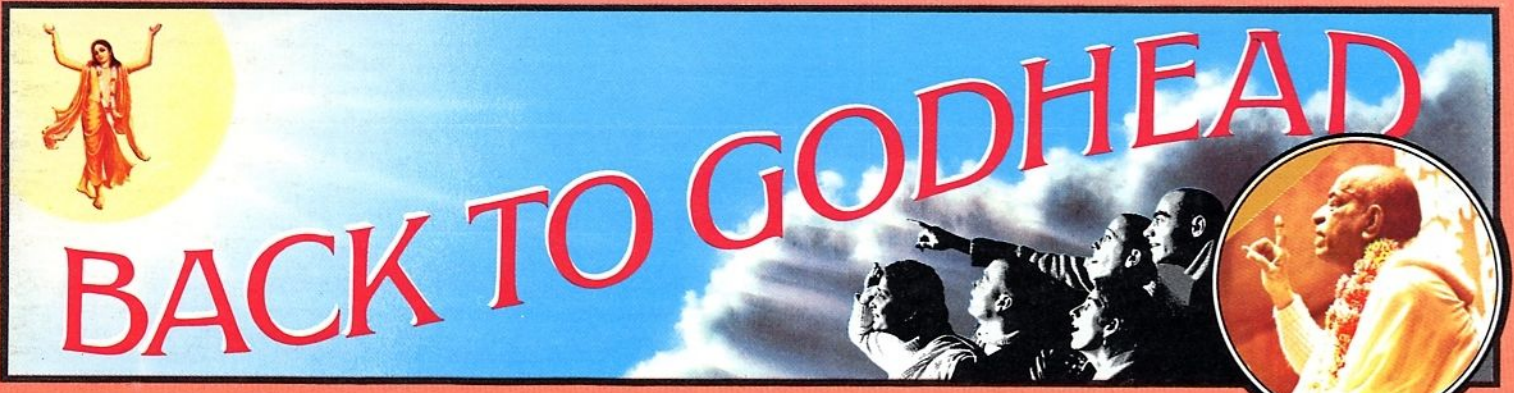


Godhead is light. Nescience is darkness. Where there is Godhead there is no nescience.



THE MAGAZINE OF THE HARE KRISHNA MOVEMENT

No. 62

**THE LOS ANGELES
KṚṢṆA CONSCIOUS
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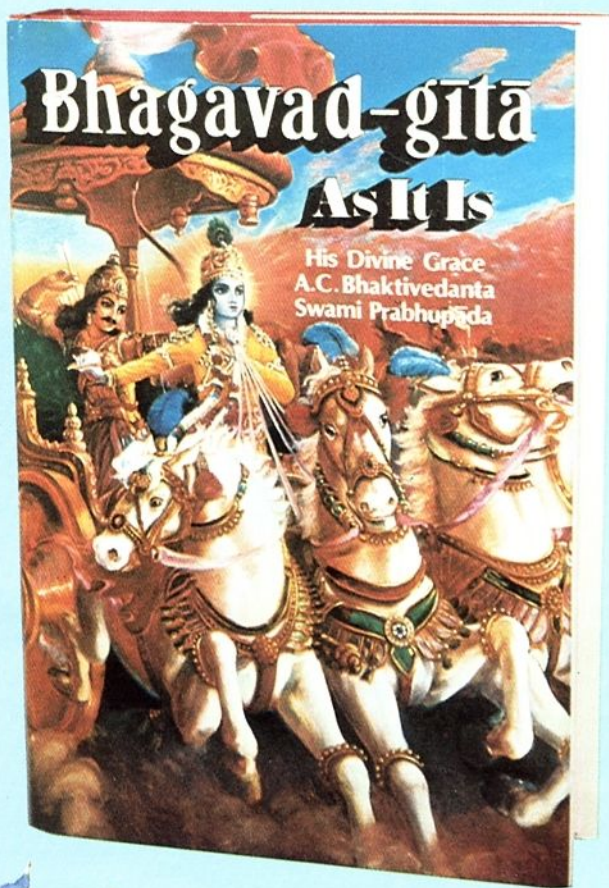
VR̥NDĀVANA
The Highest Paradise

THE BHAKTI VIEWPOINT
KṚṣṇa Consciousness
in the University



Five thousand years ago on an ancient battlefield in India, Lord Kṛṣṇa spoke the words of Bhagavad-gītā to His friend and disciple Arjuna. That holy discourse, spoken in a mere thirty minutes, can awaken and refine our eternal consciousness.

“This knowledge is the king of education, the most secret of all secrets. It is the purest knowledge, and because it gives direct perception of the self by realization, it is the perfection of religion. It is everlasting, and it is joyfully performed.” –Bhagavad-gītā, 9.2



Bhagavad-gītā As It Is

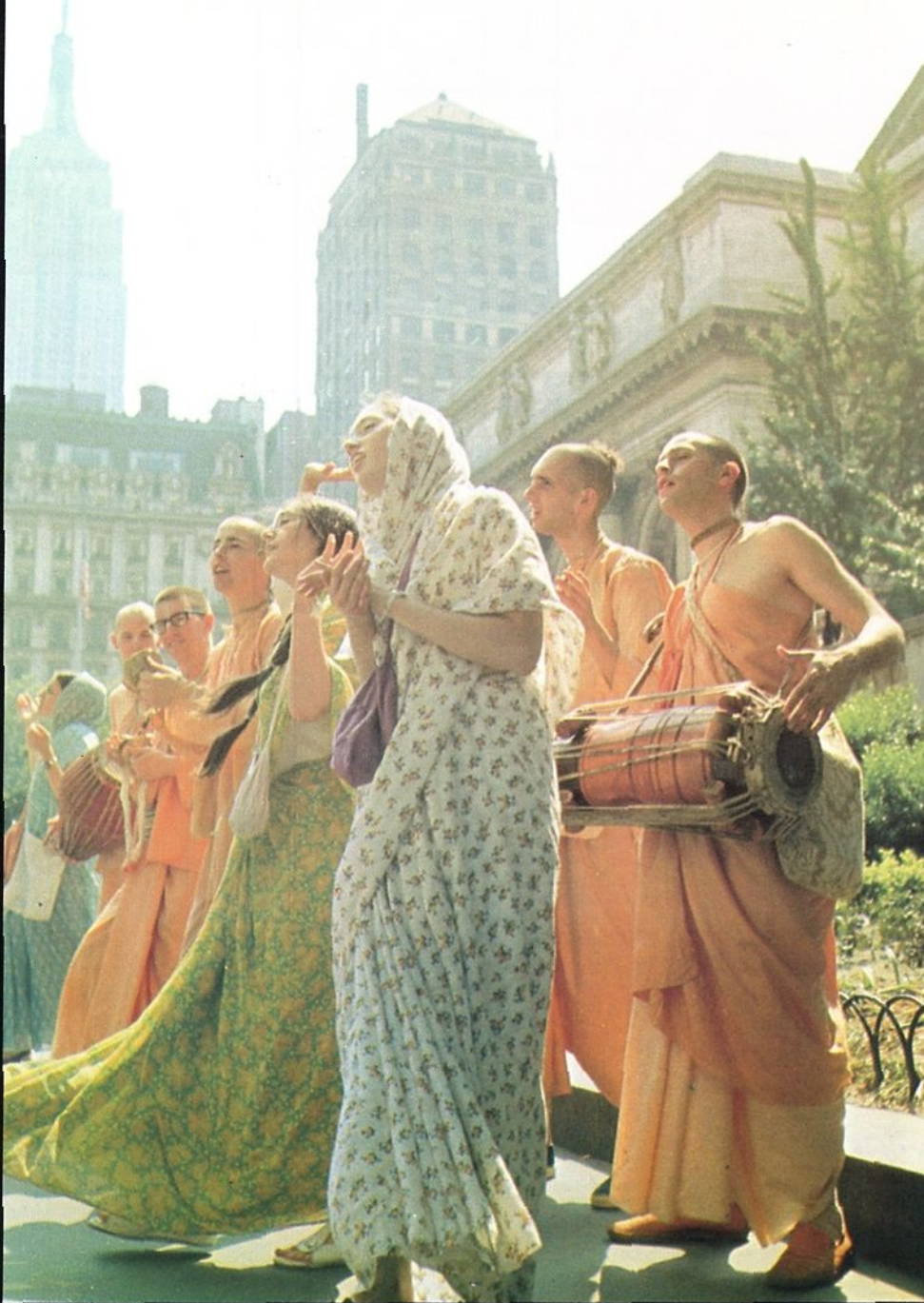
His Divine Grace

A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

A necessity for anyone truly serious about yoga, self-realization or spiritual fulfillment, Bhagavad-gītā As It Is presents and explains the Gītā's verses without changing their timeless meaning. This complete edition includes the original Sanskrit verses, easily pronounceable Roman transliterations, word-for-word synonyms, translations and elaborate purports. Pure knowledge, purely transmitted. Forty-four full-color pictures, painted especially for this book. 1,000 pages. Hardcover, \$10.95; paperback, \$4.95. Available from ISKCON Mailorder, 3959 Landmark, Culver City, Calif. 90230.

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Devotees chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa in front of the New York Public Library on Fifth Avenue and 42nd Street.

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

THE VEDIC SCRIPTURES recommend the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa as the best means to realize love of God in the present age. It is said that long ago humans lived for many thousands of years, and in more peaceful surroundings than they live in now. In that age they were advised to understand the Supreme by practicing silent meditation. But in our modern age such meditation is not at all practical. Many groups advertise such yoga, but it is not genuine if they do not follow its strict rules, which require one to sit down all alone in a sacred place, completely fearless and free of sex, holding one's body erect in meditation for long periods of time.

In yet another past age, the scriptures recommend people to perform costly temple worship by holding elaborate rituals in

which huge wealths of butter and gold were offered to the Deity. That also is not practical in our modern age, when there is a scarcity not only of wealth but even of basic natural resources.

Foreseeing the many difficulties of this age, which is called the Age of Quarrel and Hypocrisy, Vedic sages prescribed for us the easy and sublime method of chanting the holy name of God, the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra, as the most appropriate form of self-realization. The same perfection formerly obtained by silent meditation or costly temple worship may now be achieved simply by chanting names of God. Anyone serious about spiritual life should try, even if only in his spare time, to adopt this easy and authorized method for achieving spiritual perfection.



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(under the direction of His Divine Grace
Sri Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda)

His Divine Grace
A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda

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ON THE COVER

Devotees of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness at the Society's temple in Los Angeles, California.

PRONUNCIATION OF SANSKRIT WORDS

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

Liberation in Kṛṣṇa Consciousness

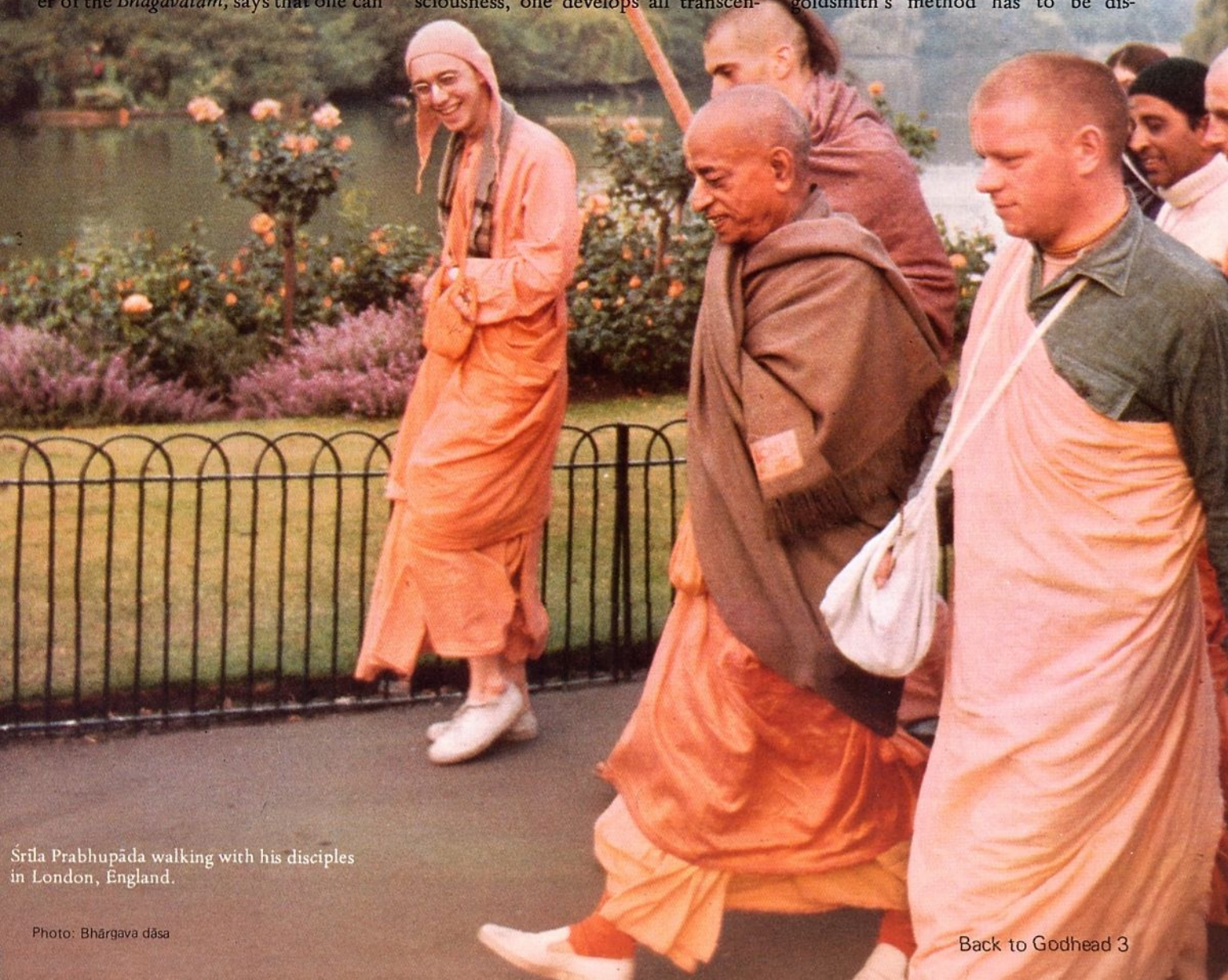
His Divine Grace

A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

IF WE SIMPLY WORSHIP the original person (*ādi-puruṣa*), we need not fear being misled by anyone. Śrīdhara Svāmī, the original commentator on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, explains that one can reach the perfection of life simply by devotional service (*kevalayā bhaktiyā*); one need not be dependent on any other process. Śukadeva Gosvāmī, the original speaker of the *Bhāgavatam*, says that one can

put an end to material life by one stroke (*kevalayā*). There is no need to first undergo severe penance and austerity, practice celibacy, control the mind and the senses, give charity, perform great sacrifices and become very truthful and clean. Simply by one stroke—by accepting Kṛṣṇa consciousness—one immediately rises to the highest position. By just taking to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, one develops all transcen-

dental qualifications. The goldsmith uses a small hammer and taps the gold many times, but the blacksmith uses a large hammer, and with one stroke his job is finished. This is the blacksmith's method; we take the big hammer of *bhakti-yoga* and finish all material life. There is no need to undergo the many lesser disciplines, nor to follow any other process. In actuality, there is no possibility of even following the other Vedic processes to perfection. For instance, the *haṭha-yoga* process would say: "You have to become strictly celibate and sit in the forest with your body at a right angle to the ground, pressing your nose with your finger for six months." Who could follow such an instruction? Since such a method is not practical in this present age, the goldsmith's method has to be dis-



