

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



BACK TO GODHEAD



Vol. 14 No. 12

THE MAGAZINE OF THE HARE KRISHNA MOVEMENT



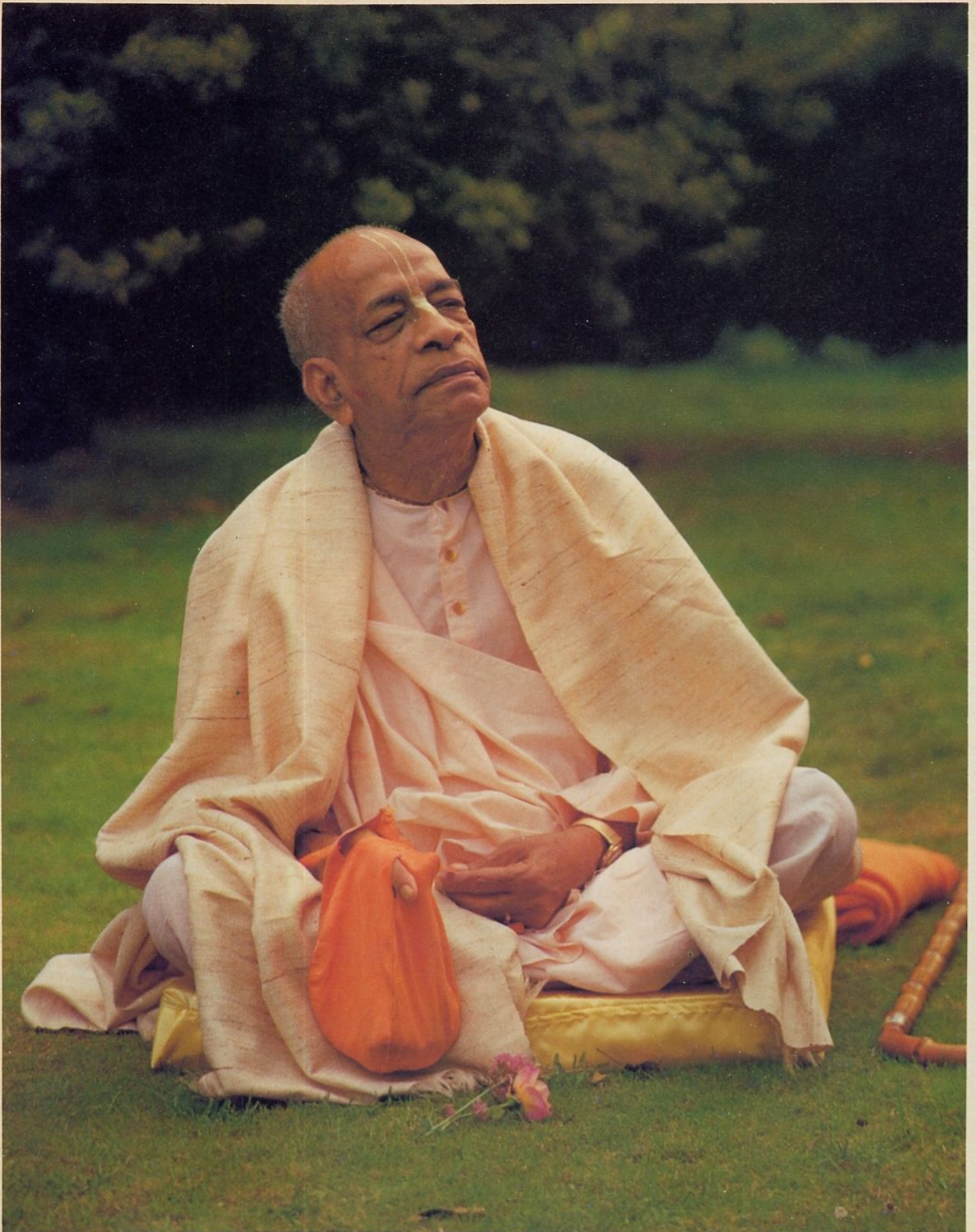


PHOTO: BHĀRGAVA DĀSA

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

BACK TO GODHEAD

VOL. 14, NO. 12

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Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda)
His Divine Grace
A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda

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PRONUNCIATION of Sanskrit words and names.
BACK TO GODHEAD follows the international
scholarly standard. Pronounce short **a** like the **u** in **but**,
long **ā** like the **a** in **far** (and hold it twice as long as the
short **a**.) Pronounce **e** like the **a** in **evade**, long **ī** like the **i**
in **pique**. Pronounce the vowel **ṛ** like the **ri** in **rim**, and **e**
like the **ch** in **chair**. Pronounce the aspirated consonants
(**ch**, **jh**, **dh**, etc.) as in **staunch-heart**, **hedge-hog**, and **red-
hot**. Finally, pronounce sibilants **ś** and **ṣ** like **sh**, and **s** like
the **s** in **sun**. So for *Kṛṣṇasay* KRISHNA, and for *Caitanya*
say CHAITANYA.

ABOUT SANSKRIT NAMES in by-lines, credits, and
text. Members of the International Society for Krishna
Consciousness receive names of Lord Kṛṣṇa or His
great devotees, combined with *dāsa* (*dāsī* for women),
meaning "servant." For instance, the name *Kṛṣṇa dāsa*
means "servant of Kṛṣṇa."

◀ **His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swami
Prabhupāda** came to America in 1965, at age seventy, to
fulfill his spiritual master's request that he teach the
science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness throughout the English-
speaking world. In a dozen years he published some
seventy volumes of translation and commentary on
India's Vedic literatures, and these are now standard in
universities worldwide. Meanwhile, traveling almost
nonstop, Śrīla Prabhupāda molded his international
society into a worldwide confederation of *āśramas*,
schools, temples, and farm communities. He passed
away in 1977 in India's Vṛndāvana, the place most sacred
to Lord Kṛṣṇa, and his disciples are carrying forward the
movement he started.


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COVER: A Relationship Everyone Can Relish. Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of
Godhead, and Rādhā, His pleasure potency and eternal consort, eternally enjoy
transcendental pastimes in the spiritual world. (Cover art: Paṛikṣit dāsa.)

ABOUT BACK TO GODHEAD: "Godhead is light" has always been BACK TO GODHEAD's byword—"Nescience is darkness. Where
there is Godhead there is no nescience." Godhead means the source of everything, and this journal is meant to assist readers in
cultivating practical, scientific realization of Godhead. To this end BACK TO GODHEAD explores the ideas presented in ancient
India's Vedic literatures, especially *Bhagavad-gītā*. As the *Gītā* itself informs us, "When one is enlightened with the knowledge by
which nescience is destroyed, then his knowledge reveals everything, as the sun lights up everything in the daytime."

ABOVE HYPOCRISY AND ANXIETY

A RELATIONSHIP EVERYONE CAN RELISH

A lecture by HIS DIVINE GRACE
A.C. BHAKTIVEDANTA SWAMI PRABHUPĀDA

*veda-sastra kahe 'sambandha,' 'abhidheya,'
'prayojana'
'krsna' prapya sambandha, 'bhakti'
praptyera sadhana*

"The Vedic literatures give information about what the living entity's eternal relationship with Lord Kṛṣṇa is, how the living entity can revive this relationship and act accordingly, and how he will live when he has returned home, back to Godhead—which is the ultimate goal of life." (*Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā* 20.124)

The Vedic literatures are not man-made. Rather, they are coming down to us through the traditional process, through hearing. For example, we accept the identity of our father by hearing. A child is born, and when the child hears his older brothers and sisters calling a gentleman "Father," he also begins to say "Father." There is no question of studying. He learns simply by hearing. Others are calling "Father," so he also calls "Father." There is no need at all for evidence or studying.

Similarly, the Vedic knowledge has come down to us through the process of hearing. Before five thousand years ago, there was no need of having the Vedic knowledge in book form, because the spiritual master would speak it, his disciple would hear it, and the disciple would speak this knowledge to his disciple, who would in turn hear it and hand it down—and so forth, through the generations. But when the Kali-yuga (this present age of hypocrisy and confusion) began five thousand years ago, all of the Vedic knowledge

was systematically recorded.

Earlier there had been only one *Veda*, the *Atharva Veda*. But to make it more clear and understandable, Vyāsadeva divided the one *Veda* into four and entrusted four of his disciples to take charge of the four *Vedas*. Later he wrote the *Mahābhārata* and the *Purāṇas* (histories) just to make the Vedic knowledge still more understandable to the common man in different ways. But the principle is the same. *Veda-sāstra kahe*—'sambandha.' *Sambandha*: we have to find out how to reestablish our lost relationship with Kṛṣṇa, or God.

And what is that relationship? As the *Vedānta-sūtra* says, *janmādy asya yataḥ*: our relationship is that all beings—including ourselves—are born of the energy of God. Therefore we call God "Father." This is accepted in every religion. There is no argument. So what is the relationship between father and son? Is the relationship only to exact from the father? No. There is duty.

If a son is sensible and grown up, he knows, "I have a duty to love my father." That is a very simple thing—to love the father. "My father has done so much for me. I am going to inherit the estate of my father, and I am already enjoying the earnings of my father. So is it not my duty to show respect to my father?"

Therefore those who are against God's principles, those who are not God-minded—they're the lowest of creatures. *Na mām duṣkṛtino mūḍhāḥ prapadyante narādhamāḥ*. Anyone who does not recognize God—he is the lowest of the low. These terms have been used. *Mūḍhāḥ*—"ass." *Duṣkṛtinaḥ*—"miscreant." And

narādhamāḥ—"the lowest of mankind."

Mankind is meant for recognizing God. This is real human life. In animal life one cannot recognize that there is a God, and that everything is coming from God. Animals cannot read the Vedic literatures. They cannot take any instruction. These Vedic literatures exist simply for the benefit of human beings. Therefore any so-called human being who does not accept the authority of the Vedic literatures and does not accept the existence of God is actually just an animal, only on two legs instead of four. *Bhagavad-gītā* very nicely describes them: *narādhamāḥ*, the lowest of mankind. So our civilization is being governed by the lowest of mankind, even though we may try to advertise ourselves as "advancing."

Yesterday some boy came and said, "Who is God? I am God." He was speaking like that. You see? And yet from his manner and dress it appeared that he was educated. So this is the education that is going on: everyone is being trained to be the lowest of mankind. The purpose of education is to make a man the *highest* of mankind, but modern education is teaching people to be the lowest of mankind. And if some of the students are taught to be the highest of mankind, their guardians become disturbed. "Oh, my son is going to be the highest of mankind? Swamiji is teaching dangerous things."

Just see. The spiritual master is saying, "No, don't smoke, don't take intoxication, don't have any illicit connection with

When Kṛṣṇa went walking, the damsels thought, "The soles of His feet are so soft. He must be hurting Himself."



women. Be upright; be a devotee of the Lord."

"Oh, Swamiji is dangerous."

But if somebody teaches, "My dear boys, take LSD, become mad, and go to the lunatic asylum," he will be very popular. What can be done? This is the situation. So we are situated in a society of the lowest of mankind. Always remember this.

I am not just speaking about the United States, but all over the world. Even in India, where so much culture is available for understanding God, their foolish leaders are also teaching this gross materialism. You see? It is because of the age we are living in. Don't think that I am criticizing some particular country or community. This is the age of Kali, the age of hypocrisy. Simply hypocrisy.

So we have to be very careful. *Dāivī hy eṣā guṇamayī mama māyā duratyayā*: the illusory, material energy is very strong. At any moment, if we become a little slack and inattentive, we can forget our relationship with the Supreme. The Supreme Cause is Kṛṣṇa, or God, but somehow we have forgotten that. Therefore these literatures—the *Vedas*, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, *Bhagavad-gītā*—are reminding us, "Your relationship with Kṛṣṇa is eternal."

Bhayaṁ dvitīyābhiniveśataḥ syād īśāḍ apetasya viparyayo 'smṛtiḥ: we are put into anxiety because we have taken an opposite position—"Who is God?" *Viparyayo 'smṛtiḥ*. This very word is used. *Viparyayah* means "topsy-turvy." Our memory has become topsy-turvy, and therefore we are suffering. But people will not admit it. "No, we shall adjust. We shall make better laws. We shall offer higher education. We shall form big political parties. We shall go on defying God. And we shall be happy in this way." So this godless civilization is now generating the Communist party, bringing us to a dangerous situation. But one who takes shelter of Kṛṣṇa will not be put into danger. Rest assured.

Vāsudevaḥ sarvaṁ iti sa mahātmā sudurlabhaḥ: We have to become great souls by reviving our eternal relationship with the Supreme, by surrendering unto God. That surrendering process is *bhakti*, or devotional service. For so long we have been disobedient. Now we have to become obedient. That's all. As soon as the people of this so-called advanced world become obedient to God, then there will be discipline, and there will be peace.

There is no discipline now. No one is agreeing to follow any spiritual rules or regulations. Everyone has become God. "We can do anything—whatever we like." That means that everyone has become dog. But *bhakti-yoga*, devotional service,

means that we follow a disciplinary pattern in our lives, so that automatically we can revive our lost relationship with the Lord. And then we will become happy. We will realize love of God, the real goal of life.

Why practice discipline? Suppose we don't revive our relationship? Then we'll be disturbed. We are searching after peace and prosperity. So what is the basis of peace? The basis of peace is love. Do you think that you can go without loving

People are
thinking, "I
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family. I shall
love my country.
I shall love
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because you are
missing the
central point.

anyone and still become peaceful? No. How is it possible? But if you love God, then you can love everyone. And if you don't love God, then you cannot love anyone. Because He's the center.

Take this example. Say a girl belongs to a certain family. But when she marries, she becomes a member of her husband's family. Because the husband and wife are now related, at once she becomes related to the husband's brother. She becomes related to the husband's mother and the husband's father. She becomes related to everyone in the family. At once. Of course, the central point is the husband. Before that—before any connection with that central point—that boy's mother, father, and brother had no relation with this girl. You see? So the central point must be there. If you can love God, then you can love everything in relationship with God. You can love every man. You can love your country. You can love your society. You can love your friend. Everyone. That is the point.

People are thinking in a different way: "Why shall I love God only? Why shall I love God? I shall love my family. I shall

love my country. I shall love my . . ." But no, you cannot love all of these things. It is not possible, because you are missing the central point. These are facts. *Harāv abhaktasya kuto mahad-guṇā*. However materially or academically qualified he may be, one who does not love God cannot have any good qualifications. Why? *Manorathenāsati dhāvato bahiḥ*—because he'll simply speculate on the mental plane and fall under the spell of the material energy.

But it is clearly stated in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, *yasyāsti bhaktir bhagavaty akiñcanā*—as a person becomes advanced in devotional service, automatically he develops all good qualities.

The *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* gives a list of twenty-six qualities of a devotee: (1) He is very kind to everyone. (2) He does not make anyone his enemy. (3) He is truthful. (4) He is equal to everyone. (5) No one can find any fault in him. (6) He is magnanimous. (7) He is mild. (8) He is always clean. (9) He is without possessions. (10) He works for everyone's benefit. (11) He is very peaceful. (12) He is always surrendered to Kṛṣṇa. (13) He has no material desires. (14) He is very meek. (15) He is steady. (16) He controls his senses. (17) He does not eat more than required. (18) He is not influenced by the Lord's illusory energy. (19) He offers respect to everyone. (20) He does not desire any respect for himself. (21) He is very grave. (22) He is merciful. (23) He is friendly. (24) He is poetic. (25) He is expert. (26) He is silent.

After all, what is the meaning of Kṛṣṇa consciousness? Is it just some kind of sentiment or fanaticism? No. It is a science. If you follow the rules and regulations, then automatically all these good qualities develop. You can actually see. And as soon as these qualities are there, then you actually become a lover of your country; you become a lover of your fellow man. You become a friend to everyone, a lover of God—everything. So just imagine if each and every person became like that. . . .

Of course, it is not expected that each and every person will become like that. However, if only ten percent of the world's population becomes Kṛṣṇa conscious, then it is guaranteed that we will have peace in the world. Why? Because *ekas' candrah*—we do not require many moons in the sky. One moon is sufficient to drive away the darkness. *Varam eko guṇī putro nirguṇena śatena kim*. Cāṅakya Paṇḍita says that it is better to have one qualified son than to have hundreds of fools. The modern civilization is going on in that way—godless civilization. But if some percentage of the civilized human beings become Kṛṣṇa conscious, that will bring world peace. Otherwise it is not possible.

(continued on page 30)

SINCERE INQUIRIES

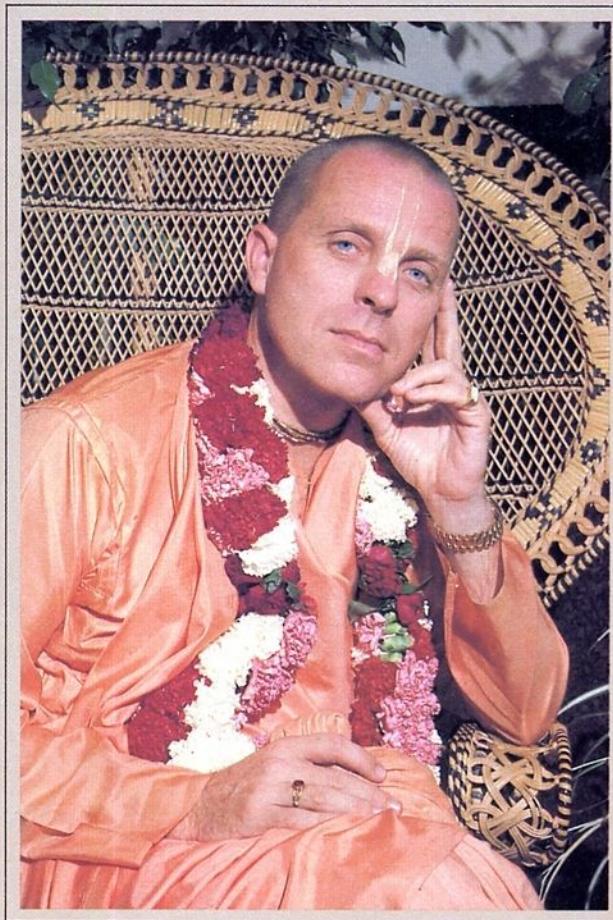
“People say, ‘You have to suffer. That’s what life’s all about.’
And they’re right. But you should ask, ‘How can I get free from this suffering?’”
An interview with Śrīla Bhavānanda Goswami Viṣṇupāda.

His Divine Grace Bhavānanda Goswami Viṣṇupāda is one of the spiritual masters of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. On his way to his headquarters in Māyāpur, India, from visiting disciples in Australia, he stopped off at the Hare Kṛṣṇa center in New York City, where he met with devotees and guests.

