities, and it is being presented for the well-being of the entire world by our spiritual master, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. He recommends the following simple formula. Let there be: One God—Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa

One scripture—*Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*

One hymn—Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare

Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare

One work—Loving service to the Lord.

And the net result will be—One World of peace and prosperity. ❧

by His Holiness
Brahmānanda Svāmī

SRĪMAD-BHĀGAVATAM may rightly be esteemed above all the many other Vedic literatures, for its English edition stands as the foremost work of the world's leading Vedic scholar and authority, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Svami Prabhupāda. Although His Divine Grace has undertaken many translations of Vedic literatures, including *Śrī Īsopaniṣad*, *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* and a thousand-page definitive edition of *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, and has written handfults of small volumes on *yoga*, *death*, *space travel* and other subjects, it is his *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* that he

His Holiness Brahmānanda Svāmī, after acting for many years as President of ISKCON's first New York City temple (and simultaneously working as a teacher in the New York City public school system), became director of ISKCON Press and in 1970 accepted the renounced order of life. He was the first to introduce the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement in Africa and is now on a preaching tour of Kenya and other east African countries.

considers his life's mission. To date he has published six volumes, comprising the first and second of the *Bhāgavatam's* twelve cantos, as well as a two-volume summary study of the exceptional Tenth Canto.

Astoundingly, His Divine Grace promises to present the complete, authoritative 18,000-verse Sanskrit work in no less than sixty volumes. It is also significant that for his historic voyage to America from India in 1965, Śrīla Prabhupāda equipped himself with a hastily printed edition of his First Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* rather than the *Śrīmad-Bhagavad-gītā*, which is far more widely known in the West. Now, after almost seven years of preaching, having toured the world four times and opened more than ninety centers in sixteen different countries (at the age of seventy-six!), he has announced his retirement to fulfill his pledge to complete, for the benefit of the world, his elaborate English presentation of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, "The Beautiful Story of

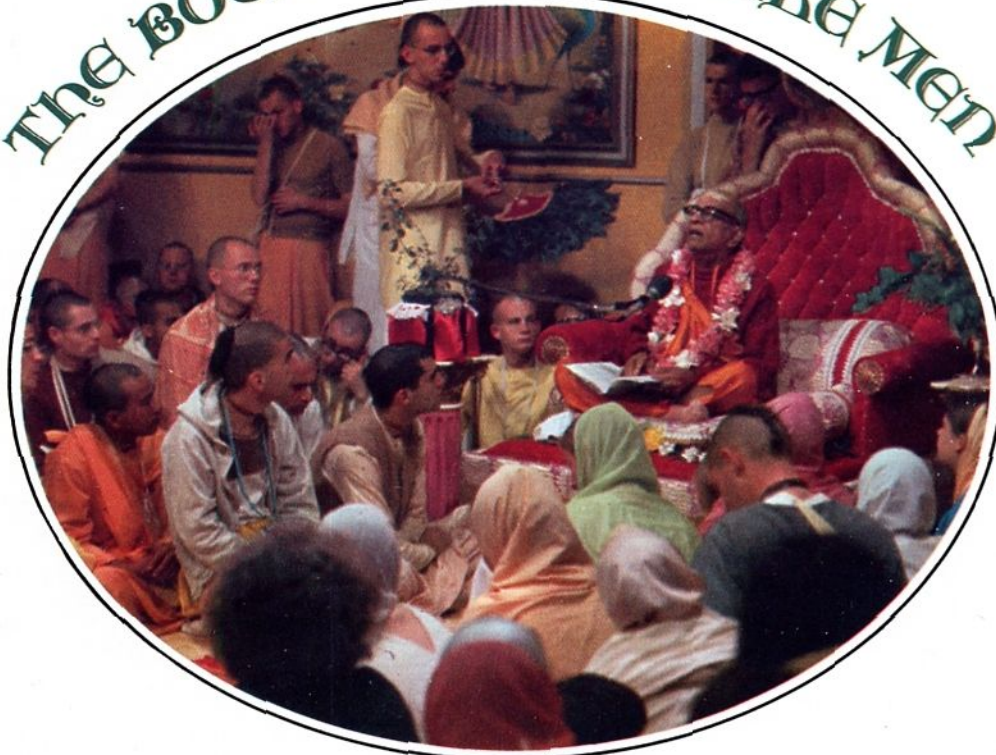
the Personality of Godhead."