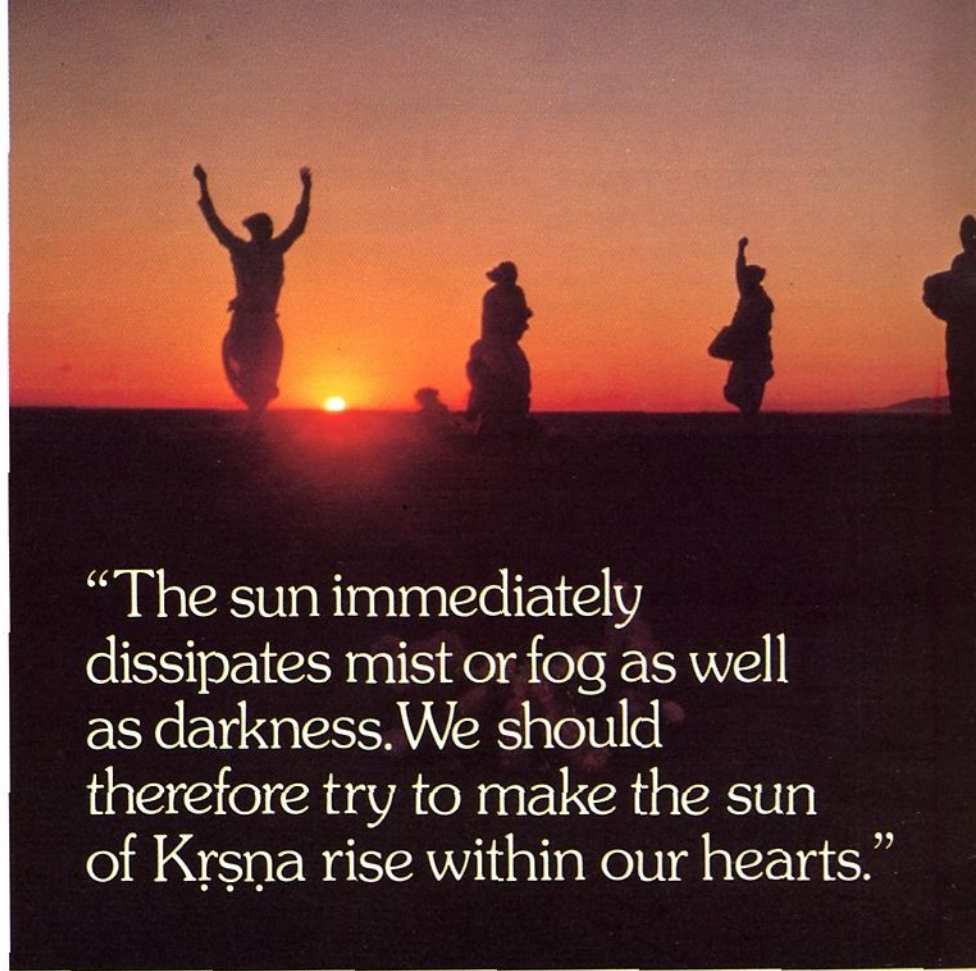
Śrīla Prabhupāda walking with his disciples in London, England.

carded. The solution is to take the blacksmith's hammer of Kṛṣṇa consciousness and finish off all sinful reactions immediately.

By devotional service one has to become *vāsudeva-parāyaṇa*, a devotee of Lord Vāsudeva, or Lord Kṛṣṇa. In other words, we have to learn how to become lovers of Vāsudeva. If the world takes up this Kṛṣṇa consciousness, the planet is certain to be peaceful. Now the earth is quickly becoming a hellish planet, and if this Kṛṣṇa consciousness is not taken up, this hellish condition will progress despite all advances in education and economic development. Therefore those who are thoughtful should take this movement very seriously and try to understand its value. It is not something manufactured by one man or a group of disciples. It is authoritative and age-old, based on the Vedic literatures that date back thousands of years.

Nīhāram iva bhāskarahaḥ. Bhāskara refers to the sun. The sun immediately dissipates mist or fog as well as darkness. We should therefore try to make the sun of Kṛṣṇa rise within our hearts. In the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* also it is stated that Kṛṣṇa is like the sun and that *māyā*, the illusory energy, is darkness. *Yahān kṛṣṇa, tāhān nāhi māyāra adhikāra*: as soon as the sun of Kṛṣṇa is present, the darkness of *māyā* immediately disappears. Without following this process, it is very difficult to overcome the ocean of darkness, *māyā*. But if we simply teach people to surrender unto Kṛṣṇa, God, all the fog and mist of illusion will disappear. The method is very simple: chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

The more one goes on chanting, the more the darkness of many lives is dissipated. *Ceto-darpaṇa-mārjanam*: by chanting, one can cleanse the dust from the mirror of his mind and perceive things very distinctly. Thus one will know what he is, what God is, what this world is, what our relationship with God in this world is, how to live in this world, and what our next life is. Such knowledge is not taught in schools, where one is taught how to manufacture or acquire products for



“The sun immediately dissipates mist or fog as well as darkness. We should therefore try to make the sun of Kṛṣṇa rise within our hearts.”

sense gratification.

There is always a hard struggle going on involving man's attempt to dominate material nature. However, for every convenience he manages to produce, there is an inconvenience accompanying it. For example, recently some engineers designed an airplane that can fly at great speeds without danger. When the plane flies, however, it breaks windows all over the city. Our time is thus being wasted in constructing so many devices to give us temporary and artificial convenience at the price of a proportionate amount of inconvenience. This is all part of the law of *karma*, the law of action and reaction. For whatever we do, there must be a reaction by which we become entangled. That is stated in *Bhagavad-gītā*:

*yajñārthāt karmaṇo 'nyatra
loko 'yaṁ karma-bandhanaḥ
tad-arthaṁ karma kaunteya
mukta-saṅgaḥ samācara*

“Work done as a sacrifice for Viṣṇu has to be performed, otherwise work binds one to this material world. There-

fore, O son of Kuntī, perform your prescribed duties for His satisfaction, and in that way you will always remain unattached and free from bondage.” (Bg. 3.9)

When one acts for sense gratification, work entangles him, whether the work be good or bad, but if one works for Kṛṣṇa (*yajñārthāt karmaṇaḥ*), he will be free, regardless of the possible undesirability of his work.

Not only does Śukadeva Gosvāmī recommend unalloyed devotional service, but he further says that by devotional service one's sinful activities will be negated. Every one of us is more or less sinful, for if we were not sinful we would not have been put into material bodies. As soon as one is free from sinful life, he is liberated and transferred to the spiritual world in a spiritual body. The whole process is to cleanse oneself from the contamination of sinful or material life.

Śukadeva Gosvāmī said, “My dear king, those who are sinful can become purified from contamination by

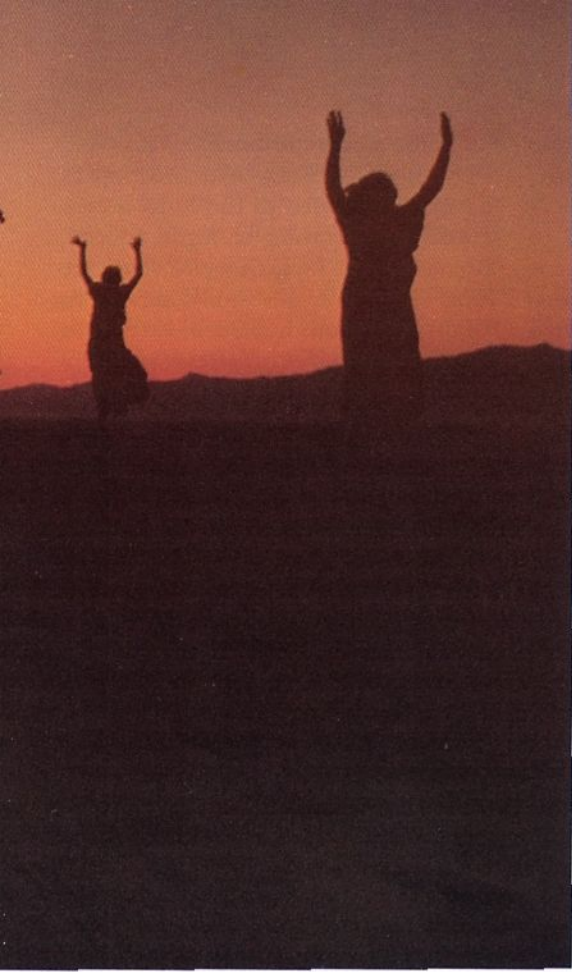


Photo: Muralidhana dāsa

tapa-ādibhiḥ, practicing austerity.” Śukadeva also said, however, that no one can become completely purified by executing this process of austerity. There are many examples of *yogīs* who practiced austerities but did not emerge completely pure. Viśvāmītra Muni, for example, was a *kṣatriya* who wanted to become a *brāhmaṇa* and therefore began to practice austerity. Later on, however, he became a victim of Menakā, a society girl of the heavenly planets. Because Viśvāmītra was not pure, he became entangled with her and begot a child. Therefore it is said that even if one performs austerities and penances, worldly circumstances are so implicating that somehow or other they will involve one again and again in the material modes of nature. There are many examples of *sannyāsīs* who give up the world, renouncing it as false, saying, “Let me turn to Brahman [spirit]” but they again become entangled in the work of the world when they set up hospitals and perform philanthropic work and welfare activities. If the world is false, why are they attracted to welfare activities? The

philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness maintains that this world is not false but that it is temporary. God created this world, and He is true, so how can His creation be false? Because this is the creation of God, and God is the Absolute Truth, this creation is also true. We simply see it otherwise due to illusion. The world is a fact, but it is a temporary fact.

A person may claim something within this world to be his property, but that is a false claim. It is a fact that it is someone’s property, but it is God’s property (*īśāvāsyam idaṁ sarvaṁ*). This does not mean, however, that the property is false. What is false is the claim to the property, which is based upon a puffed-up false consciousness that the individual is the proprietor, the master, or God. Everyone desires to be master or proprietor of something, then minister, then president, and then God. When everything else fails, the living entity wants to become God. The tendency is there to want to become the greatest of all, but the fact remains that God is the greatest and the living entity is small compared to Him. The smallest is not false, and the greatest is not false, but when the small thinks that he is great, that is false.

We understand from Vedic literature that Brahman, or the spirit, is *aṇor aṇīyāṁsam*, smaller than an atom, and *mahato mahīyāṁsam*, greater than the greatest. As far as we can conceive, the space that contains the universe is the greatest, but Kṛṣṇa has shown millions of universes in His mouth. The greatness of God cannot be comprehended by the living entities, who are part and parcel of God. As living entities, we are very minute, infinitesimal, and God is infinite. Indeed, the magnitude of the individual spirit soul is so microscopic that it cannot be seen. One cannot even imagine it with his material senses. Therefore it is said that the spirit soul is smaller than an atom (*aṇor aṇīyāṁsam*).

Since the living entities and Kṛṣṇa,

the Supreme Lord, are both spirit, they are qualitatively one. Quantitatively, however, the Lord is great and the living entities are small. This fact can be accepted immediately on the basis of Vedic information. In *Brahma-saṁhitā* it is stated, *yasyaikāniśvasita-kālam athāvalambya jīvanti loma-vilajā jagad-aṇḍa-nāthāḥ*: many millions of universes come out of God’s body when He exhales, and they again disappear when He inhales. Simply by His breathing, millions of universes are created and dissolved. If this is the case, then how can the living entities claim proprietorship over anything? One’s position is safe only insofar as he does not falsely declare himself God or proprietor. It has become fashionable to claim to be God, and fools accept such claims, but from the Vedic literatures we understand that God is not so cheap.

As long as we are not making puffed-up ego-centered claims, we are already liberated. There is actually no need to seek liberation. But as long as one thinks, “I am this body,” he is not liberated. Liberation means knowing perfectly well that one’s self is separate from the body. Therefore Sukadeva Gosvāmī said, *prāyaścittam vimarśanam*: “Develop your knowledge; that will give you relief.” Our knowledge is perfect when we come to know that we are very small particles of spiritual sparks, and that God, the Supreme, the greatest spiritual identity, supplies all our necessities (*eko bahūnām yo vidadhāti kāmān*). By knowing ourselves as minute particles, part and parcel of God, we can understand that our duty is to serve God. God is the center of all creation, of the whole universal body; He is the enjoyer, and we are His servitors. As this conception becomes clear, we become liberated.

Liberation entails freedom from all false conceptions. It is not that upon liberation one acquires ten hands. In *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* liberation (*mukti*) is defined as *hitvānyathā rūpam*. *Hitvā* means “giving up,” and *anyathā rūpam* denotes a false conception of life. This is to say that when one is situated in his original constitutional

position, having given up all false notions, he is liberated. It is also said in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* that by the acquisition of knowledge, one becomes liberated immediately. That knowledge can be very easily acquired, for it is simple: God is great, and I am very small; He is the supreme proprietor supplying all necessities, and I am His servant. Who can challenge this? It is a fact. We are simply under the false impression that we are this or that, and this leads us to the ultimate false impression that we are God. Yet we do not consider what manner of God we are. A small bodily disorder will send us to the physician. One who claims to be the Supreme, therefore, should be understood to have fallen to the last snare of *māyā*. One who is thus fallen cannot even be liberated, for he is bound by false impressions.

Only when one has attained proper knowledge can he actually be liberated. The stage of liberation is also called the *brahma-bhūta* stage, or the stage of spiritual realization. One who has attained this stage is characterized by Śrī Kṛṣṇa in *Bhagavad-gītā* in this way:

*brahma-bhūtaḥ prasannātmā
na śocati na kāṅkṣati
samaḥ sarveṣu bhūteṣu
mad-bhaktim labhate parām*

“One who is thus transcendently situated at once realizes the Supreme Brahman [spirit]. He never laments nor desires to have anything; he is equally disposed to every living entity. In that state he attains pure devotional service unto Me.” (Bg. 18.54)

The joy that follows realization arises from understanding, “I was illusioned by false notions for so long. What a fool I was! I was thinking that I was God, but now I can understand that I am God’s eternal servant.” Upon gaining such realization, one attains liberation and becomes *prasannātmā*, or jolly, for this is the constitutional position of the living entity.

There is no lamentation when one is in pure consciousness, for he knows that he is a small part, a spiritual spark protected by the Supreme Lord. Where then is the scope for lamentation? A small child feels free as long as he

knows that his father is there. He thinks, “My father is standing by me, so I am free. No one can harm me.” Similarly, when one surrenders to Kṛṣṇa, he has complete faith that he is not in danger because Kṛṣṇa is protecting him. One who is thus surrendered to Kṛṣṇa is not subject to lamentation or desire, whereas one who is not God conscious simply hankers and laments. He hankers for that which he does not possess, and he laments for that which he did possess but has lost. A God conscious person is not subject to such misery. If something is lost, he knows that it is God’s wish, and he thinks, “God desired this, so it is all right.” He does not desire anything, for he knows that all his necessities are being provided by Kṛṣṇa, the supreme father.

As soon as one understands his relationship to God, he realizes universal brotherhood, for he understands that all men and animals—indeed, all life itself—are all parts of the supreme whole and are therefore all equal. Seeing this, one does not envy, exploit or trouble another living entity. Thus a devotee of Kṛṣṇa automatically develops all good qualities, for he is in the proper consciousness. *Harāv abhaktasya kuto mahad-guṇā mano-rathenāsati dhāvato bahiḥ*. One who has developed Kṛṣṇa consciousness will manifest all the good qualities of the demigods. Indeed, it is stated, *Vāñchā-kalpatarubhyaś ca kṛpā-sindhubhya eva ca*: a Vaiṣṇava, or devotee of Kṛṣṇa, is an ocean of mercy to others. He gives the greatest gift to society, for society is in dire need of God consciousness. A Vaiṣṇava bestows the priceless gift of the *mahā-mantra*, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. Simply by chanting this *mantra*, one can remain in a liberated state.

