

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

BACK TO GODHEAD

Vol.15 No.12 THE MAGAZINE OF THE HARE KRISHNA MOVEMENT



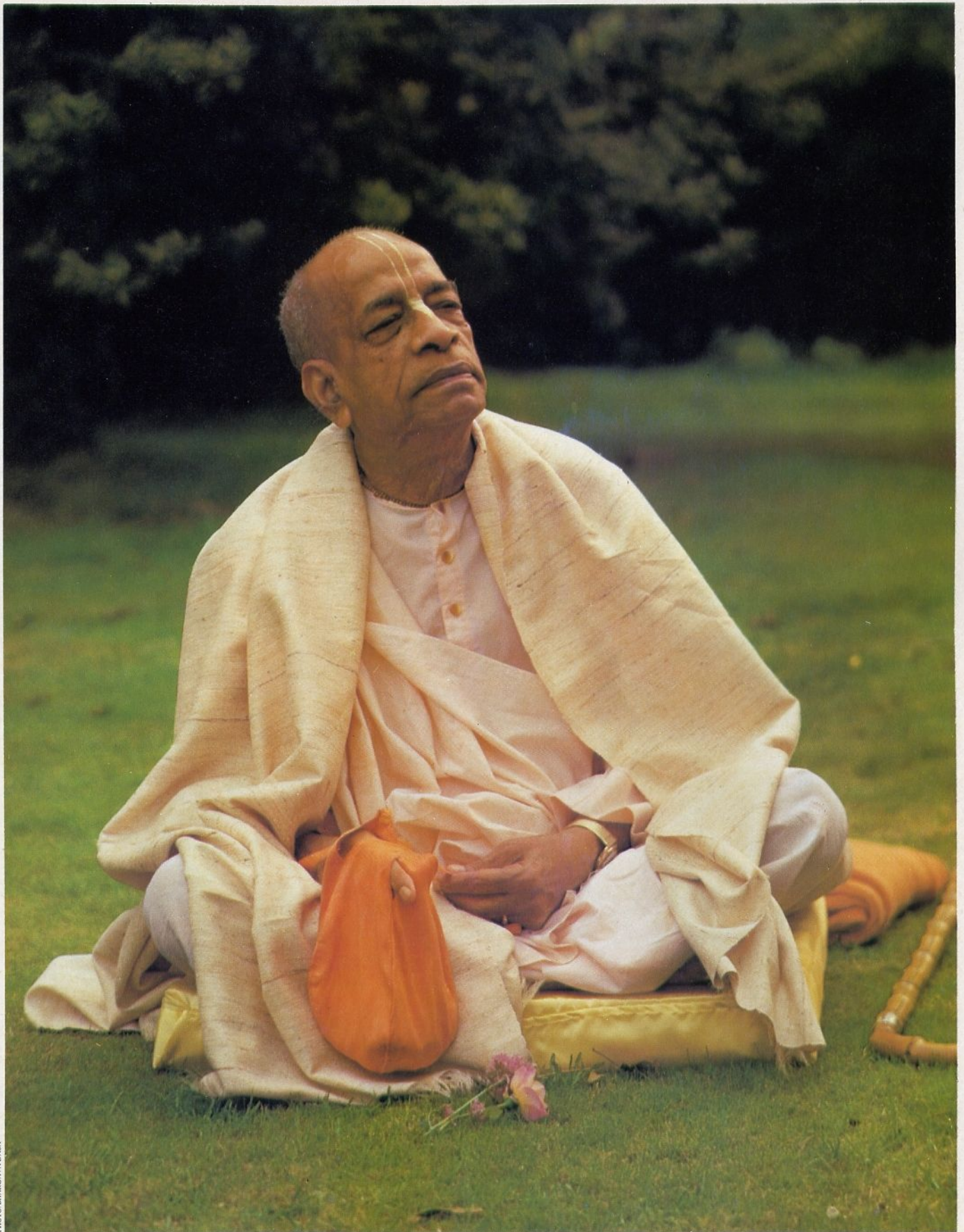


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His Divine Grace
A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda
Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

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His Divine Grace
A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda

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PRONUNCIATION of Sanskrit words and names. BACK TO GODHEAD follows the international scholarly standard. Pronounce short **a** like the **u** in **but**, long **ā** like the **a** in **far** (and hold it twice as long as the short **a**). Pronounce **e** like the **a** in **evade**, long **ī** like the **i** in **plique**. Pronounce the vowel **ṛ** like the **r** in **rīn**, and **ṛ** like the **ch** in **chair**. Pronounce the aspirated consonants (**ch**, **jh**, **dh**, etc.) as in **staunch**-heart, **hedge**-hog, and **red**-hot. Finally, pronounce the sibilants **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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COVER: Deities of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the Supreme Personality of Godhead (center figure), and His associates grace the altar of the new Kṛṣṇa temple in Laguna Beach, California. The Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, descended in West Bengal five hundred years ago as Śrī Caitanya to teach the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa as the best method for reviving love for God in the present age. Advaita Ācārya (far left) and Lord Nityānanda (second from left), assisted Śrī Caitanya in His mission. Śrī Gadādhara (on Śrī Caitanya's right) and Śrī Śrīvāsa (far right) personified loving devotion to Kṛṣṇa. The pictures at the bottom of the altar show several generations of spiritual masters who have preserved Śrī Caitanya's teachings and taught them to the world. (For news about the new center in Laguna Beach, see page 19.) (Photo: Nitya-ṛptā-devī dāsi.)

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."



KṚṢṂA CONSCIOUSNESS

A GIFT FOR WORLD UNITY

A lecture by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda
Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness
Delivered in Calcutta, India, on January 31, 1973

Ladies and gentlemen, I thank you very much for your kindly inviting me to speak something about East and West. Actually, I have considerable experience now because I have been traveling between the East and the West—not only once but at least twice or thrice every year.

As far as the Kṛṣṇa conscious movement is concerned, there is really no such thing as East and West. For instance, the sun rises from the eastern horizon and sets on the western horizon, but the sun is the same. You cannot say “the eastern sun”



and “the western sun.” That is not possible. This planet earth is moving, and we are thinking that the sun is moving from east to west. But the sun is fixed in its position. Similarly, this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement makes no such distinction between East and West. If one makes such a distinction, it is due to lack of knowledge.

Why this lack of knowledge? Because we are in the bodily concept of life. According to Vedic culture, anyone who accepts the material body to be the self is not considered a human being. It is said in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* [10.84],

*yasyātma-buddhiḥ kuṅape tri-dhātuke
sva-dhīḥ kalatrādiṣu bhauma ijya-dhīḥ
yat-tīrtha-buddhiḥ salīle na karhicij
janeṣv abhijñeṣu sa eva go-kharaḥ*

“One who accepts this bodily bag of three elements (bile, mucus, and air) as his self, who desires an intimate relationship with his wife and children, who considers the land of his birth worshipable, who bathes at the holy places of pilgrimage but never takes advantage of those persons who are in actual knowledge—he is no better than an ass or a cow.”

Go-kharaḥ. *Go* means “cow,” and *kha-ra* means “ass.” This is how the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* describes any person who is accepting this body as himself. For example, if someone asks us, “Who are you?” generally we say, “I am Mr. Such-and-such; I am American.” Or “I am Indian,” or “I am African.” These are all bodily designations, because I am identifying myself with this body.

Yasyātma-buddhiḥ kuṅape tri-dhātuke. *Kuṅape* means “bag.” This body is a bag—a bag of bones, flesh, blood, urine, and so many other things. You cannot

manufacture a living entity by combining bones, flesh, blood, urine, and stool. That is not possible. You are great scientists, you are going to the moon, but if I give you some ingredients like these bones, flesh, blood, and urine, can you manufacture a human being? Can you? Can anyone? Is there any scientist in the world who can manufacture a human being by combining bones, flesh, blood, urine, and stool? No. Then why are you identifying with this body?

From your country have come so many scientists and great leaders. From our country, also, come many big leaders—Mahatma Gandhi and others. Do you think these men are merely combinations of bones and flesh and urine? According to the Ayurvedic system of medicine, this body is made chiefly of three elements, *kapha pitta vāyu*: mucus, bile, and air. Actually, this body is like that. As soon as the spirit soul leaves this body, the body is nothing but bones, flesh, urine, and stool, and it has to be disposed of. While the man was living he was acting so nicely, so intelligently. Now, as soon as the soul is gone, immediately all of his good qualities are gone. So do you think he was simply a combination of bones and flesh? Will any sane man accept this?

You may say that it is because something is lacking for generating life in this body that the body is called dead. But that is not a fact, because after this body's death—after the soul has gone out of the body—innumerable microbes will come out. Decomposition. So you cannot say that the ingredients that give impetus to the generation of life are lacking. They are not lacking.

So if there is any difference between East and West, this is the difference. In the Eastern part of the world, especially in India, the people know, "I am not this body." And in the Western part of the world, they do *not* know. That is the difference. That is the distinction between East and West.

In India, go to a village and ask any man, "What are you?" He will say, "Sir, I am a soul suffering or enjoying according to my past *karma*." In other words, "I was living in the past. So according to my past actions I am suffering or enjoying the reactions in this life." He believes in the transmigration of the soul. And he believes in the future life also. He is very cautious not to commit sins, because he knows, "If I commit sins in this life, I'll have to suffer in my next life." This is Eastern life. And in the Western countries, no one knows this, even big, big professors. In Moscow I talked with one Professor Kotofsky. He said, "Swamiji, after death everything is finished." This is the difference between East and West.

In the Eastern countries, especially in India, a common man will understand the existence of the soul. And in the Western countries, a topmost man—a professor—does not know about the soul. That is the difference. Otherwise, as far as your eating is concerned, it is the same, either in Eastern countries or Western countries. You eat something very nice on a plate; they also eat something. You sleep in a nice apartment; they also sleep in something. You try to defend with your atomic

**I go to First Avenue,
and occasionally
I see the
United Nations
building.
But instead of
diminishing,
the number of flags
is increasing.
Why are the nations
not united?**

weapons; they also try to defend. You are after sex; they are also after sex. And this is true not only of Eastern and Western people: the animals are also after these things. *Āhāra-nidrā-bhaya-maithunāṁ ca/ sāmānyam etat paśubhir narāṇām*. Eating, sleeping, sex life, and defense. These are common to the animal and the human being. You may improve the cooking process or eating process, but, after all, it is still eating. Your eating is meant for maintaining your body. That is done by the animals, also. These things are not cultural advancement. Real cultural advancement is to know, "I am not this body. I am spirit soul." *Ahaṁ brahmāsmi*. That is the difference. So this education is in India.

In the beginning of *Bhagavad-gītā* [2.13], Kṛṣṇa says,

*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." This is the Eastern gift.

So I have come to the Western countries to give this Eastern gift. And it is being accepted by your children. So many American and European boys and girls are accepting it. Not only hundreds, but thousands. People say, "Swamiji, you are doing wonderfully." I tell them I am not doing wonderfully. I do not know any magic. I have no mystic power. I am simply presenting the Eastern culture to the West. That's all. It is not unreasonable. Any child can understand that there is the soul within the body. There is one doctor in Montreal by the name of Dr. Bigelow who is now speaking about the existence of the soul. He's a cardiologist. I had some correspondence with him, and he admitted, "Swamiji, your people know much more about these things than we know." But there is no question of East and West. It is simply education. Take these boys, for example. Four or five years ago they did not know anything about Kṛṣṇa consciousness. But because they have been educated in the science of *Bhagavad-gītā*, they are now also teaching others about the soul. And they are very sound in their conviction.

Actually, any knowledge—any scientific knowledge—is meant for the whole world. For instance, Professor Einstein discovered the law of relativity, but it is not just for the Western people. It is for the Eastern people also. When there is culture, when there is knowledge, there is no question of Eastern and Western. The Eastern people may know something very nicely, and the Western people may take some time to learn it; or the Western people may know something very nicely, and the Eastern people may take a little time. For example, in order to learn about technology, an Easterner will go to the Western countries to learn how a certain machine works. In India, they are also learning.

So now the time is ripe for us to stop thinking in terms of Eastern and Western. We should be hankering after real knowledge. That is needed. That is the point of unity. Now, for lack of knowledge, the Eastern and Western people are trying to find a solution to the world's problems through the United Nations. But they are unable to do so. My headquarters is in New York. I go to First Avenue, and occasionally I see the United Nations building. But instead of diminishing the number of flags, they're increasing them. They're increasing. Then what is the meaning of this "United Nations"? Big politicians and big learned scholars are speaking. Then why are the nations not united? It is due to
(continued on page 22)



“Global 2000”

Kali-yuga Report to the President

“Is the end near?
Probably not, but we may be wishing it were.”

by HAYAGRĪVA DĀSA

In twenty years, we'll have reached year 2000. Just twenty brief orbits round the sun, five Presidential elections, three total changes in body chemistry. Twenty years fly. Nineteen sixty was but yesterday: President Kennedy elected, U.S. property seized in Cuba, Adolf Eichmann captured, the absurdist end of Albert Camus.

Most of us living today will be alive in year 2000, everything being equal, barring

accidents, diseases, nuclear catastrophes, and so much else that can befall man on this planet.

A recent report to President Carter, however, reveals that a great deal will be happening on this globe between now and 2000. And assuredly, all things will not be “equal.” In the material universe, the old laws hold: You can't win, break even, or even stop playing. As Lord Kṛṣṇa assures

us, this universe is *duḥkhālayam*, a place of misery, and *aśāśvatam*, the place of death.

The State Department and the Council on Environmental Quality have assured President Carter the same. In a 766-page report submitted in early August (1980), the President was informed that the earth and life on it are slowly dying. And that's putting it euphemistically. The outlook is

bleak. The report, entitled "Global 2000," paints a landscape of a wasteland that makes T. S. Eliot's portrait paradisaical.

Due to unwanted population and misuse of natural resources, Mother Earth will hardly be recognizable. Half of the existing forests will be depleted, especially in the tropics, where overpopulated, underdeveloped countries use wood for fires. Burning fuels will raise the carbon dioxide content in the air, triggering climatic changes. We have already witnessed side effects: heat waves, warm winters, snow in June, gigantic hurricanes, droughts, tornadoes, and other scenes from Revelations. Is the end near? Probably not, but we may be wishing it were.

The cities of year 2000 will be the size of nations in bygone eras. Population will increase 55 percent to 6.35 billion, and most of this growth will appear in less developed countries, where it can't be accommodated. The poor will get poorer, and the rich will do all they can to break even. Air pollution and loss of natural habitats will force two million species of plants, birds, insects, and animals to call it quits and disappear. The big demand, of course, will be for food. Unwanted children mean unwanted mouths to feed. Look for more starving children in the Mideast, Latin America, Africa, and Asia. According to the report, "the quantity of food available to the poorest groups of people will simply be insufficient to permit children to reach normal body weight and intelligence."

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam's predictions realized! Eventually, the *Bhāgavatam* tells us, people in our present Kali-yuga, "the Age of Kali," will be twelve inches tall. (We've 427,000 years of Kali's age left.) These physical and mental dwarfs will run about frantically, spawning offspring to eat. Shades of Jonathan Swift.

Underlining these prophecies, the report to the President informs us that *hundreds of millions* of people will go hungry in twenty years. The harvests of arable land will be spreading thinner: although 2.4 acres of land fed 2.6 people in the early 1970s, they will have to support four people by the year 2000. Salt and alkali buildups will also threaten tillable soil with erosion. Sand dunes will replace fertile farms. More hungry, unwanted children crying, diseased, fly-ridden, ignorant, miserable.

Deforestation will cause sufficient catastrophes in the form of floods and droughts. The world's rivers will be destabilized; ground water will be depleted.

There will be lots of money by today's standards, but what will the currency be worth? Mere paper. The per capita gross national product will rise to 11,117 dollars in developed countries and will flounder

at 587 dollars in underdeveloped countries. The gap between poor and rich will widen. Prices for food will be astronomical. The report states: "It is not quite clear how a world economy will function when virtually every one of its major sectors needs a price increase that substantially . . . exceeds overall inflation rates." According to Vedic culture, wealth is figured in terms of cows and grains. In Kali-yuga, it's worthless paper. And demonic machines of destruction—guns, tanks, bombs.

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Avoiding conjecture, the report to the President makes no allowances for war, that great depleter of resources, time, energy, constructive ambition, love.

"'Global 2000' paints an absolutely shocking picture of the world twenty years from now," World Bank president Robert McNamara states. "Unless we act now."

We can recall how well McNamara solved our Vietnam fiasco. And now he talks about managing the world's flow of events, of redirecting the *karma* of six billion souls.

What a world to live in, to bring children into, to die in. And this prognosis is not science fiction. It is based on the logical outcome of current trends; if we simply continue as we are, all this will come to pass.

It's easy to say that if everyone takes to Kṛṣṇa consciousness—or some form of God consciousness—these disasters can be avoided. But we might as well say that if man stopped reproducing, population would drop. It's not in man's nature to turn perfect overnight, or over-yuga.

"There are two classes of beings," Lord

Kṛṣṇa tells us. "The fallible and the infallible. In the material world, every entity is fallible. . . . There is no being existing, either here or among the demigods, [who is] free from the three modes of material nature." (*Bhagavad-gītā*, 15.17, 18.40).

It is man's nature to err, to cheat, to be illusioned, and to be limited. These are our basic defects. If anyone claims not to be so conditioned, he's either illusioned or trying to cheat. This is especially true in Kali-yuga, our present time cycle.

This isn't to say that man is inherently evil. To the contrary, everyone is by nature Kṛṣṇa conscious. It is the Zeitgeist of Kali-yuga that deludes us into mistaking the illusion for reality.

"What appears to be truth without Me is certainly My illusory energy," Lord Kṛṣṇa says, "for nothing can exist without Me. It is like a reflection of real light in the shadows, for in the light there are neither shadows nor reflections."

All the miseries delineated in "Global 2000" are there for a purpose—to make us give up trying to find happiness in the shadows, happiness independent of Kṛṣṇa.