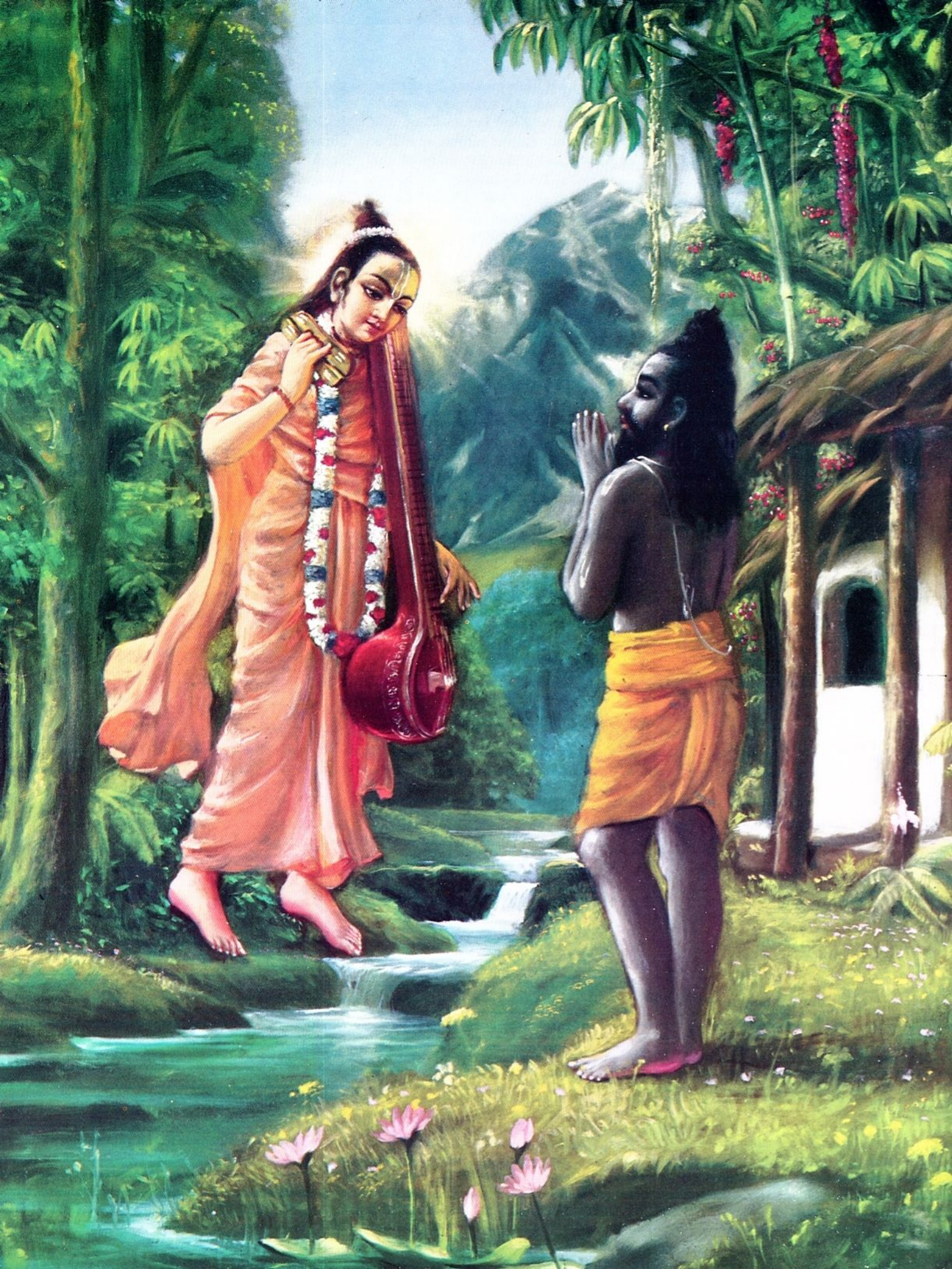
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam's original author is Śrīla Kṛṣṇa-dvaipāyana Vyāsa, the author of the entire galaxy of Vedic literature. Understanding that Śrīla Vyāsadeva is actually Kṛṣṇa Himself appearing as a literary incarnation enables one to comprehend how he was able to edit the original *Veda* in four divisions, from which emanates all knowledge of all subjects that exist now in the world and will exist in the future; then to write the massive *Mahābhārata* (60,000 verses), which includes the famous *Bhagavad-gītā*; then the eighteen *Purāṇas*; and then the highly intricate *Vedānta-sūtra*. Such a vast scriptural literature could issue forth only from the Lord Himself.

