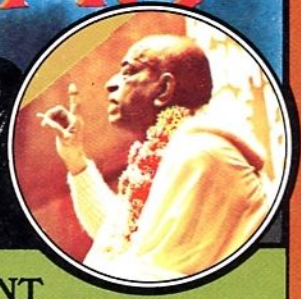


Godhead is light. Nescience is darkness. Where there is Godhead there is no nescience.



BACK TO GODHEAD



Vol.10 No.5/6

THE MAGAZINE OF THE HARE KRISHNA MOVEMENT



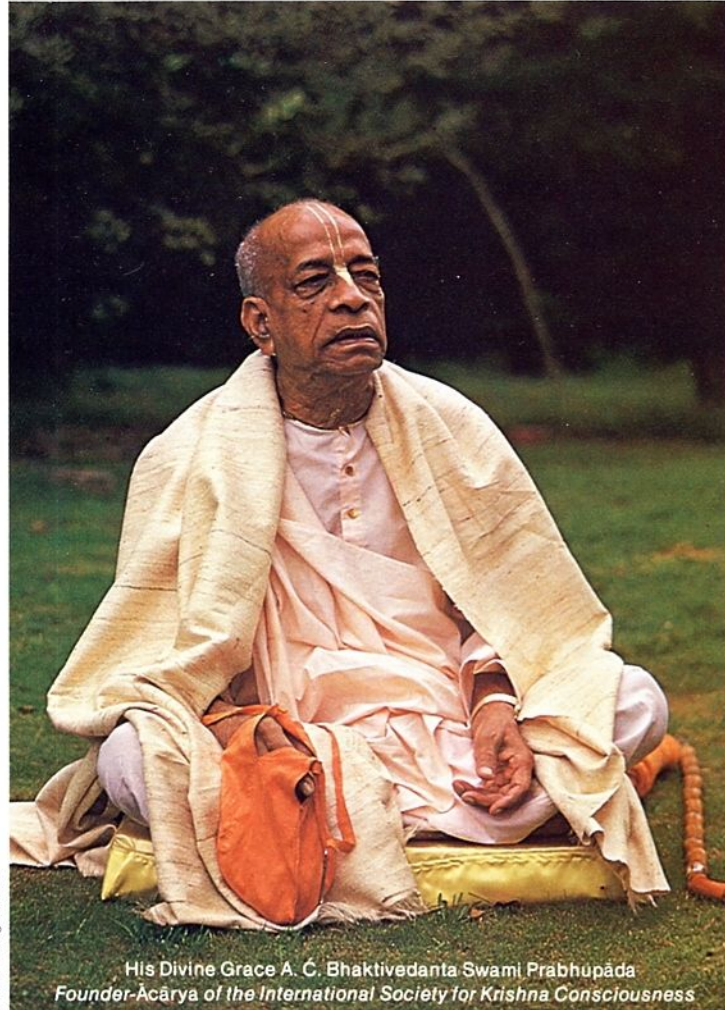


Photo: Bhārgava dāsa

His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda
 Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

In Denver, Colorado, and around the world . . .

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

"People come to Colorado for purification," says Kuruśreṣṭha dāsa, president of the Denver center of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement. "It's a clean atmosphere. Clean climate, nice people. People come to Colorado from all over the country for spiritual purification."

That's natural. A living being is a combination of matter and spirit—matter externally and spirit within. So naturally we want to satisfy our physical needs, and after those needs are taken care of, there has to be something more. Higher than the body is the mind, and the mind, too, needs to be satisfied. That's why every human civilization

naturally includes some form of music, art, philosophy and social culture. For some people, that seems enough. For others, however, it's not. Higher than the body and mind is the soul, and the soul, too, needs to be satisfied.

Unfortunately, modern society generally caters to the body and mind, but it does not consider the needs of the soul. When those needs are unfulfilled, we're prone to a kind of creeping dissatisfaction, despite all material comforts. Out of thousands of men, a very few—perhaps only one—will have the insight to recognize that this incompleteness is due to a lack of self-knowledge. It is such a rare person who strives to purify his consciousness and achieve spiritual enlightenment.

But where is spiritual knowledge to be found? "Many of the spiritual seekers who come to Denver don't really know what they're looking for," says Kuruśreṣṭha. "They may sense that material happiness isn't enough for them, and they may be looking for



spiritual life, but they have only a vague idea of what that spiritual life might be." The purpose of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, therefore, is to provide reliable guidance on the path leading back to our original spiritual consciousness, or Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Even among those who attain some measure of spiritual advancement, hardly one will truly understand Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is the ultimate goal of spiritual life because He is the supreme form of eternity, knowledge and bliss. But one cannot know Kṛṣṇa merely by mental speculation or yogic exercises. By these methods one may get a vague or impersonal idea of Kṛṣṇa, but to actually know Kṛṣṇa in truth, one should take guidance from a bona fide spiritual master who is a pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa. Such a devotee acts with his body, mind and words only for the service of Kṛṣṇa, and therefore he is considered a fully liberated soul, even in this material world.

The Denver center for Kṛṣṇa conscious-

ness, like the more than sixty-five other centers of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement around the world, offers a program of spiritual enlightenment under the auspices of such a pure devotee—His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. Although Śrīla Prabhupāda is the *ācārya*, or spiritual director, of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, he has not invented his own method of attaining spiritual knowledge; rather, he is simply transmitting the knowledge that has been preserved for thousands of years in the classic guide to spiritual perfection known as *Bhagavad-gītā*.

By spreading the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* (the transcendental sound vibration you see on the preceding page) and by spreading the *Gītā*'s message of spiritual enlightenment, the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is creating a transcendental atmosphere of peace and spiritual satisfaction. You'll find out more about it in the pages of
BACK TO GODHEAD.

BACK TO GODHEAD

THE MAGAZINE OF THE HARE KRISHNA MOVEMENT

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PRONUNCIATION OF SANSKRIT WORDS

Sanskrit words and names in *Back to Godhead* are spelled according to a system that scholars throughout the world use to show how to pronounce 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 *e* in *evade*. Long *i* is like the *i* in *pique*. The vowel *rī* is pronounced like the *er* in the English word *fiber*. The *c* is pronounced as in the English word *chair*. The aspirated consonants (*ch, jh, dh, etc.*) are pronounced as in *staunch-heart, hedge-hog* and *red-hot*. The two spirants *ś* and *ṣ* are like the English *sh*, and *s* is like the *s* in *sun*. So pronounce *Kṛṣṇa* as KRISHNA and *Caitanya* as CHAITANYA.

So that the BACK TO GODHEAD staff may join other devotees of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement for a spiritually purifying month-long pilgrimage in India, this year we are publishing one less issue of BTG than usual. That is why the present issue is marked "No. 5/6." Our yearly subscribers, of course, will receive a full twelve issues.

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

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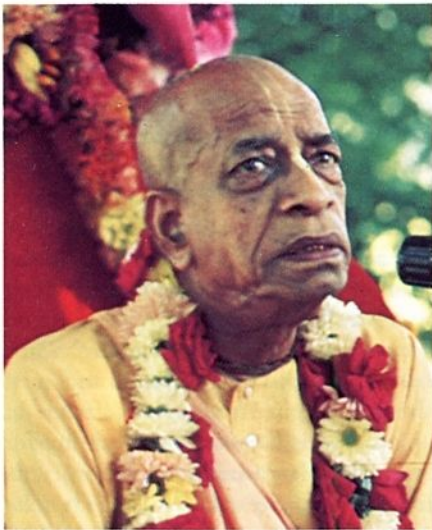
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QUESTIONS FOR THE WELFARE OF THE WORLD

A discourse delivered at the New Vṛndāvana
spiritual community in West Virginia by His Divine Grace
A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda



*munayaḥ sādhu prṣṭo 'haṁ
bhavadbhir loka-maṅgalam
yat kṛtaḥ kṛṣṇa-sampraśno
yenātmā suprasidati*

“O sages, I have been justly questioned by you. Your questions are worthy because they are linked to Lord Kṛṣṇa and so are of relevance to the world’s welfare. Only questions of this sort are capable of completely satisfying the self.”
(Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, 1.2.5)

JUST AS we are holding a meeting here for a few days, a similar meeting was held at least four thousand years ago in a place called Naimiṣāraṇya. Naimiṣāraṇya is in India and is situated near Lucknow. The place is still existing, and if one goes to India he can visit it. Its atmosphere is very conducive to spiritual undertakings. Formerly all the great sages used to assemble in the forest at Naimiṣāraṇya, and it is said that all the demigods used to visit there. It was at Naimiṣāraṇya, at a meeting of great sages, that Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam was discussed. Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam was first im-

parted to Mahārāja Parikṣit by Śukadeva Gosvāmī. Mahārāja Parikṣit, who was emperor of this planet, was cursed by a brāhmaṇa to die within seven days. Although he was very wrongly cursed, Mahārāja Parikṣit nonetheless tolerated it. He could have counteracted such a curse, but he did not do it. Instead, he took the opportunity to retire from active life and prepare for death. He had only seven days to die, and because he was king of the earth, all the great sages and kings from all parts of the world came to see him. The problem they discussed was what to do at the time of death. Many great sages and brāhmaṇas made numerous suggestions, telling him, “Mahārāja, you simply have to do this, or do that.” Later, at the arrival of

Śukadeva Gosvāmī, it was decided that Śukadeva Gosvāmī, who had recently learned Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam from his father, Vyāsadeva, could impart that knowledge to the King.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam was Vyāsadeva’s last contribution. It was Vyāsadeva who was the original compiler of all Vedic literature. He wrote many books—the four Vedas, the 108 Upaniṣads, eighteen Purāṇas and the 1,400,000 verses of Mahābhārata. These books contain

Auspicious Assembly. “The problem they discussed was what to do at the time of death.”

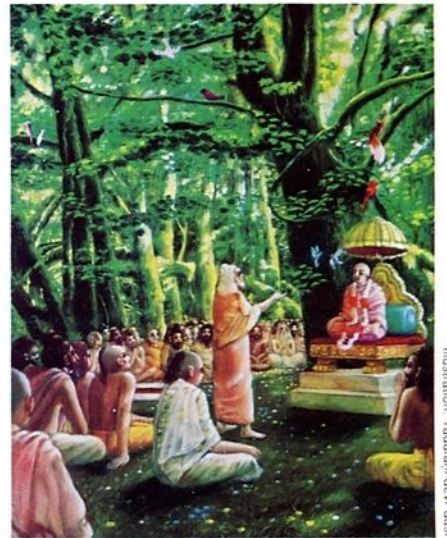
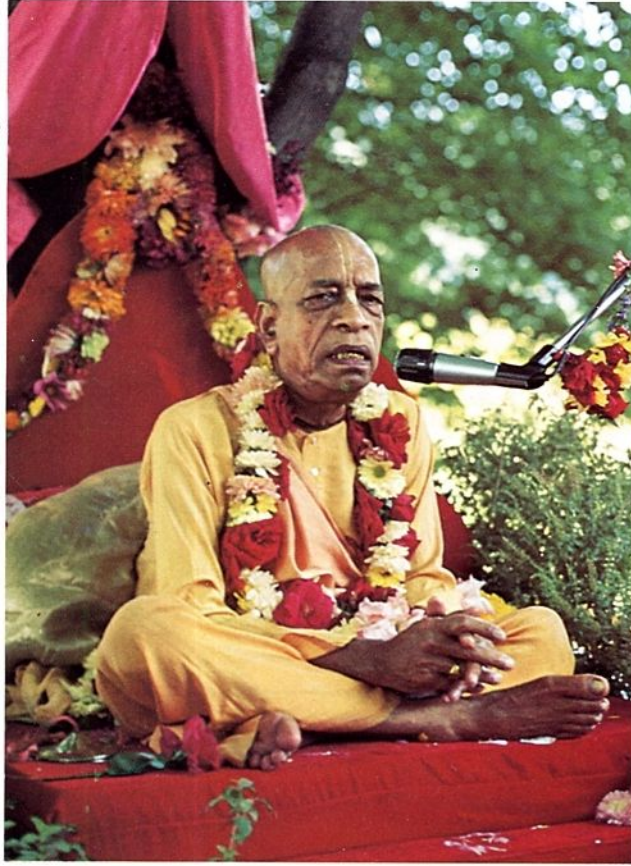


Illustration: Yaduśri-devī dāśī

“ . . . there are 8,400,000 species of life, and all of them — whether in the air, sea or land — are sons of God. This is real universal brotherhood.”



hundreds of thousands of verses, and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* alone contains eighteen thousand verses. In this way Vyāsadeva compiled so many books for the benefit of people in this Age of Kali. Unfortunately, people are not interested in these literatures. Even the people of India have lost interest, and what to speak of people of other countries. They are busy doing research, but they are neglecting the mature research already carried out by Vyāsadeva. This neglect is the misfortune of India. At any rate, Vyāsadeva summarized all the Vedic literatures in the *Vedānta-sūtra*. *Veda* means knowledge, and *anta* means end; thus the ultimate goal of education and knowledge is *vedānta*. If one knows *vedānta*, he knows everything, for *vedānta* means ultimate knowledge. *Yasmin vijñate sarvam eva vijñatam bhavanti*. Yet after compiling *Vedānta-sūtra* philosophy, Vyāsadeva was not satisfied. Because he was feeling some vacancy and was sorrowful, his spiritual master, Nārada, ap-

peared before him. Nārada could understand that Vyāsadeva was not happy even after compiling so many great volumes of Vedic literature, and Nārada addressed him as Pārāśarya, for Vyāsadeva's father was Parāśara Muni.

