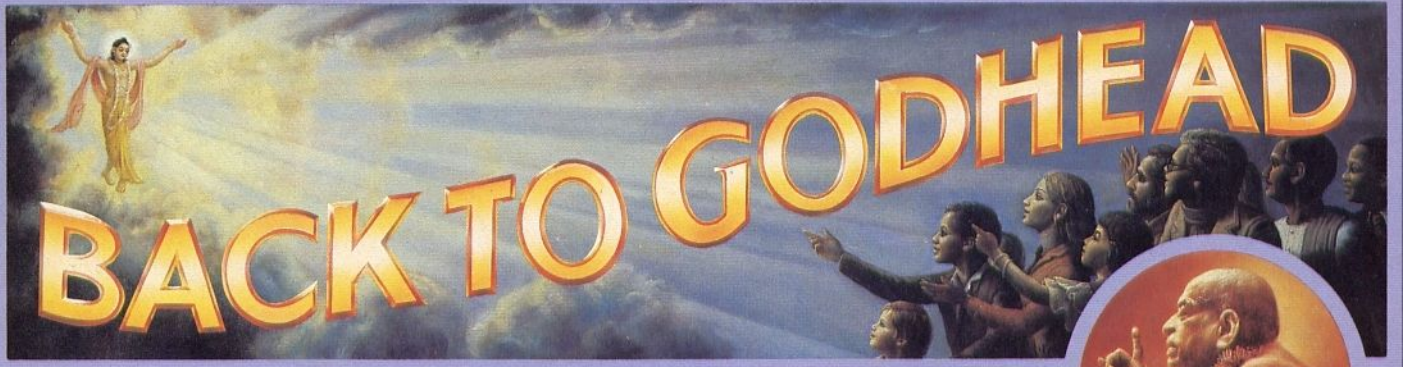


Godhead is light. Nescience is darkness. Where there is Godhead there is no nescience.



Vol.15 No.8 THE MAGAZINE OF THE HARE KRISHNA MOVEMENT



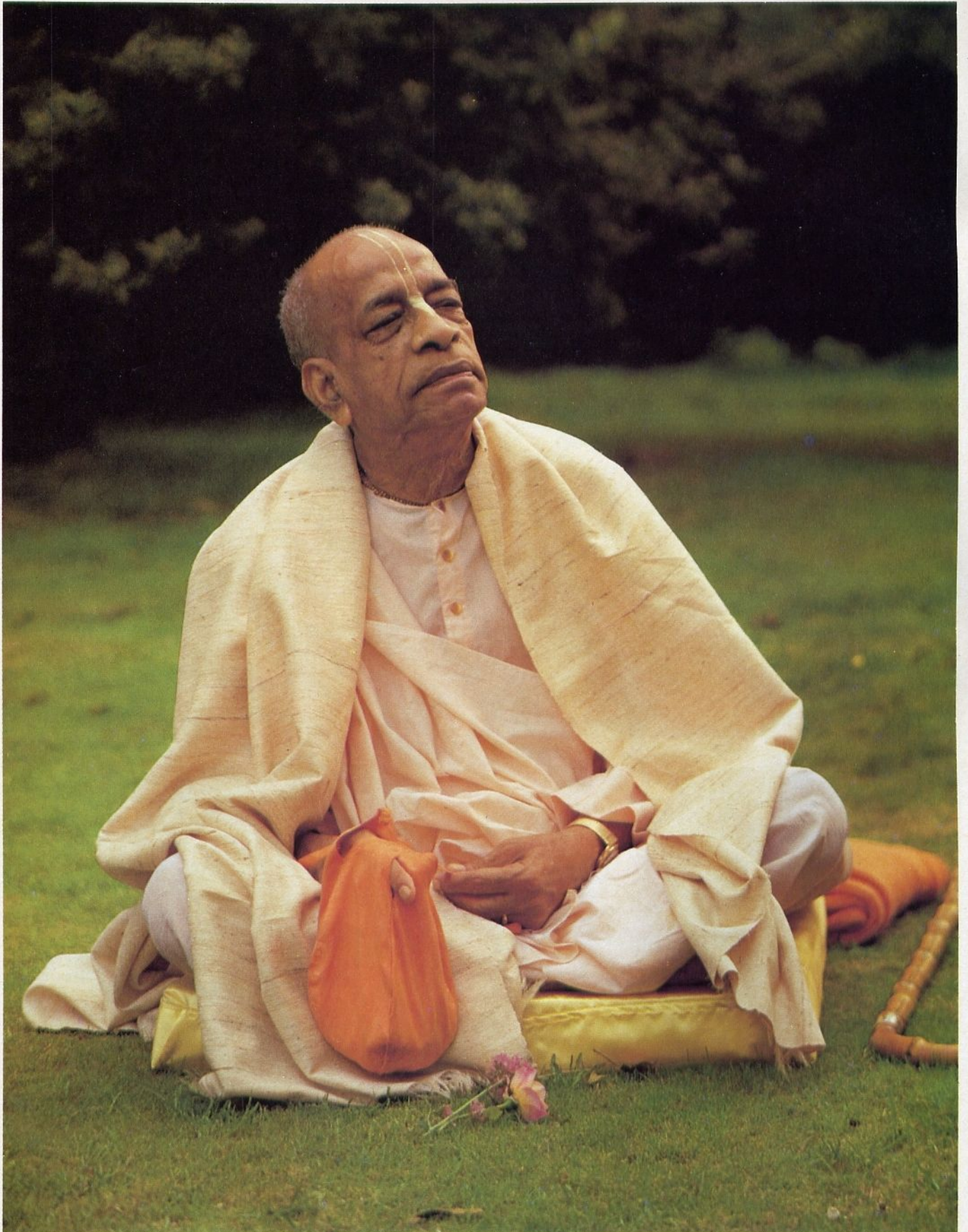


PHOTO: BHARGAVA DĀSA

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

BACK TO GODHEAD

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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 scholar-
ly 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 I like the i in pique.
Pronounce the vowel ṛ like the ri in rim, and c 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 (dāsi for women),
meaning "servant." For instance, the name Kṛṣṇa
dāsa means "servant of Kṛṣṇa."

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

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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."

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will increase more and more."

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COVER: Lord Kṛṣṇa's Universal Form. The original form of God is His all-attractive
pastoral feature as Kṛṣṇa, charming to see and playing sweetly His transcendental
flute. But to reveal how He pervades the material cosmos, Kṛṣṇa displays His
gigantic universal form, in which He manifests the entire creation all at once.
Within this form, Brahmā, the first created being, appears seated on his lotus,
amidst all the planetary systems of the universe. (See page 15.) (Cover art: diorama
by FATE.)

SOCRATES AND HIS TEACHINGS

A Vedic Perspective

An excerpt from *Dialectical Spiritualism: A Vedic View of Western Philosophy* by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

In Dialectical Spiritualism (a book in manuscript), Śrīla Prabhupāda examines with his disciples the ideas of the West's major philosophers. What follows is taken from his discussions about Socrates.

Devotee: Socrates strongly opposed the Sophists, a group of speculators who taught that the standards of right and wrong and of truth and falsity were completely relative, being established solely by individual opinion or social convention. Socrates, on the other hand, seemed convinced that there was an absolute, universal truth or good, beyond mere speculation and opinion, that could be known clearly and with certainty.

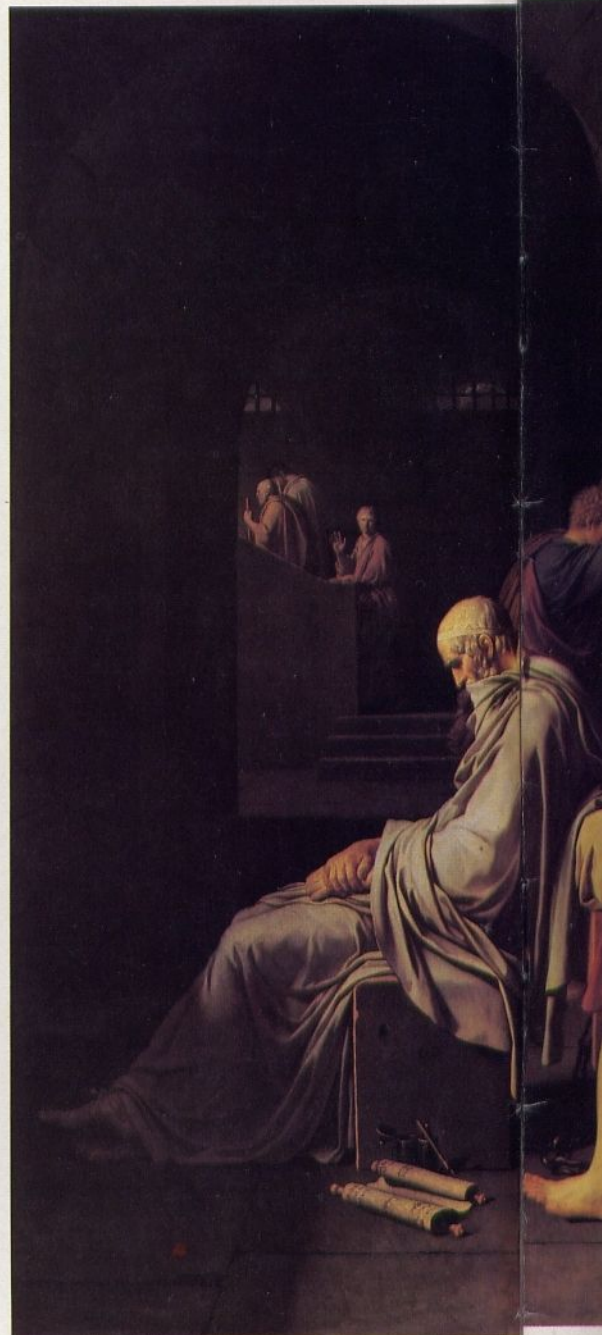
Śrīla Prabhupāda: He was correct. For our part, since we accept Kṛṣṇa, God, as the supreme authority, the Absolute Truth, we cannot refute what He says. Kṛṣṇa, or God, is by definition supreme perfection, and philosophy is perfect when it is in harmony with Him. This is our position. The philosophy of this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is religious in the sense that it is concerned with carrying out the orders of God. That is the sum and substance of religion. It is not possible to manufacture a religion. In *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* manufactured religion is called *kaitava-dharma*, just another form of cheating. Our basic principle is *dharmaṁ tu sākṣād bhagavat-praṇītam*. The word *dharma*

refers to the orders given by God, and if we follow those orders we are following *dharma*. An individual citizen cannot manufacture laws, for laws are given by the government. Our perfection lies in following the orders of God cent percent. Those who have no conception of God or His orders may manufacture religious systems, but our system is different.

Devotee: The Socratic dialectic usually sought gradually to arrive at an understanding of the essence of a particular moral virtue—for example, self-control, piety, courage, or justice—by examining proposed definitions for completeness and consistency. Socrates wanted to establish more than just a list of universal definitions, however. He tried to show that any particular virtue, when understood in depth, was not different from all the others. The unity of the virtues thus implied the existence of a single absolute good. The goal of life is to rise by means of the intellect to a realization of this absolute good. A person who had attained such knowledge of the good would be self-realized in that he would always *do* the good without fail. A soul who had thus realized the good was said to be in a healthy or sound state, or to have attained wisdom. Socrates's name for the single absolute good was "knowledge."

Could one say that Socrates was a kind of *jñāna-yogī*?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Socrates was a *muni*, a



great thinker. However, the real truth comes to such a *muni* by that process after many, many births. As Kṛṣṇa says in *Bhagavad-gītā* [7.19]:

*bahūnāṁ janmanām ante
jñānavān māṁ prapadyate
vāsudevaḥ sarvaṁ iti
sa mahātmā sudurlabhaḥ*

"After many births and deaths, he who is actually in knowledge surrenders unto Me, knowing Me to be the cause of all causes and all that is. Such a great soul is very rare."

These people are known as *jñānavān*, wise men, and after many births they surrender themselves to Kṛṣṇa. They do not do so blindly, but knowing that the Supreme Personality of Godhead is the



DETAIL FROM "THE DEATH OF SOCRATES," BY JACQUES-LOUIS DAVID, FROM THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, WOLFE FUND, 1911.

source of everything. However, this process of self-searching for knowledge takes time. If we take the instructions of Kṛṣṇa directly and surrender unto Him, we save time and many, many births.

Devotee: Socrates terms his method *maieutic*, that is, like that of a midwife. He thought that a soul could not really come to knowledge of the good by the imposition of information from an external source. Rather, such knowledge had to be awakened within the soul itself. The teacher's business is to direct, encourage, and prod a soul until it gives birth to the truth. The *maieutic* method therefore suggests that since the soul is able to bring the truth out of itself, knowledge is really a kind of recollection or remembrance. If so, then there must have been

a previous life in which the soul possessed the knowledge it has forgotten. This suggests, then, that the soul (understood as something involving intelligence and memory) exists continuously through many lives and, indeed, is eternal.*

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes, the soul is eternal. And because the soul is eternal, the intelligence, mind, and senses are also eternal. However, they are all now covered by a material coating, which must be cleansed. Once this material coating is washed away, the real mind, intelligence and senses will emerge. That is stated in

*Scholars disagree about whether Socrates explicitly taught the doctrine of remembrance. Even if it was Plato's doctrine, he clearly thought it inherent in Socrates's *maieutic* itself.

"The Death of Socrates."

Condemned to die by the Athenian democracy, Socrates prepares to drink poisonous hemlock, surrounded by his mourning followers. Socrates, however, faces his death calmly and without fear, an attitude he said was but proper for a philosopher, who is interested only in the care of his soul and is unaffected by bodily conditions.

the *Nārada-pañcarātra: tat-paratvena nirmalam*. The purificatory process takes place when one is in touch with the transcendental loving service of the Lord and is chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*. Caitanya Mahāprabhu said, *cetodarpaṇa-mārjanam*: one must cleanse the heart. All misconceptions come from misunderstanding. We are all part and parcel of God, yet somehow or other we have forgotten this. Previously our service was rendered to God, but now we are rendering service to something illusory. This is *māyā*. Whether we are liberated or conditioned, our constitutional position is to render service. In the material world we work according to our different capacities—as a politician, a thinker, a poet, or whatever. But if we are disconnected from Kṛṣṇa, all of this is *māyā*. When we perform our duty in order to develop Kṛṣṇa consciousness, our duty enables liberation from this bondage.

Devotee: It is interesting that nowadays we find the kind of relativism taught by Sophists like Protagoras to be again very widespread. “If you believe it, then it is true for you.” Socrates took up the task of vigorously combating this position, trying to demonstrate by strong arguments that there must be an absolute truth that is distinguishable from the relative and that must be categorically acknowledged by everyone.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: That is what we are also doing. The Absolute Truth is true for everyone, and the relative truth is relative to a particular position. The relative truth depends on the Absolute Truth, which is the summum bonum. God is the Absolute Truth, and the material world is relative truth. Because the material world is God’s energy, it appears to be real or true, just as the reflection of the sun in water emits some light. That reflection is not absolute, and as soon as the sun sets, that light will disappear. Since relative truth is a reflection of the Absolute Truth, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* states, *satyaṁ param dhī-mahi*: “I worship the Absolute Truth.” The Absolute Truth is Kṛṣṇa, Vāsudeva. *Oṁ namo bhagavate vāsudevāya*. This cosmic manifestation is relative truth; it is a manifestation of Kṛṣṇa’s external energy. If Kṛṣṇa withdrew His energy, the cosmos would not exist. In another sense, Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa’s energy are not different. We cannot separate heat from fire; heat is also fire, yet heat is not fire. This is the position of relative truth. As soon as we experience heat, we understand that there is fire. Yet we cannot say that heat is fire. Relative truth is like heat because it stands on the strength of the Absolute Truth, just as heat stands on the strength of fire. Because the Absolute is true, relative truth also appears to be

true, although it has no independent existence. A mirage appears to be water because in actuality there is such a thing as water. Similarly, this material world appears attractive because there is actually an all-attractive spiritual world.

Devotee: Socrates held that the highest duty of man was to “care for his soul,” that is, to cultivate that healthy state of soul which is true knowledge, the attainment of the good. When a man becomes fixed in such knowledge he will as a matter of course act correctly in all affairs, he will be beyond the dictates of

Socrates cannot understand how God, through His potencies, can remain in His own abode and simultaneously be present in every atom.

the passions, and he will remain peaceful and undisturbed in every circumstance. Socrates seems himself to have attained such a state, as his own behavior at the time of his death illustrates. He seems to have realized knowledge of at least some aspect of the Absolute Truth, although we must add that he never spoke of it as a person or gave it a personal name.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: That is the preliminary stage of understanding the Absolute, known as Brahman realization, realization of the impersonal feature. When one is further advanced he attains Paramātmā realization, realization of the localized feature, whereby he realizes that God is everywhere. It is a fact that God is everywhere, but at the same time God has His own abode. *Goloka eva nivasaty akhilātma-bhūtaḥ*. God is a person, and He has His own abode and associates. Although He is in His abode, He is present everywhere, within every atom. *Aṅgāntara-stha-paramāṇu-cayāntara-stham*. Like other impersonalists, Socrates cannot understand how God, through His potency, can remain in His own abode and simultaneously be present in every atom. The material world is His expansion, His energy (*bhūmir āpo ’nalo vāyuḥ khaṁ mano buddhir eva ca*). Because His energy is expanded every-

where, He can be present everywhere. Although the energy and the energetic are nondifferent, we cannot say that they are not distinct. They are simultaneously one and different. This is the perfect philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda-tattva* [inconceivable simultaneous oneness and difference].

Devotee: Socrates held that “all the virtues are one thing—knowledge.” He saw goodness and knowledge as inseparable. This union of the two seems to reflect features of *sattva-guṇa* as described in the *Bhagavad-gītā*.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: *Sattva-guṇa*, the mode of goodness, is a position from which we can receive knowledge. Knowledge cannot be received from the platform of passion and ignorance. If we hear about Kṛṣṇa, or God, we are gradually freed from the clutches of darkness and passion. Then we can come to the platform of *sattva-guṇa*, and when we are perfectly situated there, we are beyond the lower modes. In the words of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* [1.2.18-19]:

*naṣṭa-prāyeṣv abhadreṣu
nityaṁ bhāgavata-sevayā
bhagavaty uttama-śloke
bhaktir bhavati naiṣṭhikī
tadā rajas-tamo-bhāvāḥ
kāma-lobhādayaś ca ye
ceta etair anāvīddharṁ
sthitāṁ sattve prasīdati*

“By regular attendance in classes on the *Bhāgavatam* and by rendering of service to the pure devotee, all that is troublesome to the heart is almost completely destroyed, and loving service unto the Personality of Godhead, who is praised with transcendental songs, is established as an irrevocable fact. As soon as irrevocable loving service is established in the heart, the effects of nature’s modes of passion and ignorance, such as lust, desire, and hankering, disappear from the heart. Then the devotee is established in goodness, and he becomes completely happy.”

This process may be gradual, but it is certain. The more we hear about Kṛṣṇa, the more we become purified. Purification means freedom from the attacks of greed and passion. Then we can become happy. From the *brahma-bhūta* platform we can realize ourselves and then realize God. So before realizing the Supreme Good, we must first come to the platform of *sattva-guṇa*, goodness. Therefore we have regulations prohibiting illicit sex, meat-eating, intoxication, and gambling. Ultimately we must transcend even the mode of goodness through *bhakti*. Then we become liberated, gradually develop love of God, and regain our original state. *Muktir hitvānyathā rūpam*. This means

giving up all material engagements and rendering full service to Kṛṣṇa. Then we attain the state where *māyā* cannot touch us. If we keep in touch with Kṛṣṇa, *māyā* has no jurisdiction. *Māyāṁ etāṁ taranti te*. This is perfection.

Devotee: Socrates took the oracular *gnōthi seauton*, “know thyself,” to enjoy “care of the soul.” Care of the soul, as we have seen, involved an intense intellectual endeavor, a kind of introspective contemplation or meditation. It gradually purified the self, detaching it more and more from the body and its passions. Thus through the contemplative endeavor entailed by “know thyself,” a person attained knowledge and self-control, and with that he also became happy.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes, that is a fact. Meditation means analyzing the self and searching for the Absolute Truth. That is described in the Vedic literatures: *dhyanāvasthita-tad-gatena manasā paśyanti yaṁ yoginaḥ*. Through meditation, the *yogī* sees the Supreme Truth (Kṛṣṇa, or God) within himself. Kṛṣṇa is there. The *yogī* consults with Kṛṣṇa, and Kṛṣṇa advises him. That is the relationship Kṛṣṇa has with the *yogī*. *Dadāmi buddhi-yogaṁ tam*. When one is purified, he is always seeing Kṛṣṇa within himself. This is confirmed in *Brahma-saṁhitā* [5.38].

*premāñjana-cchurita-bhakti-vilocanena
santaḥ sadaiva hṛdayeṣu vilokayanti
yaṁ śyāmasundaram acintya-guṇa-
svarūpaṁ
govindam ādi-puruṣaṁ tam ahaṁ
bhajāmi*

“I worship the primeval Lord, Govinda, who is always seen by the devotee whose eyes are anointed with the pulp of love. He is seen in His eternal form of Śyāmasundara, situated within the heart of the devotee.” Thus an advanced saintly person is always seeing Kṛṣṇa. In this verse, the word *śyāma* means “blackish” but at the same time extraordinarily beautiful. Being the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa is of course very beautiful. The word *acintya* means that He has inconceivable, unlimited qualities. Although He is situated everywhere, as Govinda He is always dancing in Vṛndāvana with the *gopīs*. There He plays with His friends and sometimes, acting as a naughty boy, teases His mother. These pastimes of the Supreme Person are described in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

Devotee: As far as we know, Socrates himself had no teacher in philosophy. Indeed, he refers to himself as “self-made.” Do you believe that one can be self-taught? Can self-knowledge be attained through one’s own meditation or introspection?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes. Ordinarily every-

one thinks according to the bodily conception. If I begin to study the different parts of my body and seriously begin to consider what I am, I will gradually arrive at the study of the soul. If I ask myself, “Am I this hand?” the answer will be, “No, I am not this hand. Rather, this is my hand.” I can thus continue analyzing each part of the body and discover that all the parts are mine but that I am different. Through this method of self-study, any intelligent man can see that he is not the body. This is the first lesson of *Bhagavad-gītā* [2.13]:

**We cannot say
that Socrates
was self-taught.
In his previous
lives, Socrates
had cultivated
knowledge, and
this knowledge
was continuing.**

*dehino 'smin yathā dehe
kaumāraṁ yauvanaṁ jarā
tathā dehāntara-prāptir
dhīras tatra na muhyati*

“As the embodied soul continuously passes, in this body, from boyhood to youth to old age, the soul similarly passes into another body at death. The self-realized soul is not bewildered by such a change.”

At one time I had the body of a child, but now that body is no longer existing. Nonetheless, I am aware that I possessed such a body; therefore from this I can deduce that I am something other than the body. I may rent an apartment, but I do not identify with it. The body may be mine, but I am not the body. By this kind of introspection, a man can teach himself the distinction between body and soul.

As far as being *completely* self-taught, according to *Bhagavad-gītā* and the Vedic conception, life is continuous. Since we are always acquiring experience, we cannot actually say that Socrates was self-taught. Rather, in his previous lives he had cultivated knowledge, and this knowledge was simply continuing. That is a fact. Otherwise, why is one man intelligent and another man ignorant? This is due to continuity.

Devotee: Socrates believed that through intellectual endeavor—meditation—a person can attain knowledge or wisdom, which is nothing else but the possession of all the virtues in their unity. Such a person always acts in the right way and thus is happy. Therefore the enlightened man is meditative, knowledgeable, and virtuous. He is also happy because he acts properly.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes, that is confirmed in *Bhagavad-gītā* [18.54]. *Brahma-bhūtaḥ prasannātmā na śocati na kāṅkṣati*: when one is self-realized, he immediately becomes happy, joyful (*prasannātmā*). This is because he is properly situated. One may labor a long time under some mistaken idea, but when he finally comes to the proper conclusion, he becomes very happy. He thinks, “Oh, what a fool I was, going on so long in such a mistaken way.” Thus a self-realized person is happy. Happiness means that one no longer has to think of attaining things. For instance, Dhruva Maharaja told the Lord, *svāmin kṛtārtho 'smi varaṁ na yāce*: “I don’t want any material benediction.” Prahlāda Mahārāja also said, “My Lord, I don’t want material benefits. I have seen my father—who was such a big materialist that even the demigods were afraid of him—destroyed by You within a second. Therefore I am not after these things.” Real knowledge means that one no longer hankers. The *karmīs*, *jñānīs*, and *yogīs* are all hankering after something. The *karmīs* want material wealth, beautiful women, and good positions. If one is not hankering for what one does not have, he is lamenting for what he has lost. The *jñānīs* are also hankering, expecting to become one with God and merge into His existence. The *yogīs* are hankering after some magical powers to befool others into thinking that they have become God. In India some *yogīs* convince people that they can manufacture gold and fly in the sky, and foolish people believe them. Even if a *yogī* can fly, there are many birds flying. What is the difference? An intelligent person can understand this. If a person says that he will walk on water, thousands of fools will come to see him. People will even pay ten rupees just to see a man bark like a dog, not thinking that there are many dogs barking anyway. In any case, people are always hankering and lamenting, but the devotee is fully satisfied in the service of the Lord. He doesn’t hanker for anything, nor does he lament.

Devotee: Through *jñāna*, meditation, Socrates may have realized Brahman. Could he have also realized Paramātmā?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes.

Devotee: But what about the realization of Bhagavān, Kṛṣṇa? I thought that Kṛṣṇa

(continued on page 30)

The Biography of a Pure Devotee

A MOST INTENSE PRESENCE

Some early followers drifted away, but many newcomers felt irresistibly drawn to Śrīla Prabhupāda and his Kṛṣṇa conscious Society.

by ŚRĪLA SATSVARŪPA DĀSA GOSWAMI

After weathering a near-fatal sea journey from India and a difficult winter on New York City's Upper West Side and the Bowery, Śrīla Prabhupāda had set up America's first Kṛṣṇa temple in the East Village. Now, as some of his early supporters began to fall away, new people joined him.

Don was a test of Swamiji's tolerance. He had lived in the storefront for months, working little and not trying to change his habits. He had a remarkable speech affectation: instead of talking, he *enunciated* his words, as if he were reciting from a book. And he never used contractions. It wasn't that he was intellectual, just that somehow he had developed a plan to abolish his natural dialect. Don's speech struck people as bizarre, like it might be the result of too many drugs. It gave him the air of being not an ordinary being. And he continually took marijuana, even after Swamiji had asked those who lived with him not to. Sometimes during the day his girl friend would join him in the storefront, and they would sit together talking intimately and sometimes kissing. But he liked the Swami. He even gave some money once. He liked living in the storefront, and Swamiji didn't complain.

But others did. One day an interested newcomer dropped by the storefront and found Don alone, surrounded by the sharp aroma of marijuana. "You been smoking pot? But the Swami doesn't want anyone smoking here." Don denied it: "I have not been smoking. You are not speaking the truth." The boy then reached into Don's shirt pocket and pulled out a joint, and Don hit him in the face. Several of the boys found out. They weren't sure what was right: What would the Swami do? What do you do if someone smokes pot? Even though a devotee was not supposed to, could it be allowed sometimes? They put the matter before Swamiji.

Prabhupāda took it very seriously, and he was upset, especially about the violence. "He hit you?" he asked the boy. "I will go down myself and kick him in the head." But then Prabhupāda thought about it and said that Don should be asked to leave. But Don had already left.

The next morning during Swamiji's class, Don appeared at the front door. From his dais, Swamiji looked out at Don with great concern. But his first concern was for ISKCON: "Ask him," Prabhupāda requested Roy, who sat nearby, "if he has marijuana — then he cannot come in. Our society . . ." Prabhupāda was like an anxious father, afraid for the life of his infant ISKCON. Roy went to the door and told Don he would have to give up his drugs if he entered. And Don walked away.

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





Raphael was not interested in spiritual discipline. He was a tall young man with long, straight, brown hair who, like Don, tried to stay aloof and casual toward Swamiji. When Prabhupāda introduced *japa* and encouraged the boys to chant during the day, Raphael didn't go for it. He said he liked a good *kīrtana*, but he wouldn't chant on beads.

One time Swamiji was locked out of his apartment, and the boys had to break the lock. Swamiji asked Raphael to replace it. Days went by. Raphael could sit in the storefront reading Rimbaud, he could wander around town, but he couldn't find time to fix the lock. One evening he opened the lockless door to the Swami's apartment and made his way to the back room, where some boys were sitting, listening to Swamiji speak informally about Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Suddenly Raphael spoke up, revealing his doubts and his distracted mind. "As for me," he said, "I don't know what's happening. I don't know whether a brass band is playing or what the heck is going on." Some of the devotees tensed; he had interrupted their devotional mood. "Raphael is very candid," Swamiji replied smiling, as if to explain his son's behavior to the others.

Raphael finally fixed the lock, but one day after a lecture he approached the Swami, stood beside the dais, and spoke up, exasperated, impatient: "I am not meant to sit in a temple and chant on beads! My father was a boxer. I am meant to run on the beach and breathe in big breaths of air. . . ." Raphael went on, gesticulating and voicing his familiar complaints—things he would rather do than take up Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Suddenly Prabhupāda interrupted him in a loud voice: "Then do it! Do it!" Raphael shrank away, but he stayed.

Bill Epstein took pride in his relationship with the Swami—it was honest. Although he helped the Swami by telling people about him and sending them up to see him in his apartment, he felt the Swami knew he'd never become a serious follower. Nor did Bill ever mislead himself into thinking he would be serious. But Prabhupāda wasn't content with Bill's take-it-or-leave-it attitude. When Bill would finally show up at the storefront again after spending some days at a friend's place, only to fall asleep with a blanket wrapped over his head during the lecture, Prabhupāda would just start shouting so loud that Bill couldn't sleep. Sometimes Bill would ask a challenging question, and Prabhupāda would answer and then say, "Are you satisfied?" and Bill would look up dreamily and answer, "No!" Then Prabhupāda would answer it again more fully and say louder, "Are you

satisfied?" and again Bill would say no. This would go on until Bill would have to give in: "Yes, yes, I am satisfied."

But Bill was the first person to get up and dance during a *kīrtana* in the storefront. Some of the other boys thought he looked like he was dancing in an egotistical, narcissistic way, even though his arms were outstretched in a facsimile of the pictures of Lord Caitanya. But when Swamiji saw Bill dancing like that, he looked at Bill with wide-open eyes and feelingly expressed appreciation: "Bill is dancing just like Lord Caitanya."

Carl liked the Swami, and the talk about Kṛṣṇa and the soul was fine, but giving up drugs and sex was carrying it a little too far.

Bill sometimes returned from his wanderings with money, and although it was not very much, he would give it to Swamiji. He liked to sleep at the storefront and spend the day on the street, returning for lunch or *kīrtanas* or a place to sleep. He used to leave in the morning and go looking for cigarettes on the ground. To Bill, the Swami was part of the hip movement and had thus earned a place of respect in his eyes as a genuine person. Bill objected when the boys introduced signs of reverential worship toward the Swami (starting with their giving him an elevated seat in the temple), and as the boys who lived with the Swami gradually began to show enthusiasm, competition, and even rivalry among themselves, Bill turned from it in disgust. He allowed that he would go on just helping the Swami in his own way, and he knew that the Swami appreciated whatever he did. So he wanted to leave it at that.

Carl Yeagens had helped Prabhupāda in times of need. He had helped with the legal work of incorporating ISKCON, signed the ISKCON charter as a trustee, and even opened his home to Swamiji

when David had driven him from the Bowery loft. But those days when he and Eva had shared their apartment with him had created a tension that had never left. He liked the Swami, he respected him as a genuine *sannyāsī* from India, but he didn't accept the conclusions of the philosophy. The talk about Kṛṣṇa and the soul was fine, but the idea of giving up drugs and sex was carrying it a little too far. Now Prabhupāda was settled in his new place, and Carl felt he had done his part and was no longer needed. Though he had helped Prabhupāda incorporate his International Society for Krishna Consciousness, he didn't want to join it.

Carl found the Second Avenue *kīrtanas* too public, not like the more intimate atmosphere he had enjoyed with the Swami on the Bowery. Now the audiences were larger, and there was an element of wild letting loose that they had never had on the Bowery. Like some of the other old associates, Carl felt reluctant to join in. Compared to the Second Avenue street scene, the old meetings in the fourth-floor Bowery loft had seemed more mystical, like secluded meditations.

Carol Bekar also preferred a more sedate *kīrtana*. She thought people were trying to take out their personal frustrations by the wild singing and dancing. The few times she did attend evening *kīrtanas* on Second Avenue were "tense moments." One time a group of teenagers had come into the storefront mocking and shouting, "Hey! What the hell is this!" She kept thinking that at any moment a rock was going to come crashing through the big window. And anyway, her boyfriend wasn't interested.

Robert Nelson, Prabhupāda's old uptown friend, never deviated in his good feelings for Prabhupāda, but he always went along in his own natural way and never adopted any serious disciplines. Somehow, almost all of those who had helped Prabhupāda uptown and on the Bowery did not want to go further once he began a spiritual organization, which happened almost immediately after he moved into 26 Second Avenue. New people were coming forward to assist him, and Carl, Carol, and others like them felt that they were being replaced and that their obligation toward the Swami was ending. It was a kind of changing of the guard. Although the members of the old guard were still his well-wishers, they began to drift away.

* * *

Bruce Scharf had just graduated from New York University and was applying for a job. One day an ex-roommate told him about the Swami he had visited down

on Second Avenue. "They sing there," his friend said, "and they have this far-out thing where they have some dancing. And Allen Ginsberg was there." The Swami was difficult to understand, his friend explained, and besides that, his followers recorded his talks on a tape recorder. "Why should he have a big tape recorder? That's not very spiritual." But Bruce became interested.

He was already a devotee of Indian culture. Four years ago, when he was barely twenty, Bruce had worked during the summer as a steward aboard an American freighter and gone to India, where he had visited temples, bought pictures of Śiva and Gaṇeśa and books on Gandhi, and felt as if he were part of the culture. When he returned to N.Y.U., he read more about India and wrote a paper on Gandhi for his history course. He would eat in Indian restaurants and attend Indian films and music recitals, and he was reading the *Bhagavad-gītā*. He had even given up eating meat. He had plans of returning to India, taking some advanced college courses, and then coming back to America to teach Eastern religions. But in the meantime he was experimenting with LSD.

Chuck Barnett was eighteen years old. His divorcée mother had recently moved to Greenwich Village, where she was studying psychology at N.Y.U. Chuck had moved out of his mother's apartment to one on Twelfth Street on the Lower East Side, in the neighborhood of Allen Ginsberg and other hip poets and musicians. He was a progressive jazz flutist who worked with several professional groups in the city. He had been practicing *haṭha-yoga* for six years and had recently been experimenting with LSD. He would have visions of lotuses and concentric circles, but after coming down, he would become more involved than ever in sensuality. A close friend of Chuck's had suddenly gone homosexual that summer, leaving Chuck disgusted and cynical. Someone told Chuck that an Indian swami was staying downtown on Second Avenue, so he came one day in August to the window of the former Matchless Gifts store.

Steve Guarino, the son of a New York fireman, had grown up in the city and graduated from Brooklyn College in 1961. Influenced by his father, he had gone into the Navy, where he had tolerated two years of military routine, always waiting for the day he would be free to join his friends on the Lower East Side. Finally, a few months after the death of President Kennedy, he had been honorably discharged. Without so much as paying a visit to his parents, he had headed straight

for the Lower East Side, which by then appeared vividly within his mind to be the most mystical place in the world. He was writing stories and short novels under the literary influence of Franz Kafka and others, and he began to take LSD "to search and experiment with consciousness." *A Love Supreme*, a record by John Coltrane, the jazz musician, encouraged Steve to think that God actually existed. Just to make enough money to live, Steve had taken a job with the welfare office. One afternoon during his lunch hour, while walking down Second Avenue, he

**I had the feeling
that I was leaving
the world, like
when you're going
to catch a plane.
I thought, "Now
I'm leaving a part
of me behind, and
I'm going to
something new."**

saw that the Matchless Gifts store had a small piece of paper in the window, announcing, "Lectures in Bhagavad Gītā, A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami."

Chuck: *I finally found Second Avenue and First Street, and I saw through the window that there was some chanting going on inside and some people were sitting up against the wall. Beside me on the sidewalk some middle-class people were looking in and giggling. I turned to them, and with my palms folded I asked, "Is this where a swami is?" They giggled and said, "Pilgrim, your search has ended." I wasn't surprised by this answer, because I felt it was the truth.*

Bruce: *I was looking for Hare Kṛṣṇa. I had left my apartment and had walked over to Avenue B when I decided to walk all the way down to Houston Street. When I came to First Street, I turned right and then, walking along First Street, came to Second Avenue. All along First Street I was seeing these Puerto Rican grocery stores, and then there was one of those churches where everyone was standing up, singing loudly, and playing tambourines. Then, as I walked further along First Street, I had the feeling that I was*

leaving the world, like when you're going to the airport to catch a plane. I thought, "Now I'm leaving a part of me behind, and I'm going to something new."

But when I got over to Second Avenue, I couldn't find Hare Kṛṣṇa. There was a gas station, and then I walked past a little storefront, but the only sign was one that said Matchless Gifts. Then I walked back again past the store, and in the window I saw a black-and-white sign announcing a Bhagavad-gītā lecture. I entered the storefront and saw a pile of shoes there, so I took off my shoes and came in and sat down near the back.

Steve: *I had a feeling that this was a group that was already established and had been meeting for a while. I came in and sat down on the floor, and a boy who said his name was Roy was very courteous and friendly to me. He apparently had already experienced the meetings. He asked my name, and I felt at ease.*

Suddenly the Swami entered through the side door. He wore a saffron dhoti but no shirt, just a piece of cloth like a long sash, tied across his right shoulder and leaving his arms, his left shoulder, and part of his chest bare. When I saw him I thought of the Buddha.

Bruce: *There were about fifteen people sitting on the floor. One man with a big beard sat up by the front on the right-hand side, leaning up against the wall. After some time the door on the opposite side opened, and in walked the Swami. When he came in, he turned his head to see who was in his audience. And then he stared right at me. Our eyes met. It was as if he were studying me. In my mind it was like a photograph was being taken of Swamiji looking at me for the first time. There was a pause. Then he very gracefully got up on the dais and sat down and took out a pair of hand cymbals and began a kīrtana. The kīrtana was the thing that most affected me. It was the best music I'd ever heard. And it had meaning. You could actually concentrate on it, and it gave you some joy to repeat the words "Hare Kṛṣṇa." I immediately accepted it as a spiritual practice.*

Chuck: *I entered the storefront, and sitting on a grass mat on the hard floor was a person who seemed at first to be neither male nor female, but when he looked at me I couldn't even look him straight in the eyes, they were so brilliant and glistening. His skin was golden with rosy cheeks, and he had large ears that framed his face. He had three strands of beads—one which was at his neck, one a little longer, and the other down on his chest. He had a long forehead, which rose above his shining eyes, and there were many furrows in his brow. His arms*
(continued on page 32)

SPIRITUAL STRATEGIES FOR THE AGE OF IRON

Śrīla Prabhupāda was alone in an alien country, with no money or place of his own—but fifty centuries of spiritual tradition stood behind him.

by RAVĪNDRA SVARŪPA DĀSA

The freezing wind blasting off the river becomes merciless when funneled between the walls of the city's chartered canyons. The wind hurtles a birdshot of cinder and sleet; it sends trash skimming over the icy pavement and lifts it in sudden dizzying spirals high up the face of the blank, impassive towers. A dull unending roar, as though the buildings moaned under a drugged sleep, fills the chasms.

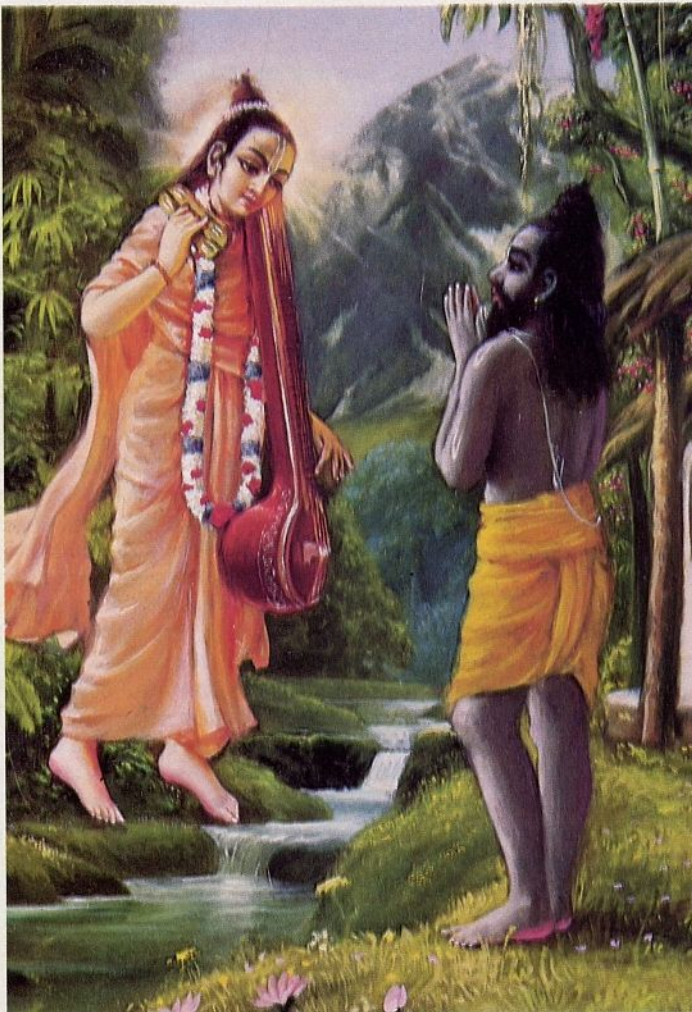
RAVĪNDRA SVARŪPA DĀSA holds a doctorate in religion from Temple University, Philadelphia. He has been a devotee of Kṛṣṇa for nine years.

This most densely crowded city of America is also its most desolate waste, and nothing seems more inhospitable to man than the world where everything is man-made. This is New York, in the grip of an iron winter, in the middle of an iron age.

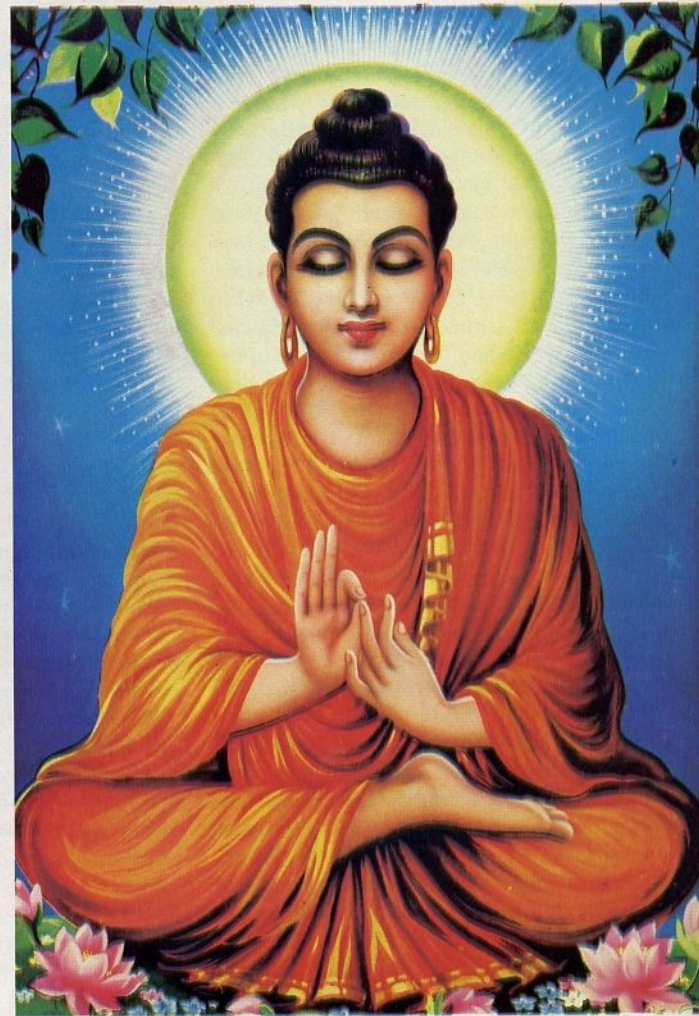
We see now a figure making its way along the bottom of one of the empty iron-rimmed abysses. Leaning forward into the wind, a cane in his left hand, he moves steadfastly on. Look at him closely: the saffron robes of an Indian mendicant priest flap below his overcoat, and his forehead bears the parallel clay lines of the devotee of Kṛṣṇa. His face has an expression both

indomitable and serene, as though he were not really walking this bitter wasteland, and indeed he appears so out of place here that a magnolia tree in full fragrant bloom on these hard and frigid streets would seem no less incongruous. This is Śrīla Prabhupāda in the winter of 1966. He is alone; he has no money; and he is seventy years old. His small figure is dwarfed by the towers in icy reserve, whose stern, impervious faces turn all human effort on the streets below into tableaux of defeat. But Śrīla Prabhupāda's effort is not merely human, and the seed he brings with him from another world does indeed incredibly, miraculously take root in this barren and uninviting soil and flourish. Soon hundreds of saffron-robed devotees will blossom out into these streets, their American faces marked with the twin clay lines, and the sound of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* will echo and re-echo against the hard high walls.

We should remind ourselves that what we see is not all there is; we never know what unseen presences hover over some lonely and modest endeavor, nor what invisible efforts cooperate to bring great



Vyāsa (greeting his guru, Nārada)—edited the *Vedas*; (c. 3000 B.C.).



The Buddha—stopped animal slaughter by denying the *Vedas*; (c. 500 B.C.).

results from meager beginnings. We believe that in nature no effect exceeds its cause; why should it be different in other affairs? *Chance* or *luck* are merely words to cover our ignorance.

Behind Śrīla Prabhupāda's appearance on the alien Manhattan streets stand five millennia of planning and effort. The story of it opens one sunrise fifty centuries ago in the Himalayas, where the sage Kṛṣṇa-Dvaipāyana Vyāsa sits in trance on the bank of the Sarasvatī. In his meditation, Vyāsa sees a future of unrelieved horror unfold before him. He sees Kali-yuga, the age of iron, begin and bring with it universal deterioration. The decay is so deep-rooted that matter itself diminishes in potency, and all our food progressively decreases in quality as well as quantity. Vyāsa sees the effects of chronic malnutrition on generation after generation; he watches it gradually diminish their span of life along with their brain power; no one can escape the progressive drop in intelligence and ability to remember.

The harassment of hard times upon an increasingly witless populace hastens its

moral and spiritual decline. People begin to slaughter animals for food; they become more and more enslaved by drugs; they lose all sexual restraint. These habits further their physical and mental deterioration. Vyāsa watches them sink deeper and deeper into sensuality and ignorance. Families break up, and women and children are abandoned. Increasingly degraded generations, conceived accidentally in lust and growing up wild, swarm over the earth. Leadership falls into the hands of unprincipled criminals who use their power to loot the people. The world teems with ideologues, mystagogues, fanatics, and spiritual bunko artists who win huge followings among a people dazed by social and moral anarchy. Unspeakable depravities and atrocities flourish under a rhetoric of high ideals.

Vyāsa sees horror piled upon horror; he sees the end of everything human; he sees the gathering darkness engulf the world.

This is Vyāsa's prophetic vision on the eve of Kali-yuga, five thousand years ago. It spurs him into action. For Vyāsa's appearance on the brink of this temporal

decline is not fortuitous. Vyāsa is an *avatāra*, the empowered literary incarnation of God, sent by Kṛṣṇa specifically to prepare the knowledge of Vedic civilization for transmission through the coming millennia of darkness.

Without such an undertaking, the erosion of human intelligence by the force of time would insure that all future generations would be completely cut off from their own cultural heritage and the matchless spiritual attainment of their forebears. Once the iron age began, they would not even realize that at one time the whole world had been governed by a single, supremely enlightened civilization: the Vedic culture.

In that Vedic culture, everything was organized to further self-realization. Self-realization marks the ultimate development of human potential, in which a person knows himself directly as an eternal spiritual being, infrangibly bound to the supreme spiritual being, and without intrinsic relation to a temporarily inhabited material body. By cultivating self-realization, the Vedic civilization brought



Śaṅkara—drove the Buddhists out of India and began the Vedic restoration; eighth century.



Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu—completed the Vedic restoration; sixteenth century.

off this unparalleled achievement: it was able to eliminate completely the evils of birth, old age, disease, and death, securing for its members an eternal existence of knowledge and ever-increasing bliss. The Vedic culture recognized that not all souls who took human birth after transmigrating up through the animal forms would be able to make direct progress toward the supreme goal. Owing to different histories, people are born with different qualities and abilities. Nevertheless, Vedic culture enabled everyone to make some advancement, and there were many arrangements for the gradual elevation of materialistic people. In any case, Vedic culture organized life so that everyone could satisfy the basic necessities in the simplest and most sensible way, leaving most of human energy free for the higher task.

Vyāsa saw that all this would disappear in Kali-yuga, since the focus of civilization would shift from self-realization to sense gratification. Yet even though Kali-yuga could not be stopped, he would be able to mitigate its effects and keep alive the tradition of spiritual culture, in the way that emissaries of a higher civilization can preserve their heritage among barbarians, or that a well provisioned village can survive a raging winter.

Vyāsa had mastered all the knowledge of Vedic culture—social, scientific, economic, political, ethical, aesthetic, and spiritual. This knowledge was gathered in a comprehensive canon called the *Veda*, a word that means, simply, “knowledge.” Until the time of Vyasa, the *Veda* was not written, because writing had been unnecessary. Far from being a sign of intellectual advancement, the appearance of writing is a testimony of decline, a device seized upon to compensate for that mental deterioration which includes the loss of the ability to remember.

It is interesting, by the way, that the Vedic date assigned to the advent of Kali-yuga (c. 3000 B.C.) corresponds closely to the date set by modern historians for the rise of civilized life, an event signaled by the appearance of literacy and the emergence of complex urban societies. All that historians recognize as recorded human history is, in fact, only human history in Kali-yuga. The academic historians’ ignorance of the earlier and incalculably higher Vedic civilization is what we have to expect from people suffering from the mental retardation imposed by the times. We see symptoms of this intellectual degradation of modern thinkers in their avowal that sense perception is the only source of knowledge and in their obliviousness to the dependence of knowledge upon goodness. Inverted values warp their ideas, such as the conviction that human progress resides in the proliferation of complex urban societies and increas-

ingly sophisticated technology. They are unaware that simple living is the best basis for high thinking, and that a truly advanced civilization minimizes exploitation of nature and social complexity. They do not know that the real standard of progress is the caliber of people society produces. If we pursue material advancement at the expense of self-realization, measuring our standard of living only by the gratification of our senses, then we will only get a spiritually and morally debilitated people in control of an intricate and powerful technology—a terrifying combination that leads to horrors on a scale we are just beginning to experience.

A spiritually debilitated people, a powerful technology—a combination that leads to horrors we are just beginning to experience.

To give us access to an alternative, Vyāsa divided the *Veda* into four and wrote it down. Yet he knew that we would still be unable to understand the *Vedas*, and so he composed a number of supplementary works in which he spelled out the intentions of Vedic thought explicitly.

In this Vyāsa was aided by Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Himself. Acting in tandem with Vyāsa’s effort, Kṛṣṇa had descended personally onto this planet and, as a member of the royal order, had played a significant role in recent political events. Vyāsa took advantage of Kṛṣṇa’s activities and chronicled those times in a vast epic narrative called the *Mahābhārata*. In this sprawling dynastic tale of love, ambition, intrigue, and war, of fidelity and treachery, heroism and cowardice, transcendence and ignominy, Vyāsa imparted Vedic thought in a way even unphilosophical people would find engrossing. Kṛṣṇa’s presence surcharged history with transcendental significance. Moreover, in the middle of this sweeping narrative, like a jewel placed in a gorgeous setting, Vyāsa set the *Bhagavad-gītā*, Kṛṣṇa’s discourse to Arjuna before the climactic battle at Kurukṣetra.

In a laconic seven hundred verses, Kṛṣṇa gives Arjuna what He calls “the most confidential knowledge” of the *Vedas*. Like

Vyāsa, Kṛṣṇa Himself is preparing Vedic knowledge for Kali-yuga. This entails taking the highest knowledge of the *Vedas*, so sublime and pure that, as Kṛṣṇa says, even great souls rarely attain it, and laying it out explicitly, openly—available to everyone. So that there would be no question about the validity of this daring exposition, Kṛṣṇa, the highest possible authority, delivers it Himself.

You may question why the most advanced knowledge in the *Vedas* is “confidential.” If it is so important for us to know it, then why is it hidden in the first place? The answer is that knowledge is available only to those qualified to apprehend it. Education is progressive, and higher knowledge can be approached only by graduates from the lower. In particular, the qualification necessary to comprehend the mysteries concerning the ultimate source of everything is purity. Only those whose senses are under complete control and who are free from all material desires have the requisite purity to understand and directly perceive the Absolute Truth. Because people are characterized by a variety of material desires, the *Vedas* offer many religious paths (called *dharmas*). These are graded so that people in different statuses of material contamination can ascend step by step to higher states of purity and correspondingly higher disclosures of the divine.

In the *Gītā* Kṛṣṇa systematically surveys the major Vedic *dharmas* and shows how each directs a person toward the ultimate conclusion, that “most confidential of all knowledge.” Kṛṣṇa analyzes the performance of sacrifices and the worship of demigods; he discusses the *yogas* of work, meditation, and knowledge. In each case, Kṛṣṇa shows how it leads to the “most secret of all secrets,” pure loving devotional service to God. “Always think of Me and become My devotee. Worship Me and offer your homage unto Me.” This, Kṛṣṇa says, is “the most confidential part of knowledge.” Since all the Vedic *dharmas* lead to this one “supreme secret,” Kṛṣṇa can offer us this final instruction: “Just abandon all varieties of *dharmas* and surrender to Me.” In other words, we need not bother with any of the different paths; we can at once come to their common goal, surrender to Kṛṣṇa.

But if this supreme end is so difficult to reach, requiring the ultimate in purity, how is Kṛṣṇa able to offer it directly to everyone? The answer is simple. Kṛṣṇa says that if one begins devotional service, He will personally purify the devotee. “To those who are constantly devoted and who worship Me with love,” Kṛṣṇa says, “I give the understanding by which they can come to Me.” A person can circumvent all the Vedic *dharmas* and come directly to Kṛṣṇa because Kṛṣṇa will kindly help him. This

is an extremely important point. As Kali-yuga progresses, all the *dharmas* become increasingly difficult to pursue. Our intelligence, our memory, and our stamina have all decreased, but Kṛṣṇa is willing to compensate for all our infirmities by His personal effort. In essence, by opening up through divine kindness direct devotional service, the *Bhagavad-gītā* renders every other Vedic *dharma* obsolete.

Vyāsa made this message the centerpiece of the *Mahābhārata*. Vyāsa also expanded upon the Vedic teachings in eighteen *Purānas*, and he compiled an outline of the philosophical conclusions of the *Vedas* in the *Vedānta-sūtra*, a collection of extremely compressed, aphoristic utterances; later thinkers would present their understandings of Vedic thought in the form of commentaries on these *sūtras*.

After Vyāsa completed his immense labor, he was surprised to find himself dissatisfied. As he reviewed his efforts to discover what deficiency could be at the root of his discontent, his *guru*, Nārada Muni, arrived at his *āśrama*. Vyāsa placed the matter before Nārada.

Nārada praised Vyāsa's brilliant work, but then told him that his labor was still incomplete. In the *Mahābhārata* and the *Purānas*, Nārada said, Vyāsa had not sufficiently described the glories of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa. In faithfully transcribing the Vedic teaching, Vyāsa had dutifully set forth all those materially motivated *dharmas*, those teachings which allow restricted sense gratification for people who cannot come directly to the highest level of realization. In Kali-yuga such *dharmas* will become especially dangerous, Nārada warned, because people will seize upon such allowances to sanction indulgence. "They will accept such activities in the name of religion," Nārada said, "and will hardly care for prohibitions."

Nārada wanted Vyāsa to describe more completely the transcendental qualities and activities of Kṛṣṇa because, he said, by hearing them people would be able to relish their extraordinary spiritual flavor; people's natural attraction to the Lord would be revived, and as a matter of course they would lose their taste for mundane pleasures. Nārada counseled Vyāsa about the spiritual potency of words that glorify Kṛṣṇa: when spoken in pure devotion, those words enter into the hearts of the listeners and destroy almost completely the impurities of passion and ignorance.

With Nārada's blessings, Vyāsa then completed his masterpiece, the "ripened fruit of the tree of Vedic knowledge," *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. The *Bhāgavatam* picks up where the *Gītā* leaves off, for Vyāsa explicitly states that it is intended for those who have already abandoned materially motivated *dharmas*. Here Vyāsa

discloses the inviolable mysteries of the personal life of the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa, His eternal loving affairs with His most confidential and intimate devotees. Here we have spiritual life revealed at its most intense and personal, at the absolute summit of love of God.

We see from the cooperative efforts of Kṛṣṇa and Vyāsa at the beginning of Kali-yuga that there was a move to make the esoteric knowledge of the *Vedas*, the highest truths concerning the nature of God and our relations to Him, open and potentially available to everyone. This unprecedented disclosure had its dangers, and neither Kṛṣṇa nor Vyāsa could circum-

Vyāsa offers the most potent of all purifying processes— the chanting and hearing of Kṛṣṇa Himself.

vent the stricture that these confidential truths could be understood only by those utterly pure in heart. They could not waive the requirement of purity, but what they did do was make available a correspondingly more powerful process of purification—in the *Gītā* Kṛṣṇa offers personally to help anyone sincerely engaged in devotional service, and in the *Bhāgavatam* Vyāsa offers the most potent of all purifying processes—the chanting and hearing of the glories of Kṛṣṇa Himself.

Vyāsa and Kṛṣṇa completed their activity, and with the disappearance of Kṛṣṇa from the earth, Kali-yuga set firmly in. The ensuing degeneration was so strong, however, that in a short time it threatened to destroy all Vyāsa's efforts to preserve Vedic culture. The words of Nārada—"they will hardly care for your prohibitions"—proved horribly accurate. A particular perversion arose which was so dangerous that Kṛṣṇa had to take emergency measures. This is what happened:

A few thousand years after the onset of Kali-yuga, the followers of the *Vedas*—now restricted geographically to India—began more and more to slaughter animals for food. Meat-eating is so polluting to human consciousness that indulgence in it makes any sort of spiritual realization virtually impossible. Therefore, the *Vedas*

had always instructed against it. At the same time, it was recognized that some people, in spite of all prohibitions, will eat flesh anyway. Accordingly, for them the *Vedas* enjoin that if someone wants to eat flesh, he may sacrifice a goat (no other animal) on the night of the dark moon (no other time) to the goddess Kālī. The sacrificer, furthermore, must whisper into the goat's ear a *mantra* that says, "I am killing you now, but in my next life you will have the opportunity to kill me." By sanctioning meat-eating in this way, the Vedic culture at least kept it under control: only a goat, only once a month, and only in the unpleasant consciousness of its karmic price—all very discouraging conditions.

However, as the *brāhmaṇas*, the Vedic priests, in Kali-yuga became degraded, they began to proliferate animal sacrifices—to meet popular demand—by explaining away or ignoring the restrictions. Temples were transmogrified into slaughterhouses, and killing as an organized daily business flourished. If anyone objected to this unprecedented evil, the priests would reply that it was, after all, sanctioned in the *Vedas*.

Therefore, to stop the animal killing, Kṛṣṇa descended as Lord Buddha (c. 500 B.C.). Because the *Vedas* were being perversely used to justify the slaughter, Kṛṣṇa, as Lord Buddha, denied the authority of the *Vedas*—the same *Vedas* He had so carefully arranged and explicated to save the people in Kali-yuga. But it was an emergency, and there was no alternative. Lord Buddha rejected the *Vedas* and preached the ethic of *ahimsā*, of noninjury to all living beings.

The Buddha also taught that our material existence is suffering, that our material desires cause our suffering, and that by extirpating these desires we can attain *nirvāṇa*, release from material existence. Lord Buddha refused to deal with any question concerning God, the soul, life after salvation, and so on. When asked about such things, he would reply, "the Tathāgata [the Buddha] is free from all theories." Later, some of his followers spread the doctrines of *sūnyā*, voidism, and *anātmā*, no soul, but these were mundane interpretations of the Buddha's silence on transcendental topics. The simple fact is that Buddha had denied the *Vedas*, yet he remained faithful to them by refusing to make "theories," that is, to discuss God or the soul independently of the Vedic teachings; so he said nothing.

Their consciousness polluted by meat-eating, the people had become atheists. But Lord Buddha, who never said anything about God, won their devotion. Thus Kṛṣṇa tricked the atheists into worshipping Him in His incarnation as the Buddha.

Lord Buddha's mission was successful. All of India eventually took up his

teaching, and animal slaughter ceased. Lord Buddha exemplifies the transcendental cleverness of Kṛṣṇa. Yet while Lord Buddha's success averted the immediate danger, it left India without respect for the *Vedas* and in the grip of a philosophy that denied God and the soul.

The Buddha's palliative was incomplete; it was only a first step toward a complete Vedic restoration. Kṛṣṇa's next move was to send an incarnation of Lord Śiva to execute the second step. This was Śrīpāda Śaṅkarācārya, who appeared in A.D. 788. In a life of only thirty-two years, Śaṅkara drove the Buddhists out of India and reestablished the authority of the *Vedas*. A member of the renounced order, a *śannyāsī*, Śaṅkara was a thinker of immense power, and he dedicated his formidable ability to persuading the followers of Buddhism to accept the *Vedas*. To do this effectively, Śaṅkara had to make the transition between the two easy, so he devised a philosophy called *advaita-vedānta*, or absolute nondualism, a kind of crypto-Buddhism that he ingeniously expounded in Vedic language and supported with Vedic texts. Śaṅkara denied the Buddhist doctrine that the ultimate truth is void; the truth, Śaṅkara argued, as the *Vedas* declare, is Brahman, spirit. Śaṅkara likewise confuted the Buddhist doctrine of no soul or self, and reestablished the Vedic truth of the *ātmā*, the individual soul. However, Śaṅkara asserted the identity of *ātmā* and Brahman as an undifferentiated spiritual reality without any qualities, varieties, or relations. Obviously, there is no cognitive difference between "void" and "Brahman" without qualities or distinctions. Śaṅkara's Brahman is an intellectual clone of the Buddhist "void." Thus, Śaṅkara eased the way for acceptance of the *Vedas*.

Śaṅkara's philosophy of impersonal oneness has some basis in the *Vedas*. For neophyte spiritualists, whose residual material contamination prevents them from understanding the transcendental nature of Kṛṣṇa, the *Vedas* gave instruction for salvation by merging into the impersonal Brahman, Kṛṣṇa's spiritual effulgence. Associated with those instructions are texts that emphasize the qualitative oneness of *ātmā* and Brahman. The *Vedas* contain other, equally important texts that say that the *ātmās* are numerically distinct and quantitatively different from the supreme *ātmā*, Kṛṣṇa, but Śaṅkara stressed the oneness. He presented transcendent reality in an abstract form and so made the *Vedas* palatable to the Buddhists.

Śaṅkara restored Vedic culture; he founded monasteries, organized the brahminical community, and reestablished the worship of Vedic deities. The *Vedas* were recognized again, although necessarily in a distorted fashion.

Buddhism is an advancement over gross materialism, and impersonal monism over Buddhism; but the personal theism of the *Vedas*, as set out by Vyāsa and Kṛṣṇa, had yet to be restored. After Śaṅkara, that work began. As people returned to Vedic study in earnest, many began to recognize the deficiencies in Śaṅkara's monistic interpretation. Several powerful teachers arose—most notably Rāmānuja (1017–1137) and Madhva (1239–1319)—whose cogent commentaries on the *Vedānta-sūtra* and the *Bhagavad-gītā* seriously challenged the Śaṅkarite hegemony and gained theism a wide following. But the impersonalists retained civic control.

All the work to establish Vedic culture in Kali-yuga reaches its culmination in the appearance of Śrī Caitanya.

Then about five hundred years ago Kṛṣṇa descended once again, this time to complete the restoration of Vedic culture. This is Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Śrī Caitanya is Kṛṣṇa in the guise of His own devotee, teaching by His example the supreme form of worship. Caitanya's mission had two sides. On the one, He even more fully disclosed the nature of the highest love between Kṛṣṇa and His most intimate devotees, and Caitanya was continually merged in the ecstasy of that love. On the other side, Caitanya accompanied this revelation with a correspondingly more powerful means of God realization—the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*. This *mantra* is part of the original *Vedas*, but because it was chanted by Śrī Caitanya, its power increased manifold, and Caitanya taught His followers the practices by which the power of the *mantra* could work unimpeded.

With Caitanya, the trend of delivering progressively more open disclosures of the Vedic secrets along with a correspondingly more powerful means to realize them reached its culmination. A more potent means of deliverance naturally entails the spiritual enfranchisement of greater numbers of people. Kṛṣṇa had already declared in the *Gītā* that people traditionally excluded from spiritual realization—women,

merchants, and laborers—could by taking shelter of Him approach the supreme destination. And in the *Bhāgavatam* Vyāsa had asserted that even members of carnivorous and aboriginal communities—completely beyond the pale of spiritual culture—could be purified by the association of a pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa. Śrī Caitanya demonstrated in practice that this is so. As the most merciful of all *avatāras*, Caitanya initiated a spiritual democracy, and by the power of His chanting He turned people of vile habits into pure devotees. The *brāhmaṇas* claimed exclusive right to spiritual knowledge, but Caitanya showed that the potency of devotional service could elevate even the most baseborn to the brahminical platform. Caitanya recognized everyone as a candidate for devotional service, and He wanted His movement of congregational chanting to spread over the globe. "One day," He said, "My names will be chanted in every town and village in the world."

Caitanya also delivered the most comprehensive understanding of Vedic theism. He confronted, in person, the two greatest impersonalists of His time—Prakāśānanda Sarasvatī and Śārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya—and presented such a powerful theistic exposition of the *Vedānta-sūtra* that both acknowledged devotion to Kṛṣṇa to be the goal of the *Vedas*, and they danced and chanted with Caitanya.

All the work of Kṛṣṇa, Vyāsa, Buddha, and Śaṅkara to establish Vedic culture in Kali-yuga reaches its fulfillment in the appearance of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. In the original *Vedas*, the *Kali-santarāṇa Upaniṣad* had disclosed, "One cannot find a method of religion more sublime in the Kali-yuga than the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa." And looking forward to the coming of Caitanya, Vyāsa had recorded in the *Bhāgavatam*: "In the Age of Kali, intelligent persons perform congregational chanting to worship the incarnation who constantly sings the name of Kṛṣṇa. Although His complexion is not blackish, He is Kṛṣṇa Himself. He is accompanied by His associates, servants, weapons [i.e., the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*], and confidential companions." Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, then, is the long-awaited deliverer of the means of spiritual realization for this age.

Ten spiritual masters in succession have passed Śrī Caitanya's teachings down to Śrīla Prabhupāda, and it is only appropriate that we should find him, in the winter of 1966, far from his native India on the wind-racked streets of New York, center of the global technological civilization, heartland of Kali-yuga. It is the best place for him to carry the seed of Vedic culture. It is here that the work of Kṛṣṇa, Vyāsa, Buddha, Śaṅkara, and Caitanya, in the care of their empowered servant Prabhupāda, flowers and bears fruit.

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 *purāna*, or history, to explain the essence of spiritual knowledge. The original Sanskrit text is presented here with transliteration, word meanings, translation, and purports by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

Second Canto: "The Cosmic Manifestation"

CHAPTER FIVE

The Cause of All Causes

As our serialized presentation of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam continues, Lord Brahmā instructs his son and disciple Nārada about the universal form of the Supreme Lord, which comprises the entire material cosmic manifestation.

TEXT 37

पुरुषस्य मुखं ब्रह्म क्षत्रमेतस्य बाहवः ।
ऊर्वोर्वैश्या भगवतः पद्भ्यां शूद्रो व्यजायत ॥३७॥

*puruṣasya mukhaṁ brahma
kṣatram etasya bāhavaḥ
ūrvor vaiśya bhagavataḥ
padbhyaṁ śūdro vyajāyata*

puruṣasya—of the Supreme Personality of Godhead; *mukham*—mouth; *brahma*—is the *brāhmaṇas*; *kṣatram*—the royal order; *etasya*—of Him; *bāhavaḥ*—the arms; *ūrvoh*—the thighs; *vaiśyaḥ*—are the mercantile men; *bhagavataḥ*—of the Personality of Godhead; *padbhyaṁ*—from His legs; *śūdraḥ*—the laborer class; *vyajāyata*—became manifested.

TRANSLATION

The *brāhmaṇas* represent His mouth, the *kṣatriyas* His arms, the *vaiśyas* His thighs, and the *śūdras* are born of His legs.

PURPORT

All living beings are stated to be the parts and parcels of the Supreme Lord, and how they are so is explained in this verse. The four divisions of human society, namely the intelligent class (the *brāhmaṇas*), the administrative class (the *kṣatriyas*), the mercantile class (the *vaiśyas*), and the laborer class (the *śūdras*), are all in different parts of the body of the Lord. As such, no one is different from the Lord. The mouth of the body and the legs of the body are nondifferent constitutionally, but the mouth or the head of the body is qualitatively more important than the legs. At the same time, the mouth, the legs, the arms and the thighs are all component parts of the body. These limbs of the body of the Lord are meant to serve the complete whole. The mouth is meant for speaking and eating, the arms are meant for the protection of the body, the legs are meant for carrying the body, and the waist of the body is meant for maintaining the body. The intelligent class in society, therefore, must speak on behalf of the body, as well as accept foodstuff to satisfy the hunger of the body. The hunger of the Lord is to accept the fruits of sacrifice. The *brāhmaṇas*, or the intelligent class, must be very expert in performing such sacrifices, and the subordinate classes must join in such sacrifices. To speak for the Supreme Lord means to glorify the Lord by means of propagating the knowledge of the Lord as it is, broadcasting the factual nature of the Lord and the factual position of all other parts of the whole

body. The *brāhmaṇas*, therefore, are required to know the *Vedas*, or the ultimate source of knowledge. *Veda* means knowledge, and *anta* means the end of it. According to *Bhagavad-gītā*, the Lord is the source of everything (*ahaṁ sarvasya prabhavaḥ*), and thus the end of all knowledge (*Vedānta*) is to know the Lord, to know our relationship with Him and to act according to that relationship only. The parts of the body are related to the body; similarly, the living being must know his relationship with the Lord. The human life is especially meant for this purpose, namely to know the factual relationship of every living being with the Supreme Lord. Without knowing this relationship, the human life is spoiled. The intelligent class of men, the *brāhmaṇas*, are therefore especially responsible for broadcasting this knowledge of our relationship with the Lord and leading the general mass of people to the right path. The administrative class is meant for protecting the living beings so that they can serve this purpose; the mercantile class is meant for producing food grains and distributing them to the complete human society so that the whole population is given a chance to live comfortably and discharge the duties of human life. The mercantile class is also required to give protection to the cows in order to get sufficient milk and milk products, which alone can give the proper health and intelligence to maintain a civilization perfectly meant for knowledge of the ultimate truth. And the laborer class, who are neither intelligent nor powerful, can help by physical services to the other higher classes and thus be benefited by their cooperation. Therefore the universe is a complete unit in relationship with the Lord, and without this relationship with the Lord the whole human society is disturbed and is without any peace and prosperity. This is confirmed in the *Vedas*: *brāhmaṇo 'sya mukham āsīd, bāhū rājanyaḥ kṛtaḥ*.

TEXT 38

भूलोकः कल्पितः पद्भ्यां भुवर्लोकोऽस्य नाभितः ।
हृदा खर्लोक उरसा महर्लोक महत्तमनः ॥३८॥

*bhūlokaḥ kalpitah padbhyaṁ
bhuvārloko 'sya nābhitaḥ
hrdā svarloka urasā
mahārloko mahātmanaḥ*

bhūḥ—the lower planetary systems up to the stratum of the earth; *lokaḥ*—the planets; *kalpitah*—it is so imagined or said; *padbhyaṁ*—out of the legs; *bhuvah*—the upper; *lokaḥ*—the planetary system; *asya*—of Him (the Lord); *nābhitaḥ*—from the navel abdomen; *hrdā*—by the heart; *svārlokaḥ*—the planetary systems occupied by the demigods; *urasā*—by the chest; *mahārlokaḥ*—the planetary system occupied by great sages and saints; *mahā-ātmanaḥ*—of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

TRANSLATION

The lower planetary systems, up to the limit of the earthly stratum, are said to be situated in His legs. The middle planetary systems, beginning from Bhuvārloka, are situated in His navel. And the still higher planetary systems, occupied by the demigods

and highly cultured sages and saints, are situated in the chest of the Supreme Lord.

PURPORT

There are fourteen spheres of planetary systems within this universe. The lower systems are called Bhūrloka, the middle systems are called Bhuvarloka, and the higher planetary systems, up to Brahmaloaka, the highest planetary system of the universe, are called Svarloka. And all of them are situated on the body of the Lord. In other words, no one within this universe is without a relationship with the Lord.

TEXT 39

ग्रीवायां जनलोकोऽस्य तपोलोकः स्तनद्वयात् ।
मूर्धभिः सत्यलोकस्तु ब्रह्मलोकः सनातनः ॥३९॥

*grīvāyām janaloko 'sya
tapolokaḥ stana-dvayāt
mūrdhabhiḥ satyalokas tu
brahmalokaḥ sanātanaḥ*

grīvāyām—up to the neck; *janalokaḥ*—the Janaloka planetary system; *asya*—of Him; *tapolokaḥ*—the Tapoloka planetary system; *stana-dvayāt*—beginning from the breast; *mūrdhabhiḥ*—by the head; *satyalokaḥ*—the Satyaloka planetary system; *tu*—but; *brahmalokaḥ*—the spiritual planets; *sanātanaḥ*—eternal.

TRANSLATION

From the forefront of the chest up to the neck of the universal form of the Lord are situated the planetary systems named Janaloka and Tapoloka, whereas Satyaloka, the topmost planetary system, is situated on the head of the form. The spiritual planets, however, are eternal.

PURPORT

Many times in these pages we have discussed the spiritual planets situated beyond the material sky, and the description is corroborated in this verse. The word *sanātana* is significant. This very idea of eternity is expressed in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (8.20), where it is said that beyond the material creation is the spiritual sky, where everything is eternal. Sometimes Satyaloka, the planet in which Brahmā resides, is also called Brahmaloaka. But the Brahmaloaka mentioned here is not the same as the Satyaloka planetary system. This Brahmaloaka is eternal, whereas the Satyaloka planetary system is not eternal. And to distinguish between the two, the adjective *sanātana* has been used in this case. According to Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, this Brahmaloaka is the *loka* or abode of Brahman, or the Supreme Lord. In the spiritual sky all the planets are as good as the Lord Himself. The Lord is all spirit, and His name, fame, glories, qualities, pastimes, etc., are all nondifferent from Him because He is absolute. As such, the planets in the kingdom of God are also nondifferent from Him. In those planets there is no difference between the body and the soul, nor is there any influence of time as we experience it in the material world. And in addition to there being no influence of time, the planets in Brahmaloaka, due to being spiritual, are never annihilated. All variegatedness in the spiritual planets is also one with the Lord, and therefore the Vedic aphorism *ekam evadvīṭyam* is fully realized in that *sanātana* atmosphere of spiritual variegatedness. This material world is only a shadow phantasmagoria of the spiritual kingdom of the Lord, and because it is a shadow it is never eternal; the variegatedness in the material world of duality (spirit and matter) cannot be compared to that of the spiritual world. Because of a poor fund of knowledge, less intelligent persons sometimes mistake the conditions of the shadow world to be equivalent to those of the spiritual world, and thus they mistake the Lord and His pastimes in the material world to be one with the conditioned souls and their activities. The Lord condemns such less intelligent persons in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (9.11):

*avajānanti mām mūdhā
mānuṣīm tanum āśritam
param bhāvam ajānanto
mama bhūta-maheśvaram*

Whenever the Lord incarnates, He does so in His full internal potency (*ātma-māyā*), and less intelligent persons mistake Him to be one of the material creations. Śrīla Śrīdhara Svāmī, therefore, rightly commenting on this verse, says that the Brahmaloaka mentioned here is Vaikuṅṭha, the kingdom of God, which is *sanātana*, or eternal, and is therefore not exactly like the material creations described above. The *virāṭ* universal form of the Lord is an imagination for the material world. It has nothing to do with the spiritual world, or the kingdom of God.

TEXTS 40-41

तत्कट्यां चातलं कृममूर्ध्यां वितलं विभोः ।
जातुभ्यां सुतलं शुद्धं जङ्घाभ्यां तु तलातलम् ॥४०॥
महातलं तु गुल्फाभ्यां प्रपदाभ्यां रसातलम् ।
पातालं पादतलत इति लोकमयः पुमान् ॥४१॥

*tat-kaṭyām cātalam kṛptam
ūrubhyām vitalam vibhoḥ
jānubhyām sutalam śuddham
jaṅghābhyām tu talātam
mahātalam tu gulphābhyām
prapadābhyām rasātam
pātalam pāda-talata
iti lokamayah pumān*

tat—in His; *kaṭyām*—waist; *ca*—also; *atalam*—the first planetary system below the earth; *kṛptam*—situated; *ūrubhyām*—on the thighs; *vitalam*—the second planetary system below; *vibhoḥ*—of the Lord; *jānubhyām*—on the ankles; *sutalam*—the third planetary system below; *śuddham*—purified; *jaṅghābhyām*—on the joints; *tu*—but; *talātam*—the fourth planetary system below; *mahātalam*—the fifth planetary system below; *tu*—but; *gulphābhyām*—situated on the calves; *prapadābhyām*—on the upper or front portion of the feet; *rasātam*—the sixth planetary system below; *pātalam*—the seventh planetary system below; *pāda-talataḥ*—on the bottom or soles of the feet; *iti*—thus; *loka-mayaḥ*—full of planetary systems; *pumān*—the Lord.

TRANSLATION

My dear son Nārada, know from me that there are seven lower planetary systems out of the total fourteen. The first planetary system, known as Atala, is situated on the waist; the second, Vitala, is situated on the thighs; the third, Sutala, on the knees; the fourth, Talātala, on the shanks; the fifth, Mahātala, on the ankles; the sixth, Rasātala, on the upper portion of the feet; and the seventh, Pātala, on the soles of the feet. Thus the *virāṭ* form of the Lord is full of all planetary systems.

PURPORT

Modern enterprisers (the astronauts who travel in space) may take information from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* that in space there are fourteen divisions of planetary systems. The situation is calculated from the earthly planetary system, which is called Bhūrloka. Above Bhūrloka is Bhuvarloka, and the topmost planetary system is called Satyaloka. These are the upper seven *lokas*, or planetary systems. And similarly, there are seven lower planetary systems, known as Atala, Vitala, Sutala, Talātala, Mahātala, Rasātala and Pātala *lokas*. All these planetary systems are scattered over the complete universe, which occupies an area of two billion times two billion square miles. The modern astronauts can travel only a

few thousand miles away from the earth, and therefore their attempt to travel in the sky is something like child's play on the shore of an expansive ocean. The moon is situated in the third status of the upper planetary system, and in the Fifth Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* we shall be able to know the distant situation of the various planets scattered over the vast material sky. There are innumerable universes beyond the one in which we are put, and all these material universes cover only an insignificant portion of the spiritual sky, which is described above as *sanātana* Brahmaloaka. The Supreme Lord very kindly invites the intelligent human beings to return home, back to Godhead, in the following verse of the *Bhagavad-gītā* (8.16):

*ābrahma-bhuvanāl lokāḥ
punar āvartino 'rjuna
mām upetya tu kaunteya
punar janma na vidyate*

Beginning from Satyaloka, the topmost planet of the universe, situated just below the eternal Brahmaloaka, as described above, all the planets are material. And one's situation in any of the many material planets is still subject to the laws of material nature, namely birth, death, old age and disease. But one can get complete liberation from all the above-mentioned material pangs when one enters into the eternal Brahmaloaka *sanātana* atmosphere, the kingdom of God. Therefore liberation, as contemplated by the speculative philosophers and the mystics, is possible only when one becomes a devotee of the Lord. Anyone who is not a devotee cannot enter into the kingdom of God. Only by attainment of a service attitude in the transcendental position can one enter into the kingdom of Godhead. Therefore the speculative philosophers, as well as the mystics, must first of all be attracted to the devotional cult before they can factually attain liberation.

TEXT 42

भूर्लोकः कल्पितः पद्भ्यां भुवर्लोकोऽस्य नाभितः ।

स्वर्लोकः कल्पितो मूर्ध्ना इति वा लोककल्पना ॥४२॥

*bhūralokaḥ kalpitāḥ padbhyām
bhūvarlokaḥ 'sya nābhitaḥ
svarlokaḥ kalpito mūrdhnā
iti vā loka-kalpanā*

bhūralokaḥ—the entire planetary system from Pātāla to the earthly planetary system; *kalpitāḥ*—imagined; *padbhyām*—situated on the legs; *bhūvarlokaḥ*—the Bhuvarloka planetary system; *asya*—of the universal form of the Lord; *nābhitaḥ*—out of the navel abdomen; *svarlokaḥ*—the higher planetary system, beginning with the heavenly planets; *kalpitāḥ*—imagined; *mūrdhnā*—from the chest to the head; *iti*—thus; *vā*—either; *loka*—the planetary systems; *kalpanā*—imagination.

TRANSLATION

Others may divide the whole planetary system into three divisions, namely the lower planetary systems on the legs [up to the earth], the middle planetary systems on the navel, and the upper planetary systems [Svarloka] from the chest to the head of the Supreme Personality.

PURPORT

The three divisions of the complete planetary systems are here mentioned; fourteen are imagined by others, and that is also explained.

Thus end the Bhaktivedanta purports of the Second Canto, Fifth Chapter, of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, entitled "The Cause of All Causes."

CHAPTER SIX

Puruṣa-sūkta Confirmed

TEXT 1

ब्रह्मोवाच

वाचां बह्वर्धुखं क्षेत्रं छन्दसां सप्त धातवः ।

हन्धकन्यामृतानानां जिह्वा सर्वरसस्य च ॥ १ ॥

brahmovāca

*vācāṁ vahner mukhaṁ kṣetram
chandasāṁ sapta dhātavaḥ
havya-kavyāmṛtānnānāṁ
jihvā sarva-rasasya ca*

brahmā uvāca—Lord Brahmā said; *vācām*—of the voice; *vahneh*—of fire; *mukham*—the mouth; *kṣetram*—the generating center; *chandasām*—of the Vedic hymns, such as Gāyatrī; *sapta*—seven; *dhātavaḥ*—skin and six other layers; *havya-kavya*—offerings for the demigods and the forefathers; *amṛta*—food for human beings; *annānām*—of all sorts of foodstuffs; *jihvā*—the tongue; *sarva*—all; *rasasya*—of all delicacies; *ca*—also.

TRANSLATION

Lord Brahmā said: The mouth of the virāt-puruṣa [the universal form of the Lord] is the generating center of the voice, and the controlling deity is Fire. His skin and six other layers are the generating centers of the Vedic hymns, and His tongue is the productive center of different foodstuffs and delicacies for offering to the demigods, the forefathers and the general mass of people.

PURPORT

The opulences of the universal form of the Lord are described herein. It is said that His mouth is the generating center of all kinds of voices, and its controlling deity is the fire demigod. And His skin and other six layers of bodily construction are the representative generating centers of the seven kinds of Vedic hymns, like the Gāyatrī. Gāyatrī is the beginning of all Vedic *mantras*, and it is explained in the first volume of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Since the generating centers are the different parts of the universal form of the Lord, and since the form of the Lord is transcendental to the material creation, it is to be understood that the voice, the tongue, the skin, etc., suggest that the Lord in His transcendental form is not without them. The material voice, or the energy of taking in foodstuff, is generated originally from the Lord; such actions are but perverted reflections of the original reservoirs—the transcendental situation is not without spiritual variegatedness. In the spiritual world, all the perverted forms of material variegatedness are fully represented in their original spiritual identity. The only difference is that material activities are contaminated by the three modes of material nature, whereas the potencies in the spiritual world are all pure because they are engaged in the unalloyed transcendental loving service of the Lord. In the spiritual world, the Lord is the sublime enjoyer of everything, and the living entities there are all engaged in His transcendental loving service without any contamination of the modes of material nature. The activities in the spiritual world are without any of the inebrieties of the material world, but there is no question of impersonal voidness on the spiritual platform, as suggested by the impersonalists. Devotional service is defined in the *Nārada-pañcarātra* as follows:

*sarvopādhi-vinirmuktam
tat-paratvena nirmalam
hṛṣikeṇa hṛṣikeṣa-
sevanam bhaktir ucyate*

Originally, since all the senses are produced of the Lord's reservoir of senses, the sensual activities of the material world are to be purified by

the process of devotional service, and thus the perfection of life can be attained simply by purifying the present position of our material activities. And the purifying process begins from the stage of being liberated from the conception of different designations. Every living entity is engaged in some sort of service, either for the self, or for the family, or for the society, country, etc., but, unfortunately, all such services are rendered due to material attachment. The attachments of the material affinity may be simply changed to the service of the Lord, and thus the treatment of being freed from material attachment begins automatically. The process of liberation is therefore easier through devotional service than by any other methods, for in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (12.5) it is said that one is subjected to various kinds of tribulations if one is impersonally attached: *kleśo 'dhikataras teṣām avyaktāsakta-cetasām*.

TEXT 2

सर्वाङ्घनां च वायोश्च तन्नासे परमायणे ।
अश्विनोरोषधीनां च घ्राणो मोदप्रमोदयोः ॥ २ ॥

*sarvāsūnām ca vāyoś ca
tan-nāse paramāyaṇe
aśvinor ośadhīnām ca
ghrāṇo moda-pramodayoḥ*

sarva—all; *asūnām*—different kinds of life air; *ca*—and; *vāyoḥ*—of the air; *ca*—also; *tat*—His; *nāse*—in the nose; *paramāyaṇe*—in the transcendental generating center; *aśvinor*—of the Aśvinī-kumāra demigods; *ośadhīnām*—of all medicinal herbs; *ca*—also; *ghrāṇaḥ*—His smelling power; *moda*—pleasure; *pramodayoḥ*—specific sport.

TRANSLATION

His two nostrils are the generating centers of our breathing and of all other airs, His smelling powers generate the Aśvinī-kumāra demigods and all kinds of medicinal herbs, and His breathing energies produce different kinds of fragrance.

TEXT 3

रूपाणां तेजसां चक्षुर्दिवः सूर्यस्य चाक्षिणी ।
कर्णौ दिशं च तीर्थानां श्रोत्रमाकाशशब्दयोः ॥ ३ ॥

*rūpāṇām tejasām caṣur
divaḥ sūryasya cākṣiṇī
kaṇau diśāṁ ca tīrthānām
śrotram ākāśa-śabdayoḥ*

rūpāṇām—for all kinds of forms; *tejasām*—of all that is illuminating; *caṣur*—the eyes; *divaḥ*—that which glitters; *sūryasya*—of the sun; *ca*—also; *akṣiṇī*—the eyeballs; *kaṇau*—the ears; *diśām*—of all directions; *ca*—and; *tīrthānām*—of all the Vedas; *śrotram*—the sense of hearing; *ākāśa*—the sky; *śabdayoḥ*—of all sounds.

TRANSLATION

His eyes are the generating centers of all kinds of forms, and they glitter and illuminate. His eyeballs are like the sun and the heavenly planets. His ears hear from all sides and are receptacles for all the Vedas, and His sense of hearing is the generating center of the sky and of all kinds of sound.

PURPORT

The word *tīrthānām* is sometimes interpreted to mean the places of pilgrimage, but Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī says that it means the reception of the

Vedic transcendental knowledge. The propounders of the Vedic knowledge are also known as the *tīrthas*.

TEXT 4

तद्गत्रं वस्तुसाराणां सौभगस्य च भाजनम् ।
त्वगस्य स्पर्शवायोश्च सर्वमेधस्य चैव हि ॥ ४ ॥

*tad-gātram vastu-sārāṇām
saubhagasya ca bhājanam
tvag asya sparśa-vāyoś ca
sarva-medhasya caiva hi*

tat—His; *gātram*—bodily surface; *vastu-sārāṇām*—of the active principles of all articles; *saubhagasya*—of all auspicious opportunities; *ca*—and; *bhājanam*—the field of production; *tvak*—skin; *asya*—His; *sparśa*—touch; *vāyoḥ*—of the moving airs; *ca*—also; *sarva*—all kinds of; *medhasya*—of sacrifices; *ca*—also; *eva*—certainly; *hi*—exactly.

TRANSLATION

His bodily surface is the breeding ground for the active principles of everything and for all kinds of auspicious opportunities. His skin, like the moving air, is the generating center for all kinds of sense of touch and is the place for performing all kinds of sacrifice.

PURPORT

The air is the moving agent of all the planets, and as such the generating centers for promotion to the deserving planets, the sacrifices, are His bodily surface and are naturally the origin of all auspicious opportunities.

TEXT 5

रोमाण्युद्भिज्जजातीनां यैर्वा यज्ञस्तु सम्भृतः ।
केशश्मश्रुनखान्यस्य शिलालोहाभ्रविद्युताम् ॥ ५ ॥

*romāṇy udbhijja-jātīnām
yair vā yajñas tu sambhṛtaḥ
keśa-śmaśru-nakhāny asya
śilā-lohābhra-vidyutām*

romāni—hairs on the body; *udbhijja*—vegetables; *jātīnām*—of the kingdoms; *yair*—by which; *vā*—either; *yajñas*—sacrifices; *tu*—but; *sambhṛtaḥ*—particularly served; *keśa*—hairs on the head; *śmaśru*—facial hair; *nakhāni*—nails; *asya*—of Him; *śilā*—stones; *loha*—iron ores; *abhra*—clouds; *vidyutām*—electricity.

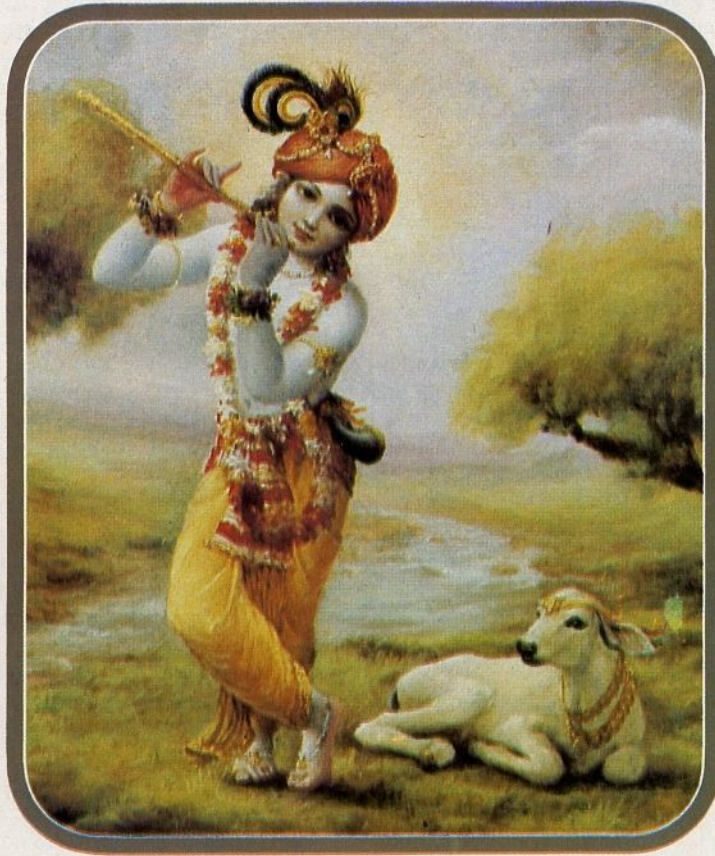
TRANSLATION

The hairs on His body are the cause of all vegetation, particularly of those trees which are required as ingredients for sacrifice. The hairs on His head and face are reservoirs for the clouds, and His nails are the breeding ground of electricity, stones and iron ores.

PURPORT

The polished nails of the Lord generate electricity, and the clouds rest on the hairs of His head. One can therefore collect all sorts of necessities of life from the person of the Lord, and therefore the Vedas affirm that everything that is produced is caused by the Lord. The Lord is the supreme cause of all causes.

(continued in next issue)



ŚRĪ KṚṢṆA JAYANTĪ

The Appearance Day of Lord Kṛṣṇa

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

With this article we observe the anniversary of Lord Kṛṣṇa's appearance. The article originally appeared in 1955 in The Harmonist, a fortnightly Kṛṣṇa conscious magazine published in New Delhi.

Hindus all over India celebrate Śrī Kṛṣṇa Jayantī (the anniversary of Lord Kṛṣṇa's appearance) as a religious function every year. We have experience that sometimes non-Hindus, out of a deep respect for Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, also celebrate the ceremony of Lord Kṛṣṇa's Jayantī. The word *jayantī* is linked with the birth date of the Personality of Godhead. *Jayantī* is a term for the special constellation of stars that takes place during the

appearance of Śrī Kṛṣṇa in this mortal world. But the word *jayantī* has become so popular a name that it is now attached to birth anniversary dates of big men who are under the conditions of natural laws. This is a wrong application of the word *jayantī*, which has a special significance in relation to the Personality of Godhead.

We must, however, clearly understand that misapplication of the word *jayantī* to the birth dates of conditioned men does not mean that Śrī Kṛṣṇa is also a conditioned man. If one accepts *Bhagavad-gītā* by *paramparā* (the disciplic chain of God-realized souls), then one will have to accept Śrī Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the Absolute Truth. He

is the fountainhead of everything that be.

The Lord descends by His causeless mercy, to protect His favorite devotees and to vanquish the infidels. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is not conditioned by the laws of nature, as we are, because physical nature is one of His multifarious energies.

The significance of celebrating Śrī Kṛṣṇa Jayantī every year is to try to know Him as He is and thus to get release from the conditioned state of life. To know Him means to get complete freedom from the chain of birth and death.

True observance of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Jayantī will solve the problems and crises in our civilization. Because of human shortcomings, we cannot solve the problems

by ordinary plans and suggestions. Human frailties always accompany the best endeavors of a conditioned soul. But solutions offered by scriptures like *Bhagavad-gītā* are eternally perfect. On account of their being transcendently spoken, the words are identical with Godhead.

When overwhelmed by powerful miseries, political leaders sometimes exclaim in despair that nature is unkind. But such voicings of frustration will not in any way induce nature to become kind. Unkind nature is grim and fixed in her determination; she will never tolerate a pinch of noncooperation or disobedience on the part of the living being. This is the real picture of material nature—a picture rightly painted in the fight of Mahiṣāsura with Durgā standing on the lion of passion.*

To pacify mother nature is as difficult as lording it over her. The remedy is specified by Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself: one who surrenders unto the Personality of Godhead can get free of the laws of nature. But nobody can surpass her laws by plans and suggestions. Let us not, therefore, fail to cooperate with the laws of Godhead, because such disobedience may force us to be pinched by the trident of the threefold miseries. That is the sign of nature's unkindness felt by humanity.

The whole cosmic universe is working under a plan of Śrī Kṛṣṇa conducted by the laws of physical nature. Material nature works by the direction of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and everything is produced by His will. Material nature, however great she may be, is inferior to the spiritual nature, and the living entities are never created by matter of any description, on account of their being spiritual in nature. These spiritual entities are parts and parcels of Godhead, and as such they are fundamentally meant for cooperation in the planned work of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Because Śrī Kṛṣṇa is identical with the sound of *Bhagavad-gītā*, hearing the words of *Bhagavad-gītā* by submissive aural reception in the *paramparā* line means realizing God.

In the beginning one can realize the presence of Śrī Kṛṣṇa in phenomenal representations, the objects of nature, both spiritual and material. Physical nature, which is inferior in quality, is represented by earth, water, fire, air, sky, mind, intelligence, and false ego. Spiritual nature is one, absolute, and superior in quality.

Lord Kṛṣṇa is represented by the spirit soul, which is the beginning of life and

the end of it. Life begins by the contact of the spirit soul with matter, and life ends when the spirit soul is gone. Amongst the celestials He is represented by Viṣṇu. Amongst the luminaries He is represented by the sun. The sun is said to be the eye of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and thus He can see everywhere in the universe. Amongst the stars in the heavens. He is represented by the moon. Amongst the Rudras, who are responsible for destruction, He is represented by Śaṅkara (Śiva). Amongst numerical figures, He is represented by the figure one. Amongst syllables, He is represented by A.U.M., or, in one word, *om* (the *oṃkāra*). He is represented by the monarch amongst human beings. He is the thunderbolt amongst all kinds of killing weapons. Amongst the *asuras* (demons) He is represented by Prahlāda. Amongst the birds He is represented by Vainateya (Garuḍa). Amongst warriors He is represented by Rāma. And so on.

Noncooperation with Śrī Kṛṣṇa means misery, because noncooperation with Śrī Kṛṣṇa means forced cooperation with *māyā*, the material nature. We must cooperate with one of them, either willingly or unwillingly. Cooperation with Śrī Kṛṣṇa is inconceivable for empiric philosophers, but for them the conception of His *viśvarūpa* (universal form) is practical, though troublesome. If one is unable to know Kṛṣṇa lying on the lap of Devakī as a little baby son of Vasudeva, let one understand Him in His gigantic feature of *viśvarūpa*. But all the same, we living entities are parts and parcels of the whole, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. We are but so many limbs of the whole body. Separation from the whole body means uselessness of the limbs. Living entities, when separated from the voluntary and spontaneous service of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, are useless dead parts progressively decomposing in contact with *māyā*. The limbs then remain limbs in name only, for they actually have no utility in the plan of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Such dead and decomposed limbs are sources of discomfiture in the total existence, and they require to be ended or mended.

The mending process is devotional activities (*bhakti*), whereas the ending processes are enjoyment in fruitive activities (*karma*) and cultivating empiric philosophical speculative habits (*jñāna*). *Karma* and *jñāna* mean an end of real spiritual life, but *bhakti* means a transcendental life of knowledge and bliss. *Karma* means a material life of perverted knowledge and bliss, *jñāna* means spiritual knowledge and life without any bliss, but *bhakti* means spiritual life full of knowledge and bliss.

The intellectual class of society (the politicians, professionals, educationists, industrialists, lawyers, etc.), all captivated

by the glamor of physical nature, are engaged in worshiping materialism, although they have a potential capacity to understand this cooperative relationship of the living being with the Supreme Whole. Modern civilized men, not having cooperated with the established plan of God, have wrongly identified themselves as products of material energy. Such deluded leaders of society offer persistent stumbling blocks on the way of spiritual understanding of our cooperative relationship with the Supreme Whole. Without any reference to this cooperative relationship of men with the Absolute Whole, they speak highly of materialistic achievements, because such illusioned, foolish talks give them pleasure. They misconceive that material prosperity will give them a long and prosperous lease on life in the kingdom of heaven, and that by advancement of material knowledge it will be possible for them to overcome the pangs of material existence.

There are many men amongst us who are adept at reading daily the message of Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the pages of *Bhagavad-gītā*, but very few of us cooperate with the plan of God.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa Jayantī day gives us an opportunity to arrange a transcendental congregation for discussion of such holy scriptures as *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and for chanting the holy name of God. In this congregation of devotional activity, one and all may join. There is no question of distinguishing between high and low, educated and uneducated, no question of country, color, creed, or faith. Rather, everyone can offer his submissive aural reception to the spiritual sound vibrated from the sources of realized souls. Simple adherence to this principle of aural reception will help one to revive his lost consciousness of his eternal relationship with the Supreme Whole. When this lost consciousness is revived by the chanting process, one becomes pure in heart.

The Indians are privileged to learn this transcendental art at ease and disseminate it all over the world for real peace and prosperity. It is not, however, expected that everyone will be able to learn this art of cooperating with the plan of Godhead. Still, if only the leading members will learn it in theory and practice, that will do immense good to the rest of the people.

On the occasion of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Jayantī day, we hereby invite the leaders of society, educationists, philosophers, religionists, and people in general to come and know this art and disseminate it all over the world. Let us do this responsible work and take a vow on this day of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Jayantī.

*Śrīla Prabhupāda here refers to a religious illustration, popular in India, that shows Durgā (the personification of material nature) wielding a trident, subduing an evildoer.



Every Town and Village

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

Nepalese Ambassador Voices Support for Kṛṣṇa Embassies

Paris—Krishna Rajaryal, Ambassador to France from Nepal, recently met with several representatives of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) to voice his support for the Society, which has faced occasional attacks here from religious bigots.

Nepal, the only remaining Hindu kingdom in the world, prides itself on its ancient Vedic traditions and religious culture. ISKCON maintains a temple in the Nepalese capital, Kathmandu, where Nepal's king is among the Society's life members.

Mr. Rajaryal met with His Divine Grace Bhagavān Goswami, initiating *guru* for ISKCON in southern Europe, and expressed his appreciation for the Society's work of establishing Vedic devotional arts and philosophy in the West. He also extended an invitation for Śrīla Bhagavān Goswami to speak in Nepal some time next year.

"People are hungry for alternatives to the godless society that surrounds them," Śrīla Bhagavān Goswami explained. "Our Kṛṣṇa temples are like embassies of Vedic culture that work to promote God consciousness around the world."



Ambassador Rajaryal receives *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* from Śrīla Bhagavān Gosvāmī.

The ambassador received French and English editions of *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, the essential text of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and noted, "We will be sure these are placed in the embassy library." Later the ambassador decided to enroll his son in the Society's *gurukula* school at the New Māyāpur farm community in Valencay, France.

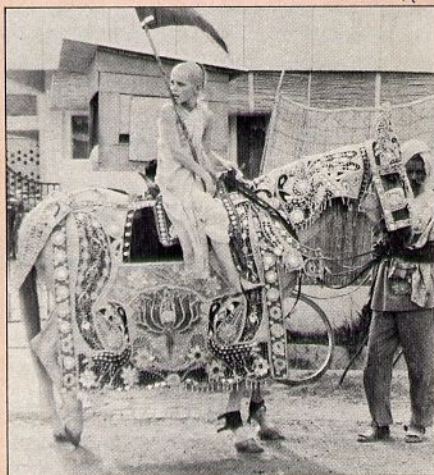
location, in Greater Kailash. Devotees and guests—along with a *shenai* band, an elephant, and brightly decorated white horses ridden by boys from the Kṛṣṇa conscious school in Vṛndāvana—escorted the Deities Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa to Their new home. All along the way, people came out of their houses to offer flower garlands, gifts, and foodstuffs to Lord Kṛṣṇa. Farther along the route, flower arches and fire-crackers signaled the arrival of the Supreme Lord.

Once the procession had reached Greater Kailash, a *paṇḍāla* tent was set up, and the Deities were bathed in an ecstatic *mahā-abhiṣeka* ceremony led by Śrīla Ācāryapāda. More than one thousand people listened to talks on Kṛṣṇa consciousness by Śrīla Ācāryapāda, ISKCON Governing Body Commissioner Gopāla Kṛṣṇa dāsa, His Holiness Girirāja Swami, and His Holiness Lokanātha Swami, the Delhi temple president.

From the *paṇḍāla* the festivities moved to the new temple, where a huge crowd had gathered to watch Śrīla Ācāryapāda cut the ribbon and open the doors. As soon as the doors opened, the crowd surged forward for a first view of the Deities.

The festivities culminated in an *ārati*, a worship celebration that featured chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa, dancing, and offerings of food and flowers to Kṛṣṇa. Afterward, some fifteen hundred guests were served a sumptuous feast of *prasāda*, spiritual food offered to Kṛṣṇa.

New Temple in New Delhi



Young devotees rode horses in the parade celebrating the opening of the new temple.

New Delhi—ISKCON has acquired a new temple and *āśrama* in one of the most prestigious areas of India's capital city. For years ISKCON New Delhi has languished in the shadows of ISKCON's larger India projects (such as those in Vṛndāvana, Māyāpur, and Bombay), moving here and there between smallish rented houses. At last it seems that Kṛṣṇa has blessed the devotees with something more substantial.

The new place has three stories, including ample space for offices and the devotees' living quarters, an all-marble kitchen, and an exquisite all-marble temple with a central dome and chandelier and teakwood and gold appointments.

On opening day Śrīla Jayapatāka Swami Ācāryapāda led a procession from the old location, in Lajpat Nagar, to the new

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 Hṛṣīkeṣa		
	September 2	September 3
	Śrī Kṛṣṇa-janmāṣṭami-vrata (fasting).	Appearance of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda (fasting). Śrī Nandotsava.
September 5	September 14	September 15
Annadā Ekādāśī (fasting from grains and beans)	Appearance of Śrī Sitādēvī, consort of Śrī Advaita Prabhu.	Appearance of Śrī Lalitā.
September 17	September 20	September 21
Śrī Rādhāṣṭami-vrata. Śrī Prabhupāda's arrival in U.S. (1965)	Pārsva Ekādāśī (fasting from grains and beans).	Śrī Vāmana-dvādāśī. Appearance of Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī.
September 22	September 23	September 24
Appearance of Śrīla Saccidānanda Bhaktiwinoda Thākura.	Disappearance of Śrīla Haridāsa Thākura.	Begin third month of Cāturmāsya-vrata (fasting from milk). Śrī Viśvarūpa-mahotsava.

SPEAKING OUT

What Is the Best Spiritual Process?

After giving a lecture in Bombay in April 1979 Śrīla Hṛdayānanda dāsa Goswami Ācāryadeva answered a probing question from the audience: "All over the world, Christians are living and dying for their Christian faith. How is it that you young people—their progeny—have embraced another faith?"

Śrīla Ācāryadeva: Actually, you've put your finger on the real problem with our world. If we are thinking in terms of "Christianity" or "Hinduism," then we are not actually on the spiritual platform—we're on the material platform. We have already seen historically, not only here in India but even more so in the Western countries, that this type of sectarian faith has simply produced war and suffering.

Spiritual life means to understand scientifically what we are and what God is. If we simply become attached to some so-called denomination, some *designation*—"I am Christian," "I am Hindu"—and we do not have a scientific understanding of God, then we are still on the material platform. From God's point of view, there is no question of "Christian" or "Hindu." He wants to see who loves Him.

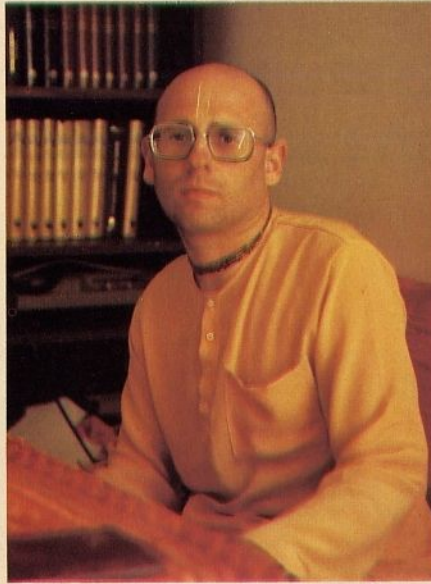
Therefore, everyone should put forward his knowledge and love of God, and whoever puts forward the best knowledge and love should be recognized and accepted by all. That's the test. So we are going all around the world, especially in Christian countries, publicly challenging that this *Bhagavad-gītā* offers the best way to know and love God. [Applause]

Religion without philosophy is mere sentiment. So on the basis of philosophy, knowledge, and practical understanding, we are "defeating" other systems of approaching God. It is *dig-vijaya*, as you say. After all, one has to look at a thing's symptoms. For example, one doctor may say, "I have the best clinic—you should come to me," and another doctor may say, "No, my clinic is much better—I have much better equipment, I have better techniques—you should come to my clinic." But if we see that at one clinic all the patients who come out are sick and dying, and at the other clinic they are coming out healthy, then it is obvious which is the real clinic. [Laughter]

The whole thing is completely nonsectarian, completely scientific. In *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* the question is raised, *ataḥ sādho 'tra yat sārām samuddhṛtya maṇīṣayā*: "What is the best religious system? What is the best spiritual process?" And the answer is given by Sūta Gosvāmī:

*sa vai puṁsām paro dharmo
yato bhaktir adhokṣaje
ahaituky apratihatā
yayātmā suprasīdati*

"The supreme occupation [*dharma*] for all humanity is that by which men can attain to loving devotional service unto the transcendental Lord. Such devotional service must be unmotivated and uninterrupted to completely satisfy the self." [Bhāg. 1.2.6] What is *paro*



dharma—what is the best *dharma*? Sūta Gosvāmī does not say, "Hinduism is *paro dharmo*," or "Christianity is *paro dharmo*." This would be a very childish understanding. Sūta Gosvāmī says, *sa vai puṁsām paro dharmo yato bhaktir adhokṣaje*: "The best spiritual process is what actually brings you to the point of love of God."

But the problem is that everyone will cheat and say, "No, I already do love God." So therefore Sūta Gosvāmī, anticipating this cheating, has given us the symptoms, because when the symptoms are clearly known, you cannot cheat.

For instance, if I give you some money and say "Please hand this money over to Mr. Patel" but I don't tell you exactly what he looks like, then someone else can come and say "I am Mr. Patel—you can hand it over to me." [Laughter.] But if I tell you, "No, he is a man who dresses like this, who speaks like this—you should identify him in such and such a way," then by clearly knowing these symptoms you'll avoid all cheating.

In the same way, everyone will say, "I love God." So therefore the symptoms are given: *ahaikuty apratihatā yayātmā suprasīdati*. When you love God, the first thing is *ahaitukī*—there's no *hetu*—there's no material cause for your service to God. It is not that like the Christians, you just pray for bread: "O my dear God, please give me bread." What is this—simply praying to God for bread? And I think also in India, sometimes we pray for something material.

But this is not actually religion; this is called *kaitava-dharma*, cheating religion, because we are not approaching God out of love. It is business; it is a business relationship: "My dear God, I am offering You such and such—now You kindly reciprocate. Here is my list; I want this and this." [Laughter.] This is not religion; it is business. But love of God means no business. You trust God; He is your father.

If your child said to you every day, "Mother,

Father, am I going to eat today? Are you going to cook today? Will there be food today?" you would become very discouraged. "Oh, our son has no faith; he has no love. Every day he thinks that we are going to starve him." [Laughter.] So if you are always asking God, "God, can you send bread today? Will there be bread today? Please don't let me starve today," God will say, "What is this nonsensical person doing?"

God is not a poor man. So there is no question of asking God for bread. He knows what we deserve. He knows what we need, and He will give it to us. We should pray for love of God; that is *ahaitukī*.

And *apratihatā*: When one loves God he is always serving God. *Everything* he will do for God. That is described in *Bhagavad-gītā, yat karoṣi yad aśnāsi yaj juhoṣi dadāsi yat*: "All that you do, all that you eat, all that you offer and give away should be done as an offering to Me." So always serving God means there must be some *vairāgya*, detachment. Otherwise, I will serve God now, and then my senses will drag me away. Therefore *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* describes,

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

"By rendering devotional service unto the Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, one immediately acquires causeless knowledge and detachment from the world." [Bhāg. 1.2.7]

So when we are actually engaged in loving God, serving God, we must have *vairāgya*, detachment, and *jñāna*, knowledge. Both things must be there.

*vairāgya-vidyā-nija-bhakti-yoga-
śikṣārtham ekaḥ puruṣaḥ purāṇaḥ
śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya-śarīra-dhārī
kṛpāmbudhir yas tam ahaṁ prapadye*

"Let me take shelter of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who has descended in the form of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu to teach us real knowledge, His devotional service, and detachment from whatever does not foster Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He has descended because He is an ocean of transcendental mercy. Let me surrender unto His lotus feet." [Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, *Madhya-līlā* 6.75] These two things are mentioned throughout the Vedic literature—detachment and knowledge. These are the symptoms we're looking for.

If someone says "I am Christian," that's all right. But we want to know, "Do you have detachment and knowledge? Then we will accept you as a Christian. Otherwise, if you have no detachment and if you have no knowledge, then we will never accept your nonsense." And the same thing goes for Hindus, the same thing goes for Muslims, or anyone. We have to be practical; we have to be scientific.

Pilgrims from the New World

Pursuing the phantoms of a historical identity in Europe.

by SUHOTRA DĀSA

Americans have been described by many international observers as a people in search of a history. Though the great achievements of this country are undeniable, it is a peculiar American trait to be insecure about the historical significance of the nation when it is compared with, say, the older European cultures from which the majority of the American people sprang. We secretly fear that our flashy prefab “now” culture really has no substance beyond making a fast buck. Almost defensively, as if to validate our niche in history to the world, we’ve erected imposing monuments commemorating important events and the great men who shaped them during the brief four hundred years since the pilgrims first settled New England. But the success of the television serial *Roots* a couple of years back betrayed the uncertainty of the American identity. Ours is a highly mobile society, ever pushing for new horizons, yet strangely homesick, aching to rediscover lost origins.

This summer, as in every summer, thousands of Americans are visiting Europe to regain a sense of history, gathering as pilgrims from the New World in the somber courtyards of the Old, yearning for a whiff of the eternal. Of course, we’ve all *seen* the travelogue photos of Buckminster Palace, Versailles, the Hofburg, and the older Colosseum and still older Parthenon—but to *be* there, standing in the shadows of those edifices and taking pictures of ourselves to record for our friends “I’ve been there”—this somehow lends to our lives an authenticity we’re often unable to find at home.

But though ancient and majestic relics do inspire us with a vision of the achievements of our ancestors, they are also testimonials to decline, decay, and defeat. Modern Europe, for all of its carefully preserved memorabilia, is the irregular remnant of a series of empires lost, whose valiant efforts at lasting glory were rewarded by broken dreams. As a result, many Europeans have consigned themselves almost totally to the past, unable to confront the failures of the present. This

attitude found expression by a high official of the Austrian government during the recent twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of that country’s republic. After narrating in glowing tones the imperial rise and fall of Vienna’s Habsburg dynasty, which dominated central Europe for hundreds of years until 1918, he soberly concluded, “But Austria will never decide world events again.”

America is certainly still the most powerful nation on earth, and most Americans can hardly imagine otherwise. Yet recent events suggest that time has not obligingly paused for Americans while they ponder from the vantage point of affluence the significance of their place in history. Is our own empire, that economic colossus which holds half the earth in its embrace, beginning to crumble? Will we soon join the ranks of Greece and Rome, England and Spain, as a people humbled by time? Will it come to pass that our principal claims to fame will be an eroding Mount Rushmore, a tottering Washington Monument, and a ravaged, forlorn Statue of Liberty eagerly photographed by wealthy foreigners?

Unthinkable, perhaps. Yet as the kingdoms of our distant forefathers have faded into memories, so too have their lives. The passing of youthful vigor and the steady march of extinction are inevitable, both for empires and for individuals. Sentimentalizing over the past while overlooking our own decline would be blindness. After all, what will the course of history mean to us when we are dead?

America’s search for timelessness is justifiable only in spiritual terms. We shall not be able to stop the clock by medicines, by monuments, or by military force. Yet something deep in our consciousness thirsts to trace out the meaning of our existence beyond the brief period of history allotted to it. The reason for this, according to Vedic science, is that we are eternal, although encased in temporary matter. We might designate ourselves “Americans,” but as spiritual beings we are only momentary visitors here. The American man’s or woman’s body we have is only a perishable vehicle for the eternal soul, which shuttles us about through the enjoyments and sufferings of life. When this body is finished off by time, the soul

must seek shelter elsewhere. There is no guarantee that we will take another birth in this country, or even in this species.

It is obviously a big mistake, then, for the soul to become enamored with any aspect of material existence. The *Vedas* warn against attachment to land, family, or society, because this attachment will only be cruelly broken by the inexorable hand of death. And such attachment, generated from ignorance of the real self, condemns us to an endless series of lives wasted in forgetfulness of our eternal nature. This forgetful condition is called *samsāra*, the cycle of birth and death.

We are propelled along the wheel of *samsāra*, through animal, vegetable, aquatic and human bodies, as long as we are attracted by *māyā*, the Lord’s powerful illusory energy. This *māyā* is described as the binding principle of material existence. *Māyā* misdirects our search for meaning and shelter by its display of the wonderful forms of material nature, which, though often beautiful, are temporary. These attractive features of the material world stimulate our senses into actions that bind us by laws of *karma* (reaction), which reward or punish our good and bad deeds with another body at death.

But *māyā* is only a shadow of the spiritual realm of Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The spiritual world is our real home, and it is free from ignorance and the ravages of time. It is *sac-cid-ānanda*—eternal, full of knowledge, and full of bliss. It is here that Kṛṣṇa, the all-attractive one, displays His pastimes of loving exchanges with His devotees. And though in the material world we have wandered so far from home, Kṛṣṇa is ever eager for our return. This is why He has imparted spiritual knowledge in *Bhagavad-gītā* as explained by His confidential representative, the Kṛṣṇa conscious *guru*.

We should not throw away this human form of life uselessly chasing the phantoms of a national or historical identity, or any identity other than our real one. There is no way we can permanently mark the ever shifting sands of time by our vain posturing. If America is beginning to feel the discomforts of her quixotic pursuit for mundane significance, it is high time her people redirect their energies toward a substantial spiritual goal.

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

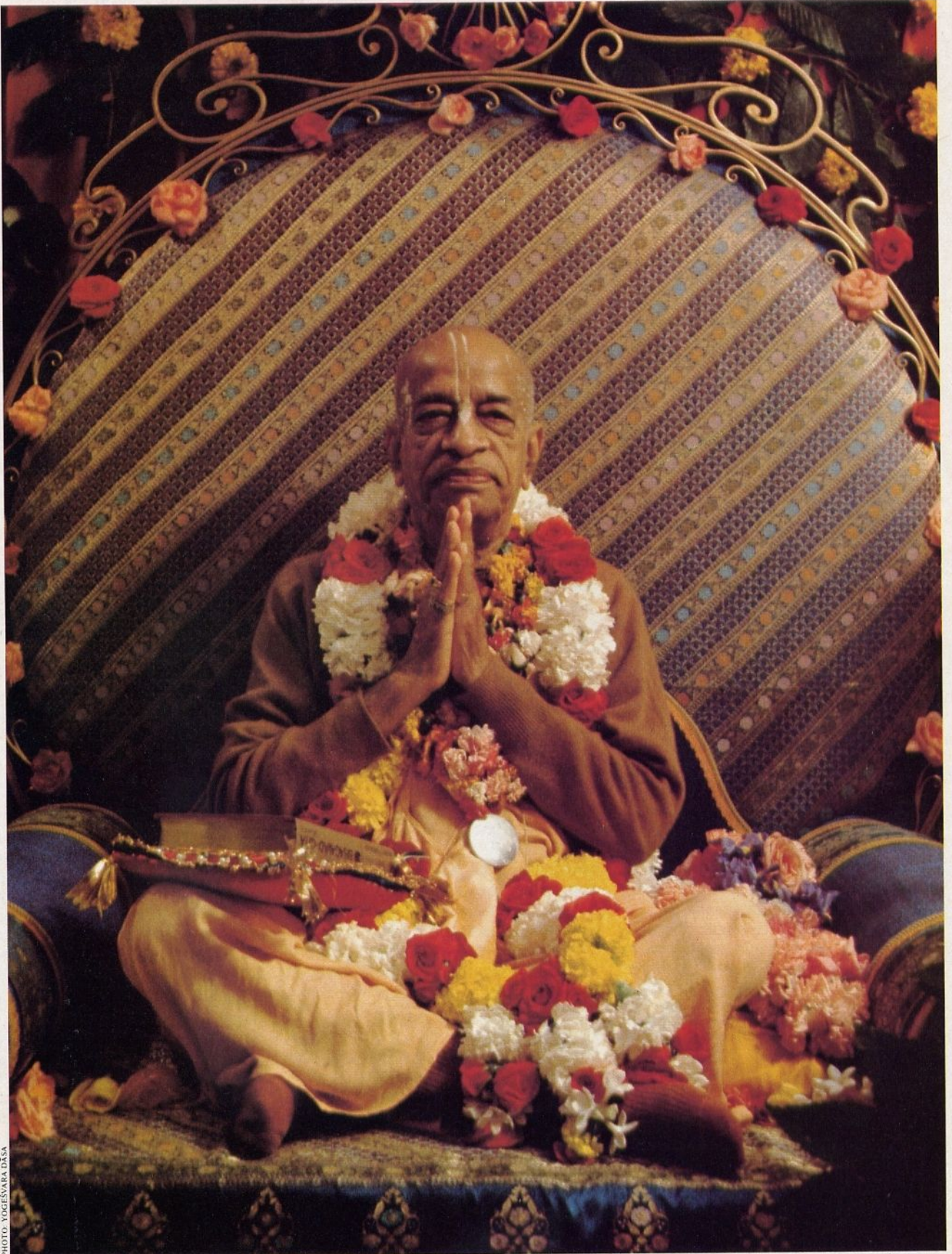


PHOTO: YOGESVARA DASSA

ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA'S PERPETUAL GIFTS

"The spiritual movement he began
will increase more and more."

by ŚRĪLA SATSVARŪPA DĀSA GOSWAMI

September 3, 1980, marks the eighty-fourth birthday anniversary of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, who departed from the material world three years ago in Vṛndāvana, India. Even before his passing away, there were predictions that after his disappearance the movement and teachings he had established would soon fall apart. Now it is three years later, and Śrīla Prabhupāda's unique contributions are still flourishing. And in my own study of Śrīla Prabhupāda's life I have begun to appreciate that he very deliberately and brilliantly acted to perpetuate his Kṛṣṇa conscious contributions to the world.

As with his other work, Śrīla Prabhupāda began his ongoing society—the International Society for Krishna Consciousness—alone. The idea of a league of God conscious devotees to spread the scriptural teachings of *Bhagavad-gītā* was not his own invention, but had been given him by his spiritual master and the previous teachers in the disciplic succession of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. In bygone ages, great spiritual masters in India had undertaken extensive tours to introduce Vedic teachings. Śrīla Prabhupāda, however, was the first authorized representative of *Bhagavad-gītā* to come to the West and create followers from those born outside the Vedic culture.

Vedic scriptures advise that one serve God in the association of God's devotees. From the beginning, therefore, Śrīla Prabhupāda tried to create a society of Kṛṣṇa conscious devotees. Yet the obstacles were formidable. When he traveled to America in 1965, Śrīla Prabhupāda saw a spiritually bleak and confused nation. In the Communist countries of the East the state forbids and forcibly attempts to crush the growth of spiritual knowledge, but in the "free" West the virtues of spiritual life

are almost as effectively crushed by hedonism. Professor Thomas Hopkins has described the difficult circumstances Śrīla Prabhupāda faced in the West: "He was seventy years old when he began this work, he had no financial resources, he was a total stranger in a foreign country, and he was setting out to sell devotional purity in New York City, the capital city of 'do your own thing.'" Yet in the eleven years during which Śrīla Prabhupāda created and developed ISKCON (his acronym for "the International Society for Krishna Consciousness"), he saw it grow from a few interested boys into a worldwide society of thousands of full-time initiated disciples and an ever broader congregational following.

But Śrīla Prabhupāda's society of devotees is not merely an institutional structure. Ultimately the society's purpose is to arouse one's inner love for Lord Kṛṣṇa. "If one man becomes a pure devotee of the Lord," Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "we shall consider our attempt a success." According to *Bhagavad-gītā*, everyone has dormant love for Kṛṣṇa in his heart, and therefore everyone is ultimately Kṛṣṇa's devotee. At present, however, most people are acting against the will of the Lord, because they are covered by illusion. It takes an especially empowered devotee to remove the covering of false ego and revive a person's normal spiritual identity as an eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa. That Śrīla Prabhupāda could do this in the West, where people are blinded by a bodily concept of happiness, is in itself miraculous. And the sincere devotees he has initiated will continue his work, because their dedication has been awarded with self-realization and the higher taste of spiritual pleasure.

In his later years, Śrīla Prabhupāda entrusted the direction of this society to a

group of some twenty disciples, whom he formed and guided into a "governing body commission." This managerial body continues to act, dedicated to protecting and carrying out Śrīla Prabhupāda's purposes for the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Śrīla Prabhupāda also chose disciples to act as initiating *gurus* to continue the succession of spiritual masters and disciples, an absolute necessity for spiritual life.

When asked why his devotees or teachings should be organized into an institution, Śrīla Prabhupāda pointed out, "I am traveling all over the world, and I see immense arrangements for sense gratification. But I don't see any arrangement for Kṛṣṇa consciousness." He therefore created such an arrangement.

Yet much more would have to be done. "I have built the structure for a skyscraper," he said, "but those who take up the work after me will have to fill in its floors. It is not one man's work." Only if the devotees worked together, Śrīla Prabhupāda taught, would the real potency of Kṛṣṇa consciousness come forth to fulfill the world's great need for spiritual realization.

Śrīla Prabhupāda also foresaw a day when society at large would respond to the social manifesto of the Vedic scriptures. The Kṛṣṇa conscious teachings would divide society into natural social and spiritual orders to foster both self-realization and material well-being. Śrīla Prabhupāda therefore inspired his disciples to have their farm communities and urban centers demonstrate in microcosm this ideal social arrangement.

Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote to his disciples in July of 1967, "After all, I am old man. There is no certainty of my life, and at any moment I can collapse and it will not be surprising. But I wish to leave some of my spiritual children so that they may work

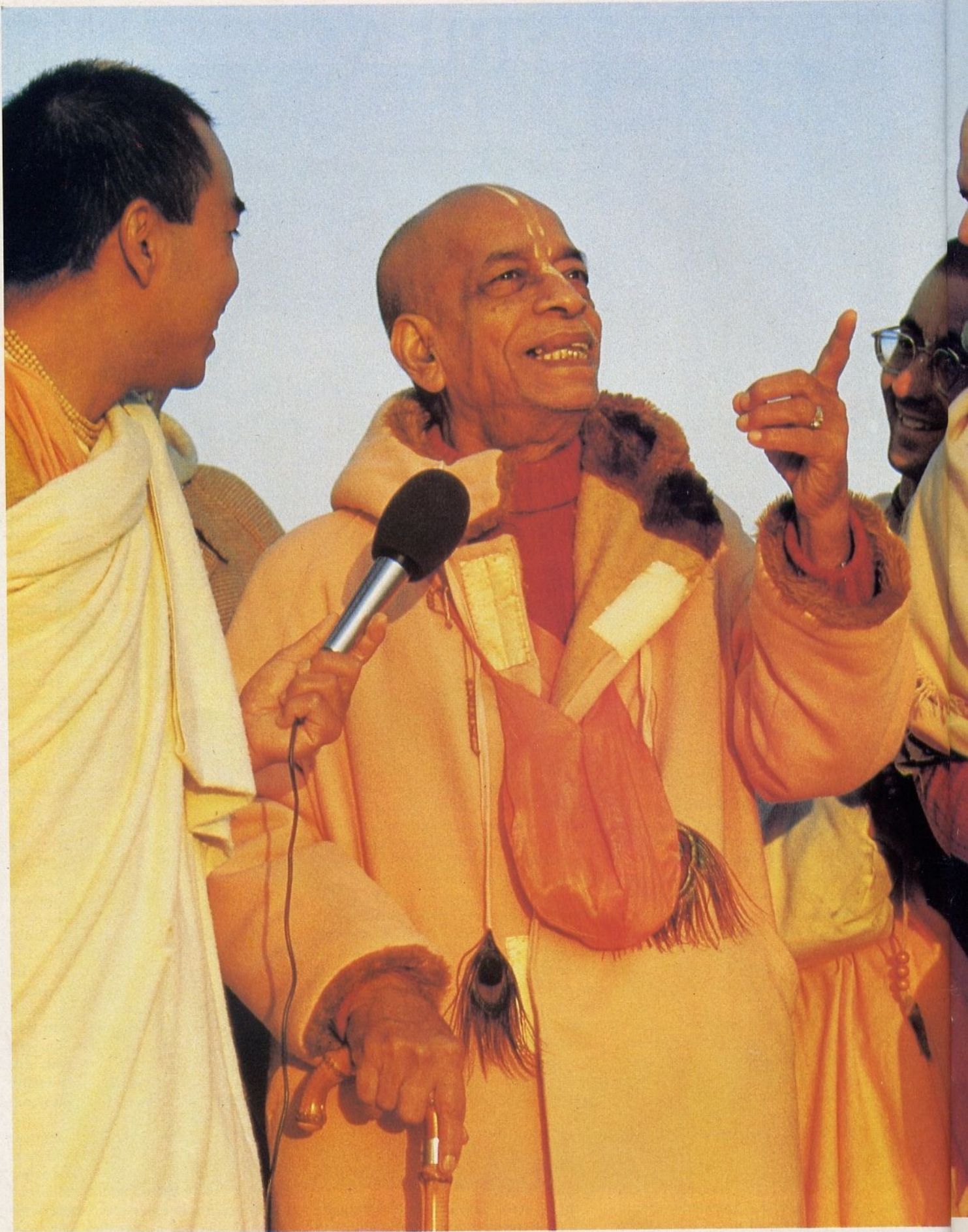




PHOTO: MURALIVADANA DASA



PHOTO: BHĀRGAVA DĀSA

Delighting his disciples (far left) with spiritual insights, Śrīla Prabhupāda instructed them in the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness as he himself had received it through the chain of disciplic succession. To record these teachings in permanent form and distribute them widely, he translated and published a virtual library of Vedic literature (left).

and this philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness may be broadcast all over the world. . . . If you understand the philosophy, it will be a great help for the suffering humanity." As the present Kṛṣṇa conscious devotees created by Śrīla Prabhupāda mature in spiritual realization, and as more take up the practice of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, the strength and purity of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement will only increase. Although his followers may not match the devotional perfection of Śrīla Prabhupāda himself, all devotees who sincerely follow his instructions put themselves on the path of perfection. If we find a devotee who is not yet mature, we should not criticize the process. Kṛṣṇa Himself says in *Bhagavad-gītā* that if one has rightly resolved to become a devotee, even if he commits a mistake he must still be considered saintly, and his faults will quickly be corrected by sincere devotional service.

Śrīla Prabhupāda also insured the perpetuation of his work by writing, publishing, and distributing Kṛṣṇa conscious books. In the last eleven years of his life, he translated into English and published more than sixty volumes of Vedic scripture. (And his disciples, under his direction, published these books in French, Spanish, German, and more than thirty other languages.) By comparative study, the original Sanskrit and Bengali Vedic writings constitute the most voluminous and comprehensive body of scriptural knowledge in the world. Now Śrīla Prabhupāda's translations of and commentaries on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and *Caitanya-*

caritāmṛta have introduced this knowledge in universities and libraries throughout the West.

Because Śrīla Prabhupāda was not only an expert scholar in Vedic study but a realized devotee and practitioner, whoever reads his Bhaktivedanta purports will come directly in touch with Kṛṣṇa through the written word. Once in April of 1975 while taking a morning walk with several disciples in Vṛndāvana, Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "Those who are purchasing the books are intelligent. When they read them, how will the movement stop? It will not stop. The book distribution is so important that the movement will continue to stay."

The chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra, another of Śrīla Prabhupāda's contributions, is also going on steadfastly. The sound waves of the holy names of God, started by one pure devotee, now travel around the world, broadcast from East to West. Lord Caitanya predicted five hundred years ago that the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa would be heard in every town and village, but no one made this possible until Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Undoubtedly the chanting will continue, because people are feeling the benefit of it. To get the full effect of the chanting, however, one should hear it from a practicing devotee. In 1967 a girl wrote from a distant country to ask Śrīla Prabhupāda whether her efforts to spread the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa would have any effect. Śrīla Prabhupāda replied, "Yes, whoever you tell the chant to, it is effective. You have heard it from me and my disciples, and

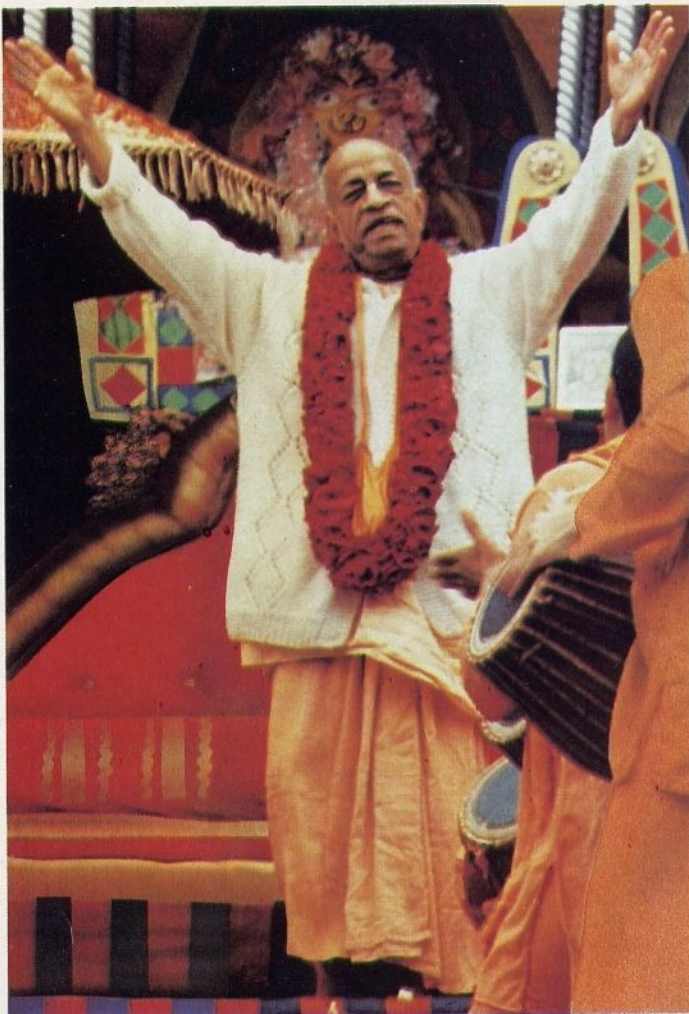


PHOTO: VISAKHA-DEVĪ DASĪ

similarly I have heard it from my Guru Mahārāja, and so on and on. . . . My disciples are my agents, my representatives. So by hearing it from them, you are receiving it from me. And because you are a sincere soul, those who are hearing the *mantra* from you are receiving it in disciplic succession from Lord Caitanya and Lord Kṛṣṇa.

As long as there are sincere devotees following the instructions of Śrīla Prabhupāda, they will be able to pass on the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa with same potency as Śrīla Prabhupāda.

In the beginning, Śrīla Prabhupāda chanted alone in Tompkins Square Park in New York and started the waves of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* in the West. The spiritual momentum he began will increase more and more. And as the glorification of the holy name goes on, it will increase the glories of the pure servant of the holy name who presented it so faithfully. When his disciples faced difficulties in spiritual life, Śrīla Prabhupāda would advise, "Just chant Hare Kṛṣṇa." As he said, "No other means of spiritual realization is as effective in this age of quarrel and hypocrisy as the chanting of the *mahā-mantra*—Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare

Chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra

(above), Śrīla Prabhupāda began waves of transcendental sound that have spread around the world. At right, Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees from several continents celebrate a joyous pilgrimage to India's holy city of Māyāpur, West Bengal.

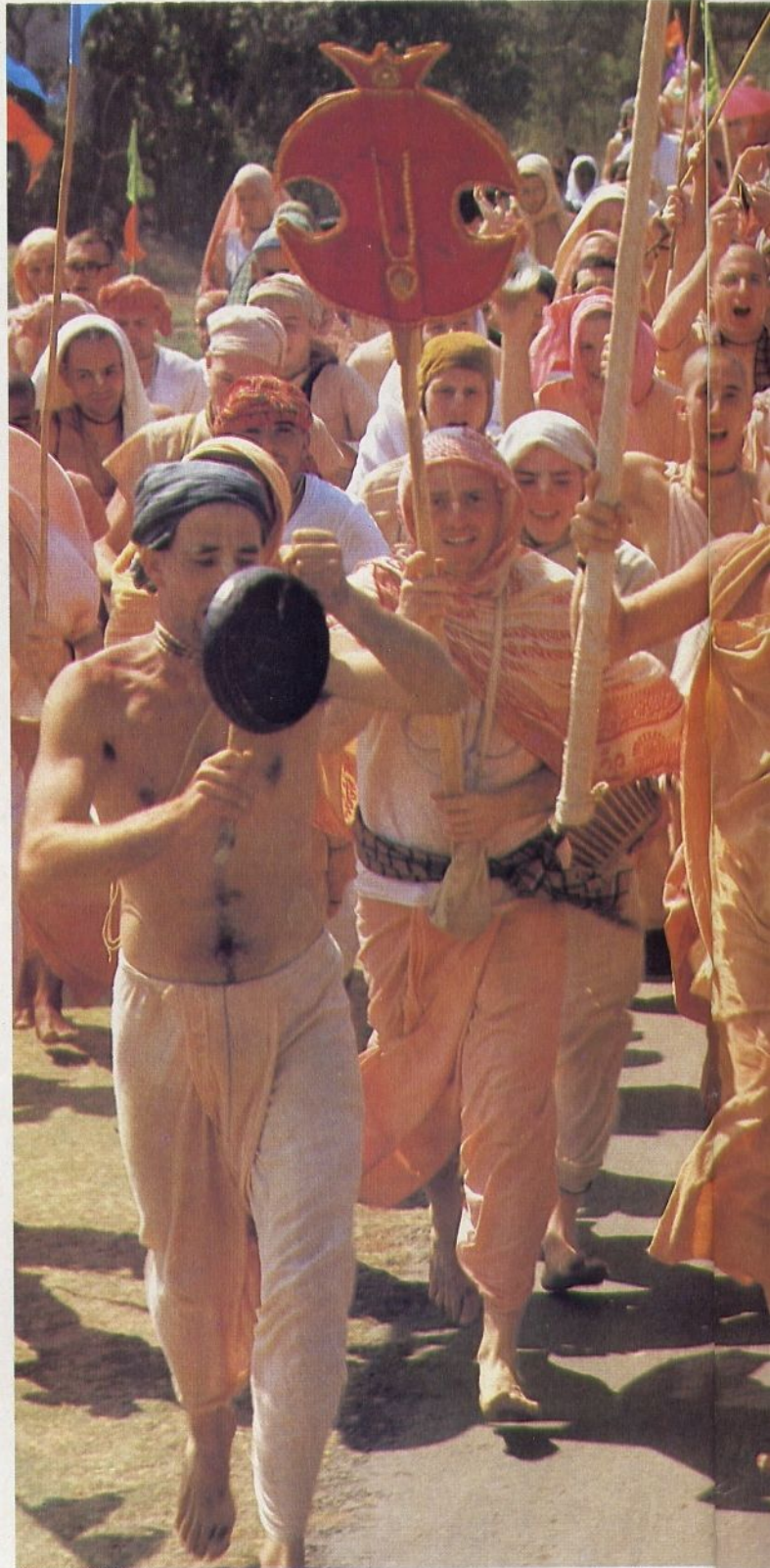


PHOTO: VISAKHA-DEVĪ DASĪ

Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare."

We could go on at great length enumerating Śrīla Prabhupāda's contributions and giving evidence that they will endure. But for our present purposes we will make just one more point: Śrīla Prabhupāda gave us the opportunity, above all, to attain the goal of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. As stated in

the Vedic scriptures, the goal of human life is to get out of the cycle of birth and death, which is always beset with miseries. Spiritual knowledge begins with the understanding that a person is a spiritual soul, not his body. And this knowledge finally culminates in pure devotional service to Kṛṣṇa. One who leaves his body at the time of death thinking of Kṛṣṇa need not



return to birth and death, but gains the eternal spiritual world. By Śrīla Prabhupāda's behavior and qualities, we can understand that he himself realized that eternal goal, but in the compassionate way of saintly persons he left us the method by which we also can attain the goal. This is the ultimate purpose of ISKCON, the reason for the association of devotees, the

subject matter to be learned in the books, and the message of chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa—to attain pure devotion to Kṛṣṇa and enter an eternal, blissful relationship with Him.

It is Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who sustains the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement throughout history. The real question, therefore, is not whether Kṛṣṇa consciousness will

continue, but whether each one of us will take part. If we take part, it will help us. If we join this movement fully, we will be protected from the material world and regain the association of Kṛṣṇa. Even taking part in Kṛṣṇa consciousness only slightly can save us from the greatest danger, that of falling into lower species after death.

**HARE KṚṢṆA HARE KṚṢṆA KṚṢṆA KṚṢṆA HARE HARE
HARE RĀMA HARE RĀMA RĀMA RĀMA HARE HARE**

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

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

Five centuries ago, while spreading the

mahā-mantra throughout India, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu prayed, "O Supreme Lord, in Your name You have invested all Your transcendental energies."

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

Enhance Your Spiritual Life

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

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

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

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6 SPECIAL: *The original Hare KṚṣṇa Meditation Album.* In 1966 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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SOCRATES

(continued from page 5)

can be realized only through *bhakti*, devotion.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes, one cannot enter into KṚṣṇa's abode without being a purified *bhakta*. That is stated in *Bhagavad-gītā* [18.55]. *Bhaktiyā māṃ abhijānāti*. "One can understand the supreme personality as He is only by devotional service." KṚṣṇa never says that He can be understood by *jñāna*, *karma*, or *yoga*. The personal abode of KṚṣṇa is especially reserved for the *bhaktas*, and the *jñānis*, *yogīs*, and *karmīs* cannot go there.

Devotee: What do you mean when you say that KṚṣṇa consciousness is the ultimate goal of life? Does this mean always being conscious of KṚṣṇa?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes, we should always be thinking of KṚṣṇa. We should act in such a way that we have to think of KṚṣṇa all the time. For instance, we are discussing Socratic philosophy in order to strengthen our KṚṣṇa consciousness. Therefore the ultimate goal is KṚṣṇa; otherwise we are not interested in criticizing or accepting anyone's philosophy. We are neutral.

Devotee: So the proper use of intelligence is to guide everything in such a way that we become KṚṣṇa conscious?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: That is it. Without KṚṣṇa consciousness, we remain on the mental platform. Being on the mental platform means hovering. On that platform, we are not fixed. It is the business of the mind to accept this and reject that, but when we are fixed in KṚṣṇa consciousness we are no longer subjected to the mind's acceptance or rejection.

Devotee: Right conduct then becomes automatic?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes, as soon as the mind wanders, we should immediately drag it back to concentrate on KṚṣṇa. While chanting, our mind sometimes wanders far away, but when we become conscious of this, we should immediately bring the mind back to hear the sound vibration of Hare KṚṣṇa. That is called *yoga-abhyāsa*, the practice of *yoga*. We should not allow our mind to wander elsewhere. We should simply chant and hear, for that is the best *yoga* system.

Devotee: Socrates could have avoided the death penalty if he had compromised his convictions. He refused to do this and so became a martyr for his beliefs.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: It is good that he stuck to his point yet regrettable that he lived in a society in which he could not think independently. Therefore he was obliged to die. In that sense, Socrates was a great soul because although he appeared in a society that was not very advanced, he was still such a great philosopher.

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PRESENCE

(continued from page 9)

were slender and long. His mouth was rich and full, and very dark and red and smiling, and his teeth were brighter than his eyes. He sat in a cross-legged position that I had never seen before in any yoga book and had never seen any yogī perform. It was a sitting posture, but his right foot was crossed over the thigh and brought back beside his left hip, and one knee rested on the other directly in front of him. His every expression and gesture was different from those of any other personality I had ever seen, and I sensed that they had meanings that I did not know, from a culture and a mood that were completely beyond this world. There was a mole on his side and a peculiar callus on his ankle, a round callus similar to what a karate expert develops on his knuckle. He was dressed in unhemmed cloth, dyed saffron. Everything about him was exotic, and his whole effulgence made him seem to be not even sitting in the room but projected from some other place. He was so brilliant in color that it was like a technicolor movie, and yet he was right there. I heard him speaking. He was sitting right there before me, yet it seemed that if I reached out to touch him he wouldn't be there. At the same time, seeing him was not an abstract or subtle experience but a most intense presence.

After their first visit to the storefront, Chuck, Steve, and Bruce each got an opportunity to see the Swami upstairs in his apartment.

Steve: I was on my lunch hour and had to be back in the office very soon. I was dressed in a summer business suit. I had planned it so that I had just enough time to go to the storefront and buy some books, then go to lunch and return to work. At the storefront, one of the Swami's followers said that I could go up and see the Swami. I went upstairs to his apartment and found him at his sitting place with a few boys. I must have interrupted what he was saying, but I asked him if I could purchase the three volumes of the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. One of the devotees produced the books from the closet opposite Swamiji's seat. I handled the books—they were a very special color not usually seen in America, a reddish natural earth, like a brick—and I asked him how much they cost. Six dollars each, he said. I took twenty dollars out of my wallet and gave it to him. He seemed the only one to ask about the price of the books or give the money to, because none of the others came forward to represent him. They were just sitting back and listening to him speak.

"These books are commentaries on the

scriptures?" I asked, trying to show that I knew something about books. Swamiji said yes, they were his commentaries. Sitting, smiling, at ease, Swamiji was very attractive. He seemed very strong and healthy. When he smiled, all his teeth were beautiful, and his nostrils flared aristocratically. His face was full and powerful. He was wearing an Indian cloth robe, and as he sat cross-legged, his smooth-skinned legs were partly exposed. He wore no shirt, but the upper part of his body was wrapped with an Indian cloth shawl. His limbs were quite slender, but he had a protruding belly.

When I saw that Swamiji was having to personally handle the sale of books, I did not want to bother him. I quickly asked him to please keep the change from my twenty dollars. I took the three volumes without any bag or wrapping and was standing, preparing to leave, when Swamiji said, "Sit down," and gestured that I should sit opposite him like the others. He had said "Sit down" in a different tone of voice. It was a heavy tone and indicated that now the sale of the books was completed and I should sit with the others and listen to him speak. He was offering me an important invitation to become like one of the others, who I knew spent many hours with him during the day when I was usually at my job and not able to come. I envied their leisure in being able to learn so much from him and sit and talk intimately with him. By ending the sales transaction and asking me to sit, he assumed that I was in need of listening to him and that I had nothing better in the world to do than to stop everything else and hear him. But I was expected back at the office. I didn't want to argue, but I couldn't possibly stay. "I'm sorry, I have to go," I said definitely. "I'm only on my lunch hour." As I said this, I had already started to move for the door, and Swamiji responded by suddenly breaking into a wide smile and looking very charming and very happy. He seemed to appreciate that I was a working man, a young man on the go. I had not come by simply because I was unemployed and had nowhere to go and nothing to do. Approving of my energetic demeanor, he allowed me to take my leave.

Chuck: One of the devotees in the storefront invited me upstairs to see the Swami in private. I was led out of the storefront into a hallway and suddenly into a beautiful little garden with a picnic table, a birdbath, a birdhouse, and flower beds. After we passed through the garden, we came to a middle-class apartment building. We walked up the stairs and entered an apartment which was absolutely bare of any furniture—just white

walls and a parquet floor. He led me through the front room and into another room, and there was the Swami, sitting in that same majestic spiritual presence on a thin cotton mat, which was covered by a cloth with little elephants printed on it, and leaning back on a pillow which stood against the wall.

One night Bruce walked home with Wally, and he told Wally about his interest in going to India and becoming a professor of Oriental literature. "Why go to India?" Wally asked. "India has come here. Swamiji is teaching us these authentic things. Why go to India?" Bruce thought Wally made sense, so he resolved to give up his long-cherished idea of going to India, at least as long as he could go on visiting the Swami.

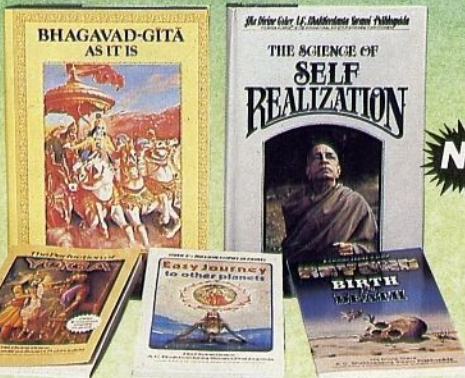
Bruce: I decided to go and speak personally to Swamiji, so I went to the storefront. I found out that he lived in an apartment in the rear building. A boy told me the number and said I could just go and speak with the Swami. He said, "Yes, just go." So I walked through the storefront, and there was a little courtyard where some plants were growing. Usually in New York there is no courtyard, nothing green, but this was very attractive. And in that courtyard there was a boy typing at a picnic table, and he looked very spiritual and dedicated. I hurried upstairs and rang the bell for apartment number 2C. After a little while the door opened, and it was the Swami. "Yes," he said. And I said, "I would like to speak with you." He opened the door wider and stepped back and said, "Yes, come." We went inside together into his sitting room and sat down facing each other. He sat behind his metal trunk-desk on a very thin mat which was covered with a woolen blanketlike cover that had frizzled ends and elephants decorating it. He asked me my name and I told him it was Bruce. And then he remarked, "Ah. In India, during the British period, there was one Lord Bruce." And he said something about Lord Bruce being a general and engaging in some campaigns.

I felt that I had to talk to the Swami—to tell him my story—and I actually found him interested to listen. It was very intimate, sitting with him in his apartment, and he was actually wanting to hear about me.

While we were talking, he looked up past me, high up on the wall behind me, and he was talking about Lord Caitanya. The way he looked up, he was obviously looking at some picture or something, but with an expression of deep love in his eyes. I turned around to see what made him look like that. Then I saw the picture in the brown frame: Lord Caitanya dancing in kīrtana.

(To be continued)

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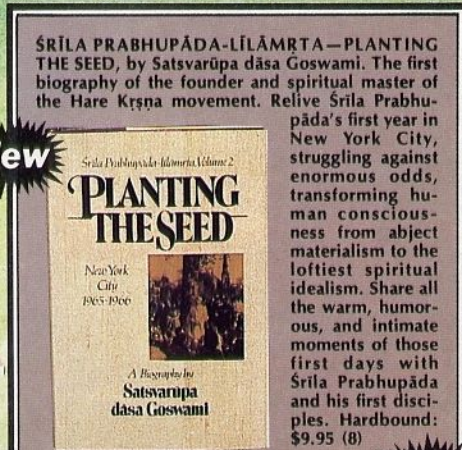
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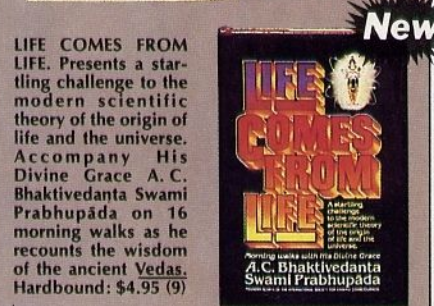
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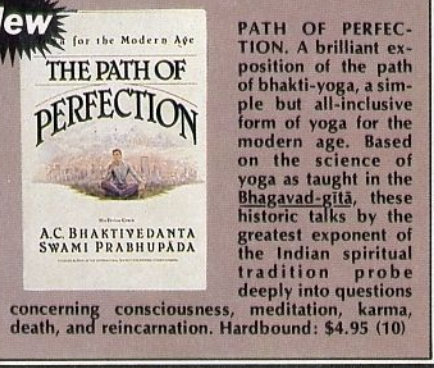
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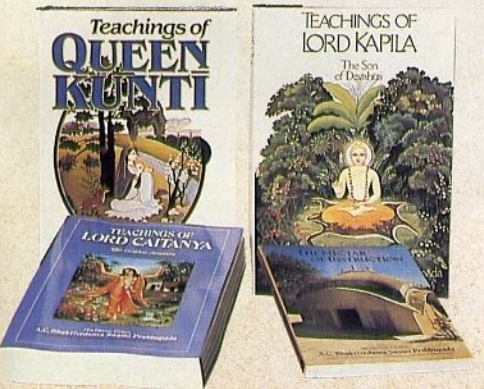
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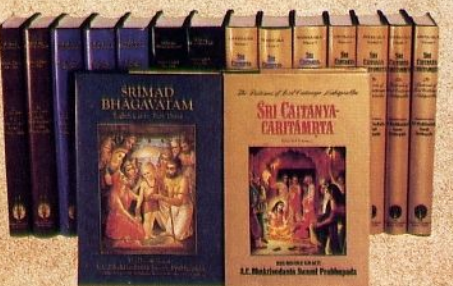
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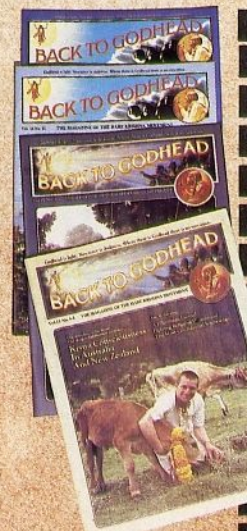
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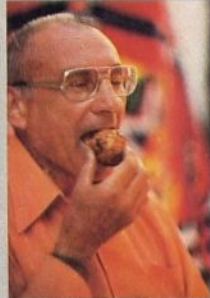
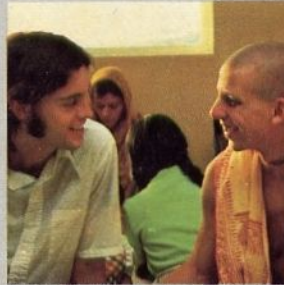
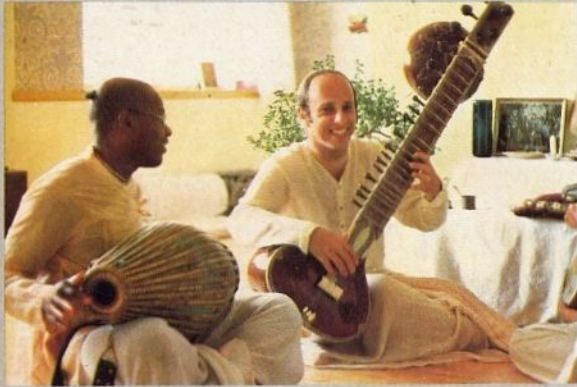
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