ANXIETY AND ITS CAUSE

Śrīla Vyāsadeva produced these works on the eve of the present Kali-yuga millennium, after foreseeing during a spiritual trance the unfortunate fate of man in this age. After having

THE BOOK FOR SWANLIKE MEN





written all these books, the greatly magnanimous sage felt dissatisfied. “I have, under strict disciplinary vows, unpretentiously worshiped the *Vedas*, the spiritual master and the altar of sacrifice,” he thought. “I have also abided by the rulings and have shown the import of disciplic succession through the explanation of the *Mahābhārata*, by which even women, *śūdras* and others can see the path of religion. I am feeling incomplete, though I myself am fully equipped with everything required by the *Vedas*.” (*Bhāg.* 1.4.28-30)

Deeper meditation intimated to Vyāsa the cause of his despondency:

*kiṁ vā bhāgavatā dharmā
na prāyeṇa nirūpitāḥ
priyāḥ paramahamsānām
ta eva hy acyuta-priyāḥ*

“This may be because I did not specifically point out the devotional service of the Lord, which is dear to both the perfect beings and the infallible Lord.” (*Bhāg.* 1.4.31)

At that moment Vyāsadeva’s spiritual master, Nārada Muni, approached the sage. It is the responsibility of a bona fide spiritual master to ascertain at once the cause of anxiety in his disciple and remove it by forthrightly speaking the truth, just as Kṛṣṇa spoke to Arjuna in the *Gītā*.

Nārada told Vyāsa, “Whatever you desire to describe that is separate in vision from the Lord simply reacts with different forms, names and results, to agitate the mind as the wind agitates a boat that has no resting place.” (*Bhāg.* 1.5.14) Vyāsa had neglected to write directly about the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, and instead he had presented many other religious observances in the *Vedas*. Not only had this left Vyāsa agitated, but, because he was an authority, it had harmed all the people of this age.

It was to no avail that Vyāsa had given transcendental instructions side

by side with material topics. In *Mahābhārata*, a historical narrative, he had indeed included *Bhagavad-gītā*, which emphasizes the gist of *bhāgavata-dharma*—that one should relinquish all other engagements and surrender wholly and solely to the lotus feet of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. But materialistic men are prone to glance over this and dwell on the political, economic and philanthropic topics of the remainder of *Mahābhārata* as suits their taste. Therefore, since he had given people a program of materialistic religion that was nothing more than the regulated performance of fruitive activities, they would not heed the essence of *bhāgavata-dharma*—that one should realize his relationship with the Lord and surrender to Him without delay. Because Vyāsa had compromised, his entire presentation of the *Vedas* had been ruined, just as a large pot of sweet rice would be ruined if someone were to drop a pinch of sand in it. Nārada chided Vyāsa “The people in general are naturally inclined to enjoy, and you have encouraged them in that way in the name of religion. This is verily condemned and is quite unreasonable.” (*Bhāg.* 1.5.15)