“Pārāśarya, why are you unhappy?” Nārada asked. “You have undergone all kinds of penances, performed all Vedic rituals, written so many books—why are you unhappy?”

Vyāsadeva answered, “My dear lord, what you say is right—I am unhappy. But you can find out the cause of my unhappiness.”

“You have considered so many things,” Nārada Muni replied, “but you have not written anything that absolutely concerns the pastimes of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Without discussing the Supreme Personality of Godhead, you cannot be happy.”

That is a fact. At the present moment also there is great educational advancement. There are many universities and

technological institutions, and there is economic development to such an extent that in America there is sufficiency of everything. Yet people are unhappy. The youth especially are becoming disillusioned. Why? The answer is that there is no knowledge of God. This is the only cause of unhappiness. Every one of us is part and parcel of God, and because of this our real hankering is for God. A child is similarly part and parcel of his mother, and when he is unhappy, nothing can satisfy the child but the lap of his mother. Although everyone may try to pacify the child, he will go on crying and crying till he reaches his mother's lap and is nursed by her. Similarly, we are all children of God, but we are making plans to be happy independent of God, and that is not possible.

Therefore at the present moment there is a great necessity to understand God, and for this reason the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement has started. Unfortunately, the modern leaders of India are neglecting Vedic culture and are begging technological information from Western countries. That is their misfortune. Although I am singlehandedly trying to present the original Vedic culture, it can be seen that people all over the world are accepting it very happily. The government of India should have known of this necessity, but unfortunately they have no knowledge of their own culture. They have lost their own culture, and now they are begging from other cultures. In any case, this *bhāgavata* culture is not for any particular country or nation; it is meant for everyone. God is not monopolized by anyone. He is for everyone. Kṛṣṇa Himself says in *Bhagavad-gītā*:

*sarva-yoniṣu kaunteya
mūrtayah sambhavanti yāḥ
tāsām brahma mahad yonir
ahaṁ bija-pradaḥ pitā*

“It should be understood that all species of life, O son of Kunti, are made possible by birth in this material nature, and that I am the seed-giving father.” (Bg. 14.4) **Universal Brotherhood.** *Sarva-yoniṣu* indicates that Kṛṣṇa is the father of all species of life—of aquatics, trees, plants, insects, birds, animals and so on. In *Padma Purāṇa* it is stated that there are

8,400,000 species of life, and it should be understood that all of them—whether in the air, sea or land—are sons of God. This is real universal brotherhood. We cannot think in terms of the brotherhood of all living entities because the central point is missing. The central point is God, but people are making themselves, their families, their society, their nation or even the whole human race the central point. In other words, they are trying to elevate these things to the position of God. However, these things are all imperfect. Unless we can see all living entities with an equal eye, we cannot be considered learned. As stated in *Bhagavad-gītā*:

*vidyā-vinaya-sampanne
brāhmaṇe gavi hastini
śuni caiva śvapāke ca
paṇḍitāḥ sama-darśinaḥ*

“The humble sage, by virtue of true knowledge, sees with equal vision a learned and gentle *brāhmaṇa*, a cow, an elephant, a dog and a dog-eater [outcaste].” (Bg. 5.18)

Thus according to Vedic culture the gentle and sober *brāhmaṇa* sees everything equally. Unless one is gentle and sober, he cannot be learned. That is the test of education. A demonic man cannot really be considered educated; he must be *sama-darśī*. He must see all with an equal vision. There are many elevated living entities, but the learned *brāhmaṇa* is considered to be the topmost. Although there are many varieties of living entities, one who is *paṇḍita*, learned, sees all of them on the same platform. How is this? He does not see the outward covering; he sees the soul within everyone. Having such a vision, what is his situation? This is also described in *Bhagavad-gītā*:

*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. 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)

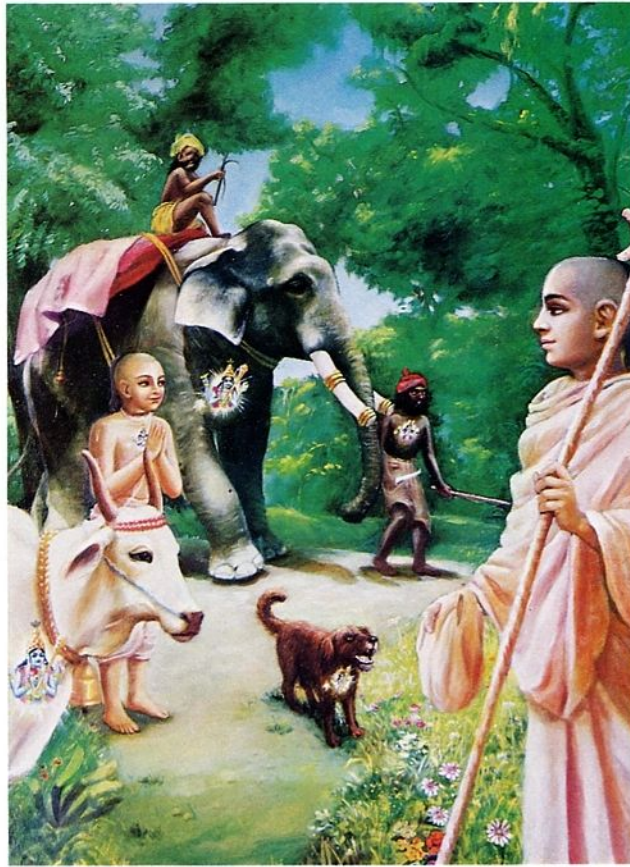


Illustration: Bharadrāja dāsa

One who is spiritually aware sees everyone equally.

“The humble sage, by virtue of true knowledge, sees with equal vision a learned and gentle *brāhmaṇa*, a cow, an elephant, a dog and a dog-eater [outcaste].” (Bg. 5.18)

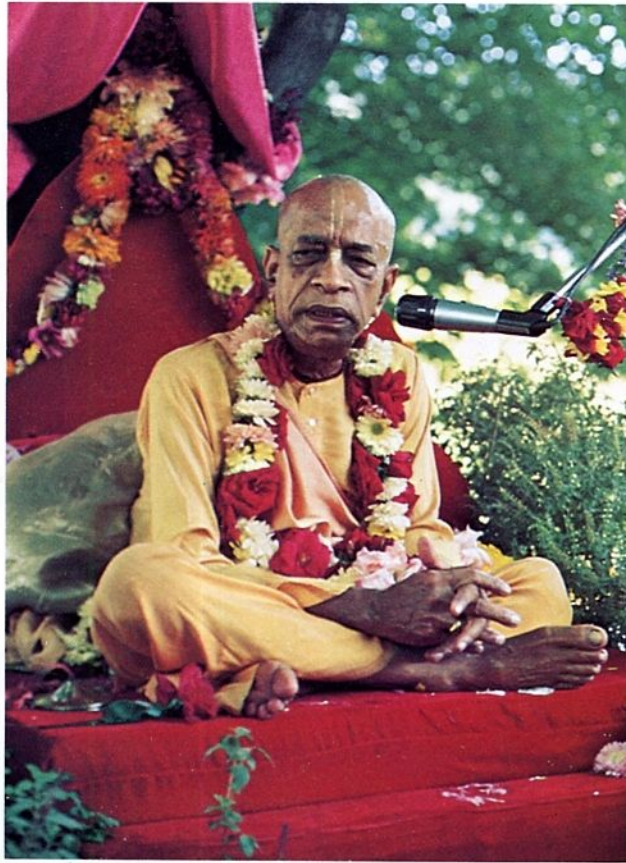
That Brahman vision is possible when one is actually in contact with Brahman, the Supreme. If the central point is missing, this is not possible. At present everyone is manufacturing his own system of knowledge, and consequently the entire world is in turmoil and confusion. Consequently, at the advent of this age of chaos, shortly after the departure of Lord Kṛṣṇa from the world, the great sages assembled at Naimiṣāranya to discuss *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Lord Kṛṣṇa was present on this planet five thousand years ago, and after His departure the sages assembled, and their question was:

*brūhi yogeśvare kṛṣṇe
brāhmaṇye dharma-varmaṇi
svām kaṣṭhām adhunopete
dharmaḥ kam śaraṇam gataḥ*

“Now that Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Absolute Truth, the master of all mystic powers, has departed for His own abode, please tell us by whom religious principles are presently protected.” (*Bhāg.* 1.1.23)

This was the main question. It is significant that Kṛṣṇa is mentioned here as Yogeśvara. The word *yoga* is very popular in the West. Generally the word *yoga* means mystic power, for if one actually becomes a *yogī*, he attains many mystic powers. A *yogī* who has actually attained perfection can become smaller than the smallest and can fit himself into the smallest compartment. If he is imprisoned, he has the ability to come out through the smallest hole imaginable. This is called *anīmā-siddhi*. Similarly, by *laghimā-siddhi*, a *yogī* can float in the sky just like a cottonflower, and by other powers he can produce whatever he desires on the spot. There are in this way many *siddhis*, or perfections. Indeed, the very powerful *yogīs* can even manufacture a planet. Viśvāmītra Muni, for instance, produced men from trees. Thus *yoga* is not simply a matter of pressing one’s nose and holding the breath; *yoga* is practiced by real *yogīs* to get material power. There are many *yogīs* who can

“We may theorize about so many things, and we may be great scientists, but when death comes we cannot protect ourselves.”



perform such magical feats, but all of these accomplishments are quantitatively small when compared to the powers of the Lord. A *yogī* may be able to float himself in air, but God, by His yogic power, can float millions and trillions of planets in space. The supreme *yogī* is Kṛṣṇa; therefore it is said, *brūhi yogeśvare kṛṣṇe. Īśvara* means controller. There are many yogic powers and *yogīs*, but Kṛṣṇa is the supreme controller of all. Thus it is mentioned in this verse that the master of all mystic powers, Kṛṣṇa, has left the planet.

Brahmaṇye dharmā-varmaṇi. Dharmā-varmaṇi refers to Him who embodies religious principles. The Sanskrit word *dharmā* actually refers to God or Kṛṣṇa. Generally *dharmā* is translated into English as religion, but this is not a perfect translation, for *dharmā* is different from religion. Religion is usually defined in a dictionary as a kind of faith, but *dharmā* is not really a faith. Faith can be changed. Today a man may be a Hindu,

and tomorrow he may be a Moslem or Christian. Faith is not, then, actually *dharmā*, for *dharmā* refers to that which cannot be changed. Water is liquid and cannot be changed into a solid. One may argue that water may become solid as ice, but that is not its natural condition. That is artificial. The solidity of water as ice is temporary, and as soon as the temperature rises, the water returns to its natural condition. As liquidity is the natural state of water, similarly *dharmā* is the natural state of the living entity.

