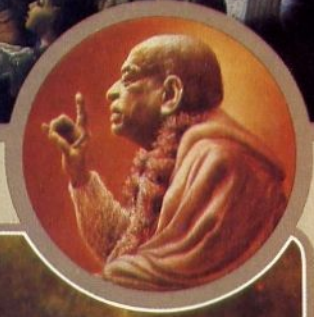


Godhead is light. Nescience is darkness. Where there is Godhead there is no nescience.

BACK TO GODHEAD

Vol.15 No.7

THE MAGAZINE OF THE HARE KRISHNA MOVEMENT



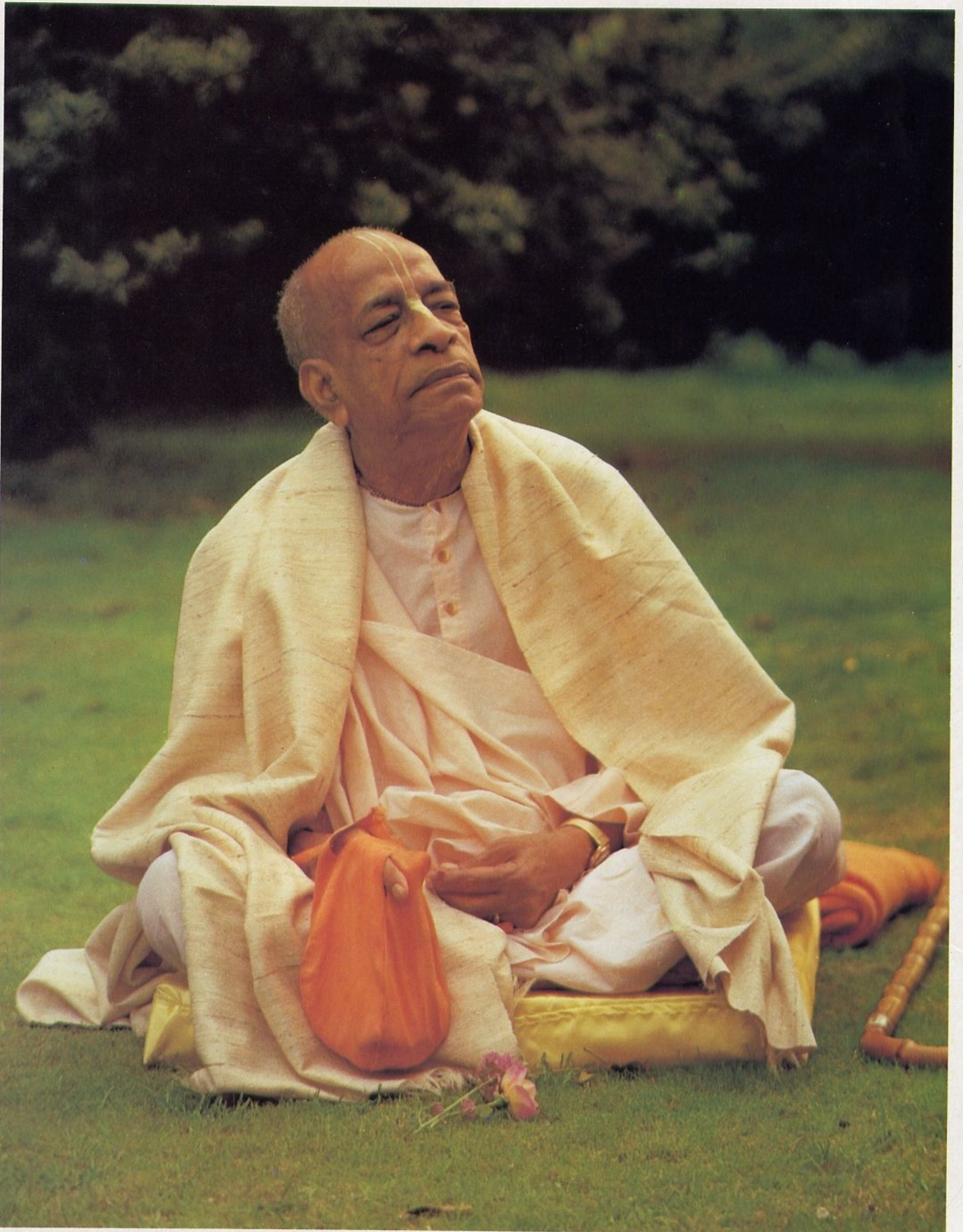


PHOTO: BHARGAVA DASIA

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

BACK TO GODHEAD

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THE MAGAZINE OF THE HARE KRISHNA MOVEMENT

FOUNDED 1944

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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 schol-
arly 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 rī in rim, and ɕ 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 ś and ṣ 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 (dāśī 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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The audience is in turmoil. The vibes are gone. A heavy hand
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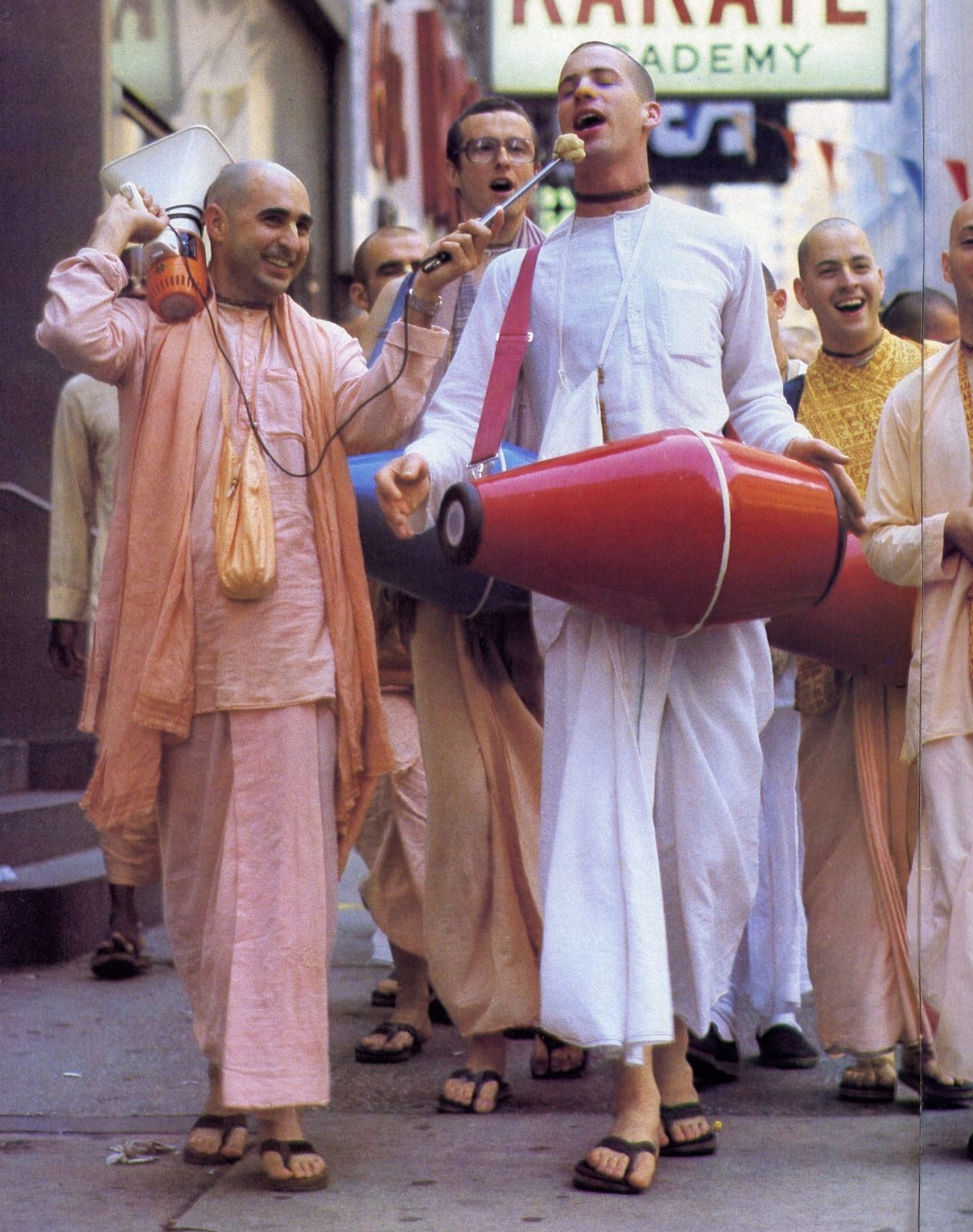
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COVER: Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma in Vṛndāvana. Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of
Godhead, and His elder brother, Balarāma, sport in the forests of Vṛndāvana. Far
beyond the limits of this material universe lies the eternal spiritual world. There
Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Lord, enjoys loving pastimes with His pure devotees. Contrary
to impersonal conceptions of Truth, the spiritual world is full of variety and
personality. The ancient Vedic texts describe that spiritual abode and emphasize
bhakti-yoga, the *yoga* of devotion, as the most effective means for going there.
(Cover art: Murādhara dāsa.)

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





KR̥ṢṆA CONSCIOUSNESS

THE PERFECTION OF YOGA

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

*śucau deśe pratiṣṭhāpya
sthiram āsanam ātmanaḥ
nāty-ucchritaṁ nātinīcaṁ
cailājīna-kuṣottaram*

*tatraikāgraṁ manaḥ kṛtvā
yata-cittendriya-kriyāḥ
upaviśyāsane yuñjyād
yogam ātma-viśuddhaye*

“To practice *yoga*, one should go to a secluded, sacred place, lay *kuśa* grass on the ground, and then cover the grass with a deerskin and a soft cloth. The seat should be neither too high nor too low. The *yogī* should then sit on the seat very firmly and practice *yoga* by controlling the mind and the senses, purifying the heart, and fixing the mind on one point.”
[*Bhagavad-gītā* 6.11-12]

These are Kṛṣṇa’s practical instructions on how to execute mystic *yoga*. In the United States *yoga* is very popular, and there are many so-called *yoga* societies that follow various teachings. But here the Supreme Lord Himself is giving instructions on how to practice *yoga*. The first instruction concerns how to sit and where to sit. First one has to select a place where he can sit down and practice

The recommended *yoga* for this age: chanting the holy names of God. City living affords little facility for the strict practice of physical *yoga*. Chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, however, is the foundation of the highest *yoga* yet can be executed anywhere, any time. Left, devotees from the New York City temple bring the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* to Broadway.

yoga. Kṛṣṇa says it should be in a “sacred place,” which refers to a place of pilgrimage. In India the transcendentalists (the *yogīs* and devotees) all leave home and reside in sacred places—such as Prayag, Mathurā, Vṛndāvana, Hṛṣīkeśa, or Hardwar—and they practice *yoga* there. But in this age how many people are prepared to search out a sacred place? For their livelihood they have to live in a congested city. What is the question of finding a sacred place? But if one can’t find a sacred place, then how can he practice *yoga*, since that is the first instruction?

The answer is found in *bhakti-yoga*. In the *bhakti-yoga* system the sacred place is the Lord’s temple. A temple is *nirguṇa*, or transcendental. The Vedic injunction is that the city is the place of passion, the forest is the place of goodness, and the Lord’s temple is transcendental. If one lives in a city or a town, he is living in a passionate place. And if he doesn’t want to live in a passionate place, he can go to a forest—that is a place of goodness. But God’s temple is above passion and goodness. Therefore a temple is the only secluded place in this age. We cannot go to a secluded place in a forest; it is impossible. And if one makes a show of *yoga* practice in a so-called class and indulges in all kinds of nonsensical things, that is not real *yoga*. Here are the genuine instructions on how to practice *yoga*.

Concerning the actual process of meditation, the *Bṛhan-Nāradiya Purāṇa* says that in the *Kali-yuga* (the present *yuga*, or age), when people in general are short-lived, slow in spiritual realization, and

always disturbed by various anxieties, the best means of spiritual realization is to chant the holy name of the Lord:

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

"In this age of quarrel and hypocrisy, the only means of deliverance is chanting the holy name of the Lord. There is no other way. There is no other way. There is no other way." This chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa, which is the essence of the *bhakti-yoga* process, is universal, and it is so nice that even a child can take part in it. But other processes will not be feasible.

Two of these processes are *aṣṭāṅga-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga*. The sitting postures and meditation comprise *aṣṭāṅga-yoga*, and *jñāna-yoga* is an analytical and philosophical process by which one tries to understand what is Brahman and what is not Brahman (*neti neti*). Part of *jñāna-yoga* consists of studying the *Vedānta-sūtra*, which begins with these words: *janmādy asya yataḥ*. This aphorism gives us the hint that the Supreme Brahman, the Absolute Truth, is that from which everything has emanated. Then we must try to understand what that Absolute Truth is. The nature of the Absolute Truth is explained in the first verse of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*: *janmādy asya yato 'nvayād itarataś cartheṣv abhijñāḥ svarāṭ*.

Now, if the Absolute Truth is the supreme cause of all emanations, then what are His symptoms? The *Bhāgavatam* says that He must be *cognizant*. *He's not dead*. And what kind of cognizance does He have? *Anvayād itarataś cartheṣu*: "He is directly and indirectly cognizant of all manifestations." I am cognizant, as is every living being, but I do not know how many hairs there are on my body. And if I ask anyone else, "Do you know how many hairs you have on your body?" he will not be able to answer. Another example of cognizance: I know I am eating, but I do not know how my internal processes are working—how the food is being transformed, how it is entering my bloodstream, how the blood is going through the arteries and veins. I do not know any of this. So, this kind of knowledge is not real knowledge.

But the Supreme, says the *Bhāgavatam*, knows everything, directly and indirectly. God must know *everything*—He must know what is going on in every corner of His creation. In other words, the Supreme Truth, from whom everything has emanated, must be supremely cognizant (*abhijñāḥ*). Now, one may say, "If God is so powerful, wise and cognizant, then He must have learned His knowledge from someone similar." No. If a person has

learned His knowledge from someone else, then he is not God. God is *svarāṭ*, or independent. He knows everything automatically.

So, this is *jñāna-yoga*: to investigate by philosophical inquiry the nature of the Supreme, from whom everything is emanating. And because the Supreme is explained in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the *Bhāgavatam* teaches the supreme *jñāna-yoga* and *bhakti-yoga* combined. In *bhakti-yoga* the target is the same as in

**Kṛṣṇa is
within you,
and when you
are sincerely
searching
after Kṛṣṇa
by devotion,
He reveals
Himself to you.**

the other *yogas*. The *jñāna-yogī* tries to reach the supreme, ultimate goal by philosophical analysis, the *aṣṭāṅga-yogī* tries to concentrate his mind on the Supreme, and the *bhakti-yogī* simply engages himself in serving the Supreme Lord so that he reveals Himself. The *jñānīs* and mystic *yogīs* try to understand the Lord by the ascending process of knowledge, and the *bhaktas* understand Him by the descending process.

For example, if we are in the darkness of night and we try to understand what the sun is by the ascending process, by shining our very powerful searchlight, we cannot see the sun. But if we use the descending process, then when the sun rises we understand it immediately. The ascending process is the process of induction—using our own endeavor to gain knowledge—and the descending process is deduction. Another example: Suppose I am trying to know whether man is mortal. If I go to my father and he says that man is mortal, and if I accept it, then I have understood the truth by the deductive process. But if I want to use the inductive process to learn whether man is mortal, then I have to study many thousands of men and see whether they are immortal or mortal. This will take so much time, and my knowledge will never

be complete. But if I take the knowledge that man is mortal from a superior authority, then my knowledge is complete. Thus, in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* [10.14.29] it is said,

*athāpi te deva padāmbuja-dvaya-
prasāda leśānugṛhīta eva hi
jānāti tattvaṁ bhagavan mahimno
na cānya eko 'pi ciram vicinvan*

"My dear Lord, a person who has received a little favor from You can understand You very quickly. But those who are trying to understand You by the ascending process may go on speculating for millions of years, yet they will never understand You."

The speculators come to the point of frustration and confusion. "God is zero," they say. If God is zero, then how have so many forms come into being? God is not zero. The *Vedānta-sūtra* says, *janmādy asya yataḥ*: "Everything is generated from the Supreme." Now, we have to study *how* it is generated. That is also explained in the *Vedānta-sūtra*. *Veda* means "knowledge," and *anta* means "ultimate." So *Vedānta* means "the ultimate knowledge." The ultimate knowledge is realization of the Supreme Lord.

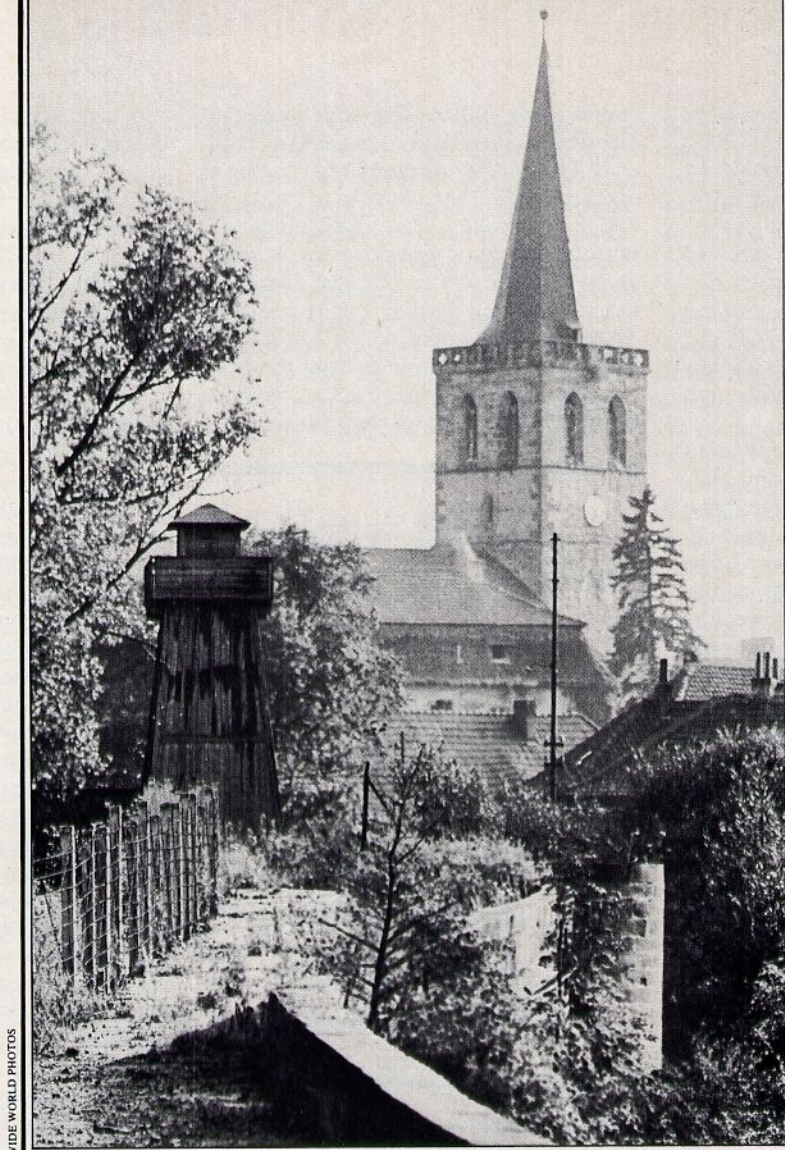
Devotee: Śrīla Prabhupāda, you said that we cannot comprehend the form of Kṛṣṇa with our mind and senses. Then how are we to understand the form of Kṛṣṇa that we see in the pictures and the *mūrtis* [statues]?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: You should simply serve Him; then He will reveal Himself. You cannot understand Kṛṣṇa by the ascending process. You have to serve Kṛṣṇa, and Kṛṣṇa will reveal Himself to you. This is stated in *Bhagavad-gītā* [10.11]:

*teṣāṁ evānukampārtham
aham ajñāna-jaṁ tamaḥ
nāśayāmy ātma-bhāvastho
jñāna-dīpena bhāsvatā*

"Just as a special favor to those who always engage in My service, I vanquish all kinds of darkness and ignorance with the light of knowledge." Kṛṣṇa is within you, and when you are sincerely searching after Kṛṣṇa by the devotional process, He reveals Himself to you. As Kṛṣṇa says in the Eighteenth Chapter of *Bhagavad-gītā*, *bhaktiyā mām abhijānāti*: "One can understand Me only by *bhakti*, the devotional process." And what is *bhakti*? *Bhakti* is this: *śravaṇaṁ kīrtanaṁ viṣṇoḥ*, simply hearing and chanting about Viṣṇu. This is the beginning of *bhakti*. So, if you simply hear talks on Kṛṣṇa sincerely and submissively, then you will understand Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa will reveal Himself to you. Now we

(continued on page 29)



WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

At the border of East and West Germany stand two quite different types of towers.

AT THE EDGE

On this line of confrontation between two powerful political doctrines,
the hope of world peace is precariously balanced.

by SUHOTRA DĀSA

From Autobahn 7, just south of the Hartz Mountain region near Göttingen, West Germany, one can turn east onto a winding country road and follow it over scenic pastoral hills and dales to the old medieval town of Duderstadt, with its cobblestone streets and thousand-year-old city hall. Just another picture postcard German city, one might think—it's seen

SUHOTRA DĀSA, an American citizen, is assistant coordinator for the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement's centers in West Germany.

its better days and is now more or less a tourist preserve for camera-toting outlanders who jostle noisily past the aging local women tending their sidewalk vegetable stands.

Leaving Duderstadt and driving further east on a narrow farm route, one immediately notices how unkempt the countryside becomes, and how the few scattered roadside dwellings appear more and more run-down and lonely—something unusual for wealthy, populous West Germany, with its carefully manicured environs and

standardized way of life. A strange quietness fills the air, and the dusty-tangy smell of cheap coal smoke suddenly wafts along with the spring breeze. Then you see it—a red and white sign with the warning ACHTUNG—GRENZGEBIET! and another in English, 50 METERS TO EAST GERMAN BORDER.

Cresting a hill, the road lies parallel to the infamous "Death Strip," fully visible in the glen below. It runs as far as the eye can see, through forests and across fields—a sixty-foot-wide ribbon of plowed

earth, marked off by fences, barbed wire, and notices that read ACHTUNG! MINEN! ("Attention! Land Mines!"). In the distance, just visible over a far ridge, one can see a watchtower, looking something like an ugly cement UFO perched upon a smokestack. And in a wooded area a few hundred feet beyond the border strip, if you're careful you can just make out the three Communist soldiers in camouflage watching you, with guns at the ready.

It is here that "our world"—the Western Euro-American world of free and easy sensual enjoyment and sophisticated material opulence—comes to its abrupt end. Beyond it lies the forbidding East, with its drudgery, dullness, and totalitarian terror—where "free thought" is not even the privilege of the wealthy few. The very idea of such a place provokes our minds to exasperation, bewilderment, fear. And this heavily guarded frontier region between East and West Germany—the line of confrontation between two powerful political doctrines in opposition—is the edge of stress upon which the delicate hope of world peace is precariously balanced. Should this edge of stress crumble, both sides will topple into nuclear war, and society as we know it may very well cease to exist.

Of course, back in Frankfurt, that "most American of all German cities," one can get back into the swing of things—plenty of clubs, disco halls, and night spots to lose yourself in. One just has to learn to overlook the big U.S. Army base smack in the middle of town, and the long convoys of military traffic clogging the autobahns out of the city, so as not to be reminded of the slender thread on which the revelry is hanging.

And even when you return to supposedly secure Stateside, where the good life abounds, the grim memory of the Death Strip and the threat which lies beyond it pop up again with the news reports about Afghanistan or Cambodia, about next year's defense budget and the draft. Yes, lately even in America the confrontation of East and West is raising the specter of world war in people's minds.

"World war? Nobody wants it." Maybe that's true, but still its inevitability stalks us. From a Kṛṣṇa conscious point of view, the accumulated societal sins of our global civilization make it almost unavoidable. Rampant animal slaughter, legalized abortions, terrorism, the brushfire wars that erupt almost monthly somewhere in the world—Śrīla Prabhupāda told his disciples as early as 1975 that the world could not continue in this way without succumbing to catastrophe. And from a strictly political and economic outlook, things aren't

encouraging, either. The arms race, the oil crunch, and inflation—where will it all end? These days one doesn't have to be a crackpot to fear the worst.

If, as a recent *Time* poll indicated, seventy percent of Americans are worried about a major war in the near future, a natural question on their minds must be, "What are we going to do about it?" Unfortunately, experience from the previous two world wars teaches us that although people had ample warning, they

World war? When we attempt to avoid the question "Who really owns the land?" the logic of politics and war seems inevitable.

either could not or would not do anything to prevent war and insure against its eventual recurrence. For instance, the fever that culminated in the First World War started in 1911, three years before the fighting actually broke out. Three years to wake up and avert disaster—but nothing was done. After that "Great War," statesmen of the world vowed it would never happen again, and they formed the League of Nations. But in 1938, with the Munich crisis, humanity was again poised on the brink of a major conflict, and again nothing was done. Hostilities broke out one year later, and the world plunged into the Second World War, which proved much more destructive than the first. And now, in 1980, world war is once more a dinner-table topic. What can we do?

Let's reconsider that border between East and West Germany, which in many ways represents the very knife edge of the modern world dilemma. Here are some disarmingly simple questions: To whom does that land really belong? Who owned it before it was divided? Who owned it before the German people settled it, and who owned it before the previous occupants, the Celts? Who put it there to begin with?

The sophisticated may scoff, "Uh-oh,

here comes God into the picture. Spare us this theological moralizing." But please notice that when by our sophisticated skepticism or out-and-out atheism we attempt to avoid the question "Who really owns the land?" the logic of politics and war seems inevitable. It is then that the claimants break into arguments that diplomatic rules of order such as those of the U.N. have yet to succeed in containing.

The simple fact is that we human inhabitants of this planet cannot substantiate an absolute claim of ownership over anything—not over the land, the plants, the animals, other people, or even our own bodies—because we cannot independently produce anything. Remember, we are born here in a manner totally beyond our control. We interact briefly with this earthly environment, upon which we are completely dependent for our life's sustenance. And then we are forced to die, and whatever claims we have established are blown away by time. What right do we have to quarrel over things that don't belong to us?

And yet, in a remarkable display of self-assuredness, scientists and philosophers insist that the world belongs to mankind by default, because the ingeniously well ordered biosphere in which we live is a product of random chemical combinations, with no conscious creator to claim it. Such men envision a world government of many flags united by an enlightened scientific materialism. Their utopian suggestions, however, always seem to fall flat in a storm of unsatisfied political opportunism. The atheistic mentality of our modern leaders, whether in America, Russia, or elsewhere, is condemning us to devastating social violence. For all its semblance of rationality, our society is rooted in the ultimate irrationality—the belief that the intricate arrangement of nature, which defies the understanding of the greatest speculators, is produced from blind chance. When leaders of states admit no allegiance to the Supreme, idle theories will not save them from being consumed by their own lust, envy, and greed for power.

"But most of history's bloodshed has been caused by religious disagreement." If that be true, then it only further proves the point. *Religion* and *God* are not synonymous. If a religious process fails to provide realized knowledge of God due to faulty teachings, then God is not to blame—the leaders of that so-called religion are. God is more than just a vague or mysterious idea. He may have many names, but clearly He is one and only one person. And nothing can change that—not even self-righteous designations like "Christian," "Jew," "Muslim," "Buddhist," and "Hindu." History may show that many

wars have been fought between differing religious sects, but that in itself proves only that the adherents of these contesting religions were lacking in knowledge of the factual owner of everything.

If religion is to be successful in revealing God to man, it must offer a process of knowledge that leads one beyond sentiment and fanaticism to a mature understanding of the Supreme Being. The Vedic literatures of India stress the factual realization of God by the process of *yoga* ("linking up"). *Yoga* fulfills the expressed purpose of religion, for it provides the science by which the tiny *jīva*, the eternal individual spark of life that animates each one of us, can rise above the temporary designations of the human species and reestablish its connection with the Supreme Soul, God. This very first step of *yoga*, the understanding that I am not the body but an eternal particle of consciousness, part and parcel of God, immediately dispels the confusion of opposing bodily conceptions like "man" vs. "woman," "black" vs. "white," "young" vs. "old," and "Catholic" vs. "Protestant," which are the source of so much strife in the modern world.

The essential teachings of the *yoga* system were revealed five thousand years ago by Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. And one verse of this great book has been singled out by the foremost *Bhagavad-gītā* commentator in our time, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. This, he says, is the "peace formula" for humanity at large:

*bhoktāraṁ yajña-tapasāṁ
sarva-loka-maheśvaram
suhṛdam sarva-bhūtānāṁ
jñātvā māṁ śāntim rcchati*

"The sages, knowing Me as the ultimate purpose of all sacrifices and austerities, the Supreme Lord of all planets and demigods, and the benefactor and well-wisher of all living entities, attain peace from the pangs of material miseries." (*Bhagavad-gītā* 5.29)

Śrīla Prabhupāda further elaborates: "Under the spell of illusion, living entities are trying to be lords of all they survey, but actually they are dominated by the material energy of the Lord. The Lord is the master of material nature, and the conditioned souls are under the stringent rules of material nature. Unless one understands these bare facts, it is not possible to achieve peace in this world, either individually or collectively."

The philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness explains that the disturbances to peace we experience in the material world are due to ignorance of God, of matter, and of our own inherent spiritual nature. For

the most part, living beings here are surrendered to God, determined instead to play God by grasping at His material energy. To realize this dubious end, they must forfeit the peace of their eternal spiritual consciousness and accept the endless discomforts of birth after birth in various species. Kṛṣṇa's material nature is known as *māyā*, or illusion, and *māyā* is the reward for those who choose to forget Kṛṣṇa. By *māyā*'s influence, God seemingly becomes a myth, and the quest

**Under illusion,
we try
to be lords.
But unless one
understands
Kṛṣṇa
it is impossible
to achieve peace,
individually
or collectively.**

to dominate nature seemingly becomes reality.

While we play our false roles as kings and queens of the world, *māyā* assaults us with an insurmountable succession of miseries—birth, death, disease, and old age—which ultimately drag us down, dashing all of our hopes for mundane glory. In the kingdom of *māyā* we may find opposing regimes erecting fortifications, amassing military might, and vying for control of contested territories; but *māyā* can smash these aspirations at any moment and prove that neither party has the power to defy Kṛṣṇa's jurisdiction.

Actually, we are always poised at the edge of destruction, war or not, since none of us can foresee how long our life in this present body will last. We may make all sorts of physical preparations for World War III, digging bomb shelters or whatever, but we may not live to enjoy our handiwork, having died of a heart attack from the exertion. The most substantial preparation possible is to become God conscious—Kṛṣṇa conscious—now.

Being Kṛṣṇa conscious means we must learn to live out our lives in a way that will please the Lord. According to the Vedic teachings, this entails approaching

a bona fide spiritual master and submissively inquiring from him about the science of Kṛṣṇa. Such a spiritual master can engage one in *bhakti-yoga*, or service to Kṛṣṇa, which begins with chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* and following the basic regulative principles of spiritual life, namely abstinence from meat-eating, illicit sex, gambling, and intoxication. By these simple processes one can know the Lord in truth, cross over the miseries of this temporary world, and go back home, back to Godhead.

These teachings of Lord Kṛṣṇa's peace formula, as explained by Śrīla Prabhupāda and offered to everyone by the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, are admittedly simple proposals for solving a complex problem. They have been available to the Western world since 1966, but they have been largely ignored by top-level policy makers, owing to our modern society's "secular" orientation. Godless politicians have not been able to afford even an experimental investigation into the application of these principles in society, and yet their own exertions seem to be offering us no relief from the dilemmas they are pledged to resolve. History has shown their attempts for peace to be nothing more than a flimsy charade of false promises.

However, the Vedic literatures themselves serve as testimony to the social efficacy of the Kṛṣṇa conscious philosophy, since they were compiled at a time when the important civilizations of the world followed those principles. From the descriptions of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the most esteemed of the *Purāṇas* (Vedic histories), we find that by acknowledging the property rights of Lord Kṛṣṇa, human society was decorated by His blessings in the form of wisdom, opulence, happiness, and peace, the natural conditions of life for devotees of the Lord.

Śrīla Prabhupāda was convinced that it is not too late for us to alter the vicious course of modern history and return to the divine shelter from which we have wandered so far away. He called modern sociopolitical arrangements "decorations on a dead body," because the spiritual foundations of society have long decayed. Therefore, external adjustments to the social body in the name of "detente," "coexistence," "arms limitation," or "containment" cannot check social decline, any more than cosmetics can check the gradual withering of a corpse. But by spiritual inspiration through Kṛṣṇa consciousness, civilization can regain its real life and purpose. For those who recognize the futility of a godless existence of quarrel, uncertainty, and meaningless death, Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings are not to be lightly dismissed.

The Biography of a Pure Devotee

GURU IN A MANHATTAN MONASTERY

He was maestro of the chanting, head of the kitchen,
and spiritual father to a band of wild, candid young Americans.

by ŚRĪLA SATSVARŪPA DĀSA GOSWAMI

Having transplanted Kṛṣṇa consciousness to a small storefront in New York. Śrīla Prabhupāda carefully nurtured his first disciples with a variety of spiritual activities.

August 1966

It was makeshift—a storefront-turned-temple and a two-room apartment transformed into the guru's residence and study—but it was complete nonetheless. It was a complete monastery amid the city slums. The temple (the storefront) was quickly becoming known among the hip underground of the Lower East Side; the courtyard was a strangely peaceful place for aspiring monks, with its little garden, bird sanctuary, and trees, squeezed in between the front and rear buildings; the Swami's back room was the inner sanctum of the monastery. Each room had a flavor all its own—or rather, it took on its particular character from Swami's activities there.

The temple room was his *kīrtana* and lecture hall. The lecture was always serious and formal. Even from the beginning, when there was no dais and he had to sit on a straw mat facing a few guests, it was clear he was here to instruct, not to invite casual give-and-take dialogue. Questions had to wait until he finished speaking. The audience would sit on the floor and listen for forty-five minutes as he delivered the Vedic knowledge intact, always speaking on the basis of Vedic authority—quoting Sanskrit, quoting the previous spiritual masters, giving perfect knowledge based on reason and argument. While contending with noises of the street, he lectured with exacting scholarship and deeply committed devotion. It seemed he had long ago mastered all the references and conclusions of his predecessors and had even come to anticipate all intellectual challenges.

He also held *kīrtanas* in the storefront. Like the lectures, the *kīrtanas* were serious, but they were not so formal; Prabhupāda was lenient during *kīrtana*.

Visitors would bring wooden flutes, harmoniums, guitars, and they would follow the melody or create their own improvisations. Someone brought an old string bass and bow, and an inspired guest could always pick up the bow and play along. Some of the boys had found the innards of an upright piano, waiting on the curb with someone's garbage, and they had brought it to the temple and placed it near the entrance. During a *kīrtana*, freewheeling guests would run their hands over the wires, creating strange vibrations. Robert Nelson had brought a large cymbal that now hung from the ceiling, dangling close by the Swami's dais.

But there was a limit to the extravagance. Sometimes when a newcomer picked up the *karatālas* and played them in a beat other than the standard one-two-three, Swamiji would ask one of the boys to correct him, even at the risk of offending the guest. Prabhupāda led the chanting and drummed with one hand on a small bongo. Even on this little bongo drum, he played Bengali *mṛdaṅga* rhythms so interesting that a local conga drummer used to come just to hear: "The Swami gets in some good licks."

The Swami's *kīrtanas* were a new high, and the boys would glance at each other with widening eyes and shaking heads as they responded to his chanting, comparing it to their previous drug experiences and signaling each other favorably: "This is great. It's better than LSD!" "Hey, man, I'm really getting high on this." And Prabhupāda encouraged their newfound intoxication.

As maestro of these *kīrtanas*, he was also acting expertly as *guru*. Lord Caitanya had said, "There are no hard-and-fast rules for chanting the holy name," and Prabhupāda brought the chanting to the Lower East Side just that way. "A kindergarten of spiritual life," he once called the temple. Here he taught the ABCs of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, lecturing from *Bhagavad-gītā* and leading the group chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa. Sometimes, after the final *kīrtana* he would invite those who were interested to join him for further talks in his apartment.

In the back room of his apartment Prabhupāda was usually alone, especially in the early morning hours—two, three, and four a.m.—when almost no one else was awake. In these early hours his room was silent, and he worked alone in the intimacy of his relationship with Kṛṣṇa. He would sit on the floor behind his suitcase-desk, worshiping Kṛṣṇa by typing the translations and purports of his *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

But this same back room was also used for meetings, and anyone who brought himself to knock on the Swami's door could enter and speak with him at any time, face to face. Prabhupāda would sit back from his typewriter and give his time to talking, listening, answering questions, sometimes arguing or joking. A visitor might sit alone with him for half an hour before someone else would knock and Swamiji would invite the newcomer to join them. New guests would come and others would go, but Swamiji stayed and sat and talked.

Generally, visits were formal—his guests would ask philosophical questions, and he would answer, much the same as after a lecture in the storefront. But occasionally some of the more committed boys would monopolize his time—especially on Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday, and Sunday nights, when there was no evening lecture in the temple. Often they would ask him personal questions: What was it like when he first came to New York? What about India? Did he have followers there? Were his family members devotees of Kṛṣṇa? What was his spiritual master like? And then Prabhupāda would talk in a different way—quieter, more intimate and humorous.

He told how one morning in New York he had first seen snow and thought someone had whitewashed the buildings. He told how he had spoken at several churches in Butler, and when the boys asked what kind of churches they were he smiled and replied, "I don't know," and they laughed with him. He would reminisce freely about the British control of India and about Indian politics. He told them it was not so much Gandhi as

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

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Subhas Chandra Bose who had liberated India. Subhas Chandra Bose had gone outside of India and started the Indian National Army; he entered into an agreement with Hitler that Indian soldiers fighting for British India who surrendered to the Germans could be returned to the Indian National Army to fight against the British. And it was this show of force by Bose, more than Gandhi's nonviolence, which led to India's independence.

He talked of his childhood at the turn of the century, when street lamps were gas-lit and carriages and horse-drawn trams were the only vehicles on Calcutta's dusty streets. These talks charmed the boys even more than the transcendental philosophy of *Bhagavad-gītā* and drew them affectionately to him. He told about his father, Gour Mohan De, a pure Vaiṣṇava. His father had been a cloth merchant, and his family had been intimately related with the aristocratic Mulliks of Calcutta. The Mulliks had a Deity of Kṛṣṇa, and Prabhupāda's father had given him a Deity to worship as a child. He used to imitate the worship of the Govinda Deity in the Mullik's temple. As a boy, he had held his own Ratha-yātrā festivals each year, imitating in miniature the gigantic festival at Jagannātha Purī, and his father's friends used to joke: "Oh, the Ratha-yātrā ceremony is going on at your home, and you do not invite us? What is this?" His father would reply, "This is a child's play, that's all." But the neighbors said, "Oh, child's play? You are avoiding us by saying it's for children?"

Prabhupāda fondly remembered his father, who had never wanted him to be a worldly man, who had given him lessons in *mṛdaṅga*, and who had prayed to visiting *sādhus* that one day the boy would grow up to be a devotee of Rādhārāṇī.

One night he told how he had met his spiritual master. He told how he had begun his own chemical business but had left home and in 1959 had taken *sannyāsa*. The boys were interested, but so ignorant of the things Prabhupāda was talking about that at the mention of a word like *mṛdaṅga* or *sannyāsa* they would have to ask what it meant, and he would go on conversational tangents describing Indian spices, Indian drums, even Indian women. And whatever he spoke about, he would eventually shine upon it the light of the *śāstra*. He did not ration out such talk, but gave it out abundantly by the hour, day after day, as long as there was a real, live inquirer.

At noon the front room became a dining hall and in the evenings a place of intimate worship. Prabhupāda had kept the room, with its twelve-foot-square hardwood parquet floor, clean and bare; the solitary coffee table against the wall

between the two courtyard windows was the only furniture. Daily at noon a dozen men were now taking lunch here with him. The meal was cooked by Keith, who spent the whole morning in the kitchen.

At first Keith had cooked only for the Swami. He had mastered the art of cooking *dāl*, rice, and *sabji* in the Swami's three-tiered boiler, and usually there had been enough for one or two guests as well. But soon more guests had begun to gather, and Prabhupāda had told Keith to increase the quantity (abandoning the small three-tiered cooker) until he was

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cooking for a dozen hungry men. The boarders, Raphael and Don, though not so interested in the Swami's talk, would arrive punctually each day for *prasādam*, usually with a friend or two who had wandered into the storefront. Steve would drop by from his job at the welfare office. The Mott Street group would come. And there were others.

The kitchen was stocked with standard Indian spices: fresh chilies, fresh ginger root, whole cumin seeds, turmeric, and asafetida. Keith mastered the basic cooking techniques and passed them on to Chuck, who became his assistant. Some of the other boys would stand at the doorway of the narrow kitchenette to watch Keith, as one thick, pancakelike *capātī* after another blew up like an inflated football over the open flame and then took its place in the steaming stack.

While the fine *bhasmatī* rice boiled to a moist, fluffy-white finish and the *sabji* simmered, the noon cooking would climax with "the *chaunce*." Keith prepared the *chaunce* exactly as Swamiji had shown him. Over the flame he set a small metal cup, half filled with clarified butter, and then put in cumin seeds. When the seeds turned almost black he added chilies, and as the chilies blackened, a choking smoke began to pour from the cup. Now the *chaunce* was ready. With his cook's tongs,

Keith lifted the cup, its boiling, crackling mixture fuming like a sorcerer's kettle, and brought it to the edge of the pot of boiling *dāl*. He opened the tight cover slightly, dumped the boiling *chaunce* into the *dāl*, and immediately replaced the lid. . . . POW! The meeting of the *chaunce* and *dāl* created an explosion, which was then greeted by cheers from the doorway, signifying that the cooking was now complete. This final operation was so volatile that it once blew the top of the pot to the ceiling with a loud smash, causing minor burns to Keith's hand. Some of the neighbors complained of acrid, penetrating fumes. But the devotees loved it.

When lunch was ready, Swamiji would wash his hands and mouth in the bathroom and come out into the front room, his soft, pink-bottomed feet always bare, his saffron *dhotī* reaching down to his ankles. He would stand by the coffee table, which held the picture of Lord Caitanya and His associates, while his own associates stood around him against the walls. Keith would bring in a big tray of *capātīs*, stacked by the dozens, and place it on the floor before the altar table along with pots of rice, *dāl*, and *sabji*. Swamiji would then recite the Bengali prayer for offering food to the Lord, and all present would follow him by bowing down, knees and head to the floor, and approximating the Bengali prayer one word at a time. While the steam and mixed aromas drifted up like an offering of incense before the picture of Lord Caitanya, the Swami's followers bowed their heads to the wooden floor and mumbled the prayer.

Prabhupāda then sat with his friends, eating the same *prasādam* as they, with the addition of a banana and a metal bowl full of hot milk. He would slice the banana by pushing it downward against the edge of the bowl, letting the slices fall into the hot milk.

Prabhupāda's open decree that everyone should eat as much *prasādam* as possible created a humorous mood and a family feeling. No one was allowed simply to sit, picking at his food, nibbling politely. They ate with a gusto Swamiji almost insisted upon. If he saw someone not eating heartily, he would smilingly protest, "Why are you not eating? Take *prasādam*." And he would laugh. "When I was coming to your country on the boat," he said, "I thought, 'How will the Americans ever eat this food?'" And as the boys pushed their plates forward for more, Keith would serve seconds—more rice, *dāl*, *capātīs*, and *sabji*.

After all, it was spiritual. You were supposed to eat a lot. It would purify you. It would free you from *māyā*. Besides, it was good, delicious, spicy. This was better

than American food. It was like chanting. You got high from eating this food.

They ate with the right hand, Indian style. Keith and Howard had already learned this and had even tasted similar dishes, but as they told the Swami and a room full of believers, the food in India had never been this good.

One boy, Stanley, was quite young, and Prabhupāda, almost like a doting father, watched over him as he ate. Stanley's

had all taken a full plate, he would come back and ask us to take more.

Once he came up to me and asked what I would like more of—would I like some more sweet rice? In my early misconception of spiritual life, I thought I should deny myself what I liked best, so I asked for some more plain rice. But even that "plain" rice was fancy yellow rice with fried cheese balls.

On off nights his apartment was quiet.



The ceremony of "bells." Śrīla Prabhupāda would ring brass bells in his left hand while waving sticks of incense with the other. He would perform the ancient *āratī* ceremony each night, although none of his young followers knew what it was or what it meant.

mother had personally met Prabhupāda and said that only if he took personal care of her son would she allow him to live in the monastery. Prabhupāda complied. He diligently encouraged the boy until Stanley gradually took on a voracious appetite and began consuming ten *capātīs* at a sitting (and would have taken more had Swamiji not told him to stop). But aside from Swamiji's limiting Stanley to ten *capātīs*, the word was always, "More . . . take more." When Prabhupāda was finished, he would rise and leave the room, Keith would catch a couple of volunteers to help him clean, and the others would leave.

Occasionally, on a Sunday, Prabhupāda himself would cook a feast with special Indian dishes.

Steve: Swamiji personally cooked the prasādam and then served it to us upstairs in his front room. We all sat in rows, and I remember him walking up and down in between the rows of boys, passing before us with his bare feet and serving us with a spoon from different pots. He would ask what did we want—did we want more of this? And he would serve us with pleasure. These dishes were not ordinary, but sweets and savories—like sweet rice and ka-caurīs—with special tastes. Even after we

He might remain alone for the whole evening, typing and translating *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, or talking in a relaxed atmosphere to just one or two guests until ten. But on meeting nights—Monday, Wednesday, and Friday—there was activity in every room. He wasn't alone any more. His new followers were helping him, and they shared in his spirit of trying to get people to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and hear about Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

In the back room, he worked on his translation of the *Bhāgavatam* or spoke with guests up until six, when he would go to take his bath. Sometimes he would have to wait until the bathroom was free. He had introduced his young followers to the practice of taking two baths a day, and now he was sometimes inconvenienced by having to share his bathroom.

After his bath he would come into the front room, where his assembled followers would sit around him. He would sit on a mat facing his picture of the Pañca-tattva, and after putting a few drops of water in his left palm from a small metal spoon and bowl, he would rub a lump of Vṛndāvana clay in the water, making a wet paste. He would then apply the clay markings of Vaiṣṇava *tilaka*, dipping into the yellowish paste in his left hand with

the ring finger of his right. He would scrape wet clay from his palm, and while looking into a small mirror which he held deftly between the thumb and pinkie of his left hand, he would mark a vertical clay strip up his forehead and then trim the clay into two parallel lines by placing the little finger of his right hand between his eyebrows and running it upward past the hairline, clearing a path in the still-moist clay. Then he marked eleven other places on his body, while the boys sat observing, sometimes asking questions or sometimes speaking their own understandings of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Prabhupāda: My Guru Mahārāja used to put on *tilaka* without a mirror.

Devotee: Did it come out neat?

Prabhupāda: Neat or not neat, that does not matter. Yes, it was also neat.

Prabhupāda would then silently recite the *Gāyatrī mantra*. Holding his *brāhmaṇa*'s sacred thread and looping it around his right thumb, he would sit erect, silently moving his lips. His bare shoulders and arms were quite thin, as was his chest, but he had a round, slightly protruding belly. His complexion was as satiny smooth as a young boy's, except for his face, which bore signs of age. The movements of his hands were methodical, aristocratic, yet delicate.

He picked up two brass bells in his left hand and began ringing them. Then, lighting two sticks of incense from the candle near the picture of Lord Caitanya and His associates, he began waving the incense slowly in small circles before Lord Caitanya, while still ringing the bells. He looked deeply at the picture and continued cutting spirals of fragrant smoke, all the while ringing the bells. None of the boys knew what he was doing, although he did it every evening. But it was a ceremony. It meant something. The boys began to call the ceremony "bells."

After bells Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, it would usually be time for the evening *kīrtana*. Some of the devotees would already be downstairs greeting guests and explaining about the Swami and the chanting. But without the Swami, nothing could begin. No one knew how to sing or drum, and no one dared think of leading the *mantra*-chanting without him. Only when he entered at seven o'clock could they begin.

Freshly showered and dressed in his clean Indian handwoven cloth, his arms and body decorated with the arrowlike Vaiṣṇava markings, Prabhupāda would leave his apartment and go downstairs to face another ecstatic opportunity to glorify Kṛṣṇa. The tiny temple would be crowded with wild, unbrahminical, candid young Americans.

(To be continued)

SPEAKING OUT

Does Each Person Have His Own Truth?

Stambha dāsa oversees a Kṛṣṇa conscious center in State College, Pennsylvania, where this exchange took place.

Student: I don't think that someone else, a book or some person, can tell me what is reality for me, because I am an individual, with my own experiences and existence. I think each individual is his own truth and he is the only one who knows what's best for him.

Stambha dāsa: Do you mean that truth is mere subjective opinion? In other words, do you really mean that my opinion is true by virtue of its being my opinion and that your opinion is true by virtue of its being your opinion?

Student: Yes.

Stambha dāsa: Are you sure? Are you sure that my opinion is true, just by virtue of its being my opinion?

Student: Yes.

Stambha dāsa: Well, my opinion, then, is that truth is absolute, not opinion, and that you are absolutely wrong in saying that truth is subjective. And since this is my opinion, you have to grant that it's true, according to your philosophy.

Student: Well . . . that may be true for you, but not for me.

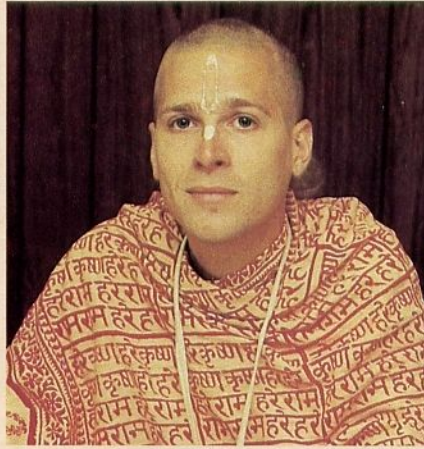
Stambha dāsa: No, no. That's not logical. If you allow that for me truth is absolute, then you have allowed that there *is* an Absolute Truth. And *absolute* means "complete." Therefore, if you allow that a truth is absolute, that truth must be "complete," or containing all other truths. There cannot be a truth which is not contained in that complete truth, if it is indeed complete or absolute. Therefore, since my truth is absolute, it is superior to your so-called truth.

Student: But I think that truth is what each individual believes it to be.

Stambha dāsa: Do you mean that if you believe that two plus two equals five, it must equal five just because you *believe* that it does?

Student: If that's what I believe, then it's true for me.

Stambha dāsa: All right. Someone please go get me a whole stack of one-dollar bills. Now, according to you, since this is your truth and since we want you to be able to dwell in truth and not live a lie, I'll hand you two one-dollar bills and then two more, and you can give me a five-dollar bill in return. And then again I'll give you two more plus two more, and you can give me another five-dollar bill, and in this way we will pass the entire



night very happily. Okay?

Student: (silence)

Stambha dāsa: You see, this is the difficulty. This is the practical difference: these relative truths cannot be satisfactorily *practiced*. They're just so much talk. Everyone is talking. But philosophy is not just mental speculation and mental gymnastics. Philosophy is meant to guide the activities of one's life. So much armchair philosophy, so many parlor-room truths. But then when it comes time to practice these so-called truths, no one can do it. Therefore, you can only *speak* your truth, whereas we are able to live our truth, and very happily. So who is living reality and who is living a lie or some mental dream?

We hear so many people talk so much, yet in their lives they can't stick to their philosophy. For example, there are some scientists who are always saying that life is nothing but a combination of chemicals. But when we say, "All right, so if we give you the chemicals can you produce life?" they can't do it.

Because these philosophies are imperfect, relative truths, they don't bring satisfaction to the self, which is hankering for absolute, eternal truth. Kṛṣṇa says in the *Bhagavad-gītā* that that which is true now but is not true tomorrow is not actually truth. Truth is eternal. It's true for all people in all times and all places. Only this will actually satisfy us.

Our subjective truths are simply sources of uncertainty, because with subjective truth we actually *don't know*. We have to admit to ourselves that we don't know anything for certain, and this uncertainty causes continuous anxiety, anxiety rooted in ignorance.

We are thinking, "Should I go to this college? Should I take this job? Should I rent this apartment?" We want to know

what will make us happy, but practically every one of us has found that we have made so many wrong decisions in the past. So we should admit, therefore, that what we're presently considering by this subjective process is not at all certain to bring us happiness. But even though we've made so many mistakes and gone through so much frustration and anxiety, we are so egotistical that we can't admit that we really don't know what is in our best interest. We can't just be humble and agree to hear from Kṛṣṇa, from God Himself, the one who is in full knowledge of past, present, and future, who is fully conscious of everything, and who has been followed to success by great sages since time immemorial.

As long as we don't have *ātma-jñāna*, knowledge of the self, as long as we don't know what this material world is, who God is, where we have come from, what the goal of our lives is, and what will happen to us at the time of death—as long as we are uncertain about these matters, there can only be anxiety in our lives, no matter what pleasant distractions we may arrange for our senses, no matter what so-called philosophies or subjective truths we may try to pacify ourselves with.

We take advice from so many friends, counselors, and teachers. "What do you think I ought to do?" So if we just hear from the supreme friend, the supreme teacher, Kṛṣṇa, then we can be situated in real truth and happiness. Kṛṣṇa says, "This knowledge is joyful." But how can someone be joyful if he doesn't know if he's going in the right direction?

Sometimes when you're driving you're not sure whether you turned in the right direction, and you suspect that you may in fact be going the wrong way. Then every mile you travel is simply anxiety. You don't know whether to go sixty miles an hour or twenty miles an hour, because if you're going in the wrong direction you don't want to go too far too fast. On the other hand, if you're going in the right direction you want to get to your destination as soon as possible. So a life without spiritual knowledge is full of a similar anxiety. We see so many people with motivational problems in their lives. We're in so much anxiety until we get some assurance, some highway marker that shows we're going in the right direction. Guidance from the bona fide scriptures and spiritual master is essential, so that we can be free from anxiety and work confidently toward the goal of life. ❧

Yoga Mush and the Jerk Divine

On the one hand, how could anyone be so stupid as to fall for such crass hucksterism.
On the other hand, they sure could.

by RAVĪNDRA SVARŪPA DĀSA

One fall day in 1972, the part of Philadelphia called University City was overrun by bright yellow posters. A rapid metastasis followed. The next day the posters had taken over Center City, and yellow tendrils were reaching delicately along main avenues toward the outlying districts. The following morning all the telephone poles on the street before our Kṛṣṇa temple were infested with shining yellow squares.

Early that morning a zealous young devotee barged into my office. (I was then the temple president.) Fired with outrage, he shoved a poster before me. "Now they're right out front!" he moaned. "We have to put a stop to this! There's *no way* we can let this go on!"

He was very young, and his obvious innocence fortunately made tolerable his headstrong and dogmatic ways. What's more, the poster justified his anger.

In bold black letters the poster said:

KRISHNA MEDITATED: HE BECAME GOD, THE LOVE DIVINE.

BUDDHA MEDITATED: HE BECAME GOD, THE KNOWLEDGE DIVINE.

JESUS MEDITATED: HE BECAME GOD, THE FORGIVENESS DIVINE.

NOW GOD WANTS YOU TO MEDITATE, SO YOU CAN BECOME GOD. . .

In smaller type it announced that members of a New York *yoga* group were coming down in a week to offer an introductory presentation at the University of Pennsylvania Christian Association.

"Well?" demanded the ardent devotee, an edge of challenge in his voice. "What are we going to do about it?" He meant, of course, what was *I* going to do.

"What we're already doing," I said. "Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. Distribute more and more *Gītās* and *Back to Godheads*. What else?"

This was not acceptable. He demanded action. The atheistic poster was everywhere. Now, he said, all a person had to do was walk down the street to be told that Kṛṣṇa began as an ordinary guy, and

that any ordinary guy could likewise become God. It loudly proclaimed there was no difference between man and God. It blasphemed the Supreme Lord. If I tolerated that blasphemy, my friend warned, I would lose all my "pious credit," become devoid of the results of my devotional service. He showed me my duty; he quoted verses; he demanded action.

"The posters are already there," I protested. "It's too late."

"Well then!" he exclaimed triumphantly, "when they come to town you could go and challenge them! You could *smash* the rascals!" He snatched up the bright poster and thumped the bottom, the invitation for all ambitious souls to begin becoming God.

"See! Don't you see what they're up to! It's a mystic *yoga* factory! They're going to set up a mystic *yoga* factory right here in this city! You've got to stop them! You've got to!"

"Yeah!" said voices together. During the devotee's tirade several others had gathered in the room. The poster went back for their inspection.

I was thinking. On the one hand, how many could be so stupid as to fall for the crass hucksterism of the poster? "First Krishna; then Buddha; then Jesus; and NOW—YOU! Yes, *you too* . . ." Could anyone take that seriously? On the other hand, they sure could. We had them come often enough into our temple to announce their divinity. Once one of them had taken me aside after a Sunday feast to confide solemnly, "I am very pleased by the way you are worshipping Me here."

God had become dirt cheap. It was common to meet these do-it-yourself Gods, made right in their own homes with medicine mixed in basements. It was already a cottage industry. So why not mass-produce them in a mystic factory? It was a sure thing.

The group with the poster was deeply impressed.

"Heavy duty!"

"Wow! Is this ever *impersonal* philosophy!"

Mincingly, someone said, "So *you* become God, the *jerk* divine . . ."

I cleared my office, and began thinking of what could be done . . .

Here was an egregious instance of what we recognized as the ultimate spiritual disease, the philosophy of impersonal oneness that proclaims man to be God. The speculative doctrines of impersonalism had been propounded in India for thousands of years, and for thousands of years our own tradition of *bhakti*, devotion to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, had opposed them. And now the battle had spread to Western soil.

According to impersonalists, the absolute truth ("Brahman" in Sanskrit, but you could call it "God") is a completely undifferentiated spiritual unity; it has no variety in it, no form, no qualities, no relations. Moreover, it is the *only* reality. The existence of any other entity, they claim, would limit it. Thus the world we see about us, in all its profusion of shapes, smells, sounds, colors, and tastes, is an illusion, *māyā*. There is only one homogeneous spiritual entity, and that alone is real. All else is false. You and I, as particular individuals, are in truth non-existent. When Brahman is covered by *māyā*, the illusion of individual existence arises.

What is inexplicable in this philosophy is the existence of illusion itself. How did that illusion arise? How could it cover Brahman? Impersonalists try to make illusion more powerful than the Supreme. For them, illusion in its individual aspect is a finite person; illusion in its collective aspect is given the name "God." Thus, the one Supreme Person is an illusion, the infinitely many subordinate persons are illusions, and *bhakti*, the devotional service of the many to the One, is also an illusion. So although impersonalists may make free use of the word *God*, in fact they are rigorously atheistic.

To support their impersonalism, they appeal to the idea that the Supreme must be unlimited and unconditioned. And all name and form, they say, are limitations. Individuality is a limitation. The Supreme, then, can properly be understood only through the complete elimination of all such limiting ideas, by the denial of all names, forms, actions, and attributes. "*Neti, neti*," they say: "Not this, not that." This procedure alone secures the transcendence of the Supreme, they say,

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and keeps it from coming under the confinement of our materially entrenched conceptions.

They do not recognize, however, that definition by negation has its own inherent limitation. We may negate conceptions of material qualities, relations, and forms, but the corresponding negations are themselves material ideas. If "form," for instance, is a material concept, then "formless" is also material. This is because the idea of "formless" depends for its meaning upon the idea of "form." "Formless" requires "form" if it is to have any sense at all. Thus "nameless," "formless," "qualityless," and so on are only *relative material conceptions* of the Supreme; they cannot precisely describe the Supreme. Definition by negation, then, is incomplete.

Can we complete the process of definition? We start with "form," then by negation go to "formless." Where can we go from there? "Form" and "formless" seem to exhaust the alternatives. We can't go back to material form; nor do we want to get hung up in some interminable blow-your-own-mind effort to realize the "unity" of "form" and "formless." (Many impersonalists do this.) But let us examine the starting point again, this time more carefully. We start not with "form" but more precisely with "material form." And our negation, "formless," means "no material form." Now we can see our way through the barrier, to the affirmation that is finally called for: "spiritual form." Here we have the factual unity or synthesis of "form" and "formless": there is form, but no (material) form. Thus we must conclude that the Supreme Absolute Truth has spiritual or transcendental form and, by the same token, transcendental names, qualities, activities, and relations.

And it makes good sense. We can agree that the Supreme must be unlimited, but isn't it paradoxical that the impersonal conception of the Supreme, arrived at by relentless denial, is of an entity so systematically stripped of everything—form, attributes, and relations—that it is cognitively no different from the idea of nothing at all? (Indeed, some impersonalists like to speak of the "Divine Nothingness" or "Nonbeing.") But nullity, nothingness, is the ultimate in limitation. On the other hand, the personal conception of God as a being full of transcendental or spiritual forms, qualities, activities, and relationships without limit really does indicate one who is the greatest of all.

Our reasoning can show that the Supreme has transcendental variegatedness, but it cannot tell us the specific, concrete facts about that variegatedness. At this point we have to drop our efforts to understand God by our own mental prowess, and we have to hear, submissively, from the *Vedas*, from the transcendental

sound that comes from the Supreme Himself. That sound discloses in full the specific name, form, opulences, and activities of the Supreme, which are beyond the effulgence of impersonal Brahman: It is Kṛṣṇa, the all-attractive, whose transcendental bluish-black form glows like a new raincloud illuminated by lightning within, whose jewel-bedecked hands lift a silver flute to His lips, whose eyes, beautiful like lotus petals, roam restless with love over His devotees in the eternal kingdom of God.

The impersonalists hanker to merge into the effulgence of the Supreme. But

**If form is material,
formless is also.
We start
with form,
then by negation
go to formless.
Where can we go
from there?**

when they hear about the form beyond that effulgence, the transcendental form of Kṛṣṇa, the embodiment of all beauty, they think of it as material, as *māyā*. This is because their own mentality is so rigidly materialistic. They are unable to accept the notion of "transcendental form" because as far as they are concerned *all* form is material. This keeps them stuck in their negations. But why should we impose our material ideas of name, form, qualities, and actions on God? Who says that *all* form has to be material form?

It is true that mundane mind and senses cannot conceive of the Supreme, but there is no reason why we have to be limited to mundane mind and senses. We can, in fact, directly experience the transcendental nature of the form, qualities, and activities of Kṛṣṇa when our own mind and senses have been completely purified and spiritualized by total absorption in devotional service to God (*bhakti*), which begins with the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa. We can then personally enter into the endless pastimes of Kṛṣṇa.

To understand God you must become a servant of God. But an impersonalist is unwilling to do that. He is ambitious. He wants to become God Himself. Therefore he is hostile toward the actual Personality of Godhead, and because of that hostility he persists in a perverse logic that tries to

make the Supreme a nonentity. The impersonalist's "*neti, neti, neti*" is a sword with which he attacks the transcendental Supreme Person, trying to mince Him down to nothing. He tries to kill Kṛṣṇa in order to take His place.

I had witnessed the impersonalists' policy of denigrating God even in their casual, offhand remarks. Once, for instance, at a Sunday feast I was speaking to a guest about Kṛṣṇa, and she stopped me to say, "Oh, don't *spoil* it by giving it a *name!*" What would she think if someone spoke of her that way?

"Karen's quite a nice girl."

"Oh, don't spoil it by giving it a name!"

And countless times I've heard the remark, "Oh, I think God is just energy." Note the word *just*. Here we are talking about the Supreme, and we have to say "just." I am a person with senses and intelligence, but God, who is supposed to be greater, is "just energy."

The *yoga* society's poster revealed the same implicit enmity toward God. No difference between you and Kṛṣṇa; no need, then, to surrender to Him and serve Him. *You* be God! The claim that Kṛṣṇa meditated to become God certainly brought *Him* down to size. It also arrogantly contradicted Kṛṣṇa's own revelation in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, as well as the standard history of Kṛṣṇa's appearance in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, another Vedic text.

We discussed this point that evening in the *Gītā* class, considering in particular one incident from Kṛṣṇa's history, the story of Kṛṣṇa and the demoness Pūtānā.

Kṛṣṇa says in the *Gītā* that He comes to the material world with a mission: to establish religious principles, to protect the devotees, and to destroy the atheists. When atheistic and demonic rulers oppressed the earth five thousand years ago, Kṛṣṇa appeared in the family of the chief of them, a usurper named Kaṁsa. Prophecy warned Kaṁsa that one of his nephews was destined to kill him. Kaṁsa therefore imprisoned his sister and her husband and killed their newborn children one by one. Their eighth child, Kṛṣṇa, was covertly taken from the capital on the night of His birth and hidden in Gokula, a small village of cowherds, where He was put under the care of Nanda, the chief of the herdsmen, and his wife Yaśodā. When Kaṁsa learned that the eighth child had eluded him, he sent his allies out into the countryside to kill every child born around that time.

One of these allies was Pūtānā, an adept in black arts. She had attained powers through mystic *yoga*: she could travel swiftly through the sky and alter her bodily form at will. Under the order of Kaṁsa, Pūtānā roamed the countryside killing babies, a task for which she was

(continued on page 27)

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. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda, Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

Second Canto: "The Cosmic Manifestation"

CHAPTER FIVE

The Cause of All Causes

In this section of our ongoing presentation of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, the great sage Nārada receives knowledge of the creation from Lord Brahmā, his father and the secondary creator of our universe. Brahmā receives inspiration for his creative task from the supremely intelligent Lord Viṣṇu.

PURPORT

The five elements, namely sky, air, fire, water and earth, are all but different qualities of the darkness of false ego. This means that the false ego in the sum total form of *mahat-tattva* is generated from the marginal potency of the Lord, and due to this false ego of lording it over the material creation, ingredients are generated for the false enjoyment of the living being. The living being is practically the dominating factor over the material elements as the enjoyer, though the background is the Supreme Lord. Factually, save and except the Lord, no one can be called the enjoyer, but the living entity falsely desires to become the enjoyer. This is the origin of false ego. When the bewildered living being desires this, the shadow elements are generated by the will of the Lord, and the living entities are allowed to run after them as after a phantasmagoria.

It is said that first the *tan-mātrā* sound is created and then the sky, and in this verse it is confirmed that actually it is so, but sound is the subtle form of the sky, and the distinction is like that between the seer and the seen. The sound is the representation of the actual object, as the sound produced speaking of the object gives an idea of the description of the object. Therefore sound is the subtle characteristic of the object. Similarly, sound representation of the Lord, in terms of His characteristics, is the complete form of the Lord, as was seen by Vasudeva and Mahārāja Daśaratha, the fathers of Lord Kṛṣṇa and Lord Rāma. The sound representation of the Lord is nondifferent from the Lord Himself because the Lord and His representation in sound are absolute knowledge. Lord Caitanya has instructed us that in the holy name of the Lord, as sound representation of the Lord, all the potencies of the Lord are invested. Thus one can immediately enjoy the association of the Lord by the pure vibration of the sound representation of His holy name, and the concept of the Lord is immediately manifested before the pure devotee. A pure devotee, therefore, is not aloof from the Lord even for a moment. The holy name of the Lord, as recommended in the *sāstras*—Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare—may therefore be constantly chanted by the devotee aspiring to be constantly in touch with the Supreme Lord. One who is thus able to associate with the Lord is sure to be delivered from the darkness of the created world, which is a product of false ego (*tamasi mā jyotir gama*).

TEXTS 26-29

नमसोऽथ विकुर्वाणादभूत् स्पर्शगुणोऽनिलः ।
परान्वयाच्छब्दवांश्च प्राण ओजः सहो बलम् ॥२६॥

वायोरपि विकुर्वाणात् कालकर्मस्वभावतः ।
उदपद्यत तेजो वै रूपवत् स्पर्शशब्दवत् ॥२७॥
तेजसस्तु विकुर्वाणादासीदम्भो रसात्मकम् ।
रूपवत् स्पर्शश्चाम्भो धोपवच्च परान्वयात् ॥२८॥
विशेषस्तु विकुर्वाणादम्भसो गन्धवानभूत् ।
परान्वयाद् रसस्पर्शशब्दरूपगुणान्वितः ॥२९॥

*nabhaso 'tha vikurvāṇād
abhūt sparśa-guṇo 'nilah
parānvayāc chabdavāṁś ca
prāṇa ojaḥ saho balam*

*vāyor api vikurvāṇāt
kāla-karma-svabhāvataḥ
udapadyata tejo vai
rūpavat sparśa-śabdavat*

*tejasas tu vikurvāṇād
āsīd ambho rasātmakam
rūpavat sparśavac cāmbho
ghoṣavac ca parānvayāt*

*viśeṣas tu vikurvāṇād
ambhaso gandhavān abhūt
parānvayād rasa-sparśa-
śabda-rūpa-guṇānvitāḥ*

nabhasaḥ—of the sky; *atha*—thus; *vikurvāṇāt*—being transformed; *abhūt*—generated; *sparśa*—touch; *guṇaḥ*—quality; *anilah*—air; *para*—previous; *anvayāt*—by succession; *śabdavān*—full of sound; *ca*—also; *prāṇaḥ*—life; *ojaḥ*—sense perception; *sahaḥ*—fat; *balam*—strength; *vāyoḥ*—of the air; *api*—also; *vikurvāṇāt*—by transformation; *kāla*—time; *karma*—reaction of the past; *svabhāvataḥ*—on the basis of nature; *udapadyata*—generated; *tejaḥ*—fire; *vai*—duly; *rūpavat*—with form; *sparśa*—touch; *śabdavat*—with sound also; *tejasah*—of the fire; *tu*—but; *vikurvāṇāt*—on being transformed; *āsīt*—it so happened; *ambhaḥ*—water; *rasa-ātmakam*—composed of juice; *rūpavat*—with form; *sparśavat*—with touch; *ca*—and; *ambhaḥ*—water; *ghoṣavat*—with sound; *ca*—and; *para*—previous; *anvayāt*—by succession; *viśeṣaḥ*—variegatedness; *tu*—but; *vikurvāṇāt*—by transformation; *ambhasaḥ*—of water; *gandhavān*—odorous; *abhūt*—became; *para*—previous; *anvayāt*—by succession; *rasa*—juice; *sparśa*—touch; *śabda*—sound; *rūpa-guṇa-anvitaḥ*—qualitative.

TRANSLATION

Because the sky is transformed, the air is generated with the quality of touch, and by previous succession the air is also full of sound and the basic principles of duration of life: sense perception, mental power and bodily strength. When the air is

transformed in course of time and nature's course, fire is generated, taking shape with the sense of touch and sound. Since fire is also transformed, there is a manifestation of water, full of juice and taste. As previously, it also has form and touch and is also full of sound. And water, being transformed from all variegatedness on earth, appears odorous and, as previously, becomes qualitatively full of juice, touch, sound and form respectively.

PURPORT

The whole process of creation is an act of gradual evolution and development from one element to another, reaching up to the variegatedness of the earth as so many trees, plants, mountains, rivers, reptiles, birds, animals and varieties of human beings. The quality of sense perception is also evolutionary, namely generated from sound, then touch, and from touch to form. Taste and odor are also generated along with the gradual development of sky, air, fire, water and earth. They are all mutually the cause and effect of one another, but the original cause is the Lord Himself in plenary portion, as Mahā-Viṣṇu lying in the causal water of the *mahat-tattva*. As such, Lord Kṛṣṇa is described in the *Brahma-saṁhitā* as the cause of all causes, and this is confirmed in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (10.8) as follows:

*ahaṁ sarvasya prabhavo
mattaḥ sarvaṁ pravartate
iti matvā bhajante mām
budhā bhāva-samanvitāḥ*

The qualities of sense perception are fully represented in the earth, and they are manifested in other elements to a lesser extent. In the sky there is sound only, whereas in the air there are sound and touch. In the fire there are sound, touch and shape, and in the water there is taste also, along with the other perceptions, namely sound, touch and shape. In the earth, however, there are all the above-mentioned qualities with an extra development of odor also. Therefore on the earth there is a full display of variegatedness of life, which is originally started with the basic principle of air. Diseases of the body take place due to derangement of air within the earthly body of the living beings. Mental diseases result from special derangement of the air within the body, and as such, yogic exercise is especially beneficial to keep the air in order so that diseases of the body become almost nil by such exercises. When they are properly done the duration of life also increases, and one can have control over death also by such practices. A perfect *yogī* can have command over death and quit the body at the right moment, when he is competent to transfer himself to a suitable planet. The *bhakti-yogī*, however, surpasses all the *yogīs* because, by dint of his devotional service, he is promoted to the region beyond the material sky and is placed in one of the planets in the spiritual sky by the supreme will of the Lord, the controller of everything.

TEXT 30

वैकारिकान्मनो जज्ञे देवा वैकारिका दश ।
दिग्वातार्कप्रचेतोऽश्विबह्विन्द्रोपेन्द्रमित्रकाः ॥३०॥

*vaikārikān mano jajñe
devā vaikārikā daśa
dik-vātārka-praceto 'śvi-
vahnīndropendra-mitra-kāḥ*

vaikārikāt—from the mode of goodness: *manaḥ*—the mind; *jajñe*—generated; *devāḥ*—demigods; *vaikār* 'u'—in the mode of goodness; *daśa*—ten; *dik*—the controller of directions; *vāta*—the controller of air; *arka*—the sun; *pracetaḥ*—Varuṇa; *aśvi*—the Aśvinī-kumāras; *vahni*—the fire-god; *indra*—the King of heaven; *upendra*—the deity in heaven; *mitra*—one of the twelve Ādityas; *kāḥ*—Prajāpati Brahmā.

TRANSLATION

From the mode of goodness the mind is generated and becomes manifest, as also the ten demigods controlling the bodily move-

ments. Such demigods are known as the controller of directions, the controller of air, the sun-god, the father of Dakṣa Prajāpati, the Aśvinī-kumāras, the fire-god, the King of heaven, the worshipable deity in heaven, the chief of the Ādityas, and Brahmāji, the Prajāpati. All come into existence.

PURPORT

Vaikārika is the neutral stage of creation, and *tejas* is the initiative of creation, while *tamas* is the full display of material creation under the spell of the darkness of ignorance. Manufacture of the "necessities of life" in factories and workshops, excessively prominent in the age of Kali, or in the age of the machine, is the summit stage of the quality of darkness. Such manufacturing enterprises by human society are in the mode of darkness because factually there is no necessity for the commodities manufactured. Human society primarily requires food for subsistence, shelter for sleeping, defense for protection, and commodities for satisfaction of the senses. The senses are the practical signs of life, as will be explained in the next verse. Human civilization is meant for purifying the senses, and objects of sense satisfaction should be supplied as much as absolutely required, but not for aggravating artificial sensory needs. Food, shelter, defense and sense gratification are all needs in material existence. Otherwise, in his pure, uncontaminated state of original life, the living entity has no such needs. The needs are therefore artificial, and in the pure state of life there are no such needs. As such, increasing the artificial needs, as is the standard of material civilization, or advancing the economic development of human society, is a sort of engagement in darkness, without knowledge. By such engagement, human energy is spoiled, because human energy is primarily meant for purifying the senses in order to engage them in satisfying the senses of the Supreme Lord. The Supreme Lord, being the supreme possessor of spiritual senses, is the master of the senses, Hṛṣīkeśa. *Hṛṣika* means the senses, and *īśa* means the master. The Lord is not the servant of the senses, or, in other words, He is not directed by the dictation of the senses, but the conditioned souls or the individual living entities are servants of the senses. They are conducted by the direction or dictation of the senses, and therefore material civilization is a kind of engagement in sense gratification only. The standard of human civilization should be to cure the disease of sense gratification, and one can do this simply by becoming an agent for satisfying the spiritual senses of the Lord. The senses are never to be stopped in their engagements, but one should purify them by engaging them in the pure service of sense gratification of the master of the senses. This is the instruction of the whole *Bhagavad-gītā*. Arjuna wanted first of all to satisfy his own senses by his decision not to fight with his kinsmen and friends, but Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa taught him the *Bhagavad-gītā* just to purify Arjuna's decision for sense gratification. Therefore Arjuna agreed to satisfy the senses of the Lord, and thus he fought the Battle of Kurukṣetra, as the Lord desired.

The *Vedas* instruct us to get out of the existence of darkness and go forward on the path of light (*tamasi mā jyotir gama*). The path of light is therefore to satisfy the senses of the Lord. Misguided men, or less intelligent men, follow the path of self-realization without any attempt to satisfy the transcendental senses of the Lord by following the path shown by Arjuna and other devotees of the Lord. On the contrary, they artificially try to stop the activities of the senses (*yoga* system), or they deny the transcendental senses of the Lord (*jñāna* system). The devotees, however, are above the *yogīs* and the *jñānīs* because pure devotees do not deny the senses of the Lord; they want to satisfy the senses of the Lord. Only because of the darkness of ignorance do the *yogīs* and *jñānīs* deny the senses of the Lord and thus artificially try to control the activities of the diseased senses. In the diseased condition of the senses there is too much engagement of the senses in increasing material needs. When one comes to see the disadvantage of aggravating the sense activities, one is called a *jñānī*, and when one tries to stop the activities of the senses by the practice of yogic principles, he is called a *yogī*, but when one is fully aware of the transcendental senses of the Lord and tries to satisfy His senses, one is called a devotee of the Lord. The devotees of the Lord do

not try to deny the senses of the Lord, nor do they artificially stop the actions of the senses. But they do voluntarily engage the purified senses in the service of the master of the senses, as was done by Arjuna, thereby easily attaining the perfection of satisfying the Lord, the ultimate goal of all perfection.

TEXT 31

तैजसात् तु विकृवाणादिन्द्रियाणि दशभवन ।
ज्ञानशक्तिः क्रियाशक्तिर्बुद्धिः प्राणश्च तैजसौ ।
श्रोत्रं त्वग्घ्राणदृग्जिह्वा वाग्दोर्मेढ्राङ्घ्रिपायवः ॥३१॥

*taijasāt tu vikurvāṇād
indriyāni daśābhavan
jñāna-śaktiḥ kriyā-śaktir
buddhiḥ prāṇaś ca taijasau
śrotram tvag-ghrāṇa-dṛg-jihvā
vāg-dor-medhṛāṅghri-pāyavaḥ*

taijasāt—by the passionate egoism; *tu*—but; *vikurvāṇāt*—transformation of; *indriyāni*—the senses; *daśa*—ten; *abhavan*—generated; *jñāna-śaktiḥ*—the five senses for acquiring knowledge; *kriyā-śaktiḥ*—the five senses of activities; *buddhiḥ*—intelligence; *prāṇaḥ*—the living energy; *ca*—also; *taijasau*—all products of the mode of passion; *śrotram*—the sense for hearing; *tvak*—the sense for touching; *ghrāṇa*—the sense for smelling; *dṛk*—the sense for seeing; *jihvāḥ*—the sense for tasting; *vāk*—the sense for speaking; *doḥ*—the sense for handling; *medhṛa*—the genitals; *aṅghri*—the legs; *pāyavaḥ*—the sense for evacuating.

TRANSLATION

By further transformation of the mode of passion, the sense organs like the ear, skin, nose, eyes, tongue, mouth, hands, genitals, legs, and the outlet for evacuating, together with intelligence and living energy, are all generated.

PURPORT

The living condition in material existence depends more or less on one's intelligence and powerful living energy. Intelligence to counteract the hard struggle for existence is assisted by the senses for acquiring knowledge, and the living energy maintains himself by manipulating the active organs, like the hands and legs. But on the whole, the struggle for existence is an exertion of the mode of passion. Therefore all the sense organs, headed by intelligence and the living energy, *prāṇa*, are different products and by-products of the second mode of nature, called passion. This mode of passion, however, is the product of the air element, as described before.

TEXT 32

यदैतेऽसङ्गता भावा भूतेन्द्रियमनोगुणाः ।
यदायतननिर्माणे न शेकुर्ब्रह्मवित्तम ॥३२॥

*yadaite 'saṅgatā bhāvā
bhūtendriya-mano-guṇāḥ
yadāyatana-nirmāṇe
na śekur brahma-vittama*

yadā—as long as; *ete*—all these; *asaṅgatāḥ*—without being assembled; *bhāvāḥ*—remained so situated; *bhūta*—elements; *indriya*—senses; *manaḥ*—mind; *guṇāḥ*—modes of nature; *yadā*—so long; *āyatana*—the body; *nirmāṇe*—in being formed; *na śekur*—was not possible; *brahma-vit-tama*—O Nārada, the best knower of transcendental knowledge.

TRANSLATION

O Nārada, best of the transcendentalists, the forms of the body cannot take place as long as these created parts, namely the elements, senses, mind and modes of nature, are not assembled.

PURPORT

The different types of bodily construction of the living entities are exactly like different types of motorcars manufactured by assembling the allied motor parts. When the car is ready, the driver sits in the car and moves it as he desires. This is also confirmed in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (18.61): the living entity is as if seated on the machine of the body, and the car of the body is moving by the control of material nature, just as the railway trains are moving under the direction of the controller. The living entities, however, are not the bodies; they are separate from the cars of the body. But the less intelligent material scientist cannot understand the process of assembling the parts of the body, namely the senses, the mind and the qualities of the material modes. Every living entity is a spiritual spark, part and parcel of the Supreme Being, and by the kindness of the Lord, for the Father is kind to His sons, the individual living beings are given a little freedom to act according to their will to lord it over the material nature. Just as a father gives some playthings to the crying child to satisfy him, the whole material creation is made possible by the will of the Lord to allow the bewildered living entities to lord it over things as they desire, although under the control of the agent of the Lord. The living entities are exactly like small children playing the material field under the control of the maidservant of the Lord (nature). They accept the *māyā*, or the maidservant, as all in all and thus wrongly conceive the Supreme Truth to be feminine (goddess Durgā, etc.). The foolish, childlike materialists cannot reach beyond the conception of the maidservant, material nature, but the intelligent grown-up sons of the Lord know well that all the acts of material nature are controlled by the Lord, just as a maidservant is under the control of the master, the father of the undeveloped children.

The parts of the body, such as the senses, are the creation of the *mahat-tattva*, and when they are assembled by the will of the Lord, the material body comes into existence, and the living entity is allowed to use it for further activities. This is explained as follows.

TEXT 33

तदा संहत्य चान्योन्यं भगवच्छक्तिचोदिताः ।
सदसत्त्वमुपादाय चोभयं समुज्जुर्बदः ॥३३॥

*tadā saṅhatya cānyonyam
bhagavac-chakti-coditāḥ
sad-asattvam upādāya
cobhayaṁ sasrjor hy adah*

tadā—all those; *saṅhatya*—being assembled; *ca*—also; *anyonyam*—one another; *bhagavat*—by the Personality of Godhead; *śakti*—energy; *coditāḥ*—being applied; *sat-asattvam*—primarily and secondarily; *upādāya*—accepting; *ca*—also; *ubhayaṁ*—both; *sasrjuḥ*—came into existence; *hi*—certainly; *adah*—this universe.

TRANSLATION

Thus when all these became assembled by force of the energy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, this universe certainly came into being by accepting both the primary and secondary causes of creation.

PURPORT

In this verse it is clearly mentioned that the Supreme Personality of Godhead exerts His different energies in the creation; it is not that He Himself is transformed into material creations. He expands Himself by His different energies, as well as by His plenary portions. In a corner of the spiritual sky of *brahmajyoti* a spiritual cloud sometimes appears, and the covered portion is called the *mahat-tattva*. The Lord then, by His plenary portion as Mahā-Viṣṇu, lies down within the water of the *mahat-tattva*, and the water is called the Causal Ocean (Kāraṇa-jala). While

Mahā-Viṣṇu sleeps within the Causal Ocean, innumerable universes are generated along with His breathing. These universes are floating, and they are scattered all over the Causal Ocean. They stay only during the breathing period of Mahā-Viṣṇu. In each and every universal globe, the same Mahā-Viṣṇu enters again as Garbhodakaśāyī Viṣṇu and lies there on the serpentlike Śeṣa incarnation. From His navel sprouts a lotus stem, and on the lotus, Brahmā, the lord of the universe, is born. Brahmā creates all forms of living beings of different shapes in terms of different desires within the universe. He also creates the sun, moon and other demigods.

Therefore the chief engineer of the material creation is the Lord Himself, as confirmed in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (9.10). It is He only who directs the material nature to produce all sorts of moving and nonmoving creations.

There are two modes of material creation: the creation of the collective universes, as stated above, done by the Mahā-Viṣṇu, and the creation of the single universe. Both are done by the Lord, and thus the universal shape, as we can see, takes place.

TEXT 34

वर्षपूगसहस्रान्ते तदण्डमुदकेशयम् ।
कालकर्मस्वभावस्थो जीवोऽजीवमजीवयत् ॥३४॥

varṣa-pūga-sahasrānte
tad aṇḍam udake śayam
kāla-karma-svabhāva-stho
jīvo 'jīvam ajīvayat

varṣa-pūga—many years; *sahasra-ante*—of thousands of years; *tat*—that; *aṇḍam*—the universal globe; *udake*—in the causal water; *śayam*—being drowned; *kāla*—eternal time; *karma*—action; *svabhāva-sthaḥ*—according to the modes of nature; *jīvaḥ*—the Lord of the living beings; *ajīvam*—nonanimated; *ajīvayat*—caused to be animated.

TRANSLATION

Thus all the universes remained thousands of aeons within the water [the Causal Ocean], and the Lord of living beings, entering in each of them, caused them to be fully animated.

PURPORT

The Lord is described here as the *jīva* because He is the leader of all other *jīvas* (living entities). In the *Vedas* He is described as the *nitya*, the leader of all other *nityas*. The Lord's relation with the living entities is like that of the father with the sons. The sons and the father are qualitatively equal, but the father is never the son, nor is the son ever the father who begets. So, as described above, the Lord as Garbhodakaśāyī Viṣṇu or Hiraṇyagarbha Supersoul enters into each and every universe and causes it to be animated by begetting the living entities within the womb of the material nature, as confirmed in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (14.3). After each annihilation of the material creation, all the living entities are merged within the body of the Lord, and after creation they are again impregnated within the material energy. In material existence, therefore, the material energy is seemingly the mother of the living entities, and the Lord is the father. When, however, the animation takes place, the living entities revive their own natural activities under the spell of time and energy, and thus the varieties of living beings are manifested. The Lord, therefore, is ultimately the cause of all animation in the material world.

TEXT 35

स एव पुरुषस्तस्मादण्डं निर्भिद्य निर्गतः ।
सहस्रोर्वङ्घ्रिबाह्वक्षः सहस्राननशीर्षवान् ॥३५॥

sa eva puruṣas tasmād
aṇḍam nirbhidyā nirgataḥ
sahasrorv-aṅghri-bāhu-akṣaḥ
sahasrānana-śīrṣavān

saḥ—He (the Lord); *eva*—Himself; *puruṣaḥ*—the Supreme Personality of Godhead; *tasmāt*—from within the universe; *aṇḍam*—Hiraṇyagarbha; *nirbhidyā*—dividing; *nirgataḥ*—came out; *sahasra*—thousands; *ūru*—thighs; *aṅghri*—legs; *bāhu*—arms; *akṣaḥ*—eyes; *sahasra*—thousands of; *ānana*—mouths; *śīrṣavān*—with heads also.

TRANSLATION

The Lord [Mahā-Viṣṇu], although lying in the Causal Ocean, came out of it, and dividing Himself as Hiraṇyagarbha, He entered into each universe and assumed the *virāṭ-rūpa*, with thousands of legs, arms, mouths, heads, etc.

PURPORT

The expansions of the planetary systems within each and every universe are situated in the different parts of the *virāṭ-rūpa* (universal form) of the Lord, and they are described as follows.

TEXT 36

यस्येहावयवैर्लोकान् कल्पयन्ति मनीषिणः ।
कत्र्यादिभिरघः सप्त समोर्ध्वं जघनादिभिः ॥३६॥

yasyehāvayavair lokān
kalpayanti manīṣiṇaḥ
kaṭya-ādibhir adhaḥ sapta
saptordhvaṃ jaghanādibhiḥ

yasya—whose; *iha*—in the universe; *avayavaiḥ*—by the limbs of the body; *lokān*—all the planets; *kalpayanti*—imagine; *manīṣiṇaḥ*—great philosophers; *kaṭya-ādibhiḥ*—down from the waist; *adhaḥ*—downwards; *sapta*—seven systems; *sapta ūrdham*—and seven systems upwards; *jaghana-ādibhiḥ*—front portion.

TRANSLATION

Great philosophers imagine that the complete planetary systems in the universe are displays of the different upper and lower limbs of the universal body of the Lord.

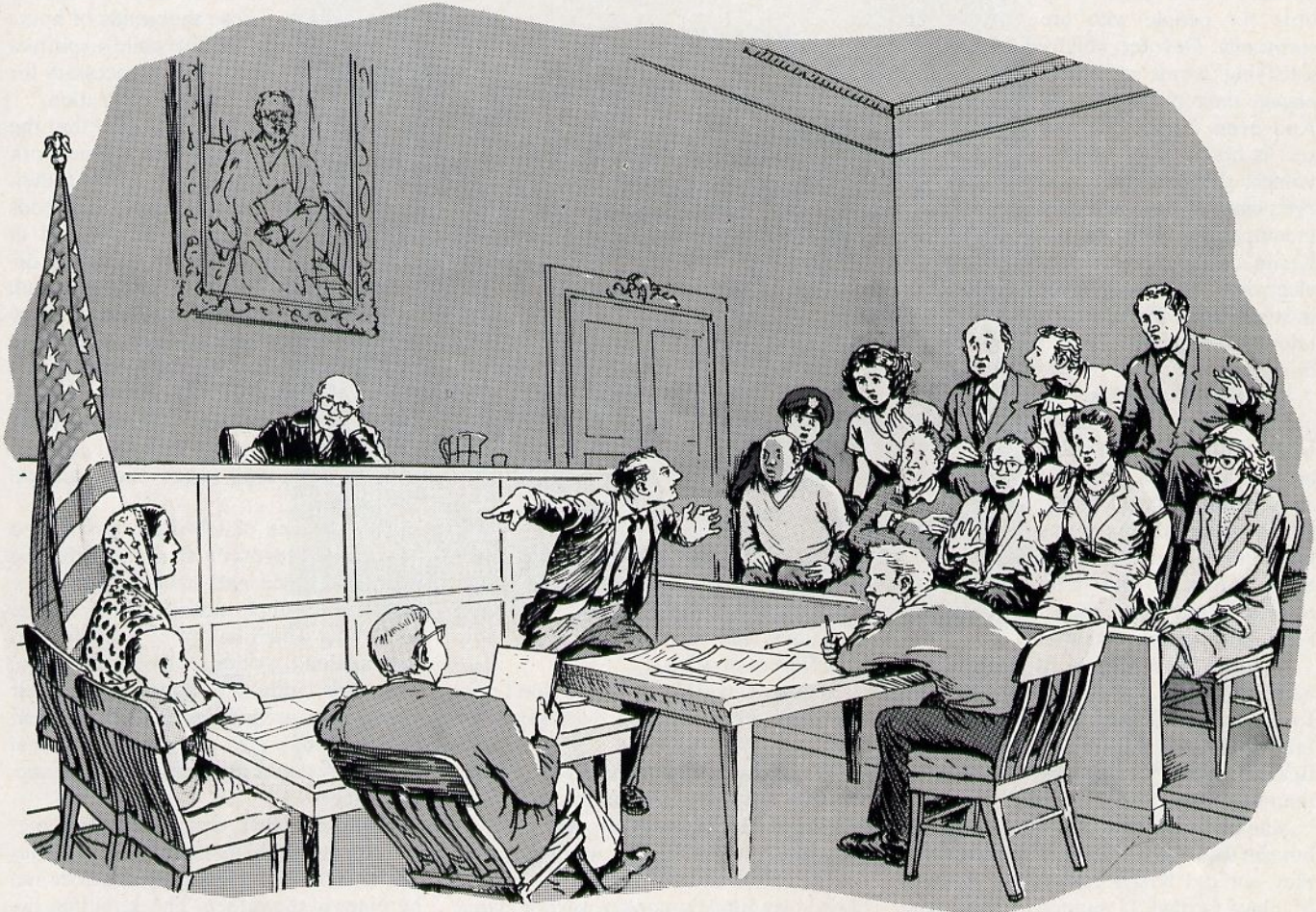
PURPORT

The word *kalpayanti*, or "imagine," is significant. The *virāṭ* universal form of the Absolute is an imagination of the speculative philosophers who are unable to adjust to the eternal two-handed form of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Although the universal form, as imagined by the great philosophers, is one of the features of the Lord, it is more or less imaginary. It is said that the seven upper planetary systems are situated above the waist of the universal form, whereas the lower planetary systems are situated below His waist. The idea impressed herein is that the Supreme Lord is conscious of every part of His body, and nowhere in the creation is there anything beyond His control.