For a sincere disciple, deprecation from the bona fide spiritual master is a welcome opportunity. There is no question of exchanging flatteries in the master-disciple relationship as many modern *svamīs* and their disciples now do. Vyāsa openly admitted his great fault, but with the urging of his spiritual master he rectified it and made it quite clear in the beginning of the *Bhāgavatam* that this work would be quite different. “Completely rejecting all religious activities that are materially motivated, this *Bhāgavata Purāna* [*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*] propounds the highest truth, which is understandable by those devotees who are pure in heart.” (*Bhāg.* 1.1.2)

THE SECRET OF PERFECTION

Śrīla Vyāsadeva’s intention in promoting through the *Vedas* a regulated system of fruitive activities, speculative philosophy and worship of demigods had been to eliminate, somehow or

other, all the undue competition between men and societies that results from sense gratification. Śrīla Vyāsadeva wrote all those books just to make everyone happy, the result being that he could not make himself happy. But Nārada Muni knew the secret of happiness, and therefore he instructed Vyāsa to write *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself stated that secret of perfection in one all-encompassing verse of *Bhagavad-gītā*: “I [Kṛṣṇa] am the source of all spiritual and material worlds. Everything emanates from Me. The wise who perfectly know this engage in My devotional service and worship Me with all their hearts.” (*Bg.* 10.8) Therefore *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* deals with one subject and one subject only: love of God. And it is a great subject matter, fully requiring the *Bhāgavatam*’s twelve cantos, in which Vyāsa establishes who God is, what the different relationships with Him are and how they can be established, all culminating in the perfection—love of God.

In *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, four consecutive verses summarize the book’s entire subject matter. These verses, known as “the original *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in four verses, are a specific reply by Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, to four questions asked by Lord Brahmā, who was the first to receive transcendental knowledge from Kṛṣṇa in this world. Brahmā asked first: “*What are the forms of the Lord in both matter and transcendence?*” The answer is the important “*aham eva*” verse:

*aham evāsam evāgre
nānyad yat sad-asat param
paścād ahaṁ yad etac ca
yo ’vaśiṣyeta so ’smy aham*

“Brahmā, it is I, the Personality of Godhead, who was existing before the creation, when there was nothing but Myself. Nor was there the material nature, the cause of this creation. That which you see now is also I, the Personality of Godhead, and after annihilation what remains will also be I, the Personality of Godhead.” (*Bhāg.* 2.9.33)

Left: After having written all the Vedic literatures, Śrīla Vyāsadeva still felt despondent. At that time his spiritual master, Nārada Muni, approached the sage.

Three times the Lord repeats *aham* ("It is I"), and not without intention. The *Vedas* use repetition to stress what is most important. For example, the *Purāṇas* state:

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

"Chant the name of Kṛṣṇa, chant the name of Kṛṣṇa, chant the name of Kṛṣṇa. There is no other way, there is no other way, there is no other way." Similarly, in the *Gītā's* Ninth Chapter Kṛṣṇa says *mām*, "Me," four times, just to stress that He is the object of thought, worship, service and liberation. This repetition is a sort of chastisement, as when a mother who wants her child to stop some mischief repeats: "Stop it! Stop it! Stop it!" Kṛṣṇa wants to chastise philosophers who by mental speculation insist that the Lord is not in fact a person.

Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, stands before Brahmā and says, "It is I, it is I," just to emphasize Himself personally. And, interestingly, immediately after speaking these four verses to Brahmā, Kṛṣṇa disappears from Brahmā's sight, again just to emphasize that when He says "Me," He refers to Himself personally. Nevertheless, right after Kṛṣṇa says, "Me" in the *Gītā* four times, one so-called scholar writes: "It is not to Kṛṣṇa. . ." and then goes on to explain that Kṛṣṇa actually was referring to the unborn and unmanifest within.