Our Natural Position. Since the living entity is part and parcel of God, he has a natural position. For instance, one's finger is part and parcel of the body, and as such it has a natural position. That is, it works in accordance with the rest of the body. The finger may pick up a piece of cake, but the finger itself does not use it. It takes it to the mouth. In this way the finger serves the whole body. Similarly, *dharmā* indicates that the living entity, being part and

parcel of God, must serve Him. The attitude of service is present in every living entity, but one person is serving himself, another is serving his family, another is serving his society or country. In any case, service is there, and if one has nothing to serve, he will sometimes take on a dog or cat to serve. However, it should be noted that service to anything other than the Supreme Lord is *māyā*, illusion. Service is actually meant for God, but because we have forgotten Him, we are rendering service to so many forms of *māyā*. Consequently when God comes He establishes *dharmā*. When Kṛṣṇa came to this earth, He proclaimed His manifesto in *Bhagavad-gītā* in this way:

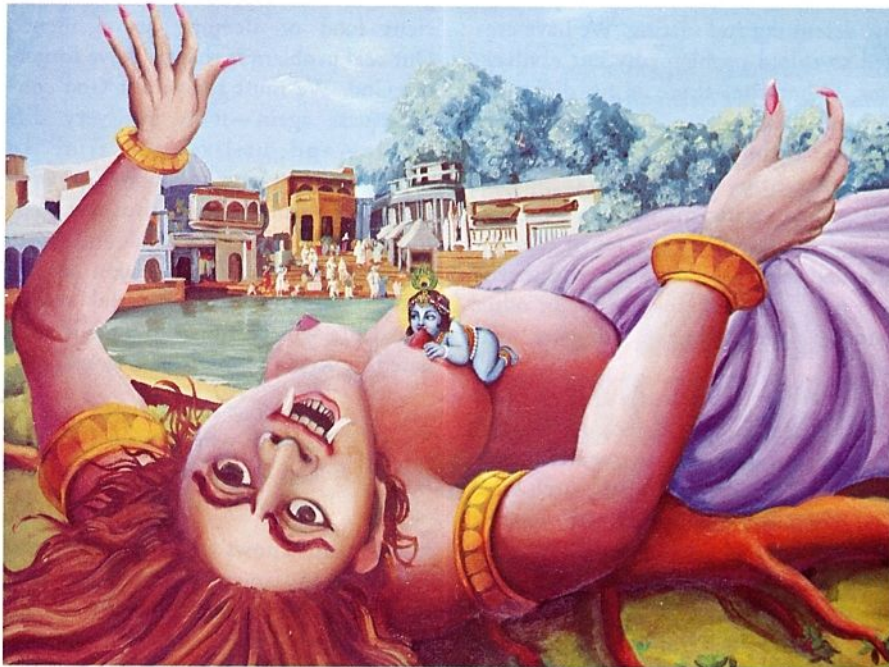
*yadā yadā hi dharmasya
glānir bhavati bhārata
abhyyutthānam adharmasya
tadātmānam sṛjāmy aham*

*paritrāṇāya sādhuṇām
vināśāya ca duṣkṛtām
dharmā-saṁsthāpanārthāya
sambhavāmi yuge yuge*

“Whenever and wherever there is a decline in religious practice, O descendant of Bhārata, and a predominant rise of irreligion—at that time I descend Myself. To deliver the pious and to annihilate the miscreants, as well as to reestablish the principles of religion, I advent Myself millennium after millennium.” (Bg. 4.7-8)

Thus Kṛṣṇa came to establish real religion. The sages assembled at Naimiṣāraṇya knew the mission of Kṛṣṇa. They knew that He came to establish religion, and they were wondering, since Kṛṣṇa was no longer on the planet, under whose care religion was entrusted. *Dharmaḥ kam śaraṇam gataḥ.* As long as Kṛṣṇa was present, He was discharging real religion. How was that? *Paritrāṇāya sādhuṇām vināśāya ca duṣkṛtām:* He was killing demons and giving protection to His devotees. Since Kṛṣṇa is absolute, both His killing and protecting are the same. This, then, is the main question of the sages of Naimiṣāraṇya, and it is answered first by Śukadeva Gosvāmī's disciple, Sūta Gosvāmī.

“Dear sages,” Sūta Gosvāmī replied, “you have asked questions concerning



When Kṛṣṇa appears in the material world, whatever He does is for the spiritual upliftment of all living beings.

Transcendental Pastimes. *Holding true to His promise to “protect the pious and annihilate the miscreants” (Bg. 4.8), Lord Kṛṣṇa is pictured (left) sucking out the life of the demonic witch Pūtana and (below) protecting His devotees from the devouring flames of a forest fire.*



insects, microbes and so on. Wherever we find living symptoms we should know that there is a living entity, and that that living entity is part and parcel of God. According to *karma*, or according to pious and impious activities, the living entity is obliged to accept a certain type of body. The acceptance of that body is in the hands of nature; science will not help! This is the verdict of *Bhagavad-gītā*:

*prakṛteḥ kriyamāṇāni
guṇaiḥ karmāṇi sarvaśaḥ
ahaṅkāra-vimūḍhātmā
kartāham iti manyate*

“The bewildered spirit soul, under the influence of the three modes of material nature, thinks himself to be the doer of activities that are in actuality carried out by nature.” (Bg. 3.27)

We may theorize about so many things, and we may be great scientists, but when death comes, we cannot protect ourselves.

*jātasya hi dhruvo mṛtyur
dhruvaṁ janma mṛtasya ca*

“For one who has taken his birth, death is certain; and for one who is dead, birth is certain.” (Bg. 2.27)

Nature’s Control. We may be puffed up by advancement of scientific knowledge, but we must be under the control of birth, old age, disease and death. This is *prakṛti*, nature, and nature is controlled by God. This is also stated in *Bhagavad-gītā*:

Kṛṣṇa, and these questions are very nice.” The word *sādhu* means very nice or perfect. *Bhavadbhir loka-maṅgalam*: “These questions,” Sūta Gosvāmī continued, “are asked for the good fortune of the entire world, for they concern Kṛṣṇa, in whom the real principles of religion abide. If we ask questions about Kṛṣṇa, try to understand Him and dis-

cuss Him, our lives become perfect.”

Simply by trying to understand Kṛṣṇa, one’s life can be perfect. The perfection of life means getting out of this material condition and attaining our constitutional position in our original spiritual life. Originally we are all spiritual sparks—not only we, but all other living entities as well—trees, plants, aquatics,

*mayādhyakṣeṇa prakṛtiḥ
sūyate sa-carācaram
hetunānena kaunteya
jagad viparivartate*

“This material nature is working under My direction, O son of Kuntī, and it is producing all moving and unmoving beings. By its rule this manifestation is created and annihilated again and again.” (Bg. 9.10)

We should not think that material nature is working independently; that is not possible. Matter cannot act independently. We may see that matter is working, but actually we are superior. Scientists may see that a molecule is working in this way or that way, but one who is seeing this activity is actually superior. Matter works under certain material laws, but in actuality the living entity is superior, and of all living entities, the supreme living entity is God. This is the verdict of the *Vedas*: *nityo nityānām cetanaś cetanānām* (*Kaṭha Up.* 2.2.13). *Nitya* means eternal; God is eternal, and we are also eternal. *Cetanānām*: God is full in knowledge, and we have some knowledge. Dull matter has no knowledge. Kṛṣṇa is the supreme eternal, and He is supremely cognizant. *Eko bahūnām yo vidadhāti kāmān* (*Kaṭha Up.* 2.2.13). Kṛṣṇa is singular, and the living entities are plural; God is one, and the living entities are many. There is no limit to the living entities. We have experience of this, for even within our room thousands and thousands of ants may come out of a small hole, and even within a drop of water there are thousands of microbes. These are all living entities under different conditions of life. Thus the living entities are many, but God is one.

What is the distinction between the plural living entities and the singular supreme living entity? It is that the supreme living entity is supplying the plural entities with all necessities. As civilized men, we have industries and businesses to solve our economic problems, but we human beings are but a small part of the many living entities. According to *Padma Purāṇa*, out of 8,400,000 species of life, different types of human beings comprise only 400,000 species. Out of these, 75% are uncivilized. Aside from the small number

of civilized human beings, other living entities have no problem eating, sleeping, defending and mating. We have created so-called problems by our civilization. Otherwise, there is no difficulty. Elephants eat a large quantity of food, but God is supplying it for them, and they also have sleeping arrangements and mating arrangements. The same can be said for the other species of life. An educated man should understand that if God makes such arrangements for other living entities, he makes them for man also.

In the human form of life we should try to understand what God actually is; this is our special prerogative. We should not worry that if we search after God our other problems will not be solved. By such a search, all our other problems will automatically be solved. Just as there is an arrangement for our distress, there is a similar arrangement for our happiness. No one wants distress, but why do distresses come upon us? The distresses have already been arranged, and we should know that if our distresses have been arranged, our happiness is also. We should not be disturbed by so-called distress and happiness; they are going and coming. Kṛṣṇa enlightened Arjuna about this at the beginning of *Bhagavad-gītā*:

*mātrā-sparśās tu kaunteya
śiṭoṣṇa-sukha-duḥkha-dāḥ
āgamāpāyino 'nityās
tānis titikṣasva bhārata*

“O son of Kuntī, the nonpermanent appearance of happiness and distress, and their disappearance in due course, are like the appearance and disappearance of winter and summer seasons. They arise from sense perception, O scion of Bharata, and one must learn to tolerate them without being disturbed.” (Bg. 2.14)

Neither summer nor winter remains forever; they both change. We should not bother, therefore, about so-called happiness and distress. Perfect civilization depends on the arrangements made by God, even as the lower animals depend upon them. Birds chirp in the morning, and they do not worry about how they are going to find food during the day, for they know that there is food

provided and that they simply have to go get it. Our real problem is not insufficient food or sleeping arrangements. Our real problem is that we have forgotten God. We must revive our God consciousness again—it is not very difficult—and utilize our time in reestablishing our relationship with God. Our business should thus always be to inquire about Kṛṣṇa, God, and try to understand Him, for as soon as we understand God, our material conditional life will be finished. This is validated by Kṛṣṇa Himself in *Bhagavad-gītā*:

*janma karma ca me divyam
evam yo vetti tattvataḥ
tyaktvā dehaṁ punar janma
naiti mām eti so 'rjuna*


“One who knows the transcendental nature of My appearance and activities does not, upon leaving the body, take his birth again in this material world, but attains My eternal abode, O Arjuna.” (Bg. 4.9)

We should know Kṛṣṇa in truth; we should not try to know Him by our own concoctions. We should know Him scientifically, for knowledge of God is a great science, and it is set forth by Kṛṣṇa Himself in *Bhagavad-gītā*:

*jñānam te 'haṁ sa-vijñānam
idam vākṣyāmy aṣeṣataḥ
yaj jñātvā neha bhūyo 'nyaj
jñātvayam avaśiṣyate*

“I shall now declare unto you in full this knowledge both phenomenal and noumenal, by knowing which there shall remain nothing further to be known.” (Bg. 7.2)

Sa-vijñānam: it is a great science. If we try to understand God, we have nothing more to understand. All knowledge is there; God is everything, and if we understand Him, we understand everything. Therefore Sūta Gosvāmī proclaimed that the great sages' questions about Kṛṣṇa are so nice that they are auspicious for the entire world.

We have begun this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, and it is not for our personal benefit; it is good fortune for the whole world. We should all try to inquire about Kṛṣṇa and try to understand Him. *Yayātmā suprasīdati*. In this way our soul (*ātmā*) will feel satisfaction. 

Why are some people by nature outgoing
and talkative while others are quiet and shy?
What are the forces of nature that compel
people to act the way they do?
How do these forces work, and who is
controlling them?

WHO'S PULLING THE STRINGS?

by Visākhā-devī dāsi

DR. AND MRS. A. B. BRIGHT and their two children have a small home, just suitable to their needs, in a peaceful country town. Dr. Bright is the local M.D., a thoughtful, qualified man, respected for doing his job honestly and selflessly. His hobby: reading books of philosophy, poetry and science. Mrs. Bright and the children (when the children aren't in school) farm and garden around the house and care for the family cow. The Brights are mildly prosperous people who give thanks to God for the things they have and take their religion as a serious duty. By almost anyone's standards, they'd have to be considered exceptionally pious. They don't gamble, and for them

intoxicants are strictly taboo—they don't smoke, and not to speak of liquor, they don't even drink coffee or tea. Dr. Bright has seen too many of his patients bring trouble to themselves through extramarital affairs, so he's always been faithful to his wife; and she, too, has always been faithful to him. The Brights decided long ago that killing animals is barbaric, so they never eat meat, fish, chicken or even eggs. All in all, the Brights lead a clean, simple and happy life. But the Brights are conditioned by a sense of happiness and knowledge. They are attached to their harmonious world. Therefore they are bound to the mode of goodness.



The Smiths, by contrast, live in suburbia in a stylish home filled with modern conveniences. Each morning Larry Smith gulps down breakfast in time to fight traffic to the office. There he sits all day dealing with different “headaches,” as he calls them. A hard job, but worth it, he figures, since it lets him afford the luxuries he enjoys and still have some money left over for the stock market and some rather shady business schemes he has going on the side. (“Money is the honey,” Larry says.) Gloria, his wife, wakes up in time to see that the two older children look decent (family prestige is important to the Smiths) and sends them off to school. She spends most of her day with the baby (“the one we didn’t expect,” says Larry). Either Gloria’s in the house with the TV going, in the playground with the other housewives and children, in the beauty salon, or (sometimes it seems like forever) shopping. All day the Smiths are active, on the go. At night they relax, but sometimes their minds are just so wound up that they can’t get a good night’s sleep. They squabble with each other, and sometimes they’re depressed, but as Larry jokingly philosophizes, “There’s no problem so great that sex can’t solve it.” On the weekends the Smiths make a show of being religious, but it’s more or less a social affair, since in fact they generally disregard the guidelines of their scriptures. This family is typical of the mode of passion.

