

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

BACK TO GODHEAD

Vol.16 No.3-4 THE MAGAZINE OF THE HARE KRISHNA MOVEMENT

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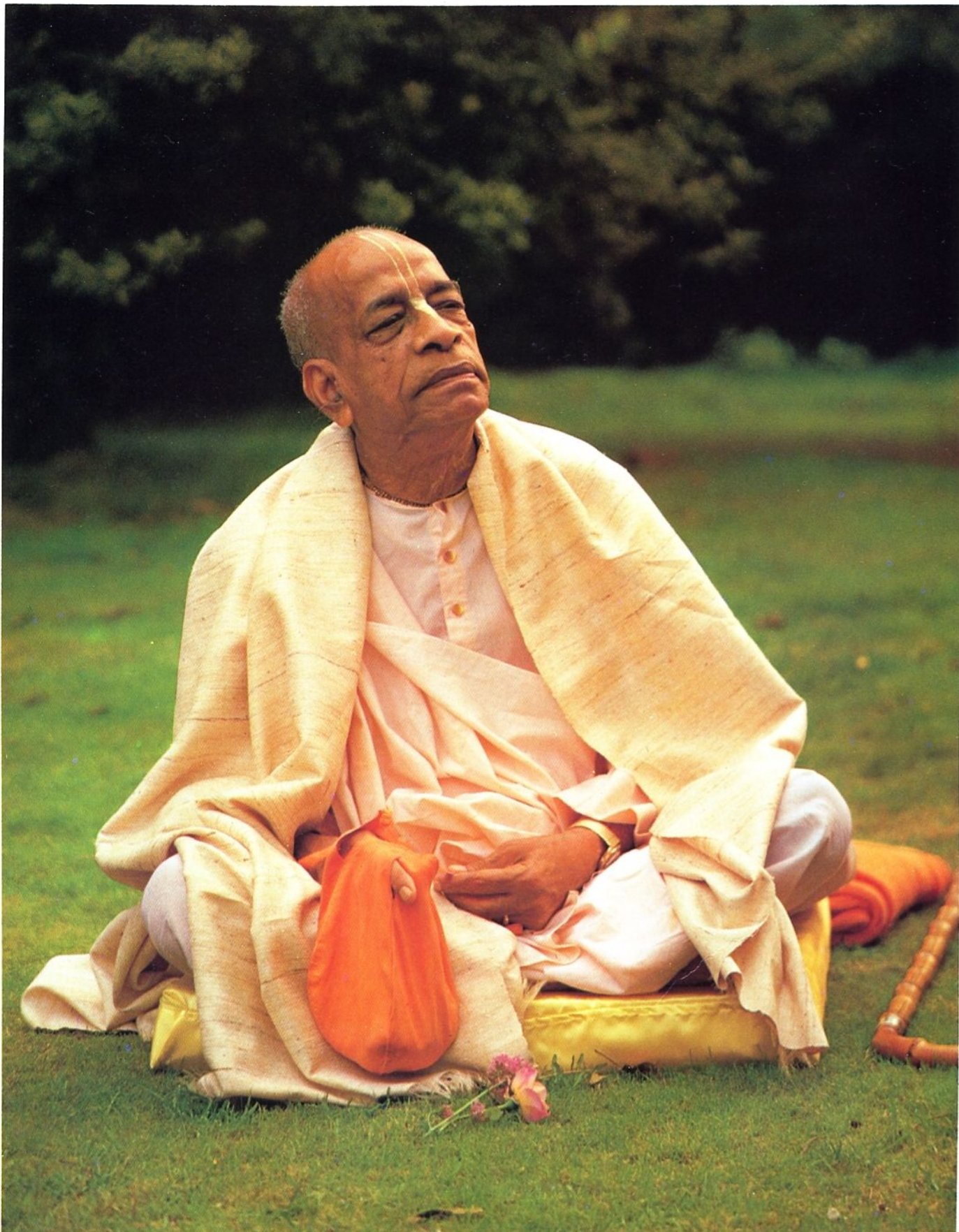


PHOTO BHARGAVA DASA

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

BACK TO GODHEAD

VOL. 16, NO. 3-4

THE MAGAZINE OF THE HARE KRISHNA MOVEMENT

FOUNDED 1944

FOUNDER

(under the direction of His Divine Grace
Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda)
His Divine Grace
A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda

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PRONUNCIATION of Sanskrit words and names. BACK TO GODHEAD follows the international scholarly standard. Pronounce short a like the u in but, long ā like the a in far (and hold it twice as long as the short a). Pronounce e like the a in evade, long ī like the i in pique. Pronounce the 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 ṣ 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 sixty-nine, 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, 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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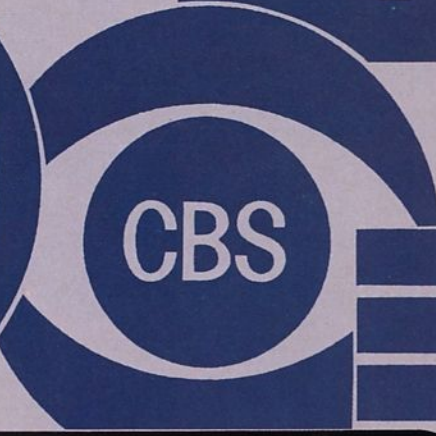
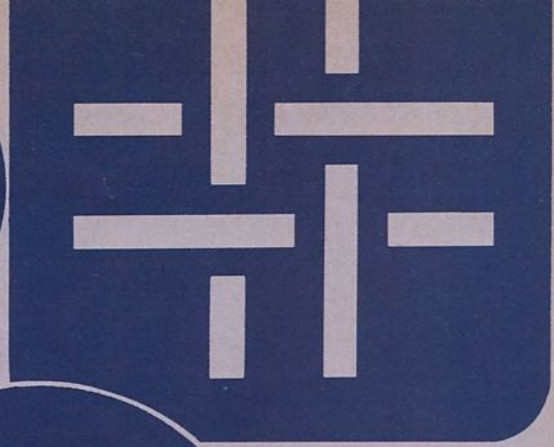
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COVER: When Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, appeared in the rural village of Vṛndāvana, India, five thousand years ago, He exhibited the loving pastimes of His original spiritual abode, Goloka. But sometimes demons would come to Vṛndāvana and try to kill Him. One of these demons was Bakāsura, who assumed the form of a gigantic crane. One day, while Kṛṣṇa was playing with His friends near a pond, Bakāsura quickly approached Him and swallowed Him. By His mystic power, Kṛṣṇa, in Bakāsura's throat, then became as hot as fire, forcing the demon to disgorge Him. The infuriated bird struck violently at the Lord, but Kṛṣṇa grabbed his upper and lower beak and tore him in two. Because of being killed by Lord Kṛṣṇa, Bakāsura achieved liberation. (Painting: Dhṛtī-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."

VISA

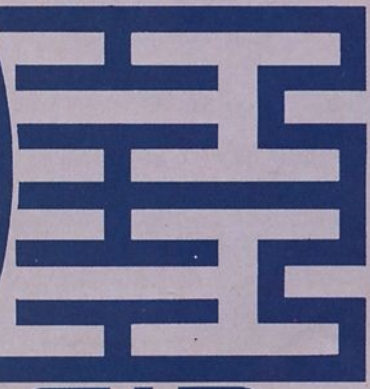


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KṚṢṆA KṚṢṆA, HARE HARE
HARE RĀMA, HARE RĀMA
RĀMA RĀMA, HARE HARE**



USSR



A MESSAGE TO BUSINESSMEN: DON'T FORGET SPIRITUAL CULTURE

A lecture by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda
 Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness
 Delivered in Calcutta on January 30, 1973, to the Bharata Chamber of Commerce.

Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, I thank you very much for kindly inviting me. I'll serve you to the best of my ability.

Today's subject is "Culture and Business." We understand *business* to mean "occupational duty." According to our Vedic culture, there are different types of business. As described in *Bhagavad-gītā* [4.13], *cātur-varṇyam mayā sṛṣṭam guṇa-karma-vibhāgaśah*. The four divisions of the social system, based on people's qualities and types of work, are the *brāhmaṇas* [intellectuals and teachers], the *kṣatriyas* [military men and state leaders], the *vaiśyas* [farmers and merchants], and the *śūdras* [laborers]. Before doing business, one must know what kinds of work there are and who can do what kind of work. People have different capabilities, and there are different types of work, but now we have created a society where everyone takes up everyone else's business. That is not very scientific.

Society has natural cultural divisions, just as there are natural divisions in the human body. The whole body is one unit, but it has different departments, also—for example, the head department, the arm department, the belly department, and the leg department. This is scientific. So in society the head department is represented by the *brāhmaṇa*, the arm department by the *kṣatriya*, the belly department by the *vaiśya*, and the leg department by the *śūdra*. Business should be divided scientifically in this way.

The head department is the most important department, because without the

head the other departments—the arm, the belly, and the leg—cannot function. If the arm department is lacking, business can still go on. If the leg department is lacking, business can go on. But if the head department is not there—if your head is cut off from your body—then even though you have arms, legs, and a belly, they are all useless.

The head is meant for culture. Without culture, every type of business creates confusion and chaos. And that is what we have at the present moment, because of jumbling of different types of business. So there must be one section of people, the head department, who give advice to the other departments. These advisors are the intelligent and qualified *brāhmaṇas*.

*śamo damas tapaḥ śaucam
 kṣāntir ārjavam eva ca
 jñānam vijñānam āstikyam
 brahma-karma svabhāva-jam*

"Peacefulness, self-control, austerity, purity, tolerance, honesty, wisdom, knowledge, and religiousness—these are the qualities by which the *brāhmaṇas* work." [*Bhagavad-gītā* 18.42]

The *brāhmaṇas*, the head of the social body, are meant to guide society in culture. Culture means knowing the aim of life. Without understanding the aim of life, a man is a ship without a rudder. But at the present moment we are missing the goal of life because there is no head department in society. The whole human society is now lacking real *brāhmaṇas* to give advice to the other departments.

Arjuna is a good example of how a mem-

ber of the *kṣatriya* department should take advice. He was a military man; his business was to fight. In the Battle of Kurukṣetra he engaged in his business, but at the same time he took the advice of the *brahmaṇya-deva*, Lord Kṛṣṇa. As it is said,

*namo brahmaṇya-devāya
 go-brāhmaṇa-hitāya ca
 jagad-dhitāya kṛṣṇāya
 govindāya namo namaḥ*

"Let me offer my respectful obeisances unto Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is the worshipable Deity for all brahminical men, who is the well-wisher of cows and *brāhmaṇas*, and who is always benefiting the whole world. I offer my repeated obeisances to the Personality of Godhead, known as Kṛṣṇa and Govinda." [*Viṣṇu Purāna* 1.19.65]

In this verse the first things taken into consideration are the cows and the *brāhmaṇas* (*go-brāhmaṇa*). Why are they stressed? Because a society with no brahminical culture and no cow protection is not a human society but a chaotic, animalistic society. And any business you do in a chaotic condition will never be perfect. Business can be done nicely only in a society following a proper cultural system.

Instructions for a perfect cultural system are given in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. At a meeting in the forest of Naimiṣaraṇya, where many learned scholars and *brāhmaṇas* had assembled and Śrīla Sūta Gosvāmī was giving instructions, he stressed the *varṇāśrama* social system (*ataḥ pumbhir dvija-śreṣṭhā varṇāśrama-vibhāgaśah*). The Vedic culture organizes society into

four *varṇas* [occupational divisions] and four *āśramas* [spiritual stages of life]. As mentioned before, the *varṇas* are the *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya*, and *śūdra*. The *āśramas* are the *brahmācārī-āśrama* [celibate student life], *gṛhastha-āśrama* [family life], *vānaprastha-āśrama* [retired life], and *sannyāsa-āśrama* [renounced life]. Unless we take to this institution of *varṇāśrama-dharma*, the whole society will be chaotic.

And the purpose of *varṇāśrama-dharma* is to satisfy the Supreme Lord. As stated in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* [3.8.9],

*varṇāśramācāravāta
puruṣeṇa paraḥ pumān
viṣṇur ārādhyate panthā
nānyat tat-toṣa-kāraṇam*

According to this verse, one has to satisfy the Supreme Lord by properly performing one's prescribed duties according to the system of *varṇa* and *āśrama*. In a state, you have to satisfy your government. If you don't, you are a bad citizen and cause chaos in society. Similarly, in the cosmic state—that is, in this material creation as a whole—if you do not satisfy the Supreme Lord, the proprietor of everything, then there will be a chaotic condition. Our Vedic culture teaches that whatever you do, you must satisfy the Supreme Lord. That is real culture.

Sva-karmaṇā tam abhyarcya siddhiṁ vindati mānavah. You may do any business—the *brāhmaṇa*'s business, the *kṣatriya*'s business, the *vaiśya*'s business, or the *śūdra*'s business—but by your business you should satisfy the Supreme Personality of Godhead. You may be a merchant, a professional man, a legal advisor, a medical man—it doesn't matter. But if you want perfection in your business, then you must try to satisfy the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Otherwise you are simply wasting your time.

In *Bhagavad-gītā* [3.9], Lord Kṛṣṇa says, *yajñārthāt karmaṇaḥ*. The word *yajña* refers to Viṣṇu, or Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Lord. You have to work for Him. Otherwise you become bound by the reactions of your activities (*anyatra loko 'yaṁ karma-bandhanaḥ*). And as long as you are in the bondage of *karma*, you have to transmigrate from one body to another.

Unfortunately, at the present moment people do not know that there is a soul and that the soul transmigrates from one body to another. As stated in *Bhagavad-gītā* [2.13], *tathā dehāntara-prāptiḥ*: "When the body dies, the soul transmigrates to another body." I've talked with big, big scientists and professors who do not know that there is life after death. They do not know. But according to our Vedic information, there is life after death. And we can experience transmigration of the soul in this present life. It is a very common

thing: a baby soon gets the body of a boy, the boy then gets the body of a young man, and the young man gets the body of an old man. Similarly, the old man, after the annihilation of his body, will get another body. It is quite natural and logical.

Actually, we have two bodies, the gross body and the subtle body. The gross body is made up of our senses and the bodily elements like bones, blood, and so on. When we change our body at death, the present gross body is destroyed, but the subtle body, made of mind, intelligence, and ego, is not. The subtle body carries us to our next gross body.

You may do your business. But if you simply do business and do not cultivate your spiritual life, your business is a useless waste of time.

It is just like what happens when we sleep. At night we forget about the gross body, and the subtle body alone works. As we dream we are taken away from our home, from our bed, to some other place, and we completely forget the gross body. When our sleep is over we forget about the dream and become attached again to the gross body. This is going on in our daily experience.

So we are the observer, sometimes of the gross body and sometimes of the subtle body. Both bodies are changing, but we are the unchanging observer, the soul *within* the bodies. Therefore, our inquiry should be, "What is my position? At night I forget my gross body, and during the daytime I forget my subtle body. Then what is my real body?" These are the questions we should ask.

So you may do your business, as Arjuna did his business. He was a fighter, a *kṣatriya*, but he did not forget his culture, hearing *Gītā* from the master. But if you simply do business and do not cultivate your spiritual life, then your business is a useless waste of time (*śrama eva hi kevalam*).

Our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is being spread so that you do not forget

your cultural life. We do not say that you stop your business and become a *sannyāsī* like me and give up everything. We do not say that. Nor did Kṛṣṇa say that. Kṛṣṇa never said, "Arjuna, give up your fighting business." No, He said, "Arjuna, you are a *kṣatriya*. You are declining to fight, saying, 'Oh, it is very abominable.' You should not say that. You *must* fight." That was Kṛṣṇa's instruction.

Similarly, we Kṛṣṇa conscious people are also advising everyone, "Don't give up your business. Go on with your business, but simply hear about Kṛṣṇa." Caitanya Mahāprabhu also said this, quoting from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*: *sthāne sthitāḥ śrutigatāṁ tanu-vān-manobhiḥ*. Caitanya Mahāprabhu never said, "Give up your position." Giving up one's position is not very difficult. But to cultivate spiritual knowledge while one stays in his position—that is required. Among the animals there is no cultivation of spiritual life. That is not possible; the animals cannot cultivate this knowledge. Therefore, if human beings do not cultivate spiritual knowledge, they're exactly like animals (*dharmena hināḥ paśubhiḥ samānāḥ*).

So we should be very conscious about our eternal existence. We, the spirit soul within the body, are eternal (*na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre*). We are not going to die after the annihilation of our body. This is the cultivation of knowledge, or *brahmajijñāsā*, which means inquiry about one's self. Caitanya Mahāprabhu's first disciple, Sanātana Gosvāmī, was formerly finance minister in the government of Nawab Hussein Shah. Then he retired and approached Caitanya Mahāprabhu and humbly said, "My dear Lord, people call me *paṇḍita*." (Because he was a *brāhmaṇa* by caste, naturally he was called *paṇḍita*, meaning "a learned person.") "But I am such a *paṇḍita*," he said, "that I do not even know who or what I am."

This is the position of everyone. You may be a businessman, or you may be in another profession, but if you do not know what you are, wherefrom you have come, why you are under the tribulations of the laws of material nature, and where you are going in your next life—if you do not know these things, then whatever you are doing is useless. As stated in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* [1.2.8],

*dharmah svanuṣṭhitāḥ puṁsāṁ
viśvaksena-kathāsu yah
notpādayed yadi ratim
śrama eva hi kevalam*

"The occupational activities a man performs according to his own position are only so much useless labor if they do not provoke attraction for the message of the Personality of Godhead." Therefore our request to everyone is that while you engage in your business, in whatever posi-

tion Kṛṣṇa has posted you, do your duty nicely, but do not forget to cultivate Kṛṣṇa knowledge.