Śrīla Viṣṇupāda: Everyone has a right to be happy. That’s the constitutional position of the living entity, because *īśvaraḥ paramaḥ kṛṣṇaḥ sac-cid-ānanda—*Kṛṣṇa is eternity, knowledge, and *ānanda*, bliss. Every living entity is part and parcel of Kṛṣṇa, so naturally as part of Kṛṣṇa you have your constitutional *right* to be happy. And if you’re not happy all the time, then you should *demand* to know *why*. Why am I suffering? Why am I not happy? In order to come to the human platform, you have to ask that question: Who am I, and why am I suffering? But you have to be intelligent enough to understand that you *are* suffering. That’s the problem—no one is willing to admit that they’re suffering. Or they’re willing to admit, “I’m suffering,” but they think, “If I keep working hard, tomorrow I’ll be happy.”

Guest: I may be suffering, but that’s part of my life.

Śrīla Viṣṇupāda: That *is* part of your life. That’s part of your *karma*, yes. But it’s not necessary. I have a close friend who is a big, big P.R. man. He had a heart attack. And his son was born with spinal meningitis. So this friend told me, “You know, it



was a strain, but what can you do? That’s life. Living is hard, dying is hard. But what can you do? That’s life.”

People say, “You have to suffer. That’s what life’s all about.” And they’re right! Life in this material world *is* suffering. But you should ask, “How can I get free from this suffering?”

There are two kinds of happy people in this world: the self-realized person and the fool. The self-realized soul *is really* happy. And the fool thinks he’s happy, just like the ostrich who buries his head in the sand

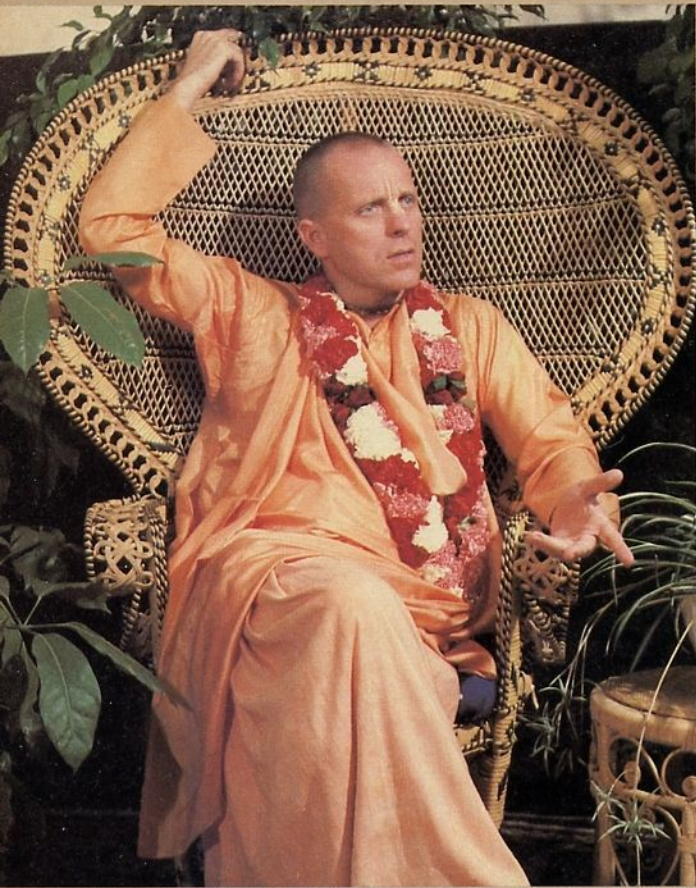
and thinks he’s safe. And then in between there’s you and me.

Guest: We understand that we’re not happy, but we’re trying to be.
Śrīla Viṣṇupāda: That’s right. So the universe is populated 99.9 percent with fools—foolishly thinking they have to suffer, foolishly thinking that suffering is part of the living experience, that it’s necessary in order to grow intellectually, emotionally, and on every level. . . .

Did you ever lift weights? In muscle building, if you want to get a strong muscle, you have to tear the muscle. When they lift all these weights, actually they’re tearing the muscle. And then as the muscle heals, it becomes stronger. So in order to get that strong muscle, they have to suffer so much pain! They keep tearing the muscle, tearing the muscle, tearing the muscle, and it builds up bigger and bigger. Have you ever seen someone who’s lifting weights? They’re always in such suffering.

Guest: But it’s a fact that they become strong in that way.

Śrīla Viṣṇupāda: They become physically strong, but ultimately the body is defeated. They’re not so strong that they can be stronger than death. You may be a big, big sufferer, and then you may think, “I’m becoming more and more intellectually advanced.” Just like so many great—so-called great—Western authors. They suffered so much. James Joyce and all. They suffered. They led lives of suffering. But still they were defeated. No matter how strong I may think I’m becoming, how intellectually aware or adroit I’m



“There are two forms of pleasure in this material world—having sex and passing stool. That’s all. What kind of pleasure is that?”

I believed that there is a God. I had been having arguments with my friends. “It’s not possible for me to be God,” I would say. “If I am supposed to be God, then why am I so unhappy?” So I inquired one night in the middle of the night. I just looked up at the sky: “O my God, do something—help me.” And within three months I was in a temple. That is submissive inquiry. Even if there is no devotee around, you will be brought to a devotee, or a devotee will be brought to you. Somehow or other you will have contact. You just have to inquire like that: “O my dear God, please help me.” Because it’s not that we are alone. Ultimately Kṛṣṇa is within everyone’s heart. He understands about us.

Guest: So if a sincere person is inquiring, he will come in contact with devotees.

Śrīla Viṣṇupāda: Yes. And for the sincere, innocent person who is not inquiring, we go out preaching and distribute Kṛṣṇa conscious literature to give them an opportunity to at least begin to inquire, an opportunity to come in contact with some knowledge about Kṛṣṇa. If they just make some submissive inquiry, even within their mind, that will be the beginning of their spiritual life.

I was talking before with a boy from Fordham Law School. “I don’t know very much about this,” he said. “I don’t understand very much. But from my experience I can see that you are right.” That’s enough—your material life is finished. You know? Even if you just read one of Prabhupāda’s books and say, “Gee, that makes sense.” Just think like that. “That makes sense.” Then your spiritual life has begun, and your material life will ultimately be finished.

Some submissive appeal has to be there. And if you’re not submissive—if you’re atheistic, averse to God—we don’t have to prove Kṛṣṇa to you. Kṛṣṇa will prove Himself to you when He slaps you down and kills you, dog.

Guest: So if a sincere person meets a devotee, then what should he do, what takes place?

Śrīla Viṣṇupāda: What should he do? He should inquire. If he’s sincere he will inquire; it’s an automatic thing.

Devotee: Suppose he’s inquiring and he inquires from different sources—from the devotee, from the meditator, from the scholar . . .

Śrīla Viṣṇupāda: That’s all right. Of course, it’s best if you just inquire from the devotee. But in the beginning you may have doubts. So if you’re sincere you inquire and you inquire and you inquire from this *guru*, that *guru*, and that *guru*—and then compare them. Compare them by hearing what they’re saying. You can do that. Of course,

becoming, how much more of the living experience I’m able to understand due to my suffering, still I will be defeated. And generally they defeat themselves by suicide. Because that’s the ultimate experience—death.

Guest: But there are people who seem to be quite happy.

Śrīla Viṣṇupāda: Who? Who? Who are those people? Name me names.

Guest: People who are performing meditation or . . .

Śrīla Viṣṇupāda: Who? Who? Who? Where? Where?

Guest: Suppose I’m happy.

Śrīla Viṣṇupāda: Suppose! I’m not supposing, I want facts! You don’t know anyone who is happy. “There are some people” or “Suppose I am.” I’m not talking of suppositions.

Guest: What if someone’s wealthy and he’s healthy . . .

Śrīla Viṣṇupāda: While I was in Dallas, the Wrigley heiress, the heiress to the Wrigley chewing gum fortune . . . She has so much money—lives in Los Angeles. Millions and millions of dollars—big, big house. She’s upset over some family affair, she locks the bathroom door, and falls on a butcher knife and commits suicide.

The *only* one who is always happy is the pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa. You can’t name me anyone else. I challenge you. I chal-

lenge you to name me one person who’s always happy in this material world.

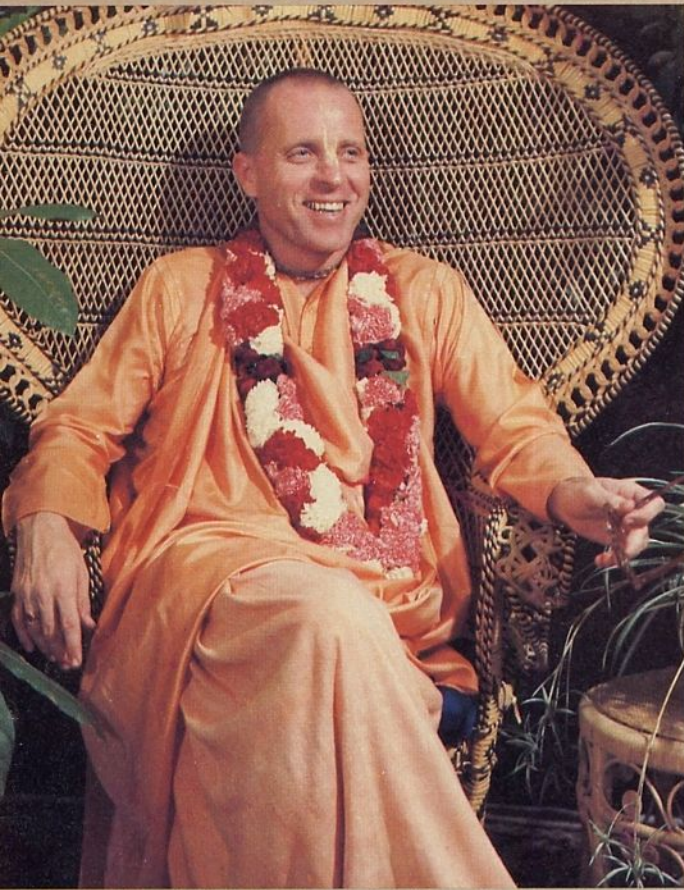
Guest: Hmmm.

Śrīla Viṣṇupāda: Because happiness in this material world is based upon gratification of the mind and the senses. There are two forms of pleasure in this material world—having sex and passing stool. That’s all. What kind of pleasure is that? Real happiness is not possible through material activities. Our activities have to be centered on that which is spiritual. You have to understand the definition of *spiritual*. *Spiritual* means knowledgeable, eternal, and blissful.

Guest: So if somebody understands that he’s suffering and that he ought to be happy, then what should he do?

Śrīla Viṣṇupāda: He should inquire. If he’s innocent and sincere, he will inquire. And as soon as he inquires, even in his mind: “O my God, what is going on? What is this all about? What is happening to me?” Even in the middle of the night in his room if he submissively inquires like that, Kṛṣṇa will help him.

I inquired like that in Mexico in 1968, December 1968. We were preparing the script of our next movie. I was completely bewildered, and one night in this little village where we were staying on the coast I just inquired and looked up at the sky and said, “O my God. If there is a God . . .”



“No one argues with you if you tell them that they’re God. If you’re going to tell people they’re God, you can fill up Carnegie Hall . . .”

we prefer if you don’t go to this *guru* and that *guru*—but you *can* go to different *gurus* and hear them.

In Australia people were coming in the evening to see me—a hundred, hundred and fifty people. Very lively discussions. And someone said, “Well, why is it that every time we come there’s always this argumentative air?”

I said, “Because if you all came here and I told you that you’re all God, no one would argue with me. If I tell you you’re God, who’s going to argue? But as soon as you come to a devotee he tells you, ‘You’re not God, I’m not God—Kṛṣṇa is God, and your business is to worship Him.’ Immediately—argument. This,” I said, “is indicative of your envious hearts.” No one argues with you if you tell them that they’re God. If you’re going to tell people they’re God, you can fill up Carnegie Hall, because people will gather to be flattered. But if you’re sincerely looking to find God, Kṛṣṇa will put you in touch with a bona fide spiritual master.

Guest: But what does that have to do with movements, and societies, and temples, and all of that?

Śrīla Viṣṇupāda: This is all to offer facility for those who are sincere to begin the process for going back home, back to Godhead.

Guest: But if I’m sincere, what need do

I have for all of these things?

Śrīla Viṣṇupāda: Because the association of devotees is necessary. The main purpose of this Society is to offer people an opportunity to associate with devotees.

Guest: What does that mean, “associate”?

Śrīla Viṣṇupāda: To associate? To speak to. And to be encouraged by. By associating with devotees you are encouraged to practice devotional principles. As you do that and chant and hear about Kṛṣṇa, your misgivings about devotional life are diminished, and your faith is increased. As your faith increases, you become more eager—you develop a taste for chanting and hearing about Kṛṣṇa. As your taste increases, then you develop attachment for Kṛṣṇa, and as the attachment intensifies, then you’re brought to the point of love—*kṛṣṇa-prema*, love for Kṛṣṇa—which is the perfection of life and the reservoir of all pleasure. That’s the point. That is the purpose of our Society.

Associate with devotees. They’re wonderful. Why are they wonderful? Because they are always serving Kṛṣṇa, they’re always talking about Kṛṣṇa, and they’re always listening, eager to hear about Kṛṣṇa. And if there is some devotee who is not, then avoid him. Offer him respect, but seek after the association of those who are always talking about Kṛṣṇa. There are so many of them. Then your misgivings

will be diminished. Now you’re filled with misgivings, doubts. But by associating with devotees and hearing about Kṛṣṇa, your misgivings are diminished, and your faith is increased.

That’s the main purpose of our Society: to give people an opportunity to associate with devotees. Even if they don’t want to associate with devotees, we go out onto the streets and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, so that they’re forced to hear Kṛṣṇa’s holy name. Sometimes force is necessary. Sometimes a stick is necessary to move a cow. So we don’t go out with sticks, but we go out with cymbals and drums so that the conditioned souls are forced to hear. This chanting provides the greatest benefit—but foolish people don’t understand it.

Guest: Isn’t that just a little—well, to put it bluntly—egotistic? I’ve heard people say that the pleasure you take in Kṛṣṇa consciousness is not spiritual happiness but the happiness that comes from thinking you’re better than everybody else.

Śrīla Viṣṇupāda: No. We don’t think that we’re better than anyone else. But we know that Kṛṣṇa is better than anyone else. He is certainly better than *you*. He’s the most beautiful, most strong, most intelligent, most renounced, most famous, most wonderful. We don’t think we’re better than you. But we know that Kṛṣṇa’s better than you. But you think you’re better than Kṛṣṇa. And that we’ll never allow—on that we will defeat you. Therefore you object.

Again—if you all come to this room and I tell you that you’re all God, no one will argue with me. Everyone will appreciate: “Oh, he is such a great saintly man. He is so wise.” But as soon as you go to a meeting of Kṛṣṇa conscious devotees, the devotee tells you, “No, you’re not God. Kṛṣṇa is God. God is God, and you must serve Him.” And then when he begins to prove to you by logic and scriptural evidence that Kṛṣṇa is God, you immediately become angry: “Oh, they’re so proud. Oh, they think they are right.” Yes, we are right! But we don’t think we’re better than you. But we know that Kṛṣṇa is better than you.

Guest: Still, isn’t the devotee thinking that because he’s in a better position than other people . . .

Śrīla Viṣṇupāda: He may be in a better position, but he doesn’t think that the better position is due to himself. It’s only due to the mercy of his spiritual master. That is the humility. He is in a better position, no doubt—he’s going back to Kṛṣṇa. He’s not going to take another birth in this material world. But he doesn’t think it’s his own doing. Instead he thinks, “It is simply due to the mercy of my spiritual master.”



CHANGING BODIES

Every seven years, scientists say, all the cells in your body have changed, including the cells in your brain. Yet *something* is constant.

by JAYĀDVAITA SWAMI

If all you see here is bodies changing, you're not seeing the point. The bodies are changing—that's obvious. But the most important person in this picture is the person you can't see at all. That person is the living spark of consciousness within the body. In other words, that person is *you*.

Whoever you are, your body is changing. You once had the body of a child. Now you have the body of a young person or old person. The change is gradual, yet continuous. At every moment, within your body, millions of chemical reactions are taking place, millions of cells are growing, dying off, replacing themselves. Just as you can't walk into the same stream twice (at every moment the stream is changing), you can't keep your body the same.

Your mind is changing, too, from moment to moment. And your intelligence is also changing—becoming sharper,



we hope, and more mature.

So far we've been talking about *your* body, *your* mind, *your* intelligence. Now, what about *you*?

You are not your body. This is not meant to be an enigmatic koan, nor merely a statement of dogma or belief. Rather, it is a scientific observation, one that bears repeating: *you are not your body*. Please consider this carefully.

Your body and mind are changing at every moment. Every seven years, scientists say, all the cells in your body have been replaced, including the cells in your brain. Yet *something* is constant.

That something is the consciousness within the body. If you think about it, you will almost certainly agree that there's a difference between you and your experiences, you and your surroundings, you and your hands, your feet, your chest, your head,

even you and your present thoughts (whatever you were thinking an instant ago, that thought has just gone away, and so by now has the one that followed it—but you, I trust, are still reading on).

You are still reading on. Not you the body or you the mind, for the body and mind of a few moments ago no longer exist, but you the observer, you the consciousness within.

Although your body and mind change, that consciousness is permanent. Of course, the *content* of consciousness may change, but the fact of consciousness does not. Within the body of the smallest child, consciousness is present. As the child matures, he gives up the child's body for that of a young man and an old man, just as one might take off old clothes and put on new ones. But just as the person changing the clothes remains the same person,

the conscious individual who changes from one body to another remains the same person within, the same conscious observer.

And what about death? When the body falls dead, it no longer holds consciousness. But has that individual consciousness ceased to exist? After all, throughout an entire lifetime of change from one body to the next, that consciousness has persisted. Now it is gone. Where is it?

And where did it come from?

Is it possible that at the time of death that conscious individual continues to exist? If so, where does he go? Might this individual spark of life, this individual consciousness, travel on to another body, to take birth again and go again through the cycle? And if so, does this cycle have an end?

These are some of the questions posed, examined, and answered in the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.



ON THE LOWER EAST SIDE

“Thousands of young people were walking the streets, not simply intoxicated or crazy (though they often were), but searching for life’s ultimate answers.”