The mode of ignorance is exemplified by the lives of John Dull and Betty Grumble. They never got married, but they live together, in squalor, in a cheap apartment in New York City. Welfare checks cover part of the rent, and at the end of the month John gets together the rest by peddling drugs. Religion, they both decided long ago, is something they want no part of. They spend their time sleeping (at least ten or twelve hours a day) or else getting high on drugs, feasting on beer and salami, and languishing in their apartment. For years they’ve dreamed about starting a commune in Spain, or perhaps Madagascar or Nepal.

What are these forces called “modes”? The modes of nature—goodness, passion and ignorance—are aspects

of Kṛṣṇa’s inferior energy. Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, has innumerable energies. For our understanding, however, they have been classified in three groups: the inferior energy, which is material; the superior energy, which is spiritual; and the marginal energy—we ourselves, the living entities. We are called marginal because we may come under the influence of either the superior or the inferior energy. For example, our body is Kṛṣṇa’s inferior energy. That means that by nature it is temporary and is a source of ignorance and misery. If one identifies with the body or mind—if one thinks that he’s an American or Indian, that he’s fat or thin, healthy or sick, Hindu or Catholic, democratic or communistic, and so on—he then comes under the influence of the inferior energy and its material qualities. Thus one is impelled to act by the modes or qualities of material nature—goodness, passion and ignorance. If we remember, however, that the life force—the source of consciousness within the body—is different from the body itself, and if we act in that remembrance, then we can free ourselves from the influence of the material energy.

The conscious spark that gives life to the body is a tiny particle of the spiritual energy of the Supreme Lord, and so it has an eternal relationship with the Lord. When we act according to that relationship, which is one of service to the Lord, then we are acting naturally, spiritually. Thus we are completely liberated from the modes of material nature, and we revive our natural spiritual qualities of eternity, knowledge and bliss.

We generally think that we’re in control of our actions and that we’re making our own decisions, but the supreme authority, Kṛṣṇa, declares that this is not the case. He says that we are acting as puppets—victims—of the forces of nature. In *Bhagavad-gītā* Lord Kṛṣṇa says, “All men are forced to act helplessly according to the impulses born of the modes of material nature; therefore no one can refrain from doing something, not even for a moment.” (Bg. 3.5) Not

just you and I, but “no being existing, anywhere in the material world, is free from the three modes of material nature.” (Bg. 18.40)

To return to our earlier example, Dr. Bright, our learned physician, feels advanced in knowledge and materially happy in his peaceful library at home. But although his life may seem pleasant, he’s still in the bodily or material concept of life, and therefore he is in illusion. He thinks that he is Dr. Bright, an American, a middle-aged man, a husband, a father, a reasonable, well-educated country gentleman. But these designations are all material; they concern only the body and mind. Dr. Bright has not yet realized that he is neither his body nor his mind; he is a spiritual soul, an eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa. Since he misidentifies himself with his body, he must come under the influence of the laws of nature governing that body. So he must continue suffering the bodily problems of birth, old age, disease and death.

If one in the mode of goodness is bound in this way, what to speak of those in the lower modes? Those in passion, like the Smiths, are bound by their attempts to satisfy their uncontrollable hankerings and longings. And those in ignorance, like Mr. Dull and Miss Grumble, are bound by madness, indolence and sleep.

Our real life, as we mentioned, is spiritual, and so it is eternal, blissful and full of knowledge. Under the illusion of goodness, however, we look for this reality in mundane learning and a feeling of material satisfaction. In passion we seek it in sex and possessions; and in ignorance we seek it in sleep and intoxication. Thus our pure spiritual nature is perverted by impure desires, born of the modes of nature.

When Bright, Smith, Dull and Grumble were born, they had no control over when or where they’d take birth, what kinds of bodies they’d be given or who their parents would be. Somehow or

All living beings in the material world are controlled like puppets by the three modes of nature. Those modes are in turn controlled by Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. →



other, nature put each of them, helpless, into his own predicament. Now they think that they're controlling their fate, but actually their helplessness has not changed. They are still acting according to the bodies that a higher authority has given them. They are neither the proprietors nor the controllers of the actions and reactions of those bodies. They are simply drowning in the midst of a material ocean, being tossed by the waves of that ocean and struggling for existence. Therefore Kṛṣṇa says in *Bhagavad-gītā*, "One who can see that all activities are performed by the body, which is created of material nature, and sees that the self, the soul within, does nothing, actually sees." (Bg. 13.30)

At this point we can hear ourselves protesting: "I have control over what I do. I can choose whether to go to the bar or the opera, whether to marry a prostitute or a Radcliffe girl. Nothing is forcing me to act."

Yes, we have minute independence. Kṛṣṇa is *svarāt*, or completely independent; God can do whatever He likes. And since we are tiny parts of God, we also have His quality of independence—but only in a minute quantity, proportionate to our size. Therefore, according to our desires, our body acts either in goodness, passion, ignorance or some combination. But whatever these desires are, they are material. They spring from our bodily concept of life, and therefore they are products of the modes of nature. And the ways we try to fulfill these desires are also material. Thus we are revolving in Kṛṣṇa's inferior, material energy. "Sometimes the mode of passion becomes prominent," Lord Kṛṣṇa says, "defeating the mode of goodness. And sometimes the mode of goodness defeats passion, and at other times the mode of ignorance defeats goodness and passion. In this way there is always competition for supremacy." (Bg. 14.10) Just as the basic colors yellow, red and blue mix in different ways to produce an uncounta-

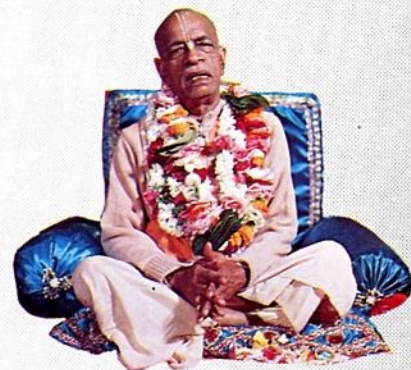
ble variety of tints and hues, so goodness, passion and ignorance mix together to produce innumerable illusions in our minds. This explains why the Brights sometimes quarrel over trivial problems; why the Smiths, and even Dull and Grumble, sometimes unexpectedly give to a bona fide religious charity; and why the Smiths go partying once in a while, drink too much, and find themselves hungover in bed the next morning, overcome by the mode of ignorance.

Like it or not, we should understand that we are now tightly tied by ropes of illusion. A man bound by the hands and feet cannot free himself; he must be helped by a person who is unbound. Because the bound cannot help the bound, the rescuer must be liberated. Therefore only Kṛṣṇa, the fully liberated Supreme Lord, or His bona fide representative, the spiritual master, can release the conditioned soul. Without such superior help, one cannot be freed from the bondage of material nature. The only way to get completely free from its clutches is to surrender to the Supreme Person. Lord Kṛṣṇa therefore says in *Bhagavad-gītā*, "This divine energy of Mine, consisting of the three modes of material nature, is difficult to overcome. But those who have surrendered unto Me can easily cross beyond it." (Bg. 7.14)

The Brights and Smiths, and Dull and Grumble, can become free from the material concept of life simply by receiving bona fide transcendental knowledge. If one has been living in a dark room all his life, he is always floundering, unable to see things as they are. Once the lights are switched on, however, everything becomes apparent, and one can at once act properly. Similarly, with the light of transcendental knowledge we can overcome our bondage and act in accordance with our spiritual nature. Thus we can liberate

ourselves from this material world. Kṛṣṇa therefore says in the *Gītā*, "One who understands this philosophy concerning material nature, the living entity, and the interaction of the modes of nature is sure to attain liberation. He will not take birth here in this material world again, regardless of his present position." (Bg. 13.24)

One who is thus becoming freed from illusion and who is scientifically understanding his pure, natural consciousness is sure to become a devotee of the Supreme Lord. In the beginning such potential devotees naturally develop the desirable personal qualities that characterize the mode of goodness. They strictly avoid all sinful activities: they do not eat meat, fish or eggs, they take no intoxicants, and they do not gamble or engage in illicit sex. But, beyond that,



As the three basic colors (yellow, red and blue) mix together in innumerable tints and hues, so the Lord's inferior energy in the form of the modes of goodness, passion and ignorance combine in different ways to cover us with illusion. The basis of this illusion is forgetfulness of our spiritual identity: we think that we are our bodies. The self-realized person, however, has full understanding of God, of himself and of material nature. Such a great soul is beyond the influence of the three modes of material nature, and he can liberate us.

PURE GOODNESS

they seek out a bona fide spiritual master and then cultivate transcendental knowledge under his guidance. Thus each day they hear scientific information about Kṛṣṇa from Vedic scriptures like *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and they chant the holy names of God—Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. Chanting this transcendental vibration is recommended in the scriptures as the best way to transcend the three modes of material nature in our difficult age of quarrel and hypocrisy.

A devotee of the Lord is free from bondage to the modes because his mind, body and words act spiritually—that is, in relationship to Kṛṣṇa. He always serves the pleasure of the Lord. For the sake of the Lord he will do any work

needed, and for such work he will live anywhere—whether it be in the country, suburbs or city. Such a Kṛṣṇa conscious devotee accepts whatever is favorable to the service of Kṛṣṇa and rejects everything unfavorable to that service. In *Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa says:

*mām ca yo 'vyabhicāreṇa
bhakti-yogena sevate
sā gunān samatīyaitān
brahma-bhūyāya kalpate*

“One who engages in full devotional service, who does not fall down in any circumstance, at once transcends the modes of material nature and thus comes to the level of spiritual perfection.” (Bg. 14.26)

Thus we can attain spiritual perfection simply by remembering our relationship with Kṛṣṇa and acting in that

relationship. We need not be disturbed by the modes of nature, for instead of putting our consciousness into material activities, we can transfer it to activities centered around Kṛṣṇa. Such Kṛṣṇa-centered activities make up *bhakti-yoga*. When we engage in this topmost *yoga* system, we acquire the same spiritual qualities as Kṛṣṇa. The Lord is eternal, blissful and full of knowledge, and we are part of Him, as gold particles are part of a gold mine. Thus our spiritual qualities are similar to those of Kṛṣṇa. The difference, however, is that Kṛṣṇa is infinite, whereas the living entities are infinitesimal.

Although the modes of material nature are very difficult to overcome, we can overcome them easily if we have the mercy of the Lord, for the Lord, after all, is the creator and controller of the modes. And how can we attain that mercy?

*yasya deve parā bhaktir
yathā deve tathā gurau
tasyaite kathitā hy arthāḥ
prakāśante mahātmanah*

“The mercy of the Lord can be obtained only by those surrendered souls who have implicit faith in both the Lord and the spiritual master.” Such fortunate souls can at once become free from the three modes of material nature and regain their original spiritual nature, which is one of boundless transcendental joy in a loving relationship with Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. 🙏

On the following two pages, you'll find a guide to understanding the three modes of material nature, their influences and their effects. On the material platform, these three modes are never found in their pure state; they are always mixed with one another. The mode of "pure goodness," therefore, is spiritual; only one who is liberated from all material contamination can act in that transcendental mode. To further understand the modes of nature and the spiritual reality beyond them, the reader can refer to *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, from which the information for this chart was derived.