Kṛṣṇa knowledge means God consciousness. We must know that we are part and parcel of God (*mamaivāṁśo jīva-loke jīva-bhūtaḥ sanātanaḥ*). We are eternally part and parcel of Kṛṣṇa, or God, but we are now struggling with the mind and senses (*manaḥ śaṣṭhānīndriyāṇi prakṛti-sthāni karṣati*). Why this struggle for existence? We must inquire about our eternal life beyond this temporary life. Suppose in this temporary life I become a big businessman for, say, twenty years or fifty years or at the utmost one hundred years. There is no guarantee that in my next life I'm going to be a big businessman. No. There is no such guarantee. But this we do not care about. We are taking care of our present small span of life, but we are not taking care of our life eternal. That is our mistake.

In this life I may be a very great businessman, but in my next life, by my *karma*, I may become something else. There are 8,400,000 forms of life. *Jalajā nava-lakṣāṇi sthāvarā lakṣa-vimśati*: There are 900,000 forms of life in the water, and two million forms of trees and other plants. Then *kṛmayo rudra-sankhyakāḥ pakṣināṁ daśa-lakṣaṇam*: There are 1,100,000 species of insects and reptiles, and one million species of birds. Finally, there are three million varieties of beasts and 400,000 hu-

man species. So we must pass through eight million different forms of life before we come to the human form of life.

Therefore Prahlāda Mahārāja says,

*kaumāra ācaret prājño
dharmān bhāgavatān iha
durlabhaṁ mānuṣaṁ janma
tad apy adhruvam arthadam*

“One who is sufficiently intelligent should use the human form of body from the very beginning of life—in other words, from the tender age of childhood—to practice the activities of devotional service. The human body is most rarely achieved, and although temporary like other bodies, it is meaningful because in human life one can perform devotional service. Even a slight amount of sincere devotional service can give one complete perfection.” [*Bhāg. 7.6.1*] This human birth is very rare. We should not be satisfied simply with becoming a big businessman. We must know what our next life is, what we are going to be.

There are different kinds of men. Some are called *karmīs*, some are called *jñānīs*, some are called *yogīs*, and some are called *bhaktas*. The *karmīs* are after material happiness. They want the best material comforts in this life, and they want to be elevated to the heavenly planets after death. The *jñānīs* also want happiness, but being fed up with the materialistic way of life, they want to merge into the existence of Brahman, the Absolute. The *yogīs*

want mystic power. And the *bhaktas*, the devotees, simply want the service of the Lord. But unless one understands who the Lord is, how can one render service to Him? So cultivating knowledge of God is the highest culture.

There are different kinds of culture: the culture of the *karmīs*, the culture of the *jñānīs*, the culture of the *yogīs*, and the culture of the *bhaktas*. Actually, all of these people are called *yogīs* if they are doing their duty sincerely. Then they are known as *karma-yogīs*, *jñāna-yogīs*, *dhyāna-yogīs*, and *bhakti-yogīs*. But in *Bhagavad-gītā* [6.47] Kṛṣṇa says,

*yogīnām api sarveṣāṁ
mad-gatenāntarātmanā
śraddhāvān bhajate yo mām
sa me yuktatamo mataḥ*

Who is the first-class *yogī*? Kṛṣṇa answers, “He who is always thinking of Me.” This means the Kṛṣṇa conscious person is the best *yogī*. As already mentioned, there are different kinds of *yogīs* (the *karma-yogī*, the *jñāna-yogī*, the *dhyāna-yogī*, and the *bhakti-yogī*), but the best *yogī* is he who always thinks of Kṛṣṇa within himself with faith and love. One who is rendering service to the Lord—he is the first-class *yogī*.

So we request everyone to try to know what he is, what Kṛṣṇa is, what his relationship with Kṛṣṇa is, what his real life is,

(continued on page 28)

International Society for Krishna Consciousness

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

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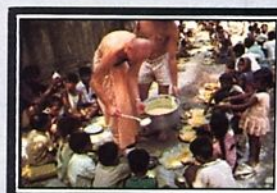
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WOMEN IN KṚṢṆA CONSCIOUSNESS

Questions and Answers

by VIŚĀKHĀ-DEVĪ DĀSĪ

Q. Why should women be interested in Kṛṣṇa consciousness?

A. So they can realize they're not women! If we think of ourselves as "women," we reveal our ignorance of our actual identity. The word *woman* refers to the temporary material body, not to the eternal, spiritual soul, the person within the body. In maybe forty or sixty years, the body I'm wearing will perish, and I'll no longer be a woman. But the living force, the soul within the body, won't perish. Kṛṣṇa consciousness provides an understanding of the relationship between the soul and matter and the Supreme Soul, Kṛṣṇa. Human intelligence is meant for contemplating these subjects, not for dwelling on materialistic thoughts based on a false identification with the temporary body.

Q. What do you think of the women's liberation movement?

A. The highest liberation is to go back home, back to Godhead, and never again face the miseries of birth, old age, disease, and death. Although the women's liberation movement may offer some worthwhile proposals, it generally ignores this highest goal. But by becoming Kṛṣṇa conscious, a woman is liberated in this life and the next; so Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the real women's liberation movement.

Q. In the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, what is the position of women devotees?

A. From the spiritual viewpoint, men and women (and all other living entities) are

equal. The soul within the body is part and parcel of Kṛṣṇa and is equal in quality and quantity to all other souls. But from the material, bodily point of view, obviously there are differences.

Q. What about those differences?

A. As far as serving Kṛṣṇa and preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness, material differences are ignored. Men and women serve the Supreme Lord's Deity form in the temple—worshipping, cleaning, cooking—and they go out daily to preach to interested people and distribute literature about Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Women with children both care for their children and spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness alongside their unmarried god sisters. Actually, to raise a child as a devotee of God is in itself a great service to Kṛṣṇa.

Q. But I've heard that you think women are inferior to men. Is that true?

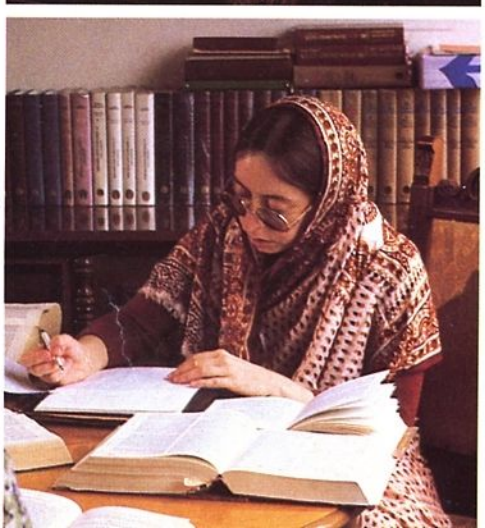
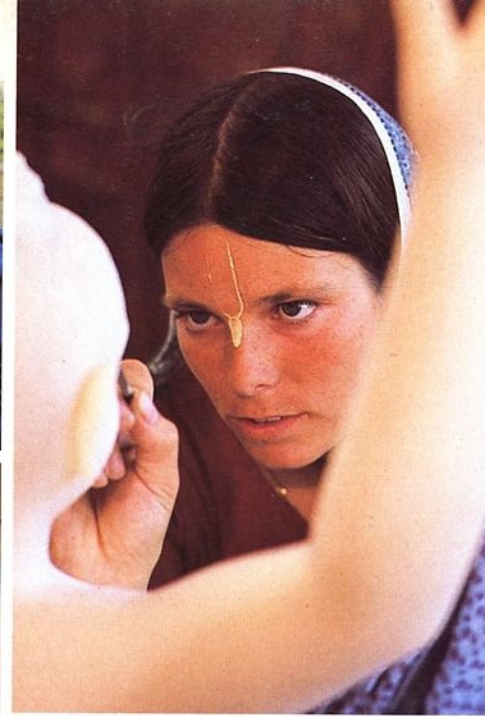
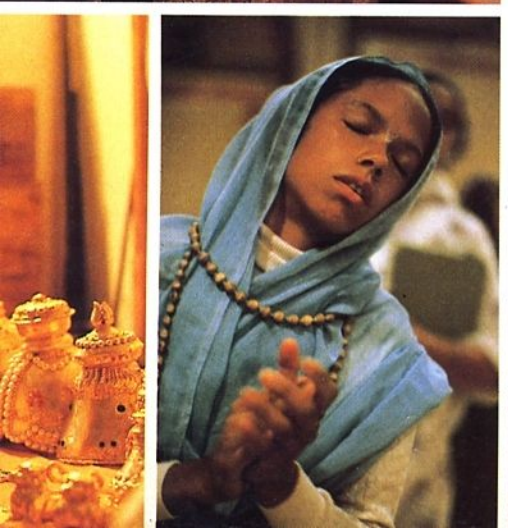
A. As I mentioned before, spiritually there's no distinction. In *Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa says that both men and women are eligible to attain the highest destination, to return to the kingdom of God, if they take shelter of Him. Spiritually there's no duality, no inferiority or superiority based on the body and mind. But there *are* material differences: women are generally not as physically strong as men, but only women can bear children and nourish them with their breast milk. So it's natural that women's duties will differ from men's in some ways.

Q. Today many people reject that idea. It won't make your movement very popular among women.

A. We can't change the Kṛṣṇa conscious philosophy to make it popular. Nor are we so concerned with popularity. We simply want to present Kṛṣṇa's teachings as they are, and those who hear receptively will benefit. The first step in spiritual understanding is to transcend the bodily concept of life. To think "I am a man" or "I am a



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woman” is to be in illusion. The body is a material dress for the soul, a dress that’s changing from moment to moment, as the body develops, and will change entirely at death. But the constant within the body is the soul, which is not subject to birth, death, or any other material influence.

Q. How do men and women relate to each other in Kṛṣṇa consciousness?

A. Except for his wife, a Kṛṣṇa conscious man should regard every woman as he would his mother. So in Kṛṣṇa consciousness the relationship between men and women is based not on lust but on mutual respect, with Kṛṣṇa in the center. If this mentality is absent, men and women mix too freely, and their relationship may easily degrade into immorality and mutual exploitation.

Q. What about in more intimate relationships?

A. In more intimate relationships, the man protects the woman. In a woman’s youth, her father protects her; after marriage, her husband protects her; and later on in life her grown sons protect her.

Q. What do you mean, “protect”?

A. Protect from illusion and degradation. That is real protection. When the father, husband, and sons are fully trained in spiritual principles by the spiritual master, they are qualified to guide their family members.

Bhagavad-gītā points out that when the religious tradition in the family breaks down, the chastity and faithfulness of women are shaken. As men and women mix freely, the result is abortion and unwanted progeny. From such immorality and licentiousness come broken homes and the degradation of the whole society. Conversely, when the husband is a dedicated devotee of God and the wife is loyal, good progeny and a harmonious society result.

Q. But what if the woman wants to be more than just a housewife?

A. That is welcome and encouraged. Women in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement sing, write, photograph, paint, act, sculpt, teach, and dance. One of my god-sisters in our West Virginia farm community is an architect. Now she’s helping plan out a huge temple that the devotees there will build over the next few years. So there’s no hindrance at all to a woman who wants to use her special talents to serve Kṛṣṇa.

Q. Can women become leaders?

A. Real leadership is to teach by example and precept how to go back home, back to Godhead, at the end of this lifetime. A fully Kṛṣṇa conscious devotee, whether man or woman, is actually more of a leader than all the so-called leaders of modern society. Materialistic leaders simply increase our material problems; a devotee decreases those problems to nil. That is real leadership.

The Biography of a Pure Devotee

CHANTING AND SPEAKING FOR ALL TO HEAR

Fall, 1966: Tompkins Square Park, the Lower East Side, New York. Street *sādhus* and street musicians, hippie seekers and the simply curious—all joined with Śrīla Prabhupāda in chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa in the park.

by ŚRĪLA SATSVARŪPA DĀSA GOSWAMI

Since he had broken the American silence with his public chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa in Washington Square Park, in the heart of Greenwich Village, Śrīla Prabhupāda had been sending out small "parades" of devotees, chanting and playing hand cymbals through the streets of the Lower East Side. Now he was ready for a bold foray into one of the centers of the midsixties hippie scene—Tompkins Square Park.

Tompkins Square Park was the park on the Lower East Side. Since the weather was still warm and it was Sunday, the park was crowded with people. Almost all the space on the benches that lined the walkways was occupied. There were old people, mostly Ukrainians, dressed in outdated suits and sweaters, even in the warm weather, sitting together in clans, talking. There were many children in the park also, mostly Puerto Ricans and blacks but also fair-haired, hard-faced slum kids racing around on bikes or playing with balls and Frisbees. The basketball and handball courts were mostly taken by the teenagers. And as always, there were plenty of loose, running dogs.

And the hippies were there, different from the others. The bearded Bohemian men and their long-haired young girlfriends dressed in old blue jeans were still an unusual sight. Even in the Lower East Side melting pot, their presence created tension. They were from middle-class families, and so they had not been driven to the slums by dire economic necessity. This created conflicts in their dealings with the underprivileged immigrants. And the hippies' well-known proclivity for psychedelic drugs, their revolt against their families and affluence, and their absorption in the avant-garde sometimes made them the jeered minority among their

neighbors. But the hippies just wanted to do their own thing and create their own revolution for "love and peace," so usually they were tolerated, although not appreciated.

There were various groups among the young and hip at Tompkins Square Park. There were friends who had gone to the same school together, who took the same drug together, or who agreed on a particular philosophy of art, literature, politics, or metaphysics. There were lovers. There were groups hanging out together for reasons undecipherable, except for the common purpose of doing their own thing. And there were others, who lived like hermits—a loner would sit on a park bench, analyzing the effects of cocaine, looking up at the strangely rustling green leaves of the trees and the blue sky above the tenements and then down to the garbage at his feet, as he helplessly followed his mind from fear to illumination, to disgust to hallucination, on and on, until after a few hours the drug began to wear off and he was again a common stranger. Sometimes they would sit up all night, "spaced out" in the park, until at last, in the light of morning, they would stretch out on benches to sleep.

But whatever the hippies' diverse interests and drives, the Lower East Side was an essential part of the mystique. It was not just a dirty slum; it was the best place in the world to conduct the experiment in consciousness. For all its filth and threat of violence and the confined life of its brownstone tenements, the Lower East Side was still the forefront of the revolution in mind expansion. Unless you were living there and taking psychedelics or marijuana, or at least intellectually pursuing the quest for free personal religion, you weren't enlightened, and you weren't taking part in the most progressive evolution of human consciousness. And it was this searching—a quest beyond the humdrum existence of the ordinary, materialistic,

"straight" American—that brought unity to the otherwise eclectic gathering of hippies on the Lower East Side.

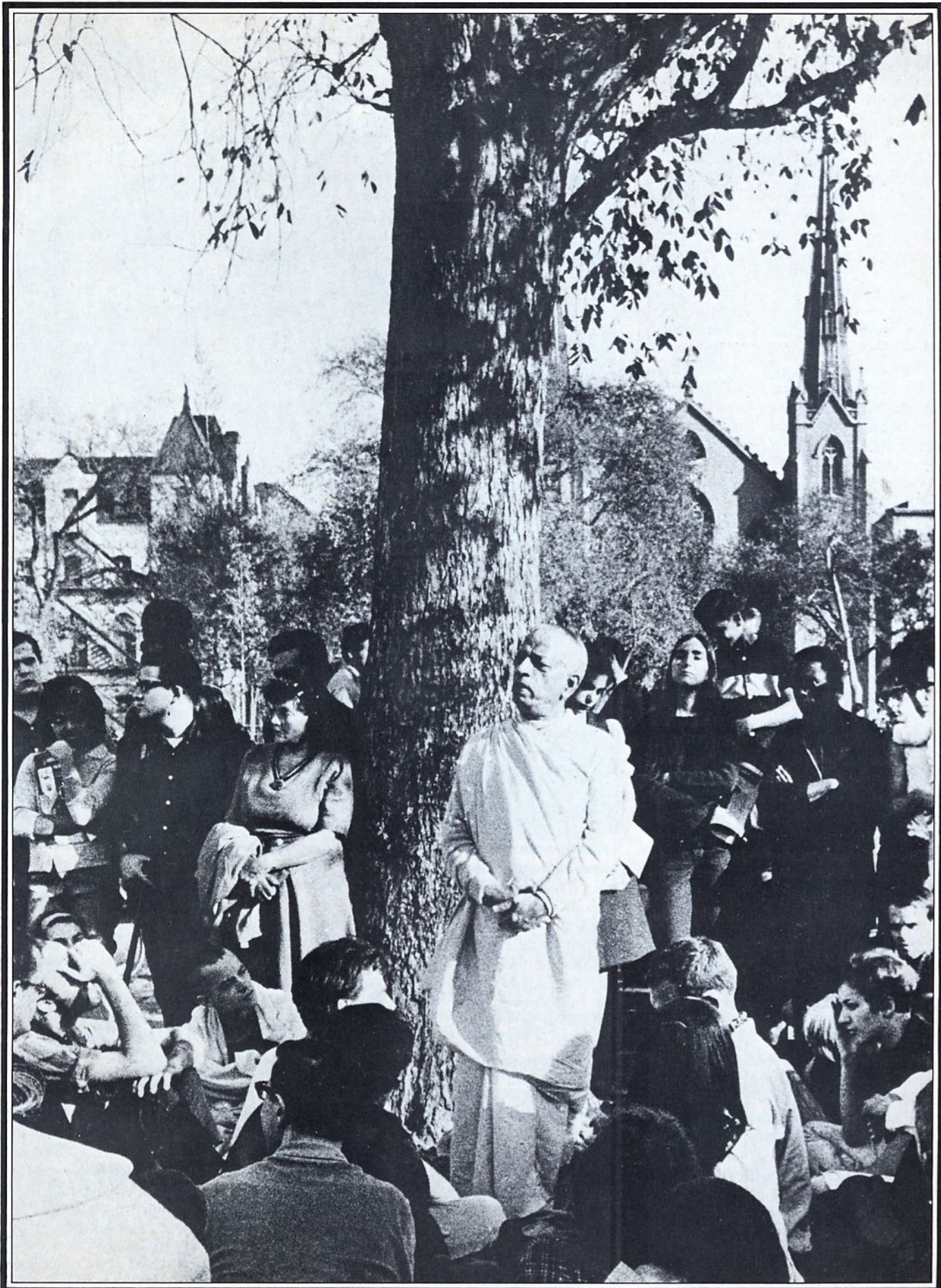
Swamiji, accompanied by half a dozen disciples, was walking the eight blocks to the park from the storefront. Brahmānanda carried the harmonium and the Swami's drum. Kīrtanānanda, now shaven-headed at Swamiji's request and dressed in loose-flowing canary yellow robes, created an extra sensation. Drivers pulled their cars over to have a look, their passengers leaning forward, agape at the outrageous dress and shaved head. As the group passed a store, people inside would poke each other and indicate the spectacle. People came to the windows of their tenements, taking in the Swami and his group as if a parade were passing. The Puerto Rican tough guys, especially, couldn't restrain themselves from exaggerated reactions. "Hey, Buddha!" they taunted. "Hey, you forgot to change your pajamas!" They made shrill screams as if imitating Indian war whoops they had heard in Hollywood westerns.