What is misery? Birth is misery. Disease is misery. Old age is misery. Death is misery. No one can claim to be free from these "inconveniences." "From the highest planet in the material world down to the lowest, all are places of misery wherein repeated birth and death take place." (*Bhagavad-gītā*, 8.16) Guaranteed. By Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Mercifully, the Lord has given us an exit—the wisdom of *Bhagavad-gītā*, "knowing which you shall be relieved of the miseries of material existence." (*Gītā*, 9.1) The message of the *Gītā* is frequently reiterated: Render devotional service to Kṛṣṇa under the guidance of *guru*. That is the Vedic way out of the labyrinth of misery that's sure to worsen.

The purpose of ISKCON, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, is to disseminate this knowledge for the benefit of mankind. Whoever's given time to read this article might give a little more time to acquire *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, read it with an open mind, and then think of the direction we're heading in Global 2000.

After reading *Bhagavad-gītā*, come visit us at one of our ISKCON centers to see how we're putting the philosophy of the *Gītā* into daily practice. Our communities may represent a small step, but at least it's in the classical Vedic direction. As Global 2000 approaches, we shall see that our decision to follow Śrī Kṛṣṇa's advice—perhaps difficult at first—is justified.

"In this endeavor there is no loss or diminution, and a little advancement on this path can protect one from the most dangerous type of fear." (*Gītā*, 2.40) ☪

DHARMA

Nature, Duty, and Divine Service

The various meanings of *dharma* reveal a richness of concept and a unique experience.

by GARUḌA DĀSA

The concept of *dharma* is of central importance in Vaiṣṇava (Kṛṣṇa conscious) philosophy and practice. So important is the concept that His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda actually defines the central teaching of Vaiṣṇava philosophy, *bhakti*, in terms of *dharma*. Therefore, if one desires to understand *bhakti*, an understanding of *dharma* is essential. The purpose of this study is to examine the dimensions of *dharma* that contribute to an understanding of the genuine experience of *bhakti*.

The concept of *dharma* is difficult for the Westerner to understand. Many a student and scholar of Indian religion and philosophy has failed to arrive at a full sense of its meaning and has put forward incomplete and faulty interpretations, thus demonstrating *dharma's* seeming foreignness. Because the West has no experience that is the equivalent of *dharma*, we have neither a direct nor adequate English translation of the word. To account for the complexity of this concept, and for the difficulty Westerners have in understanding it, I will analyze the various dimensions of *dharma* as they are exhibited in the extensive writings and translations of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

The Problem of Translation

The various specific meanings of *dharma*, which emerge through the context in which the word is found, reveal the richness of the concept and will gradually introduce us to a unique experience.

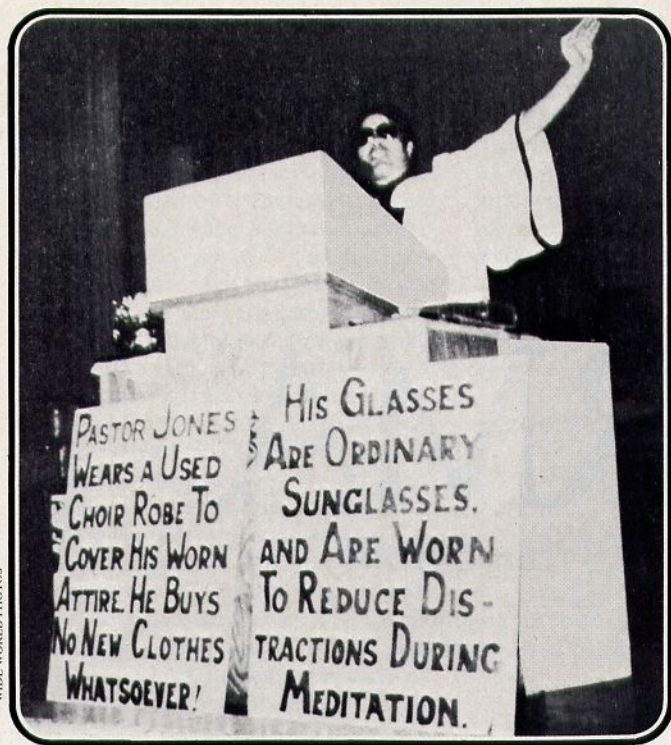
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PETER FRONK/PHOTO RESEARCHERS

Dharma as ordinary religion. When interpreted as *religion* in the common sense of the word, *dharma* refers to one's religious faith, often based on one's birth in a particular community, family, or nation. Although such a faith may change, truly spiritual *dharma* is eternal.

ience. In his writings, Śrīla Prabhupāda often translates *dharma* simply as "religion." But he indicates that he uses this particular translation for convenience and for want of a better single English term, and he expresses dissatisfaction with a translation that could be misleading. In the introduction to his translation of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, Śrīla Prabhupāda notes that the word *religion* "conveys the idea of faith, and faith may change." If a person's



Dharma as false religion. When religion is misused or distorted for personal interests, it is technically called *vidharma*, or antireligious practice. Pictured here is the late Reverend Jim Jones, the founder and leader of Jonestown.

religion can change, then it is not eternal but temporary, and therefore material. Thus in his introduction to the *Gītā*, he cautions the reader that *dharma* translated as “religion” is intended to mean truly spiritual religion, which is eternal, changeless.

At the same time, as Śrīla Prabhupāda also mentions, the word *dharma* does appear sometimes in the traditional Hindu context

of the four *puruṣārthas*, or standard, mundane aims of life: *dharma* (religiosity), *artha* (economic development), *kāma* (sense gratification), and *mokṣa* (liberation). Here Śrīla Prabhupāda translates *dharma* as “mundane religion.” He rejects this sense of *dharma* for the same reason that he objects to the sense of *religion* as “changeable faith.” In his commentary he explains that *dharma* here means simply the pursuit of materialistic interests. The *Gītā* explains that this *dharma* is embraced by one who is *phalākāṅkṣī*, desirous of the fruits of his labor, or by a *rājasī*, a passionate person. *Dharma* in the specific context of the *puruṣārthas* is always temporary and mundane, and so Śrīla Prabhupāda always distinguishes between *dharma* in this context and *dharma* in its other contexts. Religion interpreted as mere “religious faith” is practically the same as *dharma* in the mundane *puruṣārthas* context, and therefore he is careful to distinguish between ordinary religion and genuine *dharma*.

We may also understand *dharma* by examining religion that is considered not *dharma*. Śrīla Prabhupāda describes this kind of irreligion as *kaitava-dharma*, which he translates as “religious activities that are materially motivated.” *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* further qualifies *kaitava-dharma* as five kinds of irreligion, or *vi-dharma*. *Vidharma* refers not just to the materialistic “religion” of the *puruṣārthas*, but to a complete misuse or distortion of religion.

Less ambiguous than the translation “religion” is the translation “religious principles” or “the principles of religion.” Śrīla Prabhupāda uses this translation of *dharma* more frequently. This slightly expanded translation conveys the sense of religion that is unchanging, that is intrinsic to human existence. However, even this translation of *dharma* does not fully reveal the complexity and depth that *dharma* has in the writings of Śrīla Prabhupāda. Although he uses convenient English terms for the purposes of translation, and although the context in which *dharma* is found does surely contribute to its sense, he does not rely on these simple translations to convey the full meaning that *dharma* has in Vaiṣṇava philosophy. The struggle in translation merely gives us a clue as to *dharma*’s profundity. Now let us examine the various ways in which *dharma* functions philosophically in the thought of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

The Ontological Foundation of Dharma

An analysis of *dharma* in terms of its ontological, sociological, and theological dimensions is justified, because the word takes on many prefixes that indicate these levels of meaning. These prefixed meanings also are often implied by the context within which the word *dharma* alone is found. However, we will find that the ontological analysis demonstrates a common denominator in all these meanings of *dharma*, providing an underlying meaning upon which other meanings are built. The ontological, sociological, and theological levels, on which *dharma* functions in intricate ways, are all collapsed into the single word *dharma*. Thus the complexity of the concept can be seen in the various ways in which the word is applied in Vaiṣṇava philosophy.

Śrīla Prabhupāda establishes the ontological foundation of *dharma* first by referring to the word’s etymological root.* He states, “*dharma* refers to that which is constantly existing with the particular object.” He illustrates this point with the metaphor of fire: the constituent qualities of fire are heat and light, without which fire could not exist as fire. “The warmth of fire is inseparable from fire; therefore warmth is called the *dharma*, or nature, of fire.” Thus the *dharma* of the living being is that which is inseparable from him, that which is his essential nature and eternal quality. It is that which “sustains one’s existence.” What, then, is the *dharma* of the living being?

*The verbal root of *dharma* is *dhr*, which may mean “to hold,” “to bear,” “to support,” “to sustain,” and so on.

As Śrīla Prabhupāda explains, the very *dharma* (or essential characteristic and occupation) of the living being is service. “Service” presupposes action, and the *Bhagavad-gītā* states that it is impossible for the living being to cease from action even for a moment. Commenting on this verse, Śrīla Prabhupāda says that “it is the nature of the soul to be always active.” Furthermore, he observes that all actions performed by living beings are ultimately service, and that “every living creature is engaging in the service of something else.” So characteristic is the quality of service that it is seen to be the innate tendency of all living beings, an “essential part of living energy.” Thus “service” is presented as an irreducible quality of life.

It is “service” itself which is the *sanātana-dharma*, or “eternal” religion, of the living entity. In the *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Lord Caitanya states that the *svarūpa*, or constitutional position, of the living being is the rendering of service to God. From this statement, Śrīla Prabhupāda deduces that there is no living being who does not render service, and that at no time does the living being stop rendering service.

If we analyze this statement of Lord Caitanya’s, we can easily see that every living being is constantly engaged in rendering service to another living being. . . . A serves B master, B serves C master, C serves D master, and so on. . . . In this way we can see that no living being is exempt from rendering service to other living beings, and therefore we can safely conclude that service is the constant companion of the living being and that the rendering of service is the eternal religion of the living being.



Dharma as the inherent quality of all beings. The tendency to serve others is natural for life in every species. As heat and light are inseparable from fire, service to others is inseparable from living entities.

The living being's *dharma* of service is not just in relation to other living beings, but is related ultimately to God, or the complete whole. *Dharma* as service refers to that metaphysical position of the living beings as very small parts in relation to God, or the complete whole. If the living being does not consciously participate in, with knowledge of, the complete whole, then his life becomes incomplete:

... living beings are parts and parcels of the complete whole, and if they are severed from the complete whole, the illusory representation of completeness cannot fully satisfy them.

The completeness of human life can be realized only when one

engages in the service of the complete whole. All services in this world—whether social, political, communal, international, or even interplanetary—will remain incomplete until they are dovetailed with the complete whole. When everything is dovetailed with the complete whole, the attached parts and parcels also become complete in themselves.

The incompleteness experienced by living beings indicates that they strive for completeness, and this is achieved through a “dovetailing” of service with the complete whole. The living entity's full and conscious *participation* in activities that harmoniously serve the whole is service.

The Sociological Dimensions of Dharma

The Hierarchical Organization of Human Service

The different types of actions that humans perform are dovetailed with the complete whole through the function of *dharma* in the socio-ethical system called *varṇāśrama-dharma*. This system gradually elevates human beings to conscious participation in the complete whole. Here *dharma* encompasses the full range of human duties and actions in the world in relation to the elevation of the soul to perfection.

Dharma, or “occupational duty,” as Śrīla Prabhupāda most often translates it in the context of *varṇāśrama*, is the organization of the various types of human service for the ultimate aim of perfecting that service characteristic. The principle is that a person attains perfection by performing his proper work. He accomplishes this first by identifying the particular nature of his own service, or *sva-dharma*, according to his particular psychophysical condition and harmoniously accommodating it into the total scheme of a God-centered society.

Service is qualified according to progressive stages of life and principal categories of work. The four stages of life, or *āśramas*, consist of a student stage, a working stage in married life, a stage of withdrawal from both work and household life, and a last stage of complete renunciation. The *varṇas*, which come into play in the second stage of *āśrama* (the household stage), are four basic classes or categories of practical work: the teaching class, the ad-

ministrative and martial class, the professional class, and the working class, which serves the first three classes. The *varṇa* and *āśrama* of a particular person are determined by that person's qualities, or *guṇa*, and by the nature of his past and present activities, or *karma*.

The *varṇāśrama-dharma* is an arrangement of classes of human service according to people's various qualities and activities, which directly reflect various degrees or levels of awareness of the complete whole. Śrīla Prabhupāda explains that “a living being is meant for service activities, and his desires are centered on such a service attitude. . . . The perfection of such a service attitude is attained only by transferring the desire of service from matter to spirit. . . .” As our service becomes gradually directed away from matter toward pure spirit and our desires become completely purified, we progress to higher occupational duties. The different occupational duties indicated by the *varṇas* correspond to different stages of our evolving consciousness of the complete whole. For example, the development of consciousness of the public administrator is greater than that of the professional, and the latter's development of consciousness is greater than that of the simple laborer. The teaching class, or *brāhmaṇa* class, have the most developed consciousness, because to teach they have to realize the complete whole, or Brahman.

The *varṇāśrama-dharma* system presupposes the realities of *karma* and the transmigration of the soul; a person can improve

his human status of activities by performing his proper occupational duties in this life, thereby qualifying himself for higher or more advanced activities in the next human birth. "The system of the *sanātana-dharma* institution is so made that the follower is trained for the better next life without any chance that the human life will be spoiled."

Universal Characteristics of Society

It is important to note that in the above quotation *varṇāśrama-dharma* is called the "*sanātana-dharma* institution." This expresses still another philosophical understanding about *varṇāśrama-dharma*. Here Śrīla Prabhupāda indicates the eternal function of the *varṇāśrama* sociological principle, describing the very *dharma* of human society itself:

No one can stop the system of *varṇa* and *āśrama*, or the castes and divisions. For example, whether or not one accepts the name *brāhmaṇa*, there is a class in society which is known as the intelligent class and which is interested in spiritual understanding and philosophy. Similarly, there is a class of men who are interested in administration and in ruling others. In the Vedic system these martially spirited men are called *kṣatriyas*. Similarly, everywhere there is a class of men who are interested in economic development, business, industry, and making money; they are called *vaiśyas*. And there is another class who are neither intelligent nor martially spirited nor endowed with the capacity for economic development but who simply can serve others. They are called *sūdras*, or the laborer class. This system is *sanātana*—it comes from time immemorial, and it will continue in the same way. There is no power in the world which can stop it.

Because *varṇāśrama-dharma* was created by God, it can never be destroyed, although it may be distorted or perverted, as in the present-day caste system.

Varṇāśrama-dharma is carefully distinguished from the present caste system found in India, where a person's *varṇa* and *āśrama* are decided solely by his birth. At present, even if a person born into a family of laborers acquires the qualities of a learned *brāhmaṇa*, still, according to the present caste system, he must remain a laborer. But Śrīla Prabhupāda states that a person's *varṇāśrama-dharma* must be determined by his present qualities and that such an intelligent person should take up the appropriate *varṇa* despite a familial orientation toward a different *varṇa*. This principle is confirmed in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

The Paradoxical Nature of "Varṇāśrama-dharma"

Although Śrīla Prabhupāda advocates the *varṇāśrama-dharma* system as a means of gradual spiritual advancement, he states that in the present age the perfect practice of *varṇāśrama-dharma* cannot take place:

The purpose of work is to please Viṣṇu. Unfortunately people have forgotten this. *Varṇāśrama-dharma*, the Vedic system of society, is therefore very important in that it is meant to give human beings a chance to perfect their lives by pleasing Kṛṣṇa. Unfortunately, the *varṇāśrama-dharma* system has been lost in this age. . . . Although we may try to revive the perfect *varṇāśrama* system, it is not possible in this age.

Not only is the *varṇāśrama* system impractical for this age, but it is neither entirely nor ultimately necessary: "*Varṇāśrama-dharma* is the systematic institution for advancing in worship of Viṣṇu. However, if one directly engages in the process of devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, it may not be necessary to undergo the disciplinary system of *varṇāśrama-dharma*."

We can transcend *varṇāśrama-dharma* by attaining the goal of *varṇāśrama-dharma*, which is the full and direct service to God. However, transcending *varṇāśrama-dharma* does not necessarily entail the renunciation of the social system. We find that even when the goal of *varṇāśrama-dharma* (knowing and pleasing

God) is reached, the system is still utilized, although the distinctions between services become unnecessary when all the social orders are completely absorbed in satisfying God:

Everyone's aim should be to satisfy the Supreme Personality of Godhead by engaging his mind in thinking always of Kṛṣṇa, his words in always offering prayers to the Lord or preaching about the glories of the Lord, and his body in executing the service required to satisfy the Lord. . . . In executing the prescribed duties of life, no one is higher or lower; there are such divisions as "higher" or "lower," but since there is actually a common interest—to satisfy the Supreme Personality of Godhead—there are no distinctions between them.

The devotee of God (or, the Vaiṣṇava) transcends all service distinctions but retains his position in *varṇāśrama-dharma*, because he is fully satisfying God in that position. Recognizing his particular psychophysical qualities and limitations, he transcends them by engaging them in service to God, thus fulfilling the spiritual purpose of *varṇāśrama-dharma*. Conversely, one who ignores his nature and qualities becomes unconsciously dominated and limited by them, causing his own future bondage in the material world.

Another aspect of transcending *varṇāśrama-dharma* is that once a person is totally purified, he can take up any *varṇa* for the service of God, whereas ordinarily, while still undergoing purification from material conditioning, a person should perform only his own duty. The examples of Paraśurāma and Viśvāmitra are given as examples of those who, though originally of one *varṇa*, at times acted in another *varṇa*.

Varṇāśrama-dharma is rejected in the discussion between Lord Caitanya and Rāmānanda Rāya. Here Lord Caitanya asks about the ultimate goal of life. Rāmānanda Rāya suggests that it is the execution of prescribed duties to awaken God consciousness, and he quotes the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*:

"The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Viṣṇu, is worshiped by the proper execution of prescribed duties in the system of *varṇa* and *āśrama*. There is no other way to satisfy the Supreme Personality of Godhead. One must be situated in the institution of the four *varṇas* and *āśramas*."