	IGNORANCE	PASSION	GOODNESS	PURE GOODNESS*
General Characteristics	Foolishness, madness, illusion, inertia, indolence and sleep.	Unlimited, uncontrollable desires and longings, intense endeavor, greed, bondage to material fruitive activities and attachment to the fruits of action.	Relative purity, illumination, happiness and freedom from sinful reactions. Conducive to real knowledge.	Complete, unmotivated, unflinching devotion to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Absolute knowledge, purity, illumination, happiness and freedom from sinful reactions.
Destination After Death	The hellish worlds and the animal kingdom.	The association of fruitive workers on the earthly planets.	The heavenly planets.	The eternal abode of the Supreme Lord.
Objects of Worship	Ghosts and spirits.	Demons, powerful men and self-proclaimed, imitation gods.	The demigods and the impersonal conception of God.	The Supreme Personality of Godhead.
Food	Tasteless, stale, putrid, decomposed, unclean. Cooked more than three hours before being eaten. Remnants of the meals of others. Meat, fish, eggs and liquor.	Too bitter, sour, salty, pungent, rich, dry or hot. Causes pain, distress and disease.	Increases longevity, purifies one's existence, gives strength, health, happiness and satisfaction. Nourishing, sweet, juicy, fattening and palatable. Milk products, grains, sugar, fruit and vegetables.	Frees one from past sinful reactions and protects one from future contamination. Invokes one's dormant Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Prepared by devotees according to scriptural injunctions and offered with devotion to the Supreme Lord. Remnants of the meal of a saintly person or the spiritual master.
Sacrifice	Performed faithlessly, in defiance of scriptural injunctions, and with no spiritual food distributed, no hymns chanted and no remunerations made to the priests.	Performed proudly, ostentatiously, for the sake of some material end or benefit (such as elevation to the heavenly kingdom).	Performed as a duty, according to scriptural regulations, and with no expectation of reward.	Performed according to scriptural injunctions, and under the guidance of the spiritual master, to please the Supreme Lord.
Austerity	Performed foolishly by means of obstinate self-torture or to destroy or injure others.	Performed ostentatiously to gain respect, honor and reverence. Brings only unstable, temporary results.	Performed with faith and without desires for one's material benefit. <i>Bodily Austerities:</i> cleanliness, simplicity, celibacy, nonviolence, offering of respect to the demigods, <i>brāhmanas</i> , spiritual master, and superiors like the mother and father. <i>Austerities of Speech:</i> speaking beneficially, truthfully and inoffensively and with reference to Vedic authorities. <i>Mental Austerities:</i> Serenity, simplicity, gravity, self-control and purity of thought, detaching the mind from sense gratification.	Performed with faith and with a desire to satisfy the Supreme Personality of Godhead.
Charity	Performed at an improper time and place, to an unworthy person like a gambler or drunkard, or contemptuously, without respect.	Performed to get something in return, with a desire for fruitive results, or in a grudging mood.	Performed as a duty, at the proper time and place, to a worthy person and with no expectation of material returns.	Performed only to satisfy the Supreme Lord.
Renunciation	Consists of giving up one's prescribed duties because of illusion.	Consists of giving up one's prescribed duties because of fear or because they appear troublesome.	Consists of performing one's prescribed duties because they ought to be done and abandoning attachment to the fruits of one's work.	Consists of performing one's prescribed duties in Kṛṣṇa consciousness and employing the fruits of one's work for the satisfaction of Kṛṣṇa.
Knowledge	Very meager. Unrelated to the Absolute Truth. Breeds attachment to one kind of work as all in all. Concerned only with bodily comforts, eating, sleeping, mating and defending, and so resembles the knowledge of animals.	Gives rise to speculative doctrines and theories through which one sees the body as the self and consciousness as a temporary by-product of the body. Rules out the existence of the eternal individual soul within.	Gives rise to a vision of one undivided spiritual force within the bodies of all living beings.	Enables one to see all living beings as eternal, individual, spiritual servants of the supreme living being, Kṛṣṇa.
Action	Irresponsible, violent, distressing to others. Performed in illusion, without consideration of scriptural injunctions or future bondage and consequences.	Performed under false egoism, and with great effort, to satisfy one's desires to enjoy the fruits of his work. Results in distress.	Performed under scriptural regulations, and without love and hate, by one who renounces the fruits of his actions. Results in purification.	Performed solely for the satisfaction of Kṛṣṇa and the spiritual master.

RENUNCIATION: The Higher Taste

It's difficult to understand
how someone on the path of
spiritual realization
can reject the things most people
find enjoyable. Renunciation
of worldly pleasure is possible
only if one experiences a
higher satisfaction.

by His Holiness Satsvarūpa dāsa Gosvāmī

Almost everyone, at one time or another, has been attracted by hearing about the activities of renounced, saintly people. Millions have admired the lives of Jesus, Buddha or, in the modern age, Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu because they rejected the pleasures of this world as insignificant and lived for a higher reality. For most of us, however, renunciation of the world is something we may admire in a saint but never undertake ourselves. But why, then, do we admire genuinely saintly people? We admire them because we see that they have reached a fulfillment beyond our grasping attempts for happiness through money and sensual pleasure. For saintly life is based on a superior pleasure principle: if a man can renounce his deep-rooted attachment to material enjoyment, he becomes eligible to taste an even greater happiness. Renunciation, therefore, is intended for every human being.

But advocating personal renunciation is enough to provoke almost everyone's displeasure. A politician who would seriously propose that we live austerely and spend most of our efforts finding spiritual happiness could never win a majority of voters. Often parents become extremely disturbed to learn that their children are becoming interested in spiritual life and giving up coffee, tea and cigarettes, meat eating and illicit sex; they even disown their children for such radical behavior. Marriages split up if the husband or wife becomes dedicated to the Absolute Truth and uninterested in sexual enjoyment. And one who turns away from talking about and planning hopefully for good times in the material world is liable to be completely ostracized from all social groups!

Indeed, renunciation of material pleasure is probably among the most unpopular ideas we could think of. But that is only because people do not understand what it is. Certainly if renunciation is taken to mean "depriving oneself of happiness," no one could expect a sane human being to accept it, nor would we find renounced saints attractive. If renunciation consists of stopping the senses so that one doesn't hear,

see or eat, one couldn't make much of a case for it, any more than one could make a popular argument for suicide. But such uninformed notions of "repression," "giving up life" and "doing without human necessities" fall short of describing true renunciation. For an advanced transcendentalist, renouncing material pleasure is natural, since he rejects inferior pleasure only for something superior. If a man is eating inferior food but someone brings him something very tasty to eat, will his renunciation of the food he was eating be considered sensory deprivation? Of course not. He is simply showing good intelligence. Similarly, renouncing the way of "eat, drink and be merry" is both natural and intelligent, for when one attains the pleasure of spiritual life, he automatically loses his taste for pale things.

High Pressure Propaganda. The materialist, however, considers immediate sensual pleasure the all-in-all, and so for him there is no question of pleasure beyond satisfying his senses and mind. He is concerned not with how to give up the pleasure of the material world, but with how to get as much of it as possible. Because the major civilizations of the present world are materialistic, their mighty propaganda machinery urges us to enjoy our senses fully for as long as we live. Immense moneymaking industries stimulate us to work hard for more and more pleasure. Life has in fact become so complicated that people in all occupations demand higher wages to purchase things they don't even need. Drive downtown in any city in America, and you'll see billboards left and right, most advertising liquor and cigarettes and the rest generally advertising cars, airlines, ice cream or whatever else through implications of sexual pleasure. Thus one is constantly pressured to think, "If I buy this, it will increase my sexual enjoyment." But amid the all-out drive for pleasure through sense gratification, are people really becoming more happy?

In the Sanskrit Vedic literature there is a verse spoken by a saintly king named Rṣabha, saying that the entire "work hard

"In this world, there is nothing so sublime and pure as transcendental knowledge. Such knowledge is the mature fruit of all mysticism. And one who has achieved this enjoys the self within himself in due course of time."—Bhagavad-gītā As It Is



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for pleasure" syndrome is an illusion. Rṣabha was giving advice to his sons at the time of his retirement. "My dear sons," he said, "there is no reason to labor hard for sensual pleasure while in this human form of life, for such pleasure is available even to the stool-eating hogs. Rather, in this life you should undergo penances to purify your existence, and as a result you will be able to enjoy unlimited transcendental bliss."

Sensual pleasures will come automatically to each of us, according to our species and our destiny. These pleasures, Rṣabha says, are "available even to the stool-eating hogs." Certainly the hog takes pleasure in eating, sleeping and sex. And the hog enjoys in its own way, without needing to build educational institutes, read advertisements, purchase goods or work hard in factories. Moreover, Rṣabha says, even if one does work very hard for sensual happiness, he cannot increase the enjoyment for which he is destined. If one earns millions of dollars, that doesn't mean that he can eat more than a poor man. Nor by becoming wealthy or influential can he have more sex than a monkey, who enjoys dozens of mates. We work hard in a technologically advanced culture so that we can sleep on big spring-cushioned mattresses. But a dog sleeps just as soundly in the alley, and the dog also mates without complication whenever it has the urge. Therefore, just as pleasure comes automatically to the animals and just as miseries like those of disease come to us without being sought, so pleasure for our senses will also come automatically, without our having to work day and night for it.

Miseries of Material Life. Not only is the feverish pursuit of pleasure unnecessary, but there is no possibility that anyone can attain lasting happiness in this world, no matter how elaborately one arranges for his comfort. Material life inflicts so many miseries upon us that what we call happiness is really just temporary relief from the continual onslaught of natural miseries. Chiefly these are the miseries of death, disease, old age and rebirth. Also, our very bodies inflict pain upon us, other living entities inflict pain upon us, and so also do natural disasters such as droughts, earthquakes and floods. Whatever happiness we think we have attained is soon ripped away by one of these miseries. Even if one claims to be happy in spite of the miseries, he is still not allowed to stay and enjoy his happiness-mixed-with-misery, for death forces him to leave the scene.

A relevant story concerns the early life of Lord Buddha. Raised as a prince, he led a sheltered existence and never knew anything of the world outside the palace grounds. On the very first day he ventured outside the palace, however, he met a man suffering from a terrible disease. He asked the man what was wrong, and the man replied, "I am afflicted by disease."

"Will I also be afflicted by disease?" asked the young Buddha.

"Yes," the man replied. "Everyone eventually becomes diseased."

Next he met a man debilitated by old age. The sheltered young prince had never seen such an aged person. "What is the matter with you?" he asked.

"I am simply old," the man replied.

"Will I also grow old?"

"Yes, of course."

Finally, Lord Buddha saw a dead body. He was told that this was death and that it would happen to him also. But rather than accept what he saw as "the hard knocks of life," the Buddha entered meditation to understand how one could escape from such suffering.

The human being is unique among the living species because he can seriously inquire: "Why do I have to suffer? Who am I that am subject to so many miseries? How can I get free?" The solution is not to increase material pleasures in a temporary world always filled with misery. But what is the solution? His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda once asked some of his disciples, "If it were possible to live a life of eternal happiness with an endless variety of enjoyment—singing, dancing, loving and eating—wouldn't everyone want that?"

One disciple answered, "But Śrīla Prabhupāda, people don't believe that such a life is possible."

"Never mind that," Śrīla Prabhupāda said. "Whether it is possible we can discuss at another time. But if there could be such a life, would you not find it desirable?"

Unending happiness. That is what King Rṣabha referred to as *brahma-saukhyam*, unlimited bliss. Love, affection, enjoyment with friends eternally. Yes, it would be very desirable! But does such happiness exist?

Before we can understand *brahma-saukhyam*, eternal happiness, we first have to clear away one almost universal misconception. That misconception is the idea that the individual self is the same as the material body. When Rṣabha said, "Become purified and then experience *brahma-saukhyam*," that "purified" involves realizing, "I am not this body. In my real identity, I am a spiritual soul." If one thinks that he is the body and so thinks in terms of material designations—"I am an American," "I am a black man," "a Jew," "a woman" and so on—he remains in ignorance. One should understand that the self is beyond the mind and body.

The Gift of Knowledge. The real gift of saintly persons is that they disseminate knowledge. That knowledge cuts to pieces the network of illusion by which we identify with the material body and material world, which in fact are causing all our suffering. Such knowledge is found in books like *Bhagavad-gītā*, the essence of the Vedic literature of India, which was spoken by Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, thousands of years ago and is still being read and studied today by scholars all over the world. Lord Kṛṣṇa's statements are not dogmatic; they can be considered through reason and logic, and if we hear them carefully they will shed much light on how to become free from suffering.

In *Bhagavad-gītā*, Kṛṣṇa enlightens His disciple Arjuna, who is bewildered because he is thinking in the bodily concept of the self. Kṛṣṇa tells him that the real person is eternal: "As the embodied soul continually passes, in this body, from boyhood to youth to old age, the soul similarly passes into another body at death. The self-realized soul is not bewildered by such a change. . . . For the soul there is never birth nor death. Nor, having once been, does he ever cease to be. He is unborn, eternal, ever-existing, undying and pri-

meval. He is not slain when the body is slain." (Bg. 2.13, 20)

According to the teachings of *Bhagavad-gītā*, we are originally eternal, blissful and full of knowledge as servitors of God. But because we have misused our free will by trying to supersede God, who is the supreme enjoyer, by the supreme will we have been sent to this material world to try to enact our desires. How we have associated with the material nature since time immemorial, transmigrating from one body to another according to our work and desire, forms a very complicated history. But more important than tracing out our long history of sense gratification is the chance that now, in the human form of life, we can become free and return to our original blissful nature. To become free from the suffering of material life, one has to see himself as different from the body and disassociate himself from this material world. Therefore Lord Kṛṣṇa said: "When a man gives up all varieties of sense desire that arise from mental concoction, and when his mind finds satisfaction in the self alone, then he is said to be in pure transcendental consciousness. . . . The embodied soul may be restricted from sense enjoyment, though the taste for sense objects remains. But, ceasing such engagements by experiencing a higher taste, He is fixed in consciousness." (Bg. 2.55, 59)

To realize one's self as a spiritual soul and to find one's relationship with the Supreme Spirit, God, formerly one had to practice difficult methods of *yoga* and meditation involving severe austerities, strict physical and mental discipline, and complete abstinence from sex life. Today these methods are hardly possible, for people are short-lived, little interested in spirituality, and always disturbed by the agitations of civilized life. Consequently for this age the scriptures have prescribed a special method of benediction so that even people accustomed to a materialistic life can discover their spiritually ecstatic loving relationship with God. That method, delivered in Bengal, India, five hundred years ago by Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, is the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. By chanting this *mantra*, which consists of names of the Supreme Lord, one can cleanse the mirror of his mind and lose all the misgivings that have arisen within him due to bodily life. The evidence that the chanting works is shown in the lives of the devotees of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement, whose activities are shown in this magazine. By virtue of the transcendental cleansing effect of chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, young, intelligent, educated men and women all over the world are experiencing spiritual happiness that comes from beyond the mind and senses. Of course, one has to taste it for himself before he can declare, "This is superior," but the evidence from the lives of these devotees is very convincing. A few years ago, they had never heard of *brahma-saukhyam* or Hare Kṛṣṇa, and they were addicted to all sorts of intoxication and sexual indulgence in their search for pleasure and happiness. But now they have easily renounced the most advertised material pleasures with the feeling of "good riddance to rubbish." They have turned their senses toward a higher engagement—serving the senses of the Supreme Lord. (continued on page 24)



R For The Age Of Quarrel

"Chant the names
of the Lord, chant the names
of the Lord, chant the
names of the Lord.

