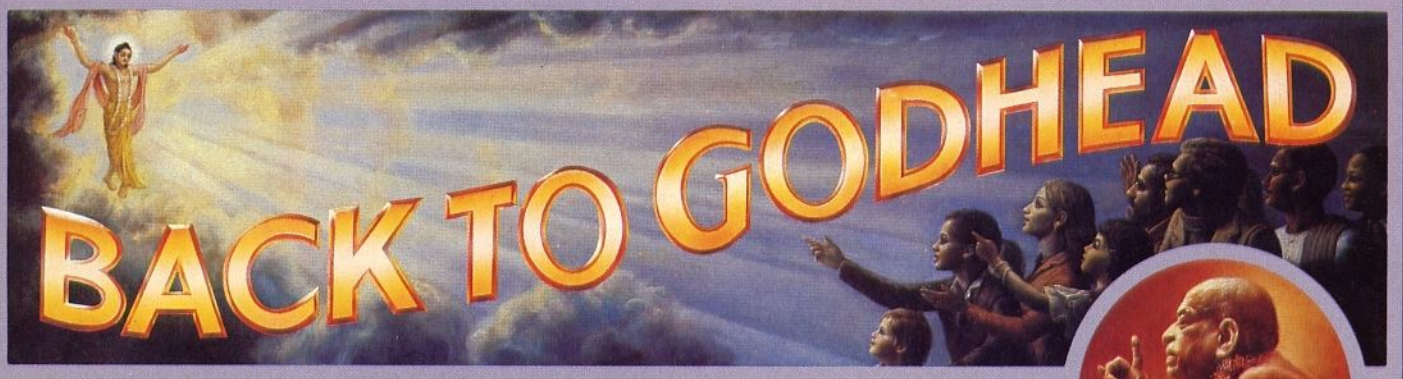
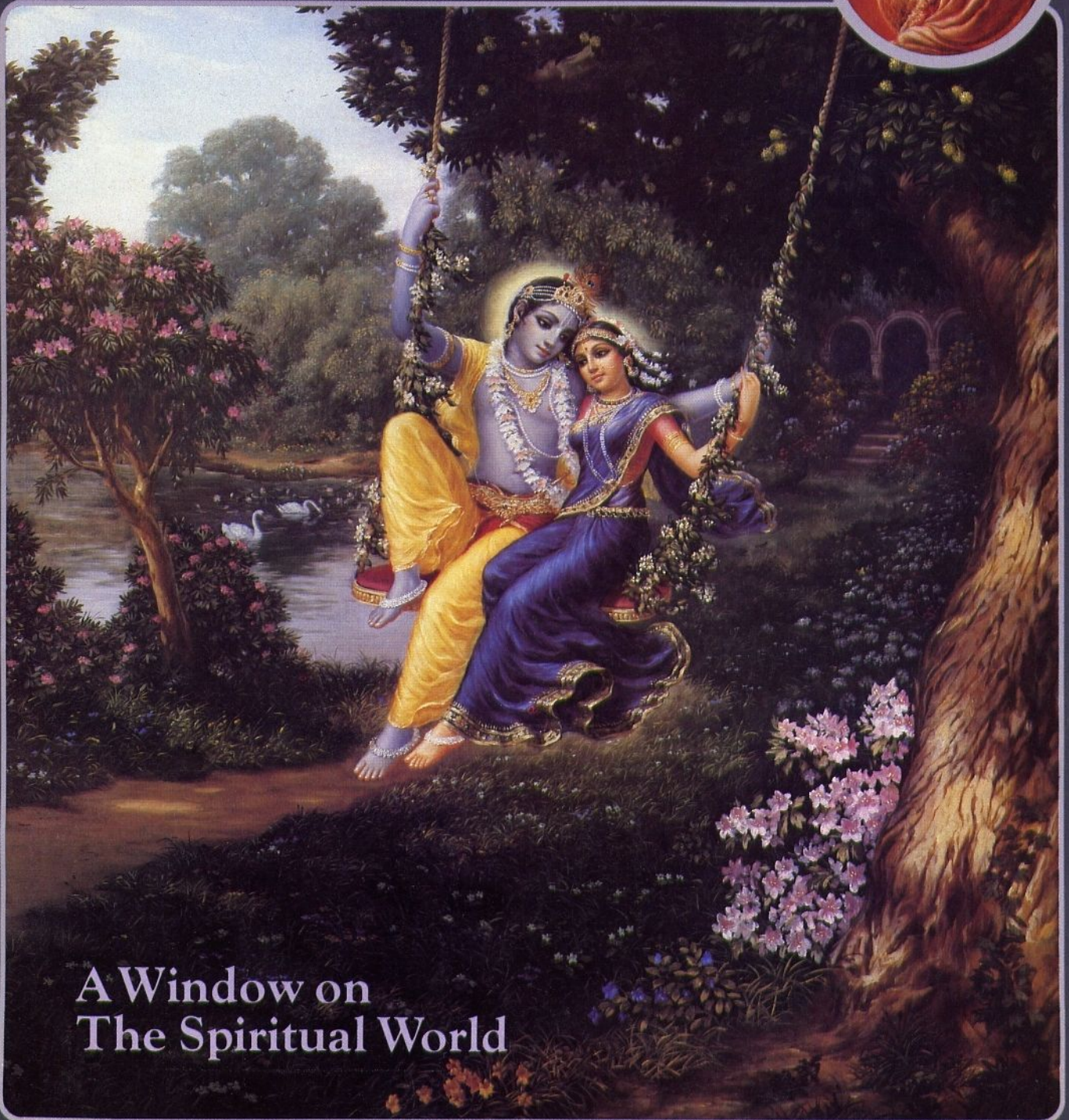


Godhead is light. Nescience is darkness. Where there is Godhead there is no nescience.



Vol.15 No. 5 THE MAGAZINE OF THE HARE KRISHNA MOVEMENT



A Window on
The Spiritual World

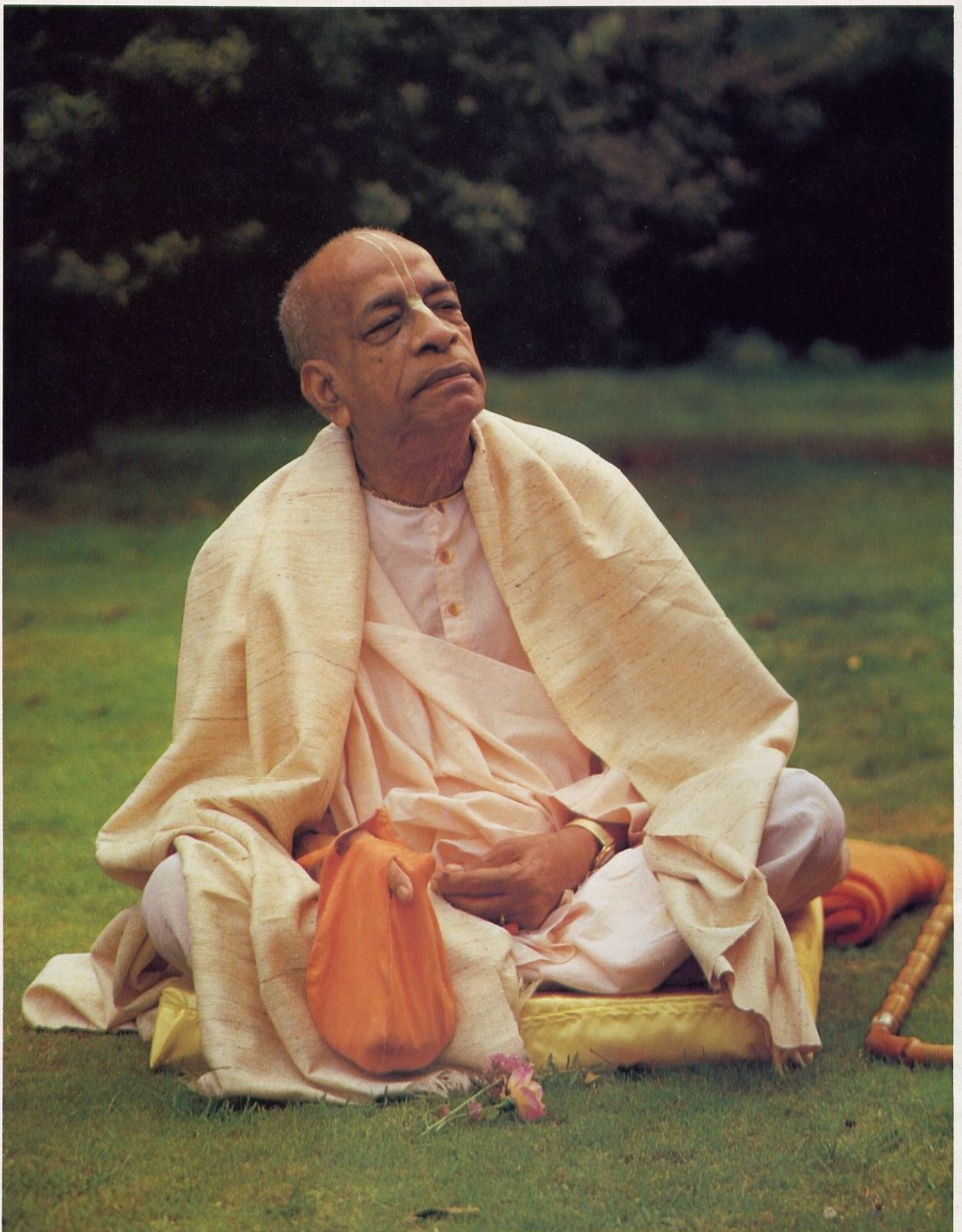


PHOTO: BHARGAVA DĀSA

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

BACK TO GODHEAD

VOL. 15, NO. 5

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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 **r** in rim, and **ṛ** like the **ch** in chair. Pronounce the aspirated consonants (**ch**, **jh**, **dh**, etc.) as in staunch-heart, hedge-hog, and red-hot. Finally, pronounce the sibilants **ṣ** and **ś** like **sh**, and **s** like the **s** in sun. So for *Kṛṣṇa* say 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* (*dāsi* 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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A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda.

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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."

THE KEY TO SELF-REALIZATION

HEARING FROM THE RIGHT SOURCE

A lecture by HIS DIVINE GRACE A.C. BHAKTIVEDANTA SWAMI PRABHUPĀDA
Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

*satataṁ kīrtayanto mām
yataniaś ca dṛḍha-vratāḥ
namasyantaś ca mām bhaktyā
nitya-yuktā upāsate*

“Always chanting My glories, endeavoring with great determination, bowing down before Me, the great souls perpetually worship Me with devotion.” [Bhagavad-gītā 9.14]

Lord Kṛṣṇa is describing the *mahātmās*, or great souls, who worship the Supreme Lord by the process of *kīrtana*. *Kīrtana* means “chanting” or, more specifically, “describing.” You can describe with music; you can describe in writing. You can describe in speeches. Any sort of describing—that is called *kīrtana*. Devotional service to the Lord begins with *kīrtana*—and *śravaṇa*, hearing. Unless you hear, you cannot describe. What shall you describe? If you do not know anything about the Supreme Lord, then how can you describe Him? Therefore, hearing is the first item.

All Vedic literature is called *śruti-sāstra*. *Śruti* means “to receive through hearing.” If you want to know the Supreme Spirit, you do not need to qualify yourself materially. You can remain what you are. But you must simply hear. God has given you the power of hearing. If you hear about God from authoritative sources, you will become perfect. Simply by hearing. Therefore, the first principle—hearing—is essential.

Formerly, the *Vedas* were heard by students from their spiritual master. For instance, in the *Bhagavad-gītā* you’ll find that Arjuna was hearing from Kṛṣṇa. On the battlefield he was not studying any *Vedānta* philosophy. He was simply hearing. You can hear at any place. Even on the battlefield, you can hear from the authoritative source. So that has always been the process of acquiring knowledge.

Hearing means receiving the knowledge—not manufacturing knowledge. There are some persons who think, “Oh, why shall I

hear from him? I can think. I can speculate. I can manufacture something new in my own circle of friends.” This is nonsense. This is not the Vedic process. The Vedic process is hearing. There are two processes of acquiring knowledge: the ascending process and the descending process. The “ascending” way means trying to go high—trying to elevate yourself—by your own strength. And the “descending” way means receiving pure knowledge from someone who is already elevated, from someone who already understands the Absolute Truth. So the ascending, or inductive, process is not recommended as the Vedic process of knowledge. The Vedic way of receiving knowledge is the descending, or deductive, process—the student gives submissive aural reception to the bona fide spiritual master. That is the way real knowledge comes to us.

As you have read in the Fourth Chapter of *Bhagavad-gītā*, *evaṁ paramparā-prāp-tam imāṁ rājarṣayo viduḥ*: traditionally this knowledge of self-realization was imparted in this way—from spiritual master to student. The Lord said, “I imparted this knowledge first of all to the sun-god, Vivasvān, and the sun-god imparted this knowledge to his son, Manu. And Manu imparted this knowledge to his son, Ikṣvāku.” At that time Ikṣvāku was the king of this planet. So from Ikṣvāku this knowledge is coming down—from father to son, or from master to disciple.

And now, because that disciplic succession had been broken, Lord Kṛṣṇa was saying, “I am again speaking that old system of knowledge to you, Arjuna—because you are My devotee, because you are My dear friend.” So this is the way. Hearing is the first stage. Hearing is so powerful that simply by hearing from the authoritative source you can become completely perfect—simply by hearing.

Submissive hearing, of course. *Jñāne prayāsam udapāsya namanta eva*. This is a verse from the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. “Don’t be an upstart. Don’t try to understand the

supreme knowledge, the Absolute Truth, by your own strength.” Your intelligence is limited; your senses are imperfect. You cannot understand. This should be given up—attempting to know the Supreme by the ascending process.

Nowadays, everyone is thinking, “Oh, I’ll manufacture my own way. Why shall I accept any authority? I shall decide myself what I am and what is my duty.” This is going on. But this is not the Vedic process. The Vedic process is *śravaṇa*, hearing from the bona fide source. So if we simply give up this foolish process of trying to know the Absolute Truth by our own efforts and become submissive, then we will be successful on the path of enlightenment.

“Submissive” means we must know our imperfection. As long as we are conditioned, we are subject to four kinds of imperfection. First of all, we must commit mistakes. As long as we are materially conditioned, nobody can say, “I’ll not commit a mistake; I never commit any mistakes.” It is not possible. You must. To err is human. So this is one imperfection.

Second, we become illusioned. We accept as true that which is false. For example, we identify with this body. If every one of us were asked what we are—“Oh, I am American.” But what is “American”? These bodies are American. But we are not, because we are not these bodies. So this is illusion.

Then, our senses are imperfect. We are very proud of seeing, but as soon as the light is put off, we cannot see. So our seeing is conditional. And similarly, all of our other senses are conditional. Therefore they are imperfect.

And finally, we have got a cheating propensity. We do not know anything, but we want to cheat others into thinking that

The original source of transcendental knowledge is Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself, who imparted it to the sun-god Vivasvān some 120 million years ago. Vivasvān then passed it on to his son Manu, who gave it to his son Ikṣvāku.



we know everything. I may be Fool Number One, but I want to start a group of students and teach them foolish things. This is cheating.

One must learn the Absolute Truth from the authoritative sources and then speak that knowledge to others. Arjuna was taught by Kṛṣṇa, and we are still speaking that same philosophy, even today. And those who are following Arjuna's submissive attitude—they're the real students of *Bhagavad-gītā*.

So our attempt to understand the Absolute Truth by our faulty senses and experience is futile. We must hear. That is the Vedic process. Formerly the student would go to the home of the spiritual master, which was known as the *gurukula*. Every *brāhmaṇa*, every self-realized soul, every *vipra* or expert in the knowledge of the Vedic literatures) would be provided with some *brahmacārīs*, celibate students. They would follow the rules and regulations of *brahmacārī* life and live at the home of the spiritual master, and he would teach them real knowledge from the Vedic literatures. That is the process. So, one should not adopt the ascending process. *Jñāne prayāsam udapāsyā. Udapāsyā* means, "Give it up," and *namanta eva*—"Be submissive." *Namanta eva jīvanti san-mukharitam bhavadīya-vārtām*: if one hears from the realized soul—just as Arjuna heard from Kṛṣṇa, the perfect person—then one will attain the perfection of life without any difficulty.

One may also hear from Kṛṣṇa's representative, the devotee of Kṛṣṇa. For instance, Arjuna was made the representative of Kṛṣṇa. Why? Kṛṣṇa said, *bhaktō'si*—"Because you are My devotee." But nobody can become the representative of Kṛṣṇa, or God, without becoming His devotee. One who thinks, "I am God"—he cannot become the representative of God.

Suppose you are a businessman and you send your representative for securing business. Now, if the representative presents himself to the customer, "I am the proprietor—I am the proprietor," how long can he go on like this? As soon as the employer finds out that this foolish man is presenting himself as the proprietor of the firm, at once he'll fire the man. Because that man is cheating. He's *not* the proprietor. Similarly, anyone who says, "I am God"—he should not teach.