Lord Caitanya has forbidden those who want to understand the true meaning of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* to read the books of these misleading philosophers. Before answering Lord Brahmā's four questions, Kṛṣṇa instructs how the Absolute Truth is to be known. "Knowledge about Me as described in the scriptures is very confidential, and it has to be realized in conjunction with devotional service. The necessary paraphernalia for that process is being explained by Me. You may take it up carefully." (*Bhāg. 2.9.31*)

THE ETERNAL FORM OF BLISS AND KNOWLEDGE

One can have knowledge of the

Lord only if it is made known by the Lord Himself. This is repeatedly stated in *Bhagavad-gītā*, specifically in the four verses known as the summary verses of *Bhagavad-gītā* (Bg. 10.8-11). Independently, even the greatest mundane thinker cannot understand the Absolute Truth by mental speculation. At most, he can achieve realization of Kṛṣṇa's impersonal (Brahman) aspect, but what the *Gītā* calls the most confidential knowledge of the Personality of Godhead can be comprehended by a very few, who receive that knowledge from the Lord in the heart because of their devotional service. The immediate example is Arjuna, whom Lord Kṛṣṇa declared in the Fourth Chapter to be qualified alone out of thousands because rather than being a big scholar, meditator or *yogī*, he was a real friend and sincere devotee of the Lord. Therefore Kṛṣṇa revealed transcendental knowledge to him, just as a father might disclose confidences only to his pet son.

The followers of impersonal philosophy stress that the Absolute Truth is ultimately impersonal or void and state that although the Absolute may manifest many forms in this world, they are all material. Citing the *Upaniṣads*, which are elementary texts of the *Vedas*, they conclude from statements such as "the Lord does not have any material form" that He has no form at all. But how can they explain this statement, which is found in the *Īsopaniṣad* (*Mantra 16*): "Please remove the effulgence of Your transcendental rays so that I may see Your form of bliss"?

A form of bliss is not within our experience, since everyone in the material world is without exception prone to four miseries: birth, disease, old age and death. But the *Vedas* point beyond our limited experience to *saccid-ānanda-vigraha*, the form of eternal bliss and knowledge. From this one can understand how impersonalism is similar to materialism and atheism because these philosophies are all based only on what one can experience through the bodily senses or mental speculation. But *bhāgavata-dharma* (Kṛṣṇa consciousness) is based on the authority of the Vedic scriptures, in

which a personalist has complete faith.

The *Brahma-saṁhitā* states that the Lord can use any one of His transcendental senses for various purposes. He can eat with His eyes, or He can see with His legs. Obviously this power is beyond the limits of a mundane form. Standing as a direct challenge to impersonalism, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* presents a most elaborate description of the Lord's various transcendental forms, which are all identical yet different in appearance. Some of His bodies are black, some red, some yellow and some white; some are two-handed, and some are four-handed; some are like a fish and some like a lion. The *Bhāgavatam* relates all the activities or pastimes of these forms in detail, especially in the Tenth Canto (published now as the *Kṛṣṇa Books*).

It is no wonder that impersonalists have avoided trying to apply their tainted and speculative interpretations to the *Bhāgavatam*, for no verbal jugglery can hide the crystal-clear meaning of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam's* verses. Even the father of impersonalism, Śrīpāda Śaṅkarācārya, although having written a famous commentary on *Vedānta-sūtra*, would not touch *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, which is a further elaboration of the *Vedānta-sūtra* by its original author, Śrīla Vyāsadeva.

ILLUSIONS

Lord Brahmā's second question in the *Bhāgavatam*—"How are the different energies of the Lord working?"—is answered as follows: "Whatever appears to be of value, if it is without relation to Me, has no reality. Know it as My illusory energy, that reflection which appears to be in darkness." (*Bhāg. 2.9.34*)

Bhagavad-gītā's Seventh Chapter confirms that the Lord has two energies, one spiritual and one material. Material energy manifests itself as that which appears not to be produced from God but to be independent. In other words, anything held not to relate with the Lord is a part of the illusory material energy because factually nothing can exist without being related to Him.