"Hey, A-rabs!" exclaimed one heckler, who began imitating what he thought was an Eastern dance. No one on the street knew anything about Kṛṣṇa consciousness, nor even of Hindu culture and customs. To them, the Swami's entourage was just a bunch of crazy hippies showing off. But they didn't quite know what to make of the Swami. He was different. Nevertheless, they were suspicious. Some, however, like Irving Halpern, a veteran Lower East Side resident, felt sympathetic toward this stranger, who was "apparently a very dignified person on a peaceful mission."

Irving Halpern: *A lot of people had spectacularized notions of what a swami*

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

Śrīla Prabhupāda speaks in Tompkins Square Park. This photograph ran on the front page of *The East Village Other*, a popular underground newspaper.



was. As though they were going to suddenly see people lying on little mattresses made out of nails—and all kinds of other absurd notions. Yet here came just a very graceful, peaceful, gentle, obviously well-meaning being into a lot of hostility.

“Hippies!”

“What are they, Communists?”

While the young taunted, the middle-aged and elderly shook their heads or stared, cold and uncomprehending. The way to the park was spotted with blasphemies, ribald jokes, and tension, but no violence. After the successful *kīrtana* in Washington Square Park, Prabhupāda had regularly been sending out “parades” of three or four devotees, chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa and playing hand cymbals through the streets and sidewalks of the Lower East Side. On one occasion, they had been bombarded with water balloons and eggs, and they were sometimes faced with bullies looking for a fight. But they were never attacked—just stared at, laughed at, or shouted after.

Today, the ethnic neighbors just assumed that Prabhupāda and his followers had come onto the streets dressed in outlandish costumes as a joke, just to turn everything topsy-turvy and cause stares and howls. They felt that their responses were only natural for any normal, respectable American slum-dweller.

So it was quite an adventure before the group even reached the park. Swamiji, however, remained unaffected. “What are they saying?” he asked once or twice, and Brahmānanda explained. Prabhupāda had a way of holding his head high, his chin up, as he walked forward. It made him look aristocratic and determined. His vision was spiritual—he saw everyone as a spiritual soul and Kṛṣṇa as the controller of everything. Yet aside from that, even from a worldly point of view he was unafraid of the city’s pandemonium. After all, he was an experienced “Calcutta man.”

The *kīrtana* had been going for about ten minutes when Swamiji arrived. Stepping out of his white rubber slippers, just as if he were home in the temple, he sat down on the rug with his followers, who had now stopped their singing and were watching him. He wore a pink sweater, and around his shoulders a *khādī* wrapper. He smiled. Looking at his group, he indicated the rhythm by counting, one . . . two . . . three. Then he began clapping his hands heavily as he continued counting, “One . . . two . . . three.” The *karatālas* followed, at first with wrong beats, but he kept the rhythm by clapping his hands, and then they got it, clapping hands, clashing cymbals artlessly to a slow, steady beat.

He began singing prayers that no one else knew. *Vande ’ham śrī-guroḥ śrī-yuta-*

pada-kamalaṁ śrī-gurūn vaiṣṇavāṁś ca. His voice was sweet like the harmonium, rich in the nuances of Bengali melody. Sitting on the rug under a large oak tree, he sang the mysterious Sanskrit prayers. None of his followers knew any *mantra* but Hare Kṛṣṇa, but they knew Swamiji. And they kept the rhythm, listening closely to him while the trucks rumbled on the street and the conga drums pulsed in the distance.

As he sang—*śrī-rūpaṁ sāgrajātam*—the dogs came by, kids stared, a few mockers pointed fingers: “Hey, who is that priest, man?” But his voice was a shelter beyond the clashing dualities. His boys went on ringing cymbals while he sang

Out of love for Swamiji, they broke loose from their surroundings and joined him as a chanting congregation.

alone: *śrī-rādhā-kṛṣṇa-pādān.*

Prabhupāda sang prayers in praise of the pure conjugal love of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī for Kṛṣṇa, the beloved of the *gopīs*. Each word, passed down for hundreds of years by the intimate associates of Kṛṣṇa, was saturated with deep transcendental meaning that only he understood. *Saha-gaṇa-lalitā-śrī-viśākhānvitāṁś ca.* They waited for him to begin Hare Kṛṣṇa, although hearing him chant was exciting enough.

More people came—which was what Prabhupāda wanted. He wanted them chanting and dancing with him, and now his followers wanted that too. They wanted to be with him. They had tried together at the U.N., Ananda Ashram, and Washington Square Park. It seemed that this would be the thing they would always do—go with Swamiji and sit and chant. He would always be with them, chanting.

Then he began the *mantra*—Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. They responded, too low and muddled at first, but he returned it to them again, singing it right and triumphant. Again they responded, gaining heart, ringing *karatālas* and clapping

hands—one . . . two . . . three, one . . . two . . . three. Again he sang it alone, and they stayed, hanging closely on each word, clapping, beating cymbals, and watching him looking back at them from his inner concentration—his old-age wisdom, his *bhakti*—and out of love for Swamiji, they broke loose from their surroundings and joined him as a chanting congregation. Swamiji played his small drum, holding its strap in his left hand, bracing the drum against his body, and with his right hand playing intricate *mṛdaṅga* rhythms.

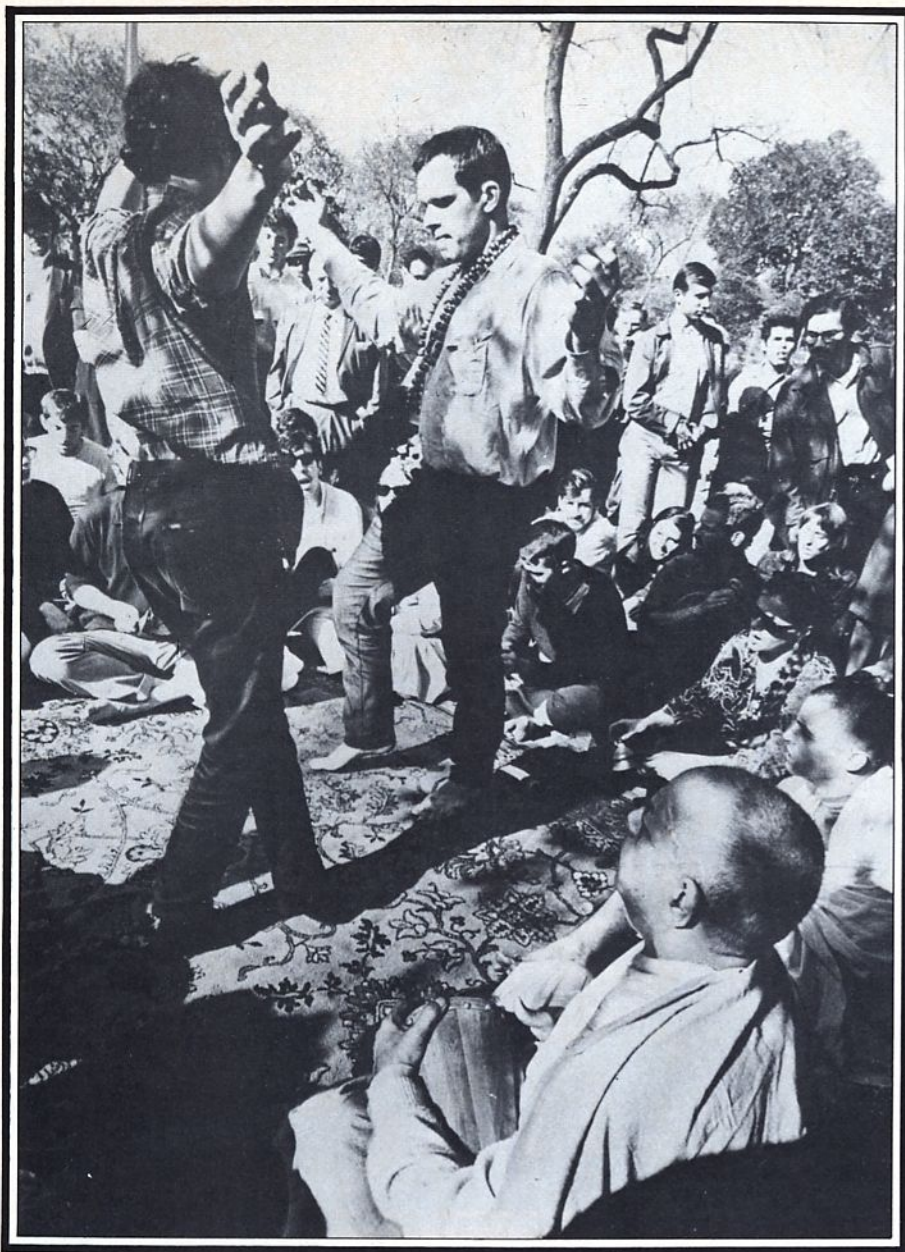
Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. He was going strong after half an hour, repeating the *mantra*, carrying them with him as interested onlookers gathered in greater numbers. A few hippies sat down on the edge of the rug, copying the cross-legged sitting posture, listening, clapping, trying the chanting, and the small inner circle of Prabhupāda and his followers grew, as gradually more people joined.

As always, his *kīrtana* attracted musicians.

Irving Halpern: *I make flutes, and I play musical instruments. There are all kinds of different instruments that I make. When the Swami came, I went up and started playing, and he welcomed me. Whenever a new musician would join and play their first note, he would extend his arms. It would be as though he had stepped up to the podium and was going to lead the New York Philharmonic. I mean, there was this gesture that every musician knows. You just know when someone else wants you to play with them and feels good that you are playing with them. And this very basic kind of musician communication was there with him, and I related to it very quickly. And I was happy about it.*

Lone musicians were always loitering in different parts of the park, and when they heard they could play with the Swami’s chanting and that they were welcome, then they began to come by, one by one. A saxophone player came just because there was such a strong rhythm section to play with. Others, like Irving Halpern, saw it as something spiritual, with good vibrations. As the musicians joined, more passersby were drawn into the *kīrtana*. Prabhupāda had been singing both lead and chorus, and many who had joined now sang the lead part also, so that there was a constant chorus of chanting. During the afternoon, the crowd grew to more than a hundred, with a dozen musicians trying—with their conga and bongo drums, bamboo flutes, metal flutes, mouth organs, wood and metal “clackers,” tambourines, and guitars—to stay with the Swami.

Irving Halpern: *The park resounded. The musicians were very careful in listen-*



As sweet fumes of frankincense billowed among the flutists, drummers, and chanters, Swamiji motioned to his disciples, and they got up and began dancing.

ing to the mantras. When the Swami sang Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare! Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare, there was sometimes a Kṛ-ṣa-ṇa, a tripling of what had been a double syllable. It would be usually on the first stanza, and the musicians really picked up on it. The Swami would pronounce it in a particular way, and the musicians were really meticulous and listened very carefully to the way the Swami would sing. And we began to notice that there were different melodies for the same brief sentence, and we got to count on that one regularity, like one would count on the conductor of an orchestra or the lead singer of a madrigal. It was really pleasant, and people would dig one another in their ribs. They would say, "Hey, see!" We would catch and repeat a particular subtle pro-

nunciation of a Sanskrit phrase that the audience, in their enthusiasm, while they would be dancing or playing, had perhaps missed. Or the Swami would add an extra beat, but it meant something, in the way in which the drummer, who at that time was the Swami, the main drummer, would hit the drums.

I have talked to a couple of musicians about it, and we agreed that in his head this Swami must have had hundreds and hundreds of melodies that had been brought back from the real learning from the other side of the world. So many people came there just to tune in to the musical gift, the transmission of the dharma. "Hey," they would say, "listen to this holy monk." People were really sure there were going to be unusual feats, grandstanding, flashy levitation, or whatever else people expect-

ed was going to happen. But when the simplicity of what the Swami was really saying, when you began to sense it—whether you were motivated to actually make a lifetime commitment and go this way of life, or whether you merely wanted to appreciate it and place it in a place and give certain due respect to it—it turned you around.

And that was interesting, too, the different ways in which people regarded the kīrtana. Some people thought it was a prelude. Some people thought it was a main event. Some people liked the music. Some people liked the poetic sound of it.

Then Allen Ginsberg and Peter Orlovsky arrived, along with some of their friends. Allen surveyed the scene and found a seat among the chanters. With his black beard, his eyeglasses, his bald spot surrounded by long, black ringlets of hair, Allen Ginsberg, the poet-patriarch come to join the chanting, greatly enhanced the local prestige of the kīrtana. Prabhupāda, while continuing his ecstatic chanting and drum-playing, acknowledged Allen and smiled.

A reporter from *The New York Times* dropped by and asked Allen for an interview, but he refused: "A man should not be disturbed while worshipping." The *Times* would have to wait.

Allen: *Tompkins Square Park was a hotbed of spiritual conflict in those days, so it was absolutely great. All of a sudden, in the midst of all the talk and drugs and theories, for some people to put their bodies, their singing, to break through the intellectual ice and come out with total bhakti—that was really amazing.*

Prabhupāda was striking to see. His brow was furrowed in the effort of singing loud, and his visage was strong. The veins in his temples stood out visibly, and his jaw jutted forward as he sang his "Hare Kṛṣṇa! Hare Kṛṣṇa!" for all to hear. Although his demeanor was pleasant, his chanting was intensive, sometimes straining, and everything about him was concentration.

It wasn't someone else's yoga retreat or silent peace vigil, but a pure chanting be-in of Prabhupāda's own doing. It was a new wave, something everyone could take part in. The community seemed to be accepting it. It became so popular that the ice cream vendor came over to make sales. Beside Prabhupāda a group of young, blond-haired boys, five or six years old, were just sitting around. A young Polish boy stood staring. Someone began burning frankincense on a glowing coal in a metal strainer, and the sweet fumes billowed among the flutists, drummers, and chanters.

Swamiji motioned to his disciples, and they got up and began dancing. Prabhupāda gave a gesture of acceptance by a typically Indian movement of his head,

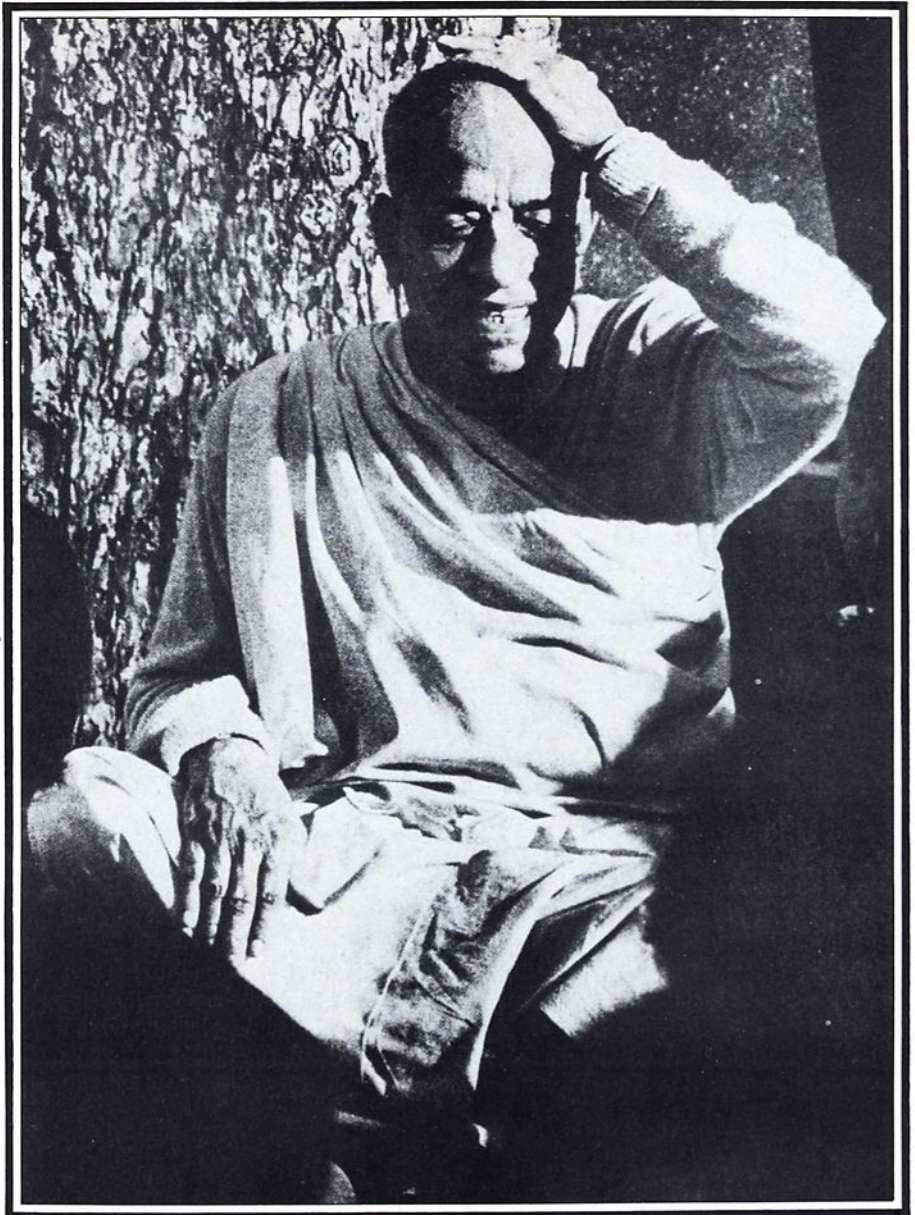
and then he raised his arms, inviting more dancers.

The harmonium played a constant drone, and a boy wearing a military fatigue jacket improvised atonal creations on a wooden recorder. Yet the total sound of the instruments blended, and Swamiji's voice emerged above the mulling tones of each chord. And so it went for hours. Prabhupāda held his head and shoulders erect, although at the end of each line of the *mantra* he would sometimes shrug his shoulders before he started the next line. His disciples stayed close by him, sitting on the same rug, religious ecstasy visible in their eyes. Finally, he stopped.

Immediately he stood up, and they knew he was going to speak. It was four o'clock, and the warm autumn sun was still shining on the park. The atmosphere was peaceful and the audience attentive and mellow from the concentration on the *mantra*. He began to speak to them, thanking everyone for joining in the *kīrtana*. The chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa, he said, had been introduced five hundred years ago in West Bengal by Caitanya Mahāprabhu. *Hare* means "O energy of the Lord," Kṛṣṇa is the Lord, and Rāma is also a name of the Supreme Lord, meaning "the highest pleasure." His disciples sat at his feet, listening. Rāya Rāma squinted through his shielding hand into the sun to see Swamiji, and Kīrtanānanda's head was cocked to one side, like a bird's who is listening to the ground.

He stood erect by the stout oak, his hands folded loosely before him in a proper speaker's posture, his light saffron robes covering him gracefully. The tree behind him seemed perfectly placed, and the sunshine dappled leafy shadows against the thick trunk. Behind him, through the grove of trees, was the steeple of St. Brigid's. On his right was a dumpy, middle-aged woman wearing a dress and hairdo that had been out of style in the United States for twenty-five years. On his left was a bold-looking hippie girl in tight denims and beside her a young black man in a black sweater, his arms folded across his chest. Next was a young father holding an infant, then a bearded young street *sādhu*, his long hair parted in the middle, and two ordinary, short-haired middle-class men and their young female companions. Many in the crowd, although standing close by, became distracted, looking off here and there.

Prabhupāda explained that there are three platforms—sensual, mental, and intellectual—and above them is the spiritual platform. The chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa is on the spiritual platform, and it is the best process for reviving our eternal, blissful consciousness. He invited everyone to attend the meetings at 26 Second Avenue and concluded his brief speech by saying,



Śrīla Prabhupāda as he appeared inside *The East Village Other*, in the article describing his first chanting session in Tompkins Square Park.

"Thank you very much. Please chant with us." Then he sat down, took the drum, and began the *kīrtana* again.

If it were risky for a seventy-one-year-old man to thump a drum and shout so loud, then he would take that risk for Kṛṣṇa. It was too good to stop. He had come far from Vṛndāvana, survived the non-Kṛṣṇa *yoga* society, waited all winter in obscurity. America had waited hundreds of years with no Kṛṣṇa-chanting. No "Hare Kṛṣṇa" had come from Thoreau's or Emerson's appreciations, though they had pored over English translations of the *Gītā* and *Purānas*. And no *kīrtana* had come from Vivekananda's famous speech on behalf of Hinduism at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893. So now that he finally had *kṛṣṇa-bhakti* going, flowing like the Ganges to the sea, it could not stop. In his heart he felt the infinite

will of Lord Caitanya to deliver the fallen souls.

He knew this was the desire of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu and his own spiritual master, even though caste-conscious *brāhmaṇas* in India would disapprove of his associating with such untouchables as these drug-mad American meat-eaters and their girlfriends. But Swamiji explained that he was in full accord with the scriptures. The *Bhāgavatam* had clearly stated that Kṛṣṇa consciousness should be delivered to all races. Everyone was a spiritual soul, and regardless of birth they could be brought to the highest spiritual platform by chanting the holy name. Never mind whatever sinful things they were doing, these people were perfect candidates for Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Tompkins Square Park was Kṛṣṇa's plan; it was also part of the earth, and these people were members of the hu-

man race. And the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa was the *dharma* of the age.

* * *

Walking back home in the early evening, past the shops and crowded tenements, followed by more than a dozen interested new people from the park, the Swami again sustained occasional shouts and taunts. But those who followed him from the park were still feeling the aura of an ecstasy that easily tolerated a few taunts from the street. Prabhupāda, especially, was undisturbed. As he walked with his head high, not speaking, he was gravely absorbed in his thoughts. And yet his eyes actively noticed people and places and exchanged glances with those whom he passed on his way along Seventh Street, past the churches and funeral homes, across First Avenue to the noisy, heavily trafficked Second Avenue, then down Second past liquor stores, coin laundries, delicatessens, past the Iglesia Alianza Cristiana Missionera, the Koh-I-Noor Intercontinental Restaurant Palace, then past the Church of the Nativity, and finally back home to number twenty-six.

A few days later, Ravindra Svarūpa was walking down Second Avenue, on his way to the Swami's morning class, when an acquaintance came out of the Gems Spa Candy and News Store and said, "Hey, your Swami is in the newspaper. Did you see?" "Yeah," Ravindra Svarūpa replied, "*The New York Times*."

"No," his friend said. "Today." And he held up a copy of the latest edition of *The East Village Other*. The front page was filled with a two-color photo of the Swami, his hands folded decorously at his waist, standing in yellow robes in front of the big tree in Tompkins Square Park. He was speaking to a small crowd that had gathered around, and his disciples were at his feet. The big steeple of St. Brigid's formed a silhouette behind him.

Above the photo was the single headline, "SAVE EARTH NOW!!" and beneath was the *mantra*: "HARE KRISHNA HARE KRISHNA KRISHNA KRISHNA HARE HARE HARE HARE RAMA HARE RAMA RAMA HARE HARE." Below the *mantra* were the words, "See Centerfold." That was the whole front page.

Ravindra Svarūpa took the newspaper and opened to the center, where he found a long article and a large photo of Swamiji with his left hand on his head, grinning blissfully in an unusual, casual moment. His friend gave him the paper, and Ravindra Svarūpa hurried to Swamiji. When he reached the storefront, several boys went along with him to show Swamiji the paper. "Look!" Ravindra Svarūpa handed it over. "This is the biggest local newspaper! Everybody reads it." Swamiji opened his eyes wide. He read aloud, "Save earth now."

Was it an ecological pun? Was it a reference to staving off nuclear disaster? Was it poking fun at Swamiji's evangelism?

"Well," said Umāpati, "after all, this is *The East Village Other*. It could mean anything."

"Swamiji is saving the earth," Kīrtanānanda said.

"We are trying to," Prabhupāda replied, "by Kṛṣṇa's grace." Methodically, he put on the eyeglasses he usually reserved for reading the *Bhāgavatam* and carefully appraised the page from top to bottom. The newspaper looked incongruous in his hands. Then he began turning the pages. He stopped at the centerfold and looked at the picture of himself and

He succeeded in convincing the world's toughest audience that he knew the way to God: Turn Off, Sing Out, and Fall In.

laughed, then paused, studying the article. "So," he said, "read it." He handed the paper to Hayagrīva.

"Once upon a time, . . ." Hayagrīva began loudly. It was a fanciful story of a group of theologians who had killed an old man in a church and of the subsequent press report that God was now dead. But, the story went on, some people didn't believe it. They had dug up the body and found it to be "not the body of God, but that of His P. R. man: organized religion. At once the good tidings swept across the wide world. GOD LIVES! . . . But where was God?" Hayagrīva read dramatically to an enthralled group. . . .

A full-page ad in *The New York Times*, offering a reward for information leading to the discovery of the whereabouts of God, and signed by Martin Luther King and Ronald Reagan, brought no response. People began to worry and wonder again. "God," said some people, "lives in a sugar cube." Others whispered that the sacred secret was in a cigarette.

But while all this was going on, an old man, one year past his allotted three score and ten, wandered into New York's East Village and set about to prove to the world that he knew where God could be found. In only three months, the man, Swami A. C. Bhaktivedanta, succeeded in convincing the

world's toughest audience—Bohemians, acid-heads, potheads, and hippies—that he knew the way to God: Turn Off, Sing Out, and Fall In. This new brand of holy man, with all due deference to Dr. Leary, has come forth with a brand of "Consciousness Expansion" that's sweeter than acid, cheaper than pot, and nonbustible by fuzz. How is all this possible? "Through Krishna," the Swami says.

The boys broke into cheers and applause. Acyutānanda apologized to Swamiji for the language of the article: "It's a hippie newspaper."

"That's all right," said Prabhupāda. "He has written it in his own way. But he has said that we are giving God. They are saying that God is dead. But it is false. We are directly presenting, 'Here is God.' Who can deny it? So many theologians and people may say there is no God, but the Vaiṣṇava hands God over to you freely, as a commodity: 'Here is God.' So he has marked this. It is very good."

The article was long. "For the cynical New Yorker," it said, "living, visible, tangible proof can be found at 26 Second Avenue, Monday, Wednesday, and Friday between seven and nine." The article described the evening *kīrtanas*, quoted from Prabhupāda's lecture, and mentioned "a rhythmic, hypnotic sixteen-word chant, Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Hare Hare, sung for hours on end to the accompaniment of hand clapping, cymbals, and bells." Swamiji said that simply because the *mantra* was there, the article was perfect.

The article also included testimony from the Swami's disciples:

I started chanting to myself, like the Swami said, as I walked down the street—Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Hare Hare—over and over, and suddenly everything started looking so beautiful, the kids, the old men and women . . . even the creeps looked beautiful . . . to say nothing of the trees and flowers. It was like I had taken a dozen doses of LSD. But I knew there was a difference. There's no coming down from this. I can always do this any time, anywhere. It is always with you.

Without sarcasm, the article referred to the Swami's discipline forbidding coffee, tea, meat, eggs, and cigarettes, "to say nothing of marijuana, LSD, alcohol, and illicit sex." Obviously the author admired Swamiji: "the energetic old man, a leading exponent of the philosophy of Personalism, which holds that the one God is a person but that His form is spiritual." The article ended with a hint that Tompkins Square Park would see similar spiritual happenings each weekend: "There in the shadow of Hoving's Hill, God lives in a trancelike dance and chant." 🌿

(To be continued)

ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA SPEAKS OUT

On Being Subordinate

The following conversation between His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda and a guest took place in September 1968 at the Seattle Kṛṣṇa center.

Guest: Can you explain subordination?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Subordination? Yes, it is simple. Everyone must be subordinate to somebody else. Are you not subordinate to somebody?

Guest: Yes, in a material sense. But in the spiritual sense, I don't feel subordinate to anyone.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: When you understand what spiritual life is, you will see that in the spiritual sense also you are subordinate, because your nature is to be subordinate. What do you mean by spiritual and material?

Guest: Well, for example, at my job I'm subordinate to my boss, but in my real being, my spiritual being, I don't feel I am subordinate to my boss or anyone else. In other words, I don't feel that I have to bow down to anybody, and I don't feel that anybody has to bow down to me.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Why do you not want to bow down?

Guest: Because I don't feel that I owe anyone anything, or that anyone owes me anything.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: So, this is the material disease. We are forced to bow down, yet we think that we do not have to bow down. This is the disease.

Guest: No one can force me to bow down.

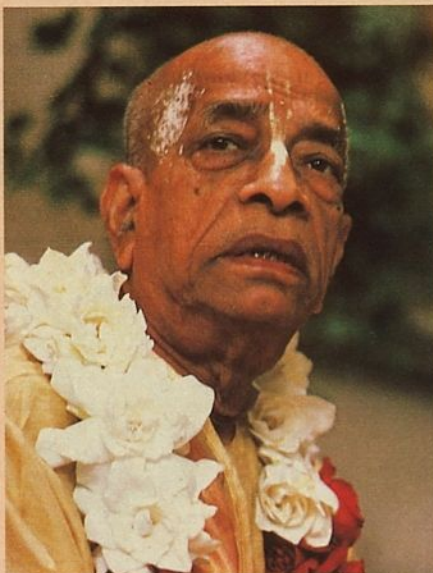
Śrīla Prabhupāda: Just try to understand. You say that you do not want to bow down—is that right?

Guest: That's basically true, yes.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Why?

Guest: Because I don't feel that I'm inferior to anyone.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: This is the disease of material existence. You have diagnosed your own disease. Everyone is thinking, "I want to be the master. I don't wish to bow down." Everyone is thinking like this. This is not only your disease; everyone has this diseased mentality: "Why shall I bow down?



Why shall I become subordinate?" But nature is forcing me to become subordinate. Now, why are people dying? Can you answer this question?

Guest: Why are people dying?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes, nobody wants to die, yet everyone is dying. Why?

Guest: Well, death is biologically determined—

Śrīla Prabhupāda: That means biological force! You are subordinate to biology. Then why do you say that you are independent?

Guest: Well, I feel that I'm—

Śrīla Prabhupāda: You are feeling wrongly. That is my point. You are subordinate, and you must bow down to biological force. When death comes, you can't say, "Oh, I don't obey you." Therefore, you are subordinate.

Guest: I am subordinate to God, yes.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: No, forget God for now. God is far away. Now we are speaking of the material nature. Just try to understand that although you do not want to die, you are forced to die because you are subordinate.

Guest: Oh, yes, that makes sense.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Then you understand your position—that you are subordinate. You cannot declare, "I am free; I am not subordinate." If you are thinking that you don't wish to be subordinate, that you don't have to bow down, then you are diseased.

Guest: O.K. But who or what should I bow down to?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: First of all try to fully understand your disease. Then we shall prescribe your medicine. You are bowing down to death, you are bowing down to disease, you are bowing down to old age—you are bowing down to so many things. You are forced to bow down, yet still you are thinking, "I cannot bow down; I don't like to bow down." But you have to bow down. Why do you forget your position? That forgetfulness is your disease.

The next step is to understand that since you are being forced to bow down, now you have to find where you shall be happy even by bowing down. And that is Kṛṣṇa. Your bowing down will not be stopped, because you are meant for that, but if you bow down to Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa's representative, you become happy. That's the difference. If you don't bow down to Kṛṣṇa and His representative, you'll be forced to bow down to something else—*māyā* [Kṛṣṇa's material nature]. That is your position. You cannot be free at any moment.

But if you bow down to Kṛṣṇa and His representative, you'll be happy. For example, a child is always bowing down to his parents, and he is happy. His mother says, "My dear child, please come and sit down here." "Yes," says the child, and he is happy. This is the nature of the child's relationship with his mother. Similarly, Kṛṣṇa and His representative are like loving parents, and we are like helpless children in the clutches of *māyā*. But if we bow down to them we shall be safe and happy.

So you cannot stop your bowing down—that is not possible. But you simply have to seek out the proper persons to bow down to. That's all. If you artificially think, "I am not going to bow down to anyone—I am independent," then you suffer. You simply have to bow down to the right person—and that is Kṛṣṇa, or Kṛṣṇa's representative.

ŚRĪMAD-BHĀGAVATAM

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

Second Canto: "The Cosmic Manifestation"

CHAPTER SEVEN

Scheduled Incarnations with Specific Functions

As our serialized presentation of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam continues, Lord Brahmā describes to his son and disciple Nārada the Lord's pastime incarnations in chronological order. First mentioned here is Lord Kapiladeva, who taught meditation on the personal form of the Lord.

TEXT 3

जज्ञे च कर्दमगृहे द्विज देवहृत्यां
स्त्रीभिः समं नवभिरात्मगतिं स्वमात्रे ।
ऊचे ययात्मशमलं गुणसङ्गपङ्क-
मस्मिन् विधूय कपिलस्य गतिं प्रपेदे ॥ ३ ॥

*jajñe ca kardama-grhe dvija devahūtyām
sṭrībhiḥ samam navabhir ātma-gatiṁ sva-mātre
ūce yayātma-śamalam guṇa-saṅga-paṅkam
asmin vidhūya kapilasya gatiṁ prapede*

jajñe—took birth; *ca*—also; *kardama*—the Prajāpati named Kardama; *grhe*—in the house of; *dvija*—O brāhmaṇa; *devahūtyām*—in the womb of Devahūti; *sṭrībhiḥ*—by women; *samam*—accompanied by; *navabhiḥ*—by nine; *ātma-gatiṁ*—spiritual realization; *sva-mātre*—unto His own mother; *ūce*—uttered; *yayā*—by which; *ātma-śamalam*—coverings of the spirit soul; *guṇa-saṅga*—associated with the modes of nature; *paṅkam*—mud; *asmin*—this very life; *vidhūya*—being washed off; *kapilasya*—of Lord Kapila; *gatiṁ*—liberation; *prapede*—achieved.

TRANSLATION

The Lord then appeared as the Kapila incarnation, being the son of the prajāpati brāhmaṇa Kardama and his wife, Devahūti, along with nine other women [sisters]. He spoke to His mother about self-realization, by which, in that very lifetime, she became fully cleansed of the mud of the material modes and thereby achieved liberation, the path of Kapila.

PURPORT

The instructions of Lord Kapila to His mother Devahūti are fully described in the Third Canto (Chapters 25–32) of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and anyone who follows the instructions can achieve the same liberation obtained by Devahūti. The Lord spoke *Bhagavad-gītā*, and thereby Arjuna achieved self-realization, and even today anyone who follows the path of Arjuna can also attain the same benefit as Śrī Arjuna. The scriptures are meant for this purpose. Foolish, unintelligent

persons make their own interpretations by imagination and thus mislead their followers, causing them to remain in the dungeon of material existence. However, simply by following the instructions imparted by Lord Kṛṣṇa or Lord Kapila, one can obtain the highest benefit, even today.

The word *ātma-gatiṁ* is significant in the sense of perfect knowledge of the Supreme. One should not be satisfied simply by knowing the qualitative equality of the Lord and the living being. One should know the Lord as much as can be known by our limited knowledge. It is impossible for the Lord to be known perfectly as He is, even by such liberated persons as Śiva or Brahmā, so what to speak of other demigods or men in this world. Still, by following the principles of the great devotees and the instructions available in the scriptures, one can know to a considerable extent the features of the Lord. His Lordship Kapila, the incarnation of the Lord, instructed His mother fully about the personal form of the Lord, and thereby she realized the personal form of the Lord and was able to achieve a place in the Vaikuṅṭhaloka where Lord Kapila predominates. Every incarnation of the Lord has His own abode in the spiritual sky. Therefore Lord Kapila also has His separate Vaikuṅṭha planet. The spiritual sky is not void. There are innumerable Vaikuṅṭha planets, and in each of them the Lord, by His innumerable expansions, predominates, and the pure devotees who are there also live in the same style as the Lord and His eternal associates.

When the Lord descends personally or by His personal plenary expansions, such incarnations are called *aṁśa*, *kalā*, *guṇa*, *yuga* and *manvantara* incarnations, and when the Lord's associates descend by the order of the Lord, such incarnations are called *śaktyāveśa* incarnations. But in all cases all the incarnations are supported by the invulnerable statements of the authorized scriptures, and not by any imagination of some self-interested propagandist. Such incarnations of the Lord, in either of the above categories, always declare the Supreme Personality of Godhead to be the ultimate truth. The impersonal conception of the supreme truth is just a process of negation of the form of the Lord from the mundane conception of the supreme truth.

The living entities, by their very constitution, are spiritually as good as the Lord, and the only difference between them is that the Lord is always supreme and pure, without contamination by the modes of material nature, whereas the living entities are apt to be contaminated by association with the material modes of goodness, passion and ignorance. This contamination by the material modes can be washed off completely by knowledge, renunciation and devotional service. Devotional service to the Lord is the ultimate issue, and therefore those who are directly engaged in the devotional service of the Lord not only acquire the necessary knowledge in spiritual science, but also attain detachment from material connection and are thus promoted to the kingdom of God by complete liberation, as stated in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (14.26):

*mām ca yo 'vyabhicāreṇa
bhakti-yogena sevate
sa guṇān samatītyaitān
brahma-bhūyāya kalpate*

Even in the nonliberated stage, a living entity can be directly engaged in the transcendental loving service of the Personality of Godhead Lord

Kṛṣṇa or His plenary expansions like Rāma and Narasiṁha. Thus, with the proportionate improvement of such transcendental devotional service, the devotee makes definite progress toward *brahma-gatim* or *ātma-gatim*, and ultimately attains *kapilasya gatim*, or the abode of the Lord, without difficulty. The antiseptic potency of devotional service to the Lord is so great that it can neutralize the material infection even in the present life of a devotee. A devotee does not need to wait for his next birth for complete liberation.

TEXT 4

अत्रेपत्यमभिकाङ्क्षन्त आह तुष्टो
दत्तो मयाहमिति यद् भगवान् स दत्तः ।
यत्पादपङ्कजपरागपवित्रदेहा
योगर्द्धिमापुरुमयीं यदुहैहयाद्याः ॥ ४ ॥

*atrer apatyam abhikāṅkṣata āha tuṣṭo
datto mayāham iti yad bhagavān sa dattaḥ
yat-pāda-pankaja-parāga-pavitra-dehā
yogarddhim āpur ubhayīm yadu-haihayādyāḥ*

atreh—of the sage Atri; *apatyam*—issue; *abhikāṅkṣataḥ*—having prayed for; *āha*—said it; *tuṣṭaḥ*—being satisfied; *dattaḥ*—given over; *mayā*—by me; *āham*—myself; *iti*—thus; *yat*—because; *bhagavān*—the Personality of Godhead; *saḥ*—He; *dattaḥ*—Dattātreya; *yat-pāda*—one whose feet; *pankaja*—lotus; *parāga*—dust; *pavitra*—purified; *dehāḥ*—body; *yoga*—mystic; *rdhim*—opulence; *āpuḥ*—got; *ubhayīm*—for both the worlds; *yadu*—the father of the Yadu dynasty; *haihaya-ādyāḥ*—and others, like King Haihaya.

TRANSLATION

The great sage Atri prayed for offspring, and the Lord, being satisfied with him, promised to incarnate as Atri's son, Dattātreya [Datta, the son of Atri]. And by the grace of the lotus feet of the Lord, many Yadus, Haihayas, etc., became so purified that they obtained both material and spiritual blessings.

PURPORT

Transcendental relations between the Personality of Godhead and the living entities are eternally established in five different affectionate humors, which are known as *śānta*, *dāsyā*, *sakhya*, *vātsalya* and *mādhurya*. The sage Atri was related with the Lord in the affectionate *vātsalya* humor, and therefore, as a result of his devotional perfection, he was inclined to have the Personality of Godhead as his son. The Lord accepted his prayer, and He gave Himself as the son of Atri. Such a relation of sonhood between the Lord and His pure devotees can be cited in many instances. And because the Lord is unlimited, He has an unlimited number of father-devotees. Factually the Lord is the father of all living entities, but out of transcendental affection and love between the Lord and His devotees, the Lord takes more pleasure in becoming the son of a devotee than in becoming one's father. The father actually serves the son, whereas the son only demands all sorts of services from the father; therefore a pure devotee who is always inclined to serve the Lord wants Him as the son, and not as the father. The Lord also accepts such service from the devotee, and thus the devotee becomes more than the Lord. The impersonalists desire to become one with the Supreme, but the devotee becomes more than the Lord, surpassing the desire of the greatest monist. Parents and other relatives of the Lord achieve all mystic opulences automatically because of their intimate relationship with the Lord. Such opulences include all details of material enjoyment, salvation and mystic powers. Therefore, the devotee of the Lord does not seek them separately, wasting his valuable time in life. The valuable time of one's life must therefore be fully engaged in the transcendental loving service of the Lord. Then other desirable achievements are automatically gained. But even after obtaining such achievements, one should be on guard against the pitfall of offenses at the feet of the devotees. The vivid exam-

ple is Haihaya, who achieved all such perfection in devotional service but, because of his offense at the feet of a devotee, was killed by Lord Paraśurāma. The Lord became the son of the great sage Atri and became known as Dattātreya.

TEXT 5

तप्तं तपो विन्वयलोकसिर्क्षया मे
आदौ सनात् स्वतपसः स चतुःसनोऽभूत् ।
प्राकल्पसम्प्लवविनष्टमिहात्मतत्त्वं
सम्यग् जगद् मुनयो यदचक्षतात्मन् ॥५॥

*taptam tapo vividha-loka-sirṣṭayā me
ādau sanāt sva-tapasah sa catuḥ-sano 'bhūt
prāk-kalpa-samplava-vinaṣṭam ihātma-tattvaṁ
samyag jagāda munayo yad acakṣatātman*

taptam—having undergone austerities; *tapah*—penance; *vividha-loka*—different planetary systems; *sirṣṭayā*—desiring to create; *me*—of mine; *ādau*—at first; *sanāt*—from the Personality of Godhead; *sva-tapasah*—by dint of my own penances; *saḥ*—He (the Lord); *catuḥ-sanaḥ*—the four bachelors named Sanat-kumāra, Sanaka, Sanandana and Sanātana; *abhūt*—appeared; *prāk*—previous; *kalpa*—creation; *samplava*—in the inundation; *vinaṣṭam*—devastated; *iha*—in this material world; *ātma*—the spirit; *tattvaṁ*—truth; *samyak*—in complete; *jagāda*—became manifested; *munayaḥ*—sages; *yat*—that which; *acakṣata*—saw clearly; *ātman*—the spirit.

TRANSLATION

To create different planetary systems I had to undergo austerities and penance, and the Lord, thus being pleased with me, incarnated in four sanas [Sanaka, Sanat-kumāra, Sanandana and Sanātana]. In the previous creation the spiritual truth was devastated, but the four sanas explained it so nicely that the truth at once became clearly perceived by the sages.

PURPORT

The *Viṣṇu-sahasra-nāma* prayers mention the Lord's name as *sanāt* and *sanātanatama*. The Lord and the living entities are both qualitatively *sanātana*, or eternal, but the Lord is *sanātana-tama* or the eternal in the superlative degree. The living entities are positively *sanātana*, but not superlatively, because the living entities are apt to fall to the atmosphere of noneternity. Therefore, the living entities are quantitatively different from the superlative *sanātana*, the Lord.

The word *san* is also used in the sense of charity; therefore when everything is given up in charity unto the Lord, the Lord reciprocates by giving Himself unto the devotee. This is also confirmed in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (4.11): *ye yathā māṁ prapadyante*. Brahmājī wanted to create the whole cosmic situation as it was in the previous millennium, and because, in the last devastation, knowledge of the Absolute Truth was altogether erased from the universe, he desired that the same knowledge again be renovated; otherwise there would be no meaning in the creation. Because transcendental knowledge is a prime necessity, the ever-conditioned souls are given a chance for liberation in every millennium of creation. This mission of Brahmājī was fulfilled by the grace of the Lord when the four *sanas*, namely Sanaka, Sanat-kumāra, Sanandana and Sanātana, appeared as his four sons. These four *sanas* were incarnations of the knowledge of the Supreme Lord, and as such they explained transcendental knowledge so explicitly that all the sages could at once assimilate this knowledge without the least difficulty. By following in the footsteps of the four Kumāras, one can at once see the Supreme Personality of Godhead within oneself.

TEXT 6

धर्मस्य दक्षदुहितर्यजनिष्ट मूर्त्यां
नारयणो नर इति स्वतपःप्रभावः ।

दृष्टात्मनो भगवतो नियमावलोकं
देव्यस्त्वनङ्गपृतना घटितुं न शेकुः ॥ ६ ॥

*dharmasya dakṣa-duhitary ajaṇiṣṭa mūrtyām
nārāyaṇo nara iti sva-tapaḥ-prabhāvaḥ
dṛṣṭvātmano bhagavato niyamāvalopaṇ
devyas tv anaṅga-pṛtanā ghaṭitum na śekuḥ*

dharmasya—of Dharma (the controller of religious principles); *dakṣa*—Dakṣa, one of the Prajāpatis; *duhitari*—unto the daughter; *ajaṇiṣṭa*—took birth; *mūrtyām*—of the name Mūrṭi; *nārāyaṇaḥ*—Nārāyaṇa; *naraḥ*—Nara; *iti*—thus; *sva-tapaḥ*—personal penances; *prabhāvaḥ*—strength; *dṛṣṭvā*—by seeing; *ātmanaḥ*—of His own; *bhagavataḥ*—of the Personality of Godhead; *niyama-avalopam*—breaking the vow; *devyah*—celestial beauties; *tu*—but; *anaṅga-pṛtanāḥ*—companion of Cupid; *ghaṭitum*—to happen; *na*—never; *śekuḥ*—made possible.

TRANSLATION

To exhibit His personal way of austerity and penance, He appeared in twin forms as Nārāyaṇa and Nara in the womb of Mūrṭi, the wife of Dharma and the daughter of Dakṣa. Celestial beauties, the companions of Cupid, went to try to break His vows, but they were unsuccessful, for they saw that many beauties like them were emanating from Him, the Personality of Godhead.

PURPORT

The Lord, being the source of everything that be, is the origin of all austerities and penances also. Great vows of austerity are undertaken by sages to achieve success in self-realization. Human life is meant for such *tapasya*, with the great vow of celibacy, or *brahmacarya*. In the rigid life of *tapasya*, there is no place for the association of women. And because human life is meant for *tapasya*, for self-realization, factual human civilization, as conceived by the system of *sanātana-dharma* or the school of four castes and four orders of life, prescribes rigid dissociation from woman in three stages of life. In the order of gradual cultural development, one's life may be divided into four divisions: celibacy, household life, retirement, and renunciation. During the first stage of life, up to twenty-five years of age, a man may be trained as a *brahmacārī* under the guidance of a bona fide spiritual master just to understand that woman is the real binding force in material existence. If one wants to get freedom from the material bondage of conditional life, he must get free from the attraction for the form of woman. Woman, or the fair sex, is the enchanting principle for the living entities, and the male form, especially in the human being, is meant for self-realization. The whole world is moving under the spell of womanly attraction, and as soon as a man becomes united with a woman, he at once becomes a victim of material bondage under a tight knot. The desires for lording it over the material world, under the intoxication of a false sense of lordship, specifically begin just after the man's unification with a woman. The desires for acquiring a house, possessing land, having children and becoming prominent in society, the affection for community and the place of birth, and the hankering for wealth, which are all like phantasmagoria or illusory dreams, encumber a human being, and he is thus impeded in his progress toward self-realization, the real aim of life. The *brahmacārī*, or a boy from the age of five years, especially from the higher castes, namely from the scholarly parents (the *brāhmaṇas*), the administrative parents (the *kṣatriyas*), or the mercantile or productive parents (the *vaiśyas*), is trained until twenty-five years of age under the care of a bona fide *guru* or teacher, and under strict observance of discipline he comes to understand the values of life along with taking specific training for a livelihood. The *brahmacārī* is then allowed to go home and enter householder life and get married to a suitable woman. But there are many *brahmacārīs* who do not go home to become householders but continue the life of *naiṣṭhika-brahmacārīs*, without any connection with women. They accept the order of *sannyāsa*, or the renounced order of

life, knowing well that combination with women is an unnecessary burden that checks self-realization. Since sex desire is very strong at a certain stage of life, the *guru* may allow the *brahmacārī* to marry; this license is given to a *brahmacārī* who is unable to continue the way of *naiṣṭhika-brahmacarya*, and such discriminations are possible for the bona fide *guru*. A program of so-called family planning is needed. The householder who associates with woman under scriptural restrictions, after a thorough training of *brahmacarya*, cannot be a householder like cats and dogs. Such a householder, after fifty years of age, would retire from the association of woman as a *vānaprastha* to be trained to live alone without the association of woman. When the practice is complete, the same retired householder becomes a *sannyāsī*, strictly separate from woman, even from his married wife. Studying the whole scheme of disassociation from women, it appears that a woman is a stumbling block for self-realization, and the Lord appeared as Nārāyaṇa to teach the principle of womanly disassociation with a vow in life. The demigods, being envious of the austere life of the rigid *brahmacārīs*, would try to cause them to break their vows by dispatching soldiers of Cupid. But in the case of the Lord, it became an unsuccessful attempt when the celestial beauties saw that the Lord can produce innumerable such beauties by His mystic internal potency and that there was consequently no need to be attracted by others externally. There is a common proverb that a confectioner is never attracted by sweetmeats. The confectioner, who is always manufacturing sweetmeats, has very little desire to eat them; similarly, the Lord, by His pleasure potential powers, can produce innumerable spiritual beauties and not be the least attracted by the false beauties of material creation. One who does not know alleges foolishly that Lord Kṛṣṇa enjoyed women in His *rāsa-līlā* in Vṛndāvana, or with His sixteen thousand married wives at Dvārakā.

TEXT 7

कामं दहन्ति कृतिनो ननु रोषदृष्ट्या
रोषं दहन्तमुत ते न दहन्त्यसह्यम् ।
सोऽयं यदन्तरमलं प्रविशन् विभेति
कामः कथं नु पुनरस्य मनः श्रयेत ॥ ७ ॥

*kāmaṁ dahanti kṛtino nanu roṣa-dṛṣṭyā
roṣaṁ dahantam uta te na dahanty asahyam
so 'yaṁ yad antaram alaṁ praviśan bibheti
kāmaḥ kathaṁ nu punar asya manaḥ śrayeta*

kāmaṁ—lust; *dahanti*—chastise; *kṛtinaḥ*—great stalwarts; *nanu*—but; *roṣa-dṛṣṭyā*—by wrathful glance; *roṣaṁ*—wrath; *dahantam*—being overwhelmed; *uta*—although; *te*—they; *na*—cannot; *dahanti*—subjugate; *asahyam*—intolerable; *saḥ*—that; *ayam*—Him; *yat*—because; *antaram*—within; *alam*—however; *praviśan*—entering; *bibheti*—is afraid of; *kāmaḥ*—lust; *kathaṁ*—how; *nu*—as a matter of fact; *punaḥ*—again; *asya*—His; *manaḥ*—mind; *śrayeta*—take shelter of.

TRANSLATION

Great stalwarts like Lord Śiva can, by their wrathful glances, overcome lust and vanquish him, yet they cannot be free from the overwhelming effects of their own wrath. Such wrath can never enter into the heart of Him [the Lord], who is above all this. So how can lust take shelter in His mind?

PURPORT

When Lord Śiva was engaged in severely austere meditation, Cupid, the demigod of lust, threw his arrow of sex desire. Lord Śiva, thus being angry at him, glanced at Cupid in great wrath, and at once the body of Cupid was annihilated. Although Lord Śiva was so powerful, he was unable to get free from the effects of such wrath. But in the behavior of Lord Viṣṇu there is no incident of such wrath at any time. On the contrary, Bhṛṅgu Muni tested the tolerance of the Lord by purposely kicking His chest, but instead of being angry at Bhṛṅgu Muni the Lord begged

his pardon, saying that Bhṛgu Muni's leg might have been badly hurt because His chest is too hard. The Lord has the sign of the foot of *bhṛgu-pāda* as the mark of tolerance. The Lord, therefore, is never affected by any kind of wrath, so how can there be any place for lust, which is less strong than wrath? When lust or desire is not fulfilled, there is the appearance of wrath, but in the absence of wrath how can there be any place for lust? The Lord is known as *āpta-kāma*, or one who can fulfill His desires by Himself. He does not require anyone's help to satisfy His desires. The Lord is unlimited, and therefore His desires are also unlimited. All living entities but the Lord are limited in every respect; how then can the limited satisfy the desires of the unlimited? The conclusion is that the Absolute Personality of Godhead has neither lust nor anger, and even if there is sometimes a show of lust and anger by the Absolute, it should be considered an absolute benediction.

TEXT 8

विद्धः सपत्न्युदितपत्रिभिरन्ति राज्ञो
 बालोऽपि सन्नपगतस्तपसे वनानि ।
 तस्मा अदाद् ध्रुवगतिं गृणते प्रसन्नो
 दिव्याः स्तुवन्ति मुनयो यदुपर्यधस्तात् ॥ ८ ॥

*viddhaḥ sapatny-udita-patribhir anti rājño
 bālo 'pi sann upagatas tapase vanāni
 tasmā adād dhruva-gatiṁ gṛṇate prasanno
 divyāḥ stuvanti munayo yad upary-adhastāt*

viddhaḥ—pinched by; *sapatni*—a co-wife; *udita*—uttered by; *patribhiḥ*—by sharp words; *anti*—just before; *rājñaḥ*—of the king; *bālaḥ*—a boy; *api*—although; *sann*—being so; *upagataḥ*—took to; *tapase*—severe penances; *vanāni*—in a great forest; *tasmai*—therefore; *adāt*—gave as a reward; *dhruva-gatiṁ*—a path to the Dhruva planet; *gṛṇate*—on being prayed for; *prasannaḥ*—being satisfied; *divyāḥ*—denizens of higher planets; *stuvanti*—do pray; *munayah*—great sages; *yat*—thereupon; *upari*—up; *adhastāt*—down.

TRANSLATION

Being insulted by sharp words spoken by the co-wife of the king, even in his presence, Prince Dhruva, though only a boy, took to severe penances in the forest. And the Lord, being satisfied by his prayer, awarded him the Dhruva planet, which is worshiped by great sages, both upward and downward.

PURPORT

When he was only five years old, Prince Dhruva, a great devotee and the son of Mahārāja Uttānapāda, was sitting on the lap of his father. His stepmother did not like the King's patting her stepson, so she dragged him out, saying that he could not claim to sit on the lap of the King because he was not born out of her womb. The little boy felt insulted by this act of his stepmother. Nor did his father make any protest, for he was too attached to his second wife. After this incident, Prince Dhruva went to his own mother and complained. His real mother also could not take any step against this insulting behavior, and so she wept. The boy inquired from his mother how he could sit on the royal throne of his father, and the poor queen replied that only the Lord could help him. The boy inquired where the Lord could be seen, and the queen replied that it is said that the Lord is sometimes seen by great sages in the dense forest. The child prince decided to go into the forest to perform severe penances in order to achieve his objective.

Prince Dhruva performed a stringent type of penance under the instruction of his spiritual master, Śrī Nārada Muni, who was specifically deputed for this purpose by the Personality of Godhead. Prince Dhruva was initiated by Nārada into chanting the hymn composed of eighteen letters, namely *om namo bhagavate vāsudevāya*, and Lord Vāsudeva incarnated Himself as Prṣṇigarbha, the Personality of Godhead with four hands, and awarded the prince a specific planet above the seven stars. Prince Dhruva, after achieving success in his undertakings, saw the Lord face to face, and he was satisfied that all his needs were fulfilled.

The planet awarded to Prince Dhruva Mahārāja is a fixed Vaikuṅṭha planet, installed in the material atmosphere by the will of the Supreme Lord, Vāsudeva. This planet, although within the material world, will not be annihilated at the time of devastation, but will remain fixed in its place. And because it is a Vaikuṅṭha planet never to be annihilated, it is worshiped even by the denizens of the seven stars situated below the Dhruva planet, as well as by the planets which are even above the Dhruva planet. Mahārṣi Bhṛgu's planet is situated above the Dhruva planet.

So the Lord incarnated Himself as Prṣṇigarbha just to satisfy a pure devotee of the Lord. And Prince Dhruva achieved this perfection simply by chanting the hymn mentioned above, after being initiated by another pure devotee, Nārada. A serious personality can thus achieve the highest perfection of meeting the Lord and attain his objective simply by being guided by a pure devotee, who automatically approaches by dint of one's serious determination to meet the Lord by all means.

The description of Prince Dhruva's activities can be read in detail in the Fourth Canto of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.

TEXT 9

यद्देनमुत्पथगतं द्विजवाक्यवज्र-
 निष्प्लुष्टयौरुषभगं निरये पतन्तम् ।
 त्रात्वार्थितो जगति पुत्रपदं च लेभे
 दुग्धा वसूनि वसुधा सकलानि येन ॥ ९ ॥

*yad venam utpatha-gataṁ dvija-vākya-vajra-
 niṣpluṣṭa-pauruṣa-bhagaṁ niraye patantam
 trātvārthito jagati putra-padam ca lebhe
 dugdhā vasūni vasudhā sakalāni yena*

yat—when; *venam*—unto King Vena; *utpatha-gataṁ*—going astray from the righteous path; *dvija*—of the brāhmaṇas; *vākya*—words of cursing; *vajra*—thunderbolt; *niṣpluṣṭa*—being burnt by; *pauruṣa*—great deeds; *bhagam*—opulence; *niraye*—into hell; *patantam*—going down; *trātvā*—by delivering; *arthitaḥ*—so being prayed for; *jagati*—on the world; *putra-padam*—the position of the son; *ca*—as well as; *lebhe*—achieved; *dugdhā*—exploited; *vasūni*—produce; *vasudhā*—the earth; *sakalāni*—all kinds of; *yena*—by whom.

TRANSLATION

Mahārāja Vena went astray from the path of righteousness, and the brāhmaṇas chastised him by the thunderbolt curse. By this King Vena was burnt with his good deeds and opulence and was en route to hell. The Lord, by His causeless mercy, descended as his son, by the name of Pṛṥthu, delivered the condemned King Vena from hell, and exploited the earth by drawing all kinds of crops as produce.

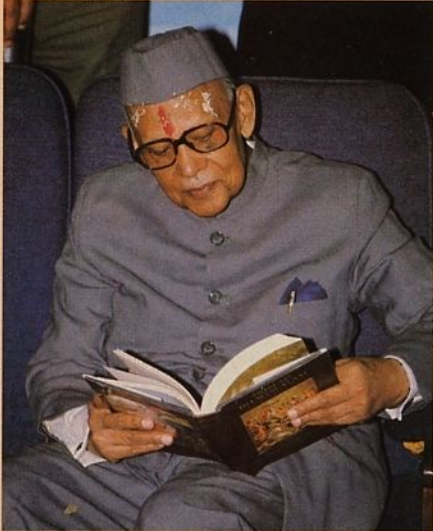
(continued in next issue)



Every Town and Village

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

Indian Governor Lauds Kṛṣṇa Society



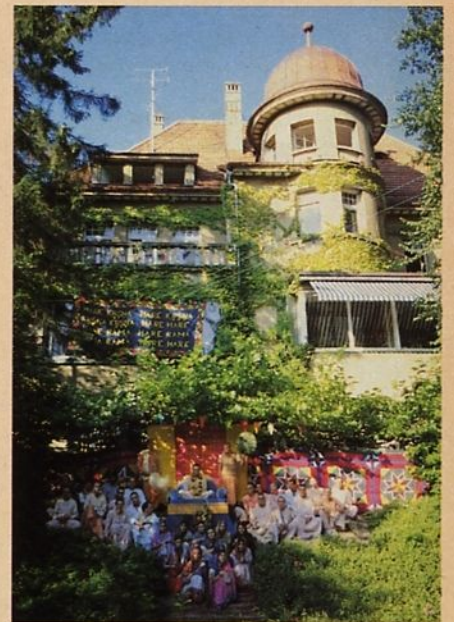
SIRĪRĀMA DĀSA

Gov. Chandreswar Singh looks through one of the books of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.

Vṛndāvana, Uttar Pradesh, India—Recently Chandreswar Prasad Narayan Singh, the governor of the north Indian state of Uttar Pradesh (population: nearly 95 million), came to this holy city expressly to visit the Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma temple of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. After being garlanded by the devotees, he paid his respects to the Lord's Deity forms in the temple and then met for some time with Śrīla Bhavānanda Goswami Viṣṇupāda, who oversees the Society's activities in Vṛndāvana and other parts of India. The governor greatly appreciated the books of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement and said, "I am extremely happy to be here amongst so many devotees of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Congratulations on your effort to let the world know about the secrets of *bhakti-yoga* [Kṛṣṇa consciousness]."

Kṛṣṇa Movement Gains New Swiss Center, Wins Federal Approval

Zürich—The Zürich chapter of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness has received what is, in all of Europe, a rare approbation for any but the largest majority religions: official recognition from the Swiss federal government as a tax-exempt religious foundation. Since early autumn the Society's Swiss headquarters has been an estate overlooking the Lake of Zürich. The new facility serves as both the main place of worship for Swiss devotees and a center for the expression of Indian art and culture.



The Kṛṣṇa Society's new headquarters in Zürich.

The Vedic Version Aired on Michigan TV

East Lansing, Michigan—The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement now broadcasts a weekly, half-hour television show here on station WELM. Called *The Vedic Version*, the prime-time program acquaints viewers with the ways of the Vedic culture as lived five thousand years ago in India and as lived and taught today by the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

Kṛṣṇa Conscious Children's Book Is Choice For Youth Library

Munich—The International Youth Library, which houses the world's largest collection of children's books, has chosen *Readings in Vedic Literature for Children* for its "Choice List" at the IYL annual exposition.

Readings is published by Bāla Books, the children's publications office of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. The book is an anthology of stories from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, classic works on Kṛṣṇa consciousness never before adapted for young readers.

Illustrations for *Readings* were executed by Jan Steward, graphic designer for Ravi Shankar, and the stories were edited by Yogeśvara dāsa, director of the Bāla Books project.

Note: The editorial offices of BACK TO GODHEAD magazine are now located at 41-51 West Allens Lane, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 19119.

Prince Charles Charmed By Kṛṣṇa Conscious Books

Bombay—Attending a cultural performance at Bombay's National Center for the Performing Arts during a recent royal visit to India, His Royal Highness Prince Charles discovered the books of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement. Between two recitals of Indian music and dance, the prince received two of the movement's books from a Hare Kṛṣṇa devotee. "Possibly he found them more interesting than the performance," reported one Indian newspaper, "for he buried himself in the books."

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 Govinda

Year 494 Caitanya Era — Month of Govinda		
		March 16
		Āmalaki Ekādāsī (fasting from grains and beans)
March 18	March 20	March 21
Disappearance of Śrīla Mādhavendra Puri.	Śrī Gaura-pūrnīmā, the appearance day of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu (fasting). Dola-yātrā (swing festival) of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.	Anandotsava of Śrī Jagannātha Mīra—a joyous festival upon the birth of his son, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.





THE NECTAR OF THE NAME

An investigation
into how transcendental sound
transforms consciousness
and invokes spiritual ecstasy.

by ŚUBHĀNANDA DĀSA

I do not know how much nectar the two syllables ‘Kṛṣṇa’ have produced. When the holy name of Kṛṣṇa is chanted, it appears to dance within the mouth. We then desire many, many mouths. When that name enters the holes of the ears, we desire many millions of ears. And when the holy name dances in the courtyard of the heart, it conquers the activities of the mind, and therefore all the senses become inert.”

These lines, conceived in a state of religious ecstasy, flowed from the pen of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, the great Vaiṣṇava theologian and mystic, as he wrote his famous devotional drama *Vidagdha-mādhava* in early sixteenth-century India. His equally famous brother, Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī, exults in his *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta*,

All glories to the all-blissful holy name of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, which causes the devotees to give up all conventional religious duties, meditation, and worship. When somehow or other uttered even once by a living entity, the holy name awards him liberation. The holy name of Kṛṣṇa is the highest nectar. It is my very life and my only treasure.

To the uninitiated, these expressions of enthusiasm for the practice of contemplative recitation of the name of God may appear odd. For how can repeated recitation of mere sounds—linguistic formulations—transform consciousness and invoke ecstasy? Modern secular students of religion, especially those of a reductionistic temperament, seek often to divest such spiritual experiences of their unique metaphysical properties, attributing them to quantifiable psychological (or other) causes. Some even view them as pathological. But mere psychological reductionism can do little to shed light upon the profound religious experiences of those who “taste,” in devotional ecstasy, “the nectar of the name.” Nor can it explain the profound influence this practice has

Chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra and dancing in ecstasy, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu (center) inaugurated in late sixteenth-century India a massive religious revival that continues today in cities throughout the world.



Bogotá

had on the religious adepts of many different spiritual traditions, most prominently the Vaiṣṇava religious tradition of India, within which the theology and practice of the holy name has reached its highest development.

According to historically reliable literary accounts, medieval India witnessed a massive religious renaissance centered largely on the popular mysticism of the congregational chanting and singing of the names of God. This litany often took the form of the *mahā-mantra*: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. The great sixteenth-century saint Śrī Caitanya, Himself worshiped as an incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa, first turned this public congregational chanting (*saṅkīrtana*) into a mass movement in Bengal and then spread it to other parts of north India, and later to the south of India, where, according to His biographers, He traveled on foot for six years and converted millions to the religion of the holy name. The chanting of the divine name was no longer to be confined to the retreats of solitary mystics and hermits, but to spread itself widely and assume a central role in the spiritual lives of the common people. Exuberant chanting processions, accompanied by drums and cymbals, swept through the streets of the cities, towns, and

villages, inundating countless people in a tidal wave of ecstatic emotion. Not only the common people but some of the most prominent religious intellectuals of the day, having first been inspired by the brilliance and clarity of His teachings, succumbed to the devotional ecstasy of Śrī Caitanya's revivalist movement. Not meant to remain confined even to India, Caitanya-style *saṅkīrtana* has in recent decades appeared on Western shores, where members of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement, modern followers of Śrī Caitanya, publicly chant in the streets of major cities.

Why the profound effect on human consciousness? How is this process of meditation performed? What are its effects? Why its universal appeal, which appears to transcend all historical and cultural bounds? To gain a deep understanding of these matters, we will need to explore the theological and mystical literature of the Vaiṣṇava tradition. In preparation, because we are dealing with a subject that is not quantitative and empiric but experiential, we will need to suspend our limiting ethnocentric and ideological prejudices and attempt to understand these apparent mysteries with an open and inquisitive mind. To do so, let us assume the reverential attitude of the sincere pilgrim, for this will give us a chance to penetrate the mystery. Now, let us proceed.

The Divine Attributes of the Holy Name

According to Vaiṣṇava wisdom, the holy name of Kṛṣṇa has extraordinary spiritual potency because the name of God is non-different from God Himself. In the material sense, name is different from form. Language is merely representative, symbolic; it does not itself embody the reality it seeks to represent. Recitation of the sound *water* does not quench our thirst, nor does calling the name of our beloved invoke the full presence of the beloved. In the divine realm, however, symbol embodies reality. Kṛṣṇa self-manifests within His "sound incarnation," His holy name. In the only literary work ascribed to Śrī Caitanya, the eight-verse

Śikṣāṣṭaka, Śrī Caitanya prays, "My Lord, in Your holy name there is all good fortune for the living entity, and therefore You have many names, such as Kṛṣṇa and Govinda, by which You expand Yourself. You have invested all Your potencies in those names." That the name of God, being nondifferent from God, manifests all transcendental potencies and attributes is explained in this verse from *Padma Purāna*:

The holy name of Kṛṣṇa is transcendently blissful. It bestows all spiritual benedictions, for it is Kṛṣṇa Himself, the reservoir of all pleasure.

Kṛṣṇa's name is complete, and it is the form of all transcendental mellows. It is not a material name under any condition, and it is no less powerful than Kṛṣṇa Himself. Since Kṛṣṇa's name is not contaminated by the material qualities, there is no question of its being involved with *māyā* [illusion]. Kṛṣṇa's name is always liberated and spiritual; it is never conditioned by the laws of material nature. This is because the name of Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa Himself are identical.

The great seventeenth-century Vaiṣṇava poet Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura writes, *golokera prēma-dhana, hari-nāma-saṅkīrtana*: the transcendental sound of the holy name of the Lord has its origin in the spiritual world.

Being the sound incarnation of the Lord, therefore, the holy name is not an ordinary material sound; it is divine, transcendent-

tal. But the divine nature of the holy name remains forever a mystery to those whose approach is merely empiric or intellectual. In discussing the theology of the holy name with an assembly of scholars, Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura, the great teacher of the name, asserted, "One cannot understand the glories of the holy name merely by logic and argument." The holy name is understood and experienced only by those who have renounced all conceit and pretension and directly embraced the process of chanting with humility, faith, and devotion. As sound transmitted from afar can be heard when received by an appropriate electronic device, so transcendent, spiritual sound can be properly heard and assimilated by one equipped with the proper means to receive it: *bhāgavata-prema*, love of God.

The Practice of Chanting the Holy Name

Since the holy name is spiritual, it must be received from spiritual sources. The holy name—and, ultimately, all spiritual wisdom—is preserved and transmitted by generation after generation of realized souls comprising a disciplic succession of spiritual teachers. The *mantra*, the holy name, which is the seed of spiritual devotion, is planted within the heart of the sincere disciple by the spiritual master at the time of formal spiritual initiation. When uttered in devotion by a fully realized *guru*, the holy name has great efficacy upon the hearer, who achieves immediate benefit. Having received the holy name from the lips of a spiritual master, the student embarks upon the path of daily chanting, being careful to pronounce the *mantra* clearly and distinctly and to chant loudly enough to hear himself. The chanter must absorb his consciousness deeply within the divine sound of the *mantra*, vigilantly protecting the mind from the distraction of trivial or directionless thought.

The chanting of the holy name is not, however, a mechanical process depending merely upon contemplative prowess. It is a devotional art, a form of prayer, and thus one must chant with reverence and devotion. The Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* is a prayer for protection and deliverance, a prayer to the Lord for His divine presence and for the opportunity to serve Him. Chanting is compared to the helpless cry of a child for its mother. It is a prayer from the core of the repentant heart. It is chanted, therefore, in humility. Once, in a state of devotional ecstasy while in the company of two close followers (Svarūpa Dāmodara Gosvāmī and Rāmānanda Rāya), Śrī Caitanya described the quintessential importance of chanting with the mood of humility. He said, "One who thinks himself lower than the grass, who is more tolerant than a tree, and who does not expect personal honor but is always prepared to give all respect to others, can very easily always chant the holy name of the Lord." Commenting upon this famous verse, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī, author of *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, declares, "Everyone please hear me! String this verse on the thread of the holy name and wear it on your neck for continuous remembrance. One must strictly follow the principles given by Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu in this verse. If one simply does so, certainly he will achieve the ultimate goal of life, the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa."

When and where is chanting appropriate? There is no restriction as to the appropriate time or place for chanting the holy name. The devotee is advised to chant always and everywhere. The process of God realization is not a mere liturgical or social formality to be restricted to circumscribed times and places. It is a quest that should underlie and pervade all one's activities. In *Bhagavad-gītā*, Kṛṣṇa describes that great souls (*mahātmas*) constantly chant His glories (*satatam kīrtayanto mām*). The final line of Śrī Caitanya's prayer mentioned above recommends that one chant the holy name *continuously* (*kīrtaniyah sadā hariḥ*). Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura says, *nirantara nāma lao*: "Chant the holy name without stopping."

To experience the full effects of the holy name, one must attain the stage of offenseless chanting. According to Vaiṣṇava scripture, there are three progressive stages in the development of chanting: the offensive stage (*nāma-aparādha*), the stage of lessening offenses (*nāmābhāsa*), and the offenseless, pure stage. A neophyte commits offenses against the holy name. According to *Padma Purāna*, there are ten offenses, involving misuse of or mundane misconceptions about the holy name and the scriptures and saints who embody and teach the holy name. One who remains at the offensive stage does not attain the ultimate goal of chanting, love of God. Says Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja, "If one chants the exalted holy name of the Lord again and again and yet his love for the Supreme Lord does not develop and tears do not appear in his eyes, it is evident that because of his offenses in chanting, the seed of the holy name of Kṛṣṇa does not sprout." In fact, without



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giving up the offenses in chanting, one does not develop a spontaneous attachment for chanting. Taking the role of a conditioned soul, Śrī Caitanya prays, "My dear Lord, although You bestow mercy upon the fallen conditioned souls by liberally teaching Your holy names, I am so unfortunate that I commit offenses while chanting the holy name, and therefore I do not achieve attachment for chanting."

How can one overcome offenses and develop pure chanting? By more chanting. In his commentary on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (*Bhāgavata-Purāna*), Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura quotes

a verse from *Padma Purāṇa* stating that even if in the beginning one chants the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* with offenses, one can become free from such offenses by repeated chanting. By the immense purificatory power of the holy name, constant chanting frees one from offenses to the holy name and gradually elevates one to the transcendental platform of pure chanting, by which one can attain pure love of God. Elsewhere it is recommended that one can also overcome offenses by realizing that the holy name is nondifferent

from the Lord, by chanting in humility, and by developing an attitude of service to the Lord.

After the offensive stage, as one's offenses cease, one approaches the platform of pure chanting. Finally, with offenseless chanting, one becomes completely enlightened and liberated, and one's dormant love of God fully awakens. In that stage, one actually enters the kingdom of God, although physically he may apparently be within the material world.

The Transcendental Effects of the Holy Name

The holy name exerts the deepest and most profound influence upon those who invoke it in a mood of reverential devotion.

Freedom from the Reactions to Sin

First, the holy name eradicates the results of sins committed both in the present and in prior lifetimes. According to the law of *karma*, a human being is responsible for the sinful acts he performs and must suffer for them ("As ye sow, so shall ye reap"). Deeply enmeshed in a complex web of material actions and their reactions, one must suffer the duality of pleasure and pain, lifetime after lifetime. The holy name, however, eradicates all reactions to past sins, both those manifesting themselves at present

dharmottara we read, "This word *kṛṣṇa* is so auspicious that anyone who chants this holy name rids himself immediately of the reactions of sinful activities from many, many births." But for the chanting of the holy name to exert such a powerful purifying effect, the devotee must chant the holy name in purity, without offense. Having ceased to indulge in sinful actions, he must live a pure and holy life.

Freedom from Desire Due to Illusion

How can one escape the will to sin? By escaping the illusion that supports it—the illusion that the material body is the self. When the embodied soul erroneously identifies himself with the gross material body and its subtle mind, intellect, and false ego, he seeks pleasure in the comfort and gratification of the body. As he wanders throughout the material creation, lifetime after lifetime, trying to dominate and enjoy the resources of the phenomenal world, he goes through myriad temporary, fleeting sensory experiences, which create myriad impressions of the phenomenal world upon his heart and consciousness. In this way, his original, pure consciousness becomes covered by layer after layer of material contamination. Because the self is purely spiritual, no variety or amount of physical or mental gratification can give him real satisfaction. Under the illusion of bodily identification, therefore, he perpetually suffers the unnatural and frustrating condition of material existence.

This illusion and its painful effects, which have haunted and tormented the embodied soul since time immemorial, are destroyed by the transcendental effects of the holy name. Because the divine name and the Lord Himself are identical, when one regularly chants the holy name he develops attraction toward the Lord Himself. That divine, spontaneous attraction cleanses his heart of all desires for lesser, material pleasures. Lord Kṛṣṇa personally aids in that progressive purification, as the great devotee Sūta Gosvāmī explained to the sages assembled at Naimiṣāraṇya Forest: "Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Personality of Godhead, who is the Paramātmā [Supersoul] in everyone's heart and the benefactor of the truthful devotee, cleanses desire for material enjoyment from the heart of the devotee who has developed the urge to hear His messages, which are in themselves virtuous when properly heard and chanted." When the heart is fully purified by chanting of the holy name, the devotee loses interest in everything unspiritual. He views the entire creation as the Lord's energy and thus gives up the desire to exploit and consume matter. As chanting cleanses the mirror of the heart (*ceto-darpaṇa-mārjanam*), one fully awakens to spiritual reality.

Enlightenment

All knowledge, both spiritual and material, is contained within the ancient writings called the *Vedas*. The knowledge of the *Vedas* is said to be eternal and of divine origin; it is not a creation of historical, imperfect human speculation. Long before the Vedic literature was compiled (by Śrīla Vyāsadeva, the "literary incarnation of God," according to orthodox Vedic historiography), that Vedic knowledge existed in the form of pure, transcendental sound (*śabda-brahman*). In the *Bhagavad-gītā*, Lord Kṛṣṇa, the speaker of the *Gītā*, identifies Himself as the summum bonum of



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and those destined to manifest themselves in the future. Simply by chanting the holy name, one attracts the attention of the Supreme Lord, who therefore considers, "Because this person has chanted My holy name, My duty is to give him protection." The power of the holy name to absolve sins is declared emphatically in the scriptures. The *Garuḍa Purāṇa* tells us, "If one chants the holy name of the Lord, even in helplessness or without desiring to do so, all the reactions of his sinful life depart, just as when a lion roars all the small animals flee in fear." Says the *Bṛhad-viṣṇu Purāṇa*, "Simply by chanting the name of Hari, a sinful man can counteract the reactions to more sins than he is able to commit." In the *Viṣṇu-*



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Vedic knowledge: “By all the *Vedas*, I am to be known” (*vedaiś ca sarvair aham eva vedyo*). The holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa, being nondifferent from the Lord Himself, is the quintessence of the *Vedas*, and therefore of all knowledge. Chanting the holy name thus enlightens the soul with complete knowledge—knowledge of his own existential identity, of the material and spiritual worlds, of God, of the soul’s eternal relationship with God, and of the means to revive that transcendental relationship. The *mahā-mantra* embodies all knowledge, all wisdom.

Those who worship the Lord by chanting His holy name invoke the mercy of the Lord, who acts as the indwelling teacher (*caitya-guru*) and supreme friend of the conditioned soul by enlightening the soul from within: “To those who are constantly devoted and who worship Me with love, I give the understanding by which they can come to Me. Out of compassion, I, dwelling within their hearts, destroy with the lamp of knowledge the darkness born of ignorance.” Rūpa Gosvāmī compares the holy name to the sun, “for just as a slight appearance of the sun dissipates the darkness of night, so a slight appearance of the holy name of Kṛṣṇa can drive away all the darkness of ignorance that arises in the heart because of greatly sinful activities performed in previous lives.”

Liberation

When through purification and knowledge one no longer identifies himself with the material body and the material world, he ceases to engage in material actions, and thus he is freed from material reactions. Thus freed, he no longer has to take birth again. He is free from *saṁsāra*, the cycle of repeated birth and death. This is the meaning of *mokṣa*, liberation. Spiritual sound (*śabda-brahman*) has the power to liberate. The *Vedānta-sūtra* speaks of

anāvṛttiḥ śabdāt, “liberation by sound.”

The ease with which one attains liberation through chanting is affirmed in the *Skanda Purāṇa*: “By once chanting the holy name of the Lord, which consists of the two syllables *ha-ri*, one guarantees his path to liberation.” As stated in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, even unconscious chanting brings results: “Living beings entangled in the complicated meshes of birth and death can be freed immediately by even unconsciously chanting the holy name of Kṛṣṇa.” “Even the faintest rays of the effulgence of the Lord’s holy name,” says Haridāsa Ṭhākura, “can grant one liberation.”

God Consciousness

Ultimately, the chanting of the holy name produces God consciousness, which culminates in ecstatic devotion to Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-bhakti*). Liberation (*mokṣa*) is not the ultimate in spiritual perfection. It simply indicates freedom from, or a negation of, material existence. Once liberated from material contamination, the soul must return to its original, constitutional position as a loving servant of the Lord.

As one progresses on the path of *bhakti*, divine love of God, the chanting of the holy name brings one into closer and closer contact with the Lord. On that path, the holy name invokes remembrance of the Lord, association with the Lord (via His form as sound), attraction to the Lord, the transcendental (“beatific”) vision (*darśana*) of the Lord, and finally divine love of God, wherein the devotee experiences various and intense spiritual ecstasies.

One should note that the efficacy of the process of chanting presupposes the Lord’s direct intervention in the devotional life of the spiritual adept. There is, in other words, nothing automatic or mechanical about the process of chanting. Revival of the soul’s



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dormant God consciousness depends not on any ritualized litany but on the causeless mercy of the Lord, who responds to the sincere efforts of His devotee to glorify Him in devotion.

Since the holy name is Kṛṣṇa Himself, the chanting of the holy name invokes remembrance of and association with Kṛṣṇa Himself. Recollection, absorption, meditation, constant remembrance, and trance (*samādhi*) are the five stages in progressive remembrance of Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-smaraṇa*). In conscious remembrance, the devotee feels the presence of the Lord as a transcendental, mystical fact. When the devotee chants the holy name, all the Lord's transcendental opulences—His divine form, activities, qualities, and so on—become manifest within the devotee's heart. Indeed, Kṛṣṇa Himself appears. "My dear Nārada, I do not actually reside in My abode, Vaikuṅṭha, nor within the hearts of the *yogīs*. I reside where My pure devotees chant My holy name and discuss My form, pastimes, and qualities." (*Padma Purāṇa*) Thus, the devotee's consciousness becomes attracted to Lord Kṛṣṇa. Along with remembrance, association, and attraction, the devotee's attitude of service to the Lord develops, and in an advanced stage the devotee engages directly in the service of the Lord in the spiritual realm, even while situated within the material body. Thus, through pure, devotional chanting of the holy name, the devotee directly realizes the presence of the Lord and enters the deepest mysteries of God consciousness.

Ecstatic Love of God

Absorption in God consciousness culminates in *prema-bhakti*, pure love of God. Writes Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī, "The holy name of Kṛṣṇa is so attractive that anyone who chants it . . . becomes imbued with love of Kṛṣṇa. This is the effect of chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*." Śrī Caitanya similarly instructs Sanātana Gosvāmī, "Of the nine processes of devotional service, the

most important is to chant the holy name of the Lord always. If one does so, avoiding the ten kinds of offenses, one very easily obtains the most valuable love of Godhead."

Pure love for Kṛṣṇa elicits the most sublime and lofty emotions of the soul. Liberation or spiritual perfection implies not the absence of cognition or emotion, but their ultimate perfection. Within the soul are profound transcendental emotions, which lie dormant as long as the soul sleeps in *māyā*, material illusion. But such sublime emotions awaken with the awakening of pure, spiritual consciousness. The entire range of emotions experienced by a conditioned soul (such as happiness and misery, love and hate, compassion and envy) are merely dim and perverted reflections of their spiritual counterparts, which exist in absolute purity and are experienced by fully realized souls in their eternal relationship with the Lord. When the soul has awakened to pure love of Kṛṣṇa, he tastes the infinitely sweet flavors of a wide variety of transcendental emotions, emotions which are variegated manifestations of spiritual ecstasy. Such transcendental, ecstatic emotions within the heart and mind of the pure devotee are so powerful that they erupt and spill over into the realm of the physical. In pursuance of the order of His spiritual master, Śrī Caitanya entered upon the path of constant chanting of the holy name of Kṛṣṇa. When such chanting invoked intense spiritual ecstasy, He wondered whether He had lost His sanity. He approached His *guru*, Īśvara Puri, who then explained,

It is a characteristic of love of Godhead that by nature it induces transcendental symptoms in one's body and makes one more and more greedy to achieve the shelter of the lotus feet of the Lord. When one actually develops love of Godhead, he naturally sometimes cries, sometimes laughs, sometimes chants, and sometimes runs here and there just like a madman. Perspiration, trembling, standing of one's bodily hairs, tears, faltering, fading, madness, melancholy, patience, pride, joy, and humility—these are various natural symptoms of ecstatic love of God-

head, which causes a devotee to dance and float in an ocean of transcendental bliss while chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*.

Of course, such states of spiritual ecstasy are very rarely achieved. They are experienced only by those who have entered the most intimate, confidential relationship with Lord Kṛṣṇa. Such experiences are unavailable even to those who worship the Lord in awe and veneration, viewing the Lord merely in His aspect of greatness, power, and majesty. The divine flavors of such ecstasy are relished by those who, by the grace of the Lord, gaze beyond His majestic feature and deal with Him in spontaneous, intimate affection. As stated in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, the pure devotional chanting of Lord Kṛṣṇa's personal names ushers the devotee into the Lord's personal presence and into the highest bliss: "Dealings in affection with the Supreme Personality of Godhead bring happiness many millions of times greater than dealing with Him in awe and veneration. Simply by hearing the holy name of the Lord, the devotee is merged in transcendental bliss."

The Divine Dispensation

Apart from the holy name's importance as a means toward individual spiritual perfection, a reading of Vaiṣṇava literature reveals the holy name to possess the broadest historical and universal significance as well. Chanting of the holy name is in fact described as the universal and supreme religion in the current epoch, an epoch referred to in traditional Indian texts as Kali-yuga, "the Age of Kali," the great Iron Age, an age of materialism, hypocrisy, and quarrel. Kali-yuga is the last of the four Great Ages, each progressively worse than its predecessor, four vast epochs that cycle perpetually. The Age of Kali is the age wherein human society degrades from human to subhuman, in which the people of the world forget their souls, identify with their gross bodies, and become mad competitors for the world's stock of material goods and pleasures. As stated in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the unfortunate inhabitants of the Kali Age are "quarrelsome, lazy, misguided, unlucky, and, above all, always disturbed."

Because such unfortunate persons have little or no inclination toward spiritual advancement, there is a compelling need for a simple method by which they can wake up from their deathly slumber and receive the opportunity for spiritual emancipation. That Great Dispensation is the holy name. Declares Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī, "In the Age of Kali, Lord Kṛṣṇa has descended in the form of the holy name." The holy name is the one true glory, the one saving grace of this condemned age, as Śukadeva Gosvāmī tells King Parīkṣit: "Although Kali-yuga is full of faults, there is still one good quality about this age. It is that simply by chanting the holy name of Kṛṣṇa one can become free from material bondage and be promoted to the transcendental kingdom." Various means of spiritual advancement practiced in the previous eras are rendered virtually ineffectual in Kali by the degradation of human beings, individually and collectively. The chanting of the holy name now supersedes all other forms of spiritual discipline: "Whatever result was obtained in Satya-yuga by meditating on Viṣṇu, in Treta-yuga by performing sacrifices, and in Dvāpara-yuga by serving the Lord's lotus feet can also be obtained in Kali-yuga simply by chanting the holy name of the Lord." (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 12.3.52) The primacy and exclusivity of the practice of the holy name is emphatically declared in this oft-cited verse from the *Bṛhan-nāradiya Purāṇa*: "In this Age of Kali there is no alternative, there is no alternative, there is no alternative for spiritual progress but the holy name, the holy name, the holy name of the Lord." Thus the chanting of the holy name of the Lord is the *yuga-dharma*, the universal and supreme religion of the age, meant to unite all faiths in common, joyful glorification of the one Supreme Lord.

Although the chanting of the holy name has played a role in India's religious history for millennia, it was specifically propa-

Beyond Death

By chanting the holy name in purity and devotion throughout his life, the devotee returns to Kṛṣṇa at the time of death. Lord Kṛṣṇa explains in *Bhagavad-gītā*,

Whoever, at the time of death, quits his body remembering Me alone at once attains My nature. Of this there is no doubt. Whatever state of being one remembers when he quits his body, that state he will attain without fail. . . . He who meditates on Me, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, his mind constantly engaged in remembering Me, undeviated from the path, . . . is sure to reach Me.

Thus by chanting at the time of leaving the material body, the devotee who has practiced *kṛṣṇa-smaraṇa*, remembrance of Kṛṣṇa, by chanting Kṛṣṇa's holy names throughout his life can escape the painful cycle of birth and death and return to Kṛṣṇa in the spiritual realm (Vaikuṅṭha) to render Him intimate, ecstatic, loving service.

gated and popularized as the *yuga-dharma* by the great Caitanya, whose effulgent presence and fervid ecstasies drew millions into *nāma-dharma*, the Religion of the Name. As the great popularizer of the holy name, Śrī Caitanya was regarded and worshiped as the Kali-yuga *avatāra*, the prime *avatāra* (incarnation) for the Age of Kali. Further, He was worshiped as the greatest incarnation of



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the Lord because He liberally bestowed pure *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*, ecstatic love of God, upon all persons. The *mahā-mantra*, the chant popularized by Śrī Caitanya, is specifically mentioned in the *Kalisantarāṇa Upaniṣad* as the exclusive means for escaping the debilitating conditions of the Kali Age: "Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare—these sixteen names composed of thirty-two syllables

are the only means to counteract the evil effects of Kali-yuga. In all the *Vedas* it is seen that to cross the ocean of nescience there is no alternative to the chanting of the holy name." Not only does the holy name bestow the highest benefits upon human beings both individually and collectively, but it purifies even lower species of life. Any living being fortunate enough to hear the divine, transcendental sound incarnation of the Lord receives immense spiritual benefit.

Śrī Caitanya did not intend the holy name to remain confined to India, but predicted that the holy name would reach "every town and village." Four centuries later, this missionary ideal, based upon a compelling vision of the universality of the holy name, gained momentum through the efforts of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, a great follower and ninth-generation disciplic representative of Śrī Caitanya. Writing in his religious journal *Sajjana-toṣaṇī* in 1885, he declared prophetically,

Lord Caitanya did not advent Himself to liberate only a few men in India. Rather, His main objective was to emancipate all living entities of all countries throughout the entire universe and preach the Eternal Religion. . . . There is no doubt that this unquestionable order will come to pass. . . . Very soon the unparalleled path of *hari-nāma-saṅkīrtana* will be propagated all over the world. . . . Oh, for that day when the fortunate English, French, Russian, German, and American people will take up banners, *mrdaṅgas* and *kāratals* and raise *kīrtana* through their streets and towns! When will that day come? . . . That day will witness the holy transcendental ecstasy of the Vaiṣṇava *dharma* to be the only *dharma*, and all the sects and religions will flow like rivers into the ocean of Vaiṣṇava *dharma*. When will that day come?

Eighty years later, His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, a disciple of Bhaktivinoda's son (Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī), left India and traveled to the United States to transform Bhaktivinoda's dream into reality. In 1966 he founded the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, which, for its active propagation of the *mahā-mantra*, came to be popularly known as "the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement." The chanting and propagation of the holy name are the stated basis and goal of the move-

ment. The Society's founder, Śrīla Prabhupāda, writes, "Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu introduced the congregational chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* to give everyone a chance to hear Kṛṣṇa's holy name, for simply by hearing [the holy name] one becomes purified. Therefore our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is chiefly engaged in chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* all over the world." "The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement," he says, "is based on this principle: chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* at every moment, as much as possible, both inside and outside of the temple." This movement "is especially meant for creating an atmosphere in which people can take to the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*." The public chanting of the holy name performed by Śrīla Prabhupāda's followers, clad in traditional Indian *dhotīs* and *sārīs*, is now a familiar sight on the streets of most major cities of the world.

The holy name of Kṛṣṇa, for so long concealed within India, locked away from Western view, has now entered the mainstream of Western society. It has become, so to speak, a "household *mantra*," available to everyone. But although it is in open, public view, the holy name is not an ordinary commodity one can find and purchase in the market. It is a hidden treasure. One must develop the eyes to see it or, rather, the ears to hear it. If one simply approaches the holy name with reverence and allows the holy name to enter through his ears into his heart, and especially if he accepts the divine name as his very life and soul, he can enter the deepest, most profound, most sublime of all spiritual mysteries.

Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa
Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare
Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma
Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare

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SPIRITUAL CULTURE

(continued from page 5)

and what the goal of his life is. Unless we cultivate all this knowledge, we are simply wasting our time, wasting our valuable human form of life. Although everyone will die—that's a fact—one who dies after knowing these things is benefited. His life is successful.

The cat will die, the dog will die—everyone will die. But one who dies knowing Kṛṣṇa—oh, that is a successful death. As Kṛṣṇa says in *Bhagavad-gītā* [4.9],

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

"One who knows in truth 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."

So wherever we go all over the world, our only request is, "Please try to understand Kṛṣṇa. Then your life is successful." It doesn't matter what your business is. You have to do something to live. Kṛṣṇa

says, *śarīra-yātrāpi ca te na prasiddhyed akarmanah*: if you stop working, your life will be hampered. One has to do something for his livelihood, but at the same time he has to cultivate knowledge for the perfection of his life. The perfection of life is simple: try to understand Kṛṣṇa. This is what we are prescribing all over the world. It is not very difficult. If you read *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, you will come to understand Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa explains everything.

For the neophytes, Kṛṣṇa says, *raso 'ham apsu kaunteya prabhāsmi śaśi-sūryayoḥ*. "My dear Kaunteya, I am the taste of water, and I am the light of the sun and the moon." There is no need to say, "I cannot see God." Here is God; the taste of water is God. Everyone drinks water, and when one tastes it he is perceiving God. Then why do you say, "I cannot see God"? Think as God directs, and then gradually you'll see Him. Simply remember this one instruction from *Bhagavad-gītā*—*raso 'ham apsu kaunteya prabhāsmi śaśi-sūryayoḥ*: "I am the taste of water; I am the shining illumination of the sun and moon." Who has not seen the sunlight? Who has not seen the moonlight? Who has not tasted

water? Then why do you say, "I have not seen God"? If you simply practice this *bhakti-yoga*, as soon as you taste water and feel satisfied you will think, "Oh, here is Kṛṣṇa." Immediately you will remember Kṛṣṇa. As soon as you see the sunshine, you will remember, "Oh, here is Kṛṣṇa." As soon as you see the moonshine, you will remember, "Oh, here is Kṛṣṇa." And *śabdaḥ khe*: As soon as you hear some sound in the sky, you will remember, "Here is Kṛṣṇa."

In this way, you will remember Kṛṣṇa at every step of your life. And if you remember Kṛṣṇa at every step of life, you become the topmost *yogī*. And above all, if you practice the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare, you will easily remember Kṛṣṇa. There is no tax. There is no loss to your business. If you chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*, if you remember Kṛṣṇa while drinking water, what is your loss? Why don't you try it? This is the real culture of knowledge. If you cultivate this knowledge and at the same time go on doing your business, your life will be successful. Thank you very much.

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 words (and, occasionally, upon relevant English terms) and explain what they mean. (For a guide to proper pronunciation, please see page 1.)

A

Ahaṁ brahmāsmi. This is an aphorism from the Vedic literature, expressing the essential identity of each living being. *Ahaṁ* means "I am." What am I? *Ahaṁ brahmāsmi*: I am Brahman, or spirit.

In materialistic life, one identifies himself with bodily designations, thinking, "I am American" or "I am English," "I am black" or "I am white." One has to become free from such bodily designations and understand oneself to be Brahman, a purely spiritual soul.

The word *Brahman* may also refer to the Supreme Absolute, and therefore some philosophers interpret the words *ahaṁ brahmāsmi* to mean "I am the Supreme."

This is partially correct. The word *Brahman* applies first to the Supreme Absolute. And because all living entities are part and parcel of the Supreme Absolute, they too are called Brahman, just as drops of water from the ocean may also be called "ocean." And just as drops of water have the same chemical composition as the ocean, all living beings have the same spiritual qualities as the Supreme. All living beings, therefore, share in the qualities of *sat* (eternity), *cit* (knowledge), and *ānanda* (bliss). Yet quantitatively the living beings are different from the Supreme, for the Supreme is the whole and all other living entities are tiny parts of the Supreme. The Supreme is infinite; the living entities, infinitesimal.

The aphorism *ahaṁ brahmāsmi*, therefore, should ultimately be understood to mean "I am an infinitesimal spiritual part of the infinite spiritual whole."

According to *Bhagavad-gītā*, when a living entity realizes his identity as Brahman, he becomes joyful, free from hankering and lamentation, and equal toward all other living beings. He then engages himself in the devotional service of the Supreme Brahman, the Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa.

Ahaṅkāra. False ego. In pure understanding of one's self, one thinks, *ahaṁ brahmāsmi*: "I am spirit." In contrast, one who lacks this pure understanding misidentifies himself with matter. So he thinks, "I am this body." In other words, he identifies himself with temporary bodily designations—white, black, tall, short, young, old, and so on.

When scientists propose that life and consciousness are but temporary phenomena arising from organic chemicals, they too advocate such a misunderstanding of the self.

Bhagavad-gītā explains that the self is eternal and conscious whereas matter is temporary and insentient. The self is therefore known as "superior energy," whereas matter is called "inferior energy." The link that binds the superior energy to the inferior is called "false ego."

Bhagavad-gītā describes the inferior energy in gross and subtle divisions, beginning from the most tangible and gross, such as earth, water, and fire, and proceeding to the most subtle, such as mind and intelligence. And the most subtle of all the material elements—the very point of contact between the inferior, material energy and the superior, spiritual energy—is *ahaṅkāra*, the false ego, the spiritual soul's false identification with matter.

The mind and intelligence of a living being are subtle aspects of matter, whereas his physical body is gross matter. Therefore,

when a living being identifies himself with either his gross physical body or his subtle mind and intelligence, he is under the influence of false ego.

Because of false ego, people engage in false, superficial activities, which give rise to a false mode of civilization. Such a so-called civilization, built upon the bodily concept of the self, smothers the spiritual life of its people.

By the influence of false ego, one takes credit for doing everything independently. Material nature controls all the world's living beings, but illusioned living beings, failing to understand that their material bodies are machines working under nature's laws, fancy themselves winning control over nature. Thus they become ever more entangled in nature's complexities.

One can free oneself from this entanglement only by giving up one's false ego and returning to one's real ego. Ego, or identity, need not be false—one also has a *real* ego, a real identity: every living entity is an eternal servant of God, or Kṛṣṇa. If one relinquishes his false identity but tries to extinguish this real identity also, he is attempting spiritual suicide. One must give up the false identity and come to his real, eternal identity. He then becomes a liberated soul.

As confirmed in *Bhagavad-gītā*, every living entity is eternally a tiny part of God. Therefore, if by mental speculation or misguided mysticism one concludes that he himself is God, he falls prey to the ultimate snare of false ego. Only one who realizes himself to be an eternal servant of God becomes perfectly situated in self-realization.

Ahimsā. Nonviolence. Nonviolence is one of the preliminary qualifications for advancement in religious or spiritual life. Every religion, therefore, proscribes needless violence.

But violence is unavoidable, for the material world is by nature a violent place. Sometimes violence is necessary for the protection of innocent lives, and shrinking from such necessary violence leads to still greater violence.

Violence, therefore, must be undertaken in obedience to religious principles and employed only for the welfare of others. Violent acts impelled by ignorance and greed are always condemned.

We should not regard violence and nonviolence only in relation to the body. The body is temporary and its destruction inevitable. More important than the body, therefore, is the eternally existing consciousness, or soul, *within* the body. The soul is meant for spiritual advancement, and anyone who needlessly impedes the spiritual advancement of the soul is guilty of violence in the extreme.

Nor can one justify being nonviolent toward human beings but violent toward animals. Animals are also creatures of God, and they also have a right to live undisturbed. When fruits, grains, vegetables, and milk are abundant, a slaughterhouse is a symbol of barbarianism. The mouth that speaks of peace and nonviolence but feeds on the blood and flesh of slaughtered animals is the mouth of a hypocrite or a fool. Although the proprietor of the LBJ Ranch wanted to build a Great Society, he had to suffer the ignominious slaughter of his country's young men in a bitter and profitless war. By the laws of *karma*, acts of ignorant violence bring violence in return.

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

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

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

Five centuries ago, while spreading the

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

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

**IN PRAISE
OF THE
SPIRITUAL MASTER**

*In darkness
have I traveled,
In nescience
was I born.
For eons
had I journeyed
In existence
forlorn.*

*My knowledge
had been covered.
Forgetful
and blind,
In different planes
I'd hovered,
But soon
I lost my mind.*

*This earthly life
confounded
Until he showed
the way;
So now all
were astounded
With what
he came to say.*

*The torch of light
he carried
Revealed the truth
at last;
Salvation
for souls wearied,
Our agony
was past.*

*Prabhupāda
has explained
The message
of the Lord;
Now hearts
previously pained
Have heard
the Holy Word.*

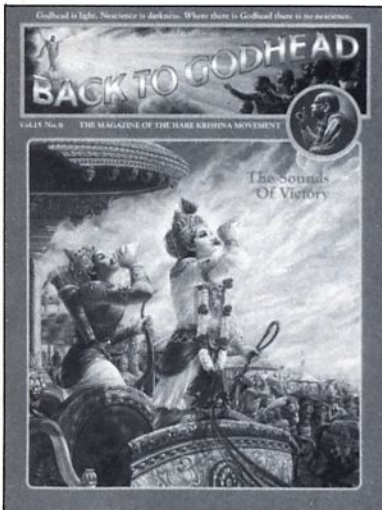
*And thus
I praise his glories,
Spiritual master
kind,
Who has killed
my worries—
The Lord he gave
is mine.*

*All glories to
His Divine Grace!
Before him
I do bow,
For he has put
my life in place
And made it
worthy now.*

—Pastora Roldan
Los Angeles, California

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NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

The Time of Death—and Afterwards

Many people haven't given much thought to the question of whether there is life after death, and many even prefer to ignore death. Still, we all must die. Like a tiger, death stalks each of us. Sooner or later it will strike.

So what happens after death? In the West there has been much speculation about reincarnation, the existence of repeated personal lives. Plato, Emerson, Thoreau, Jung, Schrödinger, Thomas Edison, Benjamin Franklin, and Henry Ford all believed in reincarnation, and their ideas have helped fuel popular speculations on the subject.

Today the speculations continue. Some people think that once a person evolves up to the human form he never goes back down to lower life forms in future lives. Some think of reincarnation only in terms of taking birth after birth in the material world, eternally. Some groups take an interest in finding out exactly what a person did in his past lives. Others put forward an idea of liberation, release from the cycle of reincarnation, wherein one loses his personal identity and merges into a light or "the void," or becomes one with the eternal energy. In the East, certain Buddhist sects describe that a person's character traits are reborn in another person, without any connecting link of continuing personal identity.

The oldest, most authorized, and most widely revered teachings on reincarnation are found in the *Vedas*, India's ancient books of wisdom. "What extracts from the *Vedas* I have read," wrote Henry David Thoreau, "follow me like the light of a higher and purer luminary, which describes a loftier course through a purer stratum—free from particulars, simple, universal."

Bhagavad-gītā, the best known of all Vedic texts, explains that life doesn't end with the demise of the body. The life within the body—the *ātmā* or "self"—is eternal. And at the time of death the *ātmā* transmigrates from one body to another. The *Gītā* explains that at death one's *karma* may cause him to descend to a lower species of life, and he may have to transmigrate among the trees, fish, birds, and so on before coming again to the human platform.

The human form of life offers a rare

opportunity. As *Bhagavad-gītā* explains, if at the time of death a person remembers Kṛṣṇa (God), he can transfer to the eternal spiritual world and become free from repeated birth and death in the material world. If a person forgets Kṛṣṇa, however, whatever else he may have attained will be destroyed by death.

Remembering Kṛṣṇa is not very difficult for one who chants His name: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. There is no difference between God and God's names. One can associate with Him simply by chanting. This simple meditation fixes the mind on the Supreme. So if a person chants regularly, he will easily be able to remember Kṛṣṇa at the time of death.

Otherwise, remembering the Supreme at death may be very difficult. Death is often sudden. Frequently it is accompanied by disease, pain, unconsciousness. The time of death is the most disturbing time of our life—not the ideal moment to begin meditation.

Taking up the chanting of God's names doesn't mean stopping our regular duties. One can chant anywhere, at any time. In *Bhagavad-gītā*, Kṛṣṇa assures His warrior-friend Arjuna, "Therefore, Arjuna, you should always think of Me in the form of Kṛṣṇa and at the same time carry out your prescribed duty of fighting. With your activities dedicated to Me and your mind and intelligence fixed on Me, you will attain Me without doubt." This is Kṛṣṇa's advice to all men. He doesn't say that a person has to give up his normal life and become a monk, or retire from economic or family duties. You can continue such activities and at the same time think of Kṛṣṇa by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Reading Vedic literature like *Bhagavad-gītā* