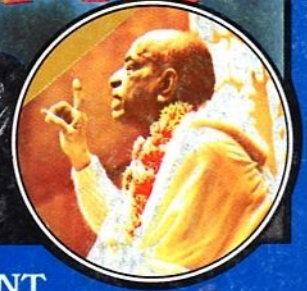


Godhead is light. Nescience is darkness. Where there is Godhead there is no nescience.



# BACK TO GODHEAD



Vol.10 No. 9

THE MAGAZINE OF THE HARE KRISHNA MOVEMENT





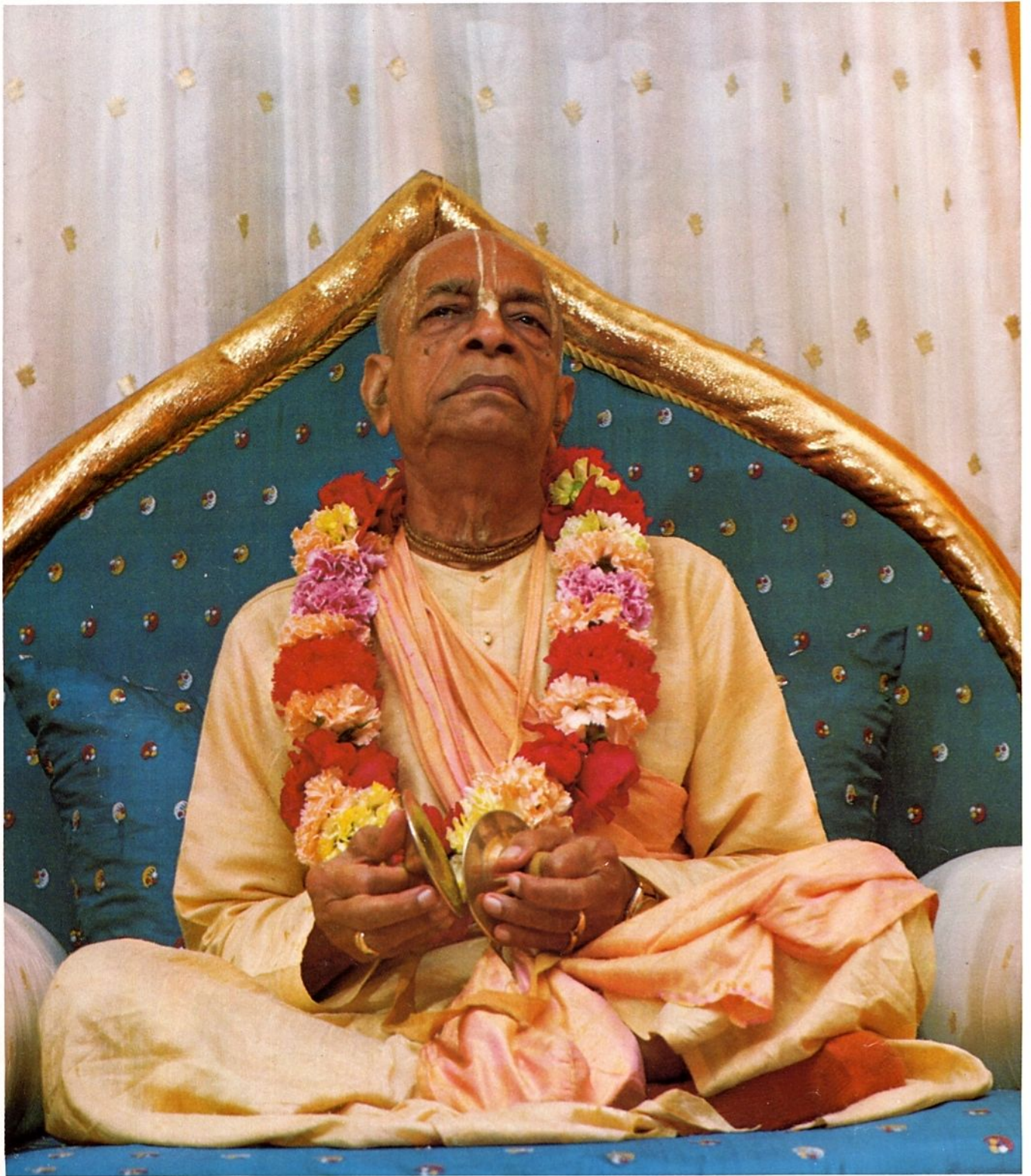


Photo: Viśākha dēvi dāsi

**His Divine Grace**  
**A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda**

Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness





Photo: Visākha devī dāśī

*Devotees at the newly acquired Berkeley center of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.*

**In Berkeley, California, and  
around the world . . .**

**HARE KṚṢṂA  
HARE KṚṢṂA  
KṚṢṂA KṚṢṂA  
HARE HARE**

**HARE RĀMA  
HARE RĀMA  
RĀMA RĀMA  
HARE HARE**

Once you've heard it, you'll never forget it. You may not know what the words mean—nevertheless there's something captivating about the Hare Kṛṣṇa chant. Is it the catchy tune, or the fascinating way in which the words are repeated and reversed? People who chant Hare Kṛṣṇa say both contribute to its appeal. But they know that the secret of the chant's attraction is the quality of the sound itself.

Anyone can take three words and make a song out of them, combining them in a clever way. But can that concoction be meditated on all day and night? Would the chanters of those words report, as do the chanters of Hare Kṛṣṇa, that the practice is freeing them from anxiety, opening up their minds to a liberated view of themselves, and investing them with blissfulness? No, of course not. The invented litany would only drive its creators to distraction.

But the sound of Hare Kṛṣṇa is so enriching that a whole culture has been founded on it. Furthermore, the people who chant Hare Kṛṣṇa are developing good character, gaining knowledge of both the material and spiritual worlds, and helping other people to be free from pain. There is, then, a special quality to the sound of Hare Kṛṣṇa. What is it?

The words Hare, Kṛṣṇa and Rāma have a special quality because they are seeds of pure spiritual consciousness. They are not a product of an earthbound language changing through the centuries. They are names of God, as ceaselessly energetic as God Himself. When you pronounce these sounds, you are propelled into your eternal position as a particle of spiritual energy, a person living in a transcendental nature. Hare Kṛṣṇa reveals to you the person you really are.

Read more about Kṛṣṇa consciousness in this issue of **BACK TO GODHEAD**.



# BACK TO GODHEAD

THE MAGAZINE OF THE HARE KRISHNA MOVEMENT

Vol. 10 No.9

## FOUNDER

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

His Divine Grace

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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 *a* is like the *a* in *far* and held twice as long as the short *a*, and *e* is like the *a* in *evade*. Long *i* is like the *i* in *pique*. The vowel *r* is pronounced like the *ri* in the English word *ring*. The *ṛ* 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 *ś* is like the *s* in *sun*. So pronounce *Kṛṣṇa* as *KRISHNA* and *Caitanya* as *CHAITANYA*.

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## ON THE COVER

When Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and His brother Balarama descended from the spiritual world five thousand years ago, they played just like human beings. Disguised in this way, they performed many superhuman acts.

Illustration: Bhadrāraja dāsa

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The continuing presentation of India's great spiritual classic. Translation and commentary by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swamī Prabhupāda.

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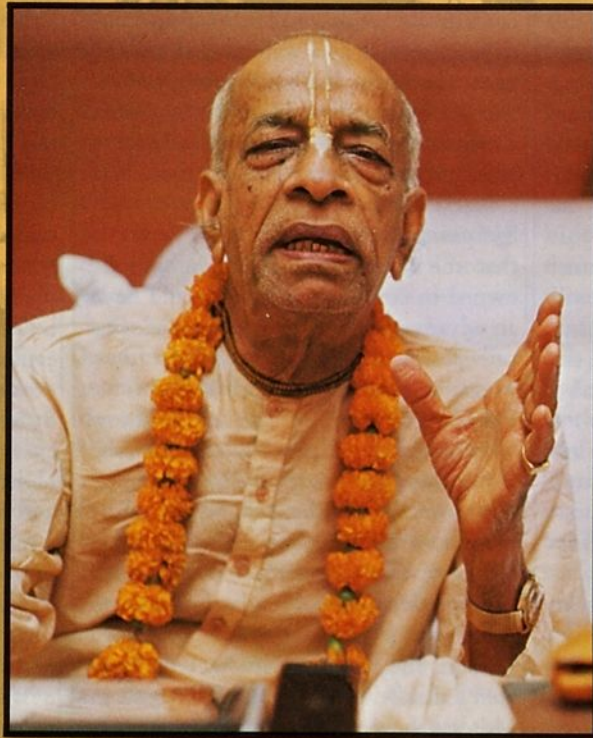
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**Communism can't work the way Karl Marx outlined it in his famous Manifesto. His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda explains why Kṛṣṇa, not the state, must be the center of a truly perfect and classless society.**

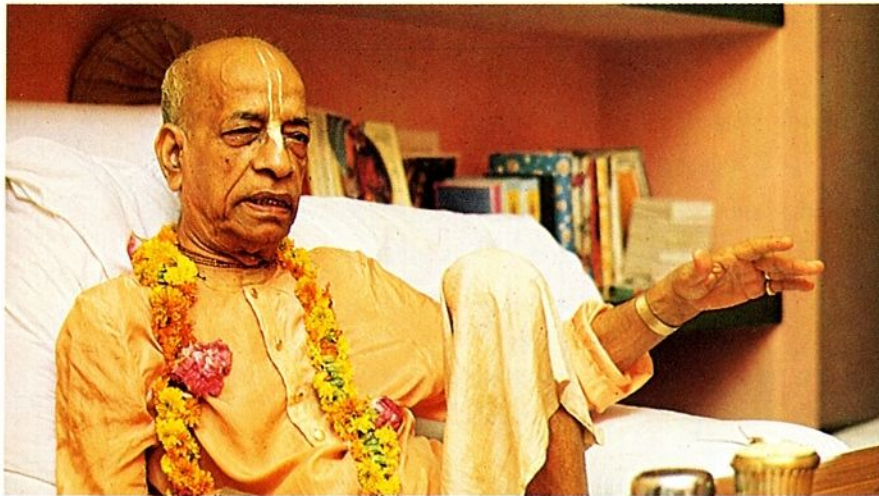
# Everything Belongs to God



Three years ago His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda held a series of conversations with his personal secretary, Śyāmasundara dāsa. The subject was Western philosophy, and their talks ranged over the vast array of thought which 2000 years has produced. Śrīla Prabhupāda

pointed out the points of value—and the inevitable defects—in the philosophies of Plato, Schopenhauer, Hegel, Kant, Darwin, and many others. Part of a forthcoming book, the following excerpt on Karl Marx explains how spiritual communism is the true perfection of society.





**“The Communists have not created a classless society. We have seen in Moscow how a poor woman will wash the streets while her boss sits comfortably in his car. So where is the classless society ?”**

**Śyāmasundara:** Karl Marx contended that philosophers have only interpreted the world; the point is to change it. His philosophy is often called “dialectical materialism” because it comes from the dialectic of George Hegel—thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. When applied to society, his philosophy is known as communism. His idea is that for many generations, the bourgeoisie (the property owners), have competed with the proletariat (the working class), and this conflict will terminate in the communist society. In other words, the workers will overthrow the capitalistic class and establish a so-called dictatorship of the proletariat, which will finally become a classless society.

**Prabhupāda:** But how is a classless society possible? Men naturally fall into different classes. Your nature is different from mine, so how can we artificially be brought to the same level?

**Śyāmasundara:** His idea is that human nature, or ideas, are molded by the means of production. Therefore everyone can be trained to participate in the classless society.

**Prabhupāda:** Then training is required?

**Śyāmasundara:** Yes.

**Prabhupāda:** And what will be the center of training for this classless society? What will be the motto?

**Śyāmasundara:** The motto is “From each according to his ability, to each according to his need.” The idea is that everyone would contribute something, and everyone would get what he needed.

**Prabhupāda:** But everyone’s contribution is different. A scientific man contributes something, and a philosopher contributes something else. The cow contributes milk, and the dog contributes service as a watchdog. Even the trees, the birds, the beasts—everyone—is contributing something. So, by nature a reciprocal arrangement is already there among social classes. How can there be a classless society?

**Śyāmasundara:** Well, Marx’s idea is that the means of production will be owned in common. No one would have an advantage over anyone else, and thus one person could not exploit another. Marx is thinking in terms of profit.

**Prabhupāda:** First we must know what profit actually is. For example, the American hippies already had “profit.” They were from the best homes, their fathers were rich—they had everything. Yet they were not satisfied; they rejected it. No, this idea of a classless society based on profit-sharing is imperfect. Besides, the Communists have not created a classless society. We have seen in Moscow how a poor woman will wash the streets while her boss sits comfortably in his car. So where is the classless society? As long as society is maintained, there must be some higher and lower classification. But if the central point of society is one, then whether one works in a lower or a higher position, he doesn’t care. For example, our body has different parts—the head, the legs, the hands—but everything works for the stomach.

**Śyāmasundara:** Actually, the Russians supposedly have the same idea: they claim the common worker is just as glorious as the top scientist or manager.

**Prabhupāda:** But in Moscow we have seen that not everyone is satisfied. One boy who came to us was very unhappy because in Russia young boys are not allowed to go out at night.

**Śyāmasundara:** The Russian authorities would say that he has an improper understanding of Marxist philosophy.

**Prabhupāda:** That “improper understanding” is inevitable. They will never be able to create a classless society because, as I have already explained, everyone’s mentality is different.

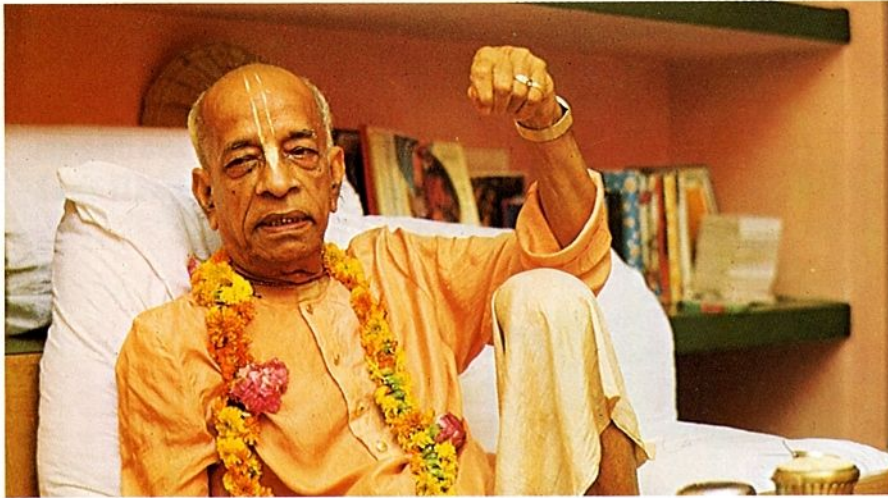
**Śyāmasundara:** Marx says that if everyone is engaged according to his abilities in a certain type of production, and everyone works for the central interest, then everyone’s ideas will become uniform.

**Prabhupāda:** Therefore we must find out the real central interest. In our International Society for Krishna Consciousness, everyone has a central interest in Kṛṣṇa. Therefore one person is speaking, another person is typing, another is going to the press or washing the dishes, and no one is grudging, because they are all convinced they are serving Kṛṣṇa.

**Śyāmasundara:** Marx’s idea is that the center is the state.

**Prabhupāda:** But the state cannot be perfect. If the Russian state is perfect, then why was Khrushchev driven from power? He was elected premier. Why was he driven from power?





**“Why should a sweeper be satisfied seeing someone else in the administrative post? He will think, ‘He is forcing me to work as a sweeper in the street while he sits comfortably in a chair.’”**

**Śyāmasundara:** Because he was not fulfilling the aims of the people.

**Prabhupāda:** Well, then, what is the guarantee the next premier will do that? There is no guarantee. The same thing will happen again and again. Because the center, Khrushchev, was imperfect, people begrudged their labor. The same thing is going on in non-Communist countries as well. The government is changed, the prime minister is deposed, the president is impeached. So what is the real difference between Russian Communism and other political systems? What is happening in other countries is also happening in Russia, only they call it by a different name. When we talked with Professor Kotofsky of Moscow University, we told him he had to surrender: either he must surrender to Kṛṣṇa, or to Lenin, but he must surrender. He was taken aback at this.

**Śyāmasundara:** From studying history, Marx concluded that the characteristics of culture, the social structure, and even the thoughts of the people are determined by the means of economic production.

**Prabhupāda:** How does he account for all the social disruption in countries like America, which is so advanced in economic production?

**Śyāmasundara:** He says that capitalism is a decadent form of economic production because it relies on the exploitation of one class by another.

**Prabhupāda:** But there is exploitation in the Communist countries also.

Khrushchev was driven out of power because he was exploiting his position. He was giving big government posts to his son and son-in-law.

**Śyāmasundara:** He was deviating from the doctrine.

**Prabhupāda:** But since any leader can deviate, how will perfection come? First the person in the center must be perfect, then his dictations will be correct. Otherwise, if the leaders are all imperfect men, what is the use of changing this or that? The corruption will continue.

**Śyāmasundara:** Presumably the perfect leader would be the one who practiced Marx’s philosophy without deviation.

**Prabhupāda:** But Marx’s philosophy is also imperfect! His proposal for a classless society is unworkable. There must be one class of men to administer the government and one class of men to sweep the streets. How can there be a classless society? Why should a sweeper be satisfied seeing someone else in the administrative post? He will think, “He is forcing me to work as a sweeper in the street while he sits comfortably in a chair.” In our International Society, I am also holding the superior post: I am sitting in a chair, and you are offering me garlands and the best food. Why? *Because you see a perfect man whom you can follow.* That mentality must be there. Everyone in the society must be able to say, “Yes, here is a perfect man. Let him sit in a chair, and let us all bow down and work like menials.” Where is that

perfect man in the Communist countries?