The knowledge, theories and research of modern scientists who try to dismiss

any connection between God and the world must therefore be considered illusory. These scientists refuse to accept the authoritative statements of the scriptures with regards to the Lord's creating the world, yet they can furnish only a plethora of theories and contradictory speculations on how the world is created, maintained and destroyed. Medical scientists refuse to accept the existence of the soul in the physiological constitution of the body, yet with all their laboratories they cannot give life to a dead body, even if all its physical mechanisms continue to exist.

Like materialistic scientists, impersonalists who maintain that in the ultimate realization the individual self becomes God are in illusion. Their claiming to be the Supreme is another way of saying that they have no connection with God, for if one is Himself God he does not have to connect himself with the Lord. Personalism clears away this illusion by explaining that the spiritual energy of the Lord cannot be as great as the Lord Himself, although there is very little qualitative difference between the energy (the living entities) and the possessor of the energy (the Lord). Just as a fire is a source of heat but the heat is not the fire itself, so the Lord is the source of innumerable living entities, although these living entities are not equal to God.

To consider God and the living entities one and the same is unreasonable because it is apparent that the living entity is forced to accept many conditions that do not at all affect the infinite Lord. For instance, the embodied soul can exhibit potencies and powers only according to the development of his body. Thus the potencies of an infant, for example, are quite limited in comparison to those of a fully grown man. But when Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, appears as an infant, He is competent to exhibit His full powers. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* relates in the Tenth Canto that Kṛṣṇa killed the terrible demon named Pūtanā when He was only an infant on the lap of His mother.

THE LORD AND HIS ENERGIES

Lord Brahmā's third question—"How

does the Lord play with His different energies?"—is answered as follows: "O Brahmā, please know that the universal elements enter into the cosmos and at the same time do not enter into the cosmos; similarly I Myself exist within everything, and at the same time I am outside of everything." (*Bhāg.* 2.9.35) *Bhagavad-gītā* explains that the material creation consists of different elements such as earth, air, water, fire and ether. The earth, trees, mountains, humans and animals are all made up of different combinations of these elements, yet these elements themselves exist independently. Similarly, the Lord is within everything by His energy yet at the same time outside of everything. To give an example, in a monarchy the different governmental departments work as the energy of the king, yet the king is not personally present in every department, although

they work by his power. Impersonalists however, perceive only that God is all-pervading, within everything, and so mistakenly conclude that He does not have a form in the kingdom of God (Vaikuṅṭhaloka), which is beyond the material manifestation.

RECEIVING ENLIGHTENMENT

How confidential knowledge of the Personality of Godhead's real nature is revealed to a devotee was explained to Brahmā in answer to his fourth question—"How may I be instructed to discharge the duty entrusted to me?" Lord Kṛṣṇa told Brahmā: "A person who is searching after the Supreme Absolute Truth, the Personality of Godhead, has to search it out up to this, certainly in all circumstances, and in all space and time, and both directly and indirectly." (*Bhāg.* 2.9.36)

Those who relish Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam are compared to swans that enjoy pleasant ponds of water, scenic and natural, whereas materialists are compared to crows that prefer to enjoy the garbage of refuse heaps.



Illustration: Yadurāṅgi devī dāsa

Not one pure devotee has received enlightenment in Kṛṣṇa consciousness independently. Rather, every great spiritual master has been instructed and benedicted by a previous spiritual master. Not only did Lord Brahmā, the first and greatest of all living entities, receive instructions from Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, but even the Lord Himself, the supreme spiritual master, became a disciple of a spiritual master, Sāṅdīpani Muni, and again when the Lord appeared as Caitanya Mahāprabhu He also accepted a spiritual master.