One should not think, however, that this state is simply a state of trance whereby one remains seated in lotus position in a corner for days on end. No, liberation means serving. One cannot simply say, “Now I have dedicated my life to Kṛṣṇa. Let me remain seated in trance.” The standard of surrender must be maintained *niṣevayā*, by serving. As one serves the

Supreme Lord, the Lord reveals Himself within the heart. The program of devotional service to the Lord is executed from morning to night. Indeed, Kṛṣṇa says in *Bhagavad-gītā* that one must engage in devotional service to Him twenty-four hours a day. It is not that we should meditate for fifteen minutes and then engage in all kinds of nonsense. The more we serve, the more dedicated to Kṛṣṇa we become; therefore a person should utilize whatever talents he has for Kṛṣṇa. There are nine process of devotional service—*hearing, chanting, remembering, serving, worshipping the Deity in the temple, praying, carrying out orders, serving the Lord as friend, and sacrificing everything for Him*—and one should always keep engaged in at least one of these nine processes. One who is always engaged in Kṛṣṇa’s service never becomes disgusted (*bhajatām prīti-pūrvakam*). Service must be rendered with love, but in the beginning this may be difficult, and so one may become disgusted. As one makes progress in Kṛṣṇa’s service, however, he will find it pleasing. This is indicated by Kṛṣṇa in *Bhagavad-gītā*:

*yat tad agre viṣam iva
pariṇāme ’mṛtopamam
tat sukhaṁ sātṭvikaṁ proktam
ātma-buddhi-prasāda-jam*

“That which in the beginning may be just like poison, but at the end is like nectar, and which awakens one to self-realization, is said to be happiness in the mode of goodness.” (Bg. 18.37)

Once one has attained the spiritual platform, it is material service that actually becomes disgusting. For example, if one chants Hare Kṛṣṇa throughout his life, he will not grow tired of the names, but if one chants a material name over and over, he will soon become disgusted. The more one chants the names of Kṛṣṇa, the more he becomes attached. Thus service by *śravaṇam* and *kīrtanam*, hearing and chanting about Kṛṣṇa, is the beginning. The next process is *smaraṇam*—always remembering Kṛṣṇa. When one is perfect in chanting and hearing, he will always remember Kṛṣṇa. In this third stage, he becomes the greatest *yogī*.

Nor is progress in Kṛṣṇa conscious-

ness ever lost. In the material world, if one begins to construct a factory but does not complete it, the factory is useless for all intents and purposes. If the construction is stopped and the building half finished, whatever money is invested is lost. This is not the case with Kṛṣṇa consciousness, for even if one does not come to the perfectional point, whatever work he does is his permanent asset, and he can begin from that point in his next life. Kṛṣṇa also confirms in *Bhagavad-gītā* that one begins Kṛṣṇa consciousness cannot lose anything:

*nehābhikrama-nāśo 'sti
pratyavāyo na vidyate
svalpam apy asya dharmasya
trāyate mahato bhayāt*

“In this endeavor there is no loss or diminution, and a little advancement on this path can protect one from the most dangerous type of fear.” (Bg. 2.40)

In the Sixth Chapter of *Bhagavad-gītā*, when Arjuna asks about the fate of the unsuccessful *yogī*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa replied:

*pārtha naiveha nāmutra
vināśas tasya vidyate
na hi kalyāṇa-kṛt kaścīd
durgatim tāta gacchati*

“Son of Pṛthā, a transcendentalist engaged in auspicious activities does not meet with destruction either in this world or in the spiritual world; one who does good, My friend, is never overcome by evil.” (Bg. 6.40)

The Lord then indicates that the unsuccessful *yogī* takes up his practice of Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the next life, beginning from the point where he left off. In other words, if one has finished fifty percent of the process in one life, in the next life he begins at fifty-one percent. Whatever material assets we accumulate in our life, however, are all annihilated at death, for we cannot take material opulence with us.

But one should not think that he will do well to wait for the next life to attain Kṛṣṇa consciousness. We should try to fulfill the mission of Kṛṣṇa consciousness in this life. Kṛṣṇa promises us that one who becomes His devotee will come to Him without fail:

*man-manā bhava mad-bhakto
mad-yājī māṁ namas-kuru
mām evaiṣyasi satyaṁ te
pratijāne priyo 'si me*

“Always think of Me and become My devotee. Worship Me and offer your homage unto Me. Thus you will come to Me without fail. I promise you this because you are my very dear friend.” (Bg. 18.65)

When we think of coming to Kṛṣṇa, we should not think that we will be standing before a void or an impersonal bright light. Kṛṣṇa, God, is a person, just as we are persons. Materially we can understand that our father is a person, and that his father is also a person, and that his father's father is a person and so on back to the supreme father, who must also be a person. This is not very difficult to understand, and it is noteworthy that God is called the supreme father not only in the *Vedas* but in the Bible, Koran, and other scriptures. The *Vedānta-sūtra* also confirms that the Absolute Truth is the original father from whom everything has taken birth or emanated. This is also confirmed in the *Vedas*:

*nityo nityānāṁ cetanaś cetanānāṁ
eko bahūnāṁ yo vidadhāti kāmān*

The Lord is the supreme eternal amongst all living entities. He is maintaining all others.” The desires and life symptoms displayed by all living entities are simply reflections of the desires and life symptoms of the supreme father. In other words, our desires are born because He has desires. Because we are part and parcel of God, we have all the instincts of God in minute quantity. The sex play and sex life we see in the material world is but the perverted reflection of the love found in the spiritual world. This world is material because God is forgotten here, but once He is remembered the world immediately becomes spiritual. In other words, the spiritual world is that place where Kṛṣṇa is not forgotten. That is also the definition of the spiritual world given by Vedic literatures. We must therefore plan our lives in such a way that it will not be possible

for us to forget Kṛṣṇa for a moment. In this way, by engaging in the service of Kṛṣṇa, we will therefore always live in Vaikuṅṭha or Vṛndāvana, the abode of Kṛṣṇa.

At present, because of our polluted consciousness, we are turning the world into a materialistic and hellish place, and because we are ignorant of our constitutional position, we have created innumerable problems, just as in dreams we create so many problems. But in actuality there are no problems. I may dream that I am in a great storm, or that I am being pursued, or that someone is taking my money, or that I am being devoured by a tiger, but actually these are all creations of my mind. *Asaṅgo hy ayaṁ puruṣa iti śruteḥ*. The *Vedas* say that the *puruṣa* (the *ātmā*, or the soul) has no connection with all its dreamlike material activities. Therefore we must engage in this Kṛṣṇa consciousness process to awaken from this dreaming condition.

Above all the fruitive laborers, speculators and mystic *yogīs* are the *bhaktas*, or devotees of Kṛṣṇa. A *bhakta* can be perfectly peaceful, whereas the others cannot because everyone but the *bhakta*, one who has pure love, has desire. A *śuddha-bhakta*, pure devotee, is desireless because he is simply happy serving Kṛṣṇa. He does not know or even care whether Kṛṣṇa is God or not; he just wants to love Kṛṣṇa. Nor is he concerned with the fact that Kṛṣṇa is omnipotent or that He is all-pervasive. In Vṛndāvana, the cowherd boys and the *gopīs* did not know whether Kṛṣṇa was God or not, but they simply loved Him. Although the *gopīs* were not Vedāntists, *yogīs* or *karmīs*, they were happy because they were simple village girls and boys who wanted to see Kṛṣṇa. This is a very highly elevated position called *sarvo-pādhi-vinirmuktaṁ tat-paratvena nirmalam*, or the stage of purity in which one is liberated from all material designations.

Although the *yogīs* and *jñānīs* are trying to understand God, they are not aware of their illusory condition. *Māyā-sukhāya bharam udvahato vimūḍhān*: they are fools because they are working hard for illusory happiness. There is no question of peace for

them. The *jñānīs*, or speculators, wanting to get relief from the hard work of this material world, reject this material world (*brahma satyaṁ jagan-mithyā*). Their position is a little higher than that of the *karmīs* because the *karmīs* have taken this material world as everything. They say, “Here we shall be happy,” and their *dharma*, or religion, consists of trying to make a peaceful atmosphere within this material world. The fools do not know that this has been tried for millions of years but has never happened and never will happen. How can peace in the material world be possible when Kṛṣṇa, the creator Himself, says that this place is meant for trouble and miseries?

*ābrahma-bhuvanāl lokāḥ
punar āvartino 'rjuna
mām upetya tu kaunteya
punar janma na vidyate*

“From the highest planet in the material world down to the lowest, all are places of misery wherein repeated birth and death take place. But one who attains to My abode, O son of Kuntī, never takes birth again.” (Bg. 8.16)

Duḥkhalāyama aśāsvatam: not only is this world full of suffering, but it is also temporary. One cannot simply agree to go ahead suffering the three-fold miseries and stay here. Even that will not be allowed. In this world, not only will he be punished while staying here, but he will also be kicked out at the end. One may accumulate a large bank balance or an expensive home, a wife, children, and so many amenities, and he may think, “I am living very peacefully,” but at any day he may be told, “Please get out.”

“Why?” he will ask. “It is my house, and it is paid for. I have money and a job and responsibilities. Why should I get out?”

“Just get out. Don’t talk. Get out.”

On that day a man sees God. “Oh, I did not believe in God,” he may think. “But now here is God finishing off everything.” Thus it is said that the demoniac recognize Kṛṣṇa as death, for at that time He takes everything away from them.

Why do we want to see God as death?

When the demon Hiranyakaśipu saw Kṛṣṇa, he saw Him as death personified, but the devotee Prahlāda saw Him in His personal form as his beloved Lord. Those who challenge God will see Him in His ghastly aspect, but those who are devoted to Him will see Him in His personal form. In any case, everyone will ultimately see God.

An honest person can always see Kṛṣṇa everywhere. Kṛṣṇa says, “Try to understand Me. Try to see Me everywhere.” By way of facilitating this method, the Lord says, *raso 'ham apsu kaunteya*: “I am the taste of water.” When we are thirsty and need a glass of water, we can drink it and feel happy, understanding that the power of water to quench our thirst is Kṛṣṇa. Similarly, as soon as there is sunrise or moonshine, we can see Kṛṣṇa, for He says, *prabhāsmi śāsi-sūryayoh*: “I am the light of the sun and moon.” At a further stage we can see Kṛṣṇa as the life force within everything, as He indicates in *Bhagavad-gītā*:

*puṇyo gandhaḥ pṛthivyām ca
tejaś cāsmi vibhāvasau
jīvanam sarva-bhūteṣu
tapaś cāsmi tapasviṣu*

“I am the original fragrance of the earth, and I am the light in fire. I am the life of all that lives, and I am the penances of all ascetics.” (Bg. 7.9)

Once we understand that all things are dependent upon Kṛṣṇa for their existence, there is no possibility of His ever becoming lost to us. In *Bhagavad-gītā* the Lord indicates that all things abide in Him both in their beginning and in their end and also in the interim state:

*etad yonīni bhūtāni
sarvāṅīty upadhāraya
aham kṛtsnasya jagataḥ
prabhavaḥ pralayas tathā*

*matṭaḥ parataram nānyat
kiñcid asti dhanāñjaya
mayi sarvam idaṁ protam
sūtre maṇi-gaṇā iva*

“Of all that is material and all that is spiritual in this world, know for certain that I am both its origin and dissolution. O conquerer of wealth [Arjuna],

there is no truth superior to Me. Everything rests upon Me, as pearls on a thread.” (Bg. 7.6,7)

Kṛṣṇa is easily visible, but He is only visible to those who are devoted to Him. For those who are envious, foolish or unintelligent, He obscures Himself with His veil of *yoga-māyā*:

*nāham prakāśaḥ sarvasya
yoga-māyā-samāvṛtaḥ
mūḍho 'yaṁ nābhijānāti
loko mām ajam avyayam*

“I am never manifest to the foolish and unintelligent. For them I am covered by My eternal creative potency [*yoga-māyā*]; thus the deluded world knows Me not, who am unborn and infallible.” (Bg. 7.25)

This eternal creative potency, or *yoga-māyā*, which obscures Kṛṣṇa to the unintelligent, is dissolved by love. This is the verdict of *Brahma-saṁhitā*:

*premāñjana-cchurita-bhakti-vilocanena
santaḥ sadaiva hṛdayeṣu vilokayanti*

Those who thus see Kṛṣṇa are not anxious because they know where they are going at death. One who has taken the gift of Kṛṣṇa consciousness knows that he will not have to return to this material world to take another body but will go to Kṛṣṇa. It is not possible to go to Kṛṣṇa unless one attains a body like Kṛṣṇa’s, a *sac-cid-ānanda-vigraha* body, a body full of eternity, knowledge and bliss. One cannot enter into fire and not perish unless he himself becomes fire, and similarly one cannot enter into the spiritual realm in a body that is not spiritual. In a spiritual body one can dance with Kṛṣṇa in the *rāsa* dance like the *gopīs*. This is not an ordinary dance, but the dance of eternity, in the association with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Only those who have become purified in their love for Kṛṣṇa can participate in it. One therefore should not take this process of Kṛṣṇa consciousness as something cheap, but as a matchless gift bestowed upon suffering humanity by the Lord Himself. Simply by engaging in this process, all the anxieties and fears of one’s life, which in actuality revolve about the fear of death, are allayed. ❧

LIVING IN THE MATERIAL WORLD

A Back to Godhead Analysis

Carbon 14 Goes Out of Date

A RECENT ISSUE of *Time* carries an article in which leading archaeological authorities admit that they have long been wrong in their theory of "the cultural inferiority of prehistoric civilization in Europe." The article states, "Now, in a surprising about-face, archaeologists are sharply questioning their old assumptions about the cultural inferiority of early Europeans." What has prompted this major reassessment is a change in archaeology's key dating tool—the so-called carbon 14 "nuclear clock."

For our present purposes we need not discuss the technicalities of why the scientists' wonderful play with the "nuclear clock" has proved inaccurate. Suffice it to say that nature has out-tricked them and forced them to make major adjustments in the science of archaeology.

This radical change in archaeological theory should serve as a lesson that the pronouncements of material science, based on knowledge gained through imperfect senses by imperfect minds, are subject to error; they should not be considered absolute. Science so dominates all fields of knowledge, however, that when materialistic scientists say that they can make man immortal in his material body or that they can create life, we receive the news as credible, for we are under the sway of the scientific method of speculation. But now the archaeologists' change of view gives evidence that this method is defective. And whoever puts forward such theories as absolute fact is indeed cheating.

The modern materialistic mind cannot process the idea that the Supreme Personality of Godhead has already informed us of the Absolute Truth through sacred, revealed scriptures and that these words spoken by God represent axiomatic scientific facts. We prefer to research for our knowledge. Indeed, we do not believe in the existence of the Supreme Personality of Godhead because we cannot find Him through our empiric methods.

But those who are real educators, scientists and philosophers, the liberated sages of the Vedic civilization, follow the Vedic literature as sources of Absolute Truth from which one can derive all the material and spiritual knowledge necessary for attaining perfection in human life. The conclusion of Vedic thought is that man is not a product of this material world; his real self is an eternal spiritual soul who is part of the Complete Whole, or God—Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Man's duty for perfect happiness is to engage in transcendental loving service to that Supreme Personality of Godhead.

We may note with interest that archaeologists, having reviewed their mistaken method for dating ancient bones and plants, now conclude, "We have completely undervalued the originality and creativity of prehistoric Europe." Now they understand that even in prehistoric times skilled and cultured workers were living in Europe. Thus the empiric method yields glimpses of reality only after many mistakes and many revisions of theories.