**Śyāmasundara:** The Russians claim that Lenin is a perfect man.

**Prabhupāda:** Lenin? But no one is following Lenin. Lenin’s only perfection was that he overthrew the Czar’s government. What other perfection has he shown? The people are not happy simply reading Lenin’s books. I studied the people in Moscow. They are unhappy. The government cannot force them to be happy artificially. Unless there is a perfect, ideal man in the center, there cannot possibly be a classless society.

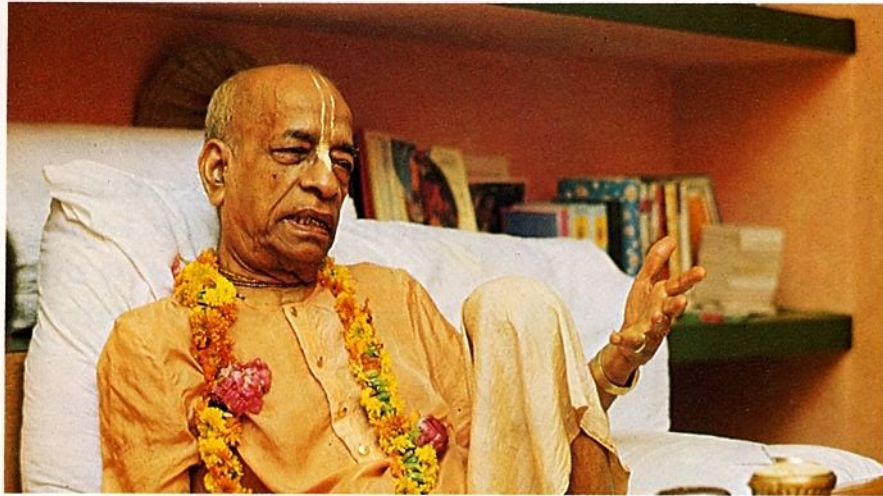
**Śyāmasundara:** Perhaps they see the workers and the managers in the same way that we do—in the absolute sense. Since everyone is serving the state, the sweeper is as good as the administrator.

**Prabhupāda:** But unless the state gives perfect satisfaction to the people, there will always be distinctions between higher and lower classes. In the Russian state, that sense of perfection in the center is lacking.

**Śyāmasundara:** Their goal is the production of material goods for the enhancement of human well-being.

**Prabhupāda:** That is useless! Economic production in America has no comparison in the world, yet still people are dissatisfied. The young men are confused. It is nonsensical to think that simply by increasing production everyone will become satisfied. No one will be satisfied. Man is not meant simply for eating. He has mental necessities, in-





**“The only way to have a truly classless society is to find that method by which both the managers and the workers will feel equal happiness.”**

tellectual necessities, spiritual necessities. In India many people sit alone silently in the jungle and practice *yoga*. They do not require anything. How will increased production satisfy them? If someone were to say to them, “If you give up this *yoga* practice, I will give you two hundred bags of rice,” they would laugh at the proposal. It is animalistic to think that simply by increasing production everyone will become satisfied. Real happiness does not depend on either production or starvation, but upon peace of mind. For example, if a child is crying, but the mother does not know why, the child will not stop simply by giving him some milk. Sometimes this actually happens: the mother cannot understand why her child is crying, and though she is giving him her breast, he continues to cry. Similarly, dissatisfaction in human society is not caused solely by low economic production. That is nonsense. There are many causes of dissatisfaction. The practical example is America, where there is sufficient production of everything, yet the young men are becoming hippies. They are dissatisfied, confused. No, simply by increasing economic production people will not become satisfied. Marx’s knowledge is insufficient. Perhaps because he came from a country where people were starving, he had that idea.

**Śyāmasundara:** Yes, now we’ve seen that production of material goods alone will not make people happy.

**Prabhupāda:** Because they do not know that real happiness comes from

spiritual understanding. That understanding is given in the *Bhagavad-gītā*: God is the supreme enjoyer, and He is the proprietor of everything. We are not actually enjoyers; we are all workers. These two things must be there: an enjoyer and a worker. For example, in our body the stomach is the enjoyer, and all other parts of the body are workers. So this system is natural: there must always be someone who is the enjoyer, and someone who is the worker. It is present in the capitalist system also. In Russia there is always conflict between the managers and the workers. The workers say, “If this is a classless society, why is that man sitting comfortably and ordering us to work?” The Russians have not been able to avoid this dilemma, and it cannot be avoided. There *must* be one class of men who are the directors or enjoyers, and another class of men who are the workers. Therefore the only way to have a truly classless society is to find that method by which both the managers and the workers will feel equal happiness. For example, if the stomach is hungry and the eyes see some food, immediately the brain will say, “O legs, please go there!” and “Hand, pick it up,” and “Now, please put it into the mouth.” Immediately the food goes into the stomach, and as soon as the stomach is satisfied, the eyes are satisfied, the legs are satisfied, and the hand is satisfied.

**Śyāmasundara:** But Marx would use this as a perfect example of communism.

**Prabhupāda:** But he has neglected to find out the real stomach.

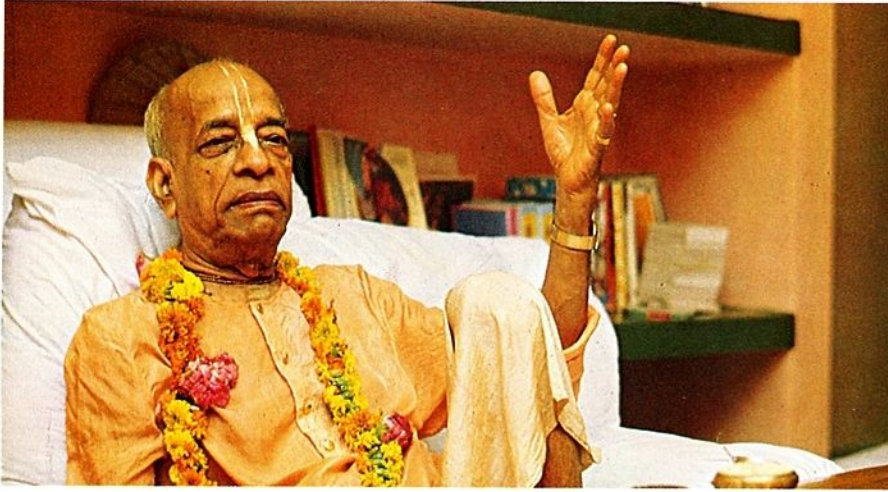
**Śyāmasundara:** His is the material stomach.

**Prabhupāda:** But the material stomach is always hungry again; it can never be satisfied. In the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement we have the substance for feeding our brains, our minds, and our souls. *Yasya prasādād bhagavat-prasādah*. If the spiritual master is satisfied, then Kṛṣṇa is satisfied, and if Kṛṣṇa is satisfied, then everyone is satisfied. Therefore you are all trying to satisfy your spiritual master. Similarly, if the Communist countries can come up with a dictator, who, if satisfied, automatically gives satisfaction to all the people, then we will accept such a classless society. But this is impossible. A classless society is only possible when Kṛṣṇa is in the center. For the satisfaction of Kṛṣṇa, the intellectual can work in his own way, the administrator can work in his way, the merchant can work in his way, and the laborer can work in his way. This is truly a classless society.

**Śyāmasundara:** How is this different from the Communist country, where all sorts of men contribute for the same central purpose, which is the state?

**Prabhupāda:** The difference is that if the state is not perfect, no one will willingly contribute to it. They may be forced to contribute, but they will not voluntarily contribute unless there is a perfect state in the center. For example, the hands, legs and brain are working in perfect harmony for the satisfaction of the stomach. Why? Because they know without a doubt that by satisfying the





**“In any society there must be a leader, there must be directors, and there must be workers, but everyone should be so satisfied that they forget the difference.”**

stomach they will all share the energy and also be satisfied. Therefore, unless the people have this kind of perfect faith in the leader of the country, there is no possibility of a classless society.

**Śyāmasundara:** The Communists theorize that if the worker contributes to the central fund, he will get satisfaction in return.

**Prabhupāda:** Yes, but if he sees imperfection in the center, he will not work enthusiastically because he will have no faith that he will get full satisfaction. That perfection of the state will never be there, and therefore the workers will always remain dissatisfied.

**Śyāmasundara:** The propagandists play upon this dissatisfaction and tell the people that foreigners are causing it.

**Prabhupāda:** But if the people were truly satisfied, they could not be influenced by outsiders. If you are satisfied that your spiritual master is perfect—that he is guiding you nicely—will you be influenced by outsiders?

**Śyāmasundara:** No.

**Prabhupāda:** Because the Communist state will never be perfect, there is no possibility of a classless society.

**Śyāmasundara:** Marx examines history and sees that in Greek times, in Roman times, and in the middle ages slaves were always required for production.

**Prabhupāda:** The Russians are also creating slaves—the working class. Joseph Stalin stayed in power simply by killing all his enemies. He killed so many men that he is recorded in history

as the greatest criminal. He was certainly imperfect, yet he held the position of dictator, and the people were forced to obey him.

**Śyāmasundara:** His followers have denounced him.

**Prabhupāda:** That's all well and good, but his followers should also be denounced. The point is that in any society, there must be a leader, there must be directors, and there must be workers, but everyone should be so satisfied that they forget the difference.

**Śyāmasundara:** No envy.

**Prabhupāda:** Ah, no envy. But that perfection is not possible in the material world. Therefore Marx's theories are useless.

**Śyāmasundara:** But on the other hand, the capitalists also make slaves of their workers.

**Prabhupāda:** Wherever there is materialistic activity, there must be imperfection. But if they make Kṛṣṇa the center, then all problems will be resolved.

**Śyāmasundara:** Are you saying that any system of organizing the means of production is bound to be full of exploitation?

**Prabhupāda:** Yes, certainly, certainly! The materialistic mentality means exploitation.

**Śyāmasundara:** Then what is the solution?

**Prabhupāda:** Kṛṣṇa consciousness!

**Śyāmasundara:** How is that?

**Prabhupāda:** Just make Kṛṣṇa the center and work for Him. Then everyone will be satisfied. As it is stated in the

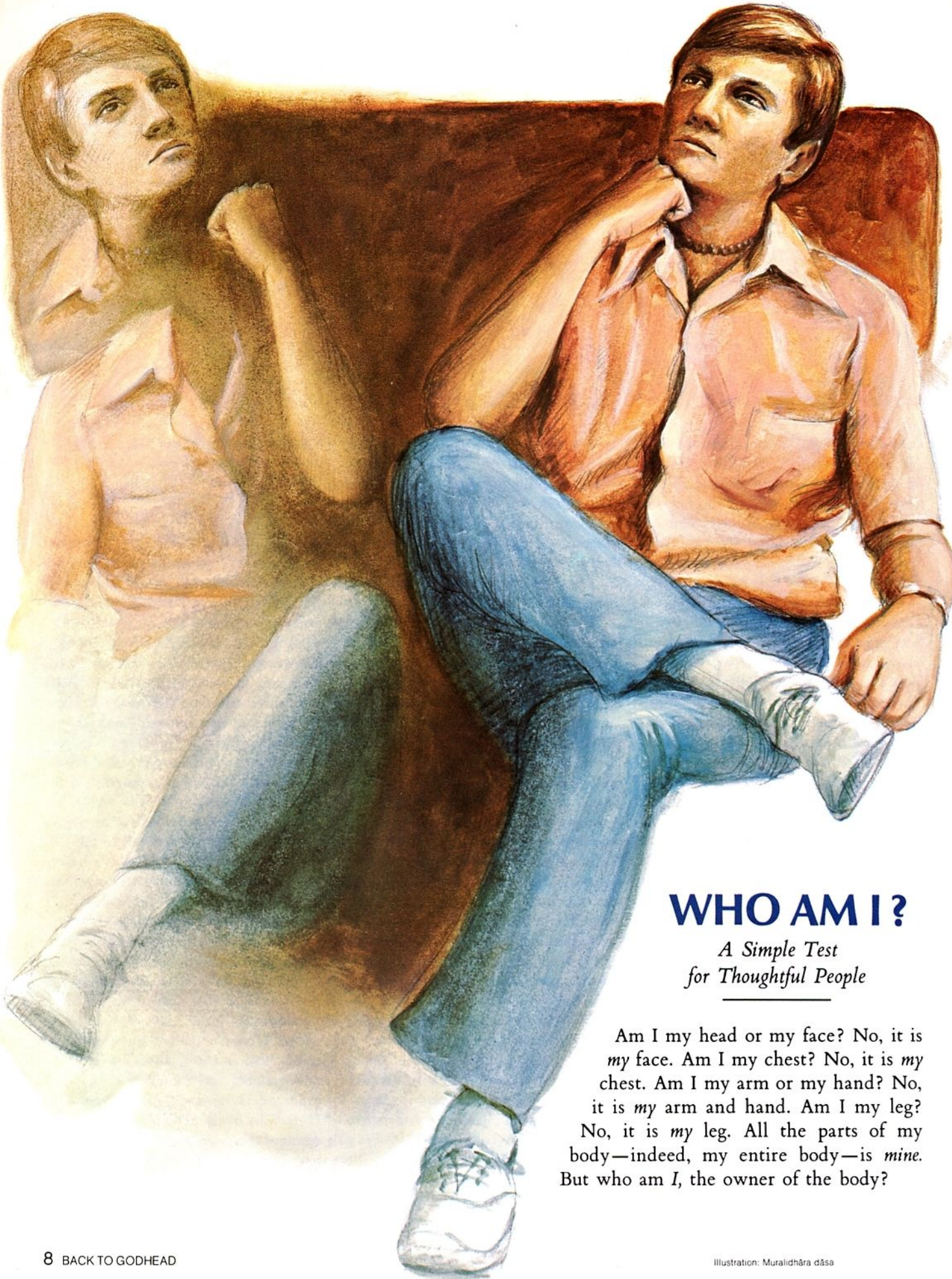
Fourth Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*:

*yathā taror mūla-niṣecanena  
tṛpyanti tat-skandha-bhujopasākhāḥ  
prāṇopahārāc ca yathendriyāṇām  
tathaiva sarvārhaṇam acyutejyā*

If you simply pour water on the root of a tree, all the branches, twigs, leaves, and flowers will be nourished. Similarly, everyone can be satisfied simply by *acyutejyā*. *Acutya* means Kṛṣṇa, and *ijyā* means worship. So this is the formula for a classless society: make Kṛṣṇa (God) the center and do everything for Him. There are no classes in our International Society for Krishna Consciousness. Now you are writing philosophy, but if I want you to wash dishes, you will do so immediately because you know that whatever you do, you are working for Kṛṣṇa and for your spiritual master. In the material world different kinds of work have different values, but in Kṛṣṇa consciousness everything is done on the absolute platform. Whether you wash dishes or write books or worship the Deity, the value is the same because you are serving Kṛṣṇa. That is a classless society. Actually, the perfect classless society is Vṛndāvana. In Vṛndāvana, some are cowherd boys, some are cows, some are trees, some are fathers, some are mothers, but the center is Kṛṣṇa, and everyone is satisfied simply by loving Him. When all people become Kṛṣṇa conscious and they understand how to love Him, then there will be a classless society. Otherwise it is not possible. ❀

(To be continued)





## WHO AM I?

*A Simple Test  
for Thoughtful People*

Am I my head or my face? No, it is *my* face. Am I my chest? No, it is *my* chest. Am I my arm or my hand? No, it is *my* arm and hand. Am I my leg? No, it is *my* leg. All the parts of my body—indeed, my entire body—is *mine*. But who am *I*, the owner of the body?



# Understanding Ourselves

by Viśākhā-devī dāsī

IF WE PERFORM THE EXPERIMENT on the opposite page, we can immediately come to the very first understanding in spiritual life: we are not our bodies; rather we are conscious of them. Under the influence of illusion, however, we falsely identify ourselves with our bodies and think we belong to a certain family, nation, race, religion, political party, and so on. The goal of human life is to awaken from this illusion and become reinstated in our real identities as fully conscious spiritual beings.

Our daily lives can be compared to acting in a play. We have become so absorbed with our temporary roles in this play that we have completely forgotten our true offstage identities. Someone is taking the part of our parent, another person is acting as our lover, another as our friend or foe, but actually it is all simply a performance; our real identities are something else. Our very bodies are nothing more than costumes, but out of illusion we identify ourselves with them and try to relate to others on the basis of these costumes. The resulting relationships are not false; they are real, but they are temporary and therefore illusory. When the curtain falls on our play—when death comes—all the different relationships we have cultivated during our lives will be finished, and our real self, an individually conscious spirit soul, will be transferred to a new situation.

## The Nature of Consciousness.

Modern scientists have touched upon the properties of the spirit soul in their research into anti-material particles. A fundamental assumption of their theory is that there may exist another world, an anti-material world, composed of anti-particles. They conjecture that this anti-material world might consist of atomic and sub-atomic particles spinning in reverse orbits to those of the world we know.

But if we really want to find out about the nature of consciousness and its source, the anti-material spirit soul, we must go beyond the tentative gropings of mundane scientists. We must search out the revealed knowledge contained in the *Vedas*, the most ancient and widely recognized source of transcendental science in the world. Since the soul is impercep-

tible by our gross senses, the authoritative Vedic wisdom is the only means for understanding it. We must accept many things solely on the basis of superior authority. For example, if I want to know who my father is, I must accept the authority of my mother. I cannot experimentally find out his identity; I must simply use intelligent discrimination to find the right source of knowledge. Similarly, to understand the science of the soul, we must turn to the Vedic literature, and specifically to the *Bhagavad-gītā*. *Bhagavad-gītā* contains the essence of the *Vedas*, for it is spoken by Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme All-knowing Personality of Godhead.