Because spiritual life is undoubtedly difficult, it is necessary to receive knowledge about God from both the scriptures and a spiritual master whose life teaches by example what the scriptures teach. In the following verse from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the word “*bhāgavata*” has a dual meaning: the scripture and the personality who exemplifies the scripture, the book *Bhāgavata* and the devotee *bhāgavata*. “By regularly hearing *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and rendering service unto the pure devotee [who is also known as *bhāgavata*], all that is troublesome to the heart is practically destroyed, and loving service unto the glorious Lord, who is praised with transcendental songs, is established as an irrevocable fact.” (*Bhāg.* 1.2.18)

But although anyone can relish *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, not everyone will, for many people derive pleasure from reading sensuous mental speculations that only waste time, thus increasing their illusion, lamentation and fear. Those who are spiritually advanced, however, and are actually disgusted with material life, are a captive audience for *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. The *Bhāgavatam* likens such rare souls to swans that enjoy pleasant ponds of water, scenic and natural, whereas it compares materialists to crows that prefer to enjoy the garbage of refuse heaps.

The impetus for *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*'s being promulgated to the English-speaking world began in the nineteenth century with Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, the grand-spiritual master of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. As a spiritual pio-

neer, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura first wrote books especially in English to try to interest Westerners in *bhāgavata-dharma*. In one small volume entitled “The *Bhāgavata*: Its Philosophy, Its Ethics and Its Theology,” he writes as follows: “The *Bhāgavata* [*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*] is pre-eminently the book of India. Once enter into it, and you are transplanted, as it were, into the spiritual world where gross matter has no existence. The true follower of the *Bhāgavata* is a spiritual man who has already cut his temporary connection with phenomenal nature and has made himself an inhabitant of that region where God eternally exists and loves. This mighty work is founded on inspiration and its superstructure upon reflection. . . We are therefore obliged to study it deeply through the assistance of such great commentators as Śrīdhara Svāmī and the divine Caitanya and His contemporary followers.”

A SPIRITUAL MASTER WHO KNOWS THE LORD

It is absolutely necessary to receive *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* from a bona fide spiritual master coming in disciplic succession and not from professional reciters or pseudo-devotees. A spiritual master is one who knows the science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He must have given up all other engagements and be fixed solely in the service of the Lord. Such a spiritual master will always lead one towards Kṛṣṇa and not away from Him. Kṛṣṇa says, “Surrender unto Me only” (*mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja*), and the spiritual master says, “Surrender unto Kṛṣṇa.” He does not interpret Kṛṣṇa's words and say that it is not to Kṛṣṇa that we must surrender. He delivers the message as it is, like a postman who delivers a letter to the addressee without opening it and changing what it says.

A bona fide spiritual master must necessarily be a personalist. Impersonalists are not pure because they desire to become one with God, like materialists who think themselves number one in the world. Because they are materially contaminated, impersonalists cannot avoid misinterpreting the pure message of the scriptures. It is therefore recommended that one who is

eager to accept a spiritual master seek a bona fide spiritual master who can lead everyone to God. Such a spiritual master knows everything about the Supreme Personality of Godhead because the Lord is obliged to reveal Himself completely to His sincere devotee. As Kṛṣṇa says in *Bhagavad-gītā*, “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)

It is important that the spiritual aspirant be conversant with the science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness so that he will not be misled. If one is ignorant of what spiritual life is, how will he be able to evaluate who is a bona fide spiritual master and who is bogus? If one is ill and needs a doctor, one must select a doctor who is qualified to cure him, who perhaps has been recommended by a friend and who has cured other patients. Selecting a spiritual master is just as practical a matter, and because the disease of material life is the most stubborn of all, only an expert spiritual master can cure one—if one really wants to be cured.

Most people do not understand the seriousness of the disease of material life. Therefore it is stated that if one wants God, the Lord will send him to a spiritual master who will give the Lord to him. We recommend any reader fortunate enough to be seeking the Absolute Truth, God, or Kṛṣṇa, to approach His Divine Grace Śrīla Prabhupāda, who is such a spiritual master. One can do this just by reading his *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. In the words of His Divine Grace: “There are thousands and thousands of literary men all over the world, and they have created many, many thousands of literary works for the information of people in general for thousands and thousands of years. Unfortunately none of them have brought peace and tranquility on the earth. This is due to the spiritual vacuum in those literatures; therefore the Vedic literatures, especially *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, are specifically recommended to suffering humanity to bring about the desired effect of liberation from the pangs of material civilization, which is eating the vital part of human energy.”

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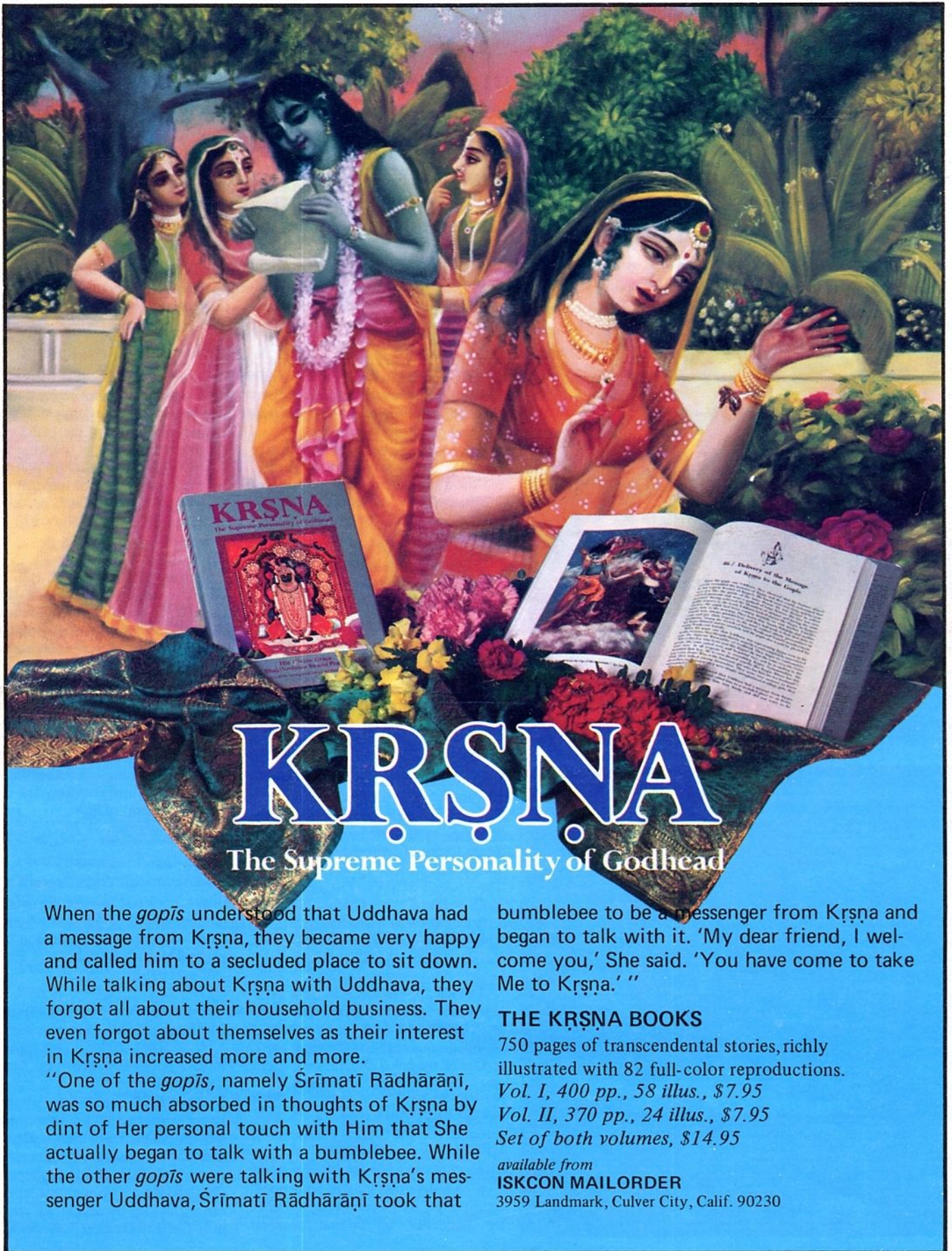
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