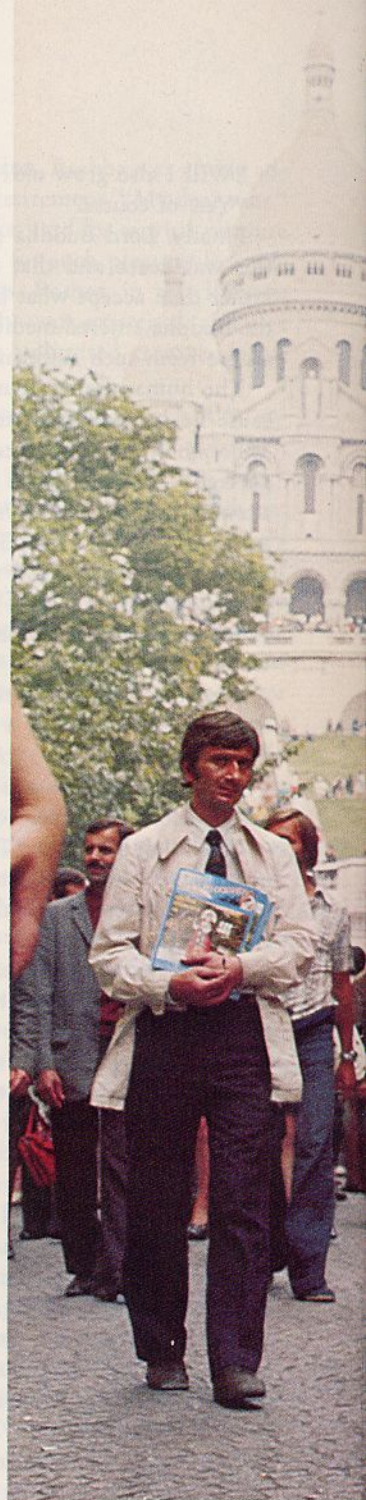
In this age of quarrel
and hypocrisy, there is no
other way, no other way,
no other way."

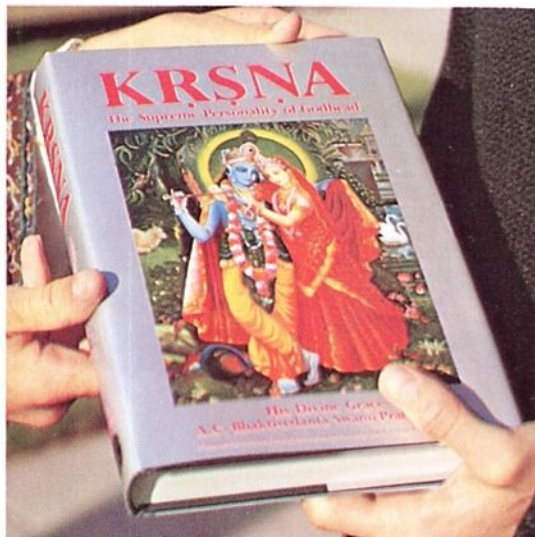
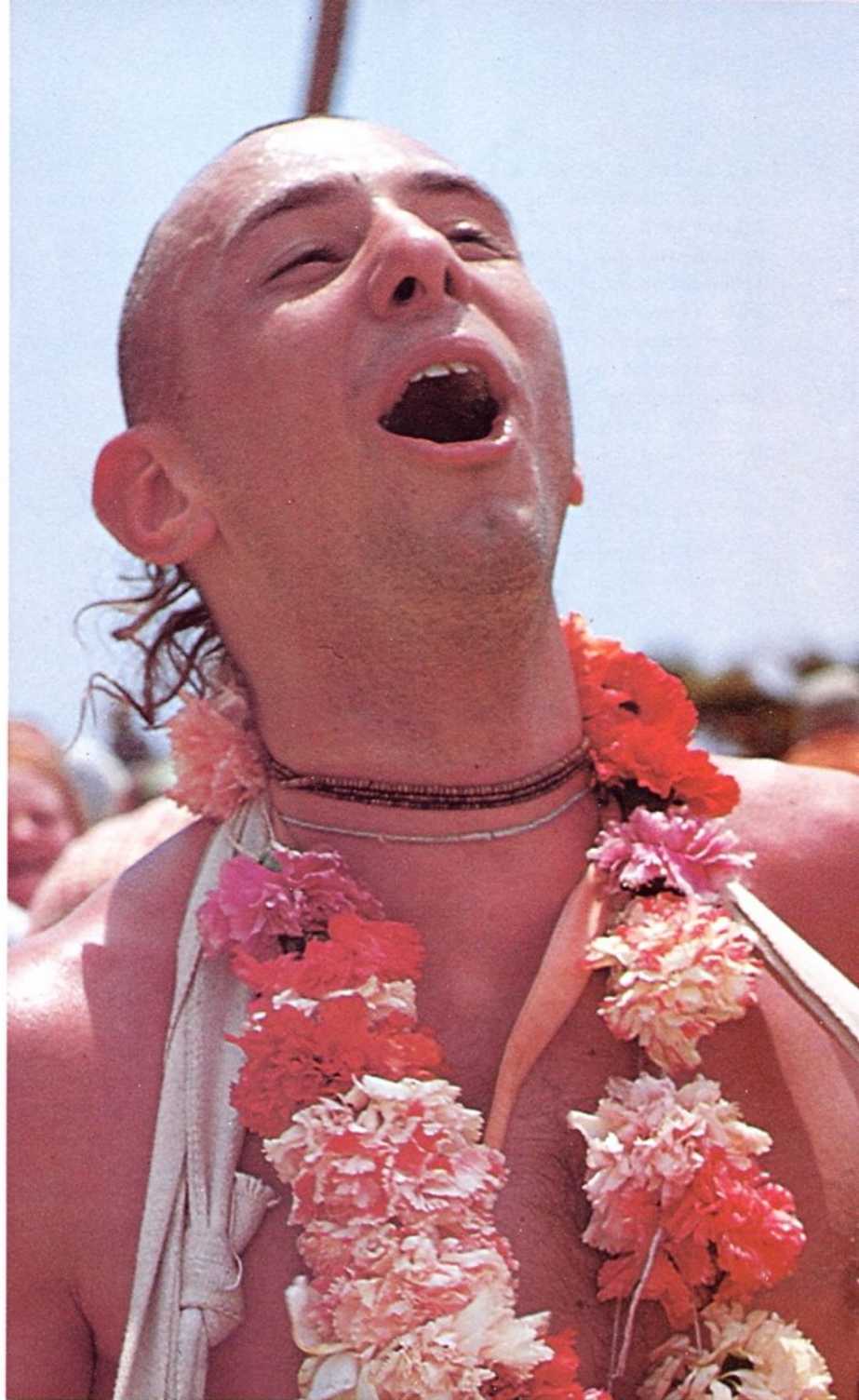
*harer nāma harer nāma
harer nāmaiva kevalam
kalau nāsty eva nāsty eva
nāsty eva gatir anyathā
(Bṛhan-nāradya Purāṇa 38.126)*

BY NOW, the Hare Kṛṣṇa people are a familiar sight on the sidewalks of the world's big cities. As the smiling, robed devotees happily dance to the beat of drum and hand cymbals, the vibration of "Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare" rises over the noises of the street. The newspapers may speak of a "new religion," but the devotees, dancing and chanting among the skyscrapers, can trace what they're doing far, far back to a certain gathering of sages, for instance, in a holy place in India named Naimiṣāraṇya, 5,000 years ago, at the very beginning of the present age. (See "Questions for the Welfare of the World," page 3.)

The sages were greatly concerned about the welfare of the people in this age, who usually know very little about spiritual life and who tend to be caught up in material activities and anxieties. In former ages, people were more inclined toward spiritual realization. But the sages knew that in this age of quarrel and hypocrisy, people would have shorter lives and would be increasingly quarrelsome, lazy, misguided and unlucky, and above all, they would always be disturbed. The sages prophesied, however, that the Lord Himself would descend in the iron age and would flood the entire world with ecstatic love of God by performing "saikīrtana"—the public congregational chanting of the glories of God.

Some 4,500 years later, in 1486, Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu appeared in West Bengal to fulfill their prophecy by inaugurating the *yuga-dharma*—the path of spiritual realization for this age. Lord Caitanya chanted





In Stockholm, Sweden, devotees fill a street with transcendental sound. Above, center: Sāṅkīrtana in Paris, France. Left: To spread a scientific philosophical understanding of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, devotees distribute books such as Bhagavad-gītā As It Is, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

and danced in ecstasy, and He also taught a scientific understanding of God and His energies. Lord Caitanya's process was neither sentimental nor fanatical; it was firmly grounded on the most profound Vedic philosophy. Therefore Lord Caitanya's *saṅkīrtana* movement attracted the greatest logicians and scholars of the day in India, and it continues to attract intelligent and educated people today in the West. Lord Caitanya Himself was brilliant in logic and argument. Nevertheless, He emphasized the simple message of this verse from the Vedic scriptures:

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

"Chant the names of the Lord, chant the names of the Lord, chant the names of the Lord. In this age of quarrel and hypocrisy, there is no other way, no other way, no other way."

Lord Caitanya foretold that every town and village in the world would one day hear this chanting. In 1966, when His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the founder-*ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), arrived on the shores of America, this prophecy began to come true. Śrīla Prabhupāda is a direct descen-

dant in a line of spiritual teachers from Lord Caitanya. And now his students, in every major city of the world, are broadcasting the glories of the Lord, following the essential teachings indicated by the sages of Naimiṣāraṇya 5,000 years ago.

As a direct result of the efforts of ISKCON, the name "Kṛṣṇa" is becoming just as familiar to Westerners as names of God like Jehovah, Buddha, and Allah. Nevertheless, people may still sometimes mistakenly think that Kṛṣṇa is a "new god" or "the Hindu God." Actually, God is one, the father of all living beings. Kṛṣṇa is the same primordial Supreme Being we have always heard about. We may not have heard the name Kṛṣṇa, but since we know that God is unlimited, we can understand that He also has unlimited names. So we shouldn't be surprised to hear a name we haven't heard before. The name Kṛṣṇa is special, however, because it means "all-attractive." We have heard that God is all-knowing and all-powerful, but it has not been very much emphasized that He is all-attractive. Since God is the most outstanding person, however, He must be the most beautiful, the strongest, the richest, the most famous, the wisest and also the most renounced. These are all attractive qualities. So the name Kṛṣṇa—"the all-attractive one"—is practically a definition of God. Once we understand this, we should have no difficulty accepting the name Kṛṣṇa as a genuine name of God. Similarly, "Rāma" is another name of God. It means "the person who is the source of the highest pleasure." And "Hare" is a call to God's energy, which unites us with the Lord in loving devotional service.

To chant God's names is a simple and sublime way to elevate oneself to a fully spiritual life because we can associate with God just by saying His name. Since God is omnipotent, He is actually present in His name, and so when we utter His name, He is immediately with us. This association is extraordinarily beneficial. We naturally pick up the qualities of those with whom we associate. If one associates with drunkards, for example, one may also become a drunkard, and if one associates with thieves, one may also learn to steal. By the same principle, if one associates with God, one can also become godly. In this age, practically everyone is to some extent a victim of bad association, but by the mercy of Lord Caitanya one can immediately come to the platform of the most elevated association, association with the most pure, most exalted person—God Himself—simply by saying His name. Thus one can become free from all impurity and so



Ten years ago, His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda brought the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa to the West.

Above: Śrīla Prabhupāda's Western devotees chanting at a Hare Kṛṣṇa *saṅkīrtana* festival in India. Far right: Glorifying Kṛṣṇa in New Orleans.

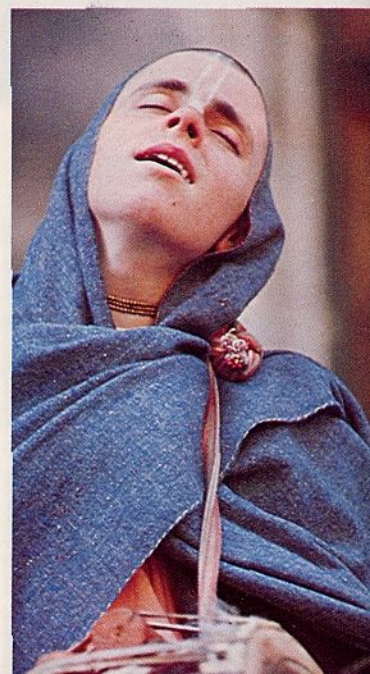
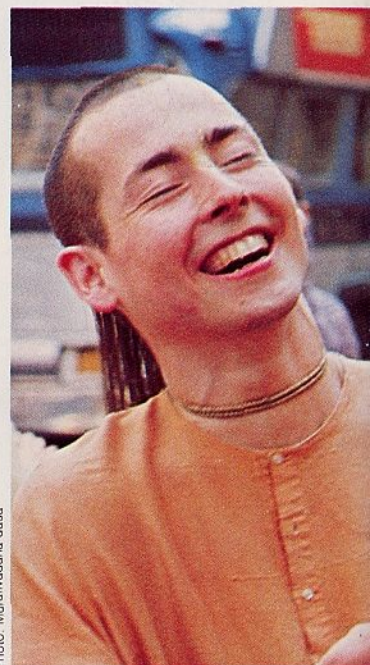
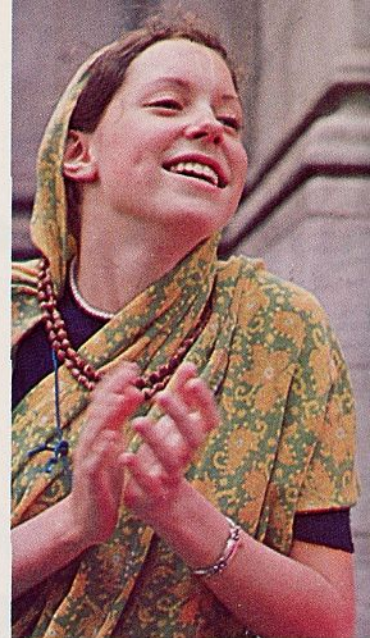
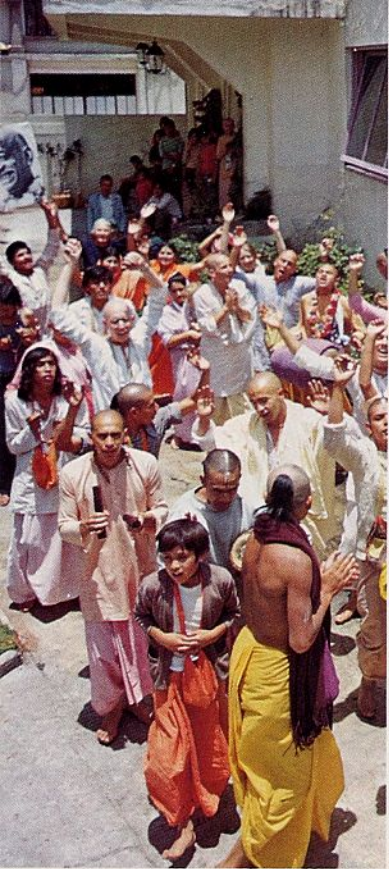


Photo: Muralivadana dāsa





Devotees chant Hare Kṛṣṇa in Mexico City

become fully joyful. The personal lives of the devotees chanting on the streets afford practical evidence of the purity that results from Kṛṣṇa consciousness; because they have intelligently taken up the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa, they are no longer bedeviled by the vices of this age.

Lord Caitanya instructed His followers to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa wherever people gather. Thus everyone can benefit by association with God, simply by hearing His names while passing by, or by remembering them later on. Formerly, people used to frequent temples, churches or mosques, but this custom is now rapidly dying out. God is so merciful, however, that if people will not come to Him, He will go to them. This is the essence of *saṅkīrtana*.

When people see the devotees chanting, they usually wonder why the devotees dress so distinctively. After all, they say, spirituality belongs to the soul, not the body. The answer is that the body is also God's and so should be used in His service. To remind people of God is a service to God. When people see a devotee, with saffron robes, shaved head and *tilaka*, a mark of devotion, on his forehead, they naturally think of Kṛṣṇa, and they even say, "Oh! Hare Kṛṣṇa." Thus a devotee, simply by

his appearance, reminds one of God and inspires one to chant the holy name of God.

A chanting party usually includes devotees who distribute books and BACK TO GOD-HEAD magazines. This literature presents the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness in depth, so that one can study it carefully and understand it. Such literature is full of glorification of God, and therefore reading it is just as spiritually beneficial as chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Devotees also pass out food (usually sweets) that has been offered to Kṛṣṇa. Such food is called *kr̥ṣṇa-prasāda*. This is also Kṛṣṇa's mercy because that food has been prepared for Kṛṣṇa and offered to Kṛṣṇa and therefore has become spiritualized. By eating such sanctified food, one gradually purifies one's consciousness and is relieved of the reactions of past sinful activities. In New York City alone, some 20,000 people a week get one of the transcendental sweets the devotees distribute.

So in these ways—by chanting and dancing, by distributing transcendental literature, and by handing out spiritual food—the devotees of the *saṅkīrtana* movement are making the pleasure of Kṛṣṇa consciousness easily available to people throughout the entire world.

(continued from page 19)

A Higher Taste. Of course, one may like the way of the Kṛṣṇa conscious devotes without wanting to follow it himself. "Chanting is nice," one may say. "Living simply is nice. But how can I think of shaving my head, giving up my wife, my family and my job or giving up my responsibilities in the world?" If one thinks in this way, he is still mistaking renunciation for something negative, like going off to the mountains to live as a frustrated hermit. But renunciation doesn't mean no wife, no children, no food, no enjoyment. It means giving up doing things selfishly in ignorance, thinking that the self is the body, and instead doing everything for Kṛṣṇa. As Kṛṣṇa says in *Bhagavad-gītā*: "All that you do, all that you eat, all that you offer and give away, as well as all austerities that you may perform, should be done as an offering to Me. In this way you will be freed from all reactions to good and evil deeds, and by this principle of renunciation you will be liberated and come to Me." (Bg. 9.27-28)

As long as we are in the material world, to live we have to satisfy our senses, but we should regulate them by offering all our activities to the Supreme. Because our misconceptions and materialistic habits run deep, we need to hear patiently about renunciation from a genuine spiritual master. If one thus understands that he is a tiny living entity who possesses nothing and who therefore has nothing to renounce, he won't be afraid of losing out by giving everything to the Supreme. Thus he will be eligible to transcend the frenetic race for sense gratification and taste nectar even in this life. And if he develops full love of God, at the end of this lifetime he will

transcend the material world and join with Kṛṣṇa in the kingdom of God.

We have admired the renunciation attained by great saints throughout history. That same spirit of renunciation is to be found in those who are devoted to chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. Certainly the present civilizations of the world are anti-renunciation and all for enjoying. But their promises of happiness through increased material indulgence are nothing more than a hoax. Where disease, old age, death and rebirth are repeatedly enforced upon one, how can one be happy? And after having acted whimsically for sense gratification, where will one go in his next life? The materialist closes his eyes to this like a scared rabbit faced with danger and says, "There is no next life. I can do whatever I want. At death it will all be over." But a human being is meant to consider life more fully and not just seek to enjoy like a hog. If there is a way to transcend even death and to live forever in happiness, our duty is to inquire about it fully. Therefore the compassionate message of *Bhagavad-gītā* is intended for our study, under the guidance of a realized spiritual master. The only real goal, the only challenge, for a spirited human being is how he and his fellow man can transcend the miseries of material life and find eternal happiness. If one simply steps onto this auspicious path of inquiring into the self and the way back to Godhead, he at once feels such purified pleasure that he shakes off the misbegotten hankerings and lamentations that beset all conditioned souls. By thus throwing away all that is inauspicious in favor of tangible happiness on the way to the Supreme, one arrives at true renunciation.



Attraction For The Message of Kṛṣṇa

by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

IN HUMAN SOCIETY there is always some kind of religious institution. One's religion is called *dharma*, faith. *Dharma*, precisely, is one's constitutional and functional duty. The essence of real religion is the rendering of service to God. However, we have manufactured many different religions in society according to the countries and circumstances. It is stated in this verse, therefore, that one may execute any type of religious principle, but the result should be that one achieves perfection. Now, one may say that he is perfectly

*dharmah svanuṣṭitah puṁsām
viṣvaksena-kathāsu yah
notpādayed yadi ratim
śrama eva hi kevalam*

“Duties [*dharma*] executed by men, regardless of occupation, are only so much useless labor if they do not provoke attraction for the message of the Supreme Lord.”

(*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, 1.2.8)

executing the principles of his religion as found in the Bible or Koran, and that is all very good, but what is the result? The result should be that one increases

his desire or tendency to hear about God.

Such a desire does not occur, however, if one's religion is impersonal. Generally people believe that God has no form. But if He has no form, how can one hear about His activities? Simply formless, formless, formless. How long can one go on thinking like that? If God is formless, our hearing about Him is finished. God is not formless. He has His form, and He is a person. He also has His activities. As the Supreme Lord Himself says in *Bhagavad-gītā*:

janma karma ca me divyam
 evam yo veti tattvatah
 tyaktvā dehaṁ punar janma
 naiti mām eti so 'rjuna

“One who knows the transcendental nature of My appearance and activities does not, upon leaving the body, take his birth again in this material world, but attains My eternal abode.” (Bg. 4.9)

Although *janma*, birth or appearance, is mentioned here, neither God nor the living entity actually takes birth. They are both *ajāḥ*, unborn. As stated in the Second Chapter of *Bhagavad-gītā*:

na jāyate mriyate vā kadācin
 nāyaṁ bhūtvā bhavitā vā na bhūyaḥ
 ajo nityaḥ śāsvato 'yaṁ purāṇo
 na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre

“For the soul there is never birth nor death. Nor, having once been, does he ever cease to be. He is unborn, eternal, ever-existing, undying and primeval. He is not slain when the body is slain.” (Bg. 2.20)

What, then, are death and birth as we know them? These words simply refer to the changes of the body. In fact, every night we die. The gross body remains inactive on the bed while the subtle body takes us away to dreamland. This is proof that we have two types of body—a gross and a subtle body. The subtle body is composed of mind, intelligence and ego. A foolish person cannot see or accept the subtle body, but the subtle body is there. Everyone accepts the presence of mind, intelligence and ego, so in that sense everyone accepts the subtle body. We work with them daily, but we cannot see them. Death involves the leaving of the gross body by the subtle body, which carries the individual away. Thus the living entity leaves one body and takes on another. The soul transmigrates from one gross body to another gross body, keeping the subtle body intact, and the subtle body is given up when one is liberated. When one gives up the subtle body also, he is promoted to the spiritual kingdom and attains a spiritual body. Therefore while living in the gross body, we have to educate the subtle body in such a way that it becomes completely spiritualized.

Overcoming False Ego. The subtle body, as stated, is composed of mind, in-

“Ego means ‘I am,’ and
 false ego means ‘I am
 American, I am
 European, I am Indian, I
 am a human being, and
 so on.’”

telligence and ego. We should therefore always think of Kṛṣṇa in our minds, and we should also employ our intelligence in working for Kṛṣṇa. We should also change our false ego. Ego means “I am,” and false ego means “I am American, I am European, I am Indian, I am a human being, and so on.” This false “I am” has to be changed to “I am an eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa.” If one can thus educate or transfer the activities of the subtle body—mind, intelligence and ego—one can give up the material subtle body at the time of death. One can then attain a spiritual body and go back home, back to Godhead. This is the process of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. At death one automatically gives up the gross body; now we should practice giving up the subtle body. To give up the subtle body, one has to develop love of God.

In the beginning of this process one must have some faith or respect. For instance, you have come to this temple out of faith and respect. We do not discuss politics, sociology or anything else here. Our business is simply to talk about God. Those who discuss God are called *santas*, saintly persons. There are two types of men in the world—materialists and transcendentalists. Those who are interested in spiritual life talk of self-realization, and those who are materialistic talk about the body and things that pertain to the body—politics, sociology, welfare activities and so on. A materialistic person will read the newspaper, but a transcendentalist will read authorized books of Vedic wisdom like *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. It was the great sage Śukadeva Gosvāmī who told Parīkṣit Mahārāja: “My dear King, there are many hundreds and thousands of topics for the materialistic person.” This is a fact, as we can easily observe. There are so many novels, magazines, newspapers, so-called philosophies, cinemas and so on. Because materialists have no information about the soul, they are always talking about the body, or, at most, they philosophically discuss the

mind. One philosopher theorizes one thing, and another philosopher theorizes something completely different. Thus a great deal of literature is generated, but it is all nonsense because it is mental speculation. I may speculate in one way, and you will speculate in another; you will refute me, and I will refute you. Therefore there are so many various points of view about the body and mind. Why do people engage in all this talk? Śukadeva Gosvāmī says that it is because they have no vision of the soul.

Those who are interested simply in maintaining the body are called *grhamedhi*. Generally atheistic men have no interest in God. Atheists were present, of course, many thousands of years ago. In fact, two classes of men are always living in this world—atheists and theists, or *asuras* and *devas*. One should not think that atheism is some sudden new development. The number of atheists may be increased at the present moment, but they were also present thousands of years ago. For instance, there was Cārvāka Muni. The word *muni* refers to a mental speculator or thoughtful person. Cārvāka Muni also presented his philosophy of atheism: “As long as you live,” he said, “live very joyfully and enjoy your senses.” This is the atheistic principle. In India, sense enjoyment is based on ghee, clarified butter. If one has butter, he can prepare many nice foodstuffs. If one goes to India, he can see that many *āśramas* offer sweets and good foodstuffs prepared from grain, fruit, sugar and butter. This is part of the basic principle of materialistic life—eating, sleeping, defending and mating. Thus Cārvāka Muni advises that we eat very nicely and enjoy our senses. This is atheistic philosophy.

Running the Risk of Death. Such a so-called philosopher has no vision of the soul, which is transmigrating in the 8,400,000 species of life. But the atheists do not care about such transmigrations. Even if they are informed that if they act in such a way they will become trees in their next life, they say, “It doesn’t matter. Let me enjoy.” Or they say, “If I become a tree, what is the harm? I will forget.” People have become so hardened that they have lost their self-interest. One may tell a child, “You are always playing and not

**“Scientists in the
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receiving any education. For this you will suffer. You will have no position in society.” But the child will say, “I do not care.” This child may speak in this way out of his ignorance, but the risk is still there. Similarly, one may deny the transmigration of the soul, but the materialistic way one is acting will assure one a body in the lower species—animal, aquatic or reptile.

By ignoring such facts, people do not show very good intelligence. One can easily understand that the transmigration of the soul is a natural fact. At this stage in our lives we accept past, present and future. One has had his past as a child or a boy, and now he may be a young man, and in the future old age is waiting. There is past, present and future in all stages of life. Just because one is an old man, one should not think that there is no future. We have experienced the past, and we are experiencing the present, so there must be a future also. For an old man—or for anyone, actually—there must be a future, and that future means taking another body, the body of either an animal, a man, or a demigod. As stated in *Bhagavad-gītā*, one can prepare himself for the next body. The ultimate goal, however, is to attain a body in the kingdom of God.

*karma-jam buddhi-yuktā hi
phalam tyaktvā manīṣiṇaḥ
janma-bandha-vinirmuktāḥ
padam gacchanty anāmayaṃ*

“The wise, engaged in devotional service, take refuge in the Lord and free themselves from the cycle of birth and death by renouncing the fruits of action in the material world. In this way they can attain that state beyond all miseries.” (Bg. 2.51)

Leaving the Material World. One may attain a body in a wealthy family, or one may attain the body of a king or a cat, and all this depends on one’s work. Just as this is possible, one can attain a body that will enable one to associate with God, Kṛṣṇa. As Lord Kṛṣṇa says in *Bhagavad-gītā*:

*anta-kāle ca mām eva
smaran muktvā kalevaram
yaḥ prayāti sa mad-bhāvam
yāti nāsty atra saṁśayaḥ*

“And, whoever, at the time of death, quits his body, remembering Me alone, at once attains My nature. Of this there is no doubt.” (Bg. 8.5)

Devotees of Kṛṣṇa go to Him at the time of death. And what is the advantage of going to Kṛṣṇa? *Mām upetya tu kaunteya punar janma na vidyate*: “One who attains to My abode, O son of Kuntī, never takes birth again.” (Bg. 8.16) One who attains Kṛṣṇa never has to return again to the material world, which is temporary and full of misery. *Ābrahma-bhuvanāl lokāḥ punar āvartino ’juna*: “From the highest planet in the material world down to the lowest, all are places of misery wherein repeated birth and death take place.” (Bg. 8.16). One may think that he may make adjustments and rid himself of the material miseries, but even if he succeeds in doing this, nature will not allow him to live in the material world permanently. One may think, “I am an American. I have enough land, money and resources. I shall simply live as an American.” But one may live as an American only for seventy years or one hundred at the utmost. No one is allowed to live permanently as an American, European, Indian or whatever. Even Brahmā, the topmost living entity in the material world, cannot remain as Brahmā. Although one day of Brahmā contains millions of earth years, Brahmā cannot remain indefinitely. Nor can an ant, cat, elephant or man. There is no demigod who is allowed to live forever. Of course, Hiraṇyakaśipu underwent severe penances in an attempt to live forever and become immortal in his material body, but it was not possible. Scientists in the present age may claim that by scientific endeavor man may become immortal, but this is lunacy. There was never such an incident in the past, nor is such an incident observable in the present, so how can we expect it in the future? It is not possible.

An intelligent person should therefore try to attain the ultimate transmigration—back home, back to Godhead.

This should be the actual aim of life. Unfortunately, people do not know this; therefore we are trying to render our humble service to human society by imparting this information. People are trying to become happy in so many ways, but instead of becoming happy, they are becoming “hippie.” *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* therefore has an important message for everyone.

Developing A Taste. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* herein states that the way to become actually happy is to develop the propensity to hear about topics that relate to God. One may execute his religious functions very dutifully, but attraction for messages about the Supreme Lord is absolutely essential. For instance, we have this temple and are worshiping Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities. That is fine, but at the same time we must develop our desire to hear about Kṛṣṇa; otherwise the worship will dwindle after a few days. The process is *śravaṇam, kīrtanam, smaraṇam, arcanam*—hearing and chanting about Kṛṣṇa, remembering Him and serving Him. As soon as people lose their propensity to hear about the pastimes of God, all these churches, temples and mosques will become empty. In the Christian world—not only Christian, but others also—this is happening. They are having to close up churches because no one is attending. Going to church officially on Sunday without enlightenment, without understanding God, will not last long. People will become uninterested and stop going. In Los Angeles, for instance, we have purchased one church. Even when that church was open, no one was attending, but since we have purchased it, hundreds of people are coming every day. This is because the words of Kṛṣṇa are present. People are actually hearing about Kṛṣṇa. Religion may have its churches, temples and mosques, but if so-called religious people do not develop a desire to hear about God, it will all go in vain, for religious activities are only so much useless labor if they do not provoke attraction for the message of the Supreme Lord.

Thus if we do not develop the propensity to hear about God, we have wasted our time. Going and coming simply become labor. Therefore in churches or temples there must be regular recitations about the pastimes, activities and nature

**“Going to
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of God. If this is not there, people will lose interest, and the temples will have to close. Talks of God are here in Kṛṣṇa consciousness because our God is not impersonal or void. Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Person, and we can actually see how He stands and how He enjoys Himself with His eternal consort and lover, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī.

The Supreme Lover. Here, then, is God. God is not engaged in punishing someone, at least not the original God. God is engaged in enjoying Himself with His eternal consort. Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī is enchanting Kṛṣṇa, and Kṛṣṇa is enchanting Rādhārāṇī. This is the only business of God. In the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* it is said that when Kṛṣṇa comes before Rādhārāṇī, she becomes so engaddened upon seeing the beauty of Kṛṣṇa that She actually becomes more beautiful, and as soon as Rādhārāṇī becomes more beautiful, Kṛṣṇa becomes engaddened and becomes more beautiful. Thus unlimitedly there is competition between Them to become more and more beautiful. In the spiritual world everything is unlimited; therefore both Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are becoming unlimitedly beautiful, and both of Them are enjoying unlimitedly. This is Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Similarly, if we develop our propensity to hear about God and His activities with His cowherd boy friends and girl friends, with His mother, father and teacher, we will be acting for our greatest self-interest.

This material world is but a perverted reflection of that spiritual life, and here also we find that we have girl friends, boy friends, mothers and fathers and teachers, but here everything is an imitation. The relationships there are also found here and vice versa. But because the relationships here between father and son, lover and beloved, friend and friend, master and servant and so on are material, they do not stand. I may be a person's servant, but if he does not pay me a salary, I will not stay. I may be someone's friend, but if my interest is not fulfilled, I give up that friendship. My love with a boy or girl may be there, but as soon as there is some discrepancy, there is separation or divorce. Thus everything here is perverted by false ideas. All these relationships, however, are present in the kingdom of God in our

relationship with God. There all these relationships are eternal. Becoming servants of God, we enjoy with Him eternally as our master. By becoming friends of God, we enjoy eternal friendship. By becoming father or mother of God, we can enjoy parental affection between father and son or mother and son. And by becoming lovers of God, we become eternally happy.

Unless we hear about this, how can our desire to return to God become intensified? Only when a person hears of a foreign country and learns something about it does he desire to go there. So, to desire to return to Godhead, we first have to hear about the kingdom of God. To give us this information, Kṛṣṇa comes and manifests His pastimes in Vṛndāvana. There He shows us how He deals with His friends and servants, with His mother and father, and with His lovers. This is God's mercy by which we may become inclined to go back to God. The purpose of our religious duties should therefore be to develop our propensity to hear about God.

Spontaneous Attraction. *Notpādayed yadi ratim.* The word *ratim* means attraction, or, actually, the word *rati* means sexual appetite. The Gosvāmīs explain *rati* in this way: when a young boy and girl meet, their sexual desire immediately becomes agitated. This does not have to be taught to them. It is natural. This is called *rati*, spontaneous attraction. So, as soon as there is spontaneous attraction to hear about God, we should know that perfection is being attained. If we are attending some hackneyed program in a church or mosque but not developing such attraction to hear about God, then all attendance is useless.

To develop such attraction, one should associate with a *sādhu*, that is, one who is acting on behalf of Kṛṣṇa. One who acts for Kṛṣṇa is automatically pious or *sādhu*. God is pure, and those who are acting for God are pious. Each and every activity in our Kṛṣṇa consciousness

temples is a pious activity. As soon as one associates with pious devotees, one will be inclined to act like them. This is actually taking place in our program, for our students are chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*, dressing in such a way, worshiping in such a way, reading these Vedic literatures, and so on. One should therefore first attend the temple, associate with the devotees and gradually increase his desire to become like the devotees. Then one may approach the spiritual master for initiation. In this way one can take to devotional service, and as soon as one does, all *anarthas*, unwanted things, are finished. What are these unwanted things? Illicit sex. Why illicit? If sex is wanted, then we get married. Meat-eating. Why eat such rotten things as dead animals, which are kept in refrigerators for years? We have sweetmeats and *halavah*, nice fruits and vegetables—so many things. Intoxication. Why drink or smoke? It has already been established that these things are injurious to one's health. Gambling. Why throw away all of our money? We can utilize it properly in the service of Kṛṣṇa. So all of these are unwanted things, and we have become habituated to them through practice. However, if we become devotees and render service to Kṛṣṇa under the direction of the spiritual master, these things will automatically vanish. In this way our faith becomes established. And what is the result of this?

*bhaktiyā māṃ abhijānāti
yāvān yaś cāsmi tattvataḥ
tato māṃ tattvato jñātvā
viśate tad-anantaram*

“One can understand the Supreme Personality as He is only by devotional service. And when one is in full consciousness of the Supreme Lord by such devotion, he can enter into the kingdom of God.” (Bg. 18.55)

In the execution of religious principles we must observe so many formulas, but the ultimate end should be that we develop spontaneous attraction for hearing about God. This is actually wanted. We should not become showbottles of religious life. We should actually try to understand what is religion and what is God and in this way make our lives successful.



KṚṢṆA

The Supreme Personality of Godhead

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

“One of the *gopīs*, namely Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, was so much absorbed in thoughts of Kṛṣṇa by dint of Her personal touch with Him that She actually began to talk with a bumblebee. While the other *gopīs* were talking with Kṛṣṇa’s messenger Uddhava, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī took that

bumblebee to be a messenger from Kṛṣṇa and began to talk with it. ‘My dear friend, I welcome you,’ She said. ‘You have come to take Me to Kṛṣṇa.’ ”

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