In the *Bhagavad-gītā* (13.34), Lord Kṛṣṇa says, “As the sun, situated in one place, illuminates the entire universe, so a small particle of spirit [the soul situated within the heart] illuminates the entire body with consciousness.” Just as sunshine proves the sun is present in the sky, consciousness proves the soul is present in the body. When the soul leaves the body, consciousness disappears and the body dies. Thus consciousness is the symptom of the soul’s presence in the body.

## The Anti-material World

The material scientists misconceive the soul, a particle of anti-matter, to be only another variety of material energy. But real anti-matter must be anti-material, or spiritual. If matter is subject to annihilation, then anti-matter must be indestructible. Lord Kṛṣṇa explains this quality of the soul in the following excerpts from the *Bhagavad-gītā* (2.18, 16, 20): “An immeasurable particle of anti-material energy is engaged within the material body (which includes the mind and intelligence). The material body is destructible, and as such it is changeable and temporary, as is the material world. But the anti-material force is indestructible and therefore permanent. For the anti-material particle, which is the vital force, there is never birth nor death. Nor, having once been, does it ever cease to be. It is unborn, eternal, ever-existing, undying and primeval. When the material body is annihilated, the anti-material particle is never affected.” The Lord further explains how the soul transmigrates from one body to another:





**The material body progressively changes from childhood to boyhood, from boyhood to youth, and from youth to**

“The material body progressively changes from childhood to boyhood, from boyhood to youth, and from youth to old age, after which the anti-material particle leaves the old, unworkable body and enters another material body.” (Bg. 2.13)

Thus, with some reflection we can understand a few of the characteristics of the material and the anti-material energies. The material energy is unconscious, lifeless, and temporary, being subject to the influence of time. Referred to in the *Bhagavad-gītā* as the inferior or external energy, the material energy has eight divisions: earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, intelligence, and false ego. All mundane knowledge is limited to these eight material principles. On the other hand, the anti-material energy stands in opposition to all the material qualities. The anti-material particle of energy is the living

force, described in the *Bhagavad-gītā* as the superior or internal energy. The material body is animated by this living force, and when it is separated from the body, the body becomes useless and dies. The nature of the anti-material particle (the soul) is *sat-cid-ānanda*—eternal, full of knowledge, and blissful—and as such it is undoubtedly superior to the material energy.

#### **Uncovering Our Real Identity**

Because we belong to the superior, spiritual energy, we cannot understand our true identity or achieve eternal happiness in full knowledge if we continue to act on the false platform of the inferior, material energy. But if all our relation-






Illustration: Bharadrāja dāsa

**old age, after which the anti-material particle leaves the old, unworkable body and enters another material body.**

ships in this material world are temporary and illusory, then with whom can we establish a meaningful and lasting relationship? Lord Kṛṣṇa answers this question in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (9.17,18): "I am the father of this universe, the mother . . . and the most dear friend." Thus we do not have to give up personal relationships, but rather re-establish our real, eternal relationship with our most dear friend, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

The Lord explains elsewhere in the *Bhagavad-gītā* how this material world is actually a perverted reflection of the spiritual world: everything in this material world is there in Lord Kṛṣṇa's abode, but in its ideal, perfect form, for that is the world of anti-matter or spirit. In the eternal kingdom of God, there are trees, animals, flowers, people and so on, but

unlike the material world, they all exist in intimate loving relationships with Kṛṣṇa.

Each of us has a place in the spiritual world, for that is our eternal home. As spiritual beings, we are not meant for this temporary world of matter. We are like a fish out of water: just as a fish can never be happy with any number of comforts outside of the water, we can never be truly happy outside of the spiritual atmosphere of Kṛṣṇa's abode. If we persist in trying to find pleasure in this material world, only repeated frustration and suffering await us. But if we make it our only business to cultivate our eternal relationship with Kṛṣṇa, we can gain re-entry into that transcendental realm of Vaikuṅṭha, the world without anxiety, and attain a life of complete knowledge and endless bliss. 



# ISKCON NEWS

A brief look at the worldwide activities of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

## SAN FRANCISCO MAYOR PROCLAIMS "RATHA-YĀTRĀ DAY"

*Jagannātha Car Festival Huge Success Worldwide.*

In a proclamation issued June 23, 1975, Mayor Joseph L. Alioto established July 20 as "Ratha-Yātrā Day" in San Francisco. Ratha-Yātrā is a large festival sponsored in San Francisco and many other cities and countries by the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. The proclamation from the mayor's office noted that "this event, held in India annually during the month of July, is known to be one of the oldest in the history of man." The Bay Area event has been observed for the past nine years and is modeled after the original celebration still held annually in the city of Jagannātha Puri, India.



Photo: Viśākha devi dāśī

Previewing the attractions, the mayor described "a two-day celebration in Golden Gate Park, highlighted by a parade with forty-five-foot-high Jagannātha carts and a free vegetarian feast." Jagannātha, like Kṛṣṇa, is a name for God. The parade honors a pleasure ride He took thousands of years ago during His pastimes on earth. The entire festival is energized by continuous chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

The Ratha-Yātrā festivals in San Francisco, Chicago, Philadelphia, London and Melbourne—among other cities—were a big hit with the thousands who attended. In each festival, spectacular chariots forty or fifty feet high rolled along the parade route, pulled by devotees of Kṛṣṇa and recruits from the crowd, who delighted in the work. The *Germantown Courier* described the cart in the Philadelphia parade: "Its towering canopy of red and yellow fabric, ornamented with silver swans, swayed gently. Diamond-shaped mirrors on the spokes of its seven-foot wheels splintered the light. A fringe of silk pennants fluttered from its upper deck, where little children leaned over to fling handfuls of flowers to the crowd."

Speaking to the huge gathering outside Philadelphia's Art Museum after the parade, His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda described how the soul evolves through millions of species of life. Human life, he explained, should be used for spiritual awakening.

His Divine Grace also took part in the San Francisco festival one week later. At Lindley Meadow in Golden Gate Park, he carefully explained the meaning of the words of the Hare Kṛṣṇa chant and requested those present to "cooperate with God." The theme of cooperation played a part in an introductory speech by California State Senator Milton Marks, and Śrīla Prabhupāda expanded on it.

In each city, Ratha-Yātrā's finale was a massive feast of vegetarian food which had been offered to Lord Kṛṣṇa. The largest crowd was in San Francisco, where festival organizers brought over five tons of food for the banquet. That was enough to satisfy even late-comers like a young priest who said, "I've got five hundred kids with me. Can you feed them all?" The answer was yes—and they all had seconds.

## DISTRICT JUDGE RULES PUBLIC CHANTING LEGAL

U.S. District Judge Alfred L. Luongo recently approved a consent decree legalizing the public activities of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. The *Philadelphia Bulletin* reported:

"Devotees of the Krishna Consciousness Society can dance and chant on the highways and byways without interference by Philadelphia police. And they can preach from religious literature and distribute sanctified food and flowers to people in public areas, transportation terminals, and Philadelphia International Airport."

The ruling settled a two-month conflict between devotees and local municipal officials. Arrests of many ISKCON members for alleged violations of city ordinances had provoked the normally peaceful devotees to bring a lawsuit against the City of Philadelphia. They also sought an injunction to stop police from harassing them in violation of their First Amendment right to practice their public activities, called *saikīrtana*.

As a result, the police are now restrained from making arrests on the basis of "unconventional appearance, manner, life-style or religious activities," the decree stated. The judge also ordered all pending litigation discontinued and said that all arrest records must be destroyed.

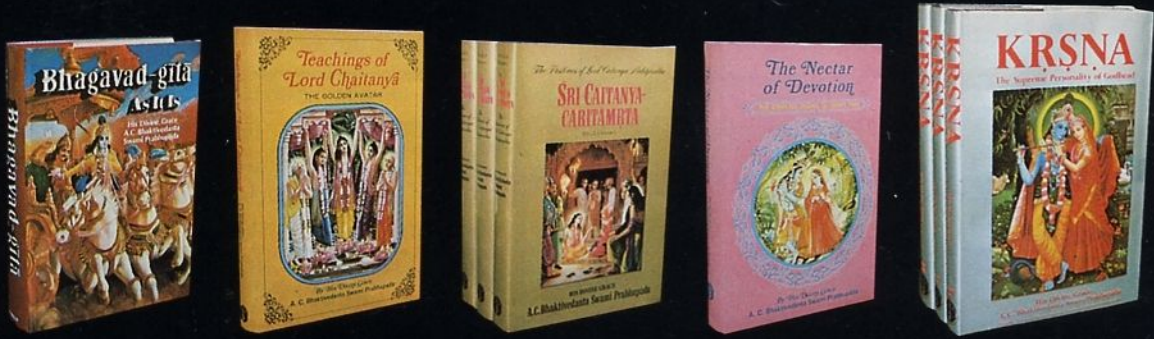
The *Bulletin* noted that "the decree recognizes the Krishna Society as an authentic religion." Similar decisions reached in dozens of cities in the United States and other countries indicate a growing appreciation of the authenticity of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.



Photo: Bhāgavata dāśī



"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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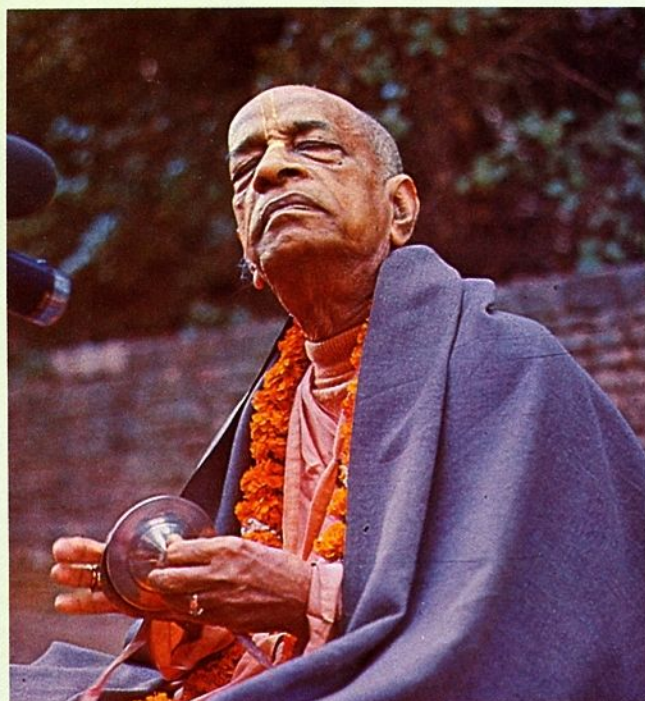
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## Kṛṣṇa Conscious Calendar

Kṛṣṇa conscious devotees follow a spiritual calendar that divides the year into twelve months, each named for a different form of Kṛṣṇa. The year is full of Kṛṣṇa conscious festivals, and some of the upcoming ones are listed here. The devotees of the ISKCON center nearest you will gladly tell you more about the meaning of these festivals.

Year 489, Caitanya Era

Vaiṣṇava Month of *Hṛṣikeṣa* (August 22, —September 20, 1975)

*Kṛṣṇa-pakṣa* (dark fortnight)

September 2 (*Hṛṣikeṣa* 12)      September 3 (*Hṛṣikeṣa* 13)

Annadā-ekādaśī

Ekādaśī pāraṇa before 7:56 a.m.

*Śukla-pakṣa* (bright fortnight)

September 10 (*Hṛṣikeṣa* 20)      September 11 (*Hṛṣikeṣa* 21)

Appearance of Śrī Sitādevī  
(consort of Śrī Advaita)

Appearance of Śrī Lalitā-devī

September 13 (*Hṛṣikeṣa* 23)      September 16 (*Hṛṣikeṣa* 26)

Śrī Śrī Rādhāṣṭamī (Appearance  
of Śrī Rādhā is at noon)

Parśvaikādaśī  
Viṣṇu-sṛṅkhāla-yoga

September 17 (*Hṛṣikeṣa* 27)      September 18 (*Hṛṣikeṣa* 28)

Ekādaśī-pāraṇa before 9:30 A.M.  
Śrī Vāmana-dvādaśī  
Appearance of Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī

Appearance of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda  
Ṭhākura

September 19 (*Hṛṣikeṣa* 29)      September 20 (*Hṛṣikeṣa* 30)

Śrī Ananta-caturdaśī-vrata  
Disappearance of Śrīla Haridāsa  
Ṭhākura

Śrī Viśvarūpa-mahotsava



# ŚRĪMAD-BHĀGAVATAM

*The Beautiful Story of the Personality of Godhead*

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## First Canto "Creation"

### Chapter One Questions by the Sages

(continued)

TEXT 13

तच्चः शुश्रूषमाणानामर्हस्यङ्गानुवर्णितुम् ।  
यस्यावतारो भूतानां क्षेमाय च भवाय च ॥१३॥

*tan naḥ śuśrūṣamāṇānām  
arhasy aṅgānuvarṇitum  
yasyāvātāro bhūtānām  
kṣemāya ca bhavāya ca*

*tan*—those; *naḥ*—unto us; *śuśrūṣamāṇānām*—those who are endeavoring for; *arhasi*—ought to do it; *aṅga*—O Sūta Gosvāmī; *anuvārṇitum*—to explain by following in the footsteps of previous *ācāryas*; *yasya*—whose; *avatārah*—incarnation; *bhūtānām*—of the living beings; *kṣemāya*—for good; *ca*—and; *bhavāya*—upliftment; *ca*—and.

TRANSLATION

Enlighten us, O Sūta, about the Personality of Godhead and His incarnations. We are eager to learn those teachings imparted by previous masters [ācāryas], for one is uplifted by hearing them.

PURPORT

The conditions for hearing the transcendental message of the Absolute Truth are set forth herein. The first condition is that the audience must be very sincere and eager to hear. And the speaker must be in the line of disciplic succession from the recognized *ācārya*. The transcendental message of the Absolute is not understandable by those who are materially absorbed. Under the direction of a bona fide spiritual master, one becomes gradually purified. Therefore, one must be in the chain of disciplic succession and learn the spiritual art by submissive hearing. In the case of Sūta Gosvāmī and the sages of Naimiṣāraṇya, all these conditions are fulfilled because Śrīla Sūta Gosvāmī is in the line of Śrīla Vyāsadeva, and the sages of Naimiṣāraṇya are all sincere souls who are anxious to learn the truth. Thus the transcendental topics of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa's superhuman activities, His incarnation, His birth, appearance or disappearance, His forms, His names and so on are all easily understandable because all requirements are fulfilled. Such discourses help all men on the path of spiritual realization.

TEXT 14

आपन्नः संसृतिं घोरां यन्नाम विवशो गुणन् ।  
ततः सद्यो विमुच्येत यद्विभेति स्वयं भयम् ॥१४॥

*āpannaḥ saṁsṛtim ghorām  
yan-nāma vivaśo gṛṇan  
tataḥ sadyo vimucyeta  
yat bibhetti svayaṁ bhayam*

*āpannaḥ*—being entangled; *saṁsṛtim*—in the hurdle of birth and death; *ghorām*—too complicated; *yat*—what; *nāma*—the absolute name; *vivaśaḥ*—unconsciously; *gṛṇan*—chanting; *tataḥ*—from that; *sadyaḥ*—at once; *vimucyeta*—gets freedom; *yat*—that which; *bibhetti*—fears; *svayam*—personally; *bhayam*—fear itself.

TRANSLATION

Living beings who are entangled in the meshes of birth and death can be freed immediately by even unconsciously chanting the holy name of Kṛṣṇa, which is feared by fear personified.

PURPORT

Vāsudeva or Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Absolute Personality of Godhead, is the supreme controller of everything. There is no one in creation who is not afraid of the rage of the Almighty. Great *asuras* like Rāvaṇa, Hiraṇyakaśipu, Kaṁsa, and others who were very powerful living entities were all killed by the Personality of Godhead. And the almighty Vāsudeva has empowered His name with the powers of His personal Self. Everything is related to Him, and everything has its identity in Him. It is stated herein that the name of Kṛṣṇa is feared even by fear personified. This indicates that the name of Kṛṣṇa is nondifferent from Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, the name of Kṛṣṇa is as powerful as Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself. There is no difference at all. Anyone, therefore, can take advantage of the holy names of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa even in the midst of greatest dangers. The transcendental name of Kṛṣṇa, even though uttered unconsciously or by force of circumstances, can help one obtain freedom from the hurdle of birth and death.

TEXT 15

यत्पादसंश्रयाः द्रुत युनयः प्रशमायनाः ।  
सद्यः पुनन्त्युपस्पृष्टाः स्वर्धुन्यापोऽनुसेवया ॥१५॥

*yat pāda-saṁśrayāḥ sūta  
munayaḥ praśamāyanāḥ  
sadyaḥ punanty upasprṣṭāḥ  
svardhunyaḥpo'nusevayā*

*yat*—whose; *pāda*—lotus feet; *saṁśrayāḥ*—those who have taken shelter of; *sūta*—O Sūta Gosvāmī; *munayaḥ*—great sages; *praśamāyanāḥ*—absorbed in devotion to the Supreme; *sadyaḥ*—at once; *punanti*—sanctify; *upasprṣṭāḥ*—simply by association; *svardhunya*—of the sacred Ganges; *apaḥ*—water; *anusevayā*—bringing into use.

TRANSLATION

O Sūta, those great sages who have completely taken shelter of the lotus feet of the Lord can at once sanctify those who come in touch with them, whereas the waters of the Ganges can sanctify only after prolonged use.