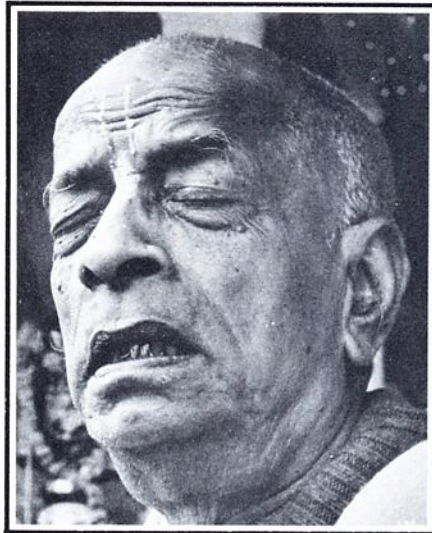
by ŚRĪLA SATSVARŪPA DĀSA GOSWAMI

July 1966. America’s first Hare Kṛṣṇa center, a storefront on Second Avenue, in New York. When Śrīla Prabhupāda (right) chanted the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra, young people gathered to hear and take part.

By the summer of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s arrival at 26 Second Avenue, the first front in the great youth rebellion of the sixties had already entered the Lower East Side. Here they were free—free to live in simple poverty and express, find, or lose themselves through art, music, drugs, and sex. The talk was of spiritual searching. LSD and marijuana were the keys, opening new realms of awareness. Notions about Eastern cultures and Eastern religions were in vogue. Through drugs, *yoga*, brotherhood, or just by being free—somehow they would attain enlightenment. Everyone was supposed to keep an open mind and develop his own cosmic philosophy by direct experience and drug-expanded consciousness blended with his own eclectic readings. And if their lives appeared aimless, at least they had dropped out of a pointless game where the player sells his soul for material goods and so supports a system already rotten.

So it was that in 1966, thousands of young people were walking the streets of the Lower East Side, not simply intoxicated or crazy (though they often were), but searching for life’s ultimate answers, in complete disregard of “the establishment” and the day-to-day life pursued by millions of “straight” Americans.

That the prosperous land of America could breed so many discontented youths surprised Śrīla Prabhupāda. Of course, it



also further proved that material well-being, the hallmark of American life, couldn’t make people happy. Prabhupāda did not see the unhappiness around him in terms of immediate social, political, economic, or cultural causes. Neither slum conditions nor youth rebellions were the all-important realities, but mere symptoms of a universal unhappiness that only Kṛṣṇa consciousness could cure. He sympathized with these young people’s miseries, but he saw a universal solution.

Prabhupāda had not made a study of the youth movement in America before moving to the Lower East Side. He had never even made specific plans to come here amidst so many young people. But in the ten months since Calcutta, he had been moved by force of circumstances, or, as he called it, “by Kṛṣṇa’s will,” from one place to another. On the order of his spiritual master he had come to America, and by Kṛṣṇa’s will he had come to the

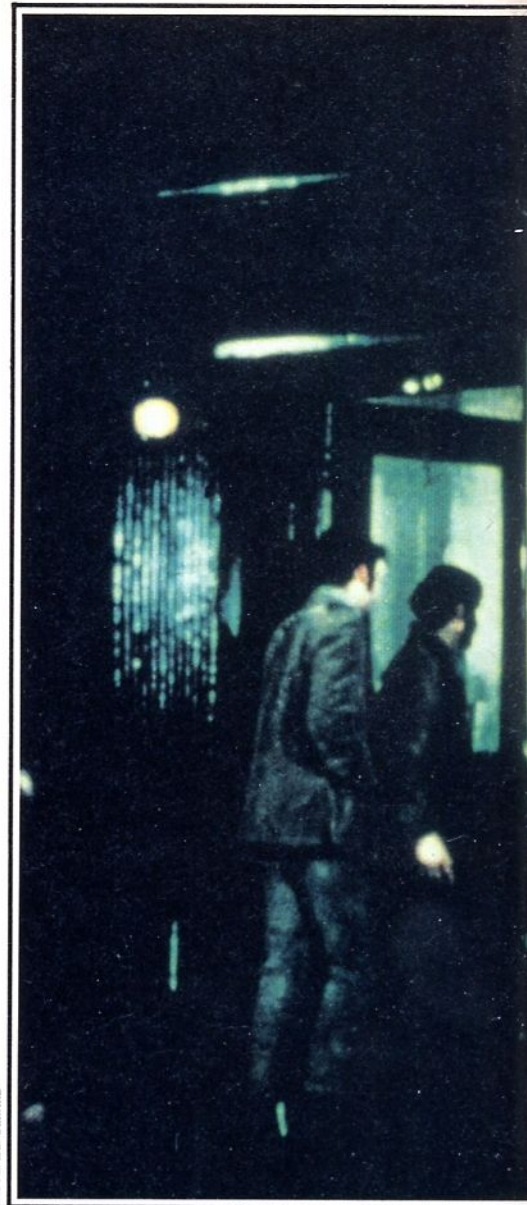


PHOTO: E.B. GERARD

Lower East Side. His mission here was the same as it had been on the Bowery or uptown or even in India. He was fixed in the order of his spiritual master and the Vedic view, a view that wasn’t going to be influenced by the radical changes of the 1960’s. Now if it so happened that these young people, because of some change in the American culture, were to prove more receptive to him, that would be welcome. And that would also be by Kṛṣṇa’s will.

Actually, because of the ominous influence of the Kali-yuga, the age of quarrel and misfortune foretold in the Vedic scriptures, a degraded age lasting many thousands of years, this was historically the worst of times for spiritual advancement, hippie revolution or not. And he was trying to transplant Vedic culture into a more alien ground than had any previous spiritual master. So he expected to find his life’s mission extremely difficult. Yet in this generally bad age, just prior to Śrīla



Prabhupāda's arrival on the Lower East Side, tremors of dissatisfaction and revolt against the Kali-yuga culture itself began vibrating through American society, sending waves of young people to wander the streets of New York's Lower East Side in search of something beyond the ordinary life, looking for alternatives, seeking spiritual fulfillment. These young people, broken from their stereotyped materialistic backgrounds and drawn together now on New York's Lower East Side, were the ones who were by chance or choice or destiny to become the congregation for the Swami's storefront offerings of *kīrtana* (chanting) and spiritual guidance.

* * *

Prabhupāda's arrival went unnoticed. The neighbors said someone new had taken the gift shop next to the laundry. There was a strange picture in the window now, but no one knew what to make of it.

Some passersby noticed a piece of paper taped to the window. A few stopped to read it, but no one knew what to make of it. They didn't know what *Bhagavad-gītā* was, and the few who did thought, "Maybe a *yoga* bookstore or something." The Puerto Ricans in the neighborhood would look in the window at Harvey Cohen's painting and then blankly walk away. The manager of the Mobil gas station next door couldn't care less who had moved in; it just didn't make any difference. The tombstone sellers and undertakers across the street didn't care. And for the drivers of the countless trucks and cars that passed by, Swamiji's place didn't exist at all. But there were young people around who had been intrigued with the painting, who went up to the window to read the little piece of paper. Some of them even knew about the *Bhagavad-gītā*, although the painting of Lord Caitanya and the dancers didn't seem to fit. A few thought maybe they would

attend Swami Bhaktivedanta's classes and check out the scene.

* * *

Howard Wheeler was hurrying from his apartment on Mott Street to a friend's apartment on Fifth Street, a quiet place where he hoped to find some peace. He walked up Mott Street to Houston, turned left and began to walk west, across Bowery, past the rushing traffic and stumbling derelicts, and towards Second Avenue.

Howard: "After crossing Bowery, just before Second Avenue, I saw Swamiji jauntily strolling down the sidewalk, his head held high in the air, his hand in the beadbag. He struck me like a famous actor in a very familiar movie. He seemed ageless. He was wearing the traditional saffron-colored robes of a *sannyāsī* and quaint white shoes with points. Coming down Houston, he looked like the genie that popped out of Aladdin's lamp."

Howard, age twenty-six, was a tall, large-bodied man with long dark hair, a profuse beard, and black-framed eyeglasses. He was an instructor in English at Ohio State University and was fresh from a trip to India, where he had been looking for a true *guru*.

Prabhupāda noticed Howard, and they both stopped simultaneously. Howard asked the first question that popped into his mind: "Are you from India?"

Prabhupāda smiled cordially. "Oh yes, and you?"

Howard: "I told him no, but that I had just returned from India and was very interested in his country and the Hindu philosophy. He told me he had come from Calcutta and had been in New York almost ten months. His eyes were as fresh and cordial as a child's, and even standing before the trucks that roared and rumbled their way down Houston, he emanated a cool tranquility that was unshakably established in something far beyond the great metropolis that roared around us."

Howard never made it to his friend's place that day. He went back to his own apartment on Mott Street, to Keith and Wally, his roommates, to tell them and everyone he knew about the *guru* who had inexplicably appeared in their midst.

Keith and Howard had been to India. Now they were involved in various spiritual philosophies, and their friends used to come over and talk about enlightenment. Nineteen-year-old Chuck Barnett was a regular visitor.

Chuck: "You would open the door of the apartment, and thousands of cockroaches would disappear into the woodwork. And the smell was enough to knock you over. So Keith was trying to clean the place up and kick some people out. They were sharing the rent—Wally, Keith,

Howard, and several others. Due to a lack of any other process, they were using LSD to try and increase their spiritual life. Actually we were all trying to use drugs to help in meditation. Anyway, Wally, Howard, and Keith were trying to find the perfect spiritual master, as we all were."

Howard remembers his own spiritual seeking as "reading books on Eastern philosophy and religion, burning lots of candles and incense, and taking ganja and peyote and LSD as aids to meditation. Actually, it was more intoxication than meditation. 'Meditation' was a euphemism that somehow connected our highs with our readings."

Keith, twenty-nine, the son of a Southern Baptist minister, was a Ph.D. candidate in history at Columbia University. He was preparing his thesis on "The Rise of Revivalism in the Southern United States." Dressed in old denim cut-offs, sandals, and a T-shirt, he was something of a *guru* along the Mott Street coterie.

Wally was in his thirties, shabbily dressed, bearded, intellectual, and well-read in Buddhist literature. He had been a radio engineer in the Army and like his roommates was unemployed. He was reading Alan Watts, Hermann Hesse, and others, talking about spiritual enlightenment, and taking LSD.

In India, Howard and Keith had visited Hardwar, Rishikesh, Benares, and other holy cities, experiencing Indian temples, hashish, and dysentery. One evening in Calcutta they had come upon a group of *sādhus* chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* and playing hand cymbals. For Howard and Keith, as for many Westerners, the essence of Indian philosophy was Śāṅkara's doctrine of impersonal oneness: all is false except the one impersonal spirit. They had bought books that told them, "Whatever way you express your faith, that way is a valid spiritual path."

Now the three roommates—Howard, Keith, and Wally—began to mix various philosophies into a hodgepodge of their own. Howard would mix in a little Whitman, Emerson, Thoreau, or Blake, Keith would cite Biblical references, and Wally would add a bit of Buddhist wisdom. And they all kept up on Timothy Leary, Thomas à Kempis, and many others, with the mixture subject to a total reevaluation whenever one of the group experienced a new cosmic insight through LSD.

This was the group that Howard returned to that day in July. Excitedly, he told them about the Swami—how he looked and what he had said. Howard told how after they had stood and talked together the Swami had mentioned his place nearby on Second Avenue, where he was planning to hold some classes.

Howard: "I walked around the corner

with him. He pointed out a small storefront building between First and Second Streets next door to a Mobil filling station. It had been a curiosity shop, and someone had painted the words MATCHLESS GIFTS over the window. At that time, I didn't realize how prophetic those words were. 'This is a good area?' he asked me. I told him that I thought it was. I had no idea what he was going to offer at his 'classes,' but I knew that all my friends would be glad that an Indian *swami* was moving

His head shaven,
Prabhupāda
seemed like the
Buddha. He
recognized big,
bearded Howard
and smiled. "You
have brought
your friends?"

into the neighborhood."

The word spread. Although it wasn't so easy now for Carl Yergens and certain others to come up from the Bowery and Chinatown (they had other things to do), Raymond Morris, a twenty-five-year-old writer for comic books, had visited Prabhupāda on the Bowery, and when he heard about the Swami's new place he wanted to drop by. James Greene and Bill Epstein had not forgotten the Swami, and they wanted to come. The Paradox restaurant was still a live connection and brought new interested people. And others, like Stephen Guarino, saw the Swami's sign in the window. Steve, age twenty-six, was a caseworker for the City's welfare department, and one day on his lunch break, as he was walking home from the welfare office at Fifth Street and Second Avenue, he saw the Swami's sign taped to the window. He had been reading a paperback *Gītā*, and he promised himself he would attend the Swami's class.

Standing with the Swami before the storefront, Howard also had noticed the little sign in the window:

LECTURES IN BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ
A. C. BHAKTIVEDANTA SWAMI
MONDAY, WEDNESDAY, AND FRIDAY
7:00 to 9:00

"Will you bring your friends?" Prabhupāda had asked.

"Yes," Howard had promised. "Monday evening."

* * *

The summer evening was warm, and in the storefront the back windows and front door were opened wide. Young men, several of them dressed in black denim and button-down sport shirts with broad dull stripes, had left their worn sneakers by the front door and were now sitting on the floor. Most of them were from the Lower East Side; no one had had to go to great trouble to come here. The little room was barren. No pictures, no furniture, no rug, not even a chair. Only a few plain straw mats. A single bulb hung from the ceiling into the center of the room. It was seven o'clock, and about a dozen people had gathered when the Swami suddenly opened the side door and entered the room.

He wasn't wearing a shirt, and the saffron cloth that draped his torso left his arms and some of his chest bare. His complexion was smooth golden brown, and as they watched him, his head shaven, his ears long-lobed, and his aspect grave, he seemed like pictures they had seen of the Buddha in meditation. He was old, yet erect in his posture, fresh and radiant. His forehead was decorated with the white clay markings of the Vaiṣṇava. Prabhupāda recognized big, bearded Howard and smiled. "You have brought your friends?"

"Yes," Howard answered in his loud, resonant voice.

"Ah, very good."

Prabhupāda stepped out of his white shoes, sat down on a thin mat, faced his congregation, and indicated they could all be seated. He distributed several pairs of brass hand cymbals and briefly demonstrated the rhythm: one . . . two . . . three. He began playing—a startling, ringing sound. He began singing: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. Now it was the audience's turn. "Chant," he told them. Some already knew, gradually the others caught on, and after a few rounds, all were chanting together.

Most of these young men and the few young women present had at one time or another embarked on the psychedelic voyage in search of a new world of expanded consciousness. Boldly and recklessly, they had entered the turbulent, forbidden waters of LSD, peyote, and magic mushrooms. Heedless of warnings, they had risked everything and done it. Yet there was merit in their valor, their

(continued on page 28)

Appraising the Peace Prize

What could Henry Kissinger and Mother Teresa possibly have in common?

by RAVINDRA SVARŪPA DĀSA

When the Nobel Prize Committee awarded the 1979 Peace Prize to Mother Teresa, the sixty-nine-year-old nun who has devoted her life to helping the poor of Calcutta, it seemed as though the learned men in Stockholm must have received some sudden enlightenment; so great is the contrast between her and previous recipients, like Henry Kissinger. How much more fitting to give the award to this frail and humble woman, who descends into the streets of what Kipling called "the City of Dreadful Night" to bathe the wounds of lepers and console the dying, than to those powerful adepts of *realpolitik* who bomb for peace. Considered beside her predecessors, she is an inspired choice.

Yet a word must be said on behalf of the politicians. Granting the dedication, self-sacrifice, and compassion of Mother Teresa (not to minimize her excellent qualities), we may still question the practicality of her work. After all, for every maimed or diseased person she helps, the world's social machinery pitilessly grinds out ten thousand more, and an army of Mother Teresas could not stem the tide. As the human detritus piles up, nations grow bellicose over increasingly scarce resources: oil, land, minerals, grains—a dwindling supply that can never hope to fill the bottomless maw of demand. Surely any solution requires social and political action on a global scale.

Can people like Mother Teresa really do anything to rectify those relentless social injustices Pope John Paul II so eloquently spoke of before the U.N. General Assembly? There cannot be a peaceful world until there is a just world. As long as the rich live at the expense of the poor, violence will be endemic to human relations. The slums, barrios, ghettos, and refugee camps of the world's disinherited teem with wars and revolutions to come. Certainly the Marxists, who find in these places such eager ears, at least recognize the need for radical change. Seen in this context, Mother Teresa's efforts appear as effective as fighting a forest fire with a water bucket: a brave and beautiful gesture, quixotic and doomed.

Ah, but the politicians! What Strange-lovian peace do the Dr. Kissingers prepare for us? What hope can we place in peace-

makers who abhor "terrorism" while holding each other's entire citizenry hostage with nuclear missiles? Is peace a balance of terror? Do doves have talons?

So in the obvious inconsistency of the Nobel Prize awards we confront a familiar dilemma: it seems that a person can be either virtuous or powerful, but not both. How could the power of a Kissinger and the purity of a Mother Teresa ever unite in the same person? If one is to be effective in changing things on a large scale, can he also be moral, humane, compassionate? Conventional wisdom holds that there is something about the demands of political leadership, the exercise of temporal power, which inevitably excludes saintliness or holiness. As it is said, "Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely."

Yet this idea was not always considered self-evident. In fact, the highly respected *Bhagavad-gītā* refers to the ideal leader of a state as a *rājarsi* (a Sanskrit term that combines the word *rāja*, meaning "king," and *rsi*, meaning "saint"). The compound signifies that sanctity is a *sine qua non* for political leadership.

Moreover, far from holding up the saintly king as an unrealizable ideal, the *Bhagavad-gītā* provides a practical way to unite power with purity. The means is *bhakti*, or devotional service to God. *Bhakti* as a discipline trains people in sanctity. A saint is understood to be one who fully recognizes the authority of God and who thus acts exclusively as His servant. A *bhakta* (a practitioner of *bhakti*) learns to understand existentially, practically, that everything belongs to God.

Recognizing the supreme position of God means accepting that He is the enjoyer and controller of everything and everyone. The Vedic analysis of the human condition traces back the lust for pleasure, power, and profit (a lust which has virtually created the present social order) to our forgetfulness of God's position as master, and our own as His servants. Contemporary human civilization is in a condition of radical deformity, for the natural servants are artificially aspiring to become the masters; the enjoyed and the controlled are perversely trying to enjoy and control.

A *bhakta*, a devotee of God, must quit this obscene masquerade. To do so, he (or she) must give up those self-deceptive

activities upon which the charade rests. Principally, these activities are eating flesh, taking intoxicants, indulging illicitly in sex, and gambling. Rejecting these corruptions, the *bhakta* systematically remembers God by hearing His glories and repeating them, and by worshiping the Lord in other ways. Eventually, remembrance of the Lord becomes spontaneous. We are all naturally loving servants of God, but that loving devotion has become covered by the twin illusions of envy of God and the desire to take His place. We have thus invested our original love in inauthentic surrogates, but it can be restored by devotional service.

The *Vedas* especially recommend the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* as the most appropriate way for us to remember God. Since God is present in His names, chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa puts us directly into contact with Him. This close proximity cleanses away our desire to be God and to usurp His position. God, the supremely pure one, purifies whoever comes in touch with Him, just as fire heats everything put into it. *Bhakti* puts the practitioner into the refining fire of God consciousness and keeps him there. Thus, through *bhakti*, one accepts God as the Supreme Lord and Master, not just theoretically or officially, but in actual practice.

From this we can see that when a *bhakta*, a purified devotee of God, has political power, he does not foolishly think the power is his. He understands that he must exercise it only on God's behalf, and he rightly sees all resources at his disposal as meant for serving God. Just as a loyal and faithful servant may manage an estate on behalf of his employer, so a devotee may assume great political responsibility without falsely assuming proprietorship. Only such a person can exercise power without becoming corrupted by it, for he always remains acutely aware that he himself is nothing but an instrument of God, a servant acting under His orders.

But what are the "orders" such a saintly leader would follow? What would he do? As a loving servant of God, who is all-merciful, a *rājarsi* would naturally work for the welfare of everyone by trying to establish peace—freedom from war and social violence, from hunger, pain, disease, and so on. His program, however,

(continued on page 28)

ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA SPEAKS OUT

Scientific Progress: Bombastic Words

This exchange between His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda and his disciple Bhaktisvarūpa Dāmodara Swami, Ph.D., took place in Atlanta during March of 1975.

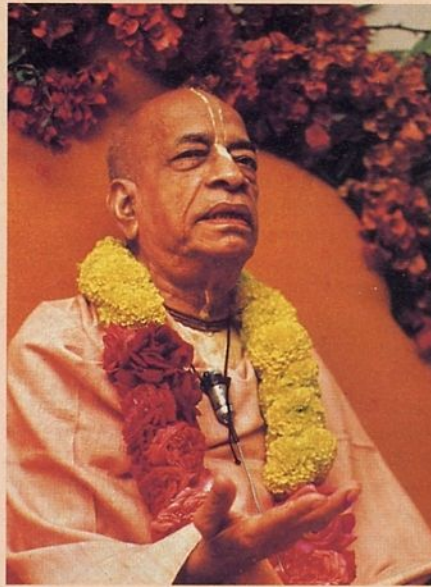
Bhaktisvarūpa Dāmodara Swami: Modern scientists are working very hard to create life in the laboratory.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Try to understand this. Just as God is already existing, so the living entities, being part and parcel of God, are also already existing—eternally. So you haven't got to "create." That is foolishness, because the living entities are eternal—they are never created. They simply become manifest in the material world in four different ways. Some of them are manifested through seeds, some of them through fermentation, some through eggs, and some through embryos. But the living entities are already existing, so there is no question of "creation." This is the science of the living entity.

There are already so many millions and trillions of living entities, and yet the materialistic scientists are holding big conferences on how to create something. Just see this childish proposal. They are wasting time, misleading people, and wasting everyone's hard-earned money. Therefore I say they are rascals. They are trying to "create." What will they create? Everything is already there. But they do not know this, even with all their advanced education. Therefore, the *Bhagavad-gītā* describes them as *mūḍhās*, rascals.

Now, you tell these *mūḍhās*. "My dear sir, you cannot create, nor can anything be created. Just find out where the living entities are coming from, what is their source, who is the brain behind all of nature. Find *that* out. That is real knowledge. If you struggle for this knowledge and try to find the original source of everything, then some day you may come to the platform of *vāsudevaḥ sarvaṃ iti sa mahātmā sudurlabhaḥ*: you'll understand that God is the source of everything, and your knowledge will be perfect."

Look at this nice flower—do you think it has come out automatically, without the direction of any brain? This is nonsensical philosophy. These so-called scientists use so many bombastic words, but how much are they actually explaining? Nobody else can understand; it is understood by them only. They put forth some complicated language in such a way that unless *they* explain it, nobody will understand. They



say that everything is automatically done "by nature." That's not the fact.

Nature is an instrument. Just like a wonderful computer. But still there is an operator. These rascals have no common sense. Where is the machine that is working without any operator? Is there such a machine within their experience? How can they suggest that nature is working automatically? Nature is a wonderful machine, but the operator is God, Kṛṣṇa. That is real knowledge. Just because the machine is working very wonderfully, does that mean there is no operator? For example, the harmonium is also a machine, and if an expert musician is playing it, then it produces very melodious, pleasing sounds. "Oh, how nice." But will the harmonium play automatically and give out melodious sounds? So they don't even have any common sense, and still they are calling themselves scientists. That is our regret—that these people don't even have any common sense, and still they are passing as scientists.

Bhaktisvarūpa Dāmodara Swami: They are thinking that because through chemistry they are able to synthesize some primitive amino acids . . .

Śrīla Prabhupāda: That is craftsmanship; that is not knowledge. For instance, let us say that you paint a picture of a rose. You are a painter—not a man of knowledge. "Man of knowledge" means someone who knows *how* things are being done. A painter simply imitates what he sees, that's all. Therefore, art and science are two different departments.

Bhaktisvarūpa Dāmodara Swami: So if they create some synthetic, that is just an art.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes. For example, a good cook knows how to mix the spices and condiments and make very tasteful things. So you can call a chemist a good cook. Chemistry is nothing but the art of mixing different chemicals, that's all. There is oil, there is alkaline, you mix it very professionally, and soap comes out—very useful.

Bhaktisvarūpa Dāmodara Swami: But the scientists are convinced that somehow they'll be able to create life and even make a human being.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: This is not a problem, that without your creation of life the world will go to hell. Life is already there. For instance, there are so many motorcars—if I manufacture another motorcar, is there any great credit for me? So many motorcars are already there! When there were no motorcars, the first man who manufactured one had some credit. "Yes, you have done something nice—a horseless carriage. People will benefit from it—a convenience—that's all right." But when there are millions and millions of motorcars simply creating accidents, and I manufacture another motorcar, what is my credit? What is my credit?

Bhaktisvarūpa Dāmodara Swami: Zero.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Zero. And to achieve this "zero," they are going to hold some big conference, and so many people will come and spend money.

Bhaktisvarūpa Dāmodara Swami: They want to make a better human being. They want to make life better.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes, that is *our* proposal. We say to the scientists, "Don't waste time trying to make life. Try to make your life *better*. Try to understand what your actual spiritual identity is, so that you may become happy in this lifetime. *This* research should be done."

The first thing they have to learn is that there is a driver, or soul, within the "motorcar" of the body. This is the first point of knowledge. Unless one understands this simple thing, he's an ass. The driver—the soul—is moving the motorcar of this body. And if the driver is educated, then he can move his body for self-realization, so that he can go home, back to Godhead. Then he becomes perfect. So we are educating the driver—we are not trying to manufacture another tin car. This is Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

The Beautiful Story of the Personality of Godhead

ŚRĪMAD-BHĀGAVATAM

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Second Canto: "The Cosmic Manifestation"

CHAPTER FOUR

The Process of Creation

As our serialized presentation of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam continues, the great sage Śukadeva Gosvāmī offers prayers of glorification to the Supreme Lord, and we learn how all classes of human society can achieve the perfection of life.

TEXT 14

नमो नमस्तेऽस्तुवृषभाय सात्वतां
विदूरकाष्ठाय मुहुः कुयोगिनाम् ।
निरस्तसाम्यातिशयेन राधसा
खधामनि ब्रह्मणि रंसते नमः ॥१४॥

namo namas te 'stv ṛṣabhāya sātvatām
vidūra-kāṣṭhāya muhuḥ kuyoginām
nirasta-sāmyātiśayena rādhasā
sva-dhāmani brahmaṇi raṁsate namaḥ

namaḥ namaḥ te—let me offer my obeisances unto You; astu—are; ṛṣabhāya—unto the great associate; sātvatām—of the members of the Yadu dynasty; vidūra-kāṣṭhāya—one who is far from mundane wranglers; muhuḥ—always; ku-yoginām—of the nondevotees; nirasta—vanquished; sāmya—equal status; atiśayena—by greatness; rādhasā—by opulence; svadhāmani—in His own abode; brahmaṇi—in the spiritual sky; raṁsate—enjoys; namaḥ—I do bow down.

TRANSLATION

Let me offer my respectful obeisances unto He who is the associate of the members of the Yadu dynasty and who is always a problem for the nondevotees. He is the supreme enjoyer of both the material and spiritual worlds, yet He enjoys His own abode in the spiritual sky. There is no one equal to Him because His transcendental opulence is immeasurable.

PURPORT

There are two sides of the transcendental manifestations of the Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. For the pure devotees He is the constant companion, as in the case of His becoming one of the family members of the Yadu dynasty, or His becoming the friend of Arjuna, or His becoming the associate neighbor of the inhabitants of Vṛndāvana, as the son of Nanda-Yasodā, the friend of Sudāmā, Śrīdāmā and Madhumāṅgala, or

the lover of the damsels of Vrajabhūmi, etc. That is part of His personal features. And by His impersonal feature He expands the rays of the brahmajyoti, which is limitless and all-pervasive. Part of this all-pervasive brahmajyoti, which is compared to the sun rays, is covered by the darkness of the mahat-tattva, and this insignificant part is known as the material world. In this material world there are innumerable universes like the one we can experience, and in each of them there are hundreds of thousands of planets like the one we are inhabiting. The mundaners are more or less captivated by the unlimited expansion of the rays of the Lord, but the devotees are concerned more with His personal form, from which everything is emanating (janmādy asya yataḥ). As the sun rays are concentrated in the sun disc, the brahmajyoti is concentrated in Goloka Vṛndāvana, the topmost spiritual planet in the spiritual sky. The immeasurable spiritual sky is full of spiritual planets, named Vaikuṅṭhas, far beyond the material sky. The mundaners have insufficient information of even the mundane sky, so what can they think of the spiritual sky? Therefore the mundaners are always far, far away from Him. Even if in the future they are able to manufacture some machine whose speed may be accelerated to the velocity of the wind or mind, the mundaners will still be unable to imagine reaching the planets in the spiritual sky. So the Lord and His residential abode will always remain a myth or a mysterious problem, but for the devotees the Lord will always be available as an associate.

In the spiritual sky His opulence is immeasurable. The Lord resides in all the spiritual planets, the innumerable Vaikuṅṭha planets, by expanding His plenary portions along with His liberated devotee associates, but the impersonalists who want to merge in the existence of the Lord are allowed to merge as one of the spiritual sparks of the brahmajyoti. They have no qualifications for becoming associates of the Lord either in the Vaikuṅṭha planets or in the supreme planet, Goloka Vṛndāvana, described in the Bhagavad-gītā as mad-dhāma and here in this verse as the svadhāma of the Lord.

This mad-dhāma or svadhāma is described in the Bhagavad-gītā (15.6) as follows:

na tad bhāsayat sūryo
na śaśāṅko na pāvakaḥ
yad gatvā na nivartante
tad dhāma paramaṁ mama

The Lord's svadhāma does not require any sunlight or moonlight or electricity for illumination. That dhāma, or place, is supreme, and whoever goes there never comes back to this material world.

The Vaikuṅṭha planets and the Goloka Vṛndāvana planet are all self-illuminating, and the rays scattered by those svadhāma of the Lord constitute the existence of the brahmajyoti. As further confirmed in the Vedas like the Muṇḍaka (2.2.10), Katha (2.2.15) and Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣads (6.14):

na tatrā sūryo bhāti na candra-tāraṅgaṁ
nemā vidyuto bhānti kuto 'yam agnih
tam eva bhāntam anu bhāti sarvaṁ
tasya bhāsā sarvaṁ idaṁ vibhāti

In the *sva-dhāma* of the Lord there is no need of sun, moon or stars for illumination. Nor is there need of electricity, so what to speak of ignited lamps? On the other hand, it is because those planets are self-illuminating that all effulgence has become possible, and whatever there is that is dazzling is due to the reflection of that *sva-dhāma*.

One who is dazzled by the effulgence of the impersonal *brahmajyoti* cannot know the personal transcendence; therefore in the *Īsopaniṣad* (15) it is prayed that the Lord shift His dazzling effulgence so that the devotee can see the real reality. It is spoken thus:

hiraṇmayena pātreṇa
satyasāpīhitaṁ mukham
tat tvāṁ pūṣaṁ apāvṛṇu
satya-dharmāya dṛṣṭaye

"O Lord, You are the maintainer of everything, both material and spiritual, and everything flourishes by Your mercy. Your devotional service, or *bhakti-yoga*, is the actual principle of religion, *satya-dharma*, and I am engaged in that service. So kindly protect me by showing Your real face. Please, therefore, remove the veil of Your *brahmajyoti* rays so that I can see Your form of eternal bliss and knowledge."

TEXT 15

यत्कीर्तनं यत्स्मरणं यदीक्षणं
यद्वन्दनं यच्छ्रवणं यदर्हणम् ।
लोकस्य सद्यो विधुनोति कल्मषं
तस्मै सुभद्रश्रवसे नमो नमः ॥१५॥

yat-kīrtanaṁ yat-smaraṇaṁ yad-ikṣaṇaṁ
yad-vandanaṁ yac-chravaṇaṁ yad-arhaṇam
lokasya sadyo vidhunoti kalmaṣaṁ
tasmai subhadra-śravase namo namaḥ

yat—whose; *kīrtanam*—glorification; yat—whose; *smaraṇam*—remembrances; yat—whose; *ikṣaṇam*—audience; yat—whose; *vandanaṁ*—prayers; yat—whose; *śravaṇam*—hearing about; yat—whose; *arhaṇam*—worshiping; *lokasya*—of all people; *sadyaḥ*—forthwith; *vidhunoti*—specifically cleanses; *kalmaṣam*—effects of sins; *tasmai*—unto Him; *subhadra*—all-auspicious; *śravase*—one who is heard; *namaḥ*—my due obeisances; *namaḥ*—again and again.

TRANSLATION

Let me offer my respectful obeisances unto the all-auspicious Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, about whom glorification, remembrances, audience, prayers, hearing and worship can at once cleanse the effects of all sins of the performer.

PURPORT

The sublime form of religious performances to free oneself from all reactions of sins is suggested herein by the greatest authority, Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī. *Kīrtanam*, or glorifying the Lord, can be performed in very many ways, such as remembering, visiting temples to see the Deity, offering prayers in front of the Lord, and hearing recitations of glorification of the Lord as they are mentioned in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* or in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. *Kīrtanam* can be performed both by singing the glories of the Lord in accompaniment with melodious

music and by recitation of scriptures like *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* or *Bhagavad-gītā*.

The devotees need not be disappointed in the physical absence of the Lord, though they may think of not being associated with Him. The devotional process of chanting, hearing, remembering, etc., (either all or some of them, or even one of them) can give us the desired result of associating with the Lord by discharging the transcendental loving service of the Lord in the above manner. Even the very sound of the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa or Rāma can at once surcharge the atmosphere spiritually. We must know definitely that the Lord is present wherever such pure transcendental service is performed, and thus the performer of offenseless *kīrtanam* has positive association with the Lord. Similarly, remembrance and prayers also can give us the desired result if they are properly done under expert guidance. One should not concoct forms of devotional service. One may worship the form of the Lord in a temple, or one may impersonally offer the Lord devotional prayers in a mosque or a church. One is sure to get free from the reactions of sins provided one is very careful about not committing sins willingly in expectation of getting free from the reactions of sins by worshiping in the temple or by offering prayers in the church. This mentality of committing sins willfully on the strength of devotional service is called *nāmo balād yasya hi pāpa-buddhiḥ*, and it is the greatest offense in the discharge of devotional service. Hearing, therefore, is essential in order to keep oneself strictly on guard against such pitfalls of sins. And in order to give special stress to the hearing process, the Gosvāmī invokes all auspicious fortune in this matter.

TEXT 16

विचक्षणा यच्चरणोपसादनात्
सङ्गं व्युदस्योभयतोऽन्तरात्मनः ।
विन्दन्ति हि ब्रह्मगतिं गतक्लमा-
स्तस्मै सुभद्रश्रवसे नमो नमः ॥१६॥

vicakṣaṇā yac-carāṇopasādanāt
saṅgaṁ vyudasyobhayato 'ntar-ātmanaḥ
vindanti hi brahma-gatiṁ gata-klamāḥ
tasmai subhadra-śravase namo namaḥ

vicakṣaṇāḥ—highly intellectual; *yat*—whose; *carāṇa-upasādanāt*—simply dedicating oneself unto the lotus feet; *saṅgam*—attachment; *vyudasya*—giving up completely; *ubhayataḥ*—for present and future existence; *antaḥ-ātmanaḥ*—of the heart and soul; *vindanti*—moves progressively; *hi*—certainly; *brahma-gatiṁ*—toward spiritual existence; *gata-klamāḥ*—without difficulty; *tasmai*—unto Him; *subhadra*—all-auspicious; *śravase*—unto one who is heard; *namaḥ*—my due obeisances; *namaḥ*—again and again.

TRANSLATION

Let me offer my respectful obeisances again and again unto the all-auspicious Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The highly intellectual, simply by surrendering unto His lotus feet, are relieved of all attachments to present and future existences and without difficulty progress toward spiritual existence.

PURPORT

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa has repeatedly instructed Arjuna, or for that matter everyone concerned with becoming His unalloyed devotee. In the last phase of His instruction in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (18.64–66) He instructed most confidentially as follows:

sarva-guhyatamaṁ bhūyaḥ
śṛṇu me paramaṁ vacaḥ
iṣṭo 'si me dṛdham iti
tato vakṣyāmi te hitam

*man-manā bhava mad-bhaktō
mad-yājī mām namaskuru
mām evaiśyasi satyaṁ te
pratijāne priyo 'si me*

*sarva-dharmān parityajya
mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja
ahaṁ tvām sarva-pāpebhyo
mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ*

“My dear Arjuna, you are very dear to Me, and therefore only for your good I will disclose the most secret part of My instructions. It is simply this: become a pure devotee of Mine and give yourself unto Me only, and I promise you full spiritual existence, by which you may gain the eternal right of transcendental loving service unto Me. Just give up all other ways of religiosity and exclusively surrender unto Me and believe that I will protect you from your sinful acts, and I shall deliver you. Do not worry any more.”

Persons who are intelligent take serious notice of this last instruction of the Lord. Knowledge of the self is the first step in spiritual realization, which is called confidential knowledge, and a step further is God realization, which is called more confidential knowledge. The culmination of the knowledge of *Bhagavad-gītā* is God realization, and when one attains this stage of God realization, he naturally, voluntarily becomes a devotee of the Lord to render Him loving transcendental service. This devotional service to the Lord is always based on love of God and is distinct from the nature of routine service as prescribed in *karma-yoga*, *jñāna-yoga* or *dhyāna-yoga*. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* there are different instructions for such men of different categories, and there are various descriptions for *varṇāśrama-dharma*, *sannyāsa-dharma*, *yati-dharma*, the renounced order of life, controlling the senses, meditation, perfection of mystic powers, etc., but one who fully surrenders unto the Lord to render service unto Him, out of spontaneous love for Him, factually assimilates the essence of all knowledge described in the *Vedas*. One who adopts this method very skillfully attains perfection of life at once. And this perfection of human life is called *brahma-gati*, or the progressive march in spiritual existence. As enunciated by Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī on the basis of Vedic assurances, *brahma-gati* means to attain a spiritual form as good as that of the Lord, and in that form the liberated living being eternally lives on one of the spiritual planets situated in the spiritual sky. Attainment of this perfection of life is easily available to a pure devotee of the Lord without his undergoing any difficult method of perfection. Such a devotional life is full of *kīrtanam*, *smaraṇam*, *iṣṇam*, etc., as mentioned in the previous verse. One must therefore adopt this simple way of devotional life in order to attain the highest perfection available in any category of the human form of life in any part of the world. When Lord Brahmā met Lord Kṛṣṇa as a playful child at Vṛndāvana, he offered his prayer in which he said:

*śreyah-śrīṁ bhaktim udasya te vibho
klīṣyanti ye kevaḷa-bodha-labdhave
teṣāṁ asaḥ kleśala eva śiṣyate
nānyad yathā sthūla-tuṣāvaghātīnām
(Bhāg. 10.14.4)*

Bhakti-yoga is the highest quality of perfection to be achieved by the intelligent person in lieu of performing a large quantity of spiritual activities. The example cited here is very appropriate. A handful of real paddy is more valuable than heaps of paddy skins without any substance within. Similarly, one should not be attracted by the jugglery of *karmakāṇḍa* or *jñāna-kāṇḍa* or even the gymnastic performances of *yoga*, but skillfully should take to the simple performances of *kīrtanam*, *smaraṇam*, etc., under a bona fide spiritual master, and without any difficulty attain the highest perfection.

TEXT 17

तपस्विनो दानपरा यशस्विनो
मनस्विनो मन्त्रविदः सुमङ्गलाः ।
क्षेमं न विन्दन्ति विना यदर्पणं
तस्मै सुमद्रथ्रवसे नमो नमः ॥१७॥

*tapasvino dāna-parā yaśasvino
manasvino mantra-vidāḥ sumāṅgalāḥ
kṣemam na vindanti vinā yad-arpaṇam
tasmai subhadra-śravase namo namaḥ*

tapasvinaḥ—the great learned sages; *dāna-parāḥ*—the great performer of charity; *yaśasvinaḥ*—the great worker of distinction; *manasvinaḥ*—the great philosophers or mystics; *mantra-vidāḥ*—the great chanter of the Vedic hymns; *su-māṅgalāḥ*—strict followers of Vedic principles; *kṣemam*—fruitful result; *na*—never; *vindanti*—attain; *vinā*—without; *yad-arpaṇam*—dedication; *tasmai*—unto Him; *subhadra*—auspicious; *śravase*—hearing about Him; *namaḥ*—my obeisances; *namaḥ*—again and again.

TRANSLATION

Let me offer my respectful obeisances unto the all-auspicious Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa again and again because the great learned sages, the great performers of charity, the great workers of distinction, the great philosophers and mystics, the great chanters of the Vedic hymns and the great followers of Vedic principles cannot achieve any fruitful result without dedication of such great qualities to the service of the Lord.

PURPORT

Advancement of learning, a charitable disposition, political, social or religious leadership of human society, philosophical speculations, the practice of the *yoga* system, expertise in the Vedic rituals, and all similar high qualities in man serve one in the attainment of perfection only when they are employed in the service of the Lord. Without such dovetailing, all such qualities become sources of trouble for people in general. Everything can be utilized either for one's own sense gratification or in the service of one other than oneself. There are two kinds of self-interest also, namely personal selfishness and extended selfishness. But there is no qualitative difference between personal and extended selfishness. Theft for personal interest or for the family interest is of the same quality—namely, criminal. A thief pleading not guilty because of committing theft not for personal interest but for the interest of society or country has never been excused by the established law of any country. People in general have no knowledge that the self-interest of a living being attains perfection only when such an interest coincides with the interest of the Lord. For example, what is the interest of maintaining body and soul together? One earns money for maintenance of the body (personal or social), but unless there is God consciousness, unless the body is being properly maintained to realize one's relation with God, all good efforts to maintain body and soul together are similar to the attempts of the animals to maintain body and soul together. The purpose of maintaining the human body is different from that of the animals. Similarly, advancement of learning, economic development, philosophical research, study in the Vedic literature or even the execution of pious activities (like charity, opening of hospitals, and the distribution of food grains) should be done in relation with the Lord. The aim of all such acts and endeavors must be the pleasure of the Lord and not the satisfaction of any other identity, individual or collective (*sāmsiddhir hari-toṣaṇam*). In the *Bhagavad-gītā* (9.27) the same principle is confirmed where it is said that whatever we may give in charity and whatever we may observe in austerity must be given over to the Lord or be done on His account only.

The expert leaders of a godless human civilization cannot bring about a fruitful result in all their different attempts at educational advancement or economic development unless they are God conscious. And to become God conscious one has to hear about the all-auspicious Lord, as He is described in literature like the *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

TEXT 18

किरातहूणान्द्रपुलिन्दपुल्कशा

आभीरशुम्भा यवनाः खसादयः ।

येऽन्ये च पापा यदपाश्रयाश्रयाः

सुध्यन्ति तस्मै प्रभविष्णवे नमः ॥१८॥

kirāta-hūnāndhra-pulinda-pulkaśā
ābhira-śumbhā yavanāḥ khasādayaḥ
ye 'nye ca pāpā yad-apāśrayāśrayāḥ
sūdhyanṭi tasmai prabhaviṣṇave namaḥ

kirāta—a province of old Bhārata; *hūna*—part of Germany and Russia; *āndhra*—a province of southern India; *pulinda*—the Greeks; *pulkaśāḥ*—another province; *ābhira*—part of old Sind; *śumbhāḥ*—another province; *yavanāḥ*—the Turks; *khasa-ādayaḥ*—the Mongolian province; *ye*—even those; *anye*—others; *ca*—also; *pāpāḥ*—addicted to sinful acts; *yat*—whose; *apāśraya-āśrayāḥ*—having taken shelter of the devotees of the Lord; *sūdhyanṭi*—at once purified; *tasmai*—unto Him; *prabhaviṣṇave*—unto the powerful Viṣṇu; *namaḥ*—my respectful obeisances.

TRANSLATION

Kirāta, Hūna, Āndhra, Pulinda, Pulkaśā, Ābhira, Śumbhā, Yavana, members of the Khasa races and even others addicted to sinful acts can be purified by taking shelter of the devotees of the Lord, due to His being the supreme power. I beg to offer my respectful obeisances unto Him.

PURPORT

Kirāta: A province of old Bhārata-varṣa mentioned in the *Bhīṣma-parva* of *Mahābhārata*. Generally the Kirātas are known as the aboriginal tribes of India, and in modern days the Santal Parganas in Bihar and Chota Nagpur might comprise the old province named Kirāta.

Hūna: The area of East Germany and part of Russia is known as the province of the Hūnas. Accordingly, sometimes a kind of hill tribe is known as the Hūnas.

Āndhra: A province in southern India mentioned in the *Bhīṣma-parva* of *Mahābhārata*. It is still extant under the same name.

Pulinda: It is mentioned in the *Mahābhārata* (*Ādi-parva* 174.38), viz., the inhabitants of the province of the name Pulinda. This country was conquered by Bhīmasena and Sahadeva. The Greeks are known as Pulindas, and it is mentioned in the *Vana-parva* of *Mahābhārata* that the non-Vedic race of this part of the world would rule over the world. This Pulinda province was also one of the provinces of Bhārata, and the inhabitants were classified amongst the *ksatriya* kings. But later on, due to their giving up the brahminical culture, they were mentioned as *mlecchas* (just as those who are not followers of the Islamic culture are called *kafirs* and those who are not followers of the Christian culture are called heathens).

Ābhira: This name also appears in the *Mahābhārata*, both in the *Sabhā-parva* and *Bhīṣma-parva*. It is mentioned that this province was situated on the River Sarasvatī in Sind. The modern Sind province for-

merly extended on the other side of the Arabian Sea, and all the inhabitants of that province were known as the Ābhīras. They were under the domination of Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira, and according to the statements of Mārkaṇḍeya the *mlecchas* of this part of the world would also rule over Bhārata. Later on this proved to be true, as in the case of the Pulindas. On behalf of the Pulindas, Alexander the Great conquered India, and on behalf of the Ābhīras, Muhammad Ghori conquered India. These Ābhīras were also formerly *ksatriyas* within the brahminical culture, but they gave up the connection. The *ksatriyas* who were afraid of Paraśurāma and had hidden themselves in the Caucasian hilly regions later on became known as the Ābhīras, and the place they inhabited was known as Ābhīradeśa.

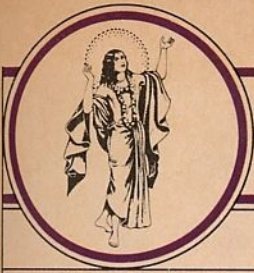
Śumbhas or *Kaṅkas*: The inhabitants of the Kaṅka province of old Bhārata, mentioned in the *Mahābhārata*.

Yavanas: Yavana was the name of one of the sons of Mahārāja Yayāti who was given the part of the world known as Turkey to rule. Therefore the Turks are Yavanas due to being descendants of Mahārāja Yavana. The Yavanas were therefore *ksatriyas*, and later on, by giving up the brahminical culture, they became *mleccha-yavanas*. Descriptions of the Yavanas are in the *Mahābhārata* (*Ādi-parva* 85.34). Another prince called Turvasu was also known as Yavana, and his country was conquered by Sahadeva, one of the Pāṇḍavas. The western Yavana joined with Duryodhana in the Battle of Kurukṣetra under the pressure of Karṇa. It is also foretold that these Yavanas also would conquer India, and it proved to be true.

Khasa: The inhabitants of the Khasadeśa are mentioned in the *Mahābhārata* (*Droṇa-parva*). Those who have a stunted growth of hair on the upper lip are generally called Khasas. As such, the Khasa are the Mongolians, the Chinese and others who are so designated.

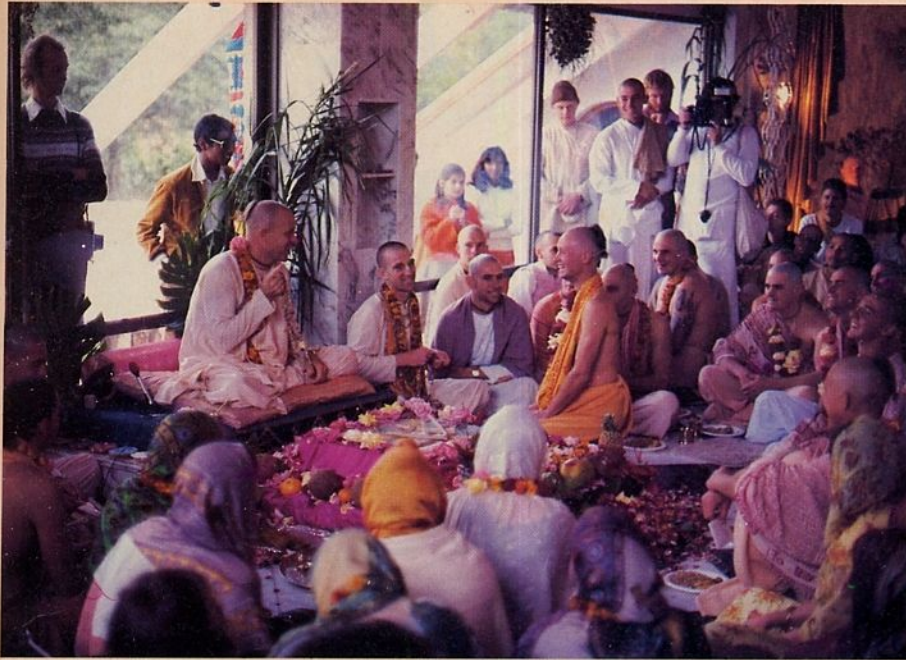
The above-mentioned historical names are different nations of the world. Even those who are constantly engaged in sinful acts are all corrigible to the standard of perfect human beings if they take shelter of the devotees of the Lord. Jesus Christ and Muhammad, two powerful devotees of the Lord, have done tremendous service on behalf of the Lord on the surface of the globe. And from the version of Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī it appears that instead of running a godless civilization in the present context of the world situation, if the leadership of world affairs is entrusted to the devotees of the Lord, for which a worldwide organization under the name and style of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness has already been started, then by the grace of the Almighty Lord there can be a thorough change of heart in human beings all over the world because the devotees of the Lord are able authorities to effect such a change by purifying the dust-worn minds of the people in general. The politicians of the world may remain in their respective positions because the pure devotees of the Lord are not interested in political leadership or diplomatic implications. The devotees are interested only in seeing that the people in general are not misguided by political propaganda and in seeing that the valuable life of a human being is not spoiled in following a type of civilization which is ultimately doomed. If the politicians, therefore, would be guided by the good counsel of the devotees, then certainly there would be a great change in the world situation by the purifying propaganda of the devotees, as shown by Lord Caitanya. As Śukadeva Gosvāmī began his prayer by discussing the word *yat-kīrtanam*, so also Lord Caitanya recommended that simply by glorifying the Lord's holy name, a tremendous change of heart can take place by which the complete misunderstanding between the human nations created by politicians can at once be extinguished. And after the extinction of the fire of misunderstanding, other profits will follow. The destination is to go back home, back to Godhead, as we have several times discussed in these pages.

(continued in next issue)



Every Town and Village

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



Festivities in New South Wales. Devotees and friends dedicate a marble-walled temple and celebrate the initiation of thirty-one students. The scene: New Govardhana, a one-thousand-acre farming community.

Moving Ahead in Australia

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) has recently taken several strides forward in Australia, according to Hari Śauri dāsa, ISKCON's coordinator in Australasia.

In Sydney, ISKCON has opened a new center in King's Cross, a central part of the city. The three-story temple complex also includes a drug counseling service, with a licensed psychologist on duty full time. The service has already had considerable success in helping addicts overcome their problem.

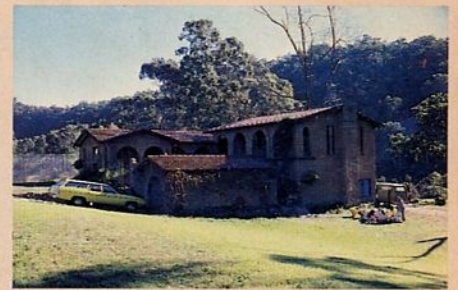
Two hours from Sydney, the Society has acquired a new farm, Bhaktivedanta Ashram—136 acres of mandarin orchards, vegetable gardens, and forested hills, near the Colo River. The Ashram, which includes two buildings to accommodate guests, also works with the drug counseling program in Sydney to provide a supportive environment for former addicts.

In New South Wales, the Society has opened a new temple at its one-thousand-acre farming community, New Govardhana, near the town of Murwillumbah. Śrīla Bhavānanda Goswami Viṣṇupāda, the present *ācārya* (initiating spiritual

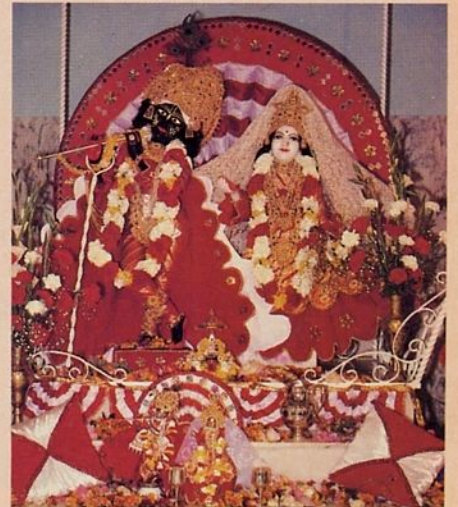
master) for devotees in Australia, dedicated the temple in festive two-day ceremonies. The marble-walled temple, designed and constructed entirely by devotees, took nearly a year to build. Two hundred devotees and fifteen hundred guests took part in the opening celebrations.

During the second day of festivities at New Govardhana, Śrīla Viṣṇupāda initiated thirty-one new disciples. Among the initiates was Kālacandra dāsa, formerly a teacher for a popular technique of meditation.

"I realized that I had come to love the *Bhagavad-gītā* very much," Kālacandra explained. "But my teacher had only given us a third of it—six chapters. Then I read the other twelve chapters—in *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*. The actual phrase that changed me was in Chapter Twelve, where Lord Kṛṣṇa explains that of the two types of transcendentalists—the impersonalist meditator and the devotee—the devotee is the most dear to Him. The night I read that, I turned to my former teacher's picture on the wall and said, 'Thank you. Now I can move on.'"



Bhaktivedanta Ashram, near Sydney. Here devotees counsel former addicts.



The Divine Couple, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, look on at the Ashram's opening.

Hare Kṛṣṇa Calendar

Kṛṣṇa conscious devotees follow a spiritual calendar that divides the year into twelve months, each named for a different form of Kṛṣṇa. The devotees at the ISKCON center nearest you will gladly tell you about the meaning of the festivals listed here.

Year 493 Caitanya Era		
Month of Nārāyaṇa	Month of Mādhava	
January 2	January 7	January 8
Flower-bathing ceremony of Lord Kṛṣṇa.	Appearance of Śrīla Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Goswāmi and disappearance of Śrīla Rāmacandra Kavirāja	Disappearance of Śrīla Jayadeva Goswāmi.
January 10	January 14	January 22
Disappearance of Śrīla Locanādāsa Thākura	Sat-tīla-ekādāsi (fasting from grains and beans).	Appearance of Śrī Viṣṇupriyā-devī and Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Goswāmi. Disappearance of Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Thākura
January 24	January 26	January 27
Appearance of Śrī Advaitācārya Prabhu (fasting)	Disappearance of Śrīpāda Madhvācārya	Disappearance of Śrīpāda Rāmānujācārya
January 28	January 29	
Trisrpsā-mahādvādāsi (fasting from grains and beans). Appearance of Lord Varāha	Appearance of Lord Nityānanda (fasting on Jan 28).	

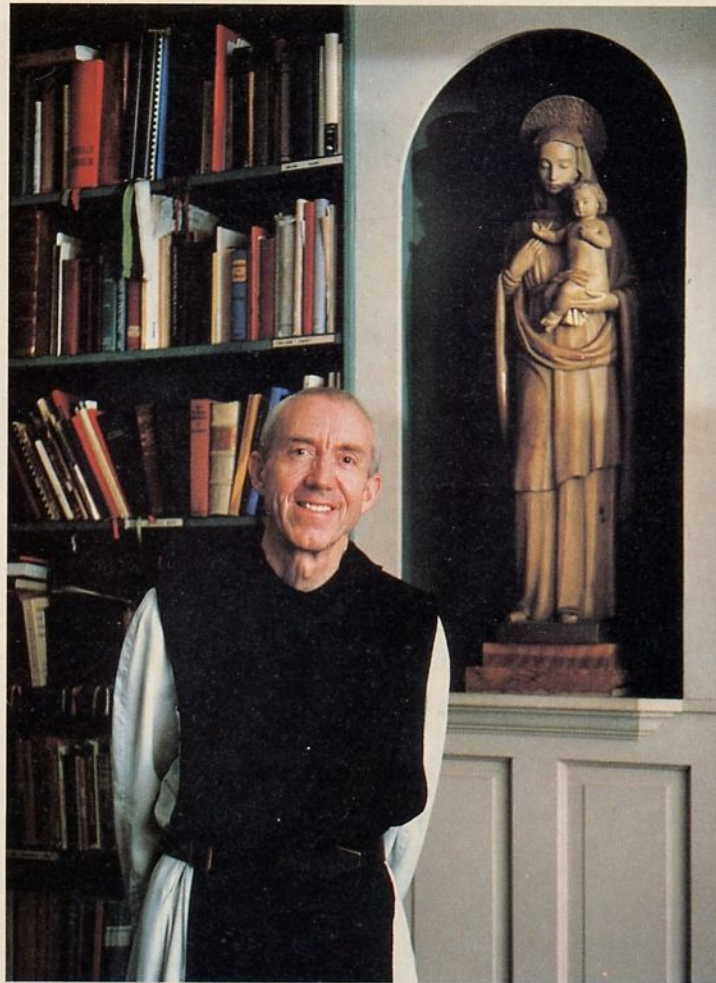
A MONASTIC ENCOUNTER

by THE RIGHT REVEREND EDWARD McCORKELL, O.C.S.O.

The questionable activities of a man like Sun Myung Moon and his disciples, popularly known as "Moonies," and the recent tragic happening at the "People's Temple" in Guyana have caused many of us to question and reexamine the varieties of religious experience in our time. Such an examination calls for an objective, unprejudiced approach to the subject. Unfortunately, in the haste to seek easy answers to our questions, many of us have tended to study these problems a bit superficially and to make hasty judgments. One hazardous mistake has been to merge together, indiscriminately, many vastly differing religious and quasi-religious groups into one ambiguous pejorative category: "cult." It is with this in mind that I would like to share my experience of a personal encounter with a rich spiritual tradition different from my own and yet, as I discovered to my delight, one in which I have felt "at home."

I have had the pleasure of meeting and becoming a friend of a monk who is a disciple of A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. His religious name is Śubhānanda dāsa Brahmācārī. This young man first visited our monastery when he was a novice. He was wearing the traditional saffron robe and was tonsured. Up to that time, my view of these young American devotees of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement whom I had seen on the streets was somewhat negative. It appeared to me to be another fad, for which our country is well known. I tended to dismiss them and discount them as immature enthusiasts.

Thus my first encounter with this young novice about seven years ago was quite reserved. He told me his story: He was born a Jew and had grown up in the turbulent sixties, becoming a part of the drug culture and the antiwar movement. He then came in touch with the International Society for Krishna Consciousness and, after being a member for some time, was accepted as a disciple of Bhaktivedanta



Swami Prabhupāda. It was through this initial encounter with him that I first began to take some interest in *Bhagavad-gītā*, an excellent copy of which he kindly gave me, entitled *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* and containing the translation and learned commentary of Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the late founder and spiritual leader of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. I later discovered that Thomas Merton (one of the great monks of our Order, who had begun a serious study of and dialogue with non-Christian monasticism) had written a preface to the first edition of this work.

As a disciple of Bhaktivedanta Swami

Prabhupāda, Śubhānanda had entered into a rich tradition, stemming from roots that go back in a long, unbroken line to Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. His tradition is firmly rooted in Hindu spirituality and culture and represents the theistic, devotional side of the Indian religious tradition. In a revealing passage in an unfinished, unpublished work, *The Inner Experience*, Thomas Merton offers some interesting observations on my friend's religious discipline, *bhakti-yoga*, and his principal scripture, *Bhagavad-gītā*:

"There are facile generalizations about Hindu religion current in the West, which it would be well to take with extreme

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reserve: for instance, the statement that for the Hindu, there is no 'personal God.' On the contrary, the mysticism of *bhakti-yoga* is a mysticism of affective devotion and of ecstatic union with God under the most personal and human forms, sometimes very reminiscent of the 'bridal mysticism' of so many Western mystics.

"The *Bhagavad-gītā* is a doctrine of pure love resembling in many points that preached by St. Bernard, Tauler, Fénelon, and many other Western mystics . . . The *Gītā*, an ancient Sanskrit philosophical poem, preaches a contemplative way of serenity, detachment, and personal devotion to God in the form of Lord Krishna,

expressed most of all in detached activity—work done without concern for results but with the pure intention of fulfilling the will of God."

My friend came back for a second visit to our monastery more recently. I was very favorably impressed by the spiritual growth that I witnessed in him. It was quite evident that his serious commitment to the monastic life was bearing fruit. He possessed a sensitivity to theological issues and a spiritual maturity usually attained only after many years in religious training and monastic experience. In comparing my own Benedictine-Cistercian monastic tradition with his, I can see much in

common: commitment to a discipline, tutelage under a spiritual master, poverty, simplicity, sacred reading and prayer, as well as celibacy.

I would like to conclude by urging readers to approach a rich tradition like this with open minds and hearts, asking the Holy Spirit of truth and charity to enlighten them and reveal to them the abundant spiritual riches to be found in that tradition. Both justice and charity call for a breaking down of the walls of prejudice in our interreligious encounters and dialogues. Discernment is needed to sift the chaff from the wheat, but prejudice is an obstacle to such discernment. 



ON INSPIRATION

The search for the source of inspiration in science, mathematics, and art leads beyond the mechanistic framework of present-day biological theory.

by SADĀPŪTA DĀSA

In this article we will examine how human beings acquire knowledge in science, mathematics, and art. Our focus shall primarily be on the formation of ideas and hypotheses in science and mathematics, since the formal nature of these subjects tends to put the phenomena we are concerned with into particularly clear perspective. We will show that the phenomenon known as inspiration plays an essential part in acquiring knowledge in modern science and mathematics and the creative arts (such as music). We will argue that the phenomenon of inspiration can not readily be explained by mechanistic models of nature consistent with present-day theories of physics and chemistry. As an alternative to these models, a theoretical framework for a nonmechanistic description of nature will be outlined. While providing a direct explanation of inspiration, this general framework is broad enough to include the current theories of physics as a limiting case.

Modern scientists acquire knowledge, at least in principle, by what is called the hypothetico-deductive method. Using this method, they formulate hypotheses and then test them by experimental observation. Investigators consider the hypotheses valid only insofar as they are consistent with the data obtained by observation, and they must in principle reject any hypothesis that disagrees with observation. Much analysis has been directed toward the deductive side of the hypothetico-deductive method, but the equally important process of hypothesis formation has been largely neglected. So we ask, "Where do the hypotheses come from?"

It is clear that scientists cannot use any direct, step-by-step process to derive hypothesis from raw observational data. To deal with such data at all, they must already have some working hypothesis, for otherwise the data amounts to nothing more than a bewildering array of symbols

The frustration of creative work. Archimedes fruitlessly pondering a mathematical dilemma.

(or sights and sounds), which is no more meaningful than a table of random numbers. In this connection Albert Einstein once said, "It may be heuristically useful to keep in mind what one has observed. But on principle it is quite wrong to try grounding a theory on observable magnitudes alone. In reality the very opposite happens. It is the theory which determines what we can observe."¹

Pure mathematics contains an equivalent of the hypothetico-deductive method. In this case, instead of hypotheses there are proposed systems of mathematical reasoning intended to answer specific mathematical questions. And instead of the experimental testing of a hypothesis there is the step-by-step process of verifying that a particular proof, or line of mathematical reasoning, is correct. This verification process is straightforward and could in principle be carried out by a computer. However, there is no systematic, step-by-step method of generating mathematical proofs and systems of ideas, such as group theory or the theory of Lebesgue integration.

If hypotheses in science and systems of reasoning in mathematics are not generated by any systematic procedure, then what is their source? We find that they almost universally arise within the mind of the investigator by sudden inspiration. The classic example is Archimedes' discovery of the principle of specific gravity. The Greek mathematician was faced with the task of determining whether a king's crown was solid gold without drilling any holes in it. After a long period of fruitless endeavor, he received the answer to the problem by sudden inspiration while taking a bath.

Such inspirations generally occur suddenly and unexpectedly to persons who had previously made some unsuccessful conscious effort to solve the problem in question. They usually occur when one is not consciously thinking about the problem, and they often indicate an entirely new way of looking at it—a way the investigator had never even considered

during his conscious efforts to find a solution. Generally, an inspiration appears as a sudden awareness of the problem's solution, accompanied by the conviction that the solution is correct and final. One perceives the solution in its entirety, though it may be quite long and complicated when written out in full.

Inspiration plays a striking and essential role in the solution of difficult problems in science and mathematics. Generally, investigators can successfully tackle only routine problems by conscious endeavor alone. Significant advances in science almost always involve sudden inspiration, as the lives of great scientists and mathematicians amply attest. A typical example is the experience of the nineteenth-century mathematician Karl Gauss. After trying unsuccessfully for years to prove a certain theorem about numbers, Gauss suddenly became aware of the solution. He described his experience as follows: "Finally, two days ago, I succeeded. . . . Like a sudden flash of lightning, the riddle happened to be solved. I myself cannot say what was the conducting thread which connected what I previously knew with what made my success possible."²

We can easily cite many similar examples of sudden inspiration. Here is another one, given by Henri Poincaré, a famous French mathematician of the late nineteenth century. After working for some time on certain problems in the theory of functions, Poincaré had occasion to go on a geological field trip, during which he set aside his mathematical work. While on the trip he received a sudden inspiration involving his researches, which he described as follows: "At the moment when I put my foot on the step the idea came to me, without anything in my former thoughts seeming to have paved the way

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Karl Gauss

for it, that the transformations I had used . . . were identical with those of non-Euclidean geometry."³ Later on, after some fruitless work on an apparently unrelated question, he suddenly realized, "with just the same characteristics of brevity, suddenness, and immediate certainty,"⁴ that this work could be combined with his previous inspiration to provide a significant advance in his research on the theory of functions. Then a third sudden inspiration provided him with the final argument he needed to complete that work.

Although inspirations generally occur after a considerable period of intense but unsuccessful effort to consciously solve a problem, this is not always the case. Here is an example from another field of endeavor. Wolfgang Mozart once described how he created his musical works: "When I feel well and in good humor, or when I am taking a drive or walking, . . . thoughts crowd into my mind as easily as you could wish. Whence and how do they come? *I do not know and I have nothing to do with it.* . . . Once I have a theme, another melody comes, linking itself with the first one, in accordance with the needs of the composition as a whole. . . . Then my soul is on fire with inspiration, if however nothing occurs to distract my attention. The work grows; I keep expanding it, conceiving it more and more clearly until I have the entire composition finished in my head, though it may be long. . . . It does not come to me successively, with its various parts worked out in detail, as they will be later on, but it is in its entirety that

my imagination lets me hear it."⁵ (Italics added.)

From these instances we discover two significant features of the phenomenon of inspiration: first, its source lies beyond the subject's conscious perception; and second, it provides the subject with information unobtainable by any conscious effort. These features led Poincaré and his follower Hadamard to attribute inspiration to the action of an entity which Poincaré called "the subliminal self," and which he identified with the subconscious or unconscious self of the psychoanalysts. Poincaré came to the following interesting conclusions involving the subliminal self: "The subliminal self is in no way inferior to the conscious self; it is not purely automatic; it is capable of discernment; it has tact, delicacy; it knows how to choose, to divine. What do I say? It knows better how to divine than the conscious self, since it succeeds where that has failed. In a word, is not the subliminal self superior to the conscious self?"⁶ Having raised this question, Poincaré then backs away from it: "Is this affirmative answer forced upon us by the facts I have just given? I confess that for my part, I should hate to accept it."⁷ He then offers a mechanical explanation of how the subliminal self, viewed as an automaton, could account for the observed phenomena of inspiration.

The Mechanistic Explanation

Let us carefully examine the arguments for such a mechanical explanation of inspiration. This question is of particular importance at the present time, because the prevailing materialistic philosophy of modern science holds that the mind is nothing more than a machine, and that all mental phenomena, including consciousness, are nothing more than the products of mechanical interactions. The mental machine is specifically taken to be the brain, and its basic functional elements are believed to be the nerve cells and possibly some systems of interacting macro-molecules within these cells. Many modern scientists believe that all brain activity results simply from the interaction of these elements according to the known laws of physics.

No one (as far as we are aware) has yet formulated an adequate explanation of the difference between a conscious and an unconscious machine, or even indicated how a machine could be conscious at all. In fact, investigators attempting to describe the self in mechanistic terms concentrate exclusively on the duplication of external behavior by mechanical means; they totally disregard each individual person's subjective experience of conscious self-awareness. This approach to the self is characteristic of modern behav-

ioral psychology. It was formally set forth by the British mathematician A. M. Turing, who argued that since whatever a human being can do a computer can imitate, a human being is merely a machine.

For the moment we will follow this behavioristic approach and simply consider the question of how the phenomenon of inspiration could be duplicated by a machine. Poincaré proposed that the subliminal self must put together many combinations of mathematical symbols by chance until at last it finds a combination satisfying the desire of the conscious mind for a certain kind of mathematical result. He proposed that the conscious mind would remain unaware of the many useless and illogical combinations running through the subconscious, but that it would immediately become aware of a satisfactory combination as soon as it was formed. He therefore proposed that the subliminal self must be able to form enormous numbers of combinations in a short time, and that these could be evaluated subconsciously as they were formed, in accordance with the criteria for a satisfactory solution determined by the conscious mind.

As a first step in evaluating this model, let us estimate the number of combinations of symbols that could be generated within the brain within a reasonable period of time. A very generous upper limit on this number is given by the figure 3.2×10^{46} . We obtain this figure by assuming that in each cubic Angstrom unit of the brain a separate combination is formed and evaluated once during each billionth of a second over a period of one hundred years. Although this figure is an enormous overestimate of what the brain could possibly do within the bounds of our present understanding of the laws of



Wolfgang Mozart

nature, it is still infinitesimal compared to the total number of possible combinations of symbols one would have to form to have any chance of hitting a proof for a particular mathematical theorem of moderate difficulty.

If we attempt to elaborate a line of mathematical reasoning, we find that at each step there are many possible combinations of symbols we can write down, and thus we can think of a particular mathematical argument as a path through a tree possessing many successive levels of subdividing branches. This is illustrated in the figure at right. The number of branches in such a tree grows exponentially with the number of successive choices, and the number of choices is roughly proportional to the length of the argument. Thus as the length of the argument increases, the number of branches will very quickly pass such limits as 10^{46} and 10^{100} (1 followed by 100 zeros). For example, suppose we are writing sentences in some symbolic language, and the rules of grammar for that language allow us an average of two choices for each successive symbol. Then there will be approximately 10^{100} grammatical sentences of 333 symbols in length.

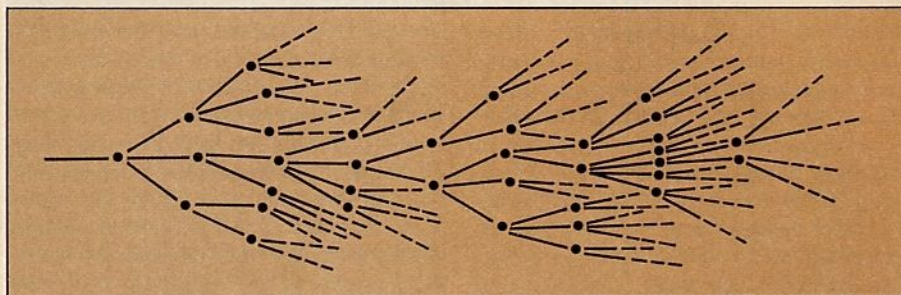
Even a very brief mathematical argument will often expand to great length when written out in full, and many mathematical proofs require pages and pages of highly condensed exposition, in which many essential steps are left for the reader to fill in. Thus there is only an extremely remote chance that an appropriate argument would appear as a random combination in Poincaré's mechanical model of the process of inspiration. Clearly, the phenomenon of inspiration requires a process of choice capable of going more or less directly to the solution, without even considering the vast majority of possible combinations of arguments.

Some Striking Examples

The requirements that this process of choice must meet are strikingly illustrated by some further examples of mathematical inspiration. It is very often found that the solution to a difficult mathematical problem depends on the discovery of basic principles and underlying systems of mathematical relationships. Only when these principles and systems are understood does the problem take on a tractable form; therefore difficult problems have often remained unsolved for many years, until mathematicians gradually developed various sophisticated ideas and methods of argument that made their solution possible. However, it is interesting to note that on some occasions sudden inspiration has completely circumvented this gradual process of development. There are several

instances in which famous mathematicians have, without proof, stated mathematical results that later investigators proved only after elaborate systems of underlying relationships had gradually come to light. Here are two examples:

The first example concerns the zeta-function studied by the German mathematician Bernhard Riemann. At the time of his death, Riemann left a note describing several properties of this function that pertained to the theory of prime numbers. He did not indicate the proof of these



The relationship between different possible lines of mathematical reasoning can be represented by a tree. Each node represents a choice among various possibilities that restricts the further development of the argument.

properties, and many years elapsed before other mathematicians were able to prove all but one of them. The remaining question is still unsettled, though an immense amount of labor has been devoted to it over the last seventy-five years. Of the properties of the zeta-function that *have* been verified, the mathematician Jacques Hadamard said, "All these complements could be brought to Riemann's publication only by the help of facts which were completely unknown in his time; and, for one of the properties enunciated by him, it is hardly conceivable how he can have found it without using some of these general principles, no mention of which is made in his paper."⁸

The work of the French mathematician Evariste Galois provides us with a case similar to Riemann's. Galois is famous for a paper, written hurriedly in sketchy form just before his death, that completely revolutionized the subject of algebra. However, the example we are considering here concerns a theorem Galois stated, without proof, in a letter to a friend. According to Hadamard this theorem could not even be understood in terms of the mathematical knowledge of that time; it became comprehensible only years later, after the discovery of certain basic principles. Hadamard remarks "(1) that Galois must have conceived these principles in some way; (2) that they must have been unconscious in his mind, since he makes no allusion to them, though they by themselves represent a significant discovery."⁹

It would appear, then, that the process of choice underlying mathematical inspira-

tion can make use of basic principles that are very elaborate and sophisticated and that are completely unknown to the conscious mind of the person involved. Some of the developments leading to the proof of some of Riemann's theorems are highly complex, requiring many pages (and even volumes) of highly abbreviated mathematical exposition. It is certainly hard to see how a mechanical process of trial and error, such as that described by Poincaré, could exploit such principles. On the other hand, if other, simpler solutions exist that

avoid the use of such elaborate developments, they have remained unknown up to the present time, despite extensive research devoted to these topics.

The process of choice underlying mathematical inspiration must also make use of selection criteria that are exceedingly subtle and hard to define. Mathematical work of high quality cannot be evaluated simply by the application of cut-and-dried rules of logic. Rather, its evaluation involves emotional sensibility and the appreciation of beauty, harmony, and other delicate aesthetic qualities. Of these criteria Poincaré said, "It is almost impossible to state them precisely; they are felt rather than formulated."¹⁰ This is also true of the criteria by which we judge artistic creations, such as musical compositions. These criteria are very real but at the same time very difficult to define precisely. Yet evidently they were fully incorporated in that mysterious process which provided Mozart with sophisticated musical compositions without any particular effort on his part and, indeed, without any knowledge of how it was all happening.

If the process underlying inspiration is not one of extensive trial and error, as Poincaré suggested, but rather one that depends mainly on direct choice, then we can explain it in terms of current mechanistic ideas only by positing the existence of a very powerful algorithm (a system of computational rules) built into the neural circuitry of the brain. However, it is not at all clear that we can satisfactorily explain inspiration by reference to such an algorithm. Here we will only briefly consider

this hypothesis before going on to outline an alternative theoretical basis for the understanding of inspiration.

The brain-algorithm hypothesis gives rise to the following basic questions:

(1) *Origins.* If mathematical, scientific, and artistic inspirations result from the workings of a neural algorithm, then how does the pattern of nerve connections embodying this algorithm arise? We know that the algorithm cannot be a simple one when we consider the complexity of automatic theorem-proving algorithms that have been produced thus far by workers in the field of artificial intelligence.¹¹ These algorithms cannot even approach the performance of advanced human minds, and yet they are extremely elaborate. But if our hypothetical brain-algorithm is extremely complex, how did it come into being? It can hardly be accounted for by extensive random genetic mutation or recombination in a single generation, for then the problem of random choice among vast numbers of possible combinations would again arise. One would therefore have to suppose that only a few relatively probable genetic transformations separated the genotype of Mozart from those of his parents, who, though talented, did not possess comparable musical ability.

However, it is not the general experience of those who work with algorithms that a few substitutions or recombinations of symbols can drastically improve an algorithm's performance or give it completely new capacities that would impress us as remarkable. Generally, if this were to happen with a particular algorithm, we would tend to suppose that it was a defective version of another algorithm originally designed to exhibit those capacities. This would imply that the algorithm for Mozart's unique musical abilities existed in a hidden form in the genes of his ancestors.

This brings us to the general problem of explaining the origin of human traits. According to the theory most widely accepted today, these traits were selected on the basis of the relative reproductive advantage they conferred on their possessors or their possessors' relatives. Most of the selection for our hypothetical hidden algorithms must have occurred in very early times, because of both the complexity of these algorithms and the fact that they are often carried in a hidden form. It is now thought that human society, during most of its existence, was on the level of hunters and gatherers, at best. It is quite hard to see how, in such societies, persons like Mozart or Gauss would ever have had the opportunity to fully exhibit their unusual abilities. But if they didn't, then the winnowing process that is posited by evolution theory could not effectively

select these abilities.

We are thus faced with a dilemma: It appears that it is as difficult to account for the origin of our hypothetical inspiration-generating algorithms as it is to account for the inspirations themselves.

(2) *Subjective experience.* If the phenomenon of inspiration is caused by the working of a neural algorithm, then why is it that an inspiration tends to occur as an abrupt realization of a complete solution, without the subject's conscious awareness of intermediate steps? The examples of Riemann and Galois show that some persons have obtained results in an apparently direct way, while others were able to verify these results only through a laborious process involving many intermediate stages. Normally, we solve relatively easy problems by a conscious, step-by-step process. Why, then, should inspired scientists, mathematicians, and artists remain unaware of important intermediate steps in the process of solving difficult problems or producing intricate works of art, and then become aware of the final solution or creation only during a brief experience of realization?

Thus we can see that the phenomenon of inspiration cannot readily be explained by means of mechanistic models of nature consistent with present-day theories of physics and chemistry. In the remainder of this article we will suggest an alternative to these models.

An Alternative Model

It has become fairly commonplace for scientists to look for correspondence between modern physics and ancient Eastern thought, and to find intriguing suggestions for hypotheses in the *Upaniṣads*, the *Bhagavad-gītā*, and similar Vedic texts. The *Bhagavad-gītā* in particular gives a description of universal reality in which the phenomenon of inspiration falls naturally into place. Using some fundamental concepts presented in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, we shall therefore outline a theoretical framework for the description of nature that provides a direct explanation of inspiration, but that is still broad enough to include the current theories of physics as a limiting case. Since here we are offering these concepts only as subject matter for thought and discussion, we will not try to give a final or rigorous treatment.

The picture of universal reality presented in the *Bhagavad-gītā* differs from that of current scientific thinking in two fundamental respects:

(1) Consciousness is understood to be a fundamental feature of reality rather than a by-product of the combination of nonconscious entities.

(2) The ultimate causative principle underlying reality is understood to be unlimitedly complex, and to be the reservoir of unlimited organized forms and activities. Specifically, the *Bhagavad-gītā* posits that the underlying, absolute cause of all causes is a universal conscious being, and that the manifestations of material energy are exhibitions of that being's conscious will. The individual subjective selves of living beings (such as ourselves) are understood to be minute parts of the absolute being that possess the same self-conscious nature. These minute conscious selves interact directly with the absolute being through consciousness, and they interact indirectly with matter through the agency of the absolute being's control of matter.

In modern science the idea of an ultimate cause underlying the phenomenal manifestation is expressed through the concept of the laws of nature. Thus in modern physics all causes and effects are thought to be reducible to the interaction of fundamental physical entities, in accordance with basic force laws. At the present moment the fundamental entities are thought by some physicists to comprise particles such as electrons, muons, neutrinos, and quarks, and the force laws are listed as strong, electromagnetic, weak, and gravitational. However, the history of science has shown that it would be unwise to consider these lists final. In the words of the physicist David Bohm, "The possibility is always open that there may exist an unlimited variety of additional properties, qualities, entities, systems, levels, etc., to which apply correspondingly new kinds of laws of nature."¹²

The picture of reality presented in the *Bhagavad-gītā* could be reconciled with the world-view of modern physics if we were to consider mathematical descriptions of reality to be approximations, at best. According to this idea, as we try to formulate mathematical approximations closer and closer to reality, our formalism will necessarily diverge without limit in the direction of ever-increasing complexity. Many equations will exist that describe limited aspects of reality to varying degrees of accuracy, but there will be no single equation that sums up all principles of causation.

We may think of these equations as approximate laws of nature, representing standard principles adopted by the absolute being for the manifestation of the physical universe. The *Bhagavad-gītā* describes the absolute being in apparently paradoxical terms, as simultaneously a single entity and yet all-pervading in space and time. This conception, however, also applies to the laws of physics as scientists

presently understand them, for each of these laws requires that a single principle (such as the principle of gravitational attraction with the universal constant G) apply uniformly throughout space and time.

The difference between the conceptions of modern physics and those presented in the *Bhagavad-gītā* lies in the manner in which the ultimate causal principle exhibits unity. The goal of many scientists has been to find some single, extremely simple equation that expresses all causal principles in a unified form. According to the *Bhagavad-gītā*, however, the unity of the absolute being transcends mathematical description. The absolute being is a single self-conscious entity possessing unlimited knowledge and potency. Therefore a mathematical account of this being would have to be limitlessly complex.

According to the *Bhagavad-gītā*, the phenomenon of inspiration results from the interaction between the all-pervading absolute being and the localized conscious selves. Since the absolute being's unlimited potency is available everywhere, it is possible for all varieties of artistic and mathematical creations to directly manifest within the mind of any individual.

These creations become manifest by the will of the absolute being in accordance with both the desire of the individual living being and certain psychological laws.

Conclusion

We have observed that the attempt to give a mechanical explanation of inspiration based on the known principles of physics meets with two fundamental difficulties. First, the process of inspiration can be explained mechanically only if we posit the existence of an elaborate algorithm embodied in the neural circuitry of the brain. However, it is as hard to account for the origin of such an algorithm as it is to account for the inspirations themselves. Second, even if we accept the existence of such an algorithm, the mechanical picture provides us with no understanding of the subjective experience of inspiration, in which a person obtains the solution to a problem by sudden revelation, without any awareness of intermediate steps.

If it is indeed impossible to account for inspiration in terms of known causal principles, then it will be necessary to acquire some understanding of deeper causal principles operating in nature. Otherwise, no explanation of inspiration

will be possible. It is here that the worldview presented in the *Bhagavad-gītā* might be useful to investigators. The *Bhagavad-gītā* provides a detailed account of the laws by which the individual selves and the absolute being interact, and this account can serve as the basis for a deeper investigation of the phenomenology of inspiration.

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Rāghava Caitanya dāsa (1886–1979)

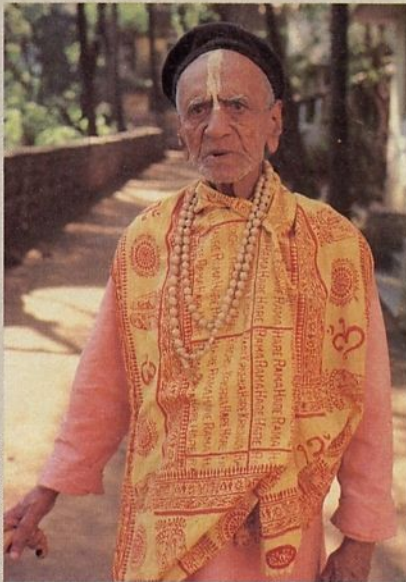


PHOTO: VISAKHDEVUDASI

Recently the oldest member of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, Rāghava Caitanya dāsa, passed away at age ninety-three. Rāghava Caitanya was born Mulchand Deomal in December of 1886, at Shikarpur, in present-day Pakistan. For

thirty-three years he worked in the British government service, in the executive force of the Karachi police department. At his retirement in 1942, he held the rank of Inspector of Police.

Rāghava Caitanya dāsa first came in touch with Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism (Kṛṣṇa consciousness) in 1905. In that year he read and was deeply affected by Vṛndāvana dāsa Ṭhākura's *Caitanya Bhāgavata*, which describes the life and teachings of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Kṛṣṇa's incarnation as a pure devotee. Rāghava Caitanya became an avid student of Kṛṣṇa consciousness and also published numerous magazine articles on the subject.

In 1970 he first met His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda in Surat, India, and immediately accepted Śrīla Prabhupāda as his *guru*. He was the first person in India to become a life member of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. And a few years later, at age eighty-nine, he left home to spend his last years in the spiritual atmosphere of Hare Krishna Land in Bombay. In 1977 he fulfilled a long-cherished desire by

taking spiritual initiation from Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Although Rāghava Caitanya's body was deeply afflicted with arthritis and hardening of the arteries, his mind always remained sharp. He was like a kindly grandfather to the devotees at Hare Krishna Land, always ready to offer wisdom and good advice and always encouraging us to depend on Lord Kṛṣṇa and Śrīla Prabhupāda.

For us Rāghava Caitanya was a window into turn-of-the-century India, an India characterized by a spirituality now sadly fading in this increasingly materialistic age. He had great faith in Lord Kṛṣṇa and the chanting of Kṛṣṇa's holy name, and this manifested itself in his peaceful disposition during his last years. Death was never fearful for him, but a welcome vehicle that would carry him back to Godhead and eternal happiness with Lord Kṛṣṇa. We miss the companionship of our Godbrother and pray to Lord Kṛṣṇa that He fulfill Rāghava Caitanya's prayer: "Let me become unconditionally and forever the most humble servant of the servants of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa." —Bhārgava dāsa

LOWER EAST SIDE

(continued from page 12)

eagerness to find the extra dimensions of the self, to get beyond ordinary existence, even if they didn't know what the beyond was or whether they would ever return to the comfort of the ordinary. Nonetheless, whatever truth they had found, they remained unfulfilled, and whatever worlds they had reached, these young psychedelic voyagers had always returned to the Lower East Side. Now they were sampling the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*.

When the *kīrtana* suddenly sprang from the Swami's cymbals and sonorous voice, they immediately felt that it was going to be something far out. Here was another chance to "trip out," and willingly they began to flow with it. They would surrender their minds and explore the limits of the chanting for all it was worth. Most of them had already associated the *mantra* with the mystical *Upaniṣads* and *Gītā*, which had called out to them in words of mystery: "Eternal spirit . . . Negating illusion." But whatever it was, they thought, this Indian *mantra*—let it come. Let its waves carry us far and high. Let's take it, and let the effects come. Whatever the price, let it come. The chanting seemed simple and natural enough. It was sweet and wasn't going to harm anyone. It was, in its own way, far out.

As Śrīla Prabhupāda chanted in his own inner ecstasy, he observed his motley congregation. He was breaking ground in a new land now. As the hand cymbals rang, the lead-and-response of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* swelled, filling the evening. Some neighbors were annoyed. Puerto Rican children, enchanted, appeared at the door and window, looking. Twilight came.

Exotic it was, yet anyone could see that a *swami* was raising an ancient prayer in praise of God. This wasn't rock or jazz. He was a holy man, a *swami*, making a public religious demonstration. But the combination was strange: an old Indian *swami* chanting an ancient *mantra* with a storefront full of young American hippies singing along.

Śrīla Prabhupāda sang on, his shaven head high and tilted, his body trembling slightly with emotion. Confidently he led the *mantra*, absorbed in pure devotion, and they responded. More passersby were drawn to the front window and the open door. Some jeered, but the chanting was too strong. Within the sound of the *kīrtana*, even the car horns were a faint staccato. The vibration of auto engines and the rumble of trucks continued, but in the distance now, unnoticed.

Gathered under the dim electric light in the bare room, the group chanted after their leader, going gradually from a feeble, hesitant chorus to an approximate har-

mony of voices. They continued clapping and chanting, putting into it whatever they could, in hopes of discovering its secrets. This *swami* was not simply giving some five-minute sample demonstration. For the moment he was their leader, their guide in an unknown realm. Howard and Keith's little encounter with a *kīrtana* in Calcutta had left them completely outsiders. The chanting had never before come like this. Right in the middle of the Lower East Side, with a genuine *swami* leading them.

In their minds were psychedelic ambitions to see the face of God, fantasies and visions of Hindu teachings, and the presumption that IT was all impersonal light. Prabhupāda had encountered a similar group on the Bowery, and he knew they weren't experiencing the *mantra* with the proper discipline, reverence, and knowledge. But he let them chant in their own way. In time their submission to the spiritual sound, their purification, and their enlightenment and ecstasy in chanting and hearing Hare Kṛṣṇa would come.

He stopped the *kīrtana*. The chanting had swept back the world, but now the Lower East Side rushed in again. The children at the door began to chatter and laugh. Cars and trucks made their rumbles heard once more. And a voice shouted from a nearby apartment, demanding quiet. It was now past 7:30. Half an hour had elapsed.

Peace Prize

(continued from page 13)

would not be some scheme hatched in a planning commission or think tank. Instead, as a devotee, he would follow the program for peace explicitly laid out by the Lord in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (5.29): "The sages, knowing Me [Lord Kṛṣṇa] as the ultimate purpose of all sacrifices and austerities, the Supreme Lord of all planets and demigods, and the benefactor and well-wisher of all living entities, attain peace from the pangs of material existence." Thus the main program of the saintly leader is universally to inculcate the knowledge that God is the proprietor of everything, the friend of everyone, and the enjoyer of all. The *rājarsi* understands that all the miseries of material life follow from our fundamental spiritual amnesia.

Forgetting God, we plan our material careers in violation of our real spiritual nature. Deluded, we identify with matter, with our transient bodies and bodily relations. False to ourselves, we erect institutions for the direct and indirect exploitation of others, competing for property and status against those similarly deluded. Since no one's position is secure, we are

always anxious and fearful, and even if we seem to prevail for some time, we are inevitably cut down by old age, disease, and ever-waiting death. Sometimes we are the oppressed, sometimes the oppressors, but either way we are stretched on the rack of this rough world until we break and break again. Yet it is all a needless nightmare, an evil spell that vanishes at once when we recall our authentic identity and our relationship with God.

Anyone who desires to relieve people's suffering must enlighten them about this relationship and help them reestablish it. Not only will a person thus enlightened be able to tolerate the most oppressive conditions, but also, nothing short of this spiritual reformation can alleviate the oppressions of war and social and political exploitation. Communism, though claiming to be a radical solution, fails to reach the root of the universal spiritual disease: the willful ignorance of the supremacy of God, the perverse desire of the tiny servant to become the all-powerful master. A "classless society" is unattainable and unnecessary; but if all social classes would learn to serve God, then no one would be misused.

Mother Teresa embodies that necessary spirit of sacrifice and dedication to others, but even the superior service she

renders is ultimately superficial. She ministers to the ravaged flesh of men, but the ultimate source of suffering is that single festering wound on the human spirit which is forgetfulness of God. We do not fully acknowledge Him until we accept His final order to us: "Abandon all varieties of *dharma* [religious duties, social and political schemes, material welfare work, obligations to family and to the state, and so on] and just surrender to Me." Only by accepting this injunction, and thus by concretely accepting God's position, can we possibly have peace, and on that basis there is no difficulty for a leader to be both powerful and pure.

The world desperately needs these genuine peacemakers. His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda founded the International Society for Krishna Consciousness as an attempt to produce such pure leaders for the future.

Since the Nobel Prize Committee has taken such a big step from Henry Kissinger to Mother Teresa, perhaps it is not too much to hope that they will continue on the path of enlightenment, come to recognize the only authentic formula for world peace, and encourage humanity to apply it. Indeed, the committee itself would then qualify for the prize.

Higher Education

DEATH AT AN EARLY AGE

“Maybe I Expect Too Much”

by YOGEŚVARA DĀSA

He was the consummate student, disciplined, industrious. He executed homework assignments with ritual precision, distrusted the frivolity of his peers, and adored the pursuit of knowledge. Eventually my friend Ralph, in his search for meaning, committed suicide at the age of sixteen. No one was less surprised than me.

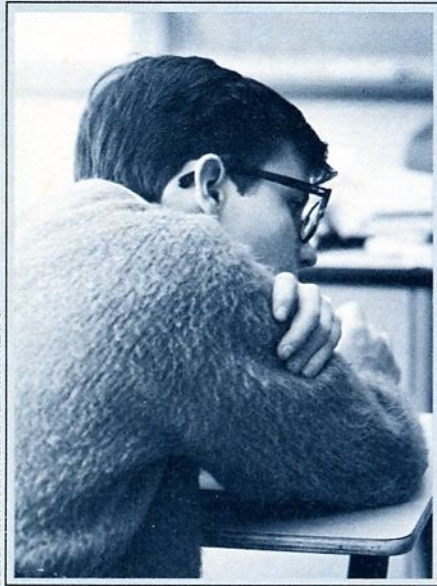
Ralph would confide to me misgivings about his studies and the value of school in general. “It’s not what they’re teaching us,” he would say, “but what they’re *not* teaching us that bothers me. We never get to the bottom of things.” Circuitous discussions in history class flashed through my mind. “Maybe there is no bottom,” he would conclude. “Maybe I just expect too much.” My presence was superfluous. He was speaking to the universe.

His death came, caused slightly more than gossip, and went. There was no reason to dwell on the matter. He was never a part of the social crowd and was considered a bit strange anyway.

I forgot about Ralph until recently, when an article caught my attention. It heralded the “new trend in education—a search for excellence,” and bade educators reconsider a place for “lasting values” in curricula. Clearly my friend Ralph did not choose death merely over shallowness in his biology class; but his death did make one very powerful statement: for Ralph, modern education had no lasting meaning, no ultimate goal, and as far as he was concerned could never produce anything but a graduating class of frustrated, directionless men and women.

Ralph’s sensitivities were much more acute than mine—I survived high school. But I still wear the scars, of biology classes that insist on defining life in biochemical terms and promoting unproven theories of evolution as fact; of history classes that depict man in a progressive march through the ages, from uncivilized beginnings to a zenith of achievement and knowledge; of teachers whose abominable private lives are reflected in their presentation of literature and philosophy; of a secular education forbidden by law to teach the existence of a supreme intelligence behind the phenomena of the universe.

During my third year in college, I met



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devotees and eventually dedicated myself to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Since then I have discovered a different kind of educational system, one that teaches about the soul within the body, the divinity of life in all its forms, and the refined qualities of a God-centered existence.

Give a child Cunier Rods, fancy textbooks, a seasoned teacher versed in Piaget or Holt, and you may succeed in teaching him elementary mathematics or even advanced grammar; but deny that child knowledge of himself beyond the temporary body and mind, and the whole effort has been a waste. How children learn is relatively unimportant if what they learn is wrong or only partially true. Certainly the body is an incredible mechanism, and yes it is important to know how to read and distinguish Africa from Australia. But the eternal soul within the body has nothing to do with the comings and goings of the material world. The soul is neither black nor white, neither American nor Russian, Protestant nor Catholic, boy nor girl. The soul is eternal, part and parcel of Kṛṣṇa, or God, and no amount of legislation separating church from state will alter that fact.

The system in Kṛṣṇa conscious schools is to first train teachers to see students as spiritual entities, not just as intellectual or physical entities, but eternal souls meant to revive their lost relationship with God. Then those teachers teach the basic lessons of education—reading,

writing, history, geography, science—in a devotional context. What is a flower? It is a living entity who has taken his birth in the material world and is now gradually evolving to human form. What is the best thing to do with a flower? Offer it to Kṛṣṇa with love. Kṛṣṇa will be pleased, and that soul in a flower form will be benefited by obtaining immediately a human body, instead of having to take so many more births in lower species first.

What makes the human form so special? Only in a human body can the spirit soul revive his lost consciousness of Kṛṣṇa. God, Kṛṣṇa, sends His son, a pure devotee, to teach us how to serve Him. By following the instructions of such a bona fide spiritual master, one can attain love for God.

Now let’s learn to read. “Pam ate her ham from a can with a yam.” That is sinful. Why? Because you have to kill the animal in order to eat the flesh. Read another sentence. “The dog ate his bone alone in his home.” So that is also sinful? No. Why not? Because dogs simply follow their animal nature. It is not sinful for them to eat meat. But a human being has higher intelligence. He should see that there are other things he can eat without having to kill.

But what about the flower? Isn’t it also alive? Yes, but Kṛṣṇa says He accepts a flower if it is offered to Him with love. He doesn’t say He will accept a slaughtered animal.

Kṛṣṇa conscious training may never be introduced in public schools, not only thanks to deeply ingrained prejudices toward spiritual subject matter, but due mainly to mere lack of interest. In a time of unlimited teaching aids and sophisticated theories on the learning process, “simple living and high thinking”—the motto of Kṛṣṇa education—is not likely to be echoed through the halls of our nation’s schools. People today, young and old, prefer complicated living and simple-headed thinking. Still, Ralph and anyone else dissatisfied with the status quo would be pleased to know that somewhere the teachers never strike, the students never kill or rape, and the desks still have tops free from graffiti. Not only that—the children learn and are happy learning. All things considered, that’s a lot.

RELATIONSHIP

(continued from page 4)

Kṛṣṇa consciousness is therefore a necessity.

When Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya appeared in India five hundred years ago, He based His teaching on this principle: *premā pum-artho mahān*—He stated that the objective of human life is to attain love

of God. That's all. That makes one's life perfect. Nothing more. One of the great spiritual masters, Śrīnātha Cakravartī, has described the mission of Lord Caitanya. *Ārādhyo bhagavān vrajeśa-tanayas*: Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is *ārādhyo*, or worshipable. He's the only worshipable personality. *Tad-dhāma vṛndāvanam*: and as Lord Kṛṣṇa is worshipable, similarly His place of pastimes,

Vṛndāvana, is also worshipable.

And what is the best kind of worship for Kṛṣṇa? *Ramyā kācid upasanā vraja-vadhū-vargeṇa yā kalpiṭā*: the highest kind of worship is what was demonstrated five thousand years ago by the cowherd damsels of Vṛndāvana village. They were always thinking of Kṛṣṇa. When Kṛṣṇa went walking outside of the village, they were at home thinking, "Oh, the soles of Kṛṣṇa's feet are so soft. How can He wander in the forest, where there are so many particles of stone? He must be hurting Himself." Kṛṣṇa was in the forest, and they were at home. But they were thinking of Kṛṣṇa—how He was walking, how His soft feet might have been suffering. In this way they were always absorbed in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

The cowherd damsels were not Vedāntists, they were not *brāhmaṇas*, they were not educated—they were cowherd girls. But their love of Kṛṣṇa was so intense that Lord Caitanya stated, "There is no better worship than what was demonstrated by the damsels of Vṛndāvana." Then what is the source where we can gain an understanding of Kṛṣṇa? *Śrīmad-bhāgavatam pramāṇam amalā*: if you study *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, then you attain all these things. You attain perfect love of Kṛṣṇa, life's highest success. So here is the book—*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. And here is the ideal worship—that of the damsels of Vṛndāvana. And the worshipable object—Kṛṣṇa. And the prime necessity of life—to attain love of God. *Śrī-caitanya-mahāprabhor matam idam*: this is the sum and substance of what Caitanya Mahāprabhu taught.

Dharma: every civilized nation has some sort of religion, or *dharma*, because unless we become religious there is no possibility of *artha*, lasting peace and prosperity. *Dharma-artha*: if all people are religious, then their economic condition will be better. And why is a better economic condition desirable? *Kāma*. *Kāma* means that the necessities of your life will be fulfilled nicely. *Dharma-artha-kāma*. Then, what is the ultimate goal? *Mokṣa*. If you live peacefully within society, then you can cultivate knowledge for your liberation. *Dharma-artha-kāma-mokṣa*.

So, generally these four principles are the aim of human society. Lord Caitanya says, "Yes, these are not bad." But *premā pum-artho mahān*—"You may have all these things, but if you have no love of Godhead, then it is all nonsense. All nonsense. Therefore try to love God, and everything will be all right." Lord Caitanya says that we should understand our relationship with God and act accordingly. That means serving Him with devotion. Then we shall have the highest perfection of life—love of God—and our mission of human life will be fulfilled.

Enhance Your Spiritual Life

For spiritual realization, all you really need is the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra. But to enhance your spiritual life, you may want to add the items listed below.

1 Mantra Meditation Beads: a string of 108 hand-carved "japa beads"—chanters use them as an aid to concentration during meditation on the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra. Each string of beads comes with a cotton carrying bag and an instruction pamphlet. \$4.95.

2 Magazine Binder (for your copies of *Back to Godhead*): a handy way to keep each month's issue in excellent condition. Holds 12 issues. \$4.95.

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6 SPECIAL: *The original Hare Kṛṣṇa Meditation Album*. In 1966, shortly after arriving in America, Śrīla Prabhupāda made this unique record album with his first disciples. It opens with a Sanskrit prayer to the guru, the spiritual master. Then Prabhupāda explains the meaning of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra, presenting the essence of what spiritual realization is and how to achieve it. Finally, for an entire side, Prabhupāda and his disciples chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. Long unavailable, this historic recording is here re-released on a C-60 cassette. \$4.00.

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

WHAT IS A *MANTRA*? In Sanskrit, *man* means "mind" and *tra* means "freeing." So a *mantra* is a combination of transcendental sounds that frees our minds from the anxieties of life in the material world.

Ancient India's Vedic literatures single out one *mantra* as the *mahā* (supreme) *mantra*. The *Kali-santarāṇa Upaniṣad* explains, "These sixteen words—Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare—are especially meant for counteracting the ill effects of the present age of quarrel and anxiety."

The *Nārada-pañcarātra* adds, "All *mantras* and all processes for self-realization are compressed into the Hare

Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*."

Five centuries ago, while spreading the *mahā-mantra* throughout the Indian subcontinent, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu prayed, "O Supreme Personality of Godhead, in Your holy name You have invested all Your transcendental energies."

The name *Kṛṣṇa* means "the all-attractive one," the name *Rāma* means "the all-pleasing one," and the name *Hare* is an address to the Lord's devotional energy. So the *mahā-mantra* means, "O all-attractive, all-pleasing Lord, O energy of the Lord, please engage me in Your devotional service." Chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*, and your life will be sublime.

NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

Turning Forty

The other day, while here in Boston, I turned forty years old. I remembered when I was twenty-five years old and went out to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa with my fellow devotees on the Boston Commons. Once a heckler shouted at us: "You kids better quit this while you can! Or else one of these days you'll wake up and find yourself forty years old and your life will be wasted!" Today it reminded me of "The Road Not Taken," by Robert Frost:

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

What if I had taken a different, more traveled road when I was twenty-five? If I hadn't met my spiritual master and become Kṛṣṇa conscious, would I have continued with my old job at the welfare office and gone up a few notches in the civil service? Or would I have become a college English professor? Married with a few children? Maybe I would have become famous and wealthy, though I doubt it. It's impossible to know what might have been. But I tend to think that if I had become anything other than a Kṛṣṇa devotee, the thought of being forty would concern me more than it does.

Out of curiosity, I took out some books about what people feel like upon reaching middle age. "By forty, the outsides of most bodies (even the most carefully preserved bodies) are, to put it bluntly, visibly beginning to crumble under the assault of the years." Of course, it was no secret that my physical powers, like any forty-year-old's, are diminishing, and more wrinkles are starting to appear on my face. "A good way to define middle age is that it is the time when you must stop taking your body for granted and start taking care of it instead." I also noticed that I wasn't able to keep up dancing during a

chanting session like some of the seventeen-year-olds. "No other age group is as well fitted for the task of accepting power and assuming social and personal responsibility as the middle-aged." Yes, on the positive side, I saw I was gaining more influence in my own world: now I'm the editor of a magazine, whereas when I first joined this movement I was cleaning the pots. But I wasn't aware, until I read a few books on middle-age psychology, that with the onset of the forties a crisis often occurs. A person feels terribly bored with what he is doing, even in the midst of a promising career: he is suddenly tired of his wife and family and may whimsically get divorced. One writer was comparing middle age to adolescence, and he coined the word "middlescence" for this period of rebellion and emotional stress. The middlescent Forty feels that nobody understands him; he is continually on the lookout for greener pastures; grieving over his physical degeneration, he often turns into a hypochondriac. Even well-wishing friends cannot bring him around. He desperately thinks, "What am I doing here? What have I done? And now how am I going to manage to get out of it? I feel trapped!"

Mental health experts say people over forty are often over-concerned about death. It seems that the death fear tends to be worse in the early forties. According to one psychologist, by the time one enters old age, "the worry about dying has been refiled into its customary pigeonhole at the back of the mind." Morbid fear of death is another part of the middle-age crisis.

But according to the path I'm on in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, thinking "I'm forty now" is just a game—because my body is not my real self. The body's turning forty, fifty, or sixty effects no change at all on the eternal self, the spirit soul. As Kṛṣṇa explains in the *Bhagavad-gītā*,

Only the material body of the indestructible, immeasurable, and eternal living entity is subject to destruction. . . . For the soul there is never birth or death.

When a person thinks of himself as an adolescent or a middle-ager, there are so many concomitant anxieties. But in Kṛṣṇa consciousness we transcend material identification, even during this lifetime. This is not a mental invention, but a factual realization: I am not my body; I am pure spirit soul, part and parcel of Kṛṣṇa. Armed with transcendental knowledge, the devotee experiences none of the crises of middle age.

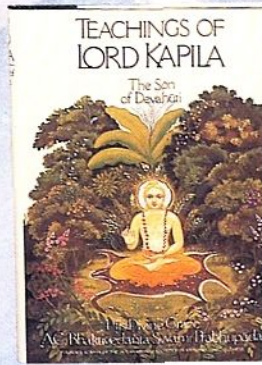
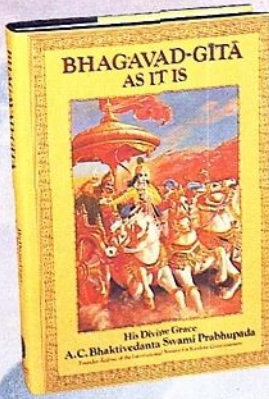
Take, for example, the middle-age death crisis. Psychologists recommend that a forty-year-old make a healthy adjustment: after all, he's actually got a good chance of living twenty to forty more years. But is this the real solution to the middle-ager's death fear? Degeneration is a signal of oncoming death. Filing it in the back of the mind won't help us avoid death when it comes. But death can be conquered. Adolescence, middlescence, old age, disease, death—all our problems come from the body. By the transcendental knowledge of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, we can gain freedom from the bodily engagement. If we revive our original love of God, then at the demise of the material body, the spirit soul will enter eternal life.

So it has come to pass, as the Commons heckler warned me. I have turned forty in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Maybe the heckler was really trying to help me. He wanted me to lead what he thought was a normal life and improve my lot. But without transcending the bodily concept of life, the problems of middlescence, old age, disease, and death are still the real problems of life. In fifteen years of Kṛṣṇa consciousness I have found the solution to these problems. It's the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa that "has made all the difference." —SDG

Climb to the highest consciousness

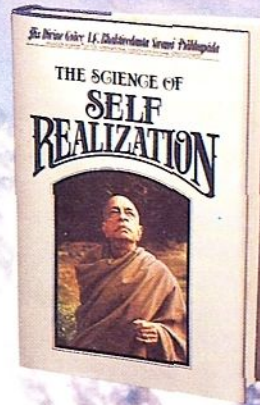
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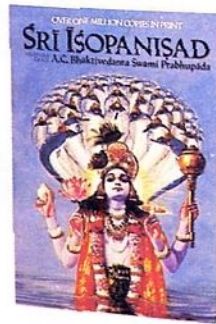
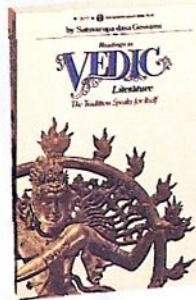
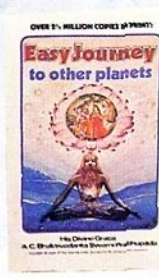
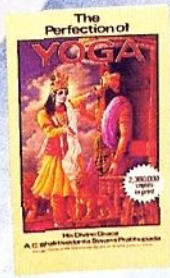


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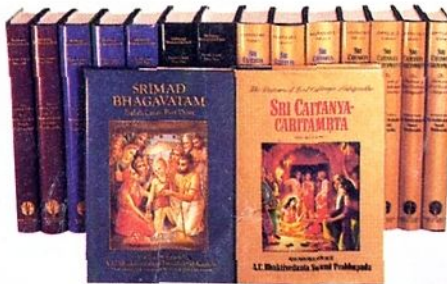
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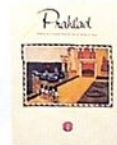
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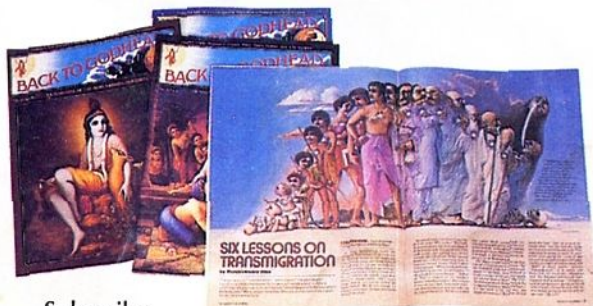


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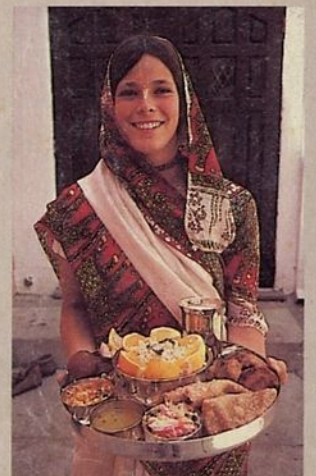
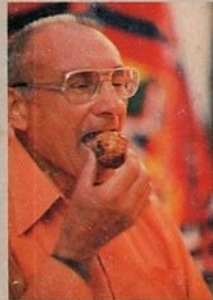
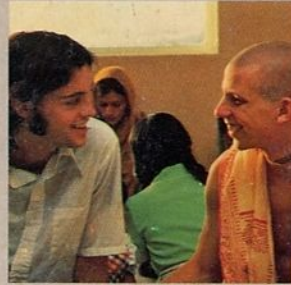
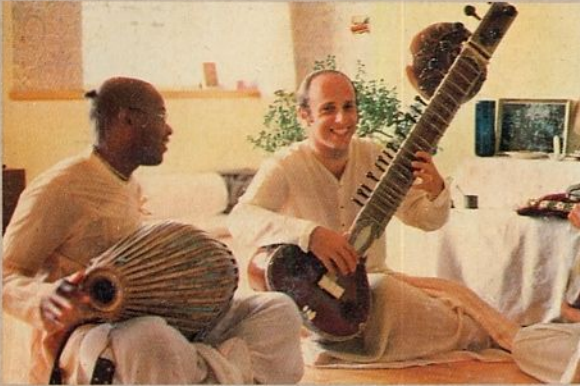
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