Of course, one may think himself capable of acquiring knowledge of God. That is another thing. "I am God" has to do with the *quality* of God. Because I am part and parcel of God, I am *qualitatively* the same as God.

For example, even a molecular particle of gold is also gold. It is nothing but gold. Similarly, although we are very minute fragments of the Supreme, our quality is

the same as His. So if I study myself, then I can study God, also, because I can understand the quality of God. But I may not understand the *quantity*.

Suppose you receive some good grains of rice. At first you are not concerned with the quantity of rice in stock, but from the sample you can understand the quality of the rice, and you can purchase. Then you make your transaction: "How many pounds have you got in your stock that I can take?" So quantity is *another* thing.

**An authorized
incarnation
will never say,
"I am God."
Rather, "I am a
servant of God."
That is his
credential for
representing God.**

But from the quality you can make your selection of what sort of rice you shall purchase. In the same way, you are qualitatively one with God—but quantitatively you are different. God is great, and you are small.

Therefore you cannot claim, "I am God." Because if you advertise yourself as God, then people may ask of you, "If you are God, then show me your all-powerfulness," and that you cannot show. So you cannot claim, "I am God." As far as Kṛṣṇa is concerned, He proved that He is God. How? In the *Bhagavad-gītā*. In the Eleventh Chapter Arjuna requested, "O Kṛṣṇa, will You kindly show me Your universal form?" So Kṛṣṇa showed him.

This was Arjuna's lasting message to the world: "In the future so many fools will represent themselves as God. So don't be fooled by them. Just ask them, 'Show me your universal form.' If they can do that, then accept them as God. But don't very cheaply accept any fool as God."

This is the highest imperfection: someone is under the stringent laws of material nature—if he simply gets a toothache he becomes overwhelmed—yet he advertises himself as God. This sort of thing can be accepted only by people of a similarly foolish nature. God is supreme. Nobody

else can be God, and nobody else can be equal with God.

In the Vedic literature, God is called *asamordhva*. *Asama* means, "Nobody is equal to Him." And *ūrdhva* means, "Nobody is higher than Him." Nobody can be equal to God, and nobody can be higher than God. Everyone is lower than God, however great one may be. There is a nice verse in this connection: *śiva-viriñci-nutam*. *Śiva* means Lord Śiva. And *viriñci* means Lord Brahmā. They are considered to be the topmost demigods in this material world. But they also offer their respectful obeisances to Viṣṇu, or God. So nobody can be equal to God. Therefore, instead of trying to become God, or instead of trying to understand God personally by our tiny knowledge and imperfect senses, we would do better to become submissive. *Jñāne prayāsam udapāsyā*: "Just give up this foolish habit of thinking, 'I can know God by speculation.' Just become submissive, and try to hear from bona fide authorities."

Who is the authority? Kṛṣṇa—God—or His representative, like Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is a representative of God. So he's an authority. And similarly with any other authorized incarnation. That incarnation will never say, "I am God." Rather, "I am a servant of God." That is his credential for representing God. He'll never say, "I am God." He'll say, "I am a servant of God" or "I am a son of God" or "I am a devotee of God." He's a real representative.

So we have to hear from him submissively, *sthāne sthitāḥ*. *Sthāne sthitāḥ* means "keeping oneself in one's position." For instance, you are hearing *Bhagavad-gītā*. Some of you are medical men. Some of you are engineers. Some of you are businessmen. Some of you are clerks. That doesn't matter. You can remain in your occupational position. You remain an American. You remain a Christian. It doesn't matter. But there is no harm in hearing *Bhagavad-gītā*. There is no harm. You'll get knowledge—you'll get knowledge. You'll become a better Christian. You'll become a better American. You see? We are not trying to convert Americans into Indians, or Indians into Americans, or Christians into Hindus. That is not our mission. We are just teaching the science of Kṛṣṇa, the science of God, Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

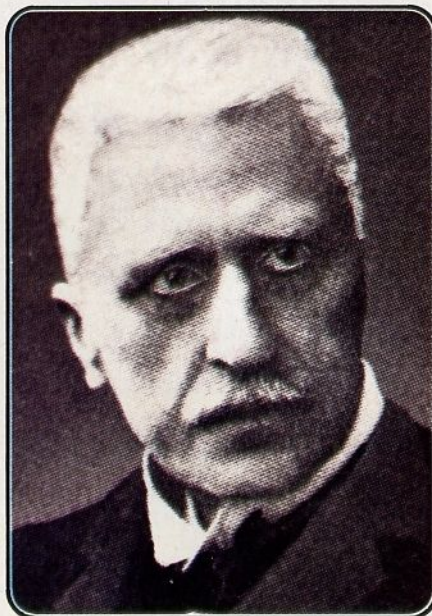
So everyone can learn this science. For example, when you go to college, there is no question of whether a man is American or Indian or African. Everyone in the school or college or university is allowed to receive scientific knowledge. So this is Kṛṣṇa consciousness, the science of God. Everyone can take part. *Sthāne sthitāḥ*—there is no need of change. *Śruti-gaiām tanu-vān-manobhir*: just try to assimilate the knowledge with your body, with your

(continued on page 30)

CAN RELIGIONS COMPETE?

“A German theologian allowed *bhakti* to speak to him, to address him directly, even to challenge him—but only up to a point.”

by GARUḌA DĀSA



Theologian Rudolf Otto (1869-1937), author of *The Idea of the Holy*.

In this century, more than ever, Christian thinkers have been concerned with understanding other religions of the world. This concern arises from what, for Christians, is an important question: Should we accept that other legitimate religions exist, or should we deny the existence of other true religions and hold that God has only one revelation, namely the Christian one?

Some Christian theologians have taken a liberal stance by saying that Christianity is just one among many religions of the world and that the others should be considered just as valid. Others have taken an exclusivistic stance by saying that although there are certainly many religions, there is only one true faith—Christianity.

Still other Christian theologians, however, have been somewhat willing to look closely for genuine value in other religions of the world. One such theologian, one of the most renowned religious thinkers of this century, was a German scholar named Rudolf Otto, who is known particularly for his book entitled *The Idea of the Holy*. As a Christian theologian, Otto was not content simply to compare world religions. Rather, he was concerned with the significance of these religions for Christianity. Even more than this, he was sensitive to a pluralism that contained a religion that was to confront him in his own faith. Indeed, he was concerned with that particular religion which he felt to be the “competitor” to Christianity.

What exactly did Otto mean by a reli-

gious competitor, and what might that competitor be for Christianity? Such a competitor, Otto explained, would make a claim to be equal or even superior to Christianity, and would have a well-founded basis on which to make such a claim. According to Otto, a religious competitor is “whatever may seek a place in our hearts or control over our lives that is not our faith but in rivalry with it.”

Out of all the world’s religious traditions, the one Otto considered the competitor to Christianity was what he referred to as “India’s religion of grace,” or “bhakti-religion.” He discussed this competitor in his book *India’s Religion of Grace and Christianity Compared and Contrasted*. There he wrote:

In this Indian bhakti-religion there is presented, without doubt, a real, saving

God, believed, received, and—can we doubt it?—experienced. And this is just why this religion appears to me to have been, and to be to-day, the most astonishing “competitor,” to be taken most seriously.

Further:

Here we are dealing with a *genuine religion* and *religion of experience*. Religion is here no mere fringe sentiment furnishing a border to the rest of our life, but is conceived as the true meaning of life itself.

Otto dedicated a good part of this book to demonstrating and appreciating numerous similarities between *bhakti* and Christianity. Later in his work, however, Otto mentioned that the two religions demonstrate a difference of “spirit”:

One *feels* that there in the Gītā the spirit of India breathes, here [in the Bible] the different and, let us say at once, the incomparably more piercing and vigorous spirit of Palestine.

Of course, nowhere in his work did Otto demonstrate that he *knew* the “spirit” of *bhakti*, nor did he ever express just how that “spirit of India” breathes through the *Gītā*. For this reason, his statement is hard to accept as being scholarly rather than emotional. How did Otto determine that a “piercing and vigorous” spirit is somehow better than some other kind? For that matter, did he actually show *bhakti* to be less piercing and vigorous? Finally, how could Otto evaluate *bhakti* and compare

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it to Christianity when he himself admitted, "Our [Christian] theology lacks categories for the evaluation and comparison of other religious types with our own"?

Yet although Otto never fully understood *bhakti*, and although the accuracy of the way he represented *bhakti* is highly questionable, he still wanted to make *bhakti* compete with Christianity in terms of the religious components peculiar to Christianity itself:

If [religions] are to be regarded as genuine competitors, . . . they must be considered with regard to that which Christianity has to offer as its deepest and most characteristic element, as its peculiar gift, the last and highest good which it has to give humanity.

To compare two religions by approaching and comparing the "peculiar gift" and the "last and highest good" of *both* would be sound scholarship, but Otto did not do this. Rather, he considered how a religion, as a whole, measures up to narrow expectations drawn from Christianity. Thus he complained, "India has no 'expiator' [referring specifically to Jesus], no Golgotha [the hill upon which Jesus was crucified], and no Cross." This says merely that *bhakti* is not Christianity; it in no ways shows *bhakti* to be inferior.

Because Otto's model for comparison was one of competition, and because in every competition there must be a winner and a loser, Otto was obliged to do whatever he could to have Christianity beat its *bhakti* finalist. Christianity would then reign supreme not only over *bhakti*, its most worthy competitor, but over all other religions of the world.

Unlike Christianity, however, *bhakti* theology *does* have many principles by which to evaluate and compare religions. An important verse from the *Bhagavad-gītā* (4.11) explains the diversity and unity among religions:

*ye yathā māṁ prapadyante
tāṁs tathāiva bhajāmy aham
mama vartmānuvartante
manuṣyāḥ pārtha sarvaśaḥ*

This verse states that God reciprocates differently according to the different ways we surrender to Him, and that the manifold religions simply express different degrees and ways of surrendering to God. These modes of surrender, in turn, determine the diversity of relationships with Him. This diversity, however, does not negate the unity of religion, which rests solely on our recognizing God as supreme and ourselves as His eternal servants.

Since Otto recognized the "full deity" of *bhakti*, he could not argue that the supreme God of *bhakti* is somehow not the

same God as in Christianity, nor could he argue that the same supreme God is more supreme in Christianity. Rather, Otto had to judge *bhakti* in terms of the forms that Christianity's particular relationship with God takes, as though this relationship were something that could have a rival. What Otto was unaware of is this: Because the diversity in religions stems from the variety of relationships one can have with the one supreme Deity, there can be no competi-

What is ultimately essential to all religions: man's devotion to and love for God, and God's reciprocation in the form of His grace and love for man.

tion between religions that leaves only one religion as true. So Otto's erroneous presupposition—that religions can compete—led him ultimately into some rather peculiar theological predicaments.

Unlike his more exclusivistic contemporaries, Otto was willing to take a close look at other religions to determine their genuine religious value. He was correct in understanding *bhakti* to be a "genuine religion," with a "real, saving God" who is truly "believed, received, and experienced." He was also correct in detecting a difference of spirit between *bhakti* and Christianity, although he was unable to attribute this difference to the uniqueness of the relationship with God found in each religion. That Otto considered *bhakti* the greatest religious "competitor" to Christianity attests that he allowed *bhakti* to speak to him, to address him directly, even to challenge him—but only up to a point.


Here it is important to note that the idea of a competition allowed Otto to appear to accept the existence of a genuine religion other than Christianity; exclusivism does not even begin to admit a competitor. But the very notion of a

competition, which requires a winner and a loser, allowed Otto in the end to act exclusivistically—to conduct the competition so that Christianity won.

For the comparative study of religion to genuinely accept the existence of several true religions, it must avoid setting up a competition among them. Rather, the real purpose of comparative religion must be to further our understanding of the simultaneous unity and diversity of religions: the oneness of God and the diversity of possible relationships with Him.

Otto was unaware that *bhakti* is not just a religion, but rather the very embodiment of the highest principles to which all religions ultimately point. Although historically *bhakti* seems to have arisen from within the "Hindu" complex of religions, it is obvious from a theological perspective that it represents something more than its mere historicity. The experience of *bhakti* presents a fullness of meaning far beyond that of a particular tradition or sectarian religion (which is how Otto treated *bhakti*). Rather, *bhakti* embodies the underlying meaning of religion itself. What then, does the term *bhakti* mean?

A look at the etymology of the word *bhakti* is revealing. Morphologically, the word *bhakti* is derived from the Sanskrit verb root *bhaj*. In a general sense, this verb means "to worship," "to love," or "to serve," and these words define *bhakti* in a basic way. But the most literal meaning of the verb *bhajis* "to share," which indicates what is ultimately essential to all religions: man's devotion to and love for God, and God's reciprocation in the form of His grace and love for man. This idea is expressed in many places in *bhakti* scriptures. In the *Gītā*, for example, we find this: "To those who are constantly devoted to God and worship Him with love, He gives, by His grace, the understanding by which they can come to Him." (Bg. 10.10)

Indeed, *bhakti* embodies the very science of the relationship between man and God. But Otto did not recognize the true nature of *bhakti*, and thus he failed to recognize that the fundamental principle of *bhakti* is also basic to Christianity. Although not emphasized as much as in such devotional scriptures as *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, it can be found in the saying of Jesus, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment." If Jesus Christ himself recognized this *bhakti* principle as the first requirement, "the great commandment," of all religion, then we may justifiably ask, What is the meaning of Christianity's expiator, its Golgotha, and its Cross if one overlooks this fundamental *bhakti* principle? 

BOISE MOTHER FOLLOWS SON

KRISHNA STORY WITH TWIST

by JUDY STEELE

Reprinted from *The Idaho Statesman*

Their story started like so many others. After months of reading and study, Joanna Redfield's son James decided two years ago to join the Hare Krishna movement. At nineteen, he left his parents and three younger brothers, traveled to Portland from the East Coast, moved into a temple, and took the name Jagannatha Puri dasa.

Mrs. Redfield and her husband James didn't understand their son's decision, but they respected it, she said.

"We respected it because he's an intelligent person. We didn't talk against it."

But something happened that closed the generation gap.

Mrs. Redfield and her family moved to Boise. She began to receive magazines about the movement from her son. Jagannatha Puri came home to visit and brought friends from the temple with him. Mrs. Redfield went to Portland to see the temple for herself.

Last winter, she decided to become a Hare Krishna follower.

"The decision ended a process of fifteen years of intense searching," Mrs. Redfield said.

"I was brought up a strict Catholic. I went to church every Sunday, went to catechism and summer programs. As a young woman my only understanding of God was great fear. I was told I had to do things, but nobody ever explained why. I was going to church not out of love but out of fear. Even when I went away from the church, I suffered from fear."

Mrs. Redfield tried other Christian denominations, but "didn't get attached"



Mrs. Redfield sits in her living room in Boise with her son Jagannātha Purī dāsa (at left) and his friend Jyotindra dāsa.

to any of them. "Somehow, conventional religion just didn't work for me."

She also went through a period of studying psychology and philosophy.

At one point, she decided the doctrine of the liberated woman was the answer for her. She found a full-time job and began working and taking care of her husband and two children still left at home. "At the end of four months, all I wanted to do was sleep," she said.

Now, as a believer in the philosophy of Krishna consciousness, Mrs. Redfield follows the principles that direct life in the temples. She eats no meat, eggs, or fish. She doesn't smoke or drink alcohol or caffeine beverages. She doesn't gamble. And she adheres to a regulated sex life. In her spare time she reads books from the movement, chants, and listens to devotional music and tapes of the teachings.

But being a member of the movement is not that easy in Boise, she said. There are no temples. She has no one she can talk to about her religion, unless her son and friends from Portland are in town. Her husband respects her beliefs, but is not a Hare Krishna follower.

"I fix vegetarian meals, even for my husband. I buy no beef," she said. "He respects our son's decision and knows I believe, but he hasn't accepted it wholeheartedly."

Mrs. Redfield wants to pass on the principles of Krishna consciousness to her two sons, ages fourteen and four, still living at home.

"A lot of parents are so fearful. They think their children are renouncing their whole life when they join the movement," she said. "They think it's so great that the children are going to discos, and probably having

illicit sex and smoking pot. They think that's all right. But I was really glad for my son when he found Hare Krishna."

But it's not easy to instill Krishna teachings in her fourteen-year-old when he is faced with the material world, she said. "I'm trying hard to instill the right values in my fourteen-year-old. But he's really caught up in the material world. He always has things he wants, things to buy. He understands what I'm talking about, though. He's said to me, 'I wait so long for one thing, and then after I get it, I don't care about it.' But there are problems that come up trying to instill this philosophy in someone already that old."

But for herself, release from the material world has been a blessing, Mrs. Redfield said. "Everybody wants to find happiness and contentment. They go to the cinema, they go bowling, but they're still frustrated. They're happy for a while but always looking for more. I got thoroughly disgusted with the material world. I've come to the point where I don't have the desire to run around searching for things. When I shop now, it's for food—just the basics. I don't want anything else."