But if one simply gives submissive aural reception to the Vedic literature, one can at once have access to all knowledge, material and spiritual. For example, it is well known to

followers of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the ripened fruit of all Vedic literature, that highly sophisticated forms of human society existed on earth 5,000 years ago, and even long before that. In fact, the first living entity, Brahmā, who appeared in the beginning of material creation, is the most highly developed, sanctified and intellectual being, and he is capable of creating entire planetary systems, as well as the bodies of all species of life.

So long as we deny the authority of the Vedic scriptures, taking them to be mythology, and instead turn to the theories of the scientists who are playing with material nature to the amazement of people in general, we will be subject again and again to errors and revisions of the truth; we will never come to know the Supreme Absolute Truth, the Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. As stated in the *Padma Purāṇa*, "No one can understand the transcendental nature of the name, form, quality and pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa through his materially contaminated senses." In his commentary to *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda writes: "A Kṛṣṇa conscious person has realized knowledge, by the grace of Kṛṣṇa, because he is satisfied with pure devotional service. By realized knowledge, one becomes perfect. . . but by academic knowledge, one is easily deluded and is confused by apparent contradictions."

Archaeologists and other scientists would do well to use their technological methods to confirm, in scientific language, the truth enunciated in the revealed scriptures. In this way, they could free themselves of error, and both they themselves and all mankind would benefit. ❧

Vṛndāvana, the highest paradise

by O.B.L. KAPOOR, Ph.D.

VṚNDĀVANA is the transcendental dwelling place (*dhāma*) of Kṛṣṇa. Being a manifestation of His intrinsic energy (*svarūpa-śakti*), it is a part of Himself.¹ It consists like Him of the attributes of existence (*sat*), intelligence (*cit*) and bliss (*ānanda*) and is different from the phenomenal world, which is a manifestation of His extrinsic energy (*māyā-śakti*). Also, since it is a manifestation of His intrinsic energy, it is inseparably related to Him. We can think neither of Kṛṣṇa without Vṛndāvana nor of Vṛndāvana without Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa eternally stays in Vṛndāvana and does not move even a step out of it (*vṛndāvanam parityajya sa kvacit naiva gacchati*).²

Just as there are infinite manifestations of Kṛṣṇa, there are infinite manifestations of His abode. For each manifestation of Kṛṣṇa there is a corresponding manifestation of His dwelling place. Since Kṛṣṇa is the highest manifestation of Bhagavān (the Personality of Godhead), His abode, Vṛndāvana, is the highest abode. Just as Kṛṣṇa is Bhagavān Himself (*svayaṁ bhagavān*) and all other manifestations of Bhagavān are manifestations of Kṛṣṇa, Vṛndāvana is the *dhāma* (supreme abode) itself (*svayaṁ dhāma*), and all other manifestations of *dhāma* are the manifestations of Vṛndāvana.³ Vṛndāvana manifests itself partly or fully according to Kṛṣṇa's manifesting Himself partly or fully. Just as each partial manifestation of Kṛṣṇa is transcendental and all-pervading (*vibhu*) even though it appears phenomenal and limited, each partial manifestation of the *dhāma* is transcendental and all-pervading, even though it appears phenomenal and limited. Even the different kinds of objects in the *dhāma*, which look so much like phenomenal objects, are transcendental (*cinmaya*).⁴ Sanātana Gosvāmī [a great authority on the Vedic scriptures]

states that each one of them is concentrated Brahman (spirit).⁵

Even though each *dhāma* is infinite and all-pervading, the *dhāmas* are said to be situated one above another. Situated above the mundane sphere, which is graded into fourteen worlds—the seven Lokas and seven Pātālas—and beyond the River Virajā, is the Brahmhaloka, or Siddhaloka, which is the residence of all the freed (*mukta*) souls (Cc. *Madhya* 19.153). Above the Brahmhaloka is the *paravyoma*, where the infinite *avatāras*, or partial manifestations of Kṛṣṇa, reside, and which is the support of infinite spiritual regions called Vaikuṅṭhas (Cc. *Ādi* 5.15). Above all these *dhāmas* is Kṛṣṇaloka (Kṛṣṇa's abode), which, according to the differences in Kṛṣṇa's pastimes (*līlās*) and associates (*parikaras*), appears in three different forms—as Dvārakā, Mathurā and Gokula (Cc. *Ādi* 5.13). Gokula, the highest of the three, is also called Vṛndāvana because Vṛndāvana is the central portion of Gokula.

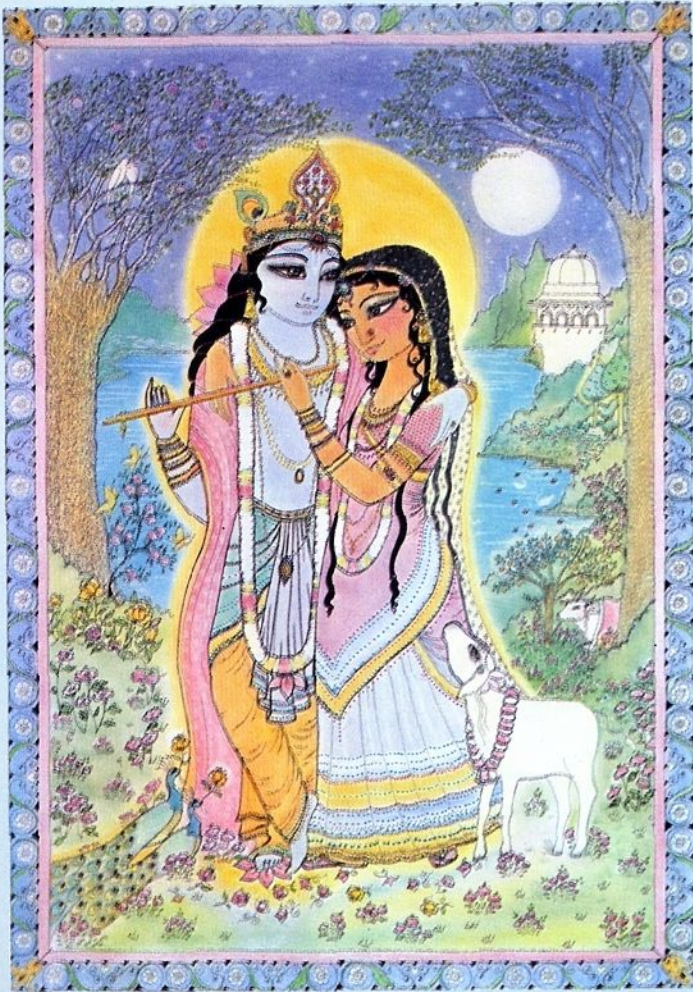
The situation of the *dhāmas* above or below each other should not, however, be taken in its literal sense. It actually implies their gradation according to their excellence (*mahimā*). The excellence of a *dhāma* depends on the degree to which it manifests the highest *dhāma*, Vṛndāvana. Thus the excellence of Siddhaloka is greater than the excellence of the phenomenal world, the excellence of *paravyoma* is greater than the excellence of Siddhaloka, the excellence of Kṛṣṇaloka is greater than the excellence of *paravyoma*, and the excellence of Gokula is greater than the excellence of all the rest of Kṛṣṇaloka. The excellence of Vṛndāvana is the greatest of all.

In the *Ṛg Veda* (1.154.6) Vṛndāvana is described as the highest *dhāma* (*paramaṁ padam*) of Viṣṇu. The *Bhāgavatam* also describes it as the highest *dhāma*. In the *Gītā* Kṛṣṇa Himself describes it as "My highest *dhāma*."⁶ It is so described because it surpasses all other *dhāmas* in grandeur (*aiśvarya*) and sweetness (*mādhurya*). But its peculiarity is that its sweetness completely eclipses its grandeur, so that everything here assumes a form sweet beyond expression. Kṛṣṇa does not appear here as God or even as a king, but as a cowherd boy with the crest of a peacock feather on His crown and a flute in His hand,

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eternally engaged in amorous pastimes with His consorts on the bank of the River Yamunā underneath the *kadamba* trees and in the green groves; laden with sweet-smelling flowers, all of which breathe an atmosphere of freedom and sweetness most congenial to Him and His consorts.

It is therefore not possible to think of Kṛṣṇa's presence anywhere else. Kṛṣṇa in Mathurā and Dvārakā is not really the Kṛṣṇa of Vṛndāvana but His partial manifestation



called Vāsudeva. When Kṛṣṇa is said to go out of Vṛndāvana, as, for example, when He goes to Mathurā at the invitation of Kāmsa, it is really His partial manifestation Vāsudeva who goes there, not Kṛṣṇa Himself, who remains unmanifest during that period in His manifest pastimes (*prakaṣa-līlā*) in Vṛndāvana.⁷

Indicating how Kṛṣṇa is inseparably connected with Vṛndāvana in His highest aspect, which fully displays His sweetness, Rādhā, to whom even a moment's separation from Kṛṣṇa is unbearable, is not satisfied to find Him in Kurukṣetra, where He appears as a king with His entourage and not as a cowherd with His flute (Cc. *Madhya* 1.72-73). She is also not satisfied to find Him in Nava-vṛndāvana, a replica of Vṛndāvana specially prepared for Her in

Dvārakā, because it lacks the atmosphere of freedom and the charm and grace so natural to Vṛndāvana and is therefore not conducive to the highest bliss. She is accustomed to experience in the company of Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana.

It is not surprising, therefore, that Uddhava, the wisest of Kṛṣṇa's associates, wishes to be a blade of grass or a creeper in Vṛndāvana so that he may be consecrated by the dust of the holy feet of the *gopīs*.⁸ Even the great Śaṅkarācārya, who regards the form and pastimes of Kṛṣṇa as creations of *māyā*, reveals a secret desire to be in Vṛndāvana so that he may sit on the bank of the Yamunā and pass each long day of his life in the twinkling of an eye, meditating on Kṛṣṇa:

*kadā vṛndārānye taraṇi-tanayā-puṇya-puline
smaran śrī-gopālaṁ nimiṣam iva nesyāmi divasān
(Abhilāṣāṣṭaka)*

The celestial Dvārakā, Mathurā and Gokula (Vṛndāvana) have their replicas on earth [in India] in the forms of the geographical Dvārakā, Mathurā and Vṛndāvana, which are known as their *prakaṣa-prakāśas*, or manifest forms. These appear as parts of the phenomenal world to our clouded vision, but are in essence identical with their celestial counterparts. Here also Kṛṣṇa is eternally present with Nanda, Yaśodā and His other associates and performs His pastimes with them as in the celestial Dvārakā, Mathurā and Vṛndāvana. If we could see them with spiritual eyes, they would without a doubt appear in their true form (Cc. *Ādi* 5.20-21). Even today, while staying in these very abodes and in their very bodies, the devotees who attain accomplishment (*siddhāvasthā*) in devotion are blessed with the vision of the divine pastimes of Kṛṣṇa with His associates; such devotees need not be transported to any other abode or level of existence. When Kṛṣṇa descends to these abodes, however, at the time of His manifest pastimes (*prakaṣa-prakāśa*), even those who are not devoted can see these pastimes in their true form. Such is the effect of the divine touch of Kṛṣṇa with these abodes, which otherwise appear phenomenal.

Besides the manifest forms of Kṛṣṇaloka, there is also an unmanifest form of it on earth that has the peculiar power of always remaining invisible; it remains on earth without touching it. Thus there are two *aprakaṣa-prakāśas* (unmanifest forms) of Kṛṣṇaloka. One is the Kṛṣṇaloka situated above *paravyoma*, which is called by various names: Goloka, Gokula, Śvetadvīpa, Vrajaloka or Vṛndāvana. The other is the invisible Kṛṣṇaloka situated on earth, which is different from the *prāpañcika*, the phenomenal Kṛṣṇaloka visible to our material eyes and actually touching the earth. It is also called Gokula or Vraja.

Rūpa Gosvāmī states in *Laghu-bhāgavatāmṛta* (1.277.78) that Goloka is a majestic manifestation (*vaibhava-prakāśa*) of Gokula, which is essentially sweet in appearance and therefore greater in excellence. As an instance of the majesty (*vaibhava*) of Goloka, he cites the *Varāha Purāṇa*, which says that the *kadamba* trees of Goloka spread out

majestically with their hundreds of branches, which is just in keeping with its *aiśvarya* (opulence), while the *kadamba* trees of Gokula are medium-sized, which is in keeping with its *mādhurya* (sweetness). A special reason why Gokula excels Goloka in sweetness is that in Goloka Kṛṣṇa is present eternally without birth, on account of which His pastimes in Goloka differ in certain respects from the sweet human aspect in which they reveal themselves in the phenomenal Gokula. *Brahma-saṁhitā* describes the pastimes of Vṛndāvana as *nara-līlā* (manlike pastimes) and those of Goloka as *deva-līlā* (Godlike pastimes). This

current, disregarding the rules and regulations of ritualistic *bhakti*. This is a further indication of the difference between the two abodes.

Sanātana seems to differ from Rūpa and Jīva in regard to both the relation between Goloka and Vṛndāvana and the means of their realization. According to him, Goloka (or rather the part of Goloka called Gokula) and the phenomenal Gokula or Vṛndāvana are identical.¹⁰ In his *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta*, Gopa Kumāra sometimes stays in Goloka and sometimes in Vṛndāvana, without being able to make out any difference between them.¹¹ According



theory is supported by the *rāsa* dance in Goloka, which Kṛṣṇa is said in *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta* to have performed on the head of Kāliya Nāga, the thousand-headed cobra, although there is no mention of this in the *Bhāgavatam*.

According to Jīva Gosvāmī also (*Gopāla-campū, Pūrva-khaṇḍa*, 19), Goloka is the majestic manifestation of Vṛndāvana. He describes Vṛndāvana as the inner side (*antar-maṇḍala*) of Goloka, and Goloka as the outer side (*bahir-maṇḍala*) of Vṛndāvana. But they are not the outer and inner side of each other in the physical sense, for it is possible to see Goloka in Vṛndāvana (because Goloka is the majestic manifestation of Vṛndāvana) but not possible to see Vṛndāvana in Goloka (*Kṛṣṇa-sandarbha*, 116). According to Rūpa and Jīva, (*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu, Tīkā* 1.4), Goloka can be attained by *vaidhī* (ritualistic) *bhakti*, but Vṛndāvana can be attained only by *rāgānuṅgā bhakti*, or *bhakti* flowing spontaneously like a

to him, both abodes can be attained only by spontaneous devotion and not by any other means.¹²

The difference between the two points of view, however, will seem negligible if we take into consideration the following points:

1. Although Sanātana Gosvāmī regards Goloka and Vṛndāvana as identical, it is clear from his *īkā* on *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta* (2,5,78-79) that Vṛndāvana is the *marmatarāṁśa* of Goloka, or the part of Goloka that supersedes the whole in excellence.

2. Sanātana also admits that the excellence of the phenomenal Vraja exceeds the excellence of Goloka at the time of the manifest pastimes (*prakaṣṭa-līlā*) of Kṛṣṇa.¹³

3. Although Rūpa and Jīva regard Goloka as the majestic manifestation of Vṛndāvana, Jīva seems to regard them as essentially identical. He establishes their identity by referring to the "*goloka eva nivasati*" text of *Brahma-*

samhitā and the “*tatraiva ramaṇārthe hi nitya-kālaṁ sa gacchati*” text of the *Ādi Purāṇa*, one of which says that Kṛṣṇa always stays in Goloka and the other that He always stays in the phenomenal Vṛndāvana, and by saying that the contradiction between them can be resolved only if the two are regarded as actually one and the same. In answer to a question regarding the *Hari-varṇśa*’s mention of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s lifting Govardhana Hill in Goloka, he clearly states that since Goloka and Gokula are identical, a pastime that took place in Gokula can always be mentioned in reference to Goloka.¹⁴

4. Regarding the means of realizing the two abodes, although Sanātana holds that it is spontaneous devotion for both, he maintains that if an aspiring devotee adopts any other means, he has a vision of Goloka but is not able to see Kṛṣṇa perform His pastimes with His associates, or if he is able to do so, he cannot himself participate in the pastimes.¹⁵

5. Viśvanātha Cakravartī states that those who wish to realize the sweetness of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa but practice ritualistic *bhakti* cannot attain Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana because their *bhakti* is not spontaneous, and they cannot attain Kṛṣṇa in Dvārakā because they do not desire to do so. Therefore they attain Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in Goloka, the majestic manifestation of Vṛndāvana.¹⁶

Thus we may conclude that there is essentially no difference between Goloka and Gokula (Vṛndāvana). Goloka is a particular manifestation of Vṛndāvana in which sweetness predominates, but not to the extent to which it predominates in Vṛndāvana. It is therefore called the majestic manifestation of Vṛndāvana. Vṛndāvana is attained by spontaneous devotion, whereas Goloka is attained by ritualistic devotion. The greater the dominance of spontaneity, the fuller the realization of Goloka’s sweetness.¹⁷ But when spontaneous devotion is pure, Goloka is realized in its highest aspect which displays sweetness fully and is called the inner side (*antar-maṇḍala*) of Goloka. In this aspect Goloka is identical with the phenomenal Vṛndāvana, and the sweetness displayed here is the same as that in the phenomenal Vṛndāvana, except for the difference caused by Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s always being present in Goloka as a young boy of tender age (*nitya-kiśora*), although in the phenomenal Vṛndāvana He takes birth and gradually attains boyhood.

The veracity of the claim that the phenomenal Vṛndāvana, which looks like any other part of the material world to our material eyes, is itself the spiritual Vṛndāvana, the highest abode, surpassing even Goloka in its excellence, may be questioned. But Śrī Caitanya and His followers are ever so emphatic in their statements about its transcendental character. Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī says that devotees who have ardent love for Kṛṣṇa are even today blessed with a vision of His divine pastimes in this very Vṛndāvana. Sanātana Gosvāmī says that Vṛndāvana is here on earth and Kṛṣṇa’s unmanifest pastimes are going on in it even now, but none except those to whom He and His devotees are kind can see it. Prabodhānanda Sarasvatī describes

how he actually sees this Vṛndāvana in its real form with all its transcendent beauty and excellence:

aho sarvoparyati vimala-vistīrṇa-mādhurya-sphurac-candra-prāyaṁ sphurati mama vṛndāvanam idam

“Oh, this Vṛndāvana of mine, stationed above every other abode! How it shines near me like a big moon in all its resplendent beauty!” (*Vṛndāvana-mahimāṁṛta*, 4.83)

No ground is thus left for any doubt that this very Vṛndāvana is the highest paradise, where Kṛṣṇa eternally revels in His spiritual pastimes. Residing here, therefore, is considered one of the most important aspects of devotional service. Prabodhānanda says that if one takes shelter of Vṛndāvana with faith and devotion, he will be blessed with a vision of the *rāsa* dance of Kṛṣṇa with His consorts even if he does not perform any other regulative worship. He concisely states his entire philosophy of Vṛndāvana in another verse, which says that to reside in Vṛndāvana is to perform the highest worship, to attain Vṛndāvana is to attain the highest end, and to realize Vṛndāvana is to realize the highest truth and the highest bliss.¹⁹ ❏

Footnotes

1. More specifically, it is the concentrated (*mūrti*) form of that aspect of *svarūpa-śakti* in which the *sandhinī-śakti*, the ground and source of all existence, predominates.
2. Cited in the *Laghu-bhāgavatāmṛta* from the *Yāmala*.
3. *vaikuṅṭhādi tadamśāṁśam svayaṁ vṛndāvanam bhuvī* (*Padma Purāṇa*, *Pātāla-khaṇḍa*, 38, 89.)
4. *vaikuṅṭhēra pṛthivyādi sakala cinmaya māyika bhūtera tathi janma nāhi haya* (*Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Ādi* 5.53)
5. *teṣāṁ rūpaṁ tattvaṁ manasāpi grahītuṁ na śakyate brahma-ghanatvāt* (*Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta*, 2,4,50, *Ṭīkā*.)
6. *yaṁ prāpya na nivartante tad dhāma paramaṁ mama* (Bg. 8.21)
7. *nityaṁ vṛndāvanāṁ nāma nitya-rāsa-rasotsavaṁ adṛśyaṁ paramaṁ guhyaṁ pūrṇa-prema-rasotsavam* (*Padma Purāṇa*, *Pātāla-khaṇḍa*, 51)
8. *āsāṁ aho caraṇa-reṇu-juṣāṁ ahaṁ syāṁ vṛndāvane kiṁ api gulma-latauśadhīnām* (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, 10,47,61)
9. Rūpa Gosvāmī, Jīva Gosvāmī, and Sanātana Gosvāmī, all contemporary followers of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, are great authorities on the science of *bhakti-yoga*.
10. *yathā krīḍāti tad-bhūmau goloke 'pi tathaiva saḥ atha aurdhvatayā bhedo 'nayoḥ kalpyeta kevalam* (*Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta*, 2,5,168)
11. *Ibid.* 2,6,374
12. *Ibid.* 2,5,172
13. *Ibid.* 2,5,96 *Ṭīkā*
14. For a fuller discussion on the subject, see Sri Manindra Nath Guha’s *Śrī Mādhava-mādhurya-maṅjuṣā*, pp. 165-66.
15. *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta*, 2,5,172 *Ṭīkā*.
16. *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, *Sādhana-bhakti-laharī*, 1,2,303 *Ṭīkā*
17. This is in accordance with the principle: *yadṛśī bhavanā yasya siddhir bhavati tadṛśī*.
18. *Vṛndāvana-mahimāṁṛta*, 17,33
19. *Ibid.* 17,85

The Bhakti Viewpoint

KṚṢṆA CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE UNIVERSITY

Professor Alton L. Becker is Associate Professor of Linguistics and Director of the Center for South and Southeastern Studies at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. He recently invited His Holiness Satsvarūpa dāsa Gosvāmī, the Editor of Back to Godhead, to address a meeting of the faculty and students of the Center. This is a record of that event.



Professor Becker: When I first informed members of the faculty that I was inviting a Hare Kṛṣṇa devotee to speak at our meeting, the response was negative. I think that often our view of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is one bordering perhaps on annoyance, or a feeling that these people are interlopers in a field that we properly academically control. And I think it's a loss, a tremendous loss, for our university and ourselves that the devotional side, the *bhakti* side, of knowledge or wisdom is something we have rejected in our university traditions for thousands of years. That we should be dispassionate, detached and sort of impersonal about learning, particularly learning of the eastern religions, has been almost a presupposition of every course and every class in college.

Many of us feel that this divorcing of the personal or devotional from learning, from wisdom, is a bad thing. And so I think we have a great deal to learn about the religions of India from people who have taken a direct, more involved and, I think, more complete and total approach to the things we read about in books.

We have with us today Satsvarūpa dāsa Gosvāmī and two other devotees who have come from Madison, Wisconsin, at my invitation to speak to us about the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. I thought what we would do today is to let them give an intro-

duction to what they are doing and then open up the meeting to questions. And so without taking any more time, let me turn the hour over to Satsvarūpa dāsa Gosvāmī.

Satsvarūpa dāsa Gosvāmī: Thank you very much, Professor Becker.

Our movement stands on the authority of the Vedic literature, which of course is studied in universities throughout the world. I am going from university to university, talking to professors and showing them our books, so I am also learning about the academic approach Professor Becker described. But we understand that the real scholars of Vedic literature are its original compiler and the *ācāryas* [teachers] who come in what is called the disciplic succession. These Vedic scriptures, like the *Vedas*, *Upaniṣads*, *Vedānta-sūtra*, *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Bhāgavata Purāna*, were enunciated, according to the evidence we get from the books themselves, by God, or the Absolute Truth. They are not ordinary literature. Of course, they can be studied for language, history, philosophy or religion—but what do they actually mean, aside from different interpretations?

Our approach is to give great respect to the *ācāryas* themselves, the compilers of the Vedic literature, for being very clear-headed and complete in their

presentation. We want to know what they have to say. We want to appreciate it without making our own interpretation.

This position actually has the greatest integrity. As Professor Becker was saying, *bhakti* is sometimes accused of not having integrity. This is what I meet when I show people *Bhagavad-gītā*. They say, "I can't use that *Bhagavad-gītā* because it says that Kṛṣṇa is God and

that one should approach Him as the supreme authority. Now, there are many other interpretations, and if I present this one to my students, I may be accused of some kind of religious sectarianism."

Some professors, however, are more academically astute. I have been inspired to talk with Professor Dimock of the University of Chicago, who has written the introduction to Swami Bhaktivedanta's *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*. He says that our approach, which is a forceful presentation of *bhakti*, is perfectly legitimate. Not only is it perfectly legitimate—it is the purport of the Vedic literature. An actual scholar of the Vedic literature must know how to understand these books from the original scholars. In *Bhagavad-gītā* [4.2] Kṛṣṇa says:

*evam paramparā-prāptam
imam rājarṣayo viduḥ
sa kāleneha mahatā
yogo naṣṭaḥ parantapa*

He gives the key to understanding this book. "The science of *yoga*," the Lord says, "was taught and passed down in a disciplic succession of teachers, and the saintly kings understood it in that way." In other words, the teachings are meant for society's leaders, so that they may train themselves in spiritual life and pass this knowledge down for

the benefit of everyone. "But in the course of time," Kṛṣṇa continues, "the succession was broken, and now I am passing this knowledge on to you." Thus in *Bhagavad-gītā* Arjuna, the disciple, becomes another recipient of this knowledge, and in the next verse Kṛṣṇa states why: "Because you are My devotee and friend." It is this devotion to Kṛṣṇa that makes one a scholar of the Vedic literature.

So who are these original scholars? I am talking about liberated souls such as Vyāsadeva, the compiler of almost all the Sanskrit scriptures, and Nārada Muni, and great sages (*ṛṣis*) like Lord Brahmā and Lord Śiva. We may consider all these people mythological, but why not simply try to see what they are presenting?

Because people are suffering in material life, limited by birth, death, disease and old age, great sages, out of compassion, have presented this literature whereby one can understand himself as eternal and free himself of all the inebrieties connected with the material body. This is the purpose of the Vedic literature. So we want to study the language, grammar and history minutely, but to this end: to appreciate how this literature can solve the problems of life.

In addition to sages like Vyāsa and Nārada Muni, we consult more recent sages like Madhva Ācārya, Rāmānuja Ācārya and Lord Caitanya, who have transmitted the meaning of the Vedic literature through an authorized disciplic succession. But people who know next to nothing about the disciplic succession more or less irreverently poke into the Vedic literatures, especially *Bhagavad-gītā*. For instance, Mahatma Gandhi made a commentary on *Bhagavad-gītā* to put forward his philosophy of *ahimsā*, nonviolence. But to do that is rather difficult because *Bhagavad-gītā* is taught on a battlefield, with Kṛṣṇa urging Arjuna to fight. The first verse begins, *dharma-kṣetre kuru-kṣetre*. Kurukṣetra is the place where the battle occurred. It's a place in India, and you can go there even today. But Gandhi says that *kuru-kṣetra* means "the body." Then the five Pāṇḍava brothers are mentioned. Gandhi says they represent

the five senses. His idea, of course, is that the battle did not actually happen. But we take it from Kṛṣṇa Himself that Kurukṣetra is an actual place where a real battle was fought. This is called the direct meaning, in contrast to the indirect meanings like Gandhi's.

Of course, the *bhakta* (devotee), the impersonalist and the so-called objective grammarian and historian all have in common the quest for knowledge. I spoke with one graduate student majoring in East Asian studies at the University of Minneapolis. I asked him, "Why are you studying this? What are you preparing for by studying?" He answered that he was not studying to make money or prepare for an occupation; the main reason was to get knowledge. Simply because the knowledge is worthwhile, it should be studied.

"We want to study the language, grammar and history minutely, but to this end: to appreciate how this literature can solve the problems of life. . . ."

This pure attitude is very nice. The objective is not grossly materialistic—not to study so that in ten years one will be making so much money. The study itself is worthwhile.

So what is that knowledge? The *Vedas* teach us that a person is not the material body. We have to enter this area of Absolute Truth if we are actually to talk about knowledge.

In *Bhagavad-gītā* [7.19], real knowledge is described:

*bahūnām janmanām ante
jñānavān mām prapadyate
vāsudevaḥ sarvaṃ iti
sa mahātmā sudurlabhaḥ*

Real knowledge is knowledge of the Absolute Truth, the transcendental source of everything, which is beyond all speculation. The *Vedānta-sūtra* begins this inquiry. *Athāto brahmajijñāsā*: "What is the Absolute Truth?" The next code states, *janmādy asya yataḥ*: "The Absolute Truth is that from which everything is coming."

Outside the university or inside, if you can find that Absolute Truth—whether by research, by chanting or by reading books—if you can understand where everything is coming from, who you are, and how you are different from the material world, then your knowledge is perfect.

We should not study Vedic culture as if it were a collection of quaint tribal customs, thinking, "They perform their death-rites like this, and they have this strange belief about God and the supernatural." Rather, each of us requires knowledge of his own position. I who am studying this book—what is my solution to death? The Vedic literature teaches us how to be free of death. The *Vedas* actually give us information, as human beings, how to realize our blissful transcendental nature.

In stressing this aspect, the translations and commentaries of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda have been appreciated by such an esteemed scholar as Professor Dimock to be actually hitting the nail on the head. We want to cooperate with scholars and educators in distributing some of these books to serious students. This spring, the University of Minnesota is offering a course called "Kṛṣṇa Through the Ages." Of course, the professor, Dr. Tapp, takes the approach that Kṛṣṇa is someone mythical, but at least the man appreciates that our *Kṛṣṇa Book* is a very strong presentation of Kṛṣṇa as someone real. And students will see that this is a dynamic presentation, not another dead study. Therefore Professor Tapp is using this book as required reading, and he also wants to include *The Nectar of Devotion*, a summary study of a famous book by Rūpa Gosvāmī, a disciple of Lord Caitanya, about the science of *bhakti*.

I spoke to another professor at the University of Minnesota, Professor Kopf, who is studying Vedic literature from a historical point of view. He is very perplexed because according to archaeological records there was no society further back than three thousand years ago; yet *Bhagavad-gītā*, according to Lord Kṛṣṇa, dates back much further. So he took other books,

but he was doubtful about *Bhagavad-gītā*. But when I got to Chicago and met Professor Dimock, he said that this professor had called him up and asked, “What about this *Bhagavad-gītā* by Swami Bhaktivedanta?” And he said, “Yes, it’s excellent. You should take it.”

We are not money-making book publishers, nor are we sectarian religionists trying to bring prayer books to people. That may have some value, but we are teaching knowledge of a higher value than the sentimental or sectarian. We are therefore presenting a humble plea for scholars and educators to examine our books seriously and try to use them to promote a proper understanding of what Vedic literature actually is.

Our meeting is short. If there are any questions, we would like to discuss them.

Question: There is a part of the mythical body of literature about Kṛṣṇa in the *Mahābhārata* where He is a *kṣatriya* [warrior] and assists the Pāṇḍavas by rather tricky means. People therefore sometimes question Kṛṣṇa’s character. I was wondering if you thought these things preceded the development of Kṛṣṇa as a prophet.

Satsvarūpa dāsa Gosvāmī: Just see. You have one understanding—that Kṛṣṇa is devious, practically immoral—but I have the understanding that Kṛṣṇa is all good and that He is actually the God of the Jewish, Christian and Mohammedan religions. Of course, we have different teachers. You have read some books, but I can only tell you the version I have heard from my spiritual master in disciplic succession. That is the version of Kṛṣṇa Himself and the version of the *ācāryas* within the Vedic culture. According to them, interpretations considering Kṛṣṇa an ordinary human being or mythical hero have no importance.

When I was in England last summer, a famous professor, Professor Zaehner of Oxford University, gave a talk there in which he said that Kṛṣṇa is immoral. He cited some murderer, Charles Manson, and said that he was following Kṛṣṇa’s teachings. This kind of talk is actually very offensive to one who follows *Bhagavad-gītā*. But you are

also asking why Kṛṣṇa was on a battlefield—a scene of violence—and advocating violence.

For the answer, you have to go to *Mahābhārata*. But one should also understand that Kṛṣṇa is an *avatāra*: He is the Absolute Truth personified, not an ordinary person. When He comes into the material world, He may act as a *kṣatriya*, but He is not within the conditioning of this material world. And when He does something, no one is affected for evil. For instance, when Kṛṣṇa killed or Arjuna killed under Kṛṣṇa’s direction, whoever was personally killed in that way gained eternal liberation to the spiritual world. Moreover, the battle was arranged just to annihilate miscreants. Kṛṣṇa says, “I come in age after age to annihilate the

“Kṛṣṇa is the all-good Personality of Godhead. . . If you consider Him an ordinary man, you cannot understand Him.”

miscreants.” At the time of the Battle of Kurukṣetra, the Pāṇḍavas had been thrown out of their rightful kingdom by Duryodhana and his brothers, and Kṛṣṇa wanted Arjuna to fight for the throne and justly rule the people. It was not a political war like those nowadays.

You ask why Kṛṣṇa was using tricky means. Once Kṛṣṇa asked His devotee Yudhiṣṭhira to lie to Droṇācārya by saying that his son was dead because He knew that this would discourage Droṇācārya. Yudhiṣṭhira at first hesitated. He said, “I can’t tell a lie; I am a moral man.” But actually authorities have analyzed that this somewhat diminished his stature as a truly moral man because he was hesitating to follow instructions from the Personality of Godhead. Kṛṣṇa is the all-good Personality of Godhead, and whatever He does is for the ultimate liberation of those with whom He comes in contact. If you consider Him an ordinary man, you cannot understand Him. He Himself says this in *Bhagavad-gītā*:

*avajānanti mām mūḍhā
mānuṣīm tanum āśritam
param bhāvam ajānanto
mama bhūta-maheśvaram*

“Fools deride Me when I descend in the human form. They do not know My transcendental nature and My supreme dominion over all that be.” [Bg.9.11]

Question: You have quoted repeatedly from Sanskrit. Does *Bhagavad-gītā* translate effectively into English?

Satsvarūpa dāsa Gosvāmī: Yes. The Kṛṣṇa conscious devotees are all learning *Bhagavad-gītā*, and yet we are not Sanskrit scholars. But the teachings have been so effective that we have completely taken to this way of life. I was just talking to a very nice English professor here, Sheridan Baker, who is helping us edit our *Back to Godhead* magazine. He was talking about Thoreau and *Walden*. We noted that Thoreau had great appreciation for *Bhagavad-gītā*. Emerson also appreciated it, and so did Einstein. There have also been many others who appreciated it. But no one became a devotee of Kṛṣṇa until these English translations by Swami Bhaktivedanta and his personal demonstration of devotion to Kṛṣṇa. So his translations have been very effective. There are now thousands of Kṛṣṇa conscious devotees.

Question: Do you, in your activities, ever have to face a believing Christian?

Satsvarūpa dāsa Gosvāmī: A believing Christian? Very rarely. We very rarely meet any believing Christians. [laughter]

Question: I didn’t mean to be cynical about Christianity. I just meant that you base your religion on the idea that these texts reveal the truth. Now the question has to arise in arguing with a Christian why you believe these texts reveal the truth and not their texts. And my question is how you would answer that.

Satsvarūpa dāsa Gosvāmī: Well, the explanation our spiritual master has given is that not only the Bible but the Koran and all bona fide scriptures differ according to three different principles—time, place and the persons taught. An expert religionist can make the adjustments. For example, in the Mohammedan religion there is an injunction that no man should sleep with

his mother. So we understand that since this was being stressed, the people must have been very degraded; they must have been doing that. Also, "Thou shalt not kill." Only murderers need to be advised not to do it. So the Absolute Truth is contained in all scriptures, but there are different levels of spiritual culture and information about what God is. The example is given that a small pocket dictionary and an unabridged dictionary are both valid, but the unabridged dictionary has more. So if one wants to know more than "God is great," he can consult the Vedic literature. But if a student, say a fourth-grade arithmetic student, criticizes, "Oh, in calculus they are learning all sorts of nonsense that we never learned about," then he is wrong.

Question: What the Christian claims precisely is that his Bible is above your scripture, and my question is how you argue with him about the idea that yours is above his.

Satsvarūpa dāsa Gosvāmī: We don't get much description of the Personality of Godhead from the Bible. The Christian does not know much about the nature of the spiritual world or the activities there or how to engage in *bhakti-yoga*. But that is elaborately described in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

Question: I have read that in fact the Kṛṣṇa conscious movement has cornered the incense market and is starting real estate speculation in New York. Now do those profits go down to the members, or where is the profit going? You said you weren't money-making and you weren't book publishing, but you seem to be in book publishing, and I have read that in fact there is a lot of money-making going on. I was just interested in who handles that.

Satsvarūpa dāsa Gosvāmī: Where is all the money going? We are spending it all. We just put in a printing order for over \$500,000 worth of books; we are always printing books. Our members don't receive any salaries. There is not someone off in India or Monte Carlo who has all the Kṛṣṇa money and is living it up. The money is being spent for our projects—for buildings, for our active food distribu-

tion program in India in our Mayapur, Bombay and Calcutta centers, and mainly for printing books. We distribute our books practically at what they cost us, and whatever profit we make goes back into producing more books.

We are a very book conscious society. We feel that the most effective way to spread this truth is to present it in literature. In New York we are trying to buy a building to use as a headquarters. We are not speculating, looking for land to make money. But, nevertheless, money-making is all right, provided it is in Kṛṣṇa's service. There is one impersonalist philosopher who is said to have been so detached from material life that if anyone offered him money, as an automatic reflex his hand would turn away from it. But if you

**"We support those boys
and girls who are out all
day distributing books. . .
They have dedicated
themselves to spreading
Kṛṣṇa consciousness. . ."**

offer a Vaiṣṇava (devotee) money, he will at once take it; and if you give him a million dollars, he will come back the next day to ask for more. Because he sees that everything is Kṛṣṇa's energy and should be engaged in Kṛṣṇa's service.

Question: Do you have some distinction between laymen and non-laymen?

Satsvarūpa dāsa Gosvāmī: Yes. To become a formal disciple, one must follow four rules: no meat eating, no illicit sex, no gambling and no intoxication. If one does that, and if he also chants the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* a certain minimum number of times daily, he is considered a "Hare Kṛṣṇa person."

Question: I am not very concerned about the money aspect of it. You were speaking before about a humble plea for knowledge, and I feel very good about that. But the aspect of your group that most of us see on the street is considerably more pushy and considerably more offensive to me, and I

would consider that a betrayal of what you are doing. Yet that is presumably done within the same organization.

Satsvarūpa dāsa Gosvāmī: We support those boys and girls who are out all day distributing books. They are very great workers. You are appreciating our humble presentation, but our presentation is inferior to theirs. Theirs will have more effect. They distribute so many books, and they are so selfless—they don't keep any profit.

This is a Vedic tradition. Formerly a disciple spent from morning to night collecting something for the spiritual master, and at night he would just lie down on the floor and take a little rice and think that austerity was nice. Now, of course, the public is not interested in giving alms for a spiritual cause. But even though society is so materialistic, the devotees are out there, and all I can ask is that you forgive these disciples if you are offended by them, because actually they have no intent other than to give you this knowledge and call attention to it. Humanity is generally asleep, and they are trying to distribute this knowledge. It's their only desire. And if you can take a book or talk with them, you will see they are not actually offensive people; they are very nice. They are more humble than our formal presentation because they are doing more to spread actual spiritual culture than you in your classroom or me talking here. They have dedicated themselves to spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the American culture. That's very brave of them. One can go door to door in India, and just by seeing a devotee in saffron, people will offer respect. But we wear saffron and—just the opposite. Yet rather than be frustrated and retire, the devotees have persisted. And many people, when they stop and understand what's happening, like seeing devotees in the street persistently chanting and trying to distribute these books. If it were a bogus movement, if it were something harmful, then it would be offensive. But they are not cheating anyone. Their understanding is that everything belongs to Kṛṣṇa, and they are trying to get something or someone into the service of Kṛṣṇa again. ❧

THE LOS ANGELES KṚṢṆA CONSCIOUS COMMUNITY

The Perfection of Renunciation

Text by **Karuṇāsindhu dāsa** Photos by **Muralīvadana dāsa**

HIGH IN THE HIMALAYAN MOUNTAINS, a naked *yogī* sits in a cave, on a deerskin, meditating on the Supreme Truth. He eats nothing, sees no one and goes nowhere, for he is practicing renunciation of the material world.

In an entirely different setting, in Los Angeles, California, a community of three hundred Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees lives in a suburban neighborhood sometimes called the "Hare Kṛṣṇa quarter," which includes a dozen offices, four apartment buildings, a book warehouse, a stately temple and a large factory. Men and women, many with young children, they dance, sing, eat sumptuously, work hard and handle large sums of money—yet surprisingly enough, they also claim to practice renunciation of the material world. Even more astounding, if we examine the positions of the recluse meditator and the society of devotees, we find that according to the Vedic scriptures the lives of the Kṛṣṇa conscious devotees are more renounced, for everything the devotees do is for the satisfaction of Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

While taking a tour of the Los Angeles community (which, for its opulence, he named "New Dvārakā" after Lord Kṛṣṇa's celestial capital city on earth), Śrīla Prabhupāda, the spiritual master of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement, once recited this verse from the Vedic scriptures:

*anāsaktasya viṣayān
yathārham upayuñjataḥ
nirbandhaḥ kṛṣṇa-sambandhe
yuktaṁ vairāgyam ucyate
prāpañcikatayā buddhyā
hari-sambandhi-vastunaḥ
mumukṣubhiḥ parityāgo
vairāgyaṁ phalgu kathyate*

"When one is not attached to anything but at the same time accepts everything in relation to Kṛṣṇa, one is rightly situated above possessiveness. On the other hand, one who rejects everything, without knowledge of its relationship to Kṛṣṇa, is not as complete in his renunciation." (*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, 1.2.255-256) Śrīla Prabhupāda asked that this quote be written on a sign and hung in a prominent place in the temple, for it pinpoints the essence of the Los Angeles temple's spiritual success: that all its activities and paraphernalia are directed not for anyone's selfish sense gratification but for the transcendental pleasure of the Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa.



Karuṇāsindhu dāsa, a former fine arts student at the University of Washington, joined the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement in 1970. He and his wife have been members of the New Dvārakā community ever since. Their five-year-old daughter is a student at ISKCON's Gurukula school in Dallas, Texas.

Muralīvadana dāsa, a graduate of Maryland Institute of Art, also joined the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement in 1970. He and his wife are also residents of New Dvārakā.



Temple Worship

The entire Los Angeles community of devotees gathers for *kīrtana* (congregational chanting of the names of God) at 4:30 every morning. According to Vedic scriptures, to rise one and a half hours before sunrise and attend the *kīrtana* ceremony starts the day with potent spiritual inspiration. Men on one side, women on the other, in two rows the length of the temple, the devotees face the three closed doors that house the holy Deities. The women wear saris; the men, dhotis (robes)—white if they are married, saffron if they're not. Both men and women wear white clay *tilaka* marks on their foreheads, signifying that they are devotees of Kṛṣṇa.

The chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa begins, accompanied by hand cymbals and drums. After a few minutes of chanting, the *pūjārī* (altar attendant) rings a bell and then opens the three large doors, revealing the Deities, chief of whom are Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa (shown here).

The *pūjārī* then offers the Deities a flame, handkerchief, conch shell and other articles one after another in large circles, as the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa increases its tempo, the devotees swaying rhythmically from side to side, a few small children dancing with their parents. On the marble altars, artfully arranged with flowers, vases and candles, three silver trays of milk and sweets present the first of six daily offerings to the Deities, who are dressed in silks and ornaments. Singing and dancing, the devotees worship with rapt attention. But, one might ask, who are the Deities?

Śrīla Prabhupāda has clearly explained the Deity worship in his books and lectures. "You cannot approach or see Kṛṣṇa with your present blunt senses and contaminated desires," he writes. "But Kṛṣṇa is so merciful that He appears before you in the form of the Deity so that you may see Him and render loving service. Everything is Kṛṣṇa's energy, and so He can appear in this form if He likes."

The form of Kṛṣṇa in the temple with Rādhārāṇī, His eternal consort and pleasure energy, is not a mere idol fashioned from imagination, nor is the worship in the temple a whimsical or concocted process. The Vedic scriptures describe in detail the Lord's form and how to carve or paint the form of the Deity. Since the Supreme Lord is absolute, His form is not different from Him. Thus the form of the Lord in the temple is an authorized incarnation of the Lord who can accept the loving service of His devotees.

Śrīla Prabhupāda often gives the example of a mailbox. The post office establishes boxes for the deposit of mail, and because these boxes are authorized, putting mail in the box is as good as putting it in the post office itself. Similarly, because the Vedic scriptures authorize



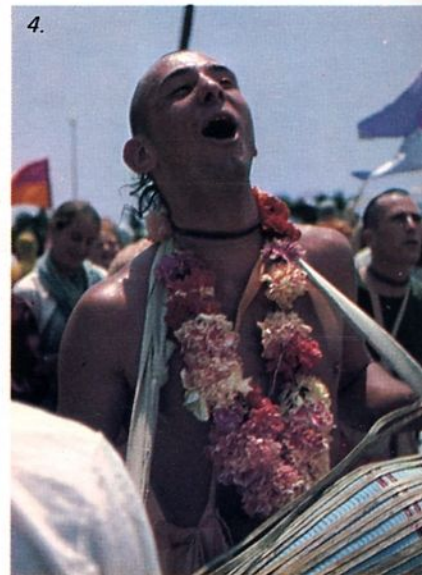
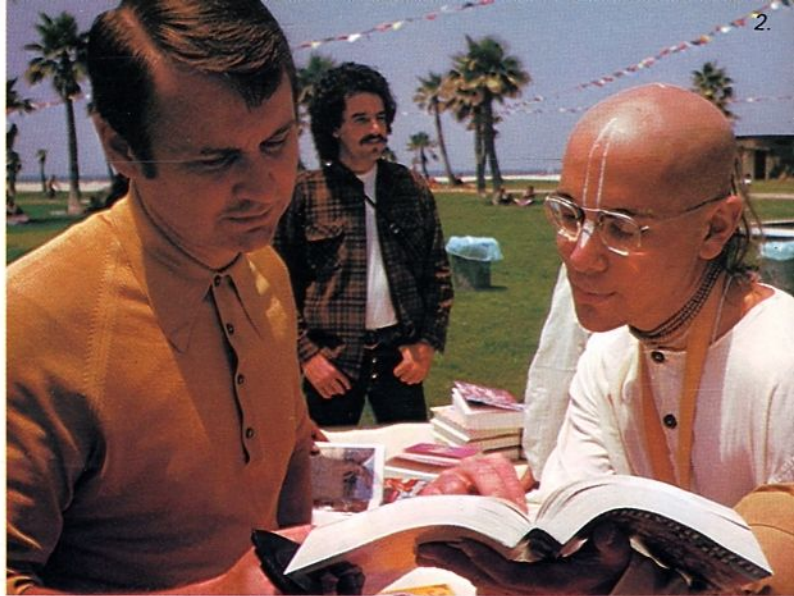
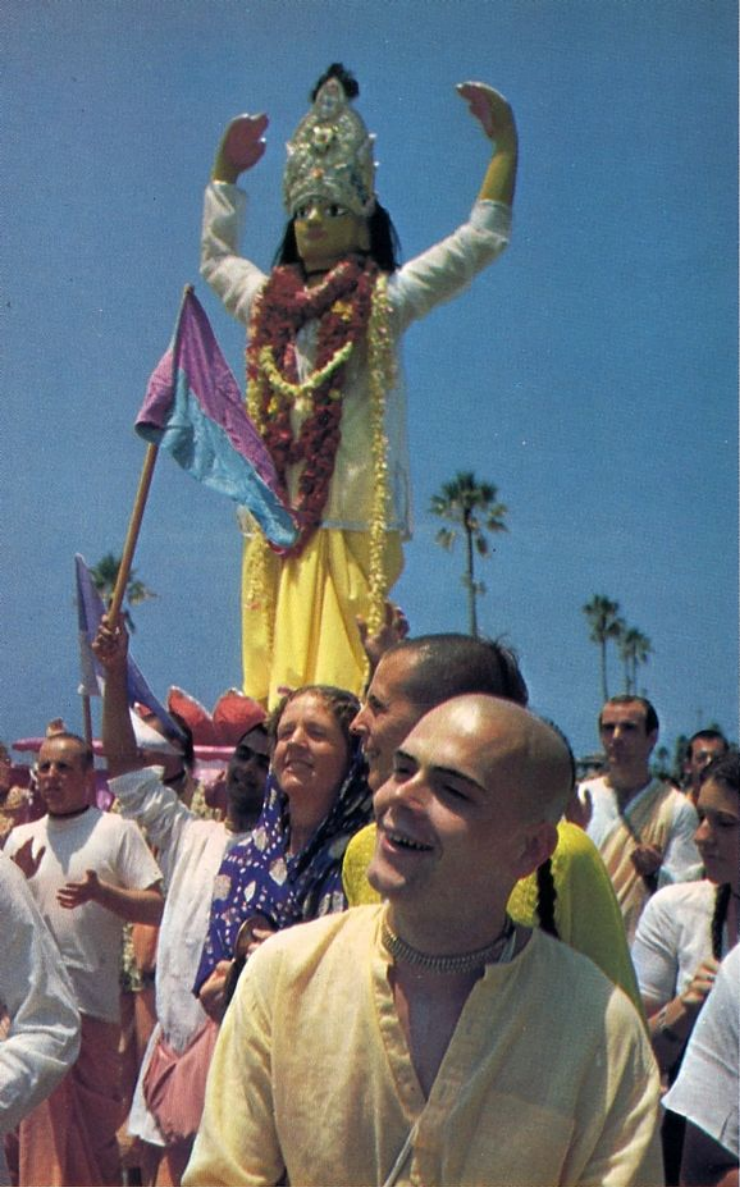
Top left, To attend the *kīrtana* ceremony before sunrise starts the day with potent spiritual inspiration. *Top right*, Śilavatī dāśī, head seamstress at New Dvārakā, sews clothes for the Deities. A true devotee is always engaged in the service of the Supreme Lord. *Above*, The *pūjārī* offers the Deities a flame and other articles one after another. *Opposite page*, The smiling, all-attractive Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities are the center of attention for the New Dvārakā community. The Deity is not an idol; the Lord makes Himself visible in the Deity form.

the form of the Lord in the temple as a fully potent incarnation of the Lord, to worship the Deity in the temple is to worship the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself.

This facility to worship the Lord's form is a great benediction because it enables one to serve the Lord in a personal way and fix one's mind upon the Lord's personal features. The vital principle of Deity worship is to fix one's mind upon the form of the Lord and consider oneself His humble servant.

In this consciousness, the devotees in New Dvārakā consider themselves humble servants of the Deity. Thinking of Him as the owner and controller of everything, the devotees depend upon His mercy and act only to please Him. By centering all their activities around Kṛṣṇa in this way, the devotees create the blissful spiritual atmosphere of devotional service that is the essence of New Dvārakā.





New Dvārakā's Distribution of Kṛṣṇa Consciousness

Worship is not confined to the temple. Since the Supreme Lord is all-pervading, His devotees go everywhere to preach His glories for the benefit of those who have forgotten Him. Although New Dvārakā sponsors presentations of Kṛṣṇa consciousness in high schools and colleges in the Los Angeles area and also holds daily classes and a Sunday festival at the temple, its most important programs for spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness are *saṅkīrtana* and the distribution of Kṛṣṇa conscious books.

The most visible of the temple's activities is *saṅkīrtana*, the public congregational chanting of the holy name of God, as in the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*—Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. The Vedic scriptures recommend this chanting as the most effective means

for spreading spiritual consciousness in the modern age. The *Garuḍa Purāṇa* gives the following comparison: "The state of conditioned life in the material world is like the unconsciousness of a man bitten by a snake, for both these unconscious states can be ended by the sound of a *mantra*."

Commenting on this verse, our spiritual master explains: "When a man is snake-bitten he does not die immediately, but first becomes unconscious and remains in a comatose condition. Anyone who is in the material world is also sleeping, as he is ignorant of his actual self or his actual duty and his relationship with God. So materialistic life means that one is bitten by the snake of *māyā*, illusion, and thus, without Kṛṣṇa consciousness, he is almost dead. Now the so-called dead man bitten by a snake can be brought back again to life by the chanting of some *mantra*. There are expert chanters of these *mantras* who can perform this feat. Similarly, one can be brought back into Kṛṣṇa consciousness from the deadly unconscious state of material life by hearing of the *mahā-mantra*: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/

1. Devotees chant the mahā-mantra at joyous Hare Kṛṣṇa festivals in the parks and beaches of Los Angeles. 2. Rāmeśvara dāsa takes great pleasure in showing an interested gentleman one of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books. Devotees in this way distribute millions of Kṛṣṇa conscious books every year. 3. Kṛṣṇakānti dāsa and his associates of Golden Avatar Productions prepare a tape for a radio broadcast. Their motto: "Hearing is the beginning of understanding." 4. Natural joy illuminates the face of a Kṛṣṇa conscious devotee.

Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare."

Understanding the potency of the mahā-mantra, new Dvārakā's devotees go to the busiest areas of Los Angeles to spread this benediction. As their other duties allow, some devotees go out chanting once a week, some once a day, and some every day, all day long. This chanting not only purifies those who chant but also those who hear, be they conscious of its potency or not. Thus one who hears the mahā-mantra gradually becomes eligible to understand Kṛṣṇa consciousness and engage in the devotional service of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Since the background for this chanting is a uniquely detailed, clear, scientific and therefore convincing philosophy of spiritual consciousness, the Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees understand that their most effective preaching is the distribution of their spiritual master's books, which convey this philosophy as originally enunciated by the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself.

New Dvārakā distributes Kṛṣṇa conscious books not only locally but on a nationwide level, for devotees in New Dvārakā arrange the shipment of books to other Kṛṣṇa conscious centers throughout the United States. According to the devotees who manage New Dvārakā's book warehouse, last year the warehouse served as a distribution center for five hundred tons of books. New Dvārakā is also the distribution center for *Back to Godhead*, which now has a monthly circulation of almost half a million copies. The money collected on sales of books and magazines goes for printing more, and thus the distribution is always increasing.

Locally, devotees distribute Kṛṣṇa conscious literature personally, hand to hand, to interested readers. The chanting party distributes many books, and other devotees, who go out individually with big bags full of books, distribute many more. According to Rāmeśvara dāsa, one of the chief architects of New Dvārakā's book distribution program, "These book distributors are the greatest friends of mankind because they are dedicated to spreading knowledge and giving relief and the joyful life everyone is seeking. They don't take vacations; they are always thinking of how to distribute this knowledge."

Some devotees are so eager to distribute Kṛṣṇa conscious books that they do it all day long. Tripurāri dāsa, one of New Dvārakā's most enthusiastic distributors, explains: "Every time I give someone a book, I feel that I've pleased my spiritual master. Prabhupāda came here to distribute this science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness to everyone, and the duty of the disciple is to serve and assist the spiritual master. By pleasing God's devotees one can

please God. So when I try to help the mission of my spiritual master, I know I have pleased Kṛṣṇa too. Whoever gets a book gets the highest knowledge, and he can be really joyful."

Adding still another dimension to New Dvārakā's programs, Golden Avatar Productions makes the philosophy and chanting of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement available on the radio, on records and on tape cassettes. Started two years ago by Kṛṣṇakānti dāsa, an electronics engineer who worked for six years with NBC television before joining the New Dvārakā community, Golden Avatar has distributed more than 25,000 tape cassettes and produces a weekly radio show, broadcast by eighty stations throughout the United States.

~ Brahmacārīs ~

Everyone in New Dvārakā serves Kṛṣṇa, but how each devotee does so depends upon his skills and leanings and also upon his social status. A Vedic community divides its members into four social groups: *brahmacārīs* (students), *gṛhasthas* (householders), *vānaprasthas* (the retired) and *sannyāsīs* (the renounced). Each of these groups has different duties.



The duty of a brahmacārī is to engage always in hearing and speaking about Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Lord.

Since the duty of a *vānaprastha*—a married man who wishes to develop detachment and retire from family life—is to travel for purification, and the duty of a *sannyāsī*—a renounced ascetic—is to travel and preach, there are no *vānaprasthas* and *sannyāsīs* in residence at New Dvārakā; all the devotees are *brahmacārīs* and *gṛhasthas*.

The *brahmacārīs* are unmarried Kṛṣṇa conscious students. The Vedic culture does not allow an unmarried boy to dally in sexual affairs, for such intrigues simply create agitation, both for oneself and for others, and thus stand in the way of spiritual progress. According

to the Vedic system, one who feels a need for the companionship of a woman should marry and live as a peaceful and responsible gentleman, and one who does not feel such a need should forget about sex altogether and concentrate his energy in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Brahmacārī life, therefore, is a life of freedom from sex—and the entanglements that come with it. A *brahmacārī* need not worry about how to get food, money, a home and security to keep a wife and family happy. He keeps only the bare necessities of life (which Kṛṣṇa provides very easily), and he can go anywhere at a moment's notice. Thus *brahmacārī* life is simple and carefree.

Since a *brahmacārī* can engage full time in cultivating Kṛṣṇa consciousness for his own spiritual advancement and spreading it for the benefit of others, the *brahmacārīs* constitute New Dvārakā's main preaching force. Most of the book distributors and members of the chanting party are *brahmacārīs*, like Rāmeśvara and Tripurāri. New Dvārakā also has two groups of three *brahmacārīs* who travel all around the United States in vans, distributing Kṛṣṇa conscious books and telling people about Kṛṣṇa. They take great pleasure in traveling and preaching.

The *brahmacārīs* who are not out on the road live in the main temple building at New Dvārakā. (The unmarried girls live in similar quarters across the street, and married couples live in apartments in the neighborhood.) Living and working together in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, the *brahmacārīs* form a closely knit family of Godbrothers. "This is an ideal life for spiritual advancement," says Gopavṇḍapāla dāsa, the *brahmacārī* who serves as New Dvārakā's temple coordinator, organizing the temple's daily routine work: "Some people may think *brahmacārī* life very austere and dry, but actually it is full of nectar." Gopavṇḍapāla, twenty-three years old, was born in California. He lived in various *yoga* communes prior to joining the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. "Because of the powerful cleansing effect and the joy of the chanting," he says, "I was curious to learn more about the philosophy." Since he was unmarried and wanted to join the temple, he became a *brahmacārī* at New Dvārakā. "We do not give up anything through artificial repression," he notes. "But we get more enjoyment from serving Kṛṣṇa than from material life. One can stay a *brahmacārī* if he likes, or one can marry. The main thing is to become Kṛṣṇa conscious."

Householder Life in New Dvārakā

According to the strict rules of most genuine *yoga* systems, including *haṭha-yoga*, *jñāna-yoga* and *sāṅkhya-yoga*, women are not allowed to participate, and men must renounce all family ties. But *bhakti-yoga*, Kṛṣṇa consciousness, is so powerful in its purification that its

Right, The New Dvārakā householder community. Bottom left, Mothers and daughters outside of the Los Angeles temple. Even a child can become Kṛṣṇa conscious and thus participate in the highest system of *yoga*. Bottom right, If one is fully Kṛṣṇa conscious, he can make his home very happy simply by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

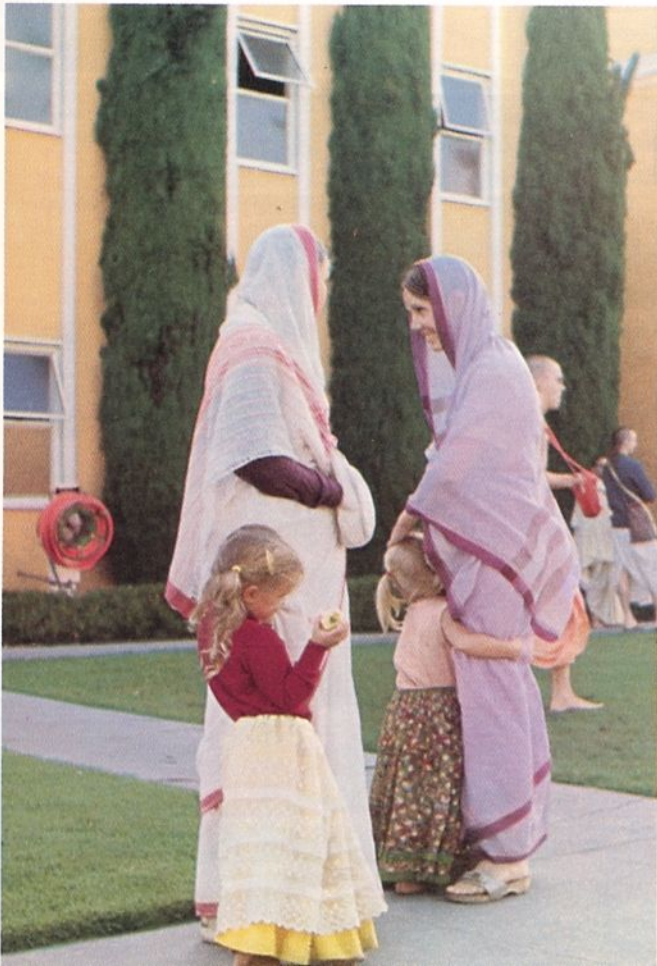
full benefits are available to renounced celibates and to married men and women as well.

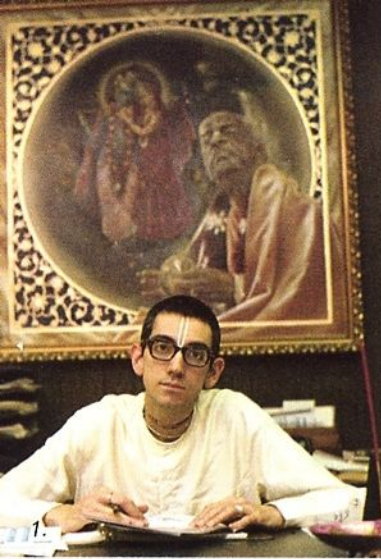
"The Vedic scriptures," Śrīla Prabhupāda explains, "describe two kinds of householders: *gṛhasthas* and *gṛhamedhīs*. A *gṛhastha* is a married man who lives with wife and children, but transcendently—to realize the Supreme Truth. *Gṛhamedhīs*, however, live only for their families and friends; they are envious of others. Please do not be a *gṛhamedhī*." Disregarding spiritual culture, *gṛhamedhīs* spend their days either making money or spending it, and their nights they spend sleeping or enjoying sex. They depend upon their families, friends, communities and nations, not realizing that these are armies of fallible soldiers who cannot protect them from death. Thus the *gṛhamedhīs*, in the final issue, are failures, because they die without realizing the ultimate goal of life.

A Kṛṣṇa conscious householder is a *gṛhastha* who lives for transcendental progress, not for envious competition with others for artificial opulence. Most of New Dvārakā's married couples live in comfortable apartments in four nearby buildings owned by the Society, but their lives revolve as much around the temple as around their homes, for the center of their lives is Kṛṣṇa. Since marriage affords a less austere, physically more comfortable existence than the life of a *brahmacārī*, some devotees find it easier to make Kṛṣṇa conscious progress in marriage than in *brahmacārī* life. In return for the pleasures of being a householder, a married man takes the responsibility for both the spiritual welfare and material comfort of his family. Thus New Dvārakā's householders all work at paying jobs—some within the New Dvārakā community, others outside. Generally the men who work outside give half of their income to supporting the temple's programs.

In Kṛṣṇa consciousness, husband and wife assist each other in serving Kṛṣṇa, and they raise children in *bhakti-yoga*. Suśarmā dāsī, a married girl at New Dvārakā, says, "Our children, five years old and two years old, are automatically learning spiritual principles, and this is one big thing that drew us here. We were trying to do meditation and *yoga*, and it always had to be when the children were asleep. We couldn't include them in it. But even a child can chant Hare Kṛṣṇa."

"This is a practical spiritual community," comments Umāpati dāsa, a 36-year-old householder who has settled in New Dvārakā with his wife, Ilāvātī, and who works as a computer programmer for New Dvārakā's Spiritual Sky Scented Products Company. "Regardless of one's occupation or social position, anyone can engage in Kṛṣṇa consciousness and achieve the highest perfection of life."





~ Spiritual Sky ~

“By the way you are managing this business,” stated a letter from Śrīla Prabhupāda to Jayatīrtha dāsa Adhikārī, President of the Spiritual Sky Scented Products Company, “I can understand that you are completely surrendering to Kṛṣṇa.” Spiritual Sky, whose headquarters are also a part of the Los Angeles Kṛṣṇa conscious community, is a commercial enterprise organized by the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement to gather funds for use in spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Spiritual Sky is growing quickly, having doubled its size each year for the past four years and looking to double it again in the coming year. The company markets and manufactures incense, oils, shampoo, soap and other scented products. “It may seem contradictory or hard to understand that we are engaged in business dealings but still act on the spiritual platform,” says Jayatīrtha, the company’s slender 24-year-old president. “But it’s simply a matter of whose account you are working for. We are working for Kṛṣṇa. The revenue from this business is not accumulating in someone’s bank account or being used to buy big, luxurious houses or something like that. Everyone works here as a volunteer, and their incidental expenses for living are provided. We all live simply, and it works nicely.”

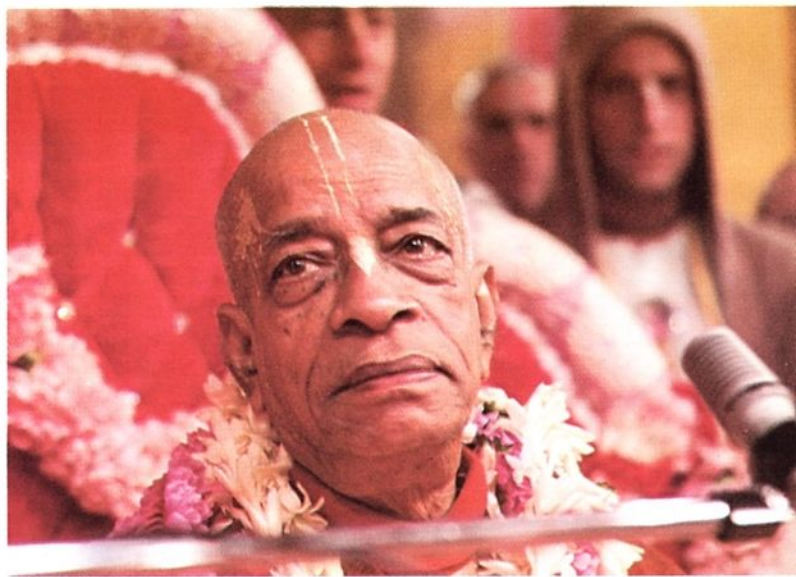
“We’re not bound up by any of this work,” explains Raṇadhīra dāsa, the company’s marketing vice-president. “Kṛṣṇa assures us in *Bhagavad-gītā* that anyone who surrenders the fruits of his labors to Him is free from implication in materialistic life. That’s the secret of Kṛṣṇa consciousness: work done for Kṛṣṇa’s pleasure.” He elaborates further: “Of course, that’s not a whimsical principle. We are taking guidance from our spiritual master and scripture. You can’t concoct a way for serving God and pleasing Him just by doing anything that pleases *you* and *saying* it pleases Him. On the other hand, the process isn’t dry; since Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme and we’re His parts and parcels, our pleasure is included in Kṛṣṇa’s pleasure.”

1. Jayatīrtha dāsa Adhikārī, President of Spiritual Sky. 2. Spiritual Sky’s computer prints out the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra while not engaged doing inventory. 3. Marketing Manager Raṇadhīra dāsa handles daily affairs of business and finance in transcendental Kṛṣṇa consciousness. 4. The computer center at Spiritual Sky. Everything can be used in Kṛṣṇa’s service. 5. Devotees in Spiritual Sky’s warehouse, who ship out almost 1 million sticks of incense per month, set a perfect example by thinking of Kṛṣṇa while engaged in their work. 6. Spiritual Sky is the largest incense manufacturer in the United States. All its profits go for the service of the Supreme Lord.

Jayatīrtha notes that although Spiritual Sky may appear just like any other enterprise, there are two fundamental differences. The first is that the Company uses its profits only to spread the teachings of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and the second is that the mentality of the staff is transcendental, for it is fixed upon Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

“We are practical spiritualists,” says Jayatīrtha. “Funds and organization are useful—even jet aircraft and technology can be useful if employed properly. We do not deny these things by artificially renouncing them; we simply use them for advancing spiritual understanding.”

~ The Spiritual Master ~



The devotees are confident about taking on so many apparently worldly activities in New Dvārakā because all these activities are authorized by a bona fide spiritual master, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. One cannot take on any spiritual activity by one’s whimsical concoction. One must receive guidance from a bona fide spiritual master.

All the programs in New Dvārakā—from temple worship, to book distribution, to the operation of Spiritual Sky—take place under Śrīla Prabhupāda’s sanction. The essence of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is “always to remember Kṛṣṇa and never to forget Kṛṣṇa.” The spiritual master engages his disciples in such a way that they may always be able to think of the Supreme Lord while engaged in their various duties.



Photo: Bali Mardan dāsa Gosvāmī

Śrīla Prabhupāda travels all over the world, preaching in Nairobi, London, Paris, Sydney, Tokyo, Bombay, Mexico City, and all over the United States, but he spends at least three months a year in New Dvārakā, where he is able to concentrate on translating the Vedic scriptures into English.

In Los Angeles, Śrīla Prabhupāda rises early and goes on a morning walk in a nearby park or at Venice Beach by the Pacific Ocean, all the while speaking to his disciples about Kṛṣṇa conscious philosophy. Then he comes back to give the morning class to the devotees in the temple from an elevated seat called the *vyāsāsana*. (*Vyāsāsana* literally means “the seat of Vyāsa,” Vyāsa being the incarnation of Kṛṣṇa who originally compiled all the Vedic literature. A bona fide spiritual master must follow in the footsteps of Vyāsa, always glorifying Kṛṣṇa according to the conclusions of the Vedic literature.) From the *vyāsāsana*, Śrīla Prabhupāda speaks about the science of God, leads the devotees in chanting and worshipping the Deity, and, on behalf of Kṛṣṇa, accepts the devotees’ service, as a viceroy accepts honor on behalf of a king. The spiritual master never considers himself God or accepts service on his own behalf; he only accepts service on behalf of the Supreme Lord.

In the building next to the temple are Śrīla Prabhupāda’s quarters, where he composes his books on a dictaphone. Working at night, he has produced more than a dozen important books in this way. The devotees

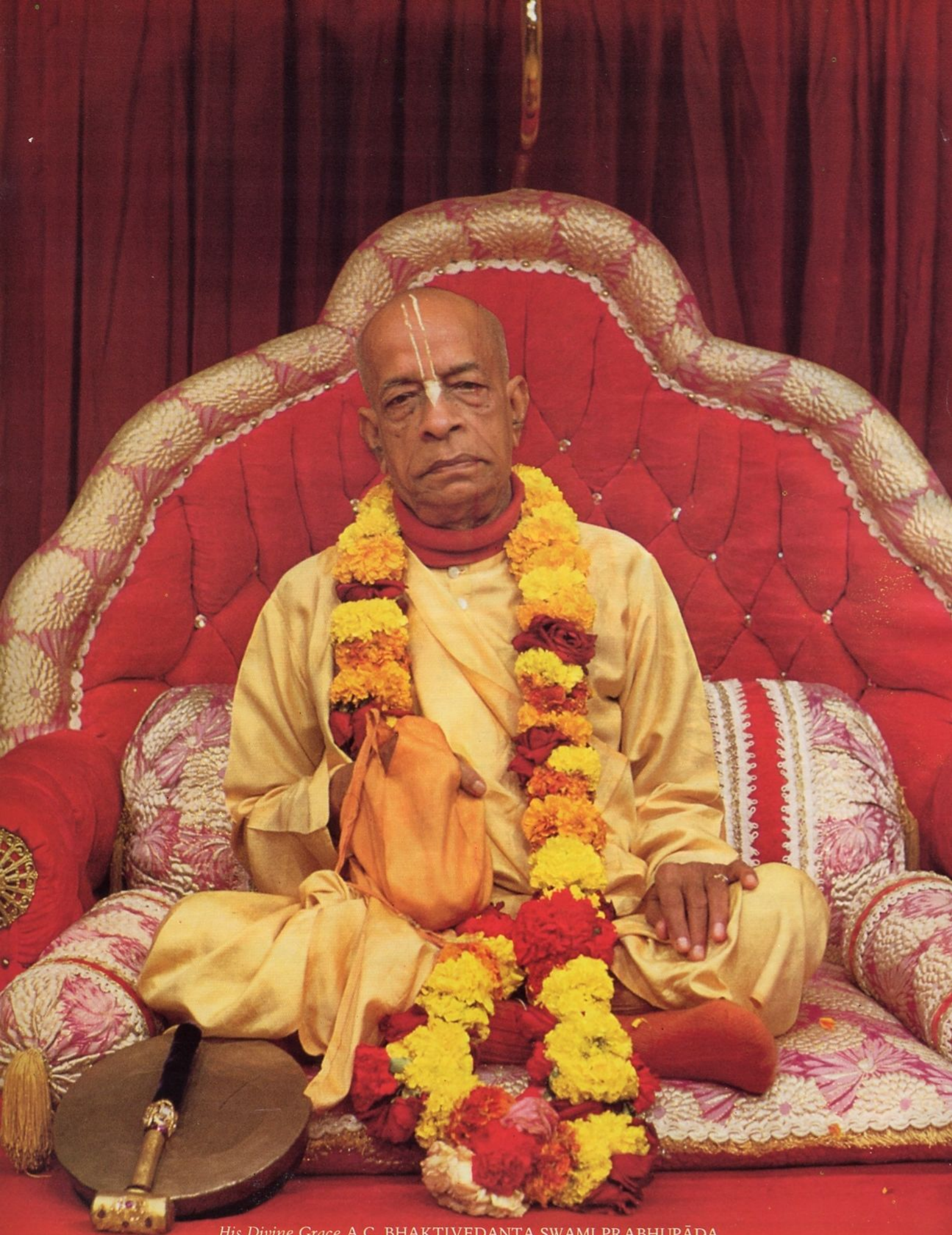
of New Dvārakā have also made a walled garden for Śrīla Prabhupāda that he has declared one of his favorite places in the world.

Even when Śrīla Prabhupāda is traveling in another part of the world, however, he is present in his instructions. He has told the devotees that if they always chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* and serve Kṛṣṇa sincerely through New Dvārakā’s many programs, they will become completely purified and go back home, back to Godhead.

Conclusion

New Dvārakā, then, demonstrates the perfection of renunciation, for the devotees there see everything as Kṛṣṇa’s energy and engage everything in His loving service. New Dvārakā is growing because its residents are following in the footsteps of the denizens of the original Dvārakā by serving Kṛṣṇa in pure devotion. Of course, Kṛṣṇa’s own celestial city is opulent beyond comparison. The Vedic scriptures state, for example, that the residents there enjoy eternal youth and beauty, like Kṛṣṇa Himself, and that brilliant jewels illuminate its palace walls, making electricity unnecessary. New Dvārakā’s working facilities are on a scale more recognizable to this world, but its real opulence—for which you will not be able to find a match even if you travel all over the world—lies in transcendental knowledge of God. Even the children there realize that Kṛṣṇa is everything, the cause of all causes, and He is their dearest friend, the topic of their talk and play.

The devotees in New Dvārakā have practical God conscious knowledge because they know how to practice renunciation by doing everything in relation to Kṛṣṇa. Thus they are dedicated to expanding their activities in the future in all ways—by distributing more books, welcoming more families and *brahmacārīs*, increasing their success in business, and doing everything for Kṛṣṇa’s pleasure. In return for their endeavors, they do not ask anything of the Lord but that He be pleased to continue engaging them in enthusiastic service to Śrīla Prabhupāda, His pure devotee. Kṛṣṇa has declared in *Bhagavad-gītā* that devotees who work twenty-four hours a day in His service are very dear to Him and will surely attain Him in His eternal spiritual world. In New Dvārakā—and almost one hundred ISKCON centers like it—the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is successfully demonstrating how to live constantly in the highest spiritual consciousness, Kṛṣṇa consciousness, while at the same time executing one’s daily duties as a student, businessman or householder. This is an ideal model the entire world can follow. ☐



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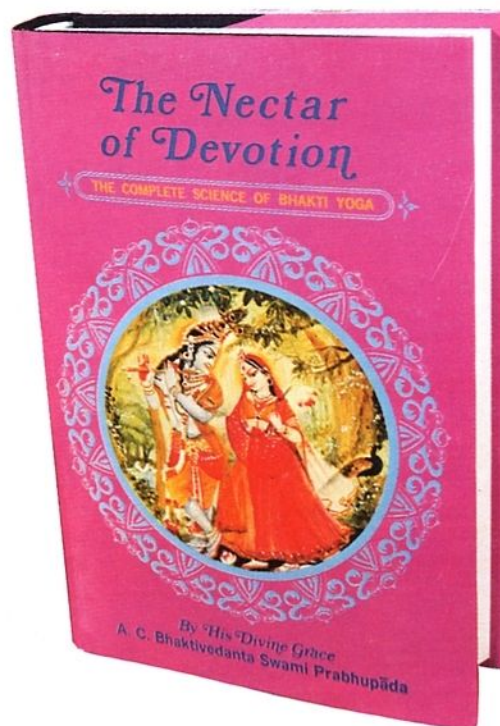
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