## PURPORT

Pure devotees of the Lord are more powerful than the waters of the sacred river Ganges. One can derive spiritual benefit out of prolonged use of the Ganges waters. But one can be sanctified at once by the mercy of a pure devotee of the Lord. In *Bhagavad-gītā* it is said that any person, regardless of birth as *śūdra*, woman, or merchant, can take shelter of the lotus feet of the Lord and by so doing can return to Godhead. To take shelter of the lotus feet of the Lord means to take shelter of the pure devotees. The pure devotees whose only business is serving are honored by the names *Prabhupāda* and *Viṣṇupāda*, which indicate such devotees to be representatives of the lotus feet of the Lord. Anyone, therefore, who takes shelter of the lotus feet of a pure devotee by accepting the pure devotee as his spiritual master can be at once purified. Such devotees of the Lord are honored equally with the Lord because they are engaged in the most confidential service of the Lord, for they deliver out of the material world the fallen souls whom the Lord wants to return home, back to Godhead. Such pure devotees are better known as vice-lords according to revealed scriptures. The sincere disciple of the pure devotee considers the spiritual master equal to the Lord, but always considers himself to be a humble servant of the servant of the Lord. This is the pure devotional path.

## TEXT 16

को वा भगवतस्तस्य पुण्यश्लोकेष्वकर्मणः ।  
शुद्धिकामो न मृश्याद्यशः कलिमलापहम् ॥१६॥

ko vā bhagavatas tasya  
puṇya-ślokeṣya-karmaṇaḥ  
śuddhi-kāmo na mṛṣyāḍ  
yaśaḥ kali-malāpaham.

*kaḥ*—who; *vā*—rather; *bhagavataḥ*—of the Lord; *tasya*—his; *puṇya*—virtuous; *ślokeṣya*—worshipable by prayers; *karmaṇaḥ*—deeds; *śuddhi-kāmaḥ*—desiring deliverance from all sins; *na*—not; *mṛṣyāḍ*—does hear; *yaśaḥ*—glories; *kali*—of the age of quarrel; *malāpaham*—the agent for sanctification.

## TRANSLATION

Who is there, desiring deliverance from the vices of the Age of Kali, who is not willing to hear the glories of the Lord?

## PURPORT

The Age of Kali is the most condemned age due to its quarrelsome features. Kali-yuga is so saturated with vicious habits that there is a great fight at the slightest misunderstanding. Those who are engaged in the pure devotional service of the Lord, who are without any desire for self-aggrandizement and who are freed from the effects of fruitive actions and dry philosophical speculations are capable of getting out of the estrangements of this complicated age. The leaders of the people are very much anxious to live in peace and friendship, but they have no information of the simple method of hearing the glories of the Lord. On the contrary, such leaders are opposed to the propagation of the glories of the Lord. In other words, the foolish leaders want to completely deny the existence of the Lord. In the name of secular state, such leaders are enacting various plans every year. But by the insurmountable intricacies of the material nature of the Lord, all these plans for progress are being constantly frustrated. They have no eyes to see that their attempts at peace and friendship are failing. But here is the hint to get over the hurdle. If we want actual peace, we must open the road to understand the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa and glorify Him for His virtuous activities as they are depicted in the pages of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

## TEXT 17

तस्य कर्माण्युदाराणि परिगीतानि स्रियिभिः ।  
ब्रूहि नः श्रद्धानानां लीलया दधतः कलाः ॥१७॥

tasya karmāṇy udārāṇi  
parigītāni sūribhiḥ  
brūhi naḥ śraddadhānānām  
līlayā dadhataḥ kalāḥ

*tasya*—His; *karmāṇi*—transcendental acts; *udārāṇi*—magnanimous; *parigītāni*—broadcast; *sūribhiḥ*—by the great souls; *brūhi*—please speak; *naḥ*—unto us; *śraddadhānānām*—ready to receive with respect; *līlayā*—pastimes; *dadhataḥ*—advented; *kalāḥ*—incarnations.

## TRANSLATION

His transcendental acts are magnificent and gracious, and great learned sages like Nārada sing of them. Please, therefore, speak to us, who are eager to hear about His adventures which He performs in His various incarnations.

## PURPORT

The Personality of Godhead is never inactive as some less intelligent persons suggest. His works are magnificent and magnanimous. His creations both material and spiritual are all wonderful and contain all variegatedness. They are described nicely by such liberated souls as Śrīla Nārada, Vyāsa, Vālmīki, Devala, Asita, Madhva, Śrī Caitanya, Rāmānuja, Viṣṇuśaṅkara, Nimbārka, Śrīdhara, Viśvanātha, Baladeva, Bhaktivinoda, Siddhānta Sarasvatī and many other learned and self-realized souls. These creations, both material and spiritual, are full of opulence, beauty, and knowledge, but the spiritual realm is more magnificent due to its being full of knowledge, bliss and eternity. The material creations are manifested for some time as perverted shadows of the spiritual kingdom and can be likened to cinemas. They attract people of less intelligent caliber who are attracted by false things. Such foolish men have no information of the reality, and they take it for granted that the false material manifestation is the all in all. But more intelligent men guided by sages like Vyāsa and Nārada know that the eternal kingdom of God is more delightful, larger, and eternally full of bliss and knowledge. Those who are not conversant with the activities of the Lord and His transcendental realm are sometimes favored by the Lord in His adventures as incarnations wherein He displays the eternal bliss of His association in the transcendental realm. By such activities He attracts the conditioned souls of the material world. Some of these conditioned souls are engaged in the false enjoyment of material senses and others in simply negating their real life in the spiritual world. These less intelligent persons are known as *karmīs* or fruitive workers, and the others are known as *jñānīs* or dry mental speculators. But above these two classes of men is the transcendentalist known as *śātvata* or the devotee who is neither busy with rampant material activity nor with material speculation. He is engaged in the positive service of the Lord, and thereby he derives the highest spiritual benefit unknown to the *karmīs* and *jñānīs*.

As the supreme controller of both the material and spiritual worlds, the Lord has different incarnations of unlimited categories. Incarnations like Brahmā, Rudra, Manu, Pṛthu, Vyāsa and so on are His material qualitative incarnations, but His incarnations like Rāma, Naraśiṃha, Varāha, Vāmana, and so on are His transcendental incarnations. Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the fountainhead of all incarnations, and He is therefore the cause of all causes.

## TEXT 18

अथाख्याहि हरेर्धोमन्नवतारकथाः शुभाः ।  
लीला विदधतः स्वैरमीश्वरस्तात्ममायया ॥१८॥

athākhyāhi harer dhīmann  
avatāra-kathāḥ śubhāḥ  
līlā vidadhataḥ svairam  
īśvarasyātma-māyayā

*atha*—therefore; *ākhyāhi*—describe; *hareḥ*—of the Lord; *dhīman*—O sagacious one; *avatāra*—incarnations; *kathāḥ*—narratives; *śubhāḥ*—auspicious; *līlā*—adventures; *vidadhataḥ*—performed; *svairam*—pastimes; *īśvarasya*—the supreme controller's; *ātma*—personal; *māyayā*—energies.



## TRANSLATION

O wise Sūta, please narrate to us the transcendental pastimes of the Supreme Godhead's multi-incarnations. Such auspicious adventures and pastimes of the Lord are performed by His internal powers.

## PURPORT

For the creation, maintenance, and destruction of the material worlds, the Supreme Lord Personality of Godhead Himself appears in many thousands of forms of incarnations, and the specific adventures found in those transcendental forms are all auspicious. Both those who are present during such activities and those who hear the transcendental narrations of such activities are benefited.

## TEXT 19

वयं तु न वितृप्याम उत्तमश्लोकविक्रमे ।  
यच्छृण्वतां रसज्ञानां स्वादु स्वादु पदे पदे ॥१९॥

vayaṁ tu na vitṛpyāma  
uttama-śloka-vikrame  
yac chṛṇvatām rasa-jñānām  
svādu svādu pade pade.

vayaṁ—we; tu—but; na—not; vitṛpyāma—shall be at rest; *uttama-śloka*—the Personality of Godhead who is glorified by transcendental prayers; *vikrame*—adventures; yat—which; *śṛṇvatām*—by continuous hearing; *rasa*—humor; *jñānām*—those who are conversant with; *svādu*—relishing; *svādu*—palatable; *pade pade*—in every step.

## TRANSLATION

We never tire of hearing the transcendental pastimes of the Personality of Godhead who is glorified by hymns and prayers. Those who enjoy association with Him relish hearing of His pastimes at every moment.

## PURPORT

There is a great difference between mundane stories, fiction, or history and the transcendental pastimes of the Lord. The histories of the whole universe contain references to the pastimes of the incarnations of the Lord. The *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Mahābhārata*, and the *Purāṇas* are histories of bygone ages recorded in connection with the pastimes of the incarnations of the Lord and therefore remain fresh even after repeated readings. For example, anyone may read *Bhagavad-gītā* or the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* repeatedly throughout his whole life and yet find in them new light of information. Mundane news is static whereas transcendental news is dynamic, inasmuch as the spirit is dynamic and matter is static. Those who have developed a taste for understanding the transcendental subject matter are never tired of hearing such narrations. One is quickly satiated by mundane activities, but no one is satiated by transcendental or devotional activities. *Uttama-śloka* indicates that literature which is not meant for nescience. Mundane literature is in the mode of darkness or ignorance, whereas transcendental literature is quite different. Transcendental literature is above the mode of darkness, and its light becomes more luminous with progressive reading and realization of the transcendental subject matter. The so-called liberated persons are never satisfied by the repetition of the words *aham brahmāsmi*. Such artificial realization of Brahman becomes hackneyed, and so to relish real pleasure they turn to the narrations of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Those who are not so fortunate turn to altruism and worldly philanthropy. This means the Māyāvāda philosophy is mundane, whereas the philosophy of *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is transcendental.

## TEXT 20

कृतवान् किल कर्माणि सह रामेण केशवः ।  
अतिमर्त्यानि भगवान् गूढः कपटमानुषः ॥२०॥

kṛtavān kila karmāṇi  
saha rāmeṇa keśavaḥ  
atimartyāni bhagavān  
gūḍhaḥ kapaṭa-mānuṣaḥ

kṛtavān—done by; kila—what and what; karmāṇi—acts; saha—along with; *rāmeṇa*—Balarāma; *keśavaḥ*—Śrī Kṛṣṇa; *atimartyāni*—superhuman; *bhagavān*—the Personality of Godhead; *gūḍhaḥ*—masked as; *kapaṭa*—apparently; *mānuṣaḥ*—human being.

## TRANSLATION

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Personality of Godhead, and Balarāma played like human beings, and so masked They performed many superhuman acts.

## PURPORT

The doctrines of anthropomorphism or that of zoomorphism are never applicable to Śrī Kṛṣṇa or the Personality of Godhead. The theory that a man becomes God by dint of penance and austerities is very much rampant nowadays, especially in India. Since Lord Rāma, Lord Kṛṣṇa, and Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu were detected by the sages and saints to be the Personality of Godhead as indicated in revealed scriptures, many unscrupulous men have created their own incarnations. This process of concocting an incarnation of God has become an ordinary business, especially in Bengal. Any popular personality with a few traits of mystic powers will display some feat of jugglery and easily become an incarnation of Godhead by popular vote. Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa was not that type of incarnation. He was actually the Personality of Godhead from the very beginning of His appearance. He appeared before His so-called mother as four-armed Viṣṇu. Then at the request of the mother, He became like a human child and at once left her for another devotee at Gokula where He was accepted as the son of Nanda Mahārāja and Yaśodā Mātā. Similarly, Śrī Baladeva, the counterpart of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, was also considered a human child born of another wife of Śrī Vasudeva. In *Bhagavad-gītā*, the Lord says that His birth and deeds are transcendental and that anyone who is so fortunate as to know the transcendental nature of His birth and deeds will at once become liberated and eligible to return to the kingdom of God. So knowledge of the transcendental nature of the birth and deeds of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa is sufficient for liberation. In the *Bhāgavatam*, the transcendental nature of the Lord is described in nine cantos, and in the Tenth Canto His specific pastimes are taken up. All this becomes known as one's reading of this literature progresses. It is important to note here, however, that the Lord exhibited His divinity even from the lap of His mother, that His deeds are all superhuman (He lifted Govardhana Hill at the age of six), and that all these acts definitely prove Him to be actually the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Yet, due to His mystic covering, He was always accepted as an ordinary human child by His so-called father and mother and other relatives. Whenever some herculean task was performed by Him, the father and mother took it otherwise. And they remained satisfied with unflinching filial love for their son. As such, the sages of Naimiṣāraṇya describe Him as apparently resembling a human being, but actually He is the Supreme Almighty Personality of Godhead.

## TEXT 21

कलिमागतमाज्ञाय क्षेत्रेऽस्मिन् वैष्णवे वयम् ।  
आसीना दीर्घसत्रेण कथायां सञ्ज्ञया हरेः ॥२१॥

kalim āgatam ājñāya  
kṣetre 'smiṁ vaiṣṇave vayam  
āsinā dirgha-satreṇa  
kathāyām sakṣaṇā hareḥ

kalim—the age of Kali (iron age of quarrel); āgatam—having arrived; ājñāya—knowing this; *kṣetre*—in this tract of land; *asmīn*—in this; *vaiṣṇave*—specially meant for the devotee of the Lord; *vayam*—we; *āsinā*—seated; *dirgha*—prolonged; *satreṇa*—for performance of sacrifices; *kathāyām*—in the words of; *sakṣaṇā*—with time at our disposal; *hareḥ*—of the Personality of Godhead.



## TRANSLATION

Knowing well that the Age of Kali has already begun, we are assembled here in this holy place to hear at great length the transcendental message of God and in this way perform sacrifice.

## PURPORT

This age of Kali is not at all suitable for self-realization as was *Satya-yuga*, the golden age, or *Tretā* or *Dvāpara yugas*, the silver and copper ages. For self-realization, the people in *Satya-yuga*, living a lifetime of a hundred thousand years, were able to perform prolonged meditation. And in *Tretā-yuga*, when the duration of life was ten thousand years, self-realization was attained by performance of great sacrifice. And in the *Dvāpara-yuga* when the duration of life was for one thousand years, self-realization was attained by worshipping the Lord. But in the *Kali-yuga*, the maximum duration of life being one hundred years only and that combined with various difficulties, the process of self-realization is recommended by hearing and chanting of the holy name, fame, and pastimes of the Lord. The sages of Naimiṣāraṇya began this process for the devotees of the Lord. So they prepared themselves to hear the pastimes of the Lord over a period of one thousand years. By the example of these sages one should learn that regular hearing and recitation of the *Bhāgavatam* is the only way for self-realization. Other attempts are simply a waste of time, for they do not give any tangible results. Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu preached this system of *Bhāgavata-dharma*, and He recommended that all those who were born in India should take the responsibility of broadcasting the messages of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, primarily the message of *Bhagavad-gītā*. And when one is well established in the teachings of *Bhagavad-gītā*, he can take up the study of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* for further enlightenment in self-realization.

## TEXT 22

त्वं नः संदक्षितो धात्रा दुस्तरं नित्तितीर्षताम् ।  
कलिं सत्त्वहरं पुंसां कर्णधार इवार्णवम् ॥२२॥

*tvam naḥ sandarśito dhātrā  
dustaram nistitīrṣatām  
kaliṁ sattva-haram puṁsāṁ  
karṇa-dhāra ivārṇavam*

*tvam*—your goodness; *naḥ*—unto us; *sandarśitaḥ*—meeting; *dhātrā*—by providence; *dustaram*—insurmountable; *nistitīrṣatām*—for those desiring to cross over; *kalim*—the age of Kali; *sattva-haram*—that which deteriorates the good qualities; *puṁsām*—of the man; *karṇa-dhāraḥ*—captain; *iva*—as; *aṇavam*—the ocean.

## TRANSLATION

We think that we have met Your Grace by the will of providence, and thus we accept you as captain of the ship for those who desire to cross the dangerous ocean of Kali, which destroys all the good qualities of a human being.

## PURPORT

The age of Kali is very dangerous for the human being. Human life is simply meant for self-realization, but due to this dangerous age, men have completely forgotten the aim of life. In this age, the life span will gradually decrease. People will gradually lose their memory, finer sentiments, strength, and better qualities. A list of the anomalies for this age is given in the Twelfth Canto of this work. And so this age is very difficult for those who want to utilize this life for self-realization. The people are so busy with sense gratification that they completely forget about self-realization. Out of madness they frankly say that there is no need for self-realization because they do not realize that this brief life is but a moment on our great journey towards self-realization. The whole system of education is geared to sense gratification, and if a learned man thinks it over, he sees that the children of this age are being intentionally sent to the slaughterhouses of so-called education. Learned men, therefore, must be

cautious of this dangerous age, and if they at all want to cross over the dangerous ocean of Kali, they must follow the footsteps of the sages of Naimiṣāraṇya and accept Śrī Sūta Gosvāmī or his bona fide representative as the captain of the ship. The ship is the message of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the shape of *Bhagavad-gītā* or the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

## TEXT 23

ब्रूहि योगेश्वरे कृष्णे ब्रह्मण्ये धर्मवर्मणि ।  
स्वां काष्ठामधुनोपेते धर्मः कं शरणं गतः ॥२३॥

*brūhi yogeshvare kṛṣṇe  
brahmaṇyē dharma-varmaṇi  
svām kāṣṭhām adhunopete  
dharmaḥ kaṁ śaraṇaṁ gataḥ*

*brūhi*—please tell; *yoga-īsvare*—the Lord of all mystic powers; *kṛṣṇe*—Lord Kṛṣṇa; *brahmaṇyē*—the Absolute Truth; *dharma*—religion; *varmaṇi*—protector; *svām*—own; *kāṣṭhām*—abode; *adhunā*—nowadays; *upete*—having gone away; *dharmaḥ*—religion; *kaṁ*—unto whom; *śaraṇam*—shelter; *gataḥ*—gone.

## TRANSLATION

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.

## PURPORT

Essentially religion is the prescribed codes enunciated by the Personality of Godhead Himself. Whenever there is gross misuse or neglect of the principles of religion, the Supreme Lord appears Himself to restore religious principles. This is stated in *Bhagavad-gītā*. Here the sages of Naimiṣāraṇya are inquiring about these principles. The reply to this question is given later. The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the transcendental sound representation of the Personality of Godhead, and thus it is the full representation of transcendental knowledge and religious principles.

*Thus end the Bhaktivedanta purports of the First Canto, First Chapter of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, entitled "Questions by the Sages."*

## Chapter Two

## Divinity and Divine Service

## TEXT 1

व्यास उवाच

इति सम्प्रभ्रसंहृष्टो विप्राणां रौमहर्षणिः ।  
प्रतिपूज्य वचस्तेषां प्रवक्तुमुपचक्रमे ॥ १ ॥

*vyāsa uvāca  
iti sampraśna-saṁhṛṣṭo  
viprāṇāṁ raumaharṣaṇiḥ  
pratipūjya vacas teṣāṁ  
pravaktum upacakrame*

*vyāsaḥ uvāca*—Vyāsa said; *iti*—thus; *sampraśna*—perfect inquires; *saṁhṛṣṭaḥ*—perfectly satisfied; *viprāṇām*—of the sages there; *raumaharṣaṇiḥ*—the son of Romaharṣaṇa, namely Ugrasravā; *pratipūjya*—after thanking them; *vacas*—words; *teṣāṁ*—their; *pravaktum*—to reply to them; *upacakrame*—attempted.

## TRANSLATION

Ugrasravā [Sūta Gosvāmī], the son of Romaharṣaṇa, being pleased with the questions of the brāhmaṇas, thanked them and attempted to reply.



## PURPORT

The sages of Naimiṣāraṇya asked Sūta Gosvāmī six questions, and so he is answering them one by one.

## TEXT 2

सूत उवाच

यं प्रव्रजन्तमनुपेतमपेतकृत्यं  
द्वैपायनो विरहकातर आजुहाव ।  
पुत्रेति तन्मयतया तरवोऽभिनेदु-  
स्तं सर्वभूतहृदयं मुनिमानतोऽस्मि ॥ २ ॥

sūta uvāca

yaṁ pravrajantam anupetam apeta-kṛtyaṁ  
dvaipāyano viraha-kātarā ājuhāva  
putreṭi tanmayatayā taravo'bhinedu  
taṁ sarva-bhūta-hṛdayaṁ munim ānato'smi

sūtaḥ—Sūta Gosvāmī; uvāca—said; yaṁ—whom; pravrajantam—while going away for the renounced order of life; anupetam—without being reformed by the sacred thread; apeta—not undergoing ceremonies; kṛtyam—prescribed duties; dvaipāyanaḥ—Vyāsadeva; viraha—separation; kātarāḥ—being afraid of; ājuhāva—exclaimed; putra iti—O my son; tanmayatayā—being absorbed in that way; taravaḥ—all the trees; abhineduḥ—responded; tam—unto him; sarva—all; bhūta—living entities; hṛdayam—heart; munim—sage; ānataḥ smi—offer obeisances.

## TRANSLATION

Śrīla Sūta Gosvāmī said: Let me offer my respectful obeisances unto that great sage [Śukadeva Gosvāmī] who can enter the hearts of all. When he went away to take up the renounced order of life [sannyāsa], leaving home without undergoing the sacred thread ceremony, his father, Vyāsadeva, cried out to him, "Oh, my son!" Indeed, only the trees echoed in response to the bereaved father.

## PURPORT

The institution of *varṇa* and *āśrama* prescribes many regulative duties to be observed by its followers. Such duties enjoin that a candidate willing to study the *Vedas* must approach a bona fide spiritual master and request acceptance as his disciple. The sacred thread is the sign of those who are competent to study the *Vedas* from the *ācārya* or the bona fide spiritual master. Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī did not undergo such a purificatory ceremony because he was a liberated soul from his very birth.

Generally, a man is born as an ordinary being, and by the purificatory processes he is born for the second time. When he sees a new light and seeks direction for spiritual progress, he approaches a spiritual master to instruct him in the *Vedas*. The spiritual master accepts only the sincere inquirer as his disciple and gives him the sacred thread. In this way a man becomes twice-born, or a *dvija*. After qualifying as a *dvija* one may study the *Vedas*, and after becoming well versed in the *Vedas* one becomes a *vipra*. A *vipra* or a qualified *brāhmaṇa* thus realizes the Absolute and makes further progress in spiritual life until he reaches the Vaiṣṇava stage. The Vaiṣṇava stage is the postgraduate status of a *brāhmaṇa*. A progressive *brāhmaṇa* must necessarily become a Vaiṣṇava, for a Vaiṣṇava is a self-realized, learned *brāhmaṇa*.

Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī was a Vaiṣṇava from the beginning; therefore, there was no need for him to undergo all the processes of the *varṇāśrama* institution. Ultimately the aim of *varṇāśrama-dharma* is to turn a crude man into a pure devotee of the Lord, or a Vaiṣṇava. Anyone, therefore, who becomes a Vaiṣṇava accepted by the first-class Vaiṣṇava or *uttama-adhikārī* Vaiṣṇava is already considered a *brāhmaṇa*, regardless of his birth or past deeds. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu accepted this principle and recognized Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura as the *ācārya* of the holy name, although Ṭhākura Haridāsa appeared in a Mohammedan family. In conclusion, Śrīla

Śukadeva Gosvāmī was born a Vaiṣṇava, and, therefore, brahminism was included in him. He did not have to undergo any ceremonies. Any low born person—be he a *Kirāta*, *Hūṇa*, *Āndhra*, *Pulinda*, *Pulkhasa*, *Ābhīra*, *Sumbha*, *Yavana*, *Khasādi* or even lower—can be delivered to the highest transcendental position by the mercy of Vaiṣṇavas. Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī was the spiritual master of Śrī Sūta Gosvāmī, and therefore he offers his respectful obeisances unto him before he begins his answers to the questions of the sages at Naimiṣāraṇya.

## TEXT 3

यः स्वानुभावमखिलश्रुतिसारमेक-  
मध्यात्मदीपमतितितीर्षतां तमोऽन्धम् ।  
संसारिणां करुणयाऽऽह पुराणगुह्यं  
तं व्याससूनुमुपयामि गुरुं मुनिनाम् ॥ ३ ॥

yaḥ svānubhāvam akhila-śruti-sāram ekam  
adhyātma-dīpam atitīrṣatāṁ tamo'ndham  
saṁsāriṇāṁ karuṇayāha purāṇa-guhyam  
taṁ vyāsa-sūnum upayāmi gurum muninām

yaḥ—he who; svānubhāvam—self-assimilated (experienced); akhila—all around; śruti—*Vedas*; sāram—cream; ekam—the only one; adhyātma—transcendental; dīpam—torchlight; atitīrṣatāṁ—desiring to overcome; tamaḥ andam—deeply dark material existence; saṁsāriṇām—of the materialistic men; karuṇayā—out of causeless mercy; āha—said; purāṇa—supplementary to the *Vedas*; guhyam—very confidential; tam—unto him; vyāsa-sūnum—the son of Vyāsadeva; upayāmi—let me offer my obeisances; gurum—spiritual master; muninām—of the great sages.

## TRANSLATION

Let me offer my respectful obeisances unto him [Śuka], the spiritual master of all sages, the son of Vyāsadeva, who, out of his great compassion for those gross materialists who struggle to cross over the darkest regions of material existence, spoke this Purāṇa [supplement to the *Vedas*], the cream of Vedic knowledge, after having personally assimilated it by experience.

## PURPORT

In this prayer, Śrīla Sūta Gosvāmī practically summarizes the complete introduction of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the natural supplementary commentary on the *Vedānta-sūtras*. The *Vedānta-sūtras* or the *Brahma-sūtras* were compiled by Vyāsadeva with a view to presenting just the cream of Vedic knowledge. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the natural commentary on this cream. Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī was a thoroughly realized master of the *Vedānta-sūtra*, and consequently he also personally realized the commentary, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. And just to show his boundless mercy upon bewildered materialistic men who want to cross completely over nescience, he recited for the first time this confidential knowledge.

There is no point in arguing that a materialistic man can be happy. No materialistic creature—be he the great Brahmā or an insignificant ant—can be happy. Everyone tries to make a permanent plan for happiness, but everyone is baffled by the laws of material nature. Therefore the materialistic world is called the darkest region of God's creation. Yet the unhappy materialists can get out of it simply by desiring to get out. Unfortunately they are so foolish that they do not want to escape. Therefore they are compared to the camel who relishes thorny twigs because he likes the taste of the twigs mixed with blood. He does not realize that it is his own blood and that his tongue is being cut by the thorns. Similarly, to the materialist his own blood is as sweet as honey, and although he is always harassed by his own material creations, he does not wish to escape. Such materialists are called *karmīs*. Out of hundreds of thousands of *karmīs*, only a few may feel tired of material engagement and desire to get out of the labyrinth. Such intelligent persons are called *jñānis*. The



*Vedānta-sūtra* is directed to such *jñānīs*. But Śrīla Vyāsadeva, being the incarnation of the Supreme Lord, could foresee the misuse of the *Vedānta-sūtra* by unscrupulous men, and, therefore, he personally supplemented the *Vedānta-sūtra* with the *Bhāgavata Purāna*. It is clearly said that this *Bhāgavatam* is the original commentary on the *Brahma-sūtras*. Śrīla Vyāsadeva also instructed the *Bhāgavatam* to his own son, Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī, who was already at the liberated stage of transcendence. Śrīla Śukadeva realized it personally and then explained it. By the mercy of Śrīla Śukadeva, the *Bhāgavat-Vedānta-sūtra* is available for all those sincere souls who want to get out of material existence.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the one unrivalled commentary on *Vedānta-sūtra*. Śrīpāda Śāṅkarācārya intentionally did not touch it because he knew that it would be difficult for him to surpass the natural commentary. He wrote his *Śārīraka-bhāṣya*, and his so-called followers deprecated the *Bhāgavatam* as some "new" presentation. One should not be misled by such propaganda directed against the *Bhāgavatam* by the Māyāvāda school. From this introductory *śloka*, the beginning student should know that *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the only transcendental literature meant for those who are *paramahansa*s and completely freed from the material disease called malice. The Māyāvādīs are envious of the Personality of Godhead despite Śrīpāda Śāṅkarācārya's admission that Nārāyaṇa, the Personality of Godhead, is above the material creation. The envious Māyāvādī cannot have access to the *Bhāgavatam*, but those who are really anxious to get out of this material existence may take shelter of this *Bhāgavatam* because it is uttered by the liberated Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī. It is the transcendental torchlight by which one can see perfectly the transcendental Absolute Truth realized as Brahman, Paramātmā and Bhagavān.

## TEXT 4

नारायणं नमस्कृत्य नरं चैव नरोत्तमम् ।  
देवीं सरस्वतीं व्यासं ततो जयमुदीरयेत् ॥ ४ ॥

*nārāyaṇam namaskṛtya  
naram caiva narottamam  
devīm sarasvatīm vyāsam  
tato jayam udīrayet*

*nārāyaṇam*—the Personality of Godhead; *namaskṛtya*—after offering respectful obeisances; *naram ca eva*—and Nārāyaṇa Ṛṣi; *narottamam*—the supermost human being; *devīm*—the goddess; *sarasvatīm*—the mistress of learning; *vyāsam*—Vyāsadeva; *tataḥ*—thereafter; *jayam*—all that is meant for conquering; *udīrayet*—be announced.

## TRANSLATION

Before reciting this *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, which is our very means of conquest, I offer my respectful obeisances unto the Personality of Godhead, Nārāyaṇa, unto Nara-nārāyaṇa Ṛṣi, the supermost human being, unto Mother Sarasvatī, the goddess of learning, and unto Śrīla Vyāsadeva, the author.

## PURPORT

All the Vedic literatures and the *Purāṇas* are meant for conquering the darkest region of material existence. The living being is in the state of forgetfulness of his relation with God due to his being overly attracted to material sense gratification from time immemorial. His struggle for existence in the material world is perpetual, and it is not possible for him to get out of it by making plans. If he at all wants to conquer this perpetual struggle for existence, he must reestablish his eternal relation with God. And one who wants to adopt such remedial measures must take shelter of literatures such as the *Vedas* and the *Purāṇas*. Foolish people say that the *Purāṇas* have no connection with the *Vedas*. However, the *Purāṇas* are supplementary explanations of the *Vedas* intended for different types of men. All men are not equal. There are men who are conducted by the mode of goodness, others who are under the mode of passion and others who are under the mode of ignorance. The *Purāṇas* are so divided that any class of men can take advantage of them and gradually regain their lost position

and get out of the hard struggle for existence. Śrīla Sūta Gosvāmī shows the way of chanting the *Purāṇas*. This may be followed by persons who aspire to be preachers of the Vedic literatures and the *Purāṇas*. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the spotless *Purāṇa*, and it is especially meant for them who are desirous to get out of the material entanglement permanently.

## TEXT 5

मुनयः साधु पृष्टोऽहं भवद्भिलोकमङ्गलम् ।  
यत्कृतः कृष्णसंप्रश्नो येनात्मा सुप्रसीदति ॥ ५ ॥

*munayaḥ sādhu pṛṣṭo 'haṁ  
bhavadbhir loka-maṅgalam  
yat kṛtaḥ kṛṣṇa-sampraśno  
yenātmā suprasīdati*

*munayaḥ*—of the sages; *sādhu*—this is relevant; *pṛṣṭaḥ*—questioned; *aḥam*—myself; *bhavadbhiḥ*—by all of you; *loka*—the world; *maṅgalam*—welfare; *yat*—because; *kṛtaḥ*—made; *kṛṣṇa*—the Personality of Godhead; *sampraśnaḥ*—relevant question; *yena*—by which; *ātmā*—self; *suprasīdati*—completely pleased.

## TRANSLATION

O sages, I have been justly questioned by you. Your questions are worthy because they relate 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.

## PURPORT

As it is stated hereinbefore, in the *Bhāgavatam* the Absolute Truth is to be known, so the questions of the sages of Naimiṣāraṇya are proper and just because they pertain to Kṛṣṇa, who is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the Absolute Truth. In *Bhagavad-gītā* the Personality of Godhead says that in all the *Vedas* there is nothing but the urge for searching after Him, Lord Kṛṣṇa (Bg. 15.15). Thus the questions that pertain to Kṛṣṇa are the sum and substance of all the Vedic inquiries.

The whole world is full of questions and answers. The birds, beasts and men are all busy in the matter of perpetual questions and answers. In the morning the birds in the nest become busy with questions and answers, and in the evening also the same birds come back and again become busy with questions and answers. The human being, unless he is fast asleep at night, is busy with questions and answers. The businessmen in the market are busy with questions and answers, and so also the lawyers in the court and the students in the schools and colleges. The legislators in the parliament are also busy with questions and answers, and the politicians and the press representatives are all busy with questions and answers. Although they go on making such questions and answers for their whole lives, they are not at all satisfied. Satisfaction of the soul can only be obtained by questions and answers on the subject of Kṛṣṇa.

Kṛṣṇa is our most intimate master, friend, father or son and object of conjugal love. Forgetting Kṛṣṇa, we have created so many objects of questions and answers, but none of them are able to give us complete satisfaction. All things—but Kṛṣṇa—give temporary satisfaction only, so if we are to have complete satisfaction we must take to the questions and answers about Kṛṣṇa. We cannot live for a moment without being questioned or without giving answers. Because the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* deals with questions and answers that are related to Kṛṣṇa, we can derive the highest satisfaction only by reading and hearing this transcendental literature. One should learn the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and make an all-around solution to all problems pertaining to social, political or religious matters. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and Kṛṣṇa are the sum total of all things.

## TEXT 6

स वै पुंसां परो धर्मो यतो भक्तिरधोक्षजे ।  
अहैतुक्यप्रतिहता यथाऽऽत्मा सुप्रसीदति ॥ ६ ॥



sa vai puṁsāṁ paro dharmo  
yato bhaktir adhokṣaje  
ahaituky apratihātā  
yayātmā suprasidati

saḥ—that; vai—certainly; puṁsām—for mankind; paraḥ—sublime; dharmah—occupation; yataḥ—by which; bhaktiḥ—devotional service; adhokṣaje—unto the Transcendence; ahaituki—causeless; apratihātā—unbroken; yayā—by which; ātmā—self; suprasidati—completely satisfied.

## TRANSLATION

The supreme occupation [dharma] for all humanity is that by which men can attain to loving devotional service unto the transcendent Lord. Such devotional service must be unmotivated and uninterrupted in order to completely satisfy the self.

## PURPORT

In this statement, Śrī Sūta Gosvāmī answers the first question of the sages of Naimiṣāranya. The sages asked him to summarize the whole range of revealed scriptures and present the most essential part so that fallen people or the people in general might easily take it up. The Vedas prescribe two different types of occupation for the human being. One is called the *pravṛtti-mārga*, or the path of sense enjoyment, and the other is called the *niṣṛtti-mārga* or the path of renunciation. The path of enjoyment is inferior, but the path of sacrifice for the supreme cause is superior. The material existence of the living being is a diseased condition of actual life. Actual life is spiritual existence, or *brahma-bhūta* existence where life is eternal, blissful and full of knowledge. Material existence is temporary, illusory and full of miseries. There is no happiness at all. There is just the futile attempt to get rid of the miseries, and temporary cessation of misery is falsely called happiness. Therefore, the path of progressive material enjoyment, which is temporary, miserable and illusory, is inferior. But devotional service of the Supreme Lord, which leads one to eternal, blissful and all-cognizant life, is called the superior quality of occupation. This is sometimes polluted when mixed with the inferior quality. For example, adoption of devotional service for material gain is certainly an obstruction to the progressive path of renunciation. Renunciation or abnegation for ultimate good is certainly a better occupation than enjoyment in the diseased condition of life. Such enjoyment only aggravates the symptoms of disease and increases its duration. Therefore devotional service of the Lord must be pure in quality, i.e., without the least desire for material enjoyment. One should, therefore, accept the superior quality of occupation in the form of devotional service of the Lord without any tinge of unnecessary desire, fruitive action and philosophical speculation. This alone can lead one to perpetual solace in His service.

We have purposely denoted *dharmā* as occupation because the root meaning of the word *dharmā* is “that which sustains one’s existence.” A living being’s sustenance of existence is to coordinate his activities with his eternal relation with the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is the central pivot of living beings, and He is the all-attractive living entity or eternal form amongst all other living beings or eternal forms. Each and every living being has his eternal form in the spiritual existence, and Kṛṣṇa is the eternal attraction for all of them. Kṛṣṇa is the complete whole, and everything else is His part and parcel. The relation is one of the servant and the served, and it is transcendental and is completely distinguished from our experience in material existence. This relation of servant and the served is the most congenial form of intimacy. One can realize it as devotional service progresses. Everyone should engage himself in that transcendental loving service of the Lord, even in the present conditional state of material existence. That will gradually give one the clue to actual life and please him to complete satisfaction.

## TEXT 7

वासुदेवे भगवति भक्तियोगः प्रयोजितः ।  
जनयत्याशु वैराग्यं ज्ञानं च यदहैतुकम् ॥ ७ ॥

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

vāsudeve—unto Kṛṣṇa; bhagavati—unto the Personality of Godhead; bhakti-yogaḥ—contact of devotional service; prayojitaḥ—being applied; janayati—does produce; āśu—very soon; vairāgyam—detachment; jñānam—knowledge; ca—and; yat—that which; ahaitukam—causeless.

## TRANSLATION

By rendering devotional service unto the Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, one immediately acquires causeless knowledge and detachment from the world.

## PURPORT

Those who consider devotional service of the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa to be something like material emotional affairs may argue that in the revealed scriptures, sacrifice, charity, austerity, knowledge, mystic powers and similar other processes of transcendental realization are recommended. According to them, *bhakti*, or devotional service of the Lord, is meant for those who cannot perform the high-grade activities. Generally it is said that the *bhakti* cult is meant for the *sūdras*, *vaiśyas* and the less intelligent woman class. But that is not the actual fact. The *bhakti* cult is the topmost of all transcendental activities, and therefore it is simultaneously sublime and easy. It is sublime for the pure devotees who are serious about getting in contact with the Supreme Lord, and it is easy for the neophytes who are just on the threshold of the house of *bhakti*. It is a great science to achieve the contact of the Supreme Personality of Godhead Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and it is open for all living beings, including the *sūdras*, *vaiśyas*, women or even those lower than the *sūdras* who are called low-born—so what to speak of the high-class men like the qualified *brāhmaṇas* and the great self-realized kings. The other high-grade activities designated as sacrifice, charity, austerity, etc., are all corollary factors following the pure and scientific *bhakti* cult.

The principles of knowledge and detachment are two important factors on the path of transcendental realization. The whole spiritual process leads to perfect knowledge of everything material and spiritual, and the results of such perfect knowledge are that one becomes detached from material affection and becomes attached to spiritual activities. Becoming detached from material things does not mean becoming inert altogether, as men with a poor fund of knowledge think. *Naishkarma* means not undertaking such activities that will produce good or bad effects. Negation does not mean negation of the positive. Negation of the nonessentials does not mean negation of the essential. Similarly, detachment from material forms does not mean nullifying the positive form. The *bhakti* cult is meant for realization of the positive form. When the positive form is realized, the negative forms are automatically eliminated. Therefore, with the development of the *bhakti* cult, with the application of the positive service to the positive form, one naturally becomes detached from inferior things, and he becomes attached to superior things. Similarly, the *bhakti* cult, being the supermost occupation of the living being, leads him out of material sense enjoyment. That is the sign of a pure devotee. He is neither a fool, nor is he engaged in the inferior energies, nor does he have material values. This is not possible by dry reasoning. It actually happens by the grace of the Almighty. In conclusion, one who is a pure devotee has all other good qualities, namely knowledge, detachment, etc., but one who has only knowledge or detachment is not necessarily well acquainted with the principles of the *bhakti* cult. *Bhakti* is the supermost occupation of the human being.

## TEXT 8

धर्मः स्वदुष्टितः पुंसां विष्वक्सेनकथासु यः ।  
नोत्पादयेद्यदि रतिं श्रम एव हि केवलम् ॥ ८ ॥



*dharmāḥ svanuṣṭhitaḥ puṁsām  
viśvaksena-kathāsu yaḥ  
notpādayet yadi ratim  
śrama eva hi kevalam*

*dharmāḥ*—occupation; *svanuṣṭhitaḥ*—executed in terms of one's own position; *puṁsām*—of humankind; *viśvaksena*—Personality of Godhead (plenary portion); *kathāsu*—in the message of; *yaḥ*—what is; *na*—not; *utpādayet*—does produce; *yadi*—if; *ratim*—attraction; *śramāḥ*—useless labor; *eva*—only; *hi*—certainly; *kevalam*—entirely.

#### TRANSLATION

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.

#### PURPORT

There are different occupational activities in terms of man's different conceptions of life. To the gross materialist who cannot see anything beyond the gross material body, there is nothing beyond the senses. Therefore his occupational activities are limited to concentrated and extended selfishness. Concentrated selfishness centers around the personal body—this is generally seen amongst the lower animals. Extended selfishness is manifested in human society and centers around the family, society, community, nation and world with a view to gross bodily comfort. Above these gross materialists are the mental speculators who hover aloft in the mental spheres, and their occupational duties involve making poetry, philosophy or propagating some *ism* with the same aim of selfishness limited to the body and the mind. But above the body and mind is the dormant spirit soul whose absence from the body makes the whole range of bodily and mental selfishness completely null and void. But less intelligent people have no information of the needs of the spirit soul.

Because foolish people have no information of the soul and how it is beyond the purview of the body and mind, they are not satisfied in the performance of their occupational duties. The question of the satisfaction of the self is raised herein. The self is beyond the gross body and subtle mind. He is the potent active principle of the body and mind. Without knowing the need of the dormant soul, one cannot be happy simply with emolument of the body and mind. The body and the mind are but superfluous outer coverings of the spirit soul. The spirit soul's needs must be fulfilled. Simply by cleansing the cage of the bird, one does not satisfy the bird. One must actually know the needs of the bird himself.

The need of the spirit soul is that he wants to get out of the limited sphere of material bondage and fulfill his desire for complete freedom. He wants to get out of the covered walls of the greater universe. He wants to see the free light and the spirit. That complete freedom is achieved when he meets the complete spirit, the Personality of Godhead. There is a dormant affection for God within everyone; spiritual existence is manifested through the gross body and mind in the form of perverted affection for gross and subtle matter. Therefore we have to engage ourselves in occupational engagements that will evoke our divine consciousness. This is possible only by hearing and chanting the divine activities of the Supreme Lord, and any occupational activity which does not help one to achieve attachment for hearing and chanting the transcendental message of Godhead is said herein to be simply a waste of time. This is

because other occupational duties (whatever *ism* they may belong to) cannot give liberation to the soul. Even the activities of the salvationists are considered to be useless because of their failure to pick up the fountain-head of all liberties. The gross materialist can practically see that his material gain is limited only to time and space, either in this world or the other. Even if he goes up to the Svargaloka, he will find no permanent abode for his hankering soul. The hankering soul must be satisfied by the perfect scientific process of perfect devotional service.

#### TEXT 9

धर्मस्य ह्यापवर्ग्यस्य नार्थोऽर्थयोपकल्पते ।  
नार्थस्य धर्मेकान्तस्य कामो लभ्याय हि स्मृतः ॥ ९ ॥

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

*dharmasya*—occupational engagement; *hi*—certainly; *āpavargyasya*—ultimate liberation; *na*—not; *arthaḥ*—end; *arthāya*—for material gain; *upakalpate*—is meant for; *na*—neither; *arthasya*—of material gain; *dharmā-eka-antasya*—for one who is engaged in the ultimate occupational service; *kāmaḥ*—sense gratification; *lābhāya*—attainment of; *hi*—exactly; *smṛtaḥ*—is described by the great sages.

#### TRANSLATION

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

#### PURPORT

We have already discussed that pure devotional service of the Lord is automatically followed by perfect knowledge and detachment from material existence. But there are others who consider that all kinds of different occupational engagements, including those of religion, are meant for material gain. The general tendency of any ordinary man in any part of the world is to gain some material profit in exchange for religious or any other occupational service. Even in the Vedic literatures for all sorts of religious performances an allurement of material gain is offered, and most people are attracted by such allurement or blessings of religiosity. Why are such so-called men of religion allured by material gain? Because material gain can enable one to fulfill desires, which in turn satisfy sense gratification. This cycle of occupational engagements includes so-called religiosity followed by material gain and material gain followed by fulfillment of desires. Sense gratification is the general way for all sorts of fully occupied men. But in the statement of Sūta Gosvāmī, as per the verdict of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, this is nullified by the present *śloka*.

One should not engage himself in any sort of occupational service for material gain only. Nor should material gain be utilized for sense gratification. How material gain should be utilized is described as follows.

(continued in next issue)



# Letters

The editors of *BACK TO GODHEAD* welcome correspondence pertaining to spiritual enlightenment. All letters will receive personal replies, and correspondence of general interest will be published regularly.

Dear Secretary,

I have a question about *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*. Does the immortality of the soul justify the act of killing? Arjuna feels himself unable to kill, but Kṛṣṇa sanctions Arjuna's fighting by saying that the soul doesn't perish with the body (B.g. 2.17-18). Is this ethical?

Jay Kirsch,  
Plainview, New York

Dear Jay,

Killing and war are never advocated by Kṛṣṇa. Indeed, *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* advocates nonviolence in a number of places (Bg. 10.4-5, 13.8, 16.1-3). Nonviolence (*ahimsā*) is one of the most important sub-religious principles and is practiced naturally by all devotees of the Lord. But, according to the *Gītā*, even higher than nonviolence is direct obedience to the will of God.

Kṛṣṇa did not give His order whimsically, as is done in today's wars, which are brought about by the political desires of the leaders. An ordinary leader cannot kill and claim he has God's sanction. However, in the *Gītā* Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is personally instructing Arjuna to kill. It must be understood that Kṛṣṇa is God Himself, not an ordinary man.

If we do not accept Kṛṣṇa's supreme position, then we cannot understand anything about *Bhagavad-gītā*. Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa is completely transcendental and cannot be judged by any conditioned souls within the material world. Nevertheless there are good reasons for His ordering Arjuna to kill.

First, Kṛṣṇa says that for the organization of human society there must be four divisions, and that one of these is the *kṣatriya* or warrior class. *Kṣatriya* means one who gives protection to the innocent. Kṛṣṇa doesn't advocate violence, but if a criminal becomes violent, then he has to be punished by violence. That punishing is the business of the *kṣatriya*.

Next, the Vedic scripture *Manu-saṁhitā* describes five kinds of criminals who can be punished by violence—(1) one who kidnaps your wife, (2) one who attacks you with a lethal weapon, (3)

one who sets fire to your home, (4) one who tries to take your land, and (5) one who tries to give you poison. If someone attacks me, shall I be nonviolent? In the case of personal attack, defensive violence is natural. Violence is necessary to stop the unnecessary attack of an immoral aggressor.

Also, in the specific case of Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna, those opposed to them were bent on war. They were a political clique who had committed many atrocities against Kṛṣṇa's devotees—in fact, they had fulfilled all the five qualifications of punishable criminals as listed above. Even after this, Kṛṣṇa tried to negotiate peace with them, but they were determined to fight. Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna fought only in defense. They cannot be blamed for fighting back when they were attacked. To refrain from fighting at such a time is artificial nonviolence. It is cowardly, especially for *kṣatriyas*.

In addition, the material world is relative. The very word "nonviolence" presumes the existence of violence. Even

though you are nonviolent, others are violent. So you may have to be violent to protect innocent members of society.

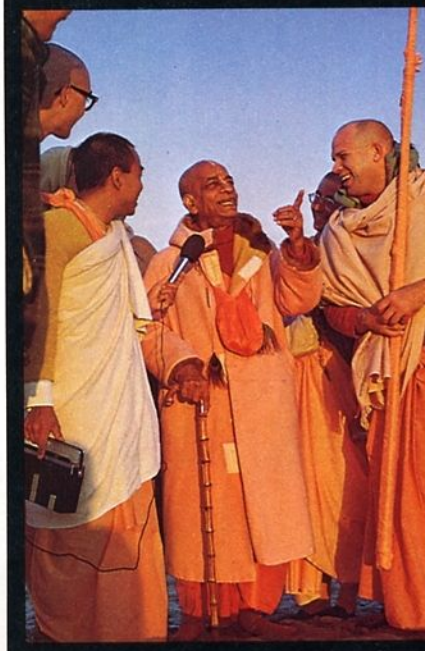
Finally, there will always be war in the material world because war is a natural reaction to sinful activity. It cannot be stopped by a material adjustment, any more than a flood or an earthquake can be stopped.

The material world is characterized by sinful activity, which brings about war and other miseries. We can be free from sinful activity only by following the instructions of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, as Arjuna did. By developing devotion to the Supreme Lord we can be transferred to the spiritual world and not have to come back again to this place of miseries. We are meant to live in the spiritual world. That is the sum and substance of the *Gītā*'s teaching that the soul is immortal. On this basis, Kṛṣṇa rightly expresses the supreme path of peace and morality for all living beings.

Satsvarūpa dāsa Gosvāmi  
Senior Editor—BTG

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# Life in the Womb

by His Holiness  
Satsvarūpa dāsa Gosvāmī

The first nine months are not idyllic, says a timeless text. This vivid report should give us second thoughts about going “back to the womb.”

CERTAIN PSYCHOLOGISTS and folklorists imagine that the womb was a very nice place—a comfortable, warm home where food and shelter were provided without our effort. Some even say that throughout our adult lives, we unconsciously desire to return to that protection and security, “floating undisturbed in the warm, dark, quiet world of unparalleled intimacy with the beloved mother.” By the scientific method of hearing from Vedic literature, however, we get the actual account of a human being’s conception, his pre-natal condition, and his birth. Contrary to what our psychologists and folklorists have imagined, life in the womb is among the most painful and miserable of human experiences.

The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, a 5,000-year-old spiritual classic containing the essence of Vedic knowledge, gives the following vivid description of the living entity’s experience from the point of conception to the time of birth: “Under the supervision of the Supreme Lord (Śrī Kṛṣṇa) and according to the results of his work, the living entity, the soul, is made to enter the womb of a woman through the particle of a man’s semina to assume a particular kind of body. On the first night, the semina and ovum mix, and on the fifth night the mixture ferments into a bubble. On the tenth night it develops into a form like a plum, and after that it gradually turns into a lump of flesh. In the course of a month, a head is formed, and at the end of two months, hands, feet and other limbs take shape. By the end of three months, the nails, fingers, toes, body hair, bones and skin appear, as do the organ of generation and the other apertures in the body, namely, the eyes, nostrils, ears, mouth and anus. Within four months from the date of conception, the seven essential ingredients of the body (lymph, blood, flesh, fat, bone, marrow and semina) come into existence. At the end of five months, hunger and thirst make themselves felt, and at the end of six months,

the fetus begins to move in the abdomen—on the right side if the child is a male and on the left side if female.”

**Painful Confinement.** The actual experience of the fetus, however, cannot be known by mere medical observation. For this information we must go to the Vedic scriptures, which give us direct knowledge of events beyond our normal experience. The *Bhāgavatam* continues, “Deriving its nutrition from the food and drink taken by the mother, the fetus grows and remains in that abominable residence of stool and urine, which is a breeding place for all kinds of worms. Bitten again and again all over his body by these hungry worms in the abdomen itself, the child suffers terrible agony because of his tenderness. He thus becomes unconscious moment after moment. When the mother eats bitter, pungent foods or food that is too salty or too sour, the body of the child incessantly suffers pains that are almost intolerable. Placed within the amnion and covered outside by the intestines, the child remains lying on the side of the abdomen, his head turned toward his belly and his back and neck arched like a bow.” An adult would be unable to endure such a difficult confinement. The child’s pain is beyond our conception, but because his consciousness is yet undeveloped, he is able to tolerate it.

As adults, we have forgotten all this suffering and absorbed ourselves in trying to become happy in material life. Life in the womb may seem remote; no one has ever told us before about its actual nature, and it has not concerned us. Writing on this topic, His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda comments, “It is an unfortunate civilization in which these matters are not plainly discussed to make people understand the precarious condition of material existence.”

**Astounding Remembrance.** At the end of seven months in the womb, the child remains just like a bird in a cage, unable to move freely and suffering



**“Although we now have no idea of the suffering in the womb, by reading such scriptures as the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and the Bhagavad-gītā, we can understand the terrible condition there and learn how to act in such a way that we will not suffer again.”**

without relief. At that time, if the soul is fortunate, he gains one astounding facility: he can remember all the troubles of his past one hundred lives. The vision of his wasted attempts to be happy makes him grieve wretchedly. While in the womb, the living being realizes that he has unnecessarily entered the material world. In this frightful condition, he

prays with folded hands, appealing to the Lord, who has put him there.

Sometimes a woman in labor promises herself that she will never again become pregnant and suffer such severe pain. Or a man on the operating table may promise himself that he will act in such a way as to never again become diseased and undergo surgery. Similarly, the child, deeply repentant, prays to the Lord that he will never again commit sinful activities and be forced into another womb. He prays as follows: “I take shelter of the lotus feet of Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who appears in His various eternal forms. I, the pure soul, appearing now to be bound by my activities, am lying in the womb of my mother by the arrangement of the Lord’s illusory energy. I offer my respectful obeisances unto Him, who is also here with me, but who is unaffected and changeless. He is unlimited, but He is perceived in the repentant heart.”

**Repentant Prayer.** The child in the womb, praying out of bewilderment and repentance, realizes he is not indepen-

dent or supreme. He seeks shelter from the Supreme Lord, perceiving that the Lord in his heart is the supreme master and that he is subordinate. By the grace of God, the child in the womb can understand his actual relationship with the Supreme Lord, and he realizes that he has been reduced to his abominable condition because of his forgetfulness of God. He wants to get out, but he understands that he can do so only by the mercy of the Supreme Lord, and thus he asks for the Lord’s blessings.

After nine months, however, the child in the womb makes an extraordinary request to the Lord: “Although I am living in a terrible condition, still I do not wish to depart from my mother’s abdomen to fall again into the blind well of materialistic life.” The child foresees that the trauma of birth will destroy his clear knowledge of the miseries of material life and his remembrance of Lord Kṛṣṇa. If he forgets the ordeal in the womb and again assumes the false position of an enjoyer, it would be better for him never to be born. Although bitten and burned and surrounded by blood and urine, at

## Overruling the Supreme Court

According to the 1973 United States Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion, only in the last twelve weeks of pregnancy does the growing fetus have a right to live despite the mother’s wish to abort him. This decision supports the claim of those who favor abortion that killing a human embryo after a few weeks or months is not murder because human life has not yet developed. They say that not until a full six months after conception does the fetus become “viable,” or able to sustain itself outside the womb. Until that time, the embryo is supposedly nothing but a lump of

flesh, and is therefore “abortable.”

According to Vedic wisdom however, the right to life is determined by laws that even the Supreme Court cannot overrule. It is the law of karma, working under the direct supervision of the Supreme Lord, that determines when an individual spirit soul will be placed in a human womb. Thus to deny a spirit soul a human birth due him by the laws of karma is to defy the will of God in a most heinous fashion.

The Vedas tell us that anyone who prevents a spirit soul from entering the mother’s womb by contraception, or who destroys a

developing fetus, is subject to severe punishment after death. In the case of abortion, both the person performing the abortion and those sanctioning it are forced at the time of death to enter wombs where they themselves become victims of the same vicious act. Thus those who are anxious to enjoy sexual pleasure, yet wish to avoid the responsibility of having children, should soberly consider the severe consequences of contraception and abortion, which are grave transgressions of the laws of nature. Unlike the edicts of the Supreme Court, there is no escaping their strict enforcement.



**“If, upon reaching the human form of life, we do not utilize the opportunity for self-realization, we will again be forced to enter a womb and undergo repeated tortures there. We should therefore thoughtfully reflect, ‘What can we do to avoid such miseries?’ ”**

least in the womb he is able to remember Kṛṣṇa. The thought of his future miseries makes him reluctant to take birth, but of course he cannot possibly live in the womb much longer. While he thus extols the Lord, the wind that helps parturition propels him forth with his face turned downward. Pushed down suddenly by the wind, the child comes out with great trouble, breathless and deprived of his memory due to severe agony. He cries piteously, having lost his superior knowledge in the ordeal of birth.

We should not take lightly this account of life in the womb. One may say, “I cannot remember such pain in the womb. I am not suffering now, so why worry? Besides, I don’t care.” According to this way of thinking, ignorance is bliss. But it is only a temporary illusion of bliss. Although we now have no idea of the suffering in the womb, by reading such scriptures as the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and the *Bhagavad-gītā*, we can understand the terrible condition there and learn how to act in such a way that we will not suffer again. We learn from the *Bhagavad-gītā* that, as individual souls, we are never created, but are eternal, fragmental parts of the Supreme Lord. By misusing our small independence, we

desire to be supreme and are thus cast into the material world. Then we wander, according to our material desires, from body to body in each of the different species, until we finally evolve to the human form of life. All this happens under the supervision of the Supreme Lord. As Śrī Kṛṣṇa states in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (18.61), “I am seated in everyone’s heart, and I direct the wanderings of all living beings.” If, upon reaching the human form of life, we do not utilize the opportunity for self-realization, we will again be forced to enter a womb and undergo repeated tortures there. We should therefore thoughtfully reflect, “What can we do to avoid such miseries?”

**True Identity.** Repeated acceptance of material life is due to forgetting our true identity as eternal loving servants of the Supreme Lord, Kṛṣṇa. Therefore reviving our relationship with Kṛṣṇa is crucial because that is the only means for the soul to escape the cycle of repeated birth and death. The primary method for doing this is chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, an incarnation of Kṛṣṇa who appeared five hundred years ago in Bengal, India, recommended that everyone take up this Great Chant for Deliverance to awaken his dormant Kṛṣṇa consciousness. We should also follow the instructions given by Lord Kṛṣṇa in *Bhagavad-gītā* (9.27-28): “All that you do, all that you eat, all that you offer and give away, as well as all austerities that you may perform, should be done as an offering unto Me. 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.” By chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa and acting in this way, the conditioned soul cleanses his mind of the false notion that he can enjoy this material world separate from Kṛṣṇa. He gradually becomes completely surrendered to the Supreme Lord, and at the end of life

liberation from the miseries of repeated birth and death is assured. Kṛṣṇa not only speaks the *Bhagavad-gītā* for our guidance, He also manifests Himself internally as the Supersoul within our hearts and externally as the spiritual master to instruct us how to avoid the repeated miseries of material existence. If one is anxious to get out of the material entanglement, Kṛṣṇa will direct him from within the heart how to approach a genuine spiritual master. By following the instructions of a spiritual master, one can perfect devotional service and be transferred to the spiritual world, which is completely free from birth and death.



**Bhagavad-gītā explains that the spiritual master can impart knowledge because he has seen the truth. (B.g. 4.34)**

We are all eternal spirit souls, but death and rebirth are great dangers for us as long as we remain in conditioned, material existence. We must pray to the Lord, as did the child in the womb, to realize our eternal relationship with Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. But we should not wait until it is too late. Preparing for the next life is a proposal for thoughtful human beings, a proposal we are meant to act on by following spiritual authorities while we are still healthy in this lifetime. ❧



# VRNDĀVANA

## Land of No Return

Part 1

by His Holiness Brahmānanda Svāmi





**F**rom the beginning of time, man has yearned for the perfect home—a paradise, a Shangri-la, a Walden—where he could live eternally in peace and happiness. Such a place cannot be found anywhere in the material world, however, for the material world is by its very nature temporary and frustrating. To end our weary searching, we must go beyond this world of duality, beyond the boundaries of space and time, into the spiritual realm.

Vṛndāvana, India, is that sought-after eternal resting place because it is at Vṛndāvana that Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, descended to this planet five thousand years ago. The Lord's appearance and activities are not mundane; they are completely transcendental. Just as a king may travel with all his retinue, set up camp, and conduct his affairs of state in the same style as if he were in his palace, Lord Kṛṣṇa brought with Him all His transcendental associates and paraphernalia and created on earth an exact replica of the spiritual world, known as Goloka Vṛndāvana. Because Vṛndāvana is the eternal and entirely spiritual abode of the Lord, it is nondifferent from Him. At Vṛndāvana, one will

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**OVERLOOKING VṚNDĀVANA TOWN**, Madana-mohana temple awaits early-morning worshipers. A favorite place of pilgrimage, the temple was built in the sixteenth century by Sanātana Gosvāmī, a great Vaiṣṇava saint, with the financial help of a wealthy salt merchant. When the merchant's barge ran aground in the nearby Yamunā River, a small cowherd boy directed him to seek help from Sanātana Gosvāmī. Sanātana advised him to pray to Lord Kṛṣṇa, and when he did so, his barge loosened and drifted free. In gratitude, the merchant gave the profit from the subsequent sale to Sanātana, who spent it all to build the lovely temple.

find unlimited wealth, strength, fame, wisdom, beauty, and renunciation—all the six opulences possessed by the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Indeed, Vṛndāvana is Kṛṣṇa, and to go there is to perceive God Himself.

As you enter the boundary of Vṛndāvana, you can feel that this place is somehow different. First you explore the forest. The cool, sandy earth feels like lotus dust beneath your feet as you walk amidst the different kinds of trees: the black-barked tamāla, the medicinal nim, the great banyan and the adorable tulasī (*Vṛndā* is a name of the *tulasī* tree, and *vana* means forest). Here the forests are like parks, their grasses carefully manicured by thousands of white cows. The slow-moving cows, with their wide-eyed children's stares, look like ancient sages silently meditating as they chew. Parrots and other multicolored birds decorate the trees, cascading pleasant songs into your ears, while peacocks in great abundance strut impressively and display their train of regal feathers. Vṛndāvana is bounded on three sides by the Yamunā River, whose waters are as pure as the primordial waters of creation. It is said that if one bathes in the Yamunā, all the sins of his millions of past lives are washed away. If you have even a little knowledge of Kṛṣṇa, or even a slight attachment to Him, everything in Vṛndāvana reminds you of Him, and you find yourself feeling a kind of love for Him known as separation.

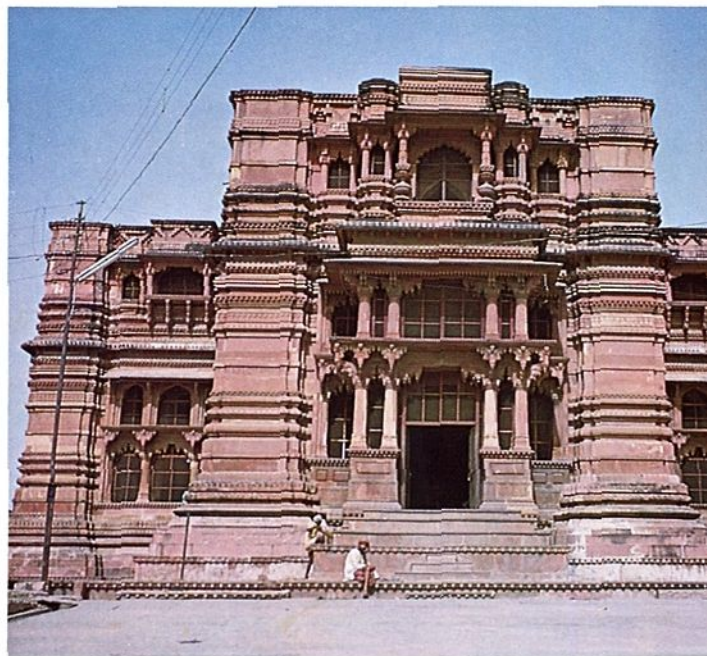
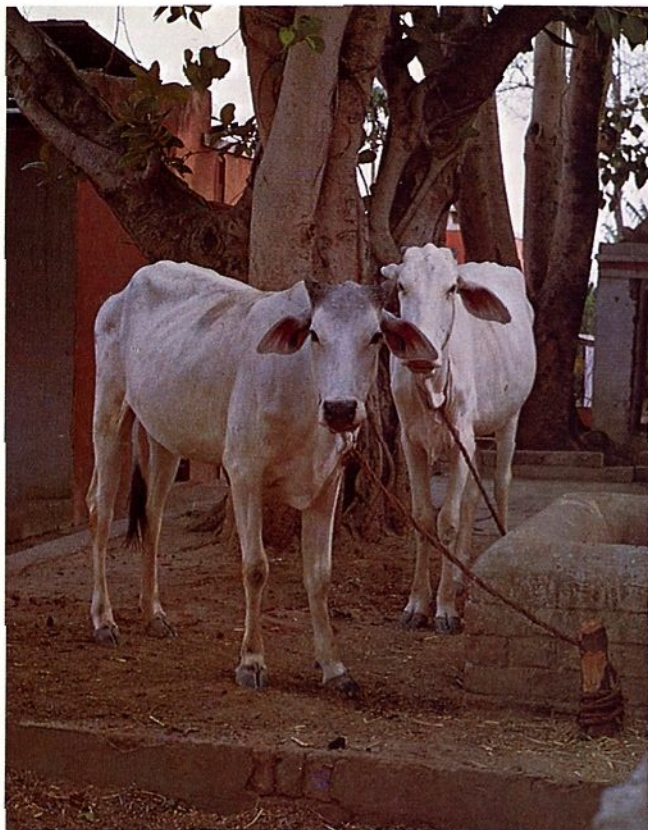
As you wander within the village of Vṛndāvana along the narrow, twisting, medieval streets, you come upon a series of temples made of heavy russet stone, which has been carved and filigreed into decorative lotus designs. As you enter one temple courtyard, you see Him: the Deity of Kṛṣṇa, the

Photos: Viśākhā-devi dāsi





**TRADITIONAL MAINSTAYS** of village economy, cows are adored in remembrance of Lord Kṛṣṇa's affection for them. When He sported in Vṛndāvana thousands of years ago, one of Kṛṣṇa's favorite pastimes was escorting the cows into the pasturing grounds along with His elder brother, Balarāma.



Supreme Personality of Godhead, in the form of pure black marble, standing on a silver throne within a protective cupola, His feet strewn with *tulasī* leaves. His body is bent attractively in three places, and He plays the flute, inviting you to take Him into your heart of hearts. Next to Him stands His inseparable consort, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, immaculate and beautiful. Do not think these Deities to be mere stone. As Kṛṣṇa says in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (7.24), "Unintelligent men, who know Me not, think that I have assumed this form and personality. Due to their small knowledge, they do not know My higher nature, which is changeless and supreme." Anyone can see Kṛṣṇa in the Deity, but first he must purify his vision by hearing about the Lord from the lips of a pure devotee, and by chanting His glories. Lord Caitanya, an incarnation of Kṛṣṇa who appeared in Bengal, India, five hundred years ago, especially recommended chanting and hearing the holy names: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. This chanting churns up a very special ointment unavailable in any pharmacy. It is known as *bhāva*, devotion. If you apply this ointment of *bhāva* to your eyes, you can see the Deity as He really is—transcendental, alive, and worshipable.

Vṛndāvana has not always been a city of Deities and temples, however. Five hundred years ago, Vṛndāvana was



**BLACK MARBLE DEITY** of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, poses invitingly in a temple established four hundred years ago by Śyāmānanda Gosvāmī. This form of the Lord is called Śyāmasundara, which means "dark and beautiful." He is pictured here accompanied by His eternal consort, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī.





**HALF ITS ORIGINAL SIZE**, the Rādhā-govinda temple of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmi stands in mute testimony to intolerance. A conquering Moghul tyrant, Aurangzeb, was so infuriated by its magnificence that he had the top dismantled stone by stone. Although the temple is missing four stories, its grand style still attracts pilgrims and scholars alike. The commanding architecture of the central hall marks it as the largest of the temples built by the Six Gosvāmīs.

simply open fields. At that time, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu personally went there to ascertain the holy sites where Lord Kṛṣṇa had exhibited His transcendental pastimes. Soon afterward, Lord Caitanya sent to Vṛndāvana six of His foremost disciples, known as the Six Gosvāmīs. Their mission was to continue the work of determining the exact locations of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, to develop these sites, and to write authoritative books on the science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Vṛndāvana is the land of Kṛṣṇa, and just as Kṛṣṇa is supremely beautiful, so is His abode. According to mundane vision, however, Vṛndāvana appears to be an ordinary village. Therefore to really see Vṛndāvana in its full, glorious beauty, we must purify our vision by becoming Kṛṣṇa conscious. The Six Gosvāmīs have shown the way. They not only led perfectly saintly Kṛṣṇa conscious lives themselves, but they wrote hundreds of spiritual guidebooks based on the revealed Vedic scriptures. By their mercy, the sincere seeker can achieve the highest boon of life—love of Kṛṣṇa.

The teachings of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda are identical with those of the Six Gosvāmīs, for he follows in direct disciplic succession from them. Therefore by following his teachings, we can see Vṛndāvana as it really is. The *Brahma-saṁhitā*, a poem written by Lord Brahmā, the most exalted living being in this universe, describes the Vṛndāvana that the pure souls perceive: "The transcendental land of Vṛndāvana is always spiritual. That spiritual land is populated by goddesses of fortune, who are known as *gopīs*. These are all beloved of Kṛṣṇa, and Kṛṣṇa



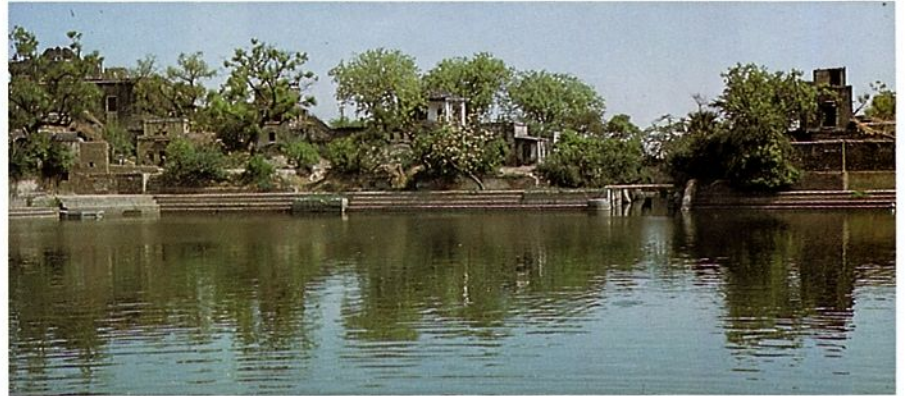
#### **EMBRACING VR̥NDĀVANA**

on three sides like a protective mother, the Yamunā River preserves the sanctity she derived from Lord Kṛṣṇa when He played in her waters. So pure is her water that Vṛndāvana's residents use it for drinking, cooking, laundering and bathing. A bath here, it is said, washes away the sins of millions of past lives. Starting high in the Himālayas, the Yamunā flows past Vṛndāvana on a six-hundred-mile journey to the city of Allahabad where she joins the sacred Ganges.



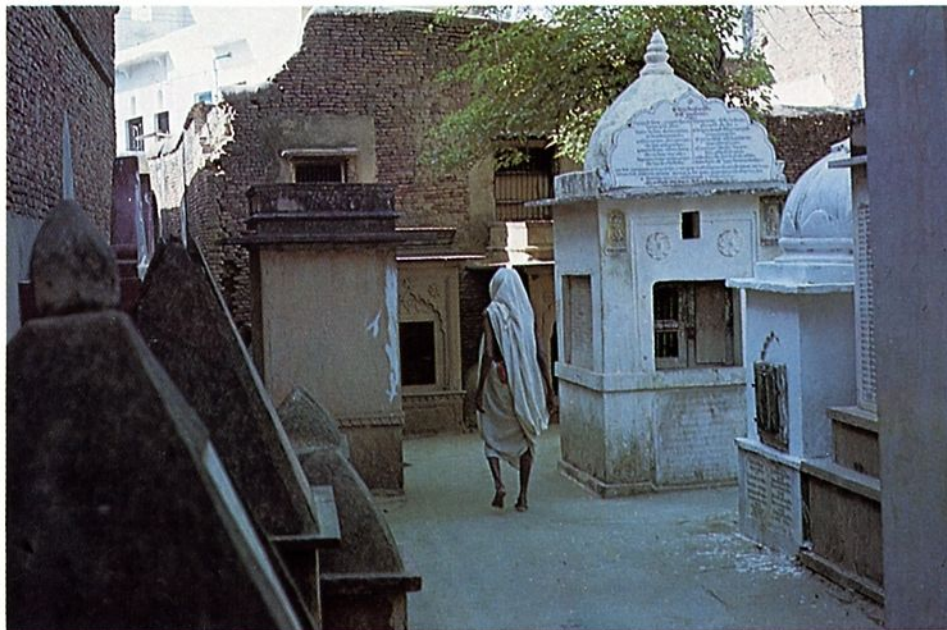


**KṚṢṆA BATHED HERE** at Śyāmakuṇḍa (below), and since then His followers have taken advantage of the pool's purifying effect. Āmli Talā tree (left) on the Yamunā's bank was living during Lord Kṛṣṇa's pastimes thousands of years ago. Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who pioneered the reclamation of Vṛndāvana's holy sites five hundred years ago, would chant His daily *japa* here in the morning.



is the only lover of all those *gopīs*. The trees of that land are *kalpa-vṛkṣa*, wish-fulfilling trees, and one can have anything he wants from them. The land is made of touchstone and the water of nectar. In that supreme abode, all speech is song, all walking is dancing, and one's constant companion is the flute. Surabhi cows flood the land with milk, and everything is self-luminous, just like the sun in the material world. Since every moment there is spent in loving service to Kṛṣṇa, there is no past, present or future." The human form of life is meant for understanding this transcendental land of Vṛndāvana. One who is intelligent should cultivate knowledge of Vṛndāvana, Lord Kṛṣṇa's eternal domain, and reach that supreme abode even in this lifetime.

**His Holiness Brahmānanda Svāmī**, personal secretary to His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, explains that his spiritual master resided in the most sacred and serene city of Vṛndāvana for a number of years and then left in 1965 to teach Kṛṣṇa consciousness to the people of the West. By Śrīla Prabhupāda's infinite mercy and fixed determination, thousands of young men and women have taken up Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and some of them have been inspired to come to Vṛndāvana to serve Lord Kṛṣṇa in His personal abode. Under the direction of His Divine Grace, his disciples have built a magnificent temple and international guest house so that others, especially from abroad, can visit Vṛndāvana and experience its intense spiritual atmosphere. This is part I of a three-part series on Vṛndāvana and ISKCON's beautiful center there.



**TO DIE IN VṚNDĀVANA** is considered favorable for one's spiritual advancement. Sitting in the shade of the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple, these tombs of noted spiritual masters are visited by devotees for inspiration in spiritual life.





## The Heroes of Vrindavana Forest

*an excerpt from Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda*

Accompanied by the cowherd boys and Balarāma, Kṛṣṇa brought forward the cows and played on His flute throughout the forest of Vrindavana, which was full of flowers, vegetables, and pasturing grass. The Vrindavana forest was as sanctified as the clear mind of a devotee and was full of bees, flowers and fruits. There were chirping birds and clear lakes with waters that could

relieve one of all fatigue. Sweet-flavored breezes blew always, refreshing the mind and body. Kṛṣṇa, with His friends and Balarāma, entered the forest and, seeing the favorable situation, enjoyed the atmosphere to the fullest extent. Kṛṣṇa saw all the trees, overloaded with fruits and fresh twigs, coming down to touch the ground, as if welcoming Him by touching His lotus feet. He was very

pleased by the behavior of the trees, fruits and flowers, and He began to smile, realizing their desires.

**K**ṛṣṇa then spoke to His elder brother Balarāma as follows: “My dear brother, You are superior to all of us, and Your lotus feet are worshiped by the demigods. Just see how these trees, full with fruits, have bent down to worship Your lotus feet! It appears that they are trying to get out of the darkness of being obliged to accept the form of trees. Actually, the trees born in the land of Vrindavana are not ordinary living entities. Having held the impersonal conception of God in their past lives, they are now put into this stationary condition of life. But now they have the opportunity of seeing You in Vrindavana, and they are praying for further advancement in spiritual life through Your personal association. Generally, trees are living entities in the modes of darkness. The impersonalist philosophers are in that darkness, but they eradicate it by taking full advantage of Your presence. I think the drones that are buzzing all around You must have been Your devotees in their past lives. They cannot leave Your company because no one can be a better, more affectionate master than You. You are the supreme and original Personality of Godhead, and the drones are just trying to spread Your glories by chanting every moment. I think some of them must be great sages, devotees of Your Lordship, and they are disguising themselves in the form of drones because they are unable to give up Your company even for a moment. My dear brother, You are the supreme worshipable Godhead. Just see how the peacocks are dancing before You in great ecstasy. The deer, whose behavior is just like the *gopis*’ [young cowherd girls], are welcoming You with the same affection. And the cuckoos who are residing in this forest are receiving You with great joy because they consider that Your appearance in their home is so auspicious. Even though they are trees and animals, these residents of Vrindavana are glorifying You. They are prepared to welcome You to their best capacity, as is the practice of great souls in receiving another great soul at home. As for the land, it is so pious and fortu-



nate that the footprints of Your lotus feet are marking its body.

“It is quite natural for these Vṇdāvana inhabitants to thus receive a great personality like You. The herbs, creepers and plants are also so fortunate to touch Your lotus feet. And by Your touching the twigs with Your hands, these small plants are also made glorious. As for the hills and the rivers, they too are now glorious because You are glancing at them. Above all, the damsels of Vraja, the *gopīs*, attracted by Your beauty, are the most glorious, because You embrace them with Your strong arms.”

In this way, both Lord Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma began to enjoy the residents of Vṇdāvana to their full satisfaction, along with the calves and cows on the bank of the Yamunā. In some places both Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma were accompanied by Their friends. The boys were singing, imitating the humming sound of the drones and accompanying Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, who were garlanded with forest flowers. While walking, the boys sometimes imitated the quacking sound of the swans in the lakes, or when they saw the peacocks dancing, they imitated them before Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa also moved His neck, imitating the dancing and making His friends laugh.

**T**he cows taken care of by Kṛṣṇa had different names, and Kṛṣṇa would call them with love. After hearing Kṛṣṇa calling, the cows would immediately respond by mooing, and the boys would enjoy this exchange to their hearts' content. They would all imitate the sound vibrations made by the different kinds of birds, especially the *cakoras*, peacocks, cuckoos and *bhāradvājas*. Sometimes, when they would see the weaker animals fleeing out of fear of the sounds of tigers and lions, the boys, along with Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, would imitate the animals and run away with them. When they felt some fatigue, they would sit down, and Balarāma would put His head on the lap of one of the boys just to take rest, and Kṛṣṇa would immediately come and begin massaging the legs of Balarāma. And sometimes He would take a palm fan and fan the body of Balarāma, causing a pleasing breeze to relieve Him of His fatigue. Other boys would sometimes dance or sing while Balarāma took rest, and sometimes they



would wrestle amongst themselves or jump. When the boys were thus engaged, Kṛṣṇa would immediately join them, and catching their hands, He would enjoy their company and laugh and praise their activities. When Kṛṣṇa would feel tired, He would sometimes take shelter of the root of a big tree, or the lap of a cowherd boy, and lie down. When He would lie down with a boy or a root as His pillow, some of the boys

would come and massage His legs, and some would fan His body with a fan made from leaves. Some of the more talented boys would sing in very sweet voices to please Him. Thus very soon His fatigue would go away. The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, whose legs are tended by the goddess of fortune, shared Himself with the cowherd boys as one of them, expanding His internal potency to appear exactly like a village





boy. But despite His appearing just like a village boy, there were occasions when He proved Himself to be the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Sometimes men pose themselves as the Supreme Personality of Godhead and cheat innocent people, but they can only cheat; they cannot exhibit the potency of God.

**W**hile Kṛṣṇa was thus engaged in exhibiting His internal potency along with the supermost fortunate

friends, there occurred another chance for Him to exhibit the superhuman powers of Godhead. His most intimate friends Śrīdāmā, Subala and Stokakṛṣṇa began to address Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma with great love and affection thus: "Dear Balarāma, You are very powerful; Your arms are very strong. Dear Kṛṣṇa, You are very expert in killing all kinds of disturbing demons. Will You kindly note that just near this place there is a

**"... Balarāma immediately caught hold of the legs of the ass with one hand and, wheeling him around, threw him into the treetops."**

big forest of the name Tālavana. This forest is full of palm trees, and all the trees are filled with fruits. Some fruits are falling down, and some of them are very ripe, even in the trees. It is a very nice place, but because of a great demon, Dhenukāsura, it is very difficult to go there. No one can reach the trees to collect the fruits. Dear Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, this demon is present there in the form of an ass, and he is surrounded by similar demon friends who have assumed the same shape. All of them are very strong, so it is very difficult to approach this place. Dear brothers, You are the only persons who can kill such demons. Other than You, no one can go there for fear of being killed. Not even animals go there, and no birds are sleeping there; they have all left. One can only appreciate the sweet aroma that is coming from that place. It appears that up until now, no one has tasted the sweet fruits there, either on the trees or on the ground. Dear Kṛṣṇa, to tell You frankly, we are very attracted by this sweet aroma. Dear Balarāma, let us all go there and enjoy these fruits. The aroma of the fruits is now spread everywhere. Don't You smell it from here?"

**W**hen Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa were thus petitioned by Their smiling, intimate friends, They were inclined to please them, and They began to proceed toward the forest, surrounded by all Their friends. Immediately upon entering the Tālavana, Balarāma began to yank the trees with His arms, exhibiting the strength of an elephant. Because of this jerking, all the ripe fruits fell down on the ground. Upon hearing the sound of the falling fruits, the demon Dhenukāsura, who was living there in the form of an ass, approached with great force, shaking the whole field so that all the trees moved as if there were an earthquake. The demon appeared first before Balarāma and began to kick His chest with his hind legs. At first, Balarāma did not say anything, but then, with great anger, the demon kicked Him again more vehemently. This time Balarāma immediately caught hold of



the legs of the ass with one hand and, wheeling him around, threw him into the treetops. While he was being wheeled around by Balarāma, the demon lost his life. Balarāma threw the demon into the biggest palm tree about, and the demon's body was so heavy that the palm tree fell upon other trees, and several fell down. It appeared as if a great hurricane had passed through the forest, and all the trees were falling down, one after another. This exhibition of strength is not astonishing because Balarāma is the Personality of Godhead known as Ananta Śeṣanāga, who is holding all the planets on the hoods of His millions of heads. The whole cosmic manifestation is maintained by Him, exactly as two threads hold the weaving of a cloth.

**A**fter the demon was thrown into the trees, all the friends and associates of Dhenukāsura immediately assembled and attacked Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa with great force. They were determined to retaliate and avenge the death of their friend. But Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma caught each of the asses by the hind legs and, exactly in the same way as before, wheeled them around. Thus They killed all of them by throwing them into the palm trees. Because of the dead bodies of the asses, there was a panoramic scene. It

appeared as if clouds of various colors were assembled in the trees. Hearing of this great incident, the demigods from the higher planets showered flowers on Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma and beat their drums and offered devotional prayers.

A few days after the killing of Dhenukāsura, people began to come into the Tālavana forest to collect the fruits, and animals began to return without fear to feed on the nice grasses growing there. Just by chanting or hearing these transcendental activities and pastimes of the brothers Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, one can amass pious activities.

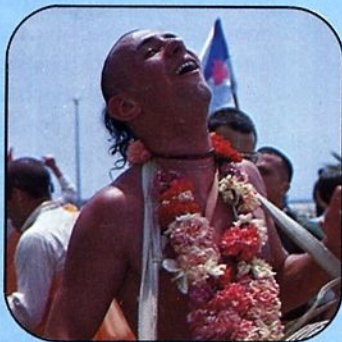
When Kṛṣṇa, Balarāma and Their friends entered the village of Vṛndāvana, They played Their flutes, and the boys praised Their uncommon activities in the forest. Their faces were decorated with *tilaka* and smeared with the dust raised by the cows, and Kṛṣṇa's head was decorated with a peacock feather. Both He and Balarāma played Their flutes, and the young *gopīs* were joyous to see Kṛṣṇa returning home. All the *gopīs* in Vṛndāvana remained very morose on account of Kṛṣṇa's absence. All day they were thinking of Kṛṣṇa in the forest or of Him herding cows in the pasture. When they saw Kṛṣṇa returning, all their anxieties were immediately relieved, and they looked at His face the way

drones hover over the honey of the lotus flower. When Kṛṣṇa entered the village, the young *gopīs* smiled and laughed. Kṛṣṇa, while playing the flute, enjoyed the beautiful smiling faces of the *gopīs*.

Then Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma were immediately received by Their affectionate mothers, Yaśodā and Rohiṇī, and, according to the time's demands, they began to fulfill the desires of their affectionate sons. Simultaneously, the mothers rendered service and bestowed benediction upon their transcendental sons. They very nicely took care of their children by bathing and dressing Them. Kṛṣṇa was dressed in yellowish garments, and Balarāma was dressed in bluish garments, and They were given all sorts of ornaments and flower garlands. Being relieved of the fatigue of Their day's work in the pasturing ground, They looked refreshed and very beautiful.

**T**hey were given palatable dishes by Their mothers, and They pleasantly ate everything. After eating, They were seated nicely on clean bedding, and the mothers began to sing various songs of Their activities. As soon as They sat down on the bedding, They very quickly fell fast asleep. In this way, Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma used to enjoy Vṛndāvana life as cowherd boys.

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## A SHORT STATEMENT OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF KṚṢṆA CONSCIOUSNESS

*The International Society for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness (ISKCON) is a worldwide community of devotees practicing bhakti-yoga, the eternal science of loving service to God. The Society was founded in 1966 by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, a pure devotee of God representing an unbroken chain of spiritual masters originating with Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself.*

*The following eight principles are the basis of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. We invite all our readers to consider them with an open mind and then visit one of the ISKCON centers to see how they are being applied in everyday life.*

1. By sincerely cultivating a bona fide spiritual science, we can be free from anxiety and come to a state of pure, unending, blissful consciousness in this lifetime.
2. We are not our bodies but eternal, spirit souls, parts and parcels of God (Kṛṣṇa). As such, we are all brothers, and Kṛṣṇa is ultimately our common father.
3. Kṛṣṇa is eternal, all-knowing, omnipresent, all-powerful, and all-attractive. He is the seed-giving father of all living beings, and He is the sustaining energy of the entire cosmic creation.
4. The Absolute Truth is contained in the *Vedas*, the oldest scriptures in the world. The essence of the *Vedas* is found in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, a literal record of Kṛṣṇa's words.
5. We should learn the Vedic knowledge from a genuine spiritual master—one who has no selfish motives and whose mind is firmly fixed on Kṛṣṇa.
6. Before we eat, we should offer to the Lord the food that sustains us. Then Kṛṣṇa becomes the offering and purifies us.
7. We should perform all our actions as offerings to Kṛṣṇa and do nothing for our own sense gratification.
8. The recommended means for achieving the mature stage of love of God in this age of Kali, or quarrel, is to chant the holy names of the Lord. The easiest method for most people is to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.



# “Bhagavad-gītā...the first of books;



it was as if an empire spoke to us, nothing small or unworthy, but large, serene, consistent, the voice of an old intelligence which in another age and climate had pondered and thus disposed of the same questions which exercise us.”

—Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Journals*

**Bhagavad-gītā As It Is.** by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. The largest selling, most widely used edition of the *Gītā* in the western world (one-half million copies sold in the first two years of publication). 1,000 pages. 44 full-color illustrations. Hardbound: \$11.95. softbound: \$7.95. To order your copy please see page 13.