(continued in next issue)

“WHAT? NO TELEVISION?”

Children in Kṛṣṇa consciousness are among the very few who rarely (if ever) watch television—and who don't miss it.



The courtroom hushed as he faced the jury and pointed a long, manicured finger at the defendant, an attractive young woman who sat calmly turning her prayer beads. The prosecution was offering summary remarks in a trial to determine custody of the woman's seven-year-old son David, then enrolled at a Kṛṣṇa conscious secondary school. The boy's divorced father had demanded that she remove their son from the school or else relinquish custody. She refused to do either.

The prosecution listed some of the shocking facts about the life of children in Kṛṣṇa schools: they ate no meat, rose

early every morning for temple services, and learned that man did not descend from the apes. And then came the clincher: "They don't even watch television."

A buzz swept through the gallery as astonished witnesses and visitors realized the full meaning of these words.

"What? No television?"

Nonetheless, the jury found the boy healthy and happy and allowed the mother to retain custody. They could find nothing objectionable in the boy's diet. In fact, two doctors testified that it was one of the healthiest imaginable. Religious observances each morning appeared to

have done the boy no harm. As for evolution, the boy himself provided a rather remarkable slice-up of Darwin's theories.

And what about the television? He said he didn't mind not having it.

"Then what do you do?" they asked him.

"I play with my friends," he said, "and I go to Kṛṣṇa farms on weekends and learn about planting crops and how trees have feelings and how to milk a cow. I also like to play the *mṛdaṅga* drum and chant Kṛṣṇa's names."

His teacher gave more information about his studies and extracurricular

activities. Like many of his classmates, he had a reading level three grades above that of his counterparts in public schools and a math proficiency two grades higher. He was as mischievous as any other child his age, she said, but he remained respectful to teachers and elders, was sorry his father wouldn't come to visit, and wrote to him once a week.

This little boy's case was exceptional, in that Kṛṣṇa children usually have contact with both their parents. Separation, especially at an early age, is not the practice in Vedic culture. What was not exceptional for Kṛṣṇa children was the absence of television. TV programs offer little for people who are growing up spiritually. Devotee children have more satisfying forms of entertainment that engage them physically and intellectually. And even though the use of television sets is not in itself objectionable to devotees, the content of the programs—even carefully selected ones—is generally incompatible with spiritual education. Kṛṣṇa conscious children don't need electronic "aids" to enhance their interest in study, and the children themselves say television programs seem "made up" and boring.

Īsvara Purī dāsa is six and a half years old and has seen television programs when visiting family members. His parents are both devotees. "I don't like when they show people killing," he explains. "If you kill someone, you have to suffer yourself from the *karma*. There should be shows about Kṛṣṇa, so that kids can become purified. Otherwise, they'll do nonsense like killing and have to suffer.

"I never liked Mickey Mouse's body," he says. "It isn't true. It's invented. When I was younger, I liked television, but my intelligence is better developed now. Besides, Kṛṣṇa things are even funner than television."

Mādhavī's parents are also devotees, but she was already seven years old when they entered Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Now Mādhavī is nine. "I suppose I liked television before becoming a devotee, but I was seeing with materialistic eyes. I don't like it any more, because I know it's an illusion. Things aren't really like that, and they always talk about cigarettes, gum, eating meat—things that aren't good for you. And you forget Kṛṣṇa when you watch television."

Devotee parents and teachers help children avoid vidiocy by providing a daily schedule filled with color and variety. Morning and evening services are particularly satisfying. The services bring the devotional community together for chanting and dancing before the Kṛṣṇa Deity. The Deity receives fresh garlands each morning, and the previous day's flowers

are distributed to the children and guests. Near the altar the children have a special place reserved for them, so that they can get a closer view of Kṛṣṇa's beautiful decorations. The children also greet newcomers, help in cooking, take part in Sunday feasts and monthly festivals, and enjoy frequent outings with their classmates.

"Do you like your studies, David?" the defense counsel asked.

"Sure. Even in math and spelling we

Devotee parents and teachers help children avoid vidiocy by a day filled with variety. The absence of TV helps children cultivate other interests.

talk about Kṛṣṇa. In history we learn about what happened a long time ago in India when the government was God conscious, and then we talk about how it's different now."

"Before, David, you said you don't miss television. What do you do instead for fun?"

"We go places and do plays every week. We play different incarnations of Kṛṣṇa, like Lord Rāma, and we dress up in costumes, and on Sunday we do the play for the guests and devotees at the feast. I like to play Rāma's monkey warrior Hanumān, because he's strong and a great devotee." No one wanted to argue that watching cartoon characters parade across a television screen was "more constructive."

There is no objection among devotees to television per se, since it can be used to broadcast the message of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Devotees even staff a video department that offers taped lectures and plays. Using technology in Kṛṣṇa's service is not a break with religious tradition but, rather, a demonstration that everything—including machinery—is God's energy and can be used for devotional purposes. Some religionists in India refuse even to wear watches, because they consider the

lubricating oil contaminating. Kṛṣṇa devotees recognize, however, that when one is properly trained to engage everything in God's service, such extremes are unnecessary.

"The objection is not the medium but the message," David's mother explained. "The Kṛṣṇa culture holds certain values in great esteem that commercial television shows neglect: chastity, respect for life in all its forms, minimizing material needs, controlling the mind and senses. I read recently that by the time a schoolchild in this country graduates from high school he will have spent eleven thousand hours in school and fifteen thousand in front of the television. Those thousands of hours don't do a thing for the child's spiritual development. I don't find it necessary for David, and he has made no objection."

David's mother also indicated that the kinds of foods promoted on the network stations were contrary to David's diet, which calls for strictly vegetarian foods offered to God. "In his school and at home David really relishes eating devotional meals. He has no interest in junk foods. And whenever he sees nondevotee children eating meat, he tries to tell them why it is wrong. 'You have to kill the animal,' he says. 'Do you believe in killing?' He convinces some of them to think about what they do and eat, instead of just following what they see on television."

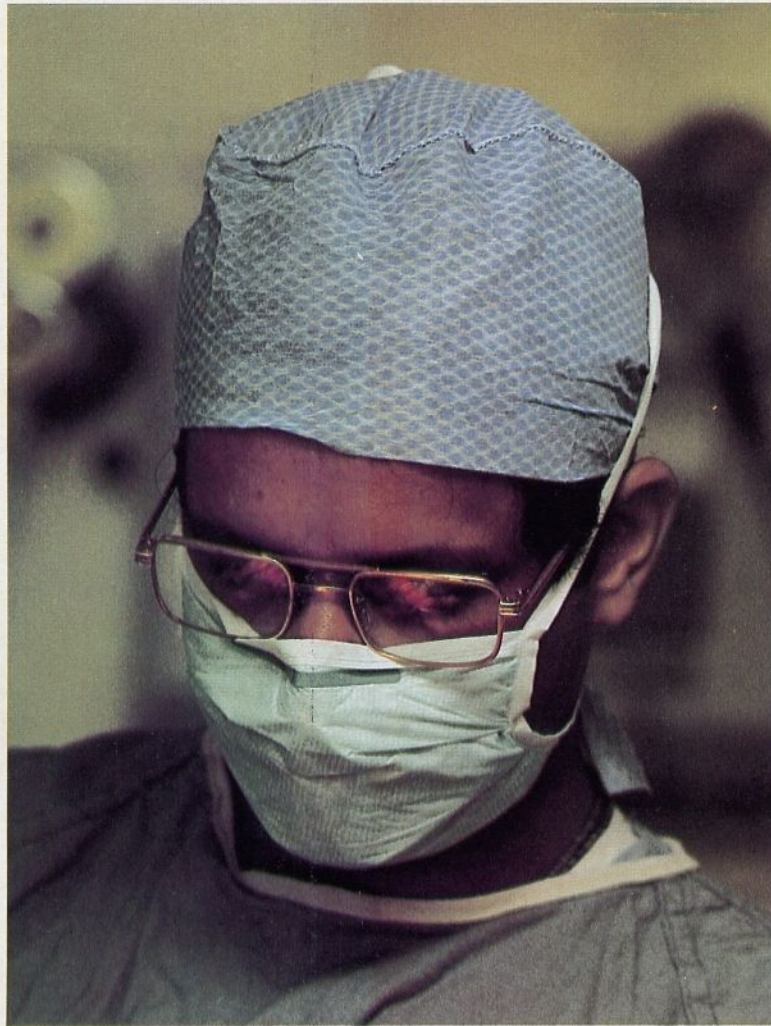
The absence of television has helped devotee children cultivate alternative interests. David and many of his classmates, for example, are voracious readers, something which has greatly accelerated their spelling, writing, and concentration. The girls, although attentive to their appearance, are indifferent to fashion and glamor and prefer to learn devotional arts such as cooking, Deity sewing, music, and dance.

For role models, devotee children prefer persons of high moral and religious character over the stereotyped heroes and heroines of the screen. The ambitions the children espouse are not wealth, fame, or success in business, even though their teachers don't deprecate these things. Instead, the children speak of becoming better devotees of Kṛṣṇa and helping others develop their love for Him.

One day, after the custody hearings had adjourned, a visitor approached the devotee mother and asked whether perhaps David were not isolated from society by not watching television.

"As a parent," she replied, "I see certain elements of this society that I want David to remain isolated from, and television is one of them."

With 19.5 scenes of violence per hour, who can blame her?



Śamīka Ṛṣi, M.D.

In Carbondale, Pennsylvania, a doctor from India leads a life of surgery and spirituality.

by YOGEŚVARA DĀSA

The other doctors never call him Śamīka Ṛṣi dāsa. Most of them don't even know he is an initiated devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa. In the hospital—St. Joseph's Hospital, Carbondale, Pennsylvania—he is Shyam Sundar Mahajan, director of the emergency ward.

"Code Blue! Code Blue!" Physicians and nurses hurry to prearranged stations. A red light sweeps rhythmically across glass doors and windows as an ambulance speeds toward

the hospital. Paramedics rush to receive the patient, a middle-aged man whose heart, for some reason no one will ever know, has stopped working.

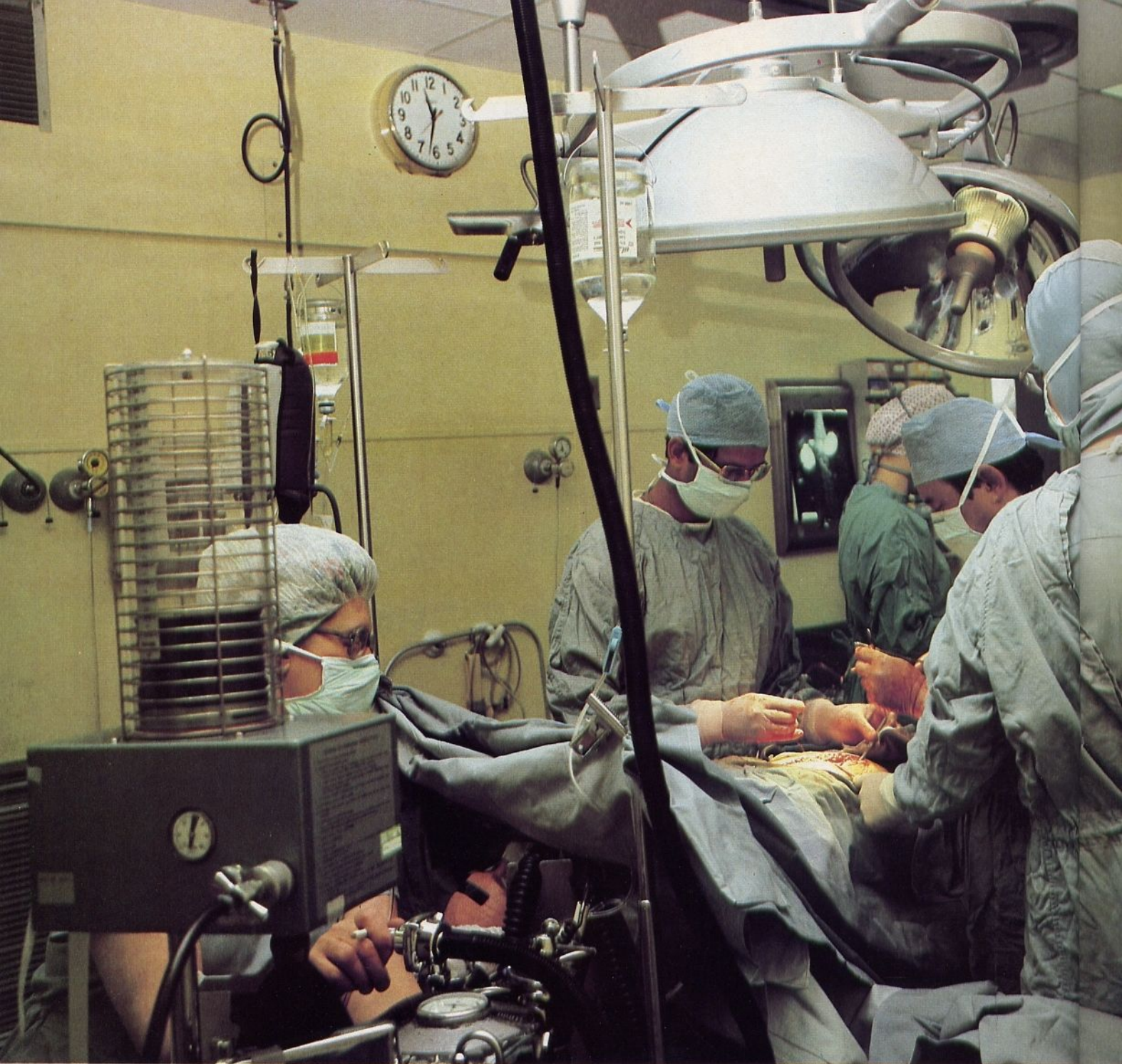
Śamīka Ṛṣi stands ready with a barrage of equipment. Attendants wheel the patient into an examination room. The doors close. Minutes tick by. Finally Śamīka Ṛṣi emerges and removes his white coat. Evening settles in quietly.

"Good night, doctor," a nurse bids on her way out. Hospital personnel

prepare to go home.

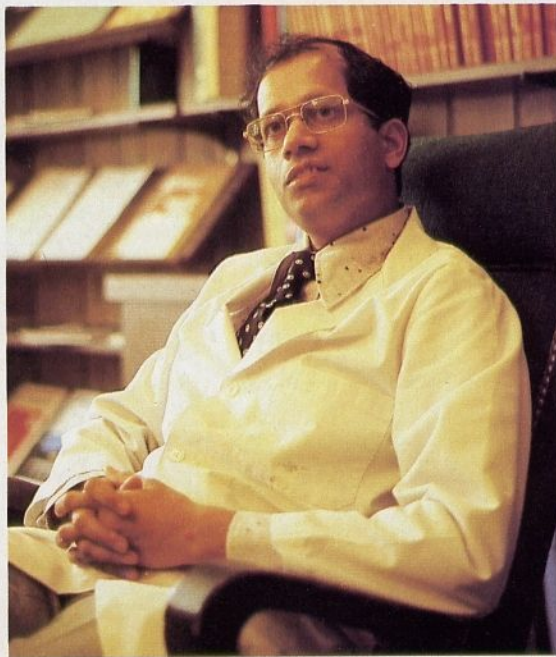
"If someone examines the man on that table," Śamīka Ṛṣi says, "they will find all the organs intact, all the parts and chemicals still there. So why can he not be revived? Because the soul has left the body. No drug or machine can change that."

He removes his stethoscope and shoves it into his bag. A few minutes' drive and we arrive at his two-story home on the outskirts of town. Ornamenting the front door is a tiny

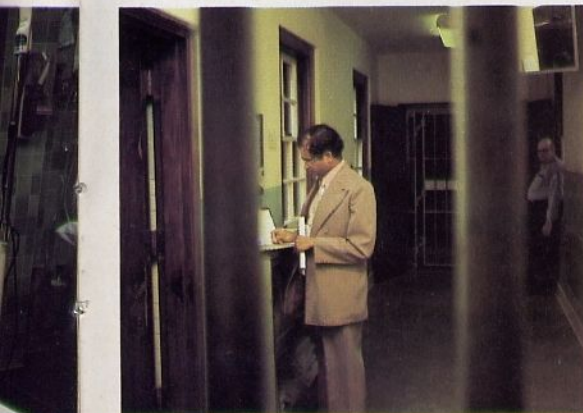


After delicate surgery (above), Šamika Rši closes an incision in a patient's chest. The surgical team had found and removed a cancerous tumor. At right, a mother comforts her son, who suffered a deep bite from a German shepherd. Apart from dealing with forty such cases a day, Šamika Rši also tends to the medical needs of 250 maximum-security prisoners at a state mental hospital (far right).





Śamika R̥ṣi considers his dual role as surgeon and devotee. Below, bacteria cultures provide evidence for diagnoses in the hospital's lab.



portrait of Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who inaugurated the street chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa in India five hundred years ago. Inside, paintings of Lord Kṛṣṇa mingle with ceramics and wood carvings.

"How often do you get life-or-death cases like tonight?"

"Four or five times a week," he says. "Sometimes more. I treat thirty to forty emergency cases each day: stab wounds, rape, car accidents, heart attacks."

Śamika R̥ṣi is the second eldest of

six brothers and three sisters. He was born in Nagziri, India, a town of eight thousand, where as a young man he assisted his father, a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa trained in classical Vedic medicine. They would travel from village to village on medical call, prescribing cures and accepting as payment grain or cloth, according to each patient's means. At age twenty-two he graduated head of his class at Gandhi Medical College and came West.

In 1972 he and his wife met devotees on the streets of Philadelphia,



followed them back to the Kṛṣṇa temple, and a year later received initiation from the Society's founder, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda.

That evening we read from *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* after a light vegetarian dinner offered first to the Deity of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Discussion soon turns again to his medical career.

Apart from the emergency ward, Śamīka Ṛṣi also serves as a staff physician in a maximum-security mental hospital for the criminally insane.

"Being a doctor is second best," he explains. "Being a devotee is better. Devotees offer permanent solutions, whereas doctors can only make temporary repairs, patching things up

until something else breaks down and the patient dies."

For a week at a time, he works on twenty-four-hour call. He rests whenever time permits, in a small room on the fifth floor, but can always be reached by a red hot-line or over the loudspeaker. In his room the next day I change into sterilized green clothes, slip a mask over my face, wash my



Worshipping Lord Kṛṣṇa at home (left), Śamīka Ṛṣi offers a fragrant camphor lamp as his wife, his brother, and fellow devotees join in chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra. Above, bag of prayer beads in one hand and medical bag in the other, Śamīka Ṛṣi hurries off to an emergency call.

ness and unrestrained sense activity. In the media and in school they learn that meat-eating, casual sex, and intoxication are acceptable habits. Not many people today admire austerity, so they make fun of devotees, who follow strict regulative principles. But the fact is, without Kṛṣṇa consciousness, where are people to find the inspiration for a nobler existence?"

Śamīka Ṛṣi is particularly concerned for young people. His own son is a student at a Kṛṣṇa conscious elementary school in the Northeast. For the school's temple, he went to Jaipur, India, and personally brought back Deities of Lord Kṛṣṇa. He dedicates in fact about half of his salary to spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness by helping construct temples and schools and publish books.

The evening before my departure, Śamīka Ṛṣi invites friends and family members to his home to see a slide show on Kṛṣṇa conscious schools in the U.S. After a dinner of finely spiced vegetables, sauces, salads, and milk sweets, we gather in the temple. Śamīka Ṛṣi reads from *Bhagavad-gītā*, and we discuss various points of philosophy.

The phone rings. His wife Anārtā dāsī answers the call.

"Code Blue," she says.

Śamīka Ṛṣi closes the book, bows to the Deity of Lord Kṛṣṇa, reaches for his bag, and walks swiftly out the door.

hands with a brown, soapy solution, and enter the operating room, cameras clutched to my side.

Śamīka Ṛṣi works with another doctor to remove what they suspect is a cancerous tumor from beneath the patient's intestines. It is a short operation, and within an hour we are preparing to return home.

"That may be considered a 'legiti-

mate' operation," he says, "but out of the twelve thousand emergency cases I treat each year, half could be avoided by simple self-control. The vast majority of emergencies are due to misuse of the body, people pushing the body to enjoy exaggerated pleasures or improper foods, drugs, alcohol.

"People are accustomed to godless-



Every Town and Village

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

Black Swami Returns from Africa

New York—Bhaktīrtha Swami, former president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference's student division, recently returned from a three-month tour of African nations. Having lectured to university audiences in Ghana and Nigeria on the science of *bhakti-yoga*, Bhaktīrtha Swami praised Africa's receptivity to Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

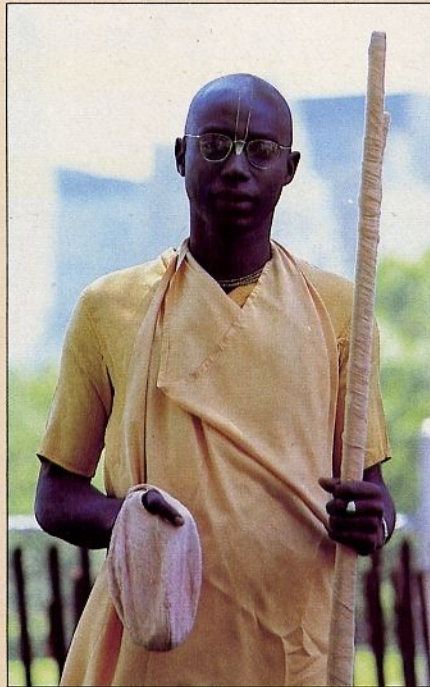
"Much of Africa's population accepts reincarnation," he explained. "And because Africans have a tradition of sitting and hearing from spiritual authorities, my lectures were well received. People there hear the message of the *Bhagavad-gītā* and feel that it clarifies beliefs they have long held. Our contribution is a scientific explanation of phenomena they have accepted for centuries, without understanding how or why."

Among Bhaktīrtha Swami's programs were an address at the National Arts Council in Accra, Ghana, that country's largest cultural center, and an appearance on television in Lagos, Nigeria. The programs were arranged by His Holiness Brahmānanda Swami, who has been in Africa preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness for the last ten years.

"People there are very eager to have books on meditation and *yoga*," Bhaktīrtha Swami said. "They practically bombard us with questions, stopping us at street lights, in stores."

Often living in villages as guest of honor in the homes of chiefs and elders, Bhaktīrtha Swami saw many cultural parallels between the African heritage and that of the Vedic, Kṛṣṇa conscious culture. "Much of Africa is very Eastern," he noted. "The family life, diet, respect for authority, spiritual beliefs . . . and the similarities with Kṛṣṇa consciousness are greatly appreciated. Rather than propose a change of culture, as the Christian missionaries did, Kṛṣṇa consciousness suggests that people continue with their own culture and simply add an understanding of the scientific process of devotional service, as described in the *Bhagavad-gītā*."

In the United States, Bhaktīrtha Swami directs the activities of the Urban Spiritual Development Committee, which sponsors Kṛṣṇa conscious social welfare programs in inner-city areas.



Bhaktīrtha Swami joined the International Society for Krishna Consciousness in 1972 and accepted *sannyāsa*, the order of renounced life, in 1979. He holds a degree in psychology from Princeton, where he was president of the Student Council and of the Third World Coalition. Before joining ISKCON he was the director of seven drug-abuse programs for the city of Cleveland and director of several penal reform projects for the state of New Jersey.

Indian Scholar Praises Śrīla Prabhupāda's Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam

"I have read with pleasure and profit the English translation of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. This *Bhāgavata Mahāpurāna*, considered in Vaiṣṇava tradition a word image of Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa, has served as a touchstone of scholarship through the ages. As an aggregation of spirituality and devotion, it has been the main source of the philosophical tenets of the various schools of Vaiṣṇavism. It is really gratifying to note

that Śrīla Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda has performed the tremendous task of translating into English, adding purport and esoteric interpretation, this basic text of Vaiṣṇavism in several volumes. Indian religion and Indology both will remain indebted to Śrīla Prabhupāda for making Vaiṣṇava thought and philosophy available round the world through the translation of this text. I do not find adequate words to express my joy and appreciation of this excellent edition."—Professor Rasik Vihari Joshi, Head of the Dept. of Sanskrit, University of Delhi, India.

Good Marks for Govinda's

Bombay—Recently *Society* magazine said this about the local branch of Govinda's Restaurant: "For the absolute yogic saints, the great souls who eat only vegetarian food in pure goodness, we have discovered the place, where both the food and the lingering fragrance of sandalwood seem to guarantee your instant nirvana. *Govinda's* is a vegetarian restaurant managed by the disciples of the Hare Krishna movement at their ashram in the Juhu Beach area. Not only do they provide the most reasonably priced vegetarian plate cooked in pure clarified butter, but there is surely a divine hand in the preparation of their delicious menu."

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 Śrīdhara		
August 1	August 4	August 7
Disappearance of Śrīla Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī.	Disappearance of Śrīla Lokanātha Gosvāmī.	Kāmkā Ekādāśī (fasting from grains and beans).
August 14	August 22	August 23
Disappearance of Śrīla Vamśīdāsa Bābājī Mahārāja.	Pavitrārōpanī Ekādāśī (fasting from grains and beans) Jhulanāyātrā (Swing Festival) of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda begins.	Disappearance of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī and Śrīla Gaurīdāsa Paṇḍita.
August 26		September 2
End of Jhulanāyātrā of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda. Appearance of Śrī Baladeva (fasting). Second month of Cāturmāsya-vrata begins (fasting from yogurt).		Śrī Kṛṣṇa-janmāṣṭamī-vrata (fasting).
September 3		
Appearance of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda (fasting). Śrī Nandotsava.		

Jerk Divine

(continued from page 14)

especially well qualified, since she drank with relish the warm blood of children.

Alighting on a pasture outside Gokula, Pūtanā assumed the form of a young woman and headed toward the settlement. The villagers all looked up in wonder as a woman of almost supernatural beauty suddenly appeared, alone and announced, on their streets. Her hips were full, and her large and firm breasts seemed more of a burden than her slender waist could bear. Her clothes were gorgeous, and the tresses of glossy black hair that framed her beautiful face were braided with garlands of flowers. Her brilliant earrings flashed. Everyone stopped to watch her, and she glanced upon them enchantingly. They were all disarmed. The women thought she must be the goddess of fortune herself coming to worship Kṛṣṇa.

No one stopped Pūtanā as she entered Nanda's house and went directly into the room where baby Kṛṣṇa lay napping. She sat by the bed, reached in, and took the baby on her lap. Disarmed by her beauty and by the tender way she held the child, Kṛṣṇa's mother did nothing to stop her.

Hugging the child to her breast, Pūtanā pushed her nipple into His mouth. She had smeared this nipple with a fast-acting, deadly poison, but it did not have the expected effect. Kṛṣṇa squeezed her breast with both His hands and began to suck very hard. Pūtanā's eyes bulged; she broke out in a sweat; she began flailing her arms and legs; her hair loosened. Jumping up, she tried in vain to knock the child away. Shrieking "Stop! Stop! Let me go! Let me go!" she fled blindly from the house and out of the village. Clinging fast to her breast, Kṛṣṇa sucked out the poison, her milk, and then her very life. Her screams reverberating through the countryside, Pūtanā died, and her body returned to its original form, hideous and gigantic, and fell with a shock that leveled trees for twelve miles around. The villagers, terrified by the earsplitting screams and the concussion of Pūtanā's fall, came racing out of the village and in fear and wonder saw the monstrous, repulsive body of Pūtanā lying across the fields. The tiny form of baby Kṛṣṇa crawled happily over her chest.

Pūtanā was a powerful mystic *yoginī*, while Kṛṣṇa was only an infant just starting to crawl. Yet as Pūtanā discovered, He had inconceivable power. He never had to "become God," because He is God eternally. This is the difference between the real Godhead and the would-be Gods turned out in the mystic factory. Kṛṣṇa did not meditate to become God,

nor by meditation can we ever become God ourselves.

Yet it seemed that every telephone pole in Philadelphia proclaimed otherwise. Every day the devotees returned from preaching, chanting, and book distribution more antagonized by the ubiquitous poster. Impersonal philosophy weighed on all minds, and in our classes I was inevitably called upon to produce further and further arguments against it. And this I did with increasing vigor and enthusi-

**She fled blindly
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Her screams
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asm. I couldn't help that, yet I knew it made the notion that I would go and "smash the rascals" more and more fixed in the devotees' minds.

I had serious misgivings about going. The circumstances would not be favorable. It was the *yogīs'* meeting, after all, and I would come as an intruder. The whole audience would be on their side. If I observed the etiquette proper for a guest, I could hardly challenge them effectively, yet if I violated that etiquette I would appear rude and belligerent. The impersonalists were already hostile, and I would simply increase their enmity.

But the devotees wanted a confrontation. As the day of the meeting drew nearer and nearer and the preaching increased in vigor, it became clear to me that the situation had developed a dramatic momentum that required a denouement. Without some resolution, a sense of incompleteness and dissatisfaction would interminably linger; morale would suffer. Whatever my misgivings, I had to go, just to lay the business to rest. If only for its symbolic value, it had to be done. So I selected two devotees who could be counted on to stay calm, and let the word out that we would go to the meeting.

It is already dark as we walk through

the ivied campus and into the Christian Association. Passing under high ceilings and along heavy walnut wainscoting, we find the room. It is dimly lit, perhaps thirty feet wide and twenty feet deep, and crowded. The audience sits on the floor. Mostly male, blue jeans, flannel shirts, hair below the shoulders. Up front is a table where candles burn and thin plumes of incense curl toward the ceiling. We make our way through the crowd, the faint odor of marijuana and patchouli rising to meet us. We create a quiet sensation: *dhotīs* and *kurtās*, shaven heads, twin lines of clay on our foreheads. We sit in the first circle, at the left of the table, and observe the mystic *yogīs* themselves. They are a surprise. Standing at the table are three young men identically dressed in grey flannel trousers, white knit turtleneck sweaters, and what looks like white buck shoes. Their hair is short and neatly combed. They all look like Pat Boone in *April Love*.

The room is deadly silent—no whispering, no coughing. A very solemn audience. Many sit with rigid backs, straight arms resting on knees, eyes closed. The quiet continues; a few more fill in the back.

Then with folded hands one of the *yogīs* welcomes them in a soft, almost languid voice and says that we will begin by chanting "om." The members of the audience work themselves into versions of a yogic posture. Everyone breathes out "om." We chant "Hare Kṛṣṇa" softly on beads. "Om" means Kṛṣṇa," but the impersonalists have ruined it for us. Bad usage drives out the good. On the table between the candles is a black-and-white front-face photograph of an Indian in yogic posture, their leader; his eyes are open wide, but you can see nothing but the whites.

The vibes are all quiet now, soft, meliow, and om-y. The three whisper among themselves, sending glances periodically our way. Two of them walk noiselessly to the side and sit. The other addresses us in soft and well-modulated tones. This is an exploratory meeting. If there is sufficient interest, members will come down to open a permanent branch.

Then he talks about Love. We must open our hearts to the divine. He talks about Surrender and Service. He talks about Humility. As he talks, his shoulders take on a slight hunch, he bends forward slightly from the waist, a posture he retains throughout his talk. Now and then he presses the palms of his hands together before him. Devotion, he says. Now and then he sends a quick look our way. Love, he says. Serve. Surrender.

It is quite a disarming performance. These are the same people who put up

the poster, but we are not going to be able to get a handle on that. No, they believe in Love, Service, and Surrender. They are Devotees.

Now we are to have some Devotional Poetry, written by their leader. A girl in a shirtwaist dress goes to the front. "My Krishna is not black," she reads. "My Krishna is gold. I have painted Him black with the ink of my mind."

There it is. The devotee next to me groans. In context, "gold" means the impersonal effulgence of light, and "black" stands for Kṛṣṇa's name, form, qualities—everything.

Questions?

A hand. "You speak a lot about worship. But isn't there something higher?" It's the first question, so they immediately realize that in slanting their presentation to us they have not satisfied the others. Now they are caught uncomfortably in between.

His answer, as you might expect, is convoluted, taking away with one hand what it gives with the other. It takes several other questions and answers to get his position out. It is this: Actually *bhakti*, the path of devotion, is the best because it is the easiest. Whatever path you take, it leads to the same place. On the path of devotion we choose some particular idea of God to worship, to concentrate our mind on. But when we reach the goal, we realize that the Supreme is beyond all thought and ideas and that the particular form we have been worshiping is a material conception. We also realize that our own individuality is an illusion. Thus we become one with the object of worship. So philosophically we understand that there is no difference between us and God. But when we practice *bhakti* we don't think like that. For the purposes of *bhakti*, we must think of God as great and of ourselves as very small. We must become very humble and surrender to and serve our chosen ideal. The higher realization of oneness will come automatically, in time.

More questions?

My hand is up. Reluctantly, "Yes?"

"Your poster says that Kṛṣṇa meditated in order to become God?"

"Well, yes."

"Could you tell me how it is that God has to meditate in order to become God?"

He walks a few steps over toward me. "Well, we were just trying to express in words what is beyond words."

"But it's not so hard to understand. God means omnipotent, unlimited. If I am God, then why should I have to meditate? What kind of God is that?"

He looks at me with a hurt expression, and raising his hands at me palms out, he begins slowly to back away.

"Words . . ." he says in a pained voice. "Words . . ."

"Words . . ." plaintively echoes the other fellow, also backing away.

"Words . . ." they both say, looking around the audience in appeal, as if words were the most distressful things in the world to contemplate.

This is an amazing performance. "Wait a minute," I protest. "You just spent an hour speaking all sorts of words, most of which sounded like nonsense to me. Now why—"

But they are past hearing, past words.

The doctrine that words are meaningless is so nonsensical it can't even be spoken. In fact, it can't even be thought!

They back away as if before a plague victim.

The audience is in turmoil. The vibes are gone. Several speak at once. Someone begins lecturing me from the other side of the room on the meaninglessness of words. Someone else flips rapidly through the *Upaniṣads* in paperback, apparently searching for confirmation of the same doctrine.

A heavy hand falls on my shoulder. I turn to confront a thin face fringed with a wispy beard. Baleful, solemn eyes peer into mine. "Hey, man," he says, "you're creatin' duality."

The mystic *yogīs* turn to other questions, and the meeting quickly breaks up. We approach them afterwards, but they refuse discussion. I tell them that as devotees of Kṛṣṇa we cannot tolerate blasphemy of Him, and that I hope we will not see any more of such posters.

The cold autumn night air cleared my head, but the meeting had left me despondent. My misgivings had been sound. All we had done was create antagonisms. I hadn't been able even to confront their philosophy, let alone defeat it. It had been like putting your hands through mush. There was nothing to get a hold of.

Back at the temple we found a few devotees waiting up for us with cups of steaming hot milk. As we recounted what

had happened, my mood began to improve.

"They can talk nonsense for hours," I said, "and then when you challenge them, all of a sudden words are meaningless!" The fathomless stupidity of their position struck me with wonder. The doctrine that words are meaningless is so nonsensical that it can't even be spoken. In fact, it can't even be thought! Why couldn't they at least be consistent and be silent? If they were true to themselves they couldn't spread this nonsense.

If words are meaningless, then thinking is meaningless too. They are actually trying to become mindless. They say that *bhakti* is for the emotional sort and that their speculative process is for the intellectual, but they revealed that night how profoundly anti-intellectual and anti-rational they are. For them, all rational thinking is *māyā*. And if they try to base their position on scripture (like the boy flipping through the *Upaniṣads*)—well, that is *māyā* too.

I was feeling ebullient. And then another realization came to me. It made everything worthwhile. I understood their philosophy of devotion.

"It's Pūtanā-*bhakti*!" I exclaimed. "That's what it is, Pūtanā-*bhakti*!" Everything fell into place. Their devotional service, like Pūtanā's, was a disguise, a sham. Pūtanā wanted to kill Kṛṣṇa, and to get close to Him she disguised herself as a devotee, as the goddess of fortune. Pretending she was going to serve Kṛṣṇa the way His mother Yaśodā serves Him, she took Him tenderly upon her lap. Even the devotees were fooled. But at the last minute, her purpose was revealed. It is the same with the impersonalists. They adopt *bhakti* for spiritual advancement and try to act like devotees; they talk about humility, and service, and surrender, but, as the *yogī* said in his talk, they have another idea in the back of their minds: "I'm God." They try to approach God through their duplicitous devotion, and their plan is that at the last moment they're going to whip off the disguise, attack Kṛṣṇa with their "*neti, neti, neti*," kill Him, and take His place. Pūtanā-*bhakti*!

I was exhilarated. They had challenged Kṛṣṇa, but in doing so they had merely brought out in the open their own mindlessness and their own petty envy of God. How ridiculous the tiny creature becomes when he aspires to be the Supreme. They had challenged Kṛṣṇa, but there was no doubt that it was—as it had to be—a clear victory for Kṛṣṇa.

In a short time the yellow posters all disappeared from the city. And the mystic *yogīs*, for whatever reason, did not come back.

YOGA

(continued from page 4)

are hearing about Kṛṣṇa from *Bhagavad-gītā* and chanting His glories: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. This is the beginning—*śravaṇam kīrtanam viṣṇoḥ*. Everything is done in relation to Viṣṇu. The meditation is on Viṣṇu, the *bhakti* is for Viṣṇu—nothing is without Viṣṇu. And Kṛṣṇa is the original form of Viṣṇu (*kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam*), the original form of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. So, if we follow this process of *bhakti-yoga*, then we'll be able to understand the form of Kṛṣṇa, without any doubt.

The next verses of *Bhagavad-gītā* read as follows:

*samaṁ kāya-śiro-grīvaṁ
dhārayann acalaṁ sthiraḥ
sampsreṣya nāsikāgraṁ svaṁ
diśaś cānavalokayan
praśāntātmā vigata-bhīr
brahmacāri-vrate sthitaḥ
manaḥ saṁyamya mac-citta
yukta āsita mat-paraḥ*

"One should hold one's body, neck, and head in a straight line and stare steadily at the tip of the nose. Thus, with an unagitated, subdued mind, devoid of fear, completely free from sex life, one should meditate upon Me within the heart and make Me the ultimate goal of life." [Bg. 6.13-14]

The goal of life is to know Kṛṣṇa, who is situated within the heart of every living being as Paramātmā, the four-handed Viṣṇu form. The *aṣṭāṅga-yoga* process is practiced in order to discover and see this localized form of Viṣṇu, and not for any other purpose. One who has no program to realize this Viṣṇu-mūrti is uselessly engaged in mock-*yoga* practice and is certainly wasting his time. Kṛṣṇa is the ultimate goal of life, and the Viṣṇu-mūrti situated in one's heart is the object of *aṣṭāṅga-yoga* practice.

As mentioned in the previous verses, to begin the *aṣṭāṅga-yoga* process one must first of all select a solitary place, where he can execute *yoga* alone. It is not that one can go to a *yoga* class, pay some fee, do some gymnastics, and then come back home and do all kinds of nonsense. We shouldn't be entrapped by all these ridiculous "*yoga* societies." Such societies, I can declare, are simply societies of the cheaters and the cheated. Here in *Bhagavad-gītā* is the real *yoga* process, taught by the supreme authority, Kṛṣṇa. Can there possibly be any person who is a better *yogī* than Kṛṣṇa? No. And here is His authoritative statement on *yoga*.

So, first of all one has to select a

secluded, holy place and prepare a special seat. Then one has to sit down upon the seat in an erect posture: "One should hold one's body, neck, and head in a straight line." These things help to concentrate the mind, that's all. But the real purpose of *yoga* is to keep Kṛṣṇa always within oneself. Here it is stated, "One should hold one's body, neck, and head in a straight line and stare steadily at the tip of the nose." And if one closes his eyes during meditation, he'll sleep. I have seen this. In these "*yoga* classes" so many so-

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called meditators are simply sleeping, because as soon as one closes his eyes, it is natural that he'll feel sleepy. So the eyes must be half-closed, and one has to see the tip of his nose. This process will help the mind to be fixed.

Then Kṛṣṇa says one should have an "unagitated, subdued mind, devoid of fear." Generally, a *yogī* practices in a jungle. But if he's thinking, "Is some tiger or snake coming? What is that?" his mind will be agitated. After all, he has to sit down alone in a jungle. There are so many animals—tigers, lions, snakes. Therefore it is especially stated here that the *yogī* must be "devoid of fear." The skin of a deer is especially used in *yoga-āsana* because it has some chemical property that repels snakes. If one sits down on that particular skin, the snakes and other reptiles will not come. That is the purpose of the deerskin: one will not be disturbed. But one can be truly fearless only when one is fully in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. A conditioned soul is fearful due to his perverted memory, his forgetfulness of his eternal relationship with Kṛṣṇa. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* says, *bhayaṁ dvitīyā-bhiniveśataḥ syād īśād apetasya viparyayo 'smṛtiḥ*. Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the only basis for fearlessness. Therefore perfect

yoga practice is possible only for a person who is Kṛṣṇa conscious.

The next qualification for the *yogī* is that he must be "completely free from sex life." If one indulges in sex, he cannot fix his mind on anything. A steady mind is the effect of *brahmacarya*, or celibacy. If one remains a *brahmacārī*, or without sex life, then he can be determined. A practical example is Mahatma Gandhi, of India. Now, he started his movement of non-violent noncooperation against the powerful British Empire. Just see! He declared, "I shall fight with the Britishers non-violently, without any weapon." Besides, India was dependent, so there were no weapons. And the few times armed revolutions were attempted, the Britishers, being more powerful, cut them down. So Gandhi invented the method of non-violent noncooperation. "I shall fight with the Britishers," he declared, "and even if they become violent, I shall not become violent. In this way I shall get world sympathy." This was his plan. He was a great statesman, but more important, his determination was very fixed because he was a *brahmacārī*. At the age of thirty-six he gave up sex life. He was a young family man—he had children, he had a wife—but from the age of thirty-six on he gave up sex with his wife. That made him so determined to drive away the Britishers from the land of India that he actually *did* it. Therefore, refraining from sex makes one very powerful. Even if one doesn't do anything else, if he simply refrains from sex he becomes a very powerful man. People do not know the secret: if one wants to do anything with determination, one has to stop sex.

Therefore in no Vedic process—neither the *yoga* process nor the *bhakti* process nor the *jñāna* process—is unrestricted sex indulgence allowed. No. Sex indulgence is allowed only in family life, just to beget very nice children, that's all. Sex is not for sense enjoyment, although there is enjoyment by nature's arrangement. Unless there were enjoyment, why would anyone take responsibility for family life? That pleasure is nature's gift, but we should not take advantage of it. These are the secrets of life.

So *yoga* practice is such a nice thing, but if one simultaneously indulges in sex life, it is simply nonsense. It is simply nonsense if anyone says that one can go on with his sex life as much as he likes and at the same time become a *yogī*. The so-called *yoga* teachers advertise, "Simply pay my fees, and I will give you a miracle mantra." These things are all nonsense. But we accept them because we want to be cheated. We want to get something sublime very cheaply. That means we want to be cheated. If I want a very fine

**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 *Kalī-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.

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.

4 Karatālas: pure bell-metal hand cymbals used in chanting the Hare KṚṣṇa *mahā-mantra*. Imported from India. \$12.00/pair.

5 Mrdaṅga Drum: lightweight, double-headed Indian-style drum used in chanting the *mahā-mantra*. Unbreakable. Comes with an instruction book and cassette instruction tape. \$89.50

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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thing, I must pay for it. Suppose I go to a store and say to the proprietor, "Sir, I can pay you ten cents. Please give me the best thing in your store." How can I expect the best thing for ten cents? If I want to purchase gold, then I have to pay for it. Similarly, if we want perfection in *yoga* practice, then we have to pay for it by giving up sex. That is the instruction of *Bhagavad-gītā*. We shouldn't try to make *yoga* a childish affair. If we try to make it a childish affair, then we'll be cheated. And there are so many cheaters waiting to cheat us, take our money, and go away. Here is the authoritative statement: "Free from sex life."

Next KṚṣṇa says, "One should meditate upon Me." Ultimately, what is the object of meditation? Not the void, but the form of Viṣṇu. This is *sāṅkhya-yoga*, which was first practiced by Kapiladeva, an incarnation of KṚṣṇa, or God. So the secret of *yoga* is that one should absorb the mind in KṚṣṇa. The process of sitting straight and seeing the tip of one's nose helps one to concentrate the mind on the Viṣṇu form, or KṚṣṇa. "One should meditate upon Me," says KṚṣṇa. Thus meditation in *sāṅkhya-yoga* means meditation on KṚṣṇa.

Now, in the KṚṣṇa consciousness movement the meditation is directly on KṚṣṇa and nothing else. Therefore no one is a better meditator than my disciples. They are concentrating simply on KṚṣṇa, and all their activities are centered on KṚṣṇa. When they're working in the garden, digging the earth, they're thinking, "A nice rose will grow, and we shall offer it to KṚṣṇa." This is meditation—practical meditation: "I shall grow a rose, and it will be offered to KṚṣṇa." Even in the digging there is meditation. And when they are preparing nice food, they think, "It will be eaten by KṚṣṇa." So, in cooking there is meditation. And what to speak of chanting Hare KṚṣṇa and dancing.

Therefore, because they are meditating twenty-four hours a day on KṚṣṇa, my disciples are perfect *yogīs*. Let anyone come and challenge them. We are teaching the perfect *yoga* system, but not whimsically: on the authority of *Bhagavad-gītā*. We have not manufactured anything by concoction. Here is KṚṣṇa's statement that one should simply concentrate one's mind on Him, and my disciples' activities have been so molded that they cannot think of anything *but* KṚṣṇa. So they are the highest meditators. KṚṣṇa says, "Think of Me within the heart and make Me the ultimate goal of life." KṚṣṇa is the ultimate goal of life, and my disciples are preparing themselves for being transferred to KṚṣṇa's planet (KṚṣṇaloka). KṚṣṇa consciousness, therefore, is the perfect *yoga*.

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NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

The Power of the Volcano

The media's complete coverage of the Mount St. Helens volcano completely avoided seriously considering the cataclysm's ultimate cause. Photographers in airplanes hovered over the mountain, taking sensational news photos of the blast, officials tallied the loss of life and money, but no one spoke of the ultimate cause; no one suggested the volcanic eruptions were the work of God. One observer cried, "Oh, my God, the mountain blew!" And a photographer at the foot of St. Helens cried, "O dear God, this is hell! God, I want to live!" and barely escaped with his life. The press, however, offered these exclamations not as philosophical statements but as human-interest sidelights.

The daily science pages, while admitting "we simply do not know enough about volcanoes," mentioned only items of intermediate interest—continental plates, how lava forms, how volcanic dust particles are wonderful "windows" by which scientists can see into the mysterious bowels of the earth. But nothing of an ultimate cause, nothing about God. One reporter did raise the question of divine origins, but only to relegate it to the antiquated superstition of primitive religion: "The ancients were convinced that eruptions occurred because of the anger of the gods; today's scientists have a more modern theory."

If the editors of this science page had wanted to bring up a God conscious explanation of natural disasters, they could have given us something more thought-provoking, such as the explanations given in the Vedic literature. But then that might have upset their intention of presenting science as the last word in everything, including Nature and her origins.

Both *The New York Times* and *Time* magazine made the same editorial reflection: there was nothing anyone could have done to stop it. "You can't blame a volcano." "It was literally inhuman."

Said Ms. Bridgid O'Hara-Forster, the writer of *Time's* cover story, "It put our human failings and frailties

in perspective."

What does that mean, to "put our human failings and frailties in perspective"? Clearly, it means the volcano showed us a force for annihilation far greater than man's most powerful and inhuman atomic weaponry. St. Helens, a baby volcano, erupted with five hundred times more power than the Hiroshima bomb. It reminded us that despite our advancement in science or military strength, man has no control over "inhuman" natural forces, forces that could in a moment dash the planet or the entire universe to pieces.

They say, "literally inhuman" and "You can't blame a volcano," but indirectly this admits to the supremacy of a power, and even a morality, incomparably beyond human scope. Call it what you will, "Nature" or "inhuman force," St. Helens forces us to admit the presence of an awesome power not answerable to man.

A Kṛṣṇa conscious person acknowledges the power of nature to be but an insignificant energy of the all-cognizant supreme controller, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. In *Bhagavad-gītā* Śrī Kṛṣṇa showed His devotee Arjuna a divine vision of the universal form, displaying the destructive power of all the universe. "If hundreds of thousands of suns were to rise at once into the sky," states the *Gītā*, "they might resemble the effulgence of the Supreme Person in that universal form." (This was the verse quoted by Robert Oppenheimer in 1945 as he witnessed the first atomic bomb exploding at Alamogordo.) Seeing the fearsome universal form of God, Arjuna asked, "What is Your mission?" and the Lord replied, "Time I am, the destroyer of the worlds, and I have come to engage all people." Was not the "baby volcano," St. Helens, a reminder of God's annihilating force, which will eventually engage all men?

People wonder: Why, if the Supreme is all-good, would He destroy? And this is a natural question with which we can begin our inquiry into Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

That the disasters of nature often seem retributive is not beyond the jurisdiction of the supreme will. The Sanskrit term *karma* refers to the law that for every action there is a reaction, either in this life or in a future life. Karmic reaction may be good or bad, and the vicissitudes of nature are one way we may receive bad *karma*. The plan of the Supreme is complex, ultimately inscrutable; even an expert devotee cannot comprehend fully how Kṛṣṇa is working. The devotee willingly acknowledges, however, that not a blade of grass moves but by the will of the Supreme, and he sees God in everything.

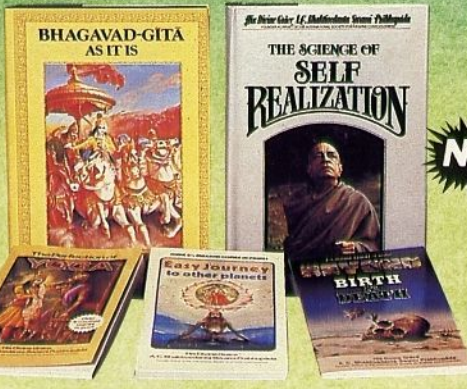
In the *Gītā*, Kṛṣṇa suggests how to see the Supreme in the varied manifestations of the world: "I am the taste of the water, the light of the sun and the moon; I am the sound in ether and ability in man. I am the original fragrance of the earth, and I am heat in fire. I am the life of all that lives. . . ." The devotee knows that a volcanic eruption, like anything else, springs from but a spark of the mighty splendor of the Supreme.

In His original form, Kṛṣṇa has very sweet features, and His dealings are all-loving exchanges with His pure devotees. This is His personal nature in the supreme eternal abode. All saints and prophets have described the material world, although produced of God's energy, to be a foreign place for the lost and wandering souls, and they advise us to go back to the kingdom of God to be reunited in loving pastimes with Him.

But although persons who deny the Supreme cannot love Him and cannot know Him in His loving aspect, they ultimately embrace Him in a form they cannot deny—Death. Those who refuse to admit the presence of the Supreme are forced to submit to Him in this most unwelcome feature. No one escapes Him: "Time I am. I have come to engage all men."

And sometimes, by His own independent will, the Supreme may manifest His power on such a grand scale that it puts even proud human beings "into the right perspective." —SDG

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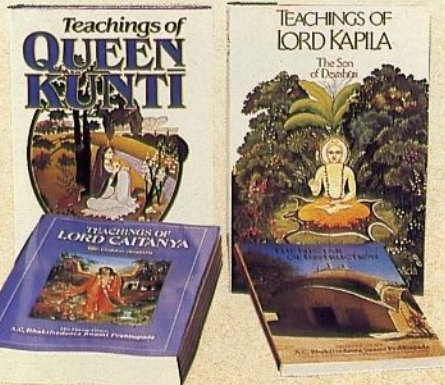
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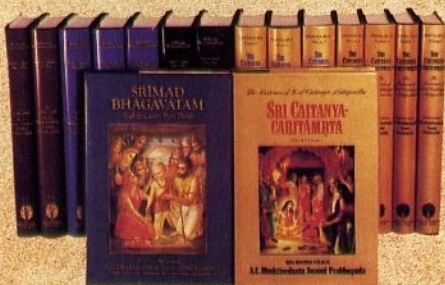
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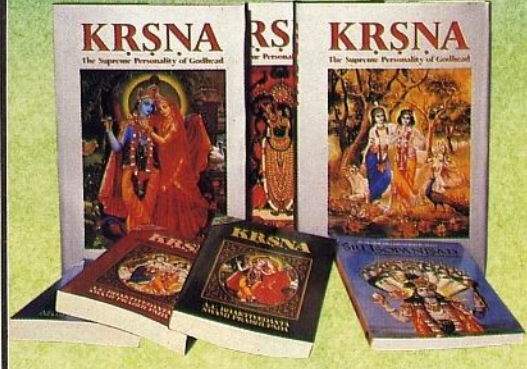
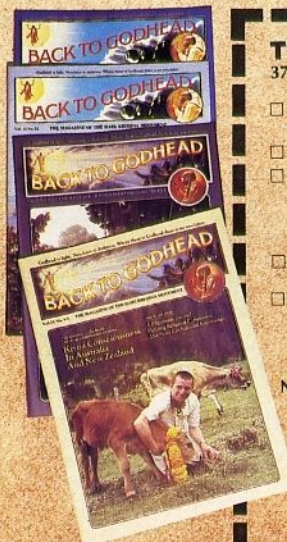
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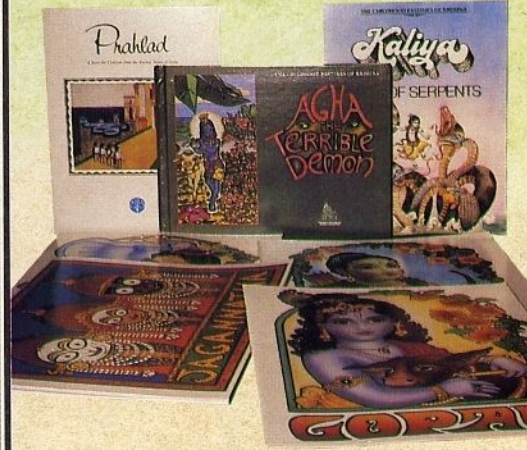
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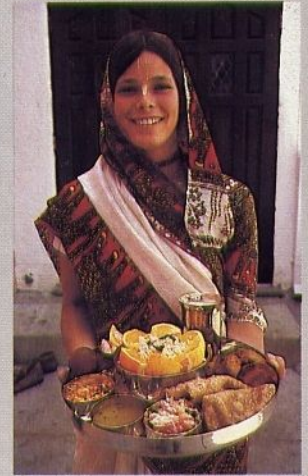
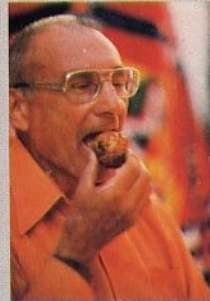
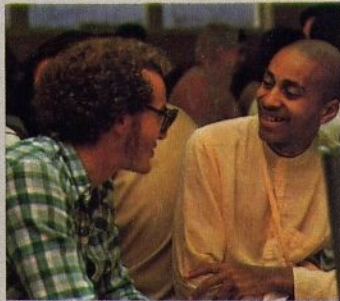
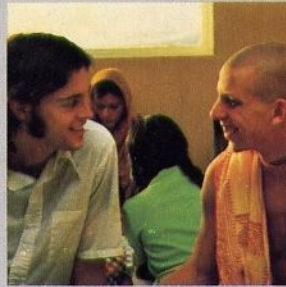
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