The Biography of a Pure Devotee

CHARTERING A NEW SOCIETY

1966: The Lower East Side, New York.
The building was humble, the membership small,
yet Śrīla Prabhupāda's vision encompassed the whole world.

by ŚRĪLA SATSVARŪPA DĀSA GOSWAMI

Amid the cacophony of a storefront at 26 Second Avenue in New York, Śrīla Prabhupāda had begun teaching the science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness to a motley congregation drawn from the local community. Then, in his characteristically far-seeing way, he founded the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

We shall call our society 'ISKCON.'" Prabhupāda laughed playfully when he first coined the acronym.

He had initiated the legal work of incorporation that spring, while still living on the Bowery. But even before its legal beginning, Prabhupāda had been talking about his "International Society for Krishna Consciousness," and so it had appeared in letters to India and in *The Village Voice*. A friend had suggested a title that would sound more familiar to Westerners, "International Society for God Consciousness," but Prabhupāda had insisted: "Krishna Consciousness." "God" was a vague term, whereas "Krishna" was exact and scientific; "God consciousness" was spiritually weaker, less personal. And

if Westerners didn't know that Kṛṣṇa was God, then the International Society for Krishna Consciousness would tell them, by spreading His glories "in every town and village."

"Kṛṣṇa consciousness" was Prabhupāda's own rendering of a phrase from Śrīla Rūpa Goswami's *Padyāvālī*, written in the sixteenth century. *Kṛṣṇa-bhakti-rasa-bhāvitā*: "to be absorbed in the mellow taste of executing devotional service to Kṛṣṇa."

But to register ISKCON legally as a non-profit, tax-exempt religion required money and a lawyer. Carl Yeargens had already had some experience in forming a religious organization, and when he had met Prabhupāda on the Bowery he had agreed to help. He had contacted his lawyer, a young Jewish man named Stephen Goldsmith.

Stephen Goldsmith had a wife and two children and an office on Park Avenue, yet he maintained an interest in spirituality. When Carl told him about Prabhupāda's plans, he was immediately fascinated by the idea of setting up a religious corporation for an Indian *swami*. He visited Prabhupāda at 26 Second Avenue, and they discussed incorporation, tax exemption, Prabhupāda's immigration status—

and Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Mr. Goldsmith visited Prabhupāda several times. Once he brought his children, who liked the "soup" Prabhupāda cooked. He began attending the evening lectures, where he was often the only nonhippie member of the congregation. One evening, having completed all the legal groundwork and being ready to complete the procedures for incorporation, Mr. Goldsmith came to Prabhupāda's lecture and *kīrtana* to get signatures from the trustees for the new society.

July 11. Prabhupāda is lecturing.

Mr. Goldsmith, wearing slacks and a shirt and tie, sits on the floor near the door, listening earnestly to the lecture, despite the distracting noises from the neighborhood.

Prabhupāda has been explaining how scholars mislead innocent people with nondevotional interpretations of the *Bhagavad-gītā*. Now, in recognition of the attorney's respectable presence, and as if to catch up Mr. Goldsmith's attention better, Prabhupāda introduces him into the subject of the talk.

I will give you a practical example of how things are misinterpreted. Just like our president, Mr. Goldsmith, he knows

From *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta*, by Sat-svarūpa dāsa Goswami. © 1980 by the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust.

that expert lawyers, by interpretation, can do so many things. When I was in Calcutta, there was a rent tax passed by the government, and some expert lawyer changed the whole thing by his interpretation. The government had to reenact a whole law, because their purpose was foiled by the interpretation of this lawyer. So we are not out for foiling the purpose of Kṛṣṇa, for which the Bhagavad-gītā was spoken. But unauthorized persons are trying to foil the purpose of Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, that is unauthorized.

All right, Mr. Goldsmith, you can ask anything.

Mr. Goldsmith stands, and to the surprise of the people gathered, he makes a short announcement asking for signers on an incorporation document for the Swami's new religious movement.

Prabhupāda: They are present here. You can take the addresses now.

Mr. Goldsmith: I can take them now, yes.

Prabhupāda: Yes, you can. Bill, you can give your address. And Raphael, you can give yours. And Don. . . . Raymond. . . . Mr. Greene.

As the meeting breaks up, those called to sign as trustees come forward, standing around in the little storefront, waiting to leaf passively through the pages the lawyer has produced from his thin attaché, and to sign as he directs. Yet not a soul among them is committed to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The lawyer meets his quota of sympathizers who feel enough reverence toward the Swami to want to help him.

The first trustees, who will hold office for a year, "until the first annual meeting of the corporation," are Michael Grant (who puts down his name and address without reading the document), Mike's girlfriend Jan, and James Greene. No one seriously intends to undertake any formal duties as trustee of the religious society, but they are happy to help the Swami by signing his fledgling society into legal existence.

According to law, a second group of trustees will assume office for the second year. They are Paul Gardiner, Roy, and Don. The trustees for the third year of office are Carl Yeargens, Bill Epstein, and Raphael.

No one knows exactly what the half-dozen legal-sized typed pages mean, except that "Swamiji is forming a society."

Why?

For tax exemption, in case someone gives a big donation, and for other benefits an official religious society might receive.

But these purposes hardly seem urgent or even relevant to the present situation in the little storefront. Who's going to make donations? Except maybe for Mr. Gold-

smith, who has any money?

But Prabhupāda is planning for the future, and he's planning for much more than just tax exemptions. He is trying to serve his spiritual predecessors and fulfill the scriptural prediction of a spiritual movement that is to flourish for ten thousand years in the midst of the Age of Kali. Within the vast Kali Age (a period that is to last 432,000 years), the 1960s are an insignificant moment.

**He seemed to
know that he
would have
temples filled up
with devotees.
"They are
existing,
they are there,
but the time
is separating
us from them."**

The Vedas describe that the time of the universe revolves through a cycle of four "seasons," or *yugas*, and Kali-yuga is the worst of times, in which all spiritual qualities of men diminish, until humanity is finally reduced to a bestial civilization devoid of human decency. Yet for ten thousand years after the advent of Lord Caitanya there is the possibility of a Golden Age of spiritual life, an eddy that runs against the current of Kali-yuga. With a vision that soars off to the end of the millennium and far beyond, and yet with his two feet planted solidly on Second Avenue, Śrīla Prabhupāda has begun an International Society for Krishna Consciousness. He has many practical responsibilities: he has to pay the rent, and he has to incorporate his society and pave the way for a thriving worldwide congregation of devotees. Somehow, he doesn't see his extremely reduced present situation as a deterrent from the greater scope of his divine mission. He knows that everything depends on Kṛṣṇa, so whether he succeeds or fails is all up to the Supreme. He has only to try.

The purposes stated within ISKCON's articles of incorporation reveal Prabhu-

pāda's thinking. They are seven points, similar to those given in the Prospectus for the League of Devotees he had formed in Jhansi, India, in 1953. That attempt had been unsuccessful, yet his purposes remained unchanged.

Seven Purposes of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness:

1. To systematically propagate spiritual knowledge to society at large and to educate all peoples in the techniques of spiritual life in order to check the imbalance of values in life and to achieve real unity and peace in the world.

2. To propagate a consciousness of Kṛṣṇa, as it is revealed in the *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

3. To bring the members of the Society together with each other and nearer to Kṛṣṇa, the prime entity, and thus to develop the idea within the members and humanity at large that each soul is part and parcel of the quality of Godhead (Kṛṣṇa).

4. To teach and encourage the *sañkīrtana* movement, congregational chanting of the holy name of God as revealed in the teachings of Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

5. To erect for the members and for society at large a holy place of transcendental pastimes dedicated to the Personality of Kṛṣṇa.

6. To bring the members closer together for the purpose of teaching a simpler and more natural way of life.

7. With a view towards achieving the aforementioned purposes, to publish and distribute periodicals, magazines, books and other writings.

Regardless of how ISKCON's charter members regarded the Society's purposes, Śrīla Prabhupāda saw them as imminent realities. As Mr. Ruben, the subway conductor who had met Prabhupāda on a Manhattan park bench in 1965, remembers, "He seemed to know that he would have temples filled up with devotees. 'There are temples and books,' he said. 'They are existing, they are there, but the time is separating us from them.'"

The first purpose mentioned in the charter was propagation. "Preaching" was the word Prabhupāda most often used. For him, preaching had a much broader significance than mere sermonizing. Preaching meant glorious, selfless adventures on behalf of the Supreme Lord. Lord Caitanya had preached by walking all over southern India and inducing thousands of people to chant and dance with Him in ecstasy. Lord Kṛṣṇa had preached the *Bhagavad-gītā* while standing with Arjuna in his chariot on the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra. Lord Buddha had preached, Lord Jesus had preached, and all other pure devotees preached.

ISKCON's preaching would achieve what the League of Nations and the United Nations had failed to achieve—"real unity and peace in the world." ISKCON workers would bring peace to a world deeply afflicted by materialism and strife. They would "systematically propagate spiritual knowledge," knowledge of the nonsecular science of God. It was not that a new religion was being born in July of 1966; rather, the eternal preaching of Godhead, known as *saṅkīrtana*, was being transported from East to West. And this new consciousness in the West would come about through the teachings of *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

The Society's members would come together, and by hearing the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness and chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* in mutual association they would realize that each was a spirit soul, eternally related to Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. They would then preach these realizations to "humanity at large," especially through *saṅkīrtana*, the chanting of the holy name of God.

ISKCON would also erect "a holy place of transcendental pastimes dedicated to the Personality of Kṛṣṇa." Was this something beyond the storefront? Yes, certainly. He never thought small: "He

seemed to know that he would have temples filled up with devotees."

He wanted ISKCON to demonstrate "a simple, more natural way of life." Such a life (Prabhupāda thought of the villages of India, where people lived just as Kṛṣṇa had lived) was most conducive to developing Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

And all six of these purposes would be achieved by the seventh: ISKCON would publish and distribute literature. This was the special instruction given to Śrīla Prabhupāda by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, who had specifically told him one day in 1935 at Rādhā-kuṇḍa in Vṛndāvana, "If you ever get any money, publish books."

Certainly none of the signers saw any immediate shape to Prabhupāda's dream, yet these seven purposes were not simply theistic rhetoric invented to convince a few New York State government officials. He literally meant to enact every item in the charter.

Of course, he was now working in extremely limited circumstances. The sole headquarters for the International Society for Krishna Consciousness was "the principal place of worship, located at 26 Second Avenue in the city, county, and state of New York." Yet Prabhupāda insisted that he was not living at 26 Second

Avenue, New York City. His vision was different. His Guru Mahārāja had gone out from the traditional holy places of spiritual meditation to preach in cities like Calcutta, Bombay, and New Delhi. And yet Prabhupāda would say that his spiritual master had not really been living in any of those cities, but was always in Vaikuṇṭha, the spiritual world, because of his absorption in devotional service.

Similarly, the place of worship, 26 Second Avenue, was not a New York storefront, a former curiosity shop. It was a small place, but it had now been spiritualized. The storefront and the apartment were now a transcendental haven. "Society at large" could come here, the whole world could take shelter here, regardless of race or religion. Plain, small, and impoverished as it was, Prabhupāda regarded the storefront as "a holy place of transcendental pastimes, dedicated to the Personality of Kṛṣṇa." It was a world headquarters, a publishing house, a sacred place of pilgrimage, and a center from which an army of devotees could issue forth and chant the holy names of God in all the streets in the world. The entire universe could receive Kṛṣṇa consciousness from the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, which was beginning here. 🙏

(To be continued)

Śrīla Prabhupāda's Sister Passes Away



A few minutes past 6:00 p.m. on March 13, at the ISKCON center in Śrīdhām Mayapur, West Bengal, Śrīla Prabhupāda's younger sister Śrīmatī Bhavatārīṇī-devī dāsī passed away. Known to all ISKCON devotees as "Pisimā" (Bengali for "the father's

sister"), she was widely respected and loved for her simple and pure devotion to Lord Kṛṣṇa and His devotees. A few hours before her passing she ceased all activities other than quietly chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*. All the devotees at the center gathered around her bedside and chanted Hare Kṛṣṇa as her final moments came.

Pisimā was born in Calcutta in 1899, three years after Śrīla Prabhupāda, and they were intimate friends as children. They sometimes flew kites together, and when a kite did not fly properly they prayed to Kṛṣṇa so that it would. After Śrīla Prabhupāda received small Rādhā-Govinda Deities from his father, Pisimā became his constant companion in worshipping Them. Later Śrīla Prabhupāda gave her the Deities, and after he passed away she placed Them in the care of the devotees at ISKCON's Mayapur center.

Pisimā was an initiated disciple of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, Śrīla Prabhupāda's spiritual master. Śrīla Prabhupāda often said she was a pure devotee of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, and

she showed her unflinching faith in the Lord on many occasions. Once, during an annual festival in Mayapur in the 1940s, her youngest son Madan came down with a dangerous disease called Asiatic cholera. Everyone advised Pisimā to take him to the doctor, but she depended on Lord Kṛṣṇa's healing power instead. She simply gave him some *caraṇāmṛta*, water that had washed the lotus feet of the Lord, and that brought life back to Madan's almost dead body.

In 1948 when riots flared up between the Hindus and the Muslims in Calcutta, no one dared go out—except Pisimā. Every day she walked alone through the deserted streets to the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa temple.

Without a doubt, Pisimā was a pure devotee, and now she has gone back to the spiritual world to participate in Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's eternal pastimes. We all pray to her for her blessings, so that we can serve the Lord and His associates with the same zeal she displayed all her life.

—Bhakti-cāru Swami

FROM LORD CAITANYA'S TEACHINGS

TASTING THE NECTAR OF LORD KṚṢṆA'S HOLY NAMES

Lord Caitanya would meet in the evening with His followers
for hours of transcendental ecstasy.

by JAYĀDVAITA SWAMI

The illustration on this page depicts Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and His associates chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* in the home of the great devotee Śrīvāsa Thākura.

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who appeared in West Bengal, India, five hundred years ago, was an *avatāra*, or incarnation, of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa. Of course, in recent years self-proclaimed Gods have become a cheap commodity. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, in contrast, never presented Himself as God but always as an insignificant living entity, a humble servant of God. Nonetheless, the scholarly followers of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu understood His true identity and proved it conclusively from revealed scriptures.

Among the many scriptural passages that refer to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, one verse from the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is particularly important:

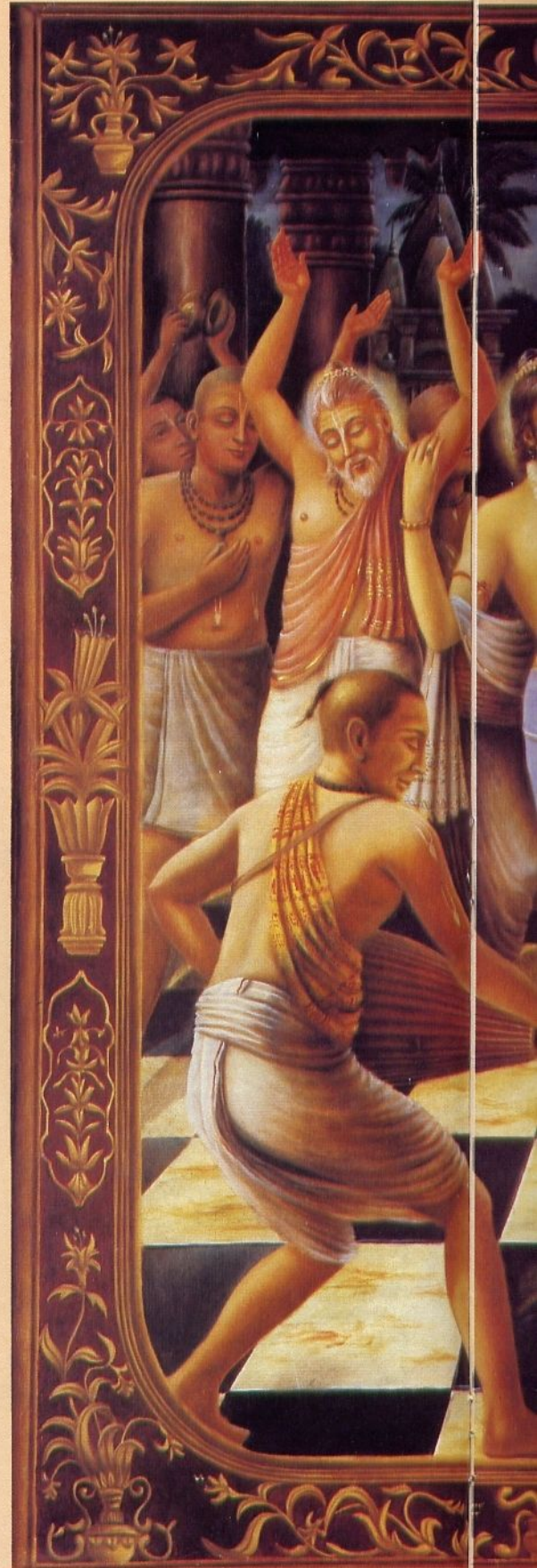
*kṛṣṇa-varṇaṁ tviṣākṛṣṇaṁ
sāṅgopāṅgāstra-pārṣadam
yajñaiḥ saṅkīrtana-prāyair
yajanti hi sumedhasaḥ*

This verse indicates that when Lord Kṛṣṇa appears in the present age, which is known as Kali-yuga, or the Age of Quarrel and Hypocrisy, His complexion is golden, He is surrounded by various associates, and His mission is to teach people how to make their lives spiritually sublime through the *saṅkīrtana-yajña*, or chanting of the holy names Hare Kṛṣṇa,

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

To fulfill this mission, Lord Kṛṣṇa, in the form of Lord Caitanya, assumes the role of His own devotee. When Lord Kṛṣṇa appeared on earth five thousand years ago, He revealed His opulences as *bhagavān*, the Supreme Godhead, and spoke the *Bhagavad-gītā*, in which He concluded that the highest duty in human life is to give up all lower occupations and surrender exclusively to Him in pure devotional service. The Lord also gave His firm assurance that He will always protect from the reactions of all *karma* those who surrender to Him, so that they will surely obtain liberation from material existence. What Lord Kṛṣṇa did not do, however, is demonstrate *how* to surrender to Him. How should one surrender to Kṛṣṇa? How should one become His devotee? This is what Lord Kṛṣṇa comes to show when He appears as Lord Caitanya.

The painting depicts Lord Caitanya in His youth, around the age of twenty-one, when He was just beginning to make known His teachings. At this time, Lord Caitanya was a married man, and He had something of a reputation as a skillful teacher of grammar and logic. But He had recently gone on a pilgrimage to Gayā, where He had met Īśvara Purī, a great spiritual master in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Having received initiation in Kṛṣṇa consciousness from Īśvara Purī, Lord Caitanya returned home to Bengal full of



PAINTING BY PĀṆDU DĀSA



ecstatic feelings of devotional love for Kṛṣṇa. Following the instructions of His spiritual master, He had begun chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*, and now He began chanting every evening in the company of other devotees.

This congregational chanting, Lord Caitanya taught, is the most effective means in the present age to purify our hearts and awaken our dormant love for God. He especially pointed out a verse in the Vedic literature that says,

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

The meaning of this verse is that in the present age, Kali-yuga, the best means of God realization is the chanting of the holy name of God. No other means of self-realization or God realization will be successful in this age. The verse repeats the words *harer nāma* ("the holy name of the Lord") three times, emphasizing with great force the importance of the chanting of the Lord's holy name. It also repeats three times the words *nāsty eva* to emphasize with equal force that no other way of spiritual realization will bring about the desired result. Other forms of *yoga* and spiritual and philosophical discipline are effective in other ages, but in the present age, which began 5,000 years ago and continues for more than 400,000 more, only the chanting of the holy name of God can bring about the desired success. The best way to surrender to Kṛṣṇa and develop one's devotion and love for Kṛṣṇa is to chant the holy names of Kṛṣṇa, especially as found in the *mahā-mantra*—Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu led the congregational chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* in Śrīvāsa Ṭhākura's house every night for a full year. This pastime of the Lord's is instructive in many ways. First, the Lord showed the importance of *congregational* chanting, chanting in the company of devotees. By chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa one comes to the transcendental platform, because Kṛṣṇa's name is completely spiritual. Because of Kṛṣṇa's absolute spiritual nature, there is no difference between the name *Kṛṣṇa* and Kṛṣṇa Himself. So by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa one associates directly with Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Truth. One may chant anywhere, under any circumstances, and the chanting will always be effective. Nonetheless, the chanting becomes even

more beneficial and more ecstatic when performed in the association of other devotees. The loud congregational vibration of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* acts with special effectiveness to create a purely spiritual atmosphere of Kṛṣṇa consciousness that is naturally pleasing to the mind and heart. In such an atmosphere, one gradually develops a spiritual appreciation for Lord Kṛṣṇa that matures into strong attraction to Him and ultimately into pure love and devotion for Kṛṣṇa, the supreme transcendental Lord.

While chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, Lord Caitanya and the other devotees began dancing in ecstasy. This is a natural effect of the chanting. As the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa begins to awaken one's dormant Kṛṣṇa consciousness, one feels spiritual ecstasy and feels like dancing. By dancing along with the chanting, one gives in to a natural spiritual feeling coming from the soul itself. So by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa and dancing in ecstasy one leaves behind the material hang-ups of one's temporary physical identity and dances in the pleasure of eternal Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Lord Caitanya taught that one should simply chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and dance in ecstasy. Lord Caitanya was especially beautiful in His physical features, and by seeing the Lord's dancing golden form and moonlike face the devotees at the house of Śrīvāsa Ṭhākura would all

feel as though immersed in an ocean of transcendental bliss.

By chanting and dancing every evening, Lord Caitanya and His associates showed us the best way to use our evenings for spiritual advancement. The human form of life is especially meant for spiritual progress, because in human life one has the requisite intelligence with which to try to understand one's self and one's relationship with God. Unfortunately people waste their valuable human life in activities meant for nothing. During the day they work hard to get money or spend whatever money they have, and at night they come home to relax, eat dinner, have sex, and go to sleep. But Lord Caitanya taught that one can use one's evenings for spiritual profit by chanting the holy name of the Lord. Instead of going to the movies, watching television, taking drugs, having sex, reading novels, or sleeping, one can chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and makes one's life sublime.

Another feature of Lord Caitanya's nightly gatherings was *kṛṣṇa-prasāda*, delicious food that had been sanctified by having first been offered to Kṛṣṇa. Lord Caitanya's teachings were not dry, lifeless speculations, nor did He teach a life of harsh, impractical renunciation. Rather, He and His devotees chanted and danced in spiritual bliss, and after chanting and dancing they would take pleasure in discussing Kṛṣṇa conscious topics of spiritual

enlightenment and relish the taste of Kṛṣṇa's mercy in the form of *kṛṣṇa-prasāda*. This was the way of spiritual life that Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, playing the role of a pure devotee, taught by His own example.

It is significant that the Lord performed these pastimes while still a householder—that is, during His married life. Lord Caitanya and the associates shown here were practically all married men. So by their example they taught that to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa one need not leave home and give up the world. One may continue one's life at home and carry on one's family responsibilities—but one should purify one's consciousness by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. The home of Śrīvāsa Ṭhākura is revered even today as a holy place because Lord Caitanya and His devotees chanted there. Similarly, one can transform one's own home from an ordinary place for eating and sleeping into a transcendental place of spiritual culture simply by adding Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

To carry forward the teachings of Lord Caitanya, the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement has temples all over the world where devotees continue to take part in Lord Caitanya's nightly Hare Kṛṣṇa festivals of chanting, dancing, feasting, and philosophy. Lord Caitanya taught that one can most easily and effectively cultivate one's Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the association of Kṛṣṇa's devotees. ❁

International Society for Krishna Consciousness

Founder-Ācārya His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

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ŚRĪMAD-BHĀGAVATAM

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is the "cream of the Vedic literatures" of ancient India. Five thousand years ago the great sage Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa composed this *purāṇa*, or history, to explain the essence of spiritual knowledge. The original Sanskrit text is presented here with transliteration, word meanings, translation, and purports by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

Second Canto: "The Cosmic Manifestation"

CHAPTER FIVE

The Cause of All Causes

The great sage Nārada had praised his father, Lord Brahmā, the creator of the universe in which we reside. Lord Brahmā, he had said, was the self-sufficient supreme creator. Yet Nārada had wondered whether there might be someone still more powerful. Here Lord Brahmā replies.

TEXT 9

ब्रह्मोवाच

सम्यक् कारुणिकस्येदं वत्स ते विचिकित्सितम् ।
यदहं चोदितः सौम्य भगवद्दीर्घदर्शने ॥ ९ ॥

brahmovāca
samyak kārūṇikasyeḍaṁ
vatsa te vicikitsitam
yad ahaṁ coditaḥ saumya
bhagavad-vīrya-darśane

brahmā uvāca—Lord Brahmā said; *samyak*—perfectly; *kārūṇikaśya*—of you, who are very kind; *idam*—this; *vatsa*—my dear boy; *te*—your; *vicikitsitam*—inquisitiveness; *yat*—by which; *aham*—myself; *coditaḥ*—inspired; *saumya*—O gentle one; *bhagavat*—of the Personality of Godhead; *vīrya*—prowess; *darśane*—in the matter of.

TRANSLATION

Lord Brahmā said: My dear boy Nārada, being merciful to all (including me) you have asked all these questions because I have been inspired to see into the prowess of the Almighty Personality of Godhead.

PURPORT

Brahmāji, being so questioned by Nāradaji, congratulated him, for it is usual for the devotees to become very enthusiastic whenever they are questioned concerning the Almighty Personality of Godhead. That is the sign of a pure devotee of the Lord. Such discourses on the transcendental activities of the Lord purify the atmosphere in which such discussions are held, and the devotees thus become enlivened while answering such questions. It is purifying both for the questioners and for one who answers the questions. The pure devotees are not only satisfied by knowing everything about the Lord, but are also eager to broadcast the information to others, for they want to see that the glories of the Lord are known to everyone. Thus the devotee feels satisfied when such an opportunity is offered to him. This is the basic principle of missionary activities.

TEXT 10

नानृतं तव तच्चापि यथा मां प्रब्रवीषि भोः ।
अविज्ञाय परं मत्त एतावच्चं यतो हि मे ॥१०॥

nānṛtaṁ tava tac cāpi
yathā mām prabraviṣi bhoḥ
avijñāya paraṁ matta
etāvat tvaṁ yato hi me

na—not; *anṛtam*—false; *tava*—of yours; *tac*—that; *cā*—also; *api*—as you have stated; *yathā*—in the matter of; *mām*—of myself; *prabraviṣi*—as you describe; *bhoḥ*—O my son; *avijñāya*—without knowing; *param*—the Supreme; *mattaḥ*—beyond myself; *etāvat*—all that you have spoken; *tvaṁ*—yourself; *yataḥ*—for the reason of; *hi*—certainly; *me*—about me.

TRANSLATION

Whatever you have spoken about me is not false because unless and until one is aware of the Personality of Godhead, who is the ultimate truth beyond me, one is sure to be illusioned by observing my powerful activities.

PURPORT

"The frog in the well" logic illustrates that a frog residing in the atmosphere and boundary of a well cannot imagine the length and breadth of the gigantic ocean. Such a frog, when informed of the gigantic length and breadth of the ocean, first of all does not believe that there is such an ocean, and if someone assures him that factually there is such a thing, the frog then begins to measure it by imagination by means of pumping its belly as far as possible, with the result that the tiny abdomen of the frog bursts and the poor frog dies without any experience of the actual ocean. Similarly, the material scientists also want to challenge the inconceivable potency of the Lord by measuring Him with their froglike brains and their scientific achievements, but at the end they simply die unsuccessfully, like the frog.

Sometimes a materially powerful man is accepted as God or the incarnation of God without any knowledge of the factual God. Such a material assessment may be gradually extended, and the attempt may reach to the highest limit of Brahmāji, who is the topmost living being within the universe and has a duration of life unimaginable to the material scientist. As we get information from the most authentic book of knowledge, the *Bhagavad-gītā* (8.17), Brahmāji's one day and night is calculated to be some hundreds of thousands of years on our planet. This long duration of life may not be believed by "the frog in the well," but persons who have a realization of the truths mentioned in the *Bhagavad-gītā* accept the existence of a great personality who creates the variegatedness of the complete universe. It is understood from the revealed scriptures that the Brahmāji of this universe is younger than all the other Brahmās in charge of the many, many universes beyond this, but none of them can be equal to the Personality of Godhead.

Nāradaji is one of the liberated souls, and after his liberation he was known as Nārada; otherwise, before his liberation, he was simply a son of a maidservant. The questions may be asked why Nāradaji was not aware of the Supreme Lord and why he misconceived Brahmāji to be the Supreme Lord, although factually he was not. A liberated soul is never bewildered by such a mistaken idea, so why did Nāradaji ask all those

questions just like an ordinary man with a poor fund of knowledge? There was such bewilderment in Arjuna also, although he is eternally the associate of the Lord. Such bewilderment in Arjuna or in Nārada takes place by the will of the Lord so that other, nonliberated persons may realize the real truth and knowledge of the Lord. The doubt arising in the mind of Nārada about Brahmājī's becoming all-powerful is a lesson for the frogs in the well, that they may not be bewildered in misconceiving the identity of the Personality of Godhead (even by comparison to a personality like Brāhmā, so what to speak of ordinary men who falsely pose themselves as God or an incarnation of God). The Supreme Lord is always the Supreme, and as we have tried to establish many times in these purports, no living being, even up to the standard of Brahmā, can claim to be one with the Lord. One should not be misled when people worship a great man as God after his death as a matter of hero worship. There were many kings like Lord Rāmacandra, the King of Ayodhyā, but none of them are mentioned as God in the revealed scriptures. To be a good king is not necessarily the qualification for being Lord Rāma, but to be a great personality like Kṛṣṇa is the qualification for being the Personality of Godhead. If we scrutinize the characters who took part in the Battle of Kurukṣetra, we may find that Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira was no less a pious king than Lord Rāmacandra, and by character study Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira was a better moralist than Lord Kṛṣṇa. Lord Kṛṣṇa asked Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira to lie, but Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira protested. But that does not mean that Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira could be equal to Lord Rāmacandra or Lord Kṛṣṇa. The great authorities have estimated Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira to be a pious man, but they have accepted Lord Rāma or Kṛṣṇa as the Personality of Godhead. The Lord is therefore a different identity in all circumstances, and no idea of anthropomorphism can be applied to Him. The Lord is always the Lord, and a common living being can never be equal to Him.

TEXT 11

येन खरोचिषा विश्वं रोचितं रोचयाम्यहम् ।
यथाकौंडरिण्या सोमो यथर्क्षग्रहताः ॥११॥

yena *sva-rociṣā* *viśvam*
rocitam *rocayāmy aham*
yathārko 'gnir *yathā somo*
yatharkṣa-graha-tārahāḥ

yena—by whom; *sva-rociṣā*—by His own effulgence; *viśvam*—all the world; *rocitam*—already created potentially; *rocayāmi*—do manifest; *aham*—I; *yathā*—as much; *arkah*—the sun; *agniḥ*—fire; *yathā*—as; *somaḥ*—the moon; *yathā*—as also; *ṛkṣa*—the firmament; *graha*—the influential planets; *tārahāḥ*—the stars.

TRANSLATION

I create after the Lord's creation by His personal effulgence [known as the *brahmajyoti*], just as when the sun manifests its fire, the moon, the firmament, the influential planets and the twinkling stars also manifest their brightness.

PURPORT

Lord Brahmājī said to Nārada that his impression that Brahmā was not the supreme authority in the creation was correct. Sometimes less intelligent men have the foolish impression that Brahmā is the cause of all causes. But Nārada wanted to clear the matter by the statements of Brahmājī, the supreme authority in the universe. As the decision of the supreme court of a state is final, similarly the judgment of Brahmājī, the supreme authority in the universe, is final in the Vedic process of acquiring knowledge. As we have already affirmed in the previous verse, Nāradaḥ was a liberated soul; therefore, he was not one of the less intelligent men who accept a false god or gods in their own ways. He repre-

sented himself as less intelligent and yet intelligently presented a doubt to be cleared by the supreme authority so that the uninformed might take note of it and be rightly informed about the intricacies of the creation and the creator.

In this verse Brahmājī clears up the wrong impression held by the less intelligent and affirms that he creates the universal variegatedness after the potential creation by the glaring effulgence of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Brahmājī has also separately given this statement in the *samhitā* known as the *Brahma-samhitā* (5.40), where he says:

yasya *prabhā prabhavato jagad-aṇḍa-koṭi-*
koṭiṣv aśeṣa-vasudhādi-vibhūti-bhinna-
tad brahma niṣkalam anantam aśeṣa-bhūtaṁ
govindam ādi-puruṣaṁ tam ahaṁ bhajāmi

"I serve the Supreme Personality of Godhead Govinda, the primeval Lord, whose transcendental bodily effulgence, known as the *brahmajyoti*, which is unlimited, unfathomed and all-pervasive, is the cause of the creation of unlimited numbers of planets, etc., with varieties of climates and specific conditions of life."

The same statement is in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (14.27). Lord Kṛṣṇa is the background of the *brahmajyoti* (*brahmaṇo hi pratiṣṭhāham*). In the *Nirukti*, or Vedic dictionary, the import of *pratiṣṭhā* is mentioned as "that which establishes." So the *brahmajyoti* is not independent or self-sufficient. Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa is ultimately the creator of the *brahmajyoti*, mentioned in this verse as *sva-rociṣā*, or the effulgence of the transcendental body of the Lord. This *brahmajyoti* is all-pervading, and all creation is made possible by its potential power; therefore the Vedic hymns declare that everything that exists is being sustained by the *brahmajyoti* (*sarvaṁ khalv idam brahma*). Therefore the potential seed of all creation is the *brahmajyoti*, and the same *brahmajyoti*, unlimited and unfathomed, is established by the Lord. Therefore the Lord (Śrī Kṛṣṇa) is ultimately the supreme cause of all creation (*ahaṁ sarvasya prabhavaḥ*).

One should not expect the Lord to create like a blacksmith with a hammer and other instruments. The Lord creates by His potencies. He has His multifarious potencies (*parāsyā śaktir vividhaiva śrūyate*). Just as the small seed of a banyan fruit has the potency to create a big banyan tree, the Lord disseminates all varieties of seeds by His potential *brahmajyoti* (*sva-rociṣā*), and the seeds are made to develop by the watering process of persons like Brahmā. Brahmā cannot create the seeds, but he can manifest the seed into a tree, just as a gardener helps plants and orchards to grow by the watering process. The example cited here of the sun is very appropriate. In the material world the sun is the cause of all illumination: fire, electricity, the rays of the moon, etc. All luminaries in the sky are creations of the sun, the sun is the creation of the *brahmajyoti*, and the *brahmajyoti* is the effulgence of the Lord. Thus the ultimate cause of creation is the Lord.

TEXT 12

तस्मै नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय धीमहि ।
यन्मायया दुर्जयया मां वदन्ति जगद्गुरुम् ॥१२॥

tasmai *namo bhagavate*
vāsudevāya dhimahi
yan-māyayā durjayayā
mām vadanti jagad-gurum

tasmai—unto Him; *namaḥ*—offer my obeisances; *bhagavate*—unto the Personality of Godhead; *vāsudevāya*—unto Lord Kṛṣṇa; *dhimahi*—do meditate upon Him; *yat*—by whose; *māyayā*—potencies; *durjayayā*—invincible; *mām*—unto me; *vadanti*—they say; *jagat*—the world; *gurum*—the master.

TRANSLATION

I offer my obeisances and meditate upon Lord Kṛṣṇa [Vāsudeva], the Personality of Godhead, whose invincible potency influences them [the less intelligent class of men] to call me the supreme controller.

PURPORT

As will be more clearly explained in the next verse, the illusory potency of the Lord bewilders the less intelligent to accept Brahmāji, or for that matter any other person, as the Supreme Lord. Brahmāji, however, refuses to be called this, and he directly offers his respectful obeisances unto Lord Vāsudeva, or Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Personality of Godhead, as he has already offered the same respects to Him in the *Brahma-saṁhitā* (5.1):

*īśvaraḥ paramaḥ kṛṣṇaḥ
sac-cid-ānanda-vigrahaḥ
anādir ādir govindaḥ
sarva-kāraṇa-kāraṇam*

“The Supreme Lord is the Personality of Godhead Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the primeval Lord in His transcendental body, the ultimate cause of all causes. I worship that primeval Lord Govinda.”

Brahmāji is conscious of his actual position, and he knows how less intelligent persons, bewildered by the illusory energy of the Lord, whimsically accept anyone and everyone as God. A responsible personality like Brahmāji refuses to be addressed as the Supreme Lord by his disciples or subordinates, but foolish persons praised by men of the nature of dogs, hogs, camels and asses feel flattered to be addressed as the Supreme Lord. Why such persons take pleasure in being addressed as God, or why such persons are addressed as God by foolish admirers, is explained in the following verse.

TEXT 13

विलज्जमानया यस्य स्यात्तुमीक्षायथेऽमुया ।
विमोहिता विकथ्यन्ते ममाहमिति दुर्धियः ॥१३॥

*vilajjamānayā yasya
sthātum iṅṣā-pathe 'muyā
vimohitā vikathante
mamāham iti durdhiyaḥ*

vilajjamānayā—by one who is ashamed; *yasya*—whose; *sthātum*—to stay; *iṅṣā-pathe*—in front; *amuyā*—by the bewildering energy; *vimohitāḥ*—those who are bewildered; *vikathante*—talk nonsense; *mama*—it is mine; *aham*—I am everything; *iti*—thus vituperating; *durdhiyaḥ*—thus ill conceived.

TRANSLATION

The illusory energy of the Lord cannot take precedence, being ashamed of her position, but those who are bewildered by her always talk nonsense, being absorbed in thoughts of “It is I” and “It is mine.”

PURPORT

The invincibly powerful deluding energy of the Personality of God, or the third energy, representing nescience, can bewilder the entire world of animation, but still she is not strong enough to be able to stand in front of the Supreme Lord. Nescience is behind the Personality of Godhead, where she is powerful enough to mislead the living beings, and the primary symptom of bewildered persons is that they talk nonsense. Nonsensical talks are not supported by the principles of Vedic literatures, and first-grade nonsense talk is “It is I, it is mine.” A godless civilization is exclusively conducted by such false ideas, and such persons, without any

factual realization of God, accept a false God or falsely declare themselves to be God to mislead persons who are already bewildered by the deluding energy. Those who are before the Lord, however, and who surrender unto Him, cannot be influenced by the deluding energy; therefore they are free from the misconception of “It is I, it is mine,” and therefore they do not accept a false God or pose themselves as equal to the Supreme Lord. Identification of the bewildered person is distinctly given in this verse.

TEXT 14

द्रव्यं कर्म च कालश्च स्वभावो जीव एव च ।
वासुदेवात्परो ब्रह्मन् चान्योऽर्थोऽस्ति तत्त्वतः ॥१४॥

*dravyam karma ca kālāś ca
svabhāvo jīva eva ca
vāsudevāt paro brahman
na cānyo 'rtho 'sti tattvataḥ*

dravyam—the ingredients (earth, water, fire, air and sky); *karma*—the interaction; *ca*—and; *kālāś*—eternal time; *ca*—also; *sva-bhāvaḥ*—intuition or nature; *jīvaḥ*—the living being; *eva*—certainly; *ca*—and; *vāsudevāt*—from Vāsudeva; *paraḥ*—differentiated parts; *brahman*—O *brāhmaṇa*; *na*—never; *ca*—also; *anyaḥ*—separate; *arthaḥ*—value; *asti*—there is; *tattvataḥ*—in truth.

TRANSLATION

The five elementary ingredients of creation, the interaction thereof set up by eternal time, and the intuition or nature of the individual living beings are all differentiated parts and parcels of the Personality of Godhead, Vāsudeva, and in truth there is no other value in them.

PURPORT

This phenomenal world is impersonally the representation of Vāsudeva because the ingredients of its creation, their interaction and the enjoyer of the resultant action, the living being, are all produced by the external and internal energies of Lord Kṛṣṇa. This is confirmed in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (7.4–5). The ingredients, namely earth, water, fire, air and sky, as well as the conception of material identity, intelligence and the mind, are produced of the external energy of the Lord. The living entity who enjoys the interaction of the above gross and subtle ingredients, as set up by eternal time, is an offshoot of internal potency, with freedom to remain either in the material world or in the spiritual world. In the material world the living entity is enticed by deluding nescience, but in the spiritual world he is in the normal condition of spiritual existence without any delusion. The living entity is known as the marginal potency of the Lord. But in all circumstances, neither the material ingredients nor the spiritual parts and parcels are independent of the Personality of Godhead Vāsudeva, for all things, whether products of the external, internal or marginal potencies of the Lord, are simply displays of the same effulgence of the Lord, just as light, heat and smoke are displays of fire. None of them are separate from the fire—all of them combine together to be called fire; similarly, all phenomenal manifestations, as well as the effulgence of the body of Vāsudeva, are His impersonal features, whereas He eternally exists in His transcendental form called *sac-cid-ānanda-vigrahaḥ*, distinct from all conceptions of the material ingredients mentioned above.

TEXT 15

नारायणपरा वेदा देवा नारायणाङ्गजाः ।
नारायणपरा लोका नारायणपरा मखाः ॥१५॥

nārāyaṇa-parā vedā
devā nārāyaṇāṅgajāḥ
nārāyaṇa-parā lokā
nārāyaṇa-parā makhāḥ

nārāyaṇa—the Supreme Lord; parāḥ—is the cause and is meant for; vedāḥ—knowledge; devāḥ—the demigods; nārāyaṇa—the Supreme Lord; aṅga-jāḥ—assisting hands; nārāyaṇa—the Personality of Godhead; parāḥ—for the sake of; lokāḥ—the planets; nārāyaṇa—the Supreme Lord; parāḥ—just to please Him; makhāḥ—all sacrifices.

TRANSLATION

The Vedic literatures are made by and are meant for the Supreme Lord, the demigods are also meant for serving the Lord as parts of His body, the different planets are also meant for the sake of the Lord, and different sacrifices are performed just to please Him.

PURPORT

According to the *Vedānta-sūtras (śāstra-yonitvāt)*, the Supreme Lord is the author of all revealed scriptures, and all revealed scriptures are for knowing the Supreme Lord. *Veda* means knowledge that leads to the Lord. The *Vedas* are made just to revive the forgotten consciousness of the conditioned souls, and any literature not meant for reviving God consciousness is rejected at once by the nārāyaṇa-para devotees. Such deluding books of knowledge, not having Nārāyaṇa as their aim, are not at all knowledge, but are the playgrounds for crows who are interested in the rejected refuse of the world. Any book of knowledge (science or art) must lead to the knowledge of Nārāyaṇa; otherwise it must be rejected. That is the way of advancement of knowledge. The supreme worshipable Deity is Nārāyaṇa. The demigods are recommended secondarily for worship in relation to Nārāyaṇa because the demigods are assisting hands in the management of the universal affairs. As the officers of a kingdom are respected due to their relation to the king, the demigods are worshiped due to their relation to the Lord. Without the Lord's relation, worship of the demigods is unauthorized (*avidhi-pūrvakam*), just as it is improper to water the leaves and branches of a tree without watering its root. Therefore the demigods are also dependent on Nārāyaṇa. The *lokas*, or different planets, are attractive because they have different varieties of life and bliss partially representing the *sac-cid-ānanda-vigraha*. Everyone wants the eternal life of bliss and knowledge. In the material world such an eternal life of bliss and knowledge is progressively realized in the upper planets, but after reaching there one is inclined to achieve further progress along the path back to Godhead. Duration of life, with a proportionate quantity of bliss and knowledge, may be increased from one planet to another. One can increase the duration of life to thousands and hundreds of thousands of years in different planets, but nowhere is there eternal life. But one who can reach the highest planet, that of Brahmā, can aspire to reach the planets in the spiritual sky, where life is eternal. Therefore, the progressive journey from one planet to another culminates in reaching the supreme planet of the Lord (*mad-dhāma*), where life is eternal and full of bliss and knowledge. All different kinds of sacrifice are performed just to satisfy Lord Nārāyaṇa with a view to reach Him, and the best sacrifice recommended in this age of Kali is *sankīrtana-yajña*, the mainstay of the devotional service of a nārāyaṇa-para devotee.

TEXT 16

नारायणपरो योगो नारायणपरं तपः ।
नारायणपरं ज्ञानं नारायणपरा गतिः ॥१६॥

nārāyaṇa-para yoga
nārāyaṇa-param tapaḥ
nārāyaṇa-param jñānam
nārāyaṇa-parā gatīḥ

nārāyaṇa-paraḥ—just to know Nārāyaṇa; yogaḥ—concentration of mind; nārāyaṇa-param—just with an aim to achieve Nārāyaṇa; tapaḥ—austerity; nārāyaṇa-param—just to realize a glimpse of Nārāyaṇa; jñānam—culture of transcendental knowledge; nārāyaṇa-para—the path of salvation ends by entering the kingdom of Nārāyaṇa; gatīḥ—progressive path.

TRANSLATION

All different types of meditation or mysticism are means for realizing Nārāyaṇa. All austerities are aimed at achieving Nārāyaṇa. Culture of transcendental knowledge is for getting a glimpse of Nārāyaṇa, and ultimately salvation is entering the kingdom of Nārāyaṇa.

PURPORT

In meditation, there are two systems of *yoga*, namely *aṣṭāṅga-yoga* and *sāṅkhya-yoga*. *Aṣṭāṅga-yoga* is practice in concentrating the mind, releasing oneself from all engagements by the regulative processes of meditation, concentration, sitting postures, blocking the movements of the internal circulation of air, etc. *Sāṅkhya-yoga* is meant to distinguish the truth from ephemerals. But ultimately both the systems are meant for realizing the impersonal Brahman, which is but a partial representation of Nārāyaṇa, the Personality of Godhead. As we have explained before, the impersonal Brahman effulgence is only a part of the Personality of Godhead. Impersonal Brahman is situated on the person of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and as such, Brahman is the glorification of the Personality of the Godhead. This is confirmed both in the *Bhagavad-gītā* and in the *Matsya Purāṇa*. *Gati* refers to the ultimate destination, or the last word in liberation. Oneness with the impersonal *brahmajyoti* is not ultimate liberation; superior to that is the sublime association of the Personality of Godhead in one of the innumerable spiritual planets in the Vaikuṅṭha sky. Therefore the conclusion is that Nārāyaṇa, or the Personality of Godhead, is the ultimate destination for all kinds of *yoga* systems as well as all kinds of liberation.

TEXT 17

तस्यापि द्रष्टुरीशस्य कृतस्यसाखिलात्मनः ।
सृज्यं सृजामि सृष्टोऽहमीक्षयैवामिचोदितः ॥१७॥

tasyāpi draṣṭur īśasya
kūṭa-sthasyākhilātmanah
srjyam srjāmi sṛṣṭo 'ham
ikṣayaiābhicoditah

tasya—His; api—certainly; draṣṭuḥ—of the seer; īśasya—of the controller; kūṭa-sthasya—of the one who is over everyone's intelligence; akhila-ātmanah—of the Supersoul; srjyam—that which is already created; srjāmi—do I discover; sṛṣṭah—created; aham—myself; ikṣayā—by glance over; eva—exactly; abhicoditah—being inspired by Him.

TRANSLATION

Inspired by Him only, I discover what is already created by Him [Nārāyaṇa] under His vision as the all-pervading Supersoul, and I also am created by Him only.

(continued in next issue)



Every Town and Village

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

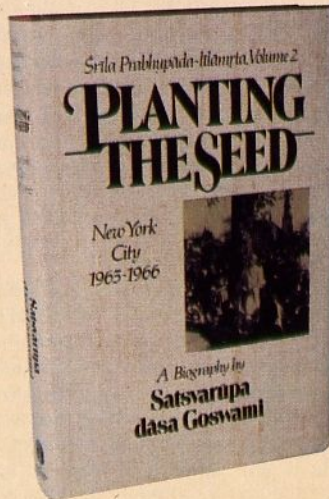
Hare Kṛṣṇa Swami in West Africa



The members of the School of Universal Law in Aba, Nigeria, pose with Brahmananda Swami (second row, center) after his keynote address at their Annual Convocation.

Aba, Nigeria— Recently Brahmananda Swami, who oversees ISKCON's activities in West Africa, delivered the keynote address here at the Annual Convocation of a metaphysical group called the School of Universal Law (SOUL). Though the group espouses a generally impersonal view of the Absolute Truth,

they warmly welcomed the *swami* and appreciated his talk. They enthusiastically joined him in chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, and later many of them purchased some literature on the science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Brahmananda Swami plans to return to Aba for an extended stay after visiting Ghana, Sierra Leone, and Liberia.



Book Trust Begins Publishing Śrīla Prabhupāda's Biography

The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust has just published Volume 2 of *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta*, the authorized biography of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. Written by Śrīla Satsvarūpa dāsa

Goswami, editor in chief of *BACK TO GODHEAD*, the volume is entitled *Planting the Seed—New York City 1965-66*. It chronicles how Śrīla Prabhupāda traveled from India to America at age 69, struggled along with no real home, few friends, and practically no money, and finally began the International Society for Krishna Consciousness on New York's Lower East Side.

The Book Trust plans to release Volume 1, treating of Śrīla Prabhupāda's life in India before he sailed for America, in the fall of this year. Because Volume 1 involved much difficult and time-consuming research in India, Volume 2 was published first. Śrīla Satsvarūpa Goswami plans to complete the proposed seven-volume work within three years.

Planting the Seed has won appreciation from academicians and religionists as a significant contribution to religiohistorical literature. Here is an excerpt from the foreword, written by Dr. Thomas J. Hopkins, chairman of the Department of Religious Studies at Franklin and Marshall College in Lancaster, Pennsylvania:

"[Śrīla Prabhupāda's biography] is a remarkable tale of faith, determination, and success beyond anyone's expectation.

The present volume [*Planting the Seed*] gives only the beginning of the story, but it tells us in fascinating detail how the first seeds of success were planted in what seemed such unpromising ground. . . .

"The temporal setting of the story is important. The 1960s was a unique period in American history, a time when major changes were taking place in our society. The place is important also, since New York City in general and the East Village in particular were on the leading edge of these changes. The author of this biography was very much a part of this time and place as one of Bhaktivedanta Swami's earliest disciples in New York. From his own recollections, from recordings and writings of the time, and from extensive interviews with other participants, he has put together a series of striking vignettes of the 1960s that have independent historical value. Threading through these scenes, however, and binding the individuals together in collective effort, is the dominant figure of A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami. . . .

"It is to Bhaktivedanta's credit that he believed in keeping nothing secret, and it is to Satsvarūpa's credit that he has presented the events of this critical period as objectively as possible. Seldom before have we had such an intimate and detailed account of a spiritual master bringing forth a new religious movement, and probably never has there been such a wealth of contemporary data to back it up. Those of us who are historians of religion will be working this rich vein for years to come."

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 494 Caitanya Era—Month of Madhusūdana		
	May 25	June 9
	Padmaṇī-ekādaśī (fasting from grains and beans).	Parama-ekādaśī (fasting from grains and beans).
Month of Trivikrama		
June 23	June 24	June 26
Disappearance of Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa.	Pāṇḍavā Nirjālā-ekādaśī (fasting from grains and beans).	Kṣīra-dahi festival of Śrīla Raghunātha-dāsa Goswāmī at Pāñhāṭī.
June 28	June 29	
Bathing ceremony of Lord Jagannātha. Disappearance of Śrīla Mukunda Datta and Śrīla Śrīdhara Pañḍita.	Disappearance of Śrīla Śyāmanānda Prabhu.	

SPEAKING OUT

A Call for Strong Leadership

What follows is a conversation between David Shapiro, Director of ISKCON TV, and Śrīla Hṛdayānanda dāsa Goswami Ācāryadeva, one of the devotees Śrīla Prabhupāda designated as spiritual masters qualified to initiate disciples. Their talk took place last September 1 at ISKCON's New Vrindaban community in West Virginia.

David Shapiro: You've called for quite a different approach to education in this country—and for a new kind of leadership. Can you explain just what your approach would be?

Śrīla Ācāryadeva: Yes, our approach is to teach people the purpose of their life. Instead of letting students waste their time carving up their desks, shooting up heroin in the lavatory, and raping their teachers, or learning atheistic nonsense, why not actually give them an education? Let's teach them about the purpose of life.

Our leaders are blind mice leading other blind mice on a treadmill. What do we really learn? If I don't know what I am, if I don't know what God is, if I don't know the purpose of my life, then what is my education? Simply technical training for financial improvement. And this financial improvement is to gratify the bodily senses. We want money, and with money sense gratification. But that sense gratification is also available to hogs and dogs. Without getting degrees in business administration or engineering, without working for a big firm, without arranging a large bank account, without renting a nice penthouse or purchasing a fashionable condominium, without all these elaborate arrangements, the pig or the dog enjoys sex daily. And in his sexual activity the pig or dog experiences essentially the same pleasure that we do. So our whole educational system aims at economic advancement, for sense gratification. And that means sophisticated dog life, pig life.

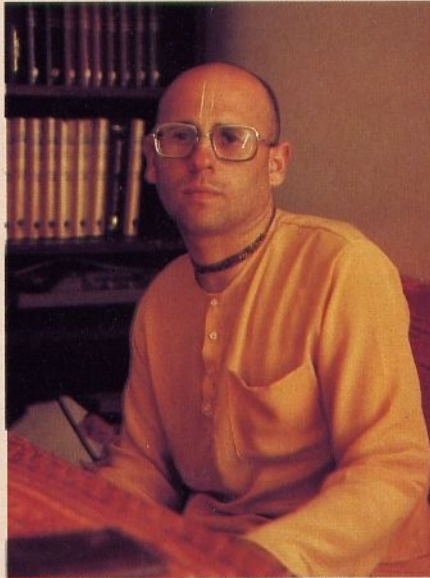
Why so much trouble for low-grade pleasures? Real education means to understand God and, by understanding God, to feel unlimited spiritual bliss. Americans aren't feeling unlimited happiness. They're frustrated. Pills to sleep, pills to wake up. They're totally frustrated, because their heart's been cut out of their body. The heart and soul of human life is God and love of God. And this modern culture has cut the heart out of the American people.

David Shapiro: Well, certainly the leadership of this country leaves something to be desired.

Śrīla Ācāryadeva: It leaves everything to be desired. There is no leadership. Misleadership.

David Shapiro: What qualifications do you expect in a leader?

Śrīla Ācāryadeva: That he not be a fool. Without knowing what the purpose of human life is, how can you direct a large country like America—a large aggregation of human beings? The purpose of life is spiritual enlightenment.



By understanding God, we can go back to the kingdom of God. God has His kingdom; He's not living in the street, He's not floating in the clouds. He has a kingdom. And the purpose of human life is to go to that kingdom. So, if a leader doesn't direct people toward that goal, he's wasting their time.

We don't need big political parties, congress, and judiciary procedures, just to fill bellies. Among the pigs, dogs, hogs, camels, asses, pigeons, grasshoppers there's no judicial branch, no legislative branch, and no executive branch. No public debate, no nothing. But all these creatures fill their bellies. We don't need these fools in Washington to fill our bellies. We need leaders who can help people understand the purpose of life and how to achieve it. And that purpose is spiritual.

Separation of church and state means there is no state church. Isn't it obvious? But that doesn't mean the state should not be spiritual. When you talk about separation of church and state, "church" means a specific religious institution. The state can never be separated from the laws of God.

After all, the laws of God are those laws that govern the functions of this universe. Whether biological, anatomical, psychological, political, historical, or social—all natural laws at all levels of physical and mental organization are under God's direction. If we understand God's purpose and God's laws, then we live peacefully and harmoniously.

Otherwise, there will be conflict. And politicians will struggle to resolve conflicts that they themselves have created by neglecting God's laws. Materialistic solutions create ten thousand more conflicts. For example, if I drive my car without knowing the state traffic laws, then my method of driving will contradict the state law, and that contradiction will inflict upon me a punishment. In the same way, if we

contradict God's laws, we suffer in a corresponding way. For instance, there are laws of God regulating sex. If we contradict those sexual laws, sexual misery will be inflicted upon us. If we contradict the political laws of God, political problems will be inflicted. So at any level of human society, if we contradict the laws of God, we provoke a misery in human society. The politicians try to solve the problem with another contradiction of God's laws. Thus they aggravate the problem.

David Shapiro: Well, I think that if you were to ask the American people whether or not they believe in God, a majority of them would say yes.

Śrīla Ācāryadeva: That's not enough—just to believe in God. You have to obey Him. Belief is an insignificant thing. Everyone also believes in China, but who wants to live in China? So you may believe in God, but who actually wants to live in God's kingdom? Belief—we believe in so many things. But who is prepared to obey God? Simple belief is not significant.

David Shapiro: Many psychologists would claim that one takes to a religious belief—in particular, the Hare Kṛṣṇa philosophy—as a crutch to divert oneself from the real problems of life. What do you say to that?

Śrīla Ācāryadeva: Crutch? But we are dependent on God. Some claim they have no crutch, but aren't they dependent on the air, on the light of the sun and the moon, and on the vegetation of the earth? Actually, everyone is dependent on the crutch of nature's gifts. But atheists ignore God's gifts and depend on the crutch of false prestige and arrogance. They pretend they're in control when actually they aren't. They talk big words that no one understands, so that everyone will assume they know something. What is this bogus "rugged individualism"? No one is rugged. Everyone is a fragile thing that can be crushed in a second. Instead of falsely pretending we're rugged, why not admit that we're eternal servants of God and accept Him?

David Shapiro: In America, traditionally, heroes have always had an indomitable kind of strength. They've always gone it alone.

Śrīla Ācāryadeva: Yes, and where have all the heroes gone? They've become food for the worms. Why pretend? Admit that we're eternal servants of God! Why not have that strength, to give up false prestige—to teach God consciousness, without worrying about our material reputation? Why not have that strength? Why just the strength of clicking spurs and jumping on a bucking bronco? Then death comes and bucks us in the head, and we're finished. So this material strength of spur clicking and bronco busting and mountain climbing—this kind of materialistic strength is a phantasmagoric, ephemeral thing, isn't it? Actual strength means to give up all of one's false prestige and surrender to God. That's strength.

How I Was Saved From Being “Saved”

“With compelling, hypnotic tones the minister would urge us forward,
and then under the swelling surges of the organ you would hear
the rustling sounds of children edging out of the pews.”

by RAVĪNDRA SVARŪPA DĀSA

Each of the last few years before he retired, an elderly Professor of Missions used to invite me to address his class at the Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary, near Philadelphia. The professor, who had spent a goodly portion of his life seeking converts in Bengal, had the best manners I had ever encountered in another American. He would meet me at my car and escort me through the seminary. In the lobby, we would inevitably pause before a display of artifacts he and others had brought back from India; and with a bemused smile he would draw my attention to the prize exhibit: a worn gray plank, about two feet by five, bristling with rusty iron spikes—your standard Hindu bed of nails. He conveyed by this act a courteous imputation, demurely indicting my religion with this instrument of self-torture. Although he knew after my first visit that the contrivance had as little to do with my devotions as it did with his own, he never failed to linger before it as we went in.

I am sure this little maneuver was intended to divert both of us from the larger irony he and I were conscious of. There was no doubt that the reason he had invited me was to afford his students a firsthand look at what they would be up against in far-off India; odd that such an example should be so easily available locally; strange that these Baptists should discover, looking back at them under a shaven head marked with the twin clay lines of *tilaka*—the signs of a servant of Viṣṇu—such a disconcertingly familiar American Protestant face.

The first time I entered his small classroom, I too felt the shock of recognition. There, looking up at me in wonder, in a ring around the table, were those same Sunday-school faces of my childhood, overlaid only slightly with a patina of age.

The professor opened class with a prayer, and hearing the suddenly familiar intonations of Protestant orison rising in that

overheated room smelling of chalk and damp wool clothes, surrounded by the benign features of these ministers-to-be, I was transported back to Bible school, and with a pang I felt that old mellow glow of indistinct goodness. But then I was sharply brought back to present reality. As the professor gave a courtly introduction, his students stared up at me; I could see their minds ram into the brick wall of unintelligibility. What ever could have possessed a nice Christian boy to go and put on those robes and shave his head and . . . ?

To see yourself being received, by features you recognize so well, with a look of utter incomprehension can give rise to a certain uneasiness. Those faces radiated a wall of misinformation, misunderstanding, cultural conditioning, and sectarian prejudice. For them to hear what I had to say, I would have to find some way to outflank the ideological Maginot Line arrayed against me.

Having spent many years in their spiritual milieu, I had formed my own judgment of them. I felt that their religious practice was severely crippled by a lack of disciplined, progressive cultivation under expert guidance. Spiritual advancement depends upon such cultivation, just as athletic success requires a rigorous program of training under an expert coach. But they had little sense of that. Their belief (correct enough) that salvation comes from God's grace became transmogrified in practice into a curious sort of spiritual passivity. They depended upon sudden emotional outpourings and flashes of inspiration (whose impact seemed to dissipate swiftly). Thus their spirituality had a haphazard, hit-or-miss character; it suffered from a lack of direction. It was immature.

As a result, they stagnated in a sort of bland, superficial wholesomeness. In the end, their religiosity simply gave a cachet to a kind of constrained, genteel ma-

terialism—to prayers in the locker room after football or golf, and to church barbecues where the girls from the choir managed to seem both sexy and pure at the same time. And even all of this was mostly for appearance. Since niceness is not enough, deviance was rampant, if covert. Yet their belief in inherent human sinfulness led to a passive acceptance of that, too.

On the other hand, I knew these Baptists would view me as espousing the error of Pelagius, the heresy that man can save himself by his own efforts. Enough evangelicals had approached me in the streets to announce, “I don't have to *work* for my salvation,” to let me know that the party line on us was out. This charge had two sources. First of all, they saw any sort of regimen as smacking of works (although the “work” the evangelicals on the streets referred to was the exuberant dancing and chanting of a group of devotees—who's working?). Second of all, they believed that *every* religion but Christianity, no matter what its particular practices, was Pelagian. To be more precise, all religions were Pelagian, but Christianity, strictly speaking, was not a religion. *Religion* they defined as the vain attempts of man to reach God on his own; all such attempts are tainted by man's inherent sinfulness and so inevitably fail. Christianity, on the other hand, is God's own reaching out to man. It is not, of course, tainted by sinfulness.

The bed of nails hanging on the seminary wall epitomized for them the folly of religion, of man's unaided attempt to reach the divine. I had no doubt that they found my own appearance just as perversely strange, just as much an exemplification of the absurdity that ensues when man tries to save himself.

However, in my talk I was going to use another definition of religion. Religion, I began by telling them, means following

the orders of God. According to the *Vedas*, "The path of religion is enunciated directly by the Lord." No one else can found a religion. But, I said, a question naturally arises: There are many scriptures, each with different injunctions; how do we judge which is best? This same question, the *Vedas* report, was asked five thousand years ago of a great authority, and he replied, "The best religion for all people is that which leads one to unconditional love for the Supreme Lord." The standard for such unconditional love, he went on to say, is that it is not motivated by any desire for personal gain, and it is uninterrupted. He did not mention any particular community. The standard is nonsectarian; wherever it may be realized—among Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, whatever—that must be accepted as true religion.

Other Vedic texts, I continued, elaborate on the nature of unconditional love for God. In Sanskrit, loving devotional service to God is called *bhakti*, but it can be contaminated in two specific ways—by *jñāna* and by *karma*. (I wrote the Sanskrit words on the board.) *Jñāna* refers to the process of empirical speculative knowledge, a quest that culminates in self-deification. *Karma*, "works" in Biblical language, refers to activities aimed at self-aggrandizement—whether in this life or in the next.

What most people have been taught to call "Hinduism," I explained, is actually *bhakti* (devotional service to God) corrupted by *jñāna* (the quest for speculative knowledge). Such corrupted religion has created a polymorphous profusion of gods to be worshiped, but with the understanding that ultimately the whole hodgepodge (including the so-called worshiper) paradoxically dissolves into an amorphous, featureless nullity. According to these teachings, although ultimately no individuals exist, in the meantime and for all practical purposes every individual, including oneself, is God. By an overweening negative theology, *jñāna* strips divinity down to nothingness; while professing to preserve the divine transcendence, it is actually a disguised expression of enmity toward God. Although such philosophy is an evil fruit of Indian civilization, it is now even more at home in the West. As an example, I cited the Protestant theologian Paul Tillich, who said, among other things, that since the temporal, contingent entities we know all "exist," it would be blasphemous to say of God that He also "exists." The "death of God" movement of the sixties was inspired by such theologizing.

While *karma* denotes those religious and charitable activities one performs in expectation of a reward, *bhakti* is service rendered to God simply out of love, with

no desire for gain. Just as the *Vedas* distinguish between *karma* and *bhakti*, I explained, they also distinguish between heaven and the kingdom of God. The *Vedas* identify heaven as a group of higher planets within the material world where enjoyment is extended and intense; nevertheless, one's stay in heaven is circumscribed. Good deeds secure pious credit, but when that credit is exhausted, the heavenly sojourn ends. The kingdom of God, however, is beyond the material

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world, and there life is eternal, full of knowledge and bliss. The activities there are not those of sense gratification but rather of loving exchanges with the Supreme Lord Himself, in varieties of relationships and degrees of intimacy. This is the supreme abode, the destination of the pure devotees, although they do not even aspire after it. Rather, they ask only to engage in divine service under any condition, in heaven or in hell.

The kingdom of God is our home, I said, our native country. All of us once resided there, engaging in the activity of our essential nature, our eternal religion: devotional service to God. But some of us perversely sought to deny our own nature and aspired not to be enjoyed by God but to enjoy as He does, not to serve Him but to be served, not to be controlled but to be the controller. In short, the original sin of the minute particle of God's energy is the desire to become God. Therefore we are exiled to the material world, where we can play out our masquerade and finally, by the mercy of the Lord, be rectified.

For this purpose God Himself establishes the path of pure religion, but under the impetus of our sinful will, even that religion becomes twisted. The *Vedas* call it *kaitava-dharma*—materially motivated,

cheating religion, religion deformed by *karma* and *jñāna*. Desiring to become the enjoyer and controller, the fallen soul performs religious duties for the sake of material advancement, which he needs to enjoy the senses; when he finally becomes disgusted, having met repeated defeat in the struggle for supremacy, he rejects the material world and aspires for liberation, for becoming one with God.

Although God establishes true religion, in the course of time it inevitably becomes corrupted by *karma* and *jñāna*. Therefore, whenever *bhakti* is in danger of disappearing, God Himself descends to the material world, or He sends His son, prophet, or pure representative to restore true religion. Real religion is always in danger of being corrupted, and most religion—most of the time—is karmic, with varying degrees of *jñāna* added. *Bhakti* is very rare.

Then I reminded them that the other symptom of pure religion is that it is uninterrupted. A pure devotee makes no distinction between his religion and his life; he does not separate the activities he does for God from those he does for himself. I could make this point clear only by giving them some concrete examples. So I explained how, in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, even eating and sex are transformed from material activities into divine service.

To live we must eat, and to eat we must kill. But killing is a sin; therefore it seems that sin is unavoidable. However, in the *Bhagavad-gītā* God informs us that if we lovingly offer Him a leaf, a fruit, a flower, or water, He will accept it. Of course, killing animals is never allowed; but if we collect vegetarian food and prepare it for God's enjoyment and *then* eat, then there is no sin. Rather, God accepts the offering of love, and in reciprocation He allows the devotees to eat the remnants of such sacrifice, which are called *prasāda*, or the mercy of God. It is *karma*-less food. Thus, even eating need not interrupt devotional service.

Similarly, marriage can also be part of devotional service. Marriage does not confer a license for sexual indulgence. It does not sanction a holiday from religious principles. Rather, according to religious principles sex is meant only for begetting God conscious children. Thus there is no need for indulging more than once in a month, when the woman is fertile. Children born of parents who are free from lust will be exceptionally pure and naturally inclined toward devotional service. So not even biological necessities like mating and eating need divert us from our religion.

Here I would usually end my talk and ask for questions. There would be a smattering of inquiries about specific

practices, and then someone would finally voice what was on all their minds. "What religion were you raised in?"

"I was nominally a Methodist," I would answer. "But the Baptists had a strong influence on me."

Then they would get down to it.

"Why did you change to *this*?"

I wanted to be both truthful and tactful, a rather difficult task under the circumstances: I would say something like, "In my childhood I was rather heavily evangelized. But I never made a full commitment. And I think it was because, well, I just never met anyone who sufficiently inspired me by his personal example to make that commitment."

But of course there was more to it than that. And as I stood there before these future ministers, the memory that had been nibbling at my consciousness all morning finally struck. The formidable machinations of their predecessors' evangelical assaults rose before me—that amazing dramatic contrivance which, if anything, must be deemed the homegrown, all-American counterpart of a bed of nails.

During vacation Bible school, all of us would be led each morning into the cool and dark interior of the Baptist church. Rank after rank of pews would fill with the small forms of children. We sang hymns, and then a well-spoken minister would begin talking to us. Although he seemed friendly, he did not let that stop him from telling us the truth about ourselves. And the truth was that even though we were only little kids and were supposed to be innocent, we were very sinful. He told us how we despised our brothers and sisters, hated our parents, envied our friends. Skillfully, he drew out all the evil of our small lives—until it was all there before us. It crushed down on us like an unbearable weight. He described how abominable, how foul our sinfulness appeared in the eyes of God, so great, so holy and pure. Such an affront were we to Him that it was only fitting and proper that we should suffer endlessly in hell for our sins. He evoked hell for us. We were going there directly, and that was only right.

But, he would say, God was not happy with mere justice. He loved us more than we could ever imagine; so much that he gave His only begotten Son, His *own* Son, who had never sinned, who was as pure as we were dirty, to suffer for our sins and die in our place. Eloquently, he would explain how Jesus had, in advance, without our even asking, undergone all the sufferings due us, and had already paid the price for us. The sins, which were like a huge weight about to shove us down to hell, were already atoned for by Jesus. And all we had to do to be saved was just accept Jesus in our heart as our personal savior.

Now his voice would drop and seem to speak to us right near our ears. He would tell us to bow our heads and shut our eyes. And then he said that anyone who had *not yet accepted* Jesus in his heart as his personal savior should raise his hand. A hush would fall over the church. With a pounding heart (for you could not lie *now*), I would raise my arm. The seconds crawled by as I would sit there, nakedly exposed, my arm as heavy as lead. Finally, we could lower our hands (but had to keep our eyes

As I grew older, I still looked for something deeper than that always-smiling friendliness and relentless cheerfulness.

shut). Then he would say that all we had to do to accept Jesus as our savior was to get up *right now* and walk up to the communion rail. Then the organ would start to play soft, yearning music. With compelling hypnotic tones the minister would urge us forward, and then under the swelling surges of the organ you would hear the rustling sounds of children edging out of the pews.

Day after day I would sit in anguish, and then, when I was on the verge of bolting from my seat, I would suddenly seem to be high in the church vaults, looking down. From that distance everything would become clear, and I could see with a wonderful lucidity just what was going on, and their whole contrivance became transparent. When, so many years later, I was to hear the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement charged with being a new "cult" that converted through brainwashing, coercive persuasion, emotional manipulation, and the evocation of guilt, I was astounded; it was an eerily accurate description of just what I had experienced as a child in this most indigenous of American religions. Yet even as a child I could recognize that I was being played upon by some craftiness or artifice. It reeked of fraudulence; how could I trust them?

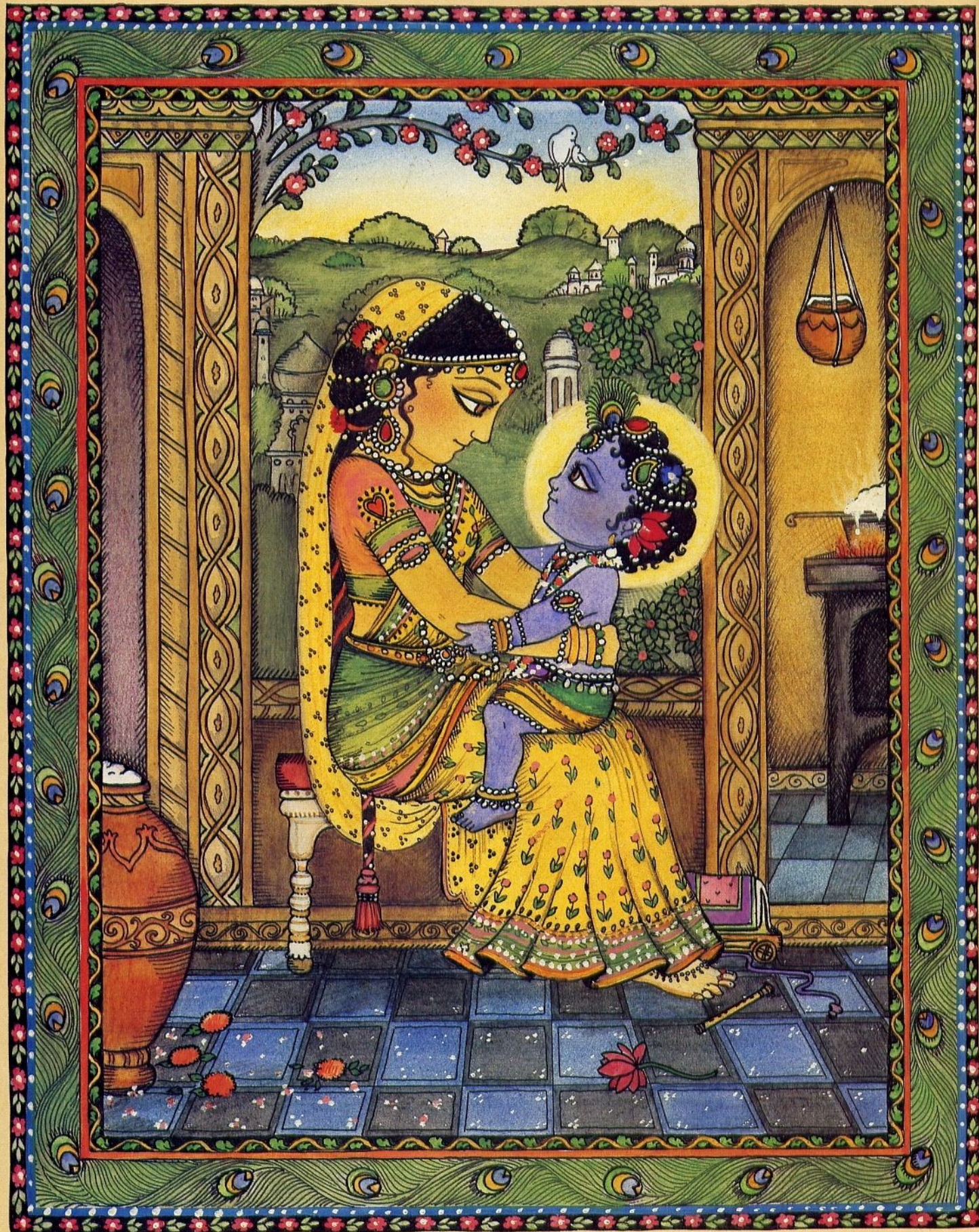
After church, we would be led to our separate classes, and on some days a face or two would be missing: they had gone up to the communion rail. They would come in later, looking a bit dazed. I would watch them carefully. For a few days they *would* be different—a bit remote, extremely peaceful, and very, very nice—but then their old selves would creep back in.

And that was the real problem. For all the anguish invoked, for all the high redemptive drama with its incredible emotional impact, there was a curiously meager result. As I grew older, I still looked for something more, something deeper than that benign wholesomeness, that always-smiling friendliness and relentless cheerfulness. It all seemed so superficial, and so many of them were, as my father put it, "on the quietus," doing in secret what the unsaved did in the open.

The spirit of American Protestant Christianity became epitomized for me by a frequently replayed cultural scenario. Reporters crowd around the winner of the Miss North or South Carolina beauty contest, glowing with her victory in that competition which has degraded her personhood to the level of a commodity, in which the air of lubricity is all the more cloying for being disguised as a celebration of the value of wholesome, upright American womanhood. The winner flashes that wide smile, the same smile that daily arouses our desire for toothpaste and shampoo on the TV, and then she announces, with not even the slightest sense of incongruity, that the most important thing in her life is that she has accepted Jesus Christ in her heart as her personal savior. And, as I experienced, Christians—laity and ministers alike—all thought that was just *wonderful!* I would feel, with some relief, that *I had been saved.*

And now, looking down at these missionary faces, suffused with that expression of mild goodness, I understood clearly what I had discovered in Kṛṣṇa consciousness that their religion did not provide me. It was integrity; it was religion without compromise. At first, I had sought integrity in uncompromising materialism. That failed, but when I was offered the integrity of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, I accepted it without misgivings. To be sure, it was sometimes difficult. But it was the genuine article.

Yet, I realized suddenly, I *was* indebted to these Christians. For they had started me on the search for the divine, even though they could not provide the solution with the same efficacy with which they could expose the problem. It was unlikely that they could see the continuity between us that I saw, while I was standing so strangely before them in that different garb, a missionary to the missionaries. ❀



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Higher Education

CHILDREN'S BOOKS WITH A SPIRITUAL THEME

An alternative to literary junk food.

by YOGEŚVARA DĀSA

Soon after its beginnings in 1966 in a small New York storefront, the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement grew to include thousands of full-time devotees.

By 1970 it was evident that we would need schools for training our children in the principles of Kṛṣṇa conscious life. And we would need books, for both inside and outside the classroom. When I mentioned this to my spiritual master, the Society's founder Śrīla Prabhupāda, he encouraged me to publish a library of children's literature based on the pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa and His incarnations.

"Do not invent anything," he directed. "Rather, present Kṛṣṇa's pastimes just as they are described in the revealed scriptures. Of course, the language can be simplified, but nothing is to be altered in the stories or characters. Just as I have not altered anything in presenting the Vedic literature in English, so now you adapt these books without change for children. Remember, in Kṛṣṇa consciousness our strength is purity."

By 1977 Bāla Books (in Sanskrit *bāla*

"Kṛṣṇa played just like an ordinary child. He was really the Supreme Personality of Godhead, but to His mother Yaśodā and the other residents of Vṛndāvana, that was not very important. For them, He was simply their beloved Kṛṣṇa." (From *The Butter Thief*)

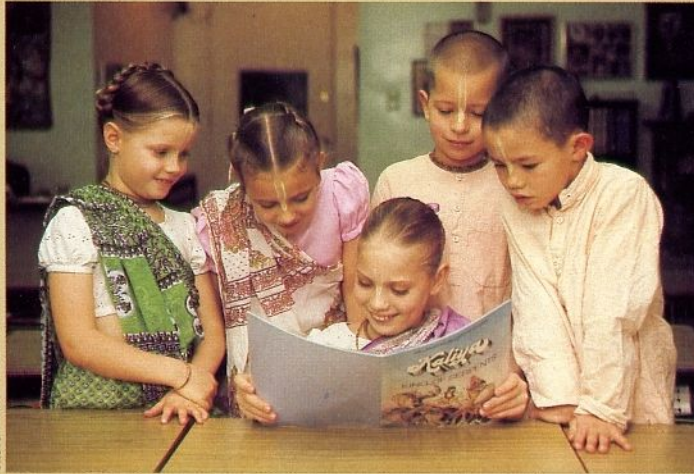


PHOTO: BHARGAVA DĀSA

means "child") was fully launched. The first book, *Agha the Terrible Demon*, had been prepared as carefully as possible to preserve the exact meaning of Śrīla Prabhupāda's original translation of the story from the Sanskrit. Naturally devotees were enthusiastic about the book; at the same time, those who had worked on it hoped for its good reception by people in general. That came.

"Sanskrit literature is full of stories which have delighted and educated Indian children for thousands of years," wrote Professor Hugh M. Flick, Jr., of the Harvard Humanities General Education Department. "These stories reflect and illustrate all aspects of life in India, from interpersonal relationships to relationships with God.

"Unfortunately, many of these wonderful tales have never been translated for children. In response to this lack of availability, Bāla Books is presenting the popular Krishna cycle of

stories, in a format designed especially for English-speaking children.

"Whether Krishna is viewed as a folk hero or as an incarnation of God does not affect the universal appeal and educational value of the Bāla Books publications. The stories are told with love and are delightfully illustrated."

When preparing Bāla publications, the devotees remember Śrīla Prabhu-

pāda's instructions: "Do not change anything. Remain pure in your presentation. It is not for your glorification, but for Kṛṣṇa's." The devotees also keep in mind that these are books for extraordinary children. As the *Bhagavad-gītā* explains, children born of devotee parents have surely practiced some form of *yoga* in their last lifetime. But having failed to complete their spiritual practices, they have again taken birth in the material world. Now, with the benefits of devotee parents and a spiritual environment from early childhood, it is expected that they will achieve full love for God and go back to Him.

So devotee parents are careful to nurture their children's God consciousness by offering them suitable books and teaching them Kṛṣṇa-related games. Some people accuse us of brainwashing our children and of isolating them from the world. Why not give them television and commercially



PAINTING BY CITRALEKHĀ DEVĪ DĀŚĪ

published children's books? Our answer is that there are no "neutral" programs or books for children. They all reflect values of one kind or another. For example, it is common for characters in children's books to be seen eating meat. Kṛṣṇa philosophy condemns animal slaughter as cruel and unnecessary. Also, recent commercial publications for children tend to reinforce the notion that life is chemical, or that there is no difference between the self and the body. We find, as a result, many children's books exhorting youngsters to be proud of their "blackness" or their "womanhood." Yet the first lesson a devotee learns is to see the equality of the soul in all bodies.

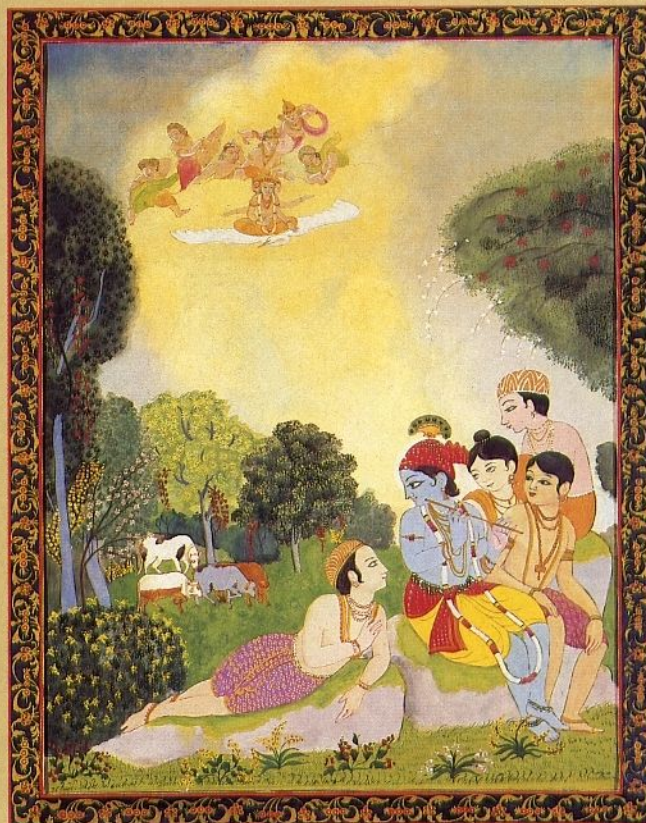
The books devotee children read are prepared with the intention of bolstering devotional attitudes and encouraging a simple life guided by wisdom, compassion, and love for God. By focusing on Kṛṣṇa's heroic activities and qualities, these books transcend the materialistic norms of contemporary society and instead remind young readers of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Children in Kṛṣṇa communities,

Above: the cowerd boys listen to the echo of their cries in *Agha the Terrible Demon*. Right: Kṛṣṇa sports with His friends in the forests of Vṛndāvana. (From *Brahmā Steals the Calves*.)

"Kṛṣṇa is fairly new to the West, but His adventures in *Agha the Terrible Demon* will appeal to children of all ages. The cover design is very clever, and the artwork is exotic and beautiful. From all points of view—storyline, shape, general appearance—*Agha* is a success."

—M. Paysinger
Professor of Literature
Newberry College



PAINTING BY DHRGĀ DEVĪ DĀŚĪ

growing up in a devotional environment and reading spiritual books, tend to be philosophically inclined. Topics such as transmigration of the soul, *karma*, and *yoga* are not beyond their comprehension. On one occasion I overheard two five-year-old girls talking together at the Kṛṣṇa school in Philadelphia. They had just discovered a cat lying dead on the road outside the school building. While one girl cried at the way the poor creature had been killed, the other consoled her by explaining that the soul had not died but rather had left the cat's body and taken up residence in some other place.

In Bāla publications, therefore, philosophical issues are not skirted. In *Agha*, the demon's soul merges into the spiritual body of Lord Kṛṣṇa and so attains salvation. The event could have been omitted, but reincarnation and liberation are topics of daily discussion for dēvotēe children. They know that the soul does not die when the body dies, and that remembrance of Kṛṣṇa at the time of death guarantees entrance into the spiritual world.

Such topics are rarely found in commercial children's books, primarily because publishers don't make much profit from books with spiritual themes. Parents, teachers, and librarians (the book buyers) shy away from books that are too "didactic," and this condemns most children to a fanciful world created by the media and industry, a world inhabited by Superman, Muppets, Seussian characters, and a hefty roster of television stereotypes who do little to shape good character or reinforce devotional goals.

Bāla publications draw their subject matter from historic events depicted in the Vedic literatures. The personalities described are ideal role models for devotee children, and the adults enjoy the stories as much as the children. This is important, because a shared literature forms bonds of common interest between children and adults in Kṛṣṇa communities.

Not only the reading matter but many elements of a devotee's life—food, dress, music, social events—carry over from childhood to adulthood. In devotional life children attend the same plays, feasts, and festivals as their parents. Proper devotional behavior is thus greatly reinforced. Of course, the children still run, play, and exhibit the mischievousness common to their age; but for them there is no generation gap, no revolt or running away. The transition from childhood to adulthood is easier.



PHOTO: NITYATRPTA-DEVĪ DĀSĪ

Bāla publications serve as scripts for plays in Kṛṣṇa conscious schools. At left, children enact the pastimes of Sītā and Rāma from the epic *Rāmāyaṇa*. Below: the Baka demon prepares to attack child Kṛṣṇa in the story of *Wonderful Kṛṣṇa*, soon to be released.



PAINTING BY SUNITĀ-DEVĪ DĀSĪ

Agha was the first Bāla publication. It was followed by several other picture books for young readers. Then, in 1978, two teachers from the Kṛṣṇa conscious school for boys in India came to New York with a unique assignment: to produce a grammar book that would

cover all elements of English usage and at the same time use devotional subject matter. That way, instead of learning punctuation with the usual nondescript sentences ("we can't begin." "Didnt you go today.") devotee children would work with themes from the *Vedas*:



PAINTING BY PARASATYA DĀSA



Lord Rāma was an ideal ruler. His (capital / capitol) was Ayodhyā.

Self-realization makes good (sense / cents).

The (principal / principle) opportunity of human life is God consciousness.

In Bāla academic books—whether the topic be English or math or history—the theme is always Kṛṣṇa and His pure devotees. This common thread through the various academic subjects makes

above, and thirty-three percent are reading four grades above. The same results showed in spelling tests.”

The Kṛṣṇa school system differs from public schools in yet another way: the teaching techniques. So-called modern methods minimize the work as far as possible, through games and workbooks where everything is already written out for the student; but devotee children learn to write by writing, and they learn to read by reading. No shortcuts. The



PAINTING BY PARASATYA DĀSA

retention much easier.

“In Bāla textbooks the children’s minds are not distracted by an endless barrage of external stimuli,” explains Bhūrijana dāsa, the headmaster for a Kṛṣṇa school in the Northeast. “In most grammar books, for example, publishers have resorted to shabby content to interest children in reading. Their advertising says it outright: ‘Such-and-such reading series on sports makes it happen!’ So the children end up reading about everything from dogs and fads to lovable monsters and their friends. But the common thread of Kṛṣṇa in all studies means devotee children have a natural interest—no motivation problems. Recently, we gave our students here a Wide Range Achievement Test. Twenty-five percent of the children tested are reading one grade above their peers in public school, forty percent are reading three grades

work is harder, but the themes are always of personal interest to the children, and so they develop strong mental discipline.

To date, Bāla Books has published six storybooks and four academic books and has distributed a total of sixty thousand copies around the world. One title (*The King Who Swept the Road*, about the king of Orissa) has been published also in Spanish and French. Our address is in each book, and the letters we receive show that many parents are dissatisfied with the usual run of children’s books and are seeking alternative reading matter. More than thirty-five percent of the people in the world are under sixteen, and all of them are entitled to read books that do not proselytize for materialism—books that reflect another, more natural lifestyle, centered on a loving relationship with God. The people at Bāla Books are planning to produce at least one hundred volumes, including an adaptation of the epic *Rāmāyaṇa*. By introducing young readers to these works, we hope to lay a foundation for young people’s cultural, intellectual, and spiritual development.

“Kṛṣṇa dashed Kāliya with His lotus feet, and this was more than the serpent could bear . . .” Above, Nanda Mahārāja embraces his son after the defeat of the great demon. (From *Kāliya, King of Serpents*.)

**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 anxiety.

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 present age of quarrel and anxiety." Five centuries ago, while spreading the

mahā-mantra throughout India, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu prayed, "O Supreme Lord, in Your 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.

THE RIGHT SOURCE
(continued from page 4)

mind, and with your intelligence.

If you do this, then the result will be *prāyaśo 'jita jito 'py asi tais tri-lokyām*: you will conquer the unconquerable Lord. Another name for God is *Ajita*. *Ajita* means "unconquerable." Because, after all, everyone is lower than God. Who will conquer Him? What to speak of God—we cannot conquer even the energy of God. We are all under the influence of the material energy of God in our present conditioned life. We cannot conquer even the energy. So how can we conquer God? It is not possible. So therefore another name of God is *Ajita*, or "one who is unconquerable." But that unconquerable person sometimes becomes conquered. How? By this process of submissively hearing about God and trying to assimilate the knowledge nicely. That's all.

God is neither Christian nor Hindu nor Muslim nor anything else. God is God. If you hear *Bhagavad-gītā* submissively and try to apply it with your body, mind, and intelligence, then you'll understand God so nicely that although God is unconquerable, you'll conquer Him. You'll conquer Him. By this simple process. This is why *śravaṇa*—hearing—is so important, and why in devotional service the first step is hearing. Then whatever you learn, if you describe it, that will help you to elevate yourself on this path of knowledge. Whatever we have discussed here today—if you have heard it in the proper consciousness, and if you try to repeat it amongst your friends and your family members—then you'll be established in this knowledge. That is called *kīrtana*, describing. *Śravaṇam kīrtanam*: hearing and describing.

Every day and night we are hearing something. There is television. There is radio. There are newspapers. There are so many things to hear about. But that is not the hearing that will help us to become self-realized. *Śravaṇam kīrtanam viśnoḥ*. You should devote your time to hearing and chanting about Viṣṇu, Kṛṣṇa. *Kṛṣṇa-kīrtanam. Kīrtanād eva kṛṣṇasya mukta-saṅgaḥ paraṁ vrajet*. If you simply do this—hear and chant about Kṛṣṇa—then you shall become free from this material entanglement, and you shall be elevated to the supreme place, the kingdom of God. Hearing and chanting—this is the remedy suggested in this age. You cannot successfully practice anything else. You cannot practice sacrifice. You cannot practice speculation. You cannot practice mystic *yoga*. Nothing. You can simply practice this: submissively hear the science of Kṛṣṇa from authoritative sources. Try to assimilate it. And become perfect. ❀

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.

3 Deity Poster: a full-color photo of the beautiful Deities at the Bhaktivedanta Manor, in England. Poster-size. \$2.00.

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6 SPECIAL: *The original Hare Kṛṣṇa Meditation Album*. In 1966 Śrīla Prabhupāda made this unique recording with his first disciples. On it Prabhupāda explains the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*, and he and his disciples chant. A historic recording. C-60 cassette. \$4.00.

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NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

A Personal Look at the U.S. Presidency

Like all Americans, I've seen my destiny shaped by the U.S. presidents under whose rule I have lived and served. But now that I think about it, although my life was shaped in certain ways by their decisions, none of the presidents were really leaders to me. Their leadership was never very inspirational; it never touched my inner self. The only persons I can think of who were my actual leaders were Steve Marino, my father, and later Śrīla Prabhupāda, my spiritual master.

It was through my father that I received my first impressions of the presidents: Teddy Roosevelt, he said, was a "bully-good" leader. He didn't care for Wilson. And as for "silent Cal" and Hoover, I heard only jokes. I was born when Franklin Roosevelt was president. When I was two years old, the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor—the day after my birthday party—and my father had to go overseas for two years. But the war wasn't FDR's fault; it was the other "presidents"—Hitler, Tojo, Mussolini.

In those years I was mostly with my mother. I remember President Roosevelt wearing a big black cape and sitting with Churchill and Stalin, figuring out how to win the war. I was only a child, and things were happening around me; and although my father was away and Franklin Roosevelt was in charge, it didn't seem to make much difference. There was my mother, food, and shelter, and life went on, waiting for Father to return. When he returned, he was again the leader of my life, as always. One night my father stayed up late listening to the radio, and I went to sleep hearing that Thomas Dewey had been elected president; but in the morning I learned that Harry Truman had won. I'm not sure about Truman, whether my father liked him or not, but it really didn't make any difference to me. I *know* he liked Eisenhower, and since my political opinions were whatever my father's were (as opposed to the foolish opinions sometimes held by other boys' fathers) I also officially revered Eisenhower.

But as I grew up in high school, it dawned on me that I was entitled to my own opinion, and after my first semester in college I was already in disagreement with my father. I concluded that he was a conservative, while I became sympathetic to the left. Yet conservative as he was, I

still thought he would favor Kennedy over Nixon in the 1960 election. I remember talking with him while he raked leaves on the front lawn. He looked up and said, "I think Nixon will make a better president," and I was shocked and disappointed. But what did it really matter? My disappointment wasn't over which president he thought was best, but over the widening rift between us.

What *did* matter was that I had to go into active military service after college—since my father had enrolled me in the Reserves when I was seventeen. So it was under the order of my political choice, JFK, that I had to sail on a ship in the Caribbean during the Cuban scare. But even while my life was being shaped against my will by President Kennedy, I felt free of his leadership and ideology. I had read in *Civil Disobedience* how Thoreau had felt free although he had been imprisoned by the government, and I was also thinking like that. The president was not my leader, even though he exercised certain powers over my physical body.

By this time I had become thoroughly disenchanted with my father's leadership, and as soon as my tour of duty was over, I left military service. With Lyndon Johnson as my president now, I went to live on the Lower East Side of New York, where I met my spiritual master, Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Here was a real leader. He hadn't come from the White House; he had come from Kṛṣṇa. I began coming by and hearing his lectures, and it didn't matter who was president or whether they taxed me or ran me out of gasoline or inflated me or depressed me or blew me up with a bomb. I had a real leader, and I was going back to Godhead. He was the first one to give me real philosophy and a perfect example in his own life. He taught from a book of transcendental knowledge, the *Bhagavad-gītā*, about the real, eternal self and the purpose of life in love of Godhead. I had never received that from anyone, neither father, priests, nor presidents. It was the mercy of Śrīla Prabhupāda that he came to New York City when I was living there looking for answers and not finding them. I became his student and wanted to take up his mission of spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness to my countrymen.

I remember chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa with a

large group of devotees outside Madison Square Garden. It was the scene of the 1976 Democratic National Convention. A political folk singer was singing, "Vote nobody for president," over an outdoor public-address system, while inside the Garden Jimmy Carter was receiving his party's nomination. A reporter approached me and asked what was the Kṛṣṇa conscious viewpoint of the presidential election. I told him that a true leader must be Kṛṣṇa conscious—God conscious. I explained that it was not sufficient that the president belong nominally to a particular religious organization, but that he should be prepared to enact practical policy based on realization of the Supreme Being as the controller and proprietor of everything in the universe. The reporter was interviewing me merely as a sidelight to his coverage of the Democratic Convention, and I thought it unfortunate that the Vedic knowledge was being taken less seriously than the speculations of the politicians. But at least I was speaking the truth, by the grace of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

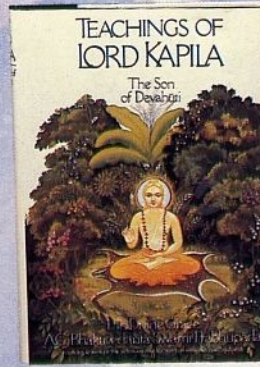
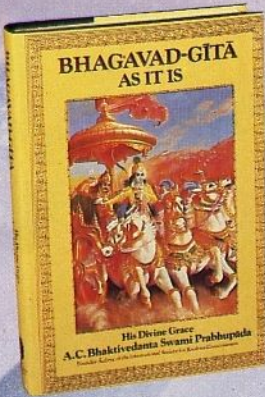
So here it is, another election year and still no hope for a really God conscious leader. And if the people persist in being led around by their hedonism and sectarian attachments and thus pick unqualified leaders, they will have only themselves to blame for the ensuing cataclysm. But if, being dissatisfied with all other alternatives, people realize that the planet belongs to God, then they may elect a real leader who knows how to rule according to the dictates of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Of course, you don't have to wait for the majority to elect such a leader. If you are tired of being cheated, you can seek out a bona fide spiritual master by taking direction from authentic sources like the Vedic scriptures. In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* it is stated, "One who cannot deliver his dependents from repeated birth and death should never become a spiritual master, or a leader of the people, or even a father or a husband." A misled nation may not be able to elect a qualified leader, but an individual can still save himself by sincerely and determinedly seeking to find the truth. There is higher knowledge than that delivered by our political systems. There are *real* leaders. —SDG

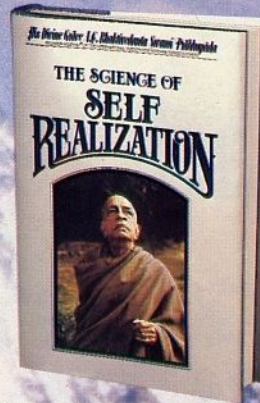
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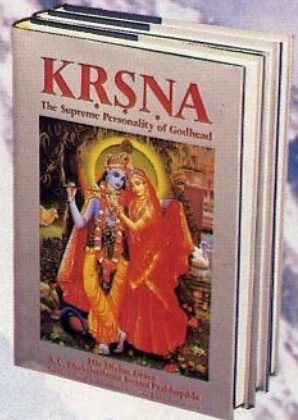
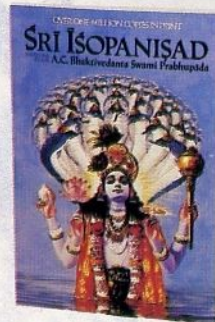
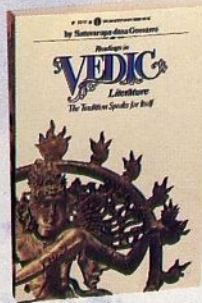
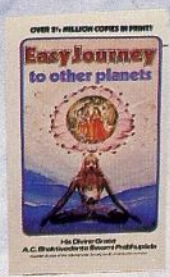
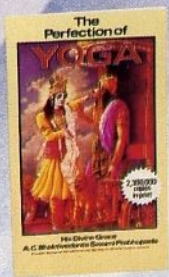
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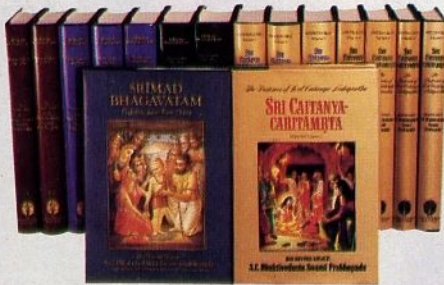
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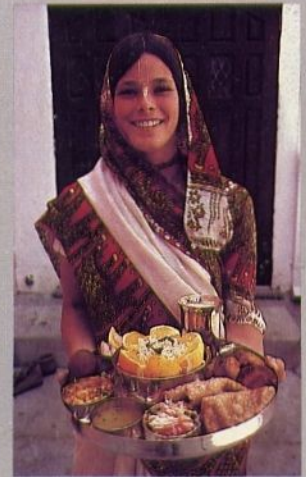
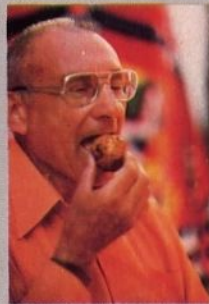
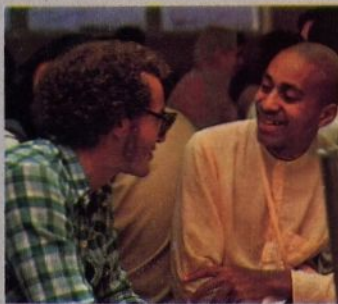
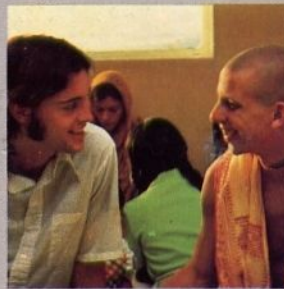
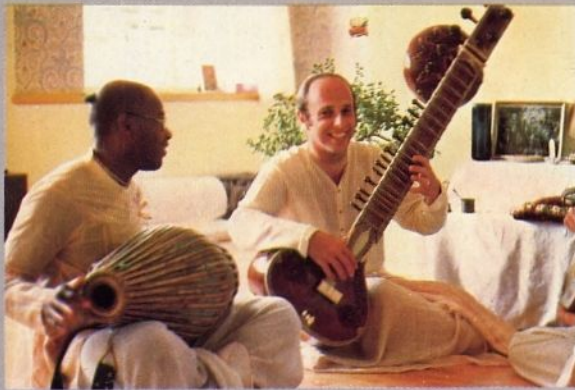
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