Commenting on Lord Caitanya's response to Rāmānanda Rāya, Śrīla Prabhupāda states, "The system of *varṇāśrama* is more or less based on moral and ethical principles. There is very little realization of the Transcendence as such, and Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu rejected it as superficial and asked Rāmānanda Rāya to go further into the matter." It is only when Rāmānanda Rāya suggests the giving up of all occupational duties in order to render service directly to God that Lord Caitanya is satisfied.

Although Lord Caitanya rejected *varṇāśrama* as being external, we know from the *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* that He rigorously upheld the practice of recognizing the *varṇas* and *āśramas* in His own dealings and advocated the maintenance of etiquette between them. This paradox is also found in the *Bhagavad-gītā*: Arjuna is told to take up his position as a warrior and fight in the battle. But at the very climax of Kṛṣṇa's instruction, Arjuna is told to abandon all varieties of *dharma*, or occupational duties, and to come directly to Him as the only shelter. Yet we know from the *Bhagavad-gītā* and the *Mahābhārata's* account of the great war at Kurukṣetra that Arjuna *does* in fact take up his occupation as a warrior and fight the battle. Does this mean Arjuna disregards Kṛṣṇa's paramount instruction to take complete shelter of Him? No, not at all. Arjuna's example epitomizes the paradoxical relationship between the perfect stage of surrender both to God and to occupational duty, to the *dharma* of *varṇāśrama*. We know from Śrīla Prabhupāda's writings that the perfection of *dharma* as religion is complete and utter surrender to God along with complete engagement in service to Him, and that the whole purpose of *varṇāśrama-dharma* is to raise a person gradually to this perfection. But once a person attains this perfection and has given up everything (including all occupational duties) in surrender to

BHARGAVA DASA

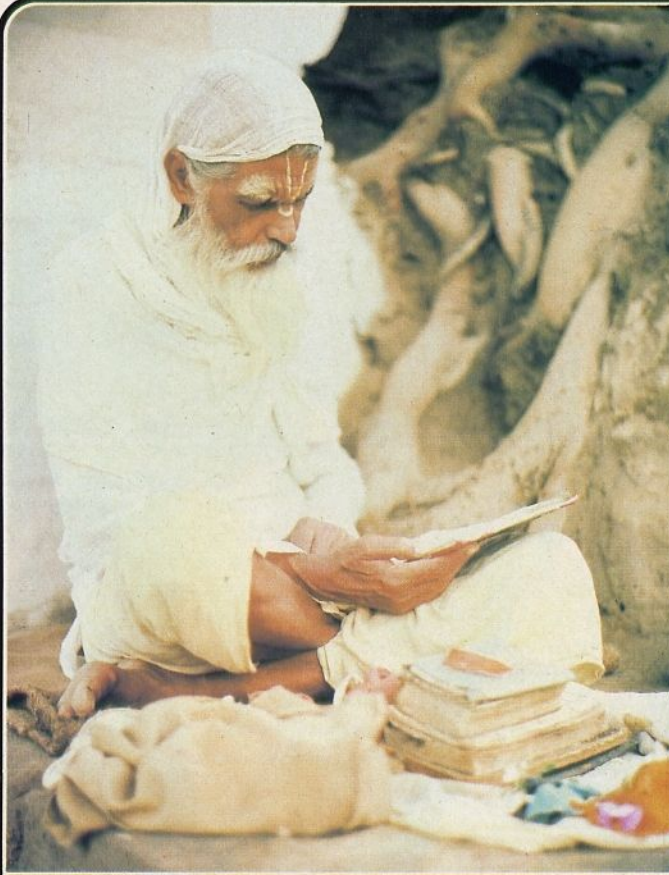
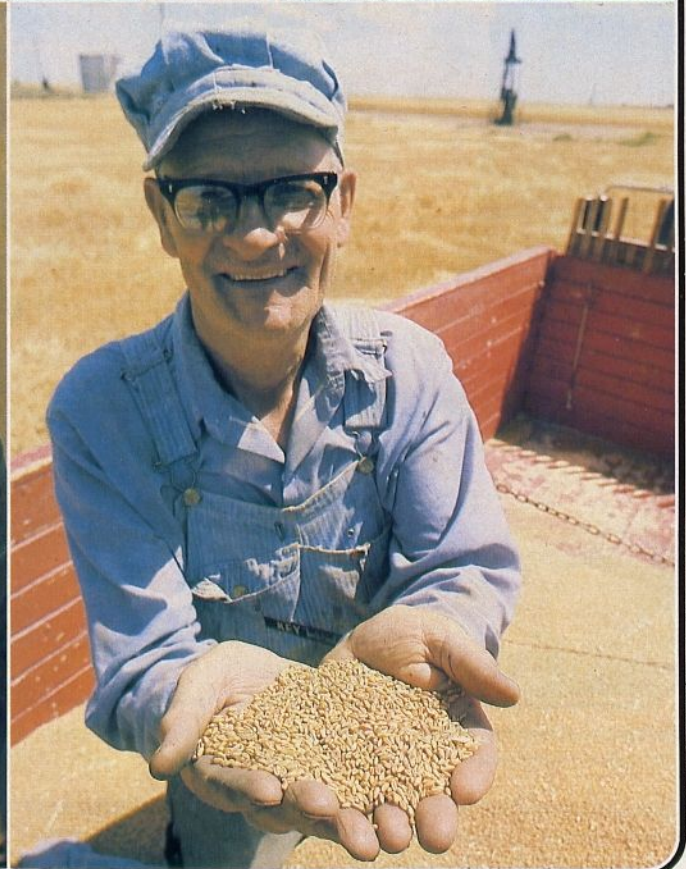
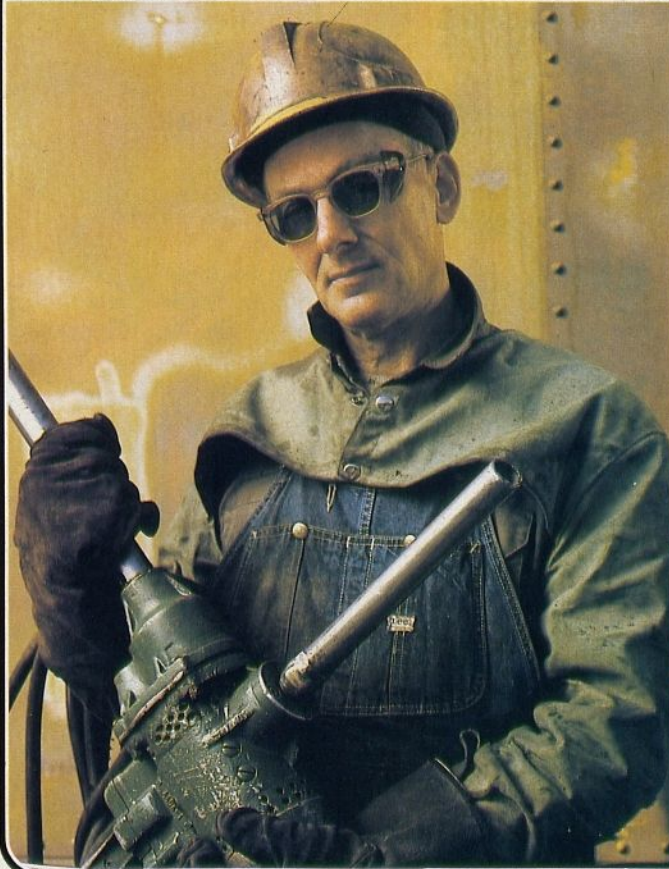


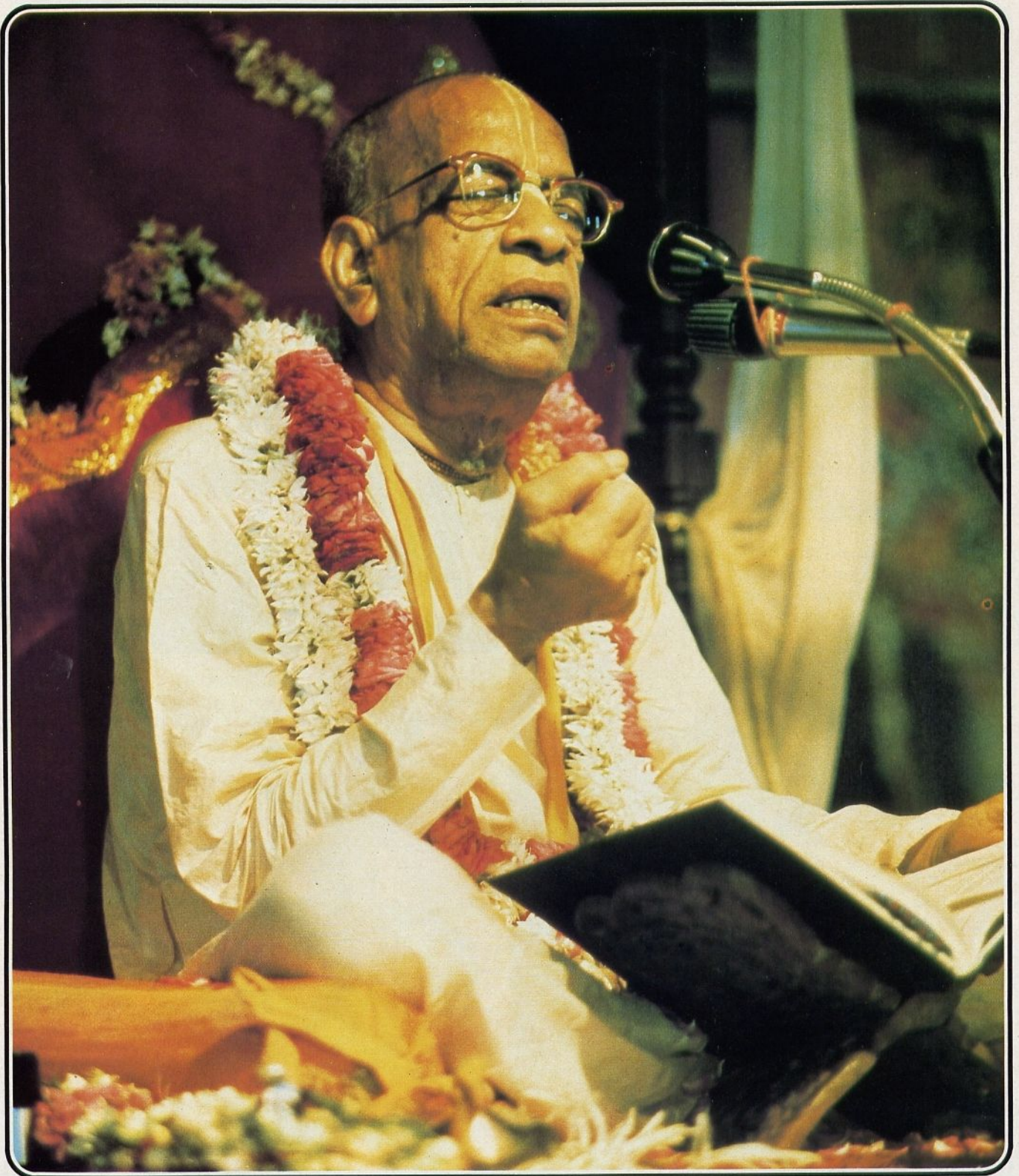
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Dharma as occupational duty. According to their personal qualities and work, people in all societies naturally tend toward four basic kinds of occupations—scholarship and teaching; public administration and the military; farming and business; and crafts and manual labor. The Vedic social system directs these occupational engagements toward service to God. (Unlike the present caste system of India, the Vedic social system assigns duties according to one's qualifications, not merely one's birth.)



Dharma as devotional service to the Supreme Lord. Śrīla Prabhupāda (above) dedicated himself to teaching *bhakti-yoga*, pure devotional service, as the highest expression of *dharma* for all living beings.

God, only then does he have the opportunity of entering back into various positions of *varṇāśrama* for the sole purpose of pleasing and serving God. The principle is that a person must first reject all occupations or *dharmas* for God, and then he must take them up, after he has completely surrendered to God, in order to use them perfectly. Śrīla Prabhupāda calls this “*daiva*”-*varṇāśrama-dharma*.

Thus the *varṇāśrama-dharma* system organizes the full range of human service or activities while a person is still in a materially conditioned state, and it also may organize the various activities performed directly for God. Therefore *varṇāśrama-dharma* is never fully rejected—on the contrary, it is used both for the gradual attainment of spiritual perfection and also for assisting and expressing the direct service of God.

The Theological Dimensions of Dharma

The "Order" of God

We have discussed the ontological dimension of *dharma* as "service," which Śrīla Prabhupāda calls "*sanātana-dharma*." We have also seen in *varṇāśrama-dharma* that the irreducible factor of "service" is qualified according to the natural, universal divisions of life and work, and *dharma* here is "occupational duty." We saw how these qualified states of service, representing different levels of spiritual development and awareness, were organized for the aim of perfecting service, and how, once having perfected service, a person naturally performs his occupational duty to please God. This is called *daiva-varṇāśrama-dharma*, where *dharma* consists of one's "divine service." There is still another sense in which the word *dharma* is used, and this involves its theological dimension.

At a theological level, *dharma* takes on a different sense as "*bhāgavata*"-*dharma*, or the *dharma* of God. According to Śrīla Prabhupāda, *bhāgavata-dharma* offers the "simplest definition" of *dharma*, defining *dharma* as "the order of the Supreme Being." The meaning of *bhāgavata-dharma* is further revealed by a key statement from the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*: *dharmaṁ tu sāksāt bhagavat-praṇītam*. This says that actual *dharma*, or religion, is directly (*sāksāt*) manifested from God. (And that is the literal meaning of *bhāgavata-dharma*.) Thus *dharma* in *bhāgavata-dharma*, as "order," has the distinct character of *śabda-brahma*, or the revelation of God.

Śrīla Prabhupāda repeatedly emphasizes the definition of *dharma* as "the order of God," demonstrating what religion is and what it is not. He insists that "we cannot manufacture *dharma*." He reasons that "no one can manufacture state laws; they are given by the government." Similarly, *dharma* cannot be manufactured, but must be revealed by God. "In *bhāgavata-dharma* there is no question of 'what you believe' and 'what I believe.' Everyone must believe in the Supreme Lord and carry out His orders." It is on the authority of God's "order," or revelation, that *dharma* is based. This kind of *dharma* can be transmitted only by God's representatives.

Bhāgavata-dharma is not sectarian religion; it is that universal religion which shows how *everything* is connected with God. Śrīla Prabhupāda states, "*Bhāgavata-dharma* has no contradictions. Conceptions of 'your religion' and 'my religion' are completely absent from *bhāgavata-dharma*," and therefore one's identity as a "Hindu" or "Christian" or "Buddhist," or whatever, is superficial because these identities do not necessarily mean that one is performing *bhāgavata-dharma*, or fulfilling the order of God. However, Śrīla Prabhupāda accepts the diversity of religions: "Since everyone has a different body and mind, different types of religions are needed." He also explains that different religions exist because of disagreements based on these limited material conceptions and differences. But "the Absolute Truth is one, and when one is situated in the Absolute Truth, there is no disagreement." On the spiritual platform we find no differences or disagreements, simply a "oneness in religion."

Conclusion

Thus we have seen that *dharma* finds its highest expression in *bhakti*, devotional service to God. We have also seen that *bhakti* is defined in terms of *dharma*, precisely because *bhakti* is the perfection of service—and *dharma* indeed does provide the full philosophical backdrop within which the experience of *bhakti* is properly understood. Through an examination of the ontological, sociological, and theological dimensions of *dharma*, we

The "order of God" is defined more specifically as the order to live according to the instruction of God. In the discussion of *bhāgavata-dharma* as supreme religion, verse 18.66 from the *Bhāgavad-gītā* is usually presented, because therein the necessity of "surrender to God" is declared by Kṛṣṇa Himself: *sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja*—"Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me." Śrīla Prabhupāda points out that the word *ekam*, meaning "one," shows that religion is ultimately one. The very unity of religion is realized in *bhakti*, wherein one finds the full realization and perfection of *dharma*.

The Perfection of Service as Bhakti

Bhāgavata-dharma and *sanātana-dharma* meet in *bhakti*. *Bhakti* means the living entity's response to the order or message of God by consciously participating in His plan as an eternal servitor:

Factually we are related to the Supreme Lord in service. The Supreme Lord is the supreme enjoyer, and we living entities are His servitors. We are created for His enjoyment, and if we participate in that eternal enjoyment with the Supreme Personality of Godhead, we become completely happy. . . . It is not possible for the living entity to be happy without rendering transcendental loving service unto the Supreme Lord.

This participation of the living being as an eternal servitor of God is called *yoga*; it consists in the connection of the living entity to the supreme Deity. This connection, or *yoga*, is made possible by the revelation of God, or *bhāgavata-dharma*, which Śrīla Prabhupāda says "captures the presence of the Supreme," and the living being's response of surrender and service to God. This connection is called *bhakti-yoga*.

Many Western scholars, and even many Hindus, translate the word *bhakti* most often as "devotion," and sometimes as "love" or "worship," which themselves are not unacceptable but may render the word ambiguously. Too often the Westerner takes these translations and relegates the experience of *bhakti* either to the mere subjective and emotional or to the realm of peculiar phenomena in the history of religions. But Śrīla Prabhupāda's contrasting translation of *bhakti* as "devotional service" is truly significant, because it indicates that *bhakti* is not an isolated emotional experience, but rather a genuine cognitive experience in direct response to the supreme reality.

It is important to note that in the translation "devotional service," "devotion" is not the primary element, but qualifies the substantive "service." But *bhakti* is not just any service; rather, it is *devotional* service, service that corresponds to the perfection of service itself, or the highest service: *sa vai puṁsām paro dharmo yato bhaktir adhokṣaje*. *Bhakti*, therefore, is the supreme occupation (*paro dharmah*) of the living entity, because it is service performed directly in relation to God (*adhokṣaje*). In the above verse, *bhakti* is correlated with *dharma* in its most essential and highest level. *Bhakti*, indeed, is the essence of *dharma*.

have been able to see how the concept of *dharma* functions in complex ways, signifying an understanding of reality that is profoundly comprehensive and virtually untranslatable, and therefore unfamiliar to the West. In the end, *dharma* as a concept is meant not merely to provide an exercise in philosophical discourse, but to be personally realized—and this is possible through the practice of *bhakti*.

ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA SPEAKS OUT

On Purity and Freedom

The following conversation between His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda and a priest took place in July 1973 in London.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: In our temples there are regular Kṛṣṇa conscious programs so that one may be purified internally and externally. *Yah smaret puṇḍarikākṣam sa bāhyābhyantaraḥ śuciḥ*. If you constantly remember the lotus-eyed Supreme Lord, you automatically become purified, internally and externally, because the Lord is absolute.

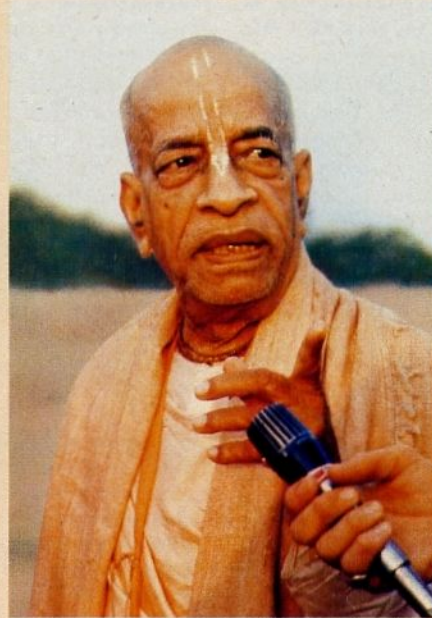
The best way to remember the Lord is to chant His holy name. The Lord and the Lord's name are identical. Because the Lord is absolute, when we chant Hare Kṛṣṇa the name Kṛṣṇa and the person Kṛṣṇa are identical. In the material world, the world of duality, the name is not the same as the substance. If you require water, simply by chanting "water, water" you will not quench your thirst. You require the substance water. But in the spiritual world the Lord and His name are the same thing. If you chant Kṛṣṇa, or any other name of the Lord, that name is identical with the Lord Himself. Therefore, by chanting the holy name of the Lord you are associating with the Lord, and as soon as you associate with the Lord you become purified, because the Lord is all-pure. If you associate with fire, you become warm. Similarly, if you constantly associate with the Lord, you'll remain purified. Therefore, our devotees are always chanting (just as I'm also chanting), or reading some book about Kṛṣṇa, or talking about Kṛṣṇa. In this way we are always connected with Kṛṣṇa, or God, in all our activities. Throughout the whole temple you'll find my disciples engaged in some sort of work that has a connection with Kṛṣṇa. There is no other work. *Nirbandhaḥ kṛṣṇa-sambandhe*. Anything related to God is also godly.

Priest: You see, I don't think that spiritual activities, which are external, can really, in and of themselves, change the internal man.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes. One changes internally and externally. And you can actually see: my disciples here have changed.

Priest: But a person can go to church every Sunday and say he's pure—

Śrīla Prabhupāda: No. Our program is not like that—once every seven days. We are engaged twenty-four hours a day in



Kṛṣṇa's service. Suppose you are washing the floor of the temple. It is not only external; because you are also *thinking* of Kṛṣṇa, you are in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. One may be washing the floor, but he is in pure Kṛṣṇa consciousness. If your full consciousness is only of God, then you will always remain godly. There's no doubt about it. If you make a division—so much for worldly things and so much for God—then you will remain impure. But if you dovetail everything towards the service of the Lord, then everything you do is godly.

Priest: Would you think it possible for a devotee to come to hate Kṛṣṇa?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Hate Kṛṣṇa?

Priest: Yes. Is it possible?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: No. A devotee cannot hate Kṛṣṇa. Then how could he serve Kṛṣṇa?

Priest: He could come to see Kṛṣṇa as too strong, repressive, taking away his freedom, and so he could come to hate Him.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Spiritualism means to sacrifice your freedom for God. That is spiritualism.

Priest: Then why were we created free?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: You are not free. You are *thinking* you're free, but you are not; you are under the stringent laws of nature.

Of course, you are free to some extent, because you are part and parcel of God, who is completely free. Therefore you have minute freedom. You may serve the Lord, or you may not serve Him—that is your freedom. If you serve the Lord you

become happy; if you do not serve the Lord you become unhappy.

Priest: But if I serve the Lord, do I lose that little bit of freedom?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: No, serving the Lord is *real* freedom. For example, my finger is part and parcel of my body. As long as the finger is healthy it serves the body, but if it is full of pain, if it is unhealthy, it cannot serve. Similarly, when a living entity does not serve God, that is his material condition, his unhealthy condition. When he serves God, that is his natural, healthy condition, because he is part and parcel of God.

Priest: When did we lose contact with God?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: When you misused your minute freedom. For example, suppose a small child wishes to become independent of his father and he leaves home and wanders in the streets. He will soon become sick from improper food, being dirty, and so on. He will not remain healthy. Similarly, we must be dependent on God. In your Christian Bible also, you pray, "O God, please give us our daily bread." You are recognizing your dependence on God. So it is better to remain dependent on God than to misuse your little independence. To remain dependent on God is our healthy state. As soon as we declare ourselves independent of God, that is our unhealthy state. This is our philosophy, and your philosophy also.

Priest: Oh, yes, I accept that. But within this world, within the limits of time and space, can't you be a healthy person without admitting your dependence on God?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Our definition of being *healthy* is being God conscious. That is healthy life. Otherwise, do you think that because someone is very strong, that means he is healthy?

Priest: Well, I would say my body can be healthy.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: That is temporary. Everyone is subject to death. You may be very strong and healthy, but you cannot avoid death.

Priest: No.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Therefore, ultimately, whether you are so-called healthy or not healthy, you die. That is a fact. So we do not want that kind of "healthy" life. Our proposition is to go back home, back to Godhead, and remain with God eternally, enjoying blissful life. This is our healthy life.

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 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 SIX

Puruṣa-sūkta Confirmed

As our serialized presentation of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam continues, Lord Brahmā concludes that he should surrender to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, whose glories are limitless. Brahmā then begins to describe to his son and disciple Nārada how Lord Kṛṣṇa creates and then annihilates the cosmos.

PURPORT

(continued from Text 35)

Brahmā, the greatest of all living creatures within the universe, is admitting his failure to know the Supreme Lord despite his vast learning in the Vedic wisdom, despite his austerity, penance, mystic powers and self-realization, and despite being worshiped by the great Prajāpatis, the forefathers of the living entities. So these qualifications are not sufficient to know the Supreme Lord. Brahmājī could understand the Lord to a little extent only when he was trying to serve Him by the eagerness of his heart (*hr̥daukhaṅhyavatā*), which is the devotional service mood. Therefore, the Lord can be known only by the sincere mood of eagerness for service, and not by any amount of material qualification as scientist or speculative philosopher or by attainment of mystic powers. This fact is clearly corroborated in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (18.54–55):

*brahma-bhūtaḥ prasannātmā
na śocati na kāṅkṣati
samaḥ sarveṣu bhūteṣu
mad-bhaktiṁ labhate parām*

*bhaktiā mām abhijānāti
yāvān yaś cāsmi tattvataḥ
tato mām tattvato jñātvā
viśate tad anantaram*

Only self-realization, by attainment of the above high qualifications of Vedic wisdom, austerity, etc., can help one on the path of devotional service. But failing in devotional service, one remains still imperfect because even in that position of self-realization one cannot factually know the Supreme Lord. By self-realization, one is qualified to become a devotee, and the devotee, by service mood (*bhaktiā*) only, can gradually know the Personality of Godhead. One should not, however, misunderstand the import of *viśate* (“enters into”) as referring to merging into the existence of the Supreme. Even in material existence, one is merged in the existence of the Lord. No materialist can disentangle self from matter, for the self is merged in the external energy of the Lord. As no layman can separate butter from milk, no one can extricate the merged self from matter by acquiring some material qualification. This *viśate* by devotion (*bhaktiā*) means to be able to participate in the association of the Lord in person. *Bhakti*, or devotional service to the Lord, means to become free from material entanglement and then to enter into the kingdom of God, becoming one like Him. Losing one’s individuality is

not the aim of *bhakti-yoga* or of the devotees of the Lord. There are five types of liberation, one of which is called *sāyujya-mukti*, or being merged into the existence or body of the Lord. The other forms of liberation maintain the individuality of the particle soul and involve being always engaged in the transcendental loving service of the Lord. The word *viśate*, used in the verses of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, is thus meant for the devotees who are not at all anxious for any kind of liberation. The devotees are satisfied simply in being engaged in the service of the Lord, regardless of the situation.

Lord Brahmā is the first living being, who directly learned the Vedic wisdom from the Lord (*tene brahma hr̥dā ya ādi-kavaye*). Therefore, who can be a more learned Vedāntist than Lord Brahmā? He admits that in spite of his perfect knowledge in the *Vedas*, he was unable to know the glories of the Lord. Since no one can be more than Lord Brahmā, how can a so-called Vedāntist be perfectly cognizant of the Absolute Truth? The so-called Vedāntist, therefore, cannot enter into the existence of the Lord without being trained in the matter of *bhakti-vedānta*, or *Vedānta* plus *bhakti*. *Vedānta* means self-realization, and *bhakti* means realization of the Personality of Godhead, to some extent. No one can know the Personality of Godhead in full, but at least to a certain extent one can know the Absolute Truth, the Personality of Godhead, by self-surrender and a devotional attitude, and by nothing else. In the *Brahma-saṁhitā* also, it is said, *vedeṣu durlabham*, or simply by study of *Vedānta* one can hardly find out the existence of the Personality of Godhead, but the Lord is *adurlabham ātma-bhaktau*, very easily available to His devotee. Śrīla Vyāsadeva, therefore, was not satisfied simply with compiling the *Vedānta-sūtras*, but over and above this, by the advice of his spiritual master, Nārada, he compiled the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in order to understand the real import of *Vedānta*. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* therefore, is the absolute medium by which to understand the Absolute Truth.

TEXT 36

नतोऽस्म्यहं तच्चरणं समीयुषां
भवच्छिदं स्वस्त्ययनं सुमङ्गलम् ।
यो ह्यात्ममायाविभवं स पर्यगाद्
यथा नमः स्वान्तमथापरे कुतः ॥३६॥

*nato 'smy ahaṁ tac-caraṇaṁ samīyūṣāṁ
bhavac-chidam svasty-ayanam suṁgaṅgalam
yo hy ātma-māyā-vibhavaṁ sma paryagād
yathā nabhaḥ svāntam athāpare kutah*

nataḥ—let me offer my obeisances; *asmi*—am; *ahaṁ*—I; *ta*—the Lord’s; *caraṇam*—feet; *samīyūṣāṁ*—of the surrendered soul; *bhavat-chidam*—that which stops repetition of birth and death; *svasti-ayanam*—perception of all happiness; *su-maṅgalam*—all-auspicious; *yaḥ*—one who; *hi*—exactly; *ātma-māyā*—personal energies; *vibhavam*—potency; *sma*—certainly; *paryagāt*—cannot estimate; *yathā*—as much as; *nabhaḥ*—the sky; *sva-antam*—its own limit; *atha*—therefore; *apare*—others; *kutaḥ*—how.

TRANSLATION

Therefore it is best for me to surrender unto His feet, which alone can deliver one from the miseries of repeated birth and death. Such surrender is all-auspicious and allows one to perceive all happiness. Even the sky cannot estimate the limits of its own expansion. So what can others do when the Lord Himself is unable to estimate His own limits?

PURPORT

Lord Brahmā, the greatest of all learned living beings, the greatest sacrificer, the greatest observer of the austere life, and the greatest self-realized mystic, advises us, as the supreme spiritual master of all living beings, that one should simply surrender unto the lotus feet of the Lord in order to achieve all success, even up to the limit of being liberated from the miseries of material life and being endowed with all-auspicious spiritual existence. Lord Brahmā is known as the *pūtāmaha*, or the father's father. A young man consults his experienced father about discharging his duties. So the father is naturally a good advisor. But Lord Brahmā is the father of all fathers. He is the father of the father of Manu, who is the father of mankind all over the universal planets. Therefore the men of this insignificant planet should kindly accept the instruction of Brahmājī and would do well to surrender unto the lotus feet of the Lord rather than try to estimate the length and breadth of the Lord's potencies. His potencies are immeasurable, as confirmed in the *Vedas*. *Parāsyā śaktir vividhaiva śrūyate svābhāviki jñāna-bala-kriyā ca* (*Śvetāśvatara Up.* 6.8). He is the greatest of all, and all others, even the greatest of all living beings, namely Brahmājī, admits that the best thing for us is to surrender unto Him. Therefore only those persons with a very poor fund of knowledge claim that they themselves are lords of all that they survey. And what can they survey? They cannot survey even the length and breadth of a small sky in one small universe. The so-called material scientist says that he would need to live forty thousand years to reach the highest planet of the universe, being carried by a sputnik. This is also utopian because no one can be expected to live forty thousand years. Besides, when the space pilot returned from his travel, none of his friends would be present to receive him back as the greatest astronaut, as has become fashionable for modern bewildered scientific men. One scientific man, who had no belief in God, was very much enthusiastic in making plans for his material existence and therefore opened a hospital to save the living. But after opening the hospital, he himself died within six months. So one should not spoil his human life, which is obtained after many, many changes of bodies in 8,400,000 species of life, simply for the concocted material happiness of life through increasing artificial needs in the name of advancement of economic development and scientific knowledge. Rather, one should simply surrender unto the feet of the Lord to make a solution to all miseries of life. That is the instruction of Lord Kṛṣṇa directly in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, and that is the instruction of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* by Brahmājī, the supreme father of all living beings.

Anyone denying this surrendering process as recommended both in the *Bhagavad-gītā* and in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*—and, for that matter, in all authorized scriptures—will be forced to surrender unto the laws of material nature. The living entity, by his constitutional position, is not independent. He must surrender, either unto the Lord or unto material nature. Material nature is also not independent of the Lord, since the Lord Himself has claimed material nature as *mama māyā*, or "My energy" (Bg. 7.14), and as *me bhinnā prakṛtir aṣṭadhā*, or "My separated energy in eight divisions" (Bg. 7.4). Therefore material nature is also controlled by the Lord, as He has claimed in *Bhagavad-gītā* (9.10). *Mayādhyakṣeṇa prakṛtiḥ sūyate sacarācaram*: "Under My direction only is material nature working, and thus are all things moving." And the living entities, being superior energy to matter, have choice and discrimination either to surrender unto the Lord or to surrender unto material nature. By surrendering unto the Lord, one is happy and liberated, but by surrendering unto material nature the living entity suffers. So the

end of all suffering means surrendering unto the Lord because the surrendering process itself is *bhava-chedam* (liberation from all material miseries), *svasty-ayanam* (perception of all happiness), and *sumāṅgalam* (the source of everything auspicious).

Therefore liberty, happiness and all good fortune can be attained only by surrendering unto the Lord because He is full liberty, full happiness and full auspiciousness. Such liberation and happiness are also unlimited, and they have been compared to the sky, although such liberation and happiness are infinitely greater than the sky. In our present position we can simply understand the magnitude of greatness when it is compared to the sky. We fail to measure the sky, but the happiness and liberty obtained in association with the Lord are far greater than the sky. That spiritual happiness is so great that it cannot be measured, even by the Lord Himself, not to speak of others.

It is said in the scriptures, *brahma-saukhyam tv anantam*: spiritual happiness is unlimited. Here it is said that even the Lord cannot measure such happiness. This does not mean that the Lord cannot measure it and is therefore imperfect in that sense. The actual position is that the Lord can measure it, but the happiness in the Lord is also identical with the Lord on account of absolute knowledge. So the happiness derived from the Lord may be measured by the Lord, but the happiness increases again, and the Lord measures it again, and then again the happiness increases more and more, and the Lord measures it more and more, and as such there is eternally a competition between increment and measurement, so much so that the competition is never stopped, but goes on unlimitedly *ad infinitum*. Spiritual happiness is *ānandāmbudhi-varḍhanam*, or the ocean of happiness which increases. The material ocean is stagnant, but the spiritual ocean is dynamic. In the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, (*Ādi-līlā*, Fourth Chapter) Kaviṛāja Gosvāmī has very nicely described this dynamic increment of the ocean of spiritual happiness in the transcendental person of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, the pleasure potency of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

TEXT 37

नाहं न यूयं यदतां गतिं विदु-
र्न वामदेवः किमुतापरे सुराः ।
तन्मायया मोहितबुद्ध्यस्त्विदं
विनिर्मितं चात्मसमं विचक्ष्महे ॥३७॥

*nāhaṁ na yūyaṁ yad-ātāṁ gatiṁ vidur-
na vāmadevaḥ kim utāpare surāḥ
tan-māyayā mohita-buddhayaḥ tv idaṁ
vinirmitaṁ cātma-samaṁ vicakṣmahe*

na—neither; *ahaṁ*—I; *yūyaṁ*—all you sons; *yat*—whose; *ātāṁ*—factual; *gatiṁ*—movements; *viduḥ*—do know; *na*—nor; *vāmadevaḥ*—Lord Śiva; *kim*—what; *uta*—else; *apare*—others; *surāḥ*—demigods; *tat*—by His; *māyayā*—by the illusory energy; *mohita*—bewildered; *buddhayaḥ*—with such intelligence; *tu*—but; *idaṁ*—this; *vinirmitaṁ*—what is created; *ca*—also; *ātma-samaṁ*—by dint of one's personal ability; *vicakṣmahe*—observe.

TRANSLATION

Since neither Lord Śiva nor you nor I could ascertain the limits of spiritual happiness, how can other demigods know it? And because all of us are bewildered by the illusory external energy of the Supreme Lord, we can see only this manifested cosmos according to our individual ability.

PURPORT

We have many times mentioned the names of twelve selected authorities (*dvādaśa-mahājana*), of which Brahmā, Nārada and Lord Śiva head the list as the first, second and third in order of merit of those who know something of the Supreme Lord. Other demigods, semi-demigods,

Gandharvas, Cāraṇas, Vidyādhara, human beings or *asuras* cannot possibly know fully about the potencies of the Absolute Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The demigods, semi-demigods, Gandharvas, etc., are all highly intelligent persons in the upper planets, the human beings are inhabitants of the intermediate planets, and the *asuras* are inhabitants of the lower planets. All of them have their respective conceptions and estimations of the Absolute Truth, as does the scientist or the empiric philosopher in human society. All such living entities are creatures of the material nature, and consequently they are bewildered by the wonderful display of the three modes of material nature. Such bewilderment is mentioned in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (7.13). *Tribhir guṇamayair bhāvair ebhiḥ sarvaṃ idaṃ jagat*: every entity, beginning from Brahmā down to the ant, is individually bewildered by the three modes of material nature, namely goodness, passion and ignorance. Everyone thinks, in terms of individual capacity, that this universe, which is manifested before us, is all in all. And so the scientist in the human society of the twentieth century calculates the beginning and end of the universe in his own way. But what can the scientists know? Even Brahmā himself was once bewildered, thinking himself the only one Brahmā favored by the Lord, but later on, by the grace of the Lord, he came to know that there are innumerable more powerful Brahmās as well, in far bigger universes beyond this universe, and all of these universes combined together form *ekapād-vibhūti*, or one fourth of the manifestation of the Lord's creative energy. The other three fourths of His energy are displayed in the spiritual world, and so what can the tiny scientist with a tiny brain know of the Absolute Personality of Godhead, Lord Kṛṣṇa? The Lord says, therefore, *mohitaṃ nābhijānāti mām ebhyaḥ param avyayam*: bewildered by such modes of material nature, they cannot understand that beyond these manifestations is a Supreme Person who is the absolute controller of everything. Brahmā, Nārada and Lord Śiva know about the Lord to a considerable extent, and therefore one should follow the instructions of these great personalities instead of being satisfied with a tiny brain and its playful discoveries such as spacecraft and similar products of science. As the mother is the only authority to identify the father of a child, so the mother *Vedas*, presented by the recognized authority such as Brahmā, Nārada or Śiva, is the only authority to inform us about the Absolute Truth.

TEXT 38

यस्यावतारकर्माणि गायन्ति ह्यसदादयः ।
न यं विदन्ति तच्चेन तस्मै भगवते नमः ॥३८॥

yasyāvatāra-karmāṇi
gāyanti hy asmat-ādayaḥ
na yaṃ vidanti tattvena
tasmai bhagavate namaḥ

yasya—whose; *avatāra*—incarnation; *karmāṇi*—activities; *gāyanti*—chant in glorification; *hi*—indeed; *asmat-ādayaḥ*—persons like us; *na*—do not; *yaṃ*—whom; *vidanti*—know; *tattvena*—cent percent as He is; *tasmai*—unto Him; *bhagavate*—unto the Personality of Godhead Śrī Kṛṣṇa; *namaḥ*—respectful obeisances.

TRANSLATION

Let us offer our respectful obeisances unto that Supreme Personality of Godhead, whose incarnations and activities are chanted by us for glorification, though He can hardly be fully known as He is.

PURPORT

It is said that the transcendental name, form, quality, pastimes, paraphernalia, personality, etc., cannot possibly be perceived by the gross materialistic senses. But when the senses are purified by the process of hearing, chanting, remembering, and worshiping the lotus feet of the holy Deity, etc., the Lord reveals Himself proportionately to the advancement of the quality of devotional service (*ye yathā māṃ*

prapadyante). One should not expect the Lord to be an order-supplying agent who must be present before us as soon as we desire to see Him. We must be ready to undergo the prescribed devotional duties, following the path shown by the predecessors in the disciplic succession from Brahmā, Nārada and similar authorities. As the senses are progressively purified by bona fide devotional service, the Lord reveals His identity according to the spiritual advancement of the devotee. But one who is not in the line of devotional service can hardly perceive Him simply by calculations and philosophical speculations. Such a hard worker can present a jugglery of words before an audience, but can never know the Supreme Personality of Godhead in His personal feature. The Lord has clearly stated in the *Bhagavad-gītā* that one can know Him only by devotional service. No one can know the Lord by any puffed-up material process of challenge, but the humble devotee can please the Lord by his earnest devotional activities. Thus the Lord reveals Himself proportionately before the devotee. Lord Brahmā therefore offers his respectful obeisances as a bona fide spiritual master and advises us to follow the process of *śravaṇa* and *kīrtana*. Simply by this process, or simply by hearing and chanting the glories of the activities of the Lord's incarnation, one can certainly see within himself the identity of the Lord. We have already discussed this subject in volume one of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, in connection with this verse:

tac chraddadhānā munayo
jñāna-vairāgya-yuktayā
paśyanty ātmani cātmānaṃ
bhaktiyā śruta-grhītayā
(Bhāg. 1.2.12)

The conclusion is that one cannot know the Supreme Personality of Godhead fully by any method, but He can be seen and felt partially by the devotional service process of hearing, chanting, etc.

TEXT 39

स एष आद्यः पुरुषः कल्पे कल्पे सृजत्यजः ।
आत्मात्मन्यात्मनात्मानं स संयच्छति पाति च ॥३९॥

sa eṣa ādyaḥ puruṣaḥ
kalpe kalpe sṛjaty ajaḥ
ātmātmanyā ātmātmānaṃ
sa saṃyacchati pāti ca

saḥ—He; *eṣaḥ*—the very; *ādyaḥ*—the original Personality of Godhead; *puruṣaḥ*—the Mahā-Viṣṇu incarnation, a plenary portion of Govinda, Lord Kṛṣṇa; *kalpe kalpe*—in each and every millennium; *sṛjati*—creates; *ajaḥ*—the unborn; *ātmā*—self; *ātmani*—upon the self; *ātmāna*—by His own self; *ātmānaṃ*—own self; *saḥ*—He; *saṃyacchati*—absorbs; *pāti*—maintains; *ca*—also.

TRANSLATION

That supreme original Personality of Godhead, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, expanding His plenary portion as Mahā-Viṣṇu, the first incarnation, creates this manifested cosmos, but He is unborn. The creation, however, takes place in Him, and the material substance and manifestations are all Himself. He maintains them for some time and absorbs them into Himself again.

PURPORT

The creation is nondifferent from the Lord, and still He is not in the creation. This is explained in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (9.4) as follows:

mayā tatam idaṃ sarvaṃ
jagad avyakta-mūrtinā
mat-sthāni sarva-bhūtāni
na cāhaṃ teṣv avasthitaḥ

The impersonal conception of the Absolute Truth is also a form of the Lord called *avyakta-mūrti*. *Mūrti* means "form," but because His impersonal feature is inexplicable to our limited senses, He is the *avyakta-mūrti* form, and in that inexplicable form of the Lord the whole creation is resting; or, in other words, the whole creation is the Lord Himself, and the creation is also nondifferent from Him, but simultaneously He, as the original Personality of Godhead Śrī Kṛṣṇa, is aloof from the created manifestation. The impersonalist gives stress to the impersonal form or feature of the Lord and does not believe in the original personality of the Lord, but the Vaiṣṇavas accept the original form of the Lord, of whom the impersonal form is merely one of the features. The impersonal and personal conceptions of the Lord are existing simultaneously, and this fact is clearly described both in the *Bhagavad-gītā* and in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and also in other Vedic scriptures. Inconceivable to human intelligence, the idea must simply be accepted on the authority of the scriptures, and it can only be practically realized by the progress of devotional service unto the Lord, and never by mental speculation or inductive logic. The impersonalists depend more or less on inductive logic, and therefore they always remain in darkness about the original Personality of Godhead Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Their conception of Kṛṣṇa is not clear, although everything is clearly mentioned in all the Vedic scriptures. A poor fund of knowledge cannot comprehend the existence of an original personal form of the Lord when He is expanded in everything. This imperfectness is due, more or less, to the material conception that a substance distributed widely in parts can no longer exist in the original form.

The original Personality of Godhead (*ādyah*), Govinda, expands Himself as the Mahā-Viṣṇu incarnation and rests in the Causal Ocean, which He Himself creates. The *Brahma-saṁhitā* (5.47) confirms this as follows:

*yah kāraṇārṇava-jale bhajati sma yoga-
nidrām ananta-jagad-aṇḍa-saroma-kūpaḥ
ādhāra-śaktim avalambya parām sva-mūrtim
govindam ādi-puruṣam tam ahaṁ bhajāmi*

Lord Brahmājī says in his *Brahma-saṁhitā*, "I worship the primeval Lord Govinda, who lies down in the Causal Ocean in His plenary portion as Mahā-Viṣṇu, with all the universes generating from the pores of hair on His transcendental body, and who accepts the mystic slumber of eternity."

So this Mahā-Viṣṇu is the first incarnation in the creation, and from Him all the universes are generated and all material manifestations are produced, one after another. The Causal Ocean is created by the Lord as the *mahat-tattva*, as a cloud in the spiritual sky, and is only a part of His different manifestations. The spiritual sky is an expansion of His personal rays, and He is the *mahat-tattva* cloud also. He lies down and generates the universes by His breathing, and again, by entering into each universe as Garbhodakaśāyī Viṣṇu, He creates Brahmā, Śiva and many other demigods for maintenance of the universe and again absorbs the whole thing into His person as confirmed in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (9.7):

*sarva-bhūtāni kaunteya
prakṛtiṁ yānti māmikām
kalpa-kṣaye punas tāni
kalpādaḥ viśrjāmy aham*

"O son of Kuntī, when the *kalpa*, or the duration of the life of Brahmā, is ended, then all the created manifestations enter into My *prakṛti*, or energy, and again, when I desire, the same creation takes place by My personal energy."

The conclusion is that these are all but displays of the Lord's inconceivable personal energies, of which no one can have any full information. This point we have already discussed.

TEXTS 40-41

विशुद्धं केवलं ज्ञानं प्रत्यक् सम्यगवस्थितम् ।
सत्यं पूर्णमनाद्यन्तं निर्गुणं नित्यमद्वयम् ॥४०॥
ऋषे विदन्ति मुनयः प्रशान्तात्मेन्द्रियाशयाः ।
यदा तदेवासत्तर्कैस्तिरोधीयेत विप्लुतम् ॥४१॥

*viśuddham kevalam jñānam
pratyak samyag avasthitam
satyaṁ pūrṇam anādy-antaṁ
nirguṇam nityam advayam*

*ṛṣe vidanti munayaḥ
praśāntātmendriyāśayāḥ
yadā tad evāsat-tarkais
tirodhiyeta viplutam*

viśuddham—without any material tinge; *kevalam*—pure and perfect; *jñānam*—knowledge; *pratyak*—all-pervading; *samyak*—in fullness; *avasthitam*—situated; *satyaṁ*—truth; *pūrṇam*—absolute; *anādi*—without any beginning; *antaṁ*—and so also without any end; *nirguṇam*—devoid of material modes; *nityam*—eternal; *advayam*—without any rival; *ṛṣe*—O Nārada, O great sage; *vidanti*—they can only understand; *munayaḥ*—the great thinkers; *praśānta*—pacified; *ātma*—self; *indriya*—senses; *āśayāḥ*—sheltered; *yadā*—while; *tat*—that; *eva*—certainly; *asat*—untenable; *tarkaiḥ*—arguments; *tiraḥ-dhiyeta*—disappears; *viplutam*—distorted.

TRANSLATION

The Personality of Godhead is pure, being free from all contaminations of material tinges. He is the Absolute Truth and the embodiment of full and perfect knowledge. He is all-pervading, without beginning or end, and without rival. O Nārada, O great sage, the great thinkers can know Him when completely freed from all material hankerings and when sheltered under undisturbed conditions of the senses. Otherwise, by untenable arguments, all is distorted, and the Lord disappears from our sight.

PURPORT

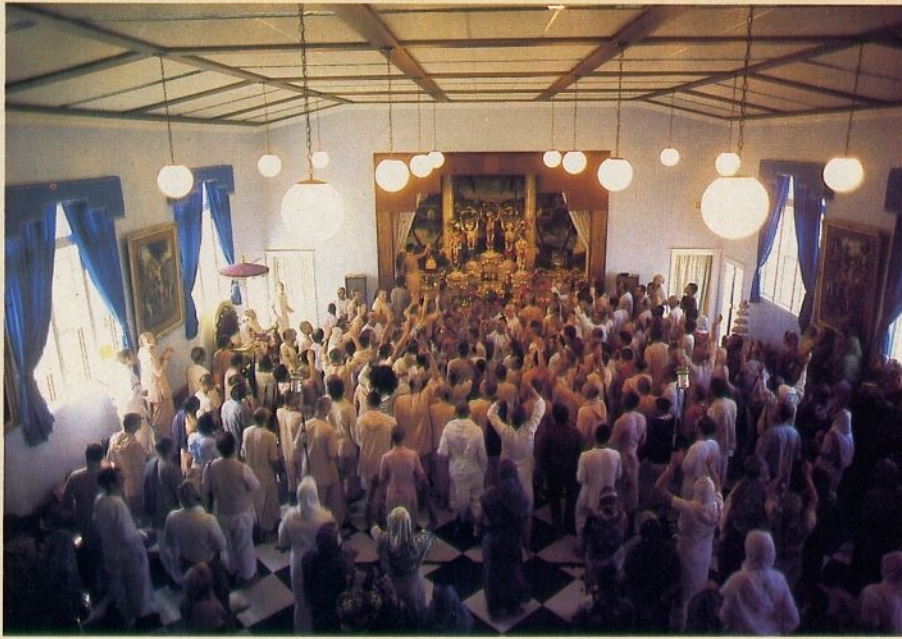
Here is an estimation of the Lord apart from His transcendental activities in the temporary, material creations. Māyāvāda philosophy tries to designate the Lord as contaminated by a material body when He accepts forms of incarnation. This sort of interpolation is completely denied herein by the explanation that the Lord's position is pure and unalloyed in all circumstances. According to Māyāvāda philosophy, the spirit soul, when covered by nescience, is designated as *jīva*, but when freed from such ignorance or nescience he merges in the impersonal existence of the Absolute Truth. But here it is said that the Lord is eternally the symbol of full and perfect knowledge. This is His speciality: perpetual freedom from all material contaminations. This distinguishes the Lord from the individual, common living entities who have the aptitude for being subordinated by nescience and thus becoming materially designated. In the *Vedas* it is said that the Lord is *viñānam ānandam*, full of bliss and knowledge. The conditioned souls are never to be compared to Him because such individual souls have the tendency to become contaminated.

(continued in next issue)



Every Town and Village

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



Devotees celebrate the opening of the new Hare Kṛṣṇa temple in Laguna Beach, California.

New Laguna Beach Temple Opens

Laguna Beach, California—Some three hundred devotees from the American West Coast recently celebrated the opening of the new Hare Kṛṣṇa temple in this southern California oceanside town. With colorful ceremonies, they installed five-foot-high Deity forms of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu (Lord Kṛṣṇa's incarnation for the present age) and His four principal associates. These are the first such Deities in the continental United States. (They appear on the cover of this month's BACK TO GODHEAD.) The celebrations included a procession through the main streets of the city and a bountiful vegetarian feast for guests and devotees alike.

"We want this temple to be known as a place of pilgrimage for devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa and as a site of ecstatic festivals for the people of this town," said Śrīla Rāmeśvara Swami, who oversees the programs of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement in the American Southwest. The Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees have had a small center in Laguna Beach for ten years.

The opening of the new temple represents a victory for the Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees in a controversy that began when they acquired the building in 1977. City officials had contended that the new property, formerly a Christian church, was no longer zoned for religious use. But

after some advice from the city attorney, the city council changed its mind and allowed renovation to proceed. Devotee carpenters and builders then transformed the abandoned church into a showpiece for Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Australian VIPs Applaud Kṛṣṇa Conscious Banquet



Mayor Paul Dahan of South Melbourne congratulates Balarāma dāsa (left), president of Melbourne's Hare Kṛṣṇa center, at banquet catered by devotees.

South Melbourne, Australia—The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement has won official accolades for a banquet it catered at Town Hall for the Mayor, the local State Member of Parliament, five other mayors,

and thirty-five other guests.

Mayor Dahan of South Melbourne wrote the Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees:

"I wish to convey my thanks for the outstanding catering done by the ISKCON team at my reception.

"Two years ago, I was horrified to learn from my eldest son that he had partaken of some food prepared by the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. After further discussion, however, and an assurance that he had not been drugged or poisoned, I was happy to learn that he had actually acquired some ideas on food science.

"Thanks to your magazine and the benefit of discussion with you, I no longer have the prejudice caused by superstition and lack of knowledge.

"I received a great deal of pleasure in bringing to the attention of my guests that the attractive display of food was prepared without the use of any meat, fish or eggs.

"They were all delighted with the food and deeply appreciated your decision to donate the costs of catering to the South Melbourne Community Chest.

"I look forward to obtaining your services on a future occasion.

"Yours respectfully,
Paul Dahan
Mayor of South Melbourne"

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 Nārāyaṇa		
Vaiṣṇava Month of Mādhava		
January 25	January 26	January 28
Appearance of Śrīla Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī.	Disappearance of Śrīla Jayadeva Gosvāmī.	Disappearance of Śrīla Locanadāsa Thākura.
January 31	February 9	
Śat-tīlā Ekādāśī (fasting from grains and beans).	Appearance of Śrī Viṣṇuprīyadevī, Śrīla Puṇḍarikā Vidyānīhī, Śrīla Raghunāthadāsa Gosvāmī, and Śrīla Raghunānanda Thākura. Disappearance of Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Thākura.	
February 11	February 13	February 14
Appearance of Śrī Advaita Ācārya.	Disappearance of Śrīpāda Madhvācārya.	Appearance of Śrīla Rāmānūjācārya.
February 15		
Bhaimī Ekādāśī. Śrī Śrī Varāh Mahādvādāśī (fasting).		

THE KṚṢṆA CONSCIOUS VISION OF SPIRITUAL EQUALITY

An enlightened person sees with equal vision a learned scholar, a cow, an elephant, a dog, and a dog-eater.

by JAYĀDVAITA SWAMI

Attempts to establish equality among all people are naïve and superficial unless supported by spiritual understanding. Materially, we are not equal. Some people are geniuses; others are fools. Materially, the rule is not unity but diversity. Ours is a world of diverse bodies, diverse faces.

And it is in terms of these diversities that we think of our selves. We think, "I am a man" or "I am a woman." "I am black" or "I am white." "I am tall" or "I am short." "I am an American" or "I am a Russian." We think in terms of temporary designations, temporary roles.

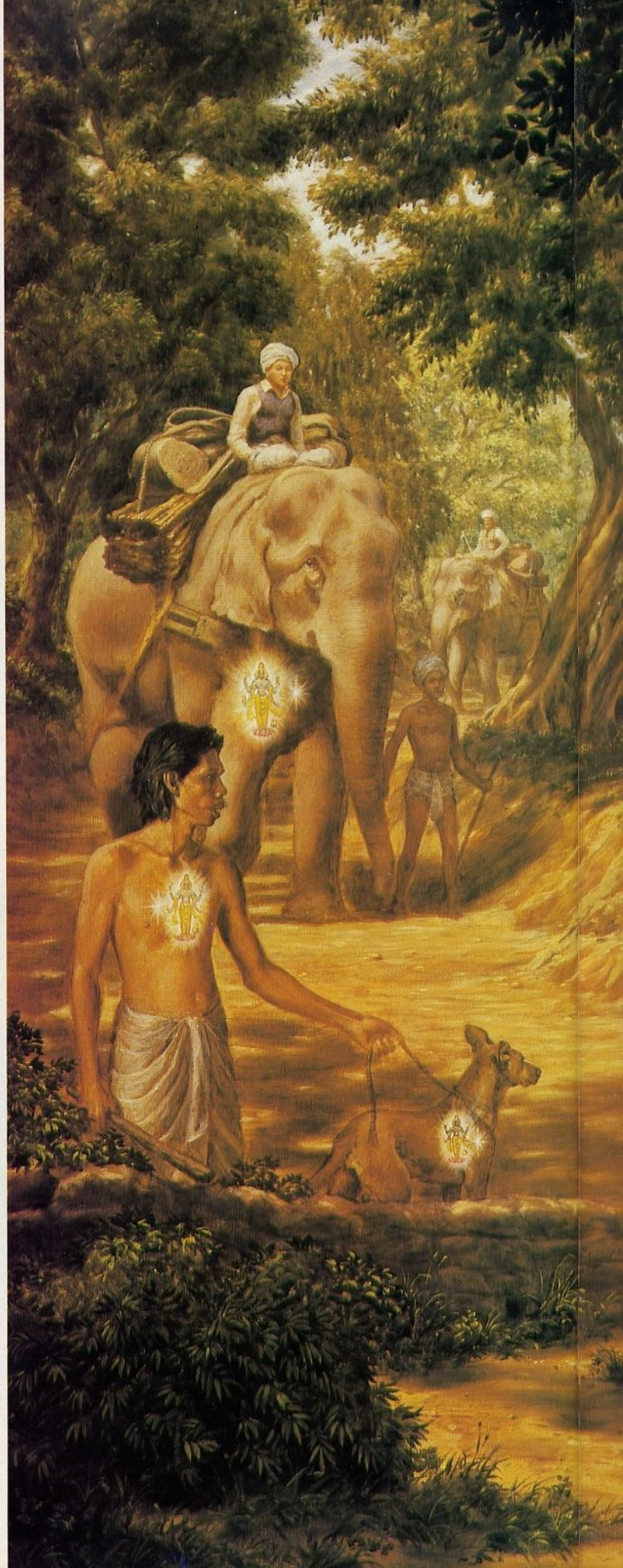
Within the limits of our categories, we strive for unity. Americans United. Women United. Workers United. And those who are broadminded seek to go beyond the small and petty and reach out to a greater oneness, the oneness of all humanity.

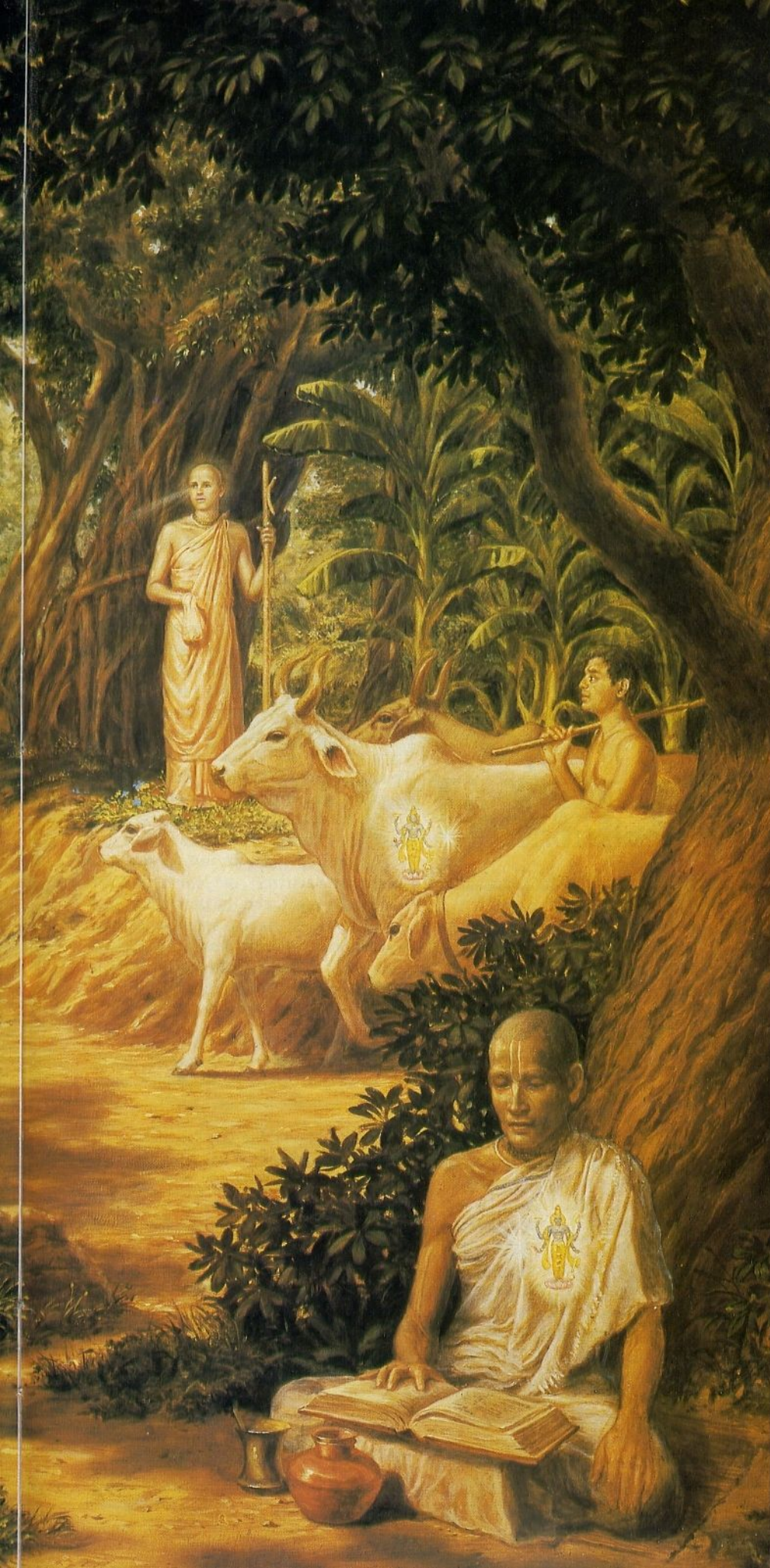
Yet even this human oneness is limited. It is but a larger "in" group, from which other living beings—animals and plants, for example—are excluded.

In Kṛṣṇa consciousness, however, one sees all living beings equally because one sees who they really are. Kṛṣṇa consciousness begins on the spiritual platform, with the understanding that I am not the body but the consciousness within the body. The external body is not the real self—the true self is the spark of consciousness within the body. It is that conscious spark that illuminates one's entire body with life. Indeed, life *is* consciousness; the body is but the house in which consciousness dwells for some time; it is a temporary garment for the eternally conscious self.

Spiritual realization, therefore, begins with awakening from one's bodily false ego to one's real identity as the spiritual soul within the body. This spiritual insight gives one the enlightened vision with which to see other living beings in their true identities also.

The enlightened person no longer sees other beings in terms of their temporary, material coverings. He no longer thinks in superficial stereotypes and designations. Rather, he sees everyone to be a spiritual spark of consciousness, in quality one with himself.





Consciousness is the same everywhere. It always has the same qualities—the qualities of perception, of understanding, of desire—regardless of the body in which it appears. A Russian may think or feel himself different from an American, but the essential nature of their thoughts and feelings is the same. As light is of one quality although it appears different when it shines through glass of varied colors, consciousness is the same in all living beings, although it manifests itself differently because of the varied bodies in which it dwells. This consciousness within the body is the real self.

A Kṛṣṇa conscious person, therefore, gives more importance to the self within and less to the outward body. So although he recognizes material variety, he understands the unity behind it.

According to *Bhagavad-gītā*, the basic book of knowledge for Kṛṣṇa consciousness, a self-realized person sees all living beings equally. In India, the highest men among the social classes are the *brāhmaṇas*, or those whose intellect is sharp and refined, whereas the lowest of men are those whose habits are unclean and who live by eating dogs. But although not blind to the outward differences between the *brāhmaṇa* and the dog-eater, a Kṛṣṇa conscious person sees that both are essentially the same, because each of them is a spiritual soul, an embodied spark of consciousness.

The Kṛṣṇa conscious person sees with this spiritual vision not only other human beings but also the lower species of life. In India, cows are loved and respected as the most valuable animals, whereas dogs are thought low and nasty. In the West, our sentiments are nearly the opposite: while raising cows for slaughter, we value dogs as our companions and lavish our affections upon them. A Kṛṣṇa conscious person, however, sees no difference between a cow and a dog and an elephant or any other creature, because he sees each of them as a tiny embodied spiritual soul. Again, the bodies differ, yet the spark of consciousness in each body is the same.

A Kṛṣṇa conscious person, therefore, has a perfect vision of material diversity and spiritual unity at the same time. He is not foolish and impractical, awkwardly straining to see all creatures as one in all respects. He recognizes diversity. We embrace our fellow human beings, but we don't embrace a tiger. Why? Because we know the differences between the tiger and the man. Our human friends shake hands with us; a tiger greets us with its jaws. Nonetheless, spiritually we see that the man and the tiger are one, because an equally spiritual soul resides

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WORLD UNITY

(continued from page 4)

lack of knowledge.

What is that lack of knowledge? *Yasyāma-buddhiḥ kuṅape tri-dhātuke*. Everyone is thinking, "I am this body." They are trying to unite, but the basic principle of their disunity is that they are all thinking, "I am this body." The American is thinking, "I am this American body," and the Russian is thinking, "I am this Russian body." So they are fighting. Why? Due to this identification with the body. But if we understand this very simple principle, that "I am not this body," then everyone will be united. Until the lack of knowledge is eradicated, how will we be united, culturally or in any other way? It is not possible, because we are missing the point.

This is the point: *dehino 'smin yathā dehe kaumāraṁ yauvanaṁ jarā/ tathā de-hāntara-prāptir dhīras tatra na muhyati*. *Asmin dehe*: in this body, there is a proprietor of the body. That is the soul. This proprietor of the body is constantly transmigrating to different types of bodies. The example is given: *kaumāraṁ yauvanaṁ jarā*. A small child is changing his body to boyhood, the boy is changing his body to adolescence, and the young man is changing his body to an old man's body. Similarly, when the old man's body dies, the soul accepts another body. This is knowledge. *Dhīras tatra na muhyati*. One who is actually in knowledge is not disturbed by the death of the body, because he knows the soul is not dead.

Another example is how you change your dress. Now, some of you are present here with a coat of black color. And tomorrow you can change into a white coat. But that does not make any difference; you still remain the same person. So it is the same when we change our body. For instance, I was once a baby. I remember that I had a little body. But that body is missing now. Then I remember that I was a young man; I had a very youthful body. But that body is also missing now. And as an older person, I know that I have again changed my body. I have simply changed my body, but I am still living. I remember the different bodies. Similarly, when we change into a completely different body, it does not mean that we are dead. It is further explained in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, *na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre*. The living entity, after the annihilation of this body, does not die.

How does the living entity transmigrate from one body to another? By the subtle body. There is a subtle body. The flesh, bones, and blood form the gross body. The subtle body works when we are asleep. While dreaming, we go outside our bedroom and we see so many things;

we work in so many ways. That is the subtle body. So after the destruction of this gross body, that subtle body carries us to another gross body. It is a great science. A great science. And it is explained very nicely in the *Bhagavad-gītā* and other Vedic literatures. So why do the scientists of the Western countries not take this matter seriously?

I was invited to speak in Boston, at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. First I inquired of all the students, "Where is your technological department by

**In human life
we must come
to understand,
"What am I,
where am I
going next,
and why have I
taken this body,
which is subject
to so many
tribulations?"**

which, when the body stops, you can again give it vitality and make it work? Where is that technology?" The students all liked that, and we had a very nice discussion.

We are very much advanced in technology, but we do not know the technology of the soul transmigrating from one body to another. That is ignorance. And this ignorance prevails in animals also. The animals do not know of the soul, because they are not advanced in knowledge. But they are also souls evolving or transmigrating from one body to another. There is a system. *Jalajā nava-lakṣāṇi sthāvarā lakṣa-vimśatiḥ*: from the aquatics everything is coming. The whole world was merged into water, devastation. Therefore, the beginning of the living entities is the aquatics. From the aquatics, they come to the forms of plants and trees. Then from plants and trees to insects. From insects to birds. Then from birds to beasts, and from beasts to human beings. *Aśītiś caturāṁś caiva lakṣāṁś tāṁ jīva-jātiṣu*. They're all mentioned.

The evolutionary theory is not a new thing, as stated by Darwin. It is there in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*. But it is very perfectly

explained there. Darwin has not very perfectly explained it. In his theory, there are so many defects. But the real point is that the living entity, the soul, is transmigrating from one body to another, and the chance of developed consciousness is in the human form of life. In this human form of life, we must come to understand, "What am I, where have I come from, where am I going next, and why have I taken this body, which is subjected to so many miserable tribulations I do not want?"

Ultimately, all of our miserable conditions have been summarized into four—birth, death, old age, and disease. *Janma-mṛtyu-jarā-vyādhi-duḥkha-doṣ-ānudarśanam*. We are trying to become happy by our scientific knowledge, by advancement of knowledge, but Lord Kṛṣṇa says that you cannot make any material solution to these four problems. That is not possible. So our happiness is false happiness. This is called *māyā*. *Māyā* means we are falsely happy. We are thinking, "Now I am well situated," but I am not thinking that at any moment—perhaps the next moment—I may be kicked out of the situation I am in and everything will be finished. "Why am I being kicked out? I want to stay here permanently." Nobody wants to leave his present body. Then why do we? Where is the solution? This is lack of knowledge. But there is a solution. That is Eastern culture.

The Eastern culture knows how to make the solution. Therefore, you'll find so many groups—the *karmīs* (performers of ritualistic activity), the *jñānīs* (philosophers), the *yogīs*, and the devotees—they are all trying to make a solution to these four problems of birth, death, old age, and disease. That is the Eastern gift. And in the *Bhagavad-gītā* [4.9], there is the solution:

*janma karma ca me divyam
evam yo vetti tattvataḥ
tyaktvā dehaṁ punar janma
naiti mām eti so 'rjuna*

"One who knows the transcendental nature of My appearance and activities does not, upon leaving the body, take his birth again in this material world, but attains My eternal abode, O Arjuna." That is culture. That is the real business of the human being—to understand, "I am put into this material condition of life. I am changing from one kind of body to another. Who can guarantee that I am not going to become a tree in my next life?"

There is no guarantee. There is no scientific guarantee that you are not going to be a tree, that you are again going to become an American. No, there is no guarantee. Because the so-called scientists cannot find a solution to this problem,

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The Biography of a Pure Devotee



THE WEDDING

Fall, 1966: the Lower East Side, New York
No one knew anything of what was going on except Swamiji.

by ŚRĪLA SATSVARŪPA DĀSA GOSWAMI

Shortly after founding the first Kṛṣṇa conscious temple in the West, Śrīla Prabhupāda organized the first Vedic marriage ceremony, replete with fire sacrifice, garlands, exotic foods, and an intimation of the worldwide mission soon to follow.

The morning after the initiation, Prabhupāda sat in his apartment reading from a commentary on the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. The large Sanskrit volume lay before him on his desk as he read. He wore horn-rimmed glasses, which changed his demeanor, making him look extremely scholarly. He wore eyeglasses only for reading, and this added to the visual impression that he had now gone into a deep professorial meditation.

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

The room was quiet, and brilliant mid-morning sunlight shone warmly through the window.

Suddenly someone knocked on the door. "Yes? Come in." He looked up, removing his glasses, as Mike and Jan, now Mukunda and Janakī, opened the door, peering in. He had asked to see them. "Yes, yes, come in." He smiled, and they walked in and closed the door behind them, two vivacious young Americans. From his expressive eyes, he seemed amused. They sat down before him, and Prabhupāda playfully addressed them by their new initiated names. "So, you are living together, but now you have taken serious vows of initiation. So what will you do about it?"

"Well"—Mukunda seemed puzzled—"isn't there any love in Kṛṣṇa consciousness?"

Swamiji nodded. "Yes, so I am saying

why don't you get married?" They agreed it was a good idea, and Prabhupāda immediately scheduled a wedding date for two days later.

Swamiji said he would cook a big feast and hold the marriage ceremony in his apartment, and he asked Mukunda and Janakī to invite their relatives. Both Mukunda and Janakī had grown up in Oregon, and their family members found it impossible to travel such a long distance on such short notice. Only Janakī's sister, Joan, agreed to come.

Joan: *Little did I know what kind of wedding it would be. All I knew was that they had met a swami and were taking Sanskrit from him as well as attending his small storefront temple on Second Avenue. When I met the Swami he was sitting beside the window in his front room, bathed in sunlight, surrounded by pots of prasādam, which he was distributing to the devotees*

who were sitting around him against the wall. I was a follower of macrobiotics and not so eager for taking this noonday meal. When I entered the room, the Swami said, "Who is this?" and Mukunda said, "This is Janakī's sister, Joan. She has come from Oregon to attend the wedding."

Swamiji said, "Oh? Where is Oregon?"

Mukunda said, "It's three thousand miles away, on the other side of the United States."

And he asked, "Oh, coming from so far? Very nice. And when will the other members of the family arrive?"

Then I said, "I am the only one who is coming for the wedding, Swamiji."

He said, "Never mind. It is very nice that you have come. Please sit down and take some kṛṣṇa-prasādam."

He offered me some dāl, a rather moist sabji, yogurt, salad, and capātis. But because I was a devotee of macrobiotics, all of this prasādam was very unpalatable to me. Practically speaking, it was sticking in my throat the whole time, but I remember looking over at the radiant and beautiful person who was so eager for me to take this prasādam that he had prepared. So I took it all, but in my mind I decided this would be the last time I would take this luncheon with the devotees.

At any rate, somehow I finished the meal, and Swamiji, who had been looking over at me, said, "You want more? You want more?" And I said, "No, thank you. I am so full. It was very nice, but I can't take any more." So finally the prasādam was finished, and they were all getting up to clean, and Swamiji commented that he wanted to see Mukunda, Janakī, and myself—for making preparations for the wedding the next day.

So when we were all three sitting there in the room with him, the Swami reached over into the corner, where there was a big pot with crystallized sugar syrup sticking to the outside. I thought, "Oh, this is supposed to be the pièce de résistance, but I can't possibly take any more." But he reached his hand into the pot anyway and pulled up a huge, round, dripping gulāb-jāmun. I said, "Oh, no. I am so full I couldn't take any." And he said, "Oh, take, take." And he made me hold out my hand and take it. Well, by the time I finished the gulābjāmun I was fully convinced that this would be the last time I would ever come there.

Then he began explaining how in the Vedic tradition the woman's side of the family made lavish arrangements for the wedding feast. So the next morning at nine, while Janakī was decorating the room for the fire sacrifice, stringing leaves and flower garlands across the top of the room, I went upstairs to meet Swamiji.

When I arrived, he immediately sent me out shopping with a list—five or six items to

purchase. One of those items was not available anywhere in the markets, although I spoke to so many shopkeepers. When I came back he asked me, "You have obtained all the items on the list?" And I said, "Well, everything except for one." He said, "What is that?" I said, "Well, no one knows what tumar is."

He had me wash my hands and sat me down in his front room on the floor with a five-pound bag of flour, a pound of butter, and a pitcher of water. And he looked down at me and said, "Can you make a medium-soft dough?"

The new initiates chanted on beads just as Swamiji had shown them. Happily though self-consciously, they called one another by their new spiritual names.

I replied, "Do you mean a pastry or piecrust or shortcrust dough or pâté brisée dough? What kind of pastry do you want?"

"How old are you?" he said.

And I said, "I am twenty-five, Swamiji."

"You are twenty-five," he said, "and you can't make a medium-soft dough? It is a custom in India that any young girl from the age of five years is very experienced in making this dough. But never mind, I will show you." So he very deftly emptied the bag of flour and, with his fingertips, cut in the butter until the mixture had a consistency of coarse meal. Then he made a well in the center of the flour, poured in just the right amount of water, and very deftly and expertly kneaded it into a velvety smooth, medium-soft dough. He then brought in a tray of cooked potatoes, mashed them with his fingertips, and began to sprinkle in spices. He showed me how to make and form potato kacaurīs, which are fried Indian pastries with spiced potato filling. From eleven until five that afternoon, I sat in this one room, making potato kacaurīs. Meanwhile, in the course of the same afternoon, Swamiji brought in fifteen other special vegetarian dishes, each one in a large enough quantity for forty persons. And he

had made them singlehandedly in his small, narrow kitchen.

It was rather hot that afternoon, and I was perspiring. I asked, "Swamiji, may I please have a glass of water?" He peeked his head around the door and said, "Go wash your hands." I immediately did so, and when I returned Swamiji had a glass of water for me. He explained to me that while preparing this food for offering to the Supreme Lord, one should not think of eating or drinking anything. So after drinking the glass of water, I went in and washed my hands and sat down. About two in the afternoon, I said, "Swamiji, may I have a cigarette?" and he peeked his head around the corner and said, "Go wash your hands." So I did, and when I came back he explained to me the four rules of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I continued to make kacaurīs, and around three-thirty, four o'clock, it was extremely warm in the room, and as Swamiji was bringing in one of his preparations I was wiping my arm and hand across my forehead. He looked down at me and said, "Please go and wash your hands." Again I did so, and upon returning he had a moistened paper towel for me. He explained that cooking for Kṛṣṇa required certain standards of cleanliness and purity that were different from the ones I was accustomed to.

About thirty people attended. The decorations were like the ones for the initiation a few days before except more festive, and the feast was more lavish. Swamiji's front room was decorated with pine boughs, and leaves and flowers strung overhead from one side of the room to the other. Some of the new initiates came, their large red beads around their necks. They had taken vows now—sixteen rounds a day—and they chanted on their beads just as Swamiji had shown them, and they happily though self-consciously called one another by their new spiritual names.

Janakī: Swamiji said that I should wear a sārī at my wedding, and he said it should be made of silk. I asked him what color, and he said red. So Mukunda bought me an absolutely elegant sārī and some very nice jewelry.

The Swami's friends were used to seeing Janakī, as she always came with Mukunda, but usually she wore no makeup and dressed in very plain clothes. They were astounded and somewhat embarrassed to see her enter wearing jewelry, makeup, and a bright red sārī. The bride's hair was up and braided, decorated with an oval silver-filigree hair ornament. She wore heavy silver earrings, which Mukunda had purchased from an expensive Indian import shop on Fifth Avenue, and silver bracelets.

Prabhupāda directed Mukunda and Janakī to sit opposite him on the other

(continued on page 30)

THE YOGA DICTIONARY

The Sanskrit language is rich in words to communicate ideas about spiritual life, yoga, and God realization. This dictionary, appearing by installments in BACK TO GODHEAD, will focus upon the most important of these (and, occasionally, upon relevant English terms) and explain what they mean. (For a guide to proper pronunciation, please see page 1.)

Absolute Truth. According to the *Vedānta-sūtra*, which concisely states the essence of Vedic knowledge, the Absolute Truth is the source of everything, the ultimate cause of all causes. It is *satyaṁ param*, the highest truth. The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* tells us that this supreme truth is pure, undivided knowledge and may be perceived in three features—as Brahman (all-pervading, impersonal oneness), as Paramātmā (the manifestation of God within the heart of every being), and as Bhagavān (the Supreme Personality of Godhead). These three are the same one truth, understood from increasingly advanced levels of realization. In the beginning one perceives the Absolute impersonally; with further advancement, one perceives the Supreme within one's own heart and the hearts of others; and with the highest realization, one perceives the Supreme Truth as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is complete in wealth, power, fame, beauty, knowledge, and renunciation. The *Bhagavad-gītā*, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and other Vedic literatures identify this Supreme Personality of Godhead as Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Ācārya. An *ācārya* is a teacher—specifically, a spiritual master—who teaches not only by verbal instructions but by the way he acts in his own life. The *Bhagavad-gītā* advises that one who wants to know truth should submissively approach a qualified *ācārya*, surrender to him and serve him, and place before him sincere and relevant inquiries. The enlightened *ācārya* can impart knowledge, for he is a seer of the truth. The Vedic literature emphatically says that unless one approaches such an *ācārya* one cannot attain success in life. A qualified *ācārya*, therefore, is one who has been enlightened in truth by his own *ācārya* and who imparts the truth to others. The *ācārya* should be spotless in character, and moreover it is essential that he be a devotee of the Supreme Lord. One who poses as an *ācārya* but does not have an attitude of service to the Supreme Lord is useless.

Acintya-bhedābheda-tattva. This is the Vedānta philosophy explained by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. In some places the Vedas say that all beings are one with God, and in others that God and all beings are different. This is a matter of considerable controversy among commentators on Vedānta philosophy. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu taught that both statements are simultaneously true. According to the Vedic literature, God is the ultimate source of multifarious kinds of energy. In this way He resembles the sun, which gives off energy in the form of heat and light. And just as the sun is inseparable from its rays, God is inseparable from His energies. God and His energies are therefore nondifferent. Yet simultaneously God and His energies are distinct. Although the sun and its rays are one, they are different also: while we on earth enjoy the rays of the sun, the fiery sun itself is millions of miles away. Similarly, although God is present everywhere by the manifestations of His energy, He simultaneously maintains His distinct personal identity, with His own name, form, qualities, abode, pastimes, and entourage. Since all living beings are manifestations of God's energy, God and the living beings are simultaneously different (*bheda*) and nondifferent (*abheda*). For the

mundane mind this truth (*tattva*) is held to be inconceivable (*acintya*). The entire cosmic manifestation is also a manifestation of God's energy and is therefore simultaneously one with God and different from Him.

Acyuta. A name of Kṛṣṇa meaning “the infallible one.” Living beings are fallible because they can be overwhelmed by weakness or illusion. But these defects can never overcome the Supreme (for then weakness and illusion themselves would be supreme and the term “supreme” would be meaningless). The supreme—or Kṛṣṇa—is therefore known as Acyuta. The material energy (the energy that illusions ordinary beings) is one of Kṛṣṇa's energies and is therefore always under His supreme control. This is a distinction between the Lord and other living beings. Kṛṣṇa is also called Acyuta because He never fails in His affection for His devotees.

Advaita. The word *dvaita* means “dual,” and so *advaita* means “nondual.” The material world is a world of dualities—heat and cold, happiness and distress, up and down, black and white. According to the Vedic literature, however, the Absolute Truth is free from all such material dualities. It is therefore called *advaita*.

Some philosophers, principally Śaṅkara, have espoused the view that because the Absolute is free from dualities, it must be utterly impersonal and devoid of qualities. According to this view, which is called *kevalādvaita* or Advaita Vedānta, in the Absolute there can be no desires, thoughts, or perceptions, no sense of personal identity, no forms, qualities, or activity, but only undifferentiated spiritual oneness. This being so, whatever we now perceive is illusory.

A problem with this view, however, is that it leads one to ask, if nothing really exists but one undifferentiated Absolute Truth, where does the illusion of variety come from? How can illusion exist (or even appear to exist)? And if truth and illusion both exist, how can there be oneness? The exponents of Advaita Vedānta have yet to provide adequate answers to these questions.

Other Vedānta philosophers, however, have explained that although the Absolute Truth is one, the one truth spiritually manifests itself in unlimited diversity. That the Absolute is void of material characteristics does not mean that it must have no characteristics at all. The Vedic literature says, *parāśya śaktir vividhaiva śrūyate*: the Absolute Truth is understood to have a varied multitude of energies. But because the Absolute is spiritual, these energies are ultimately spiritual too. In this way, there is oneness between the energies and their source. The varieties we perceive are not illusions; they are energies of the Absolute Truth, the Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa.

Our vision may be enlightened by truth or bewildered by illusion, according to our own desires, and this, too, is made possible by Kṛṣṇa, through His varied energies. As parts of Kṛṣṇa, we are naturally meant to serve Kṛṣṇa, and when we do so we are in perfect oneness with the Absolute Truth. But when we separate ourselves from Kṛṣṇa we plunge ourselves into illusion and duality. One attains liberation from illusion and duality when one surrenders to Kṛṣṇa, accepting Him as *advaita*, “one without a second.”



HOW A KṚṢṂA CONSCIOUS WOMAN ACHIEVED LIBERATION

A queen of Vedic India found freedom in dependence.

by NANDARĀṂI-DEVĪ DĀSĪ

Recently I was reading one of the many new books by women who feel they should make their miserable plight known to the world. The book read like a horror story. It told how nuptial love becomes a nightmare of neglect and abuse, how simple children become savage villains, how civilization turns a deaf ear to women's desperate pleas. Still, the story had something of a happy ending. The author joined a women's liberation group, and she is now a liberated divorcee working for the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment.

Although I truly believe that the author suffered—and that countless other women are suffering in one way or another—I couldn't help reflecting on the life of one woman in history who countered her misery with a more realistic remedy than ERA.

Draupadī was the daughter of a provincial king in what is now India. When Draupadī was little more than a child, her father arranged a wedding contest. Whoever could shoot an arrow through the eye of a fish suspended high above by looking at the fish's reflection down below in a pool of water could have the king's daughter. But the best archer was a man Draupadī detested, so at the last moment she insisted that one of the rules be changed so that this man would be disqualified. Ultimately she was won by the prince Arjuna, but since Arjuna was obliged to share everything he had with his four brothers,

Draupadī became the wife of all of the five Pāṇḍava princes. Whatever pain and pleasure we experience in establishing a marital relationship, Draupadī experienced fivefold.

Of course, the Pāṇḍavas were not ordinary husbands. Each in his own right was godly, and since Draupadī was a princess, each of her husbands gave her the care that was her due. But there was a time when they failed to meet her expectations, and her subsequent plight was unbearable.

The eldest Pāṇḍava brother, Yudhiṣṭhira, was forced into an unfair dice game with his vicious cousin Duryodhana, who was challenging him for the right to the kingly throne. The stakes were high, and in the course of the game Yudhiṣṭhira lost his wealth, his kingdom, his palaces, and ultimately his throne. With nothing else left, in the last game he bet Draupadī, his beautiful wife, as though she were an expendable piece of property. As if this were not insulting enough, he lost her in the game. Draupadī became the property of the vicious cousin.

Duryodhana immediately sent his brother to Draupadī's chambers. The man grabbed the princess by her long black hair and dragged her into the assembly, where her husbands sat humiliated. She wept and pleaded for her husbands to protect her. When they turned their faces down in hopelessness, she cried out to the others in the assembly. The brother of

Duryodhana began to take off the royal garments that covered her. He was going to disrobe her in public, and no one was going to help her.

Now, let's try to see this incident in the light of today's culture. Our modern-day beauties don't mind at all standing naked in front of the whole world. It seems their beauty is shallow; they have found no deeper meaning in life than playing up to the animal instincts of equally shallow men. Draupadī was physically beautiful, but more, she was noble, queenly, almost divine. She was sweet and chaste, beautiful and intelligent, though at times full of the fire of her noble birth. She was a pinnacle of femininity in a culture that (generally) respected women. This kind of mistreatment would usually not have been tolerated by even the lower classes, let alone the kingly order.

Draupadī called out to the assembly of kings and princes, "If you have ever loved and revered the mothers who bore you and nursed you, if the honor of wife or sister or daughter has ever been dear to you, if you believe in God and *dharma* [His laws], forsake me not in this horror more cruel than death."

Yes, death would have been more tolerable than this insult. Under normal circumstances, a man would have been killed for so much as touching a princess, especially in the presence of her husband. But here she was—being dragged by her hair and forcibly undressed—and no one was

going to save her. Of course, there was a reason why her husbands didn't protect her, but that is another story. The fact is that at this point in her life, she was abandoned while facing a danger worse than death.

If Draupadī were to face the same crisis today, she would have a number of alternatives. She could issue a couple of well-placed karate kicks or shoot her attacker with a hand gun. She could claim that on the basis of ERA, she should not be treated as a second-class citizen. She could threaten to sue the aggressor for assault and the assembly hall proprietors for insufficient protection. If none of these tactics worked, afterward she could write a book on the experience, and with her royalties she could start her own women's liberation force.

But fortunately for Draupadī, she did not have all these complicated, mundane, if not useless, options. When she saw that no one in the hall was going to help her, she gave up all attempts to protect herself, and with upraised hands she cried, "O Kṛṣṇa, Lord of the world, God whom I


adore and trust, abandon me not in this dire plight. You are my sole refuge. Please protect me."

As the brother of Duryodhana was pulling off Draupadī's royal *sārī*, Kṛṣṇa continued supplying an unlimited length of cloth to cover her. Her attacker pulled and pulled until he built a mound of cloth, but still Draupadī remained covered. At last the man admitted defeat, and Draupadī was released.

This is a classic example of genuine women's liberation. Draupadī was a perfect, chaste wife, an ideal example of womanhood. And beyond this, she was an intelligent devotee of Kṛṣṇa. She had sought protection from her husbands; failing that, she had turned to the larger social body for help. But ultimately she was protected not by any material arrangement. She was personally liberated by Kṛṣṇa Himself.

Now the world is full of men far worse than Duryodhana. Tormented women are crying out for help. Out of foolishness and desperation they are accepting the empty promises of ERA. But the independence

it offers is artificial; it has no substance. Legislation cannot change nature, and by nature we are all inescapably dependent on each other. Sometimes, in our interdependence, we can exploit, and sometimes we are exploited. Sometimes we are treated fairly, and sometimes not. But at no time does independence, freedom, or equality rest in our hands.

Of course, this doesn't mean we should give up trying to protect ourselves, trying to right the wrongs of an inequitable society. (I have been in a number of places, from the jungle villages of Bengal to the streets of New York, where I wished my karate were in better shape.) Surely we should use the machinery of democracy to help the exploited minorities. We can follow Draupadī's example. We can appeal for the help of the greater social body; we can use our intelligence to fight for the cause of just government. But ultimately, we have to raise our hands in the air and cry out—not simply for independence from an exploitative world, but for full dependence on Kṛṣṇa, the bestower of liberation. 

WORLD UNITY


(continued from page 22)

they do not believe in the next life. That is the defect in their knowledge. They want to live permanently, but by the laws of nature they cannot. Therefore, they cannot find a solution. But we can give the solution. Nobody wants to become old, but we are forced to become old. We can also give the solution to this problem. This is Eastern culture.

I request all of you ladies and gentlemen to take to this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. It is not a sentimental movement. It is a very authorized, scientific movement.

Already we are combining East and West socially, politically, religiously, philosophically, economically—in every way. The solution is here, if you take it seriously. It is not a sentimental movement. It is most scientific. If any scientist comes to me, I can convince him that it is a scientific movement.

I asked Professor Kotofsky in Moscow, "My dear professor, what is the difference between your communist movement and my movement? You have selected Lenin as God; I have selected Kṛṣṇa as God. Where is the difference of principle? You cannot live without a leader, or God. I cannot live without a leader, or God.

That's a fact. Then where is the difference? Now it is to be judged whether Lenin is good or Kṛṣṇa is good. That is another thing. But your position is that you have to accept one leader, either Lenin or Jawaharlal Nehru or Hitler or Churchill. You have to accept. You cannot work independently. Therefore you have got so many parties. So here is another party, the Kṛṣṇa party. So where is the difference in philosophy? There is no basic difference in philosophy. Now let us study whether the Lenin party is better or the Kṛṣṇa party is better. Then the whole solution will be realized." Thank you very much. Hare Kṛṣṇa 

VISION

(continued from page 21)


within them both.

Yet although the Kṛṣṇa conscious person sees beyond the material body, he even sees beyond the soul within. For the Kṛṣṇa conscious person is ultimately conscious of Kṛṣṇa, the supreme reservoir of all consciousness. He sees Kṛṣṇa to be present within the heart of every living being. Within each body resides an individual spark of consciousness, an individual living entity—but that consciousness dwells in one body, and *only* one body, at any one time. Thus I am conscious of the pains and pleasures of my body but not of

yours, whereas you are conscious of yours but not mine. Kṛṣṇa, however, lives simultaneously in the hearts of all living beings. He is present within the heart of the intellectual and the dog-eater, the elephant, the cow, and the dog. It is from Kṛṣṇa that each living being ultimately draws his life, and because of Him that one remembers or forgets. It is He who guides each living being toward spiritual perfection or away from it, according to what each of us desires. He is therefore the ultimate fountainhead of all life, all consciousness, and all spiritual and material energy. He is the source of everything, the ultimate truth.

The Kṛṣṇa conscious person sees Kṛṣṇa within all living beings, and all living be-

ings within Kṛṣṇa. Therefore his vision is clear, perfect, and universal.

This spiritual vision is not abstract or theoretical. As one advances in realization, one's vision becomes purified, and this spiritual vision becomes a natural part of his life. A businessman, because of his financial consciousness, sees money everywhere. A man intent upon sexual fulfillment sees everywhere some opportunity for sex. These are crude examples, but similarly a Kṛṣṇa conscious person, one whose consciousness is focused upon Kṛṣṇa, becomes eligible to see Kṛṣṇa everywhere. And because he sees Kṛṣṇa everywhere, he sees within Kṛṣṇa the true equality of all living beings. 

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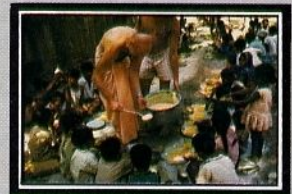
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HARE KṚṢṂA
HARE KṚṢṂA
KṚṢṂA KṚṢṂA
HARE HARE
HARE RĀMA
HARE RĀMA
RĀMA RĀMA
HARE HARE

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

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

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

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

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

THE WEDDING

(continued from page 24)

side of the sacrificial arena. And just as at the initiation, he lit the incense and instructed them in the purification by water, recited the purification *mantra*, and then began to speak. He explained about the relationship between man and wife in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and how they should serve each other and how they should serve Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda then asked Janakī's sister to present her formally to Mukunda as his wife. Mukunda then repeated after Swamiji: "I accept Janakī as my wife, and I shall take charge of her throughout both of our lives. We shall live

together peacefully in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and there will never be any separation." And then Prabhupāda turned to Janakī: "Will you accept Śrīmān Mukunda dāsa brahmacārī as your life's companion? Will you serve him always and help him to execute his Kṛṣṇa conscious activities?" And then Janakī replied, "Yes, I accept Mukunda as my husband throughout my life. There shall never be any separation between us, either in happiness or distress. I shall serve him always, and we shall live together peacefully in Kṛṣṇa consciousness."

No one knew anything of what was going on except Swamiji. He led the chanting, he gave the lines for the bride and

groom to exchange, he told them where to sit and what to do—he, in fact, had told them to get married. He had also cooked the elaborate feast that was waiting in the kitchen for the completion of the ceremony.

Prabhupāda asked Mukunda and Janakī to exchange their flower garlands and after that to exchange sitting places. He then asked Mukunda to rub some vermilion down the part in Janakī's hair and then to cover her head with her *sārī*. Next came the fire sacrifice, and finally the feast.

The special feature of the wedding was the big feast. It turned out to be quite a social success. The guests ate enthusiastically, asked for more, and raved about the sensational tastes. Prabhupāda's followers, who were accustomed to the simple daily fare of rice, *dāl*, *sabji*, and *capātīs*, found the feast intoxicating and ate as much as they could get. Many of Mukunda's friends were macrobiotic followers, and at first they fastidiously avoided all the sweets. But gradually the enthusiasm of the others wore down their resistance, and they became captivated by the Swami's expert cooking. "God, he's a good cook!" said Janakī. Bruce, who had missed the first initiation, was seeing the Vedic fire sacrifice and tasting the Swami's *kacaurīs* for the first time. He resolved on the spot to dedicate himself to Kṛṣṇa consciousness and become one of the Swamiji's disciples as soon as possible. Almost all the visitors personally approached Swamiji to thank and congratulate him. He was happy and said it was all Kṛṣṇa's grace.

After the ceremony, Mukunda and his wife entertained many of the devotees and guests in their apartment. The evening had put everyone in high spirits, and Hayagrīva was reciting poetry. Then someone turned on the television to catch the scheduled interview with Allen Ginsberg, the poet, and much to everyone's happiness, Allen began playing harmonium and chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. He even said there was a swami on the Lower East Side who was teaching this *mantra-yoga*. Kṛṣṇa consciousness was new and unheard of, yet now the devotees were seeing a famous celebrity perform *kīrtana* on television. The whole evening seemed auspicious.

Back at his apartment, Prabhupāda, along with a few helpers, cleaned up after the ceremony. He was satisfied. He was introducing some of the major elements of his Kṛṣṇa consciousness mission. He had initiated disciples, he had married them, and he had feasted the public with *kṛṣṇa-prasādam*. "If I had the means," he told his followers, "I could hold a major festival like this every day."

(To be continued)

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NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

Chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa: A Practice for Saints and Sinners

Devotees in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement are known for their chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. But why so much stress on chanting?

We chant because we follow Vedic scriptures, which prescribe chanting the name of God as the primary religious principle for the present age. We also chant because five hundred years ago in Bengal our great spiritual predecessor Lord Caitanya used to perform hours-long *kīrtanas*, chanting and dancing with His associates. They would chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, dance and leap in great ecstasy, and play musical instruments. Only when the devotees were exhausted would Lord Caitanya stop the *kīrtana*. And we chant because His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, our spiritual master, who came to the West to spread the teachings of Lord Caitanya and the Vedic scriptures, especially stressed the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa.

The Vedic literature explains the power of chanting God's name in the story of Ajāmīla, a great sinner who at the time of his death called out the name of God and was immediately purified of all sinful contamination. "Indeed," states the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, "he atoned not only for sins performed in one life but for those performed in millions of lives, for in a helpless condition he chanted the holy name of Nārāyaṇa [Kṛṣṇa]."

Present sins bring future suffering. But the story of Ajāmīla teaches that no matter how sinful a person may be, chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa frees him from the hellish suffering that would otherwise await him for his bad *karma*. This is why the scriptures, Lord Caitanya, Śrīla Prabhupāda, and other great spiritual authorities, while encouraging us to live a pure life and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, still urge us to chant even if we are unable to give up our sin. Sinful life basically consists of meat-eating, illicit sex, intoxication, and gambling—habits almost universally common in this degraded age. If someone wants to go beyond these, find a higher pleasure, and avoid the impending punishment of *karma*, he should chant Hare Kṛṣṇa.

In June of 1967 Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote, "We do have certain restrictions . . . they are not restrictions but something better in the place of something inferior. . . . If you live peaceful, regulated

lives, eating nothing but *kṛṣṇa-prasādam* [food offered to Kṛṣṇa], then the tissues in your brain will develop for spiritual consciousness and understanding. However, if you are not agreeable to these simple restrictions, still I request you to join the chanting with us. Everybody can do that, and that will gradually clarify everything. All problems will be solved, and you will find a new chapter of your life."

But one can misuse the chanting. One may think, "My sins could cause me suffering in the future, but chanting will free me from suffering. So I'll use the power of the holy name of God to go on sinning and not have to suffer." This is offensive. If one chants with this mentality, for him the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* will become ineffectual, like fire doused with water.

Chanting is sweet. There is nothing sweeter in life than chanting the holy name, which brings the soul to the ecstasy of reciprocation with Kṛṣṇa. The ecstasies Lord Caitanya showed during *kīrtana* attest to the sublime sweetness of the name of Kṛṣṇa. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* states that if one does not experience ecstasy while chanting, one's heart must be steel-framed. The pleasure that comes from chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa is not like material pleasure, which stays for a while and then goes away; it is a spiritual pleasure. The more one chants, the more the sweet taste increases. And it is this sweet taste that enables one to give up the lower taste of material sense gratification.

Nevertheless, in the first stages of chanting one may fail to taste the sweetness, and thus one resembles a person with jaundice, for whom sugar candy tastes bitter. According to Ayurvedic medicine, the best remedy for jaundice is rock candy crystallized from fresh sugarcane juice. Although rock candy tastes bitter to the patient, as he goes on eating it daily he becomes cured, and gradually it begins to taste sweet. Similarly, although one may find the restrictions unpalatable—no illicit sex, no meat-eating, no gambling, and no intoxication—and although one may have little taste for chanting, regularly chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa will gradually free one from the disease of excessive sense gratification. And the cure will be evident when he finds the chanting very sweet and relishable.

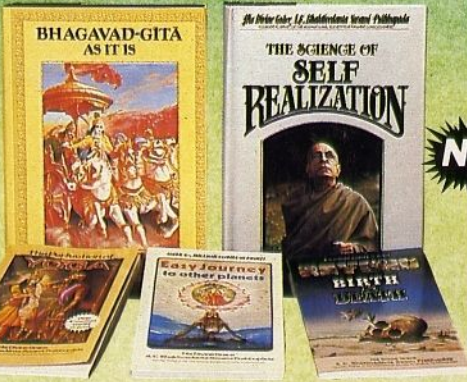
If one does not taste the sweetness immediately, he shouldn't give up the cure, the chanting. He should go on chanting,

and before long the taste will come—his original spiritual consciousness will revive. The happiness we have been looking for—in travel, study, nationalism, religion, sex—is actually to be found in the chanting of the holy name.

Aware of the difficulties we would have in trying to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa purely in this materialistic age, Lord Caitanya expressed our position in His prayers: "O My Lord, You have kindly appeared in fullness in Your holy name, but I am so unfortunate that I have no taste for chanting." It's natural that one may want to chant yet find himself overpowered by his materialistic environment or by his own desires. Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura, a great devotee who followed Lord Caitanya, expresses this position: "What good is my life? I know that this chanting is everything, yet I don't like to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. I must have been cursed. What is the use of living?" Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura presents himself as someone who doesn't want materialistic life yet cannot taste the nectar of the holy name. Such despair, however, is not permanent; rather, it produces a feeling of helplessness, which leads to inoffensive chanting. Just as Ajāmīla chanted in utter helplessness at the time of death and was saved, when we feel overwhelmed by material desires we can also chant in helplessness. Even the "cursed" person, if he chants not to help himself along in sinning but to rid himself of sin, can chant in helplessness and be delivered. He can know within his heart, "Though this chanting is everything, the highest nectar, I am unable to taste it now, because of my materialistic mentality. But it is my only hope of deliverance." This is the proper mood of helplessness for inoffensive chanting.

Lord Caitanya says, "All glories to the chanting of the holy name, which cleanses the heart of all the dirt accumulated for many, many births." The chanting of the holy name of God is "the prime benediction for all humanity because it spreads the rays of the benediction moon." The moon begins as a small sliver and waxes full. So one who starts chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa faithfully, without offenses, can soon realize the full moon of ecstatic love of God. As Lord Caitanya says, "Chanting the name of God increases the ocean of transcendental bliss and gives us a taste of the nectar for which we are always anxious."—SDG

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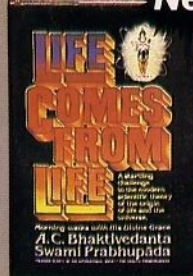
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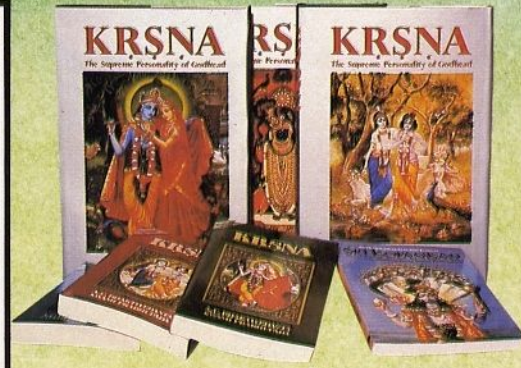
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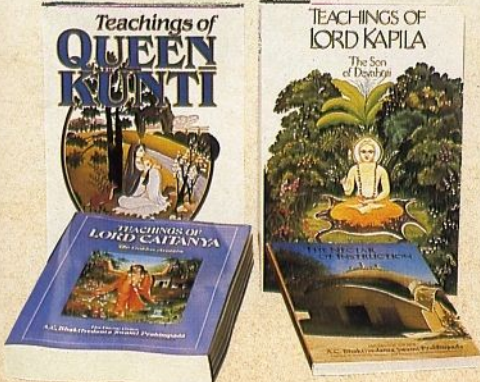
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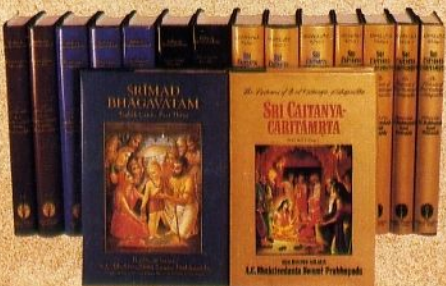
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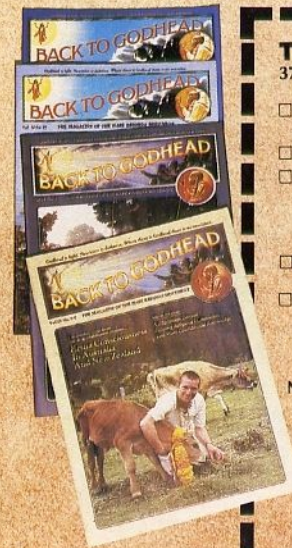
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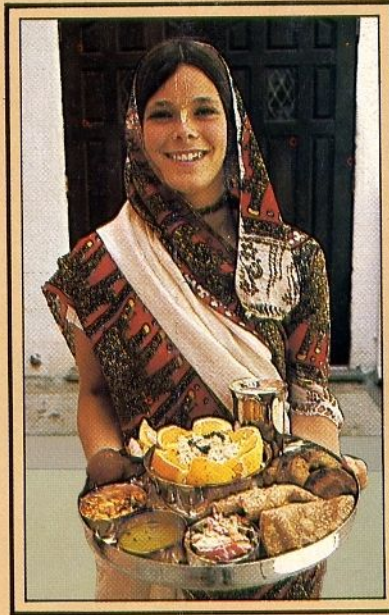
The Sunday Feast

It's a kind of open house. You come alone or with your friends or family. When you first come in, you might like to meet some of the devotees. Maybe you'll want to sit down and talk philosophy. Look through some of the books and magazines. Or maybe you'll just wander around on your own and see what the place is all about. It's up to you.

The schedule differs from center to center. Generally things get started with some chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa. It's a kind of meditation. The idea is to meditate on the sound. And if you decide to join along in the chanting too—well, so much the better. And if you feel like dancing in ecstasy, fine! You take it as you like, at your own pace, in your own way.

After the chanting (it usually goes for twenty minutes or so) there's a talk on *Bhagavad-gītā*. This is the basic book of spiritual knowledge the Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees get their philosophy from. It's five thousand years old, originally written in Sanskrit, and its ideas have drawn some of the deepest minds of the world. Emerson and Thoreau revered it. Albert Schweitzer found it fascinating. Mahatma Gandhi said it was the most important book in his life. If you haven't read it yet, you're in for quite a profound encounter.

And of course you can ask the devotees questions about it too. In fact, the whole *Bhagavad-gītā* comes to us in the form of a dialogue, and questions and answers have always provided the way to get at the essence of what the book is all about.



After the talk about the *Gītā* comes a ceremony called *ārati*. If you've never been to a Hare Kṛṣṇa temple before and you've never been to India, chances are you've never seen anything quite like it. *Ārati* is an ancient and very beautiful ceremony that helps you come out into your spiritual identity, into a higher awareness, and ultimately into being reunited with Kṛṣṇa—God—in a very personal way.

In the *ārati* ceremony, Kṛṣṇa Himself appears on the temple's altar in His Deity form (a statue, most people would say). A devotee offers Kṛṣṇa flaming lamps of camphor and ghee, fragrant flowers, peacock fans, and a special white whisk called a *cāmara*. All this to the sounds of hand cymbals, drums, and the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa. The effect of the ceremony is that you actually feel that you're in the personal presence of Kṛṣṇa—which in fact you are. (We're all in Kṛṣṇa's presence all the time, without thinking about

it, but the *ārati* ceremony helps us realize it.) How it happens may be a little hard to explain. But when you attend the ceremony, the spiritual experience is very pure and natural. That's why Kṛṣṇa temples in India have held *ārati* ceremonies every day since longer ago than anyone can remember.

After *ārati* comes the feast. And it's no small-time snack. Devotees have spent all day—sometimes more—cooking wonderfully varied dishes, with devotion for Kṛṣṇa. After the food is offered to Kṛṣṇa (that's part of what goes on with the *ārati*), devotees and guests alike sit down to sumptuous plates. There are sweet things made with milk and grains that taste something like ice cream, cake, and smooth cream cheese all rolled into one. There are salty things, spicy things, fried things, baked things, blended things . . . People have been known to go on for hours later asking, "And what were those spicy yellow balls with the tomato sauce? And was that yogurt with the soft little white cakes in it?" Others have just eaten and smiled big smiles.

After the feast, maybe you pick up a copy of *Bhagavad-gītā* to take home with you. And when you finally leave, you probably feel a whole lot richer within yourself than you did when the evening started.

And that, in a nutshell, is what it's all about.

(See page 31 for the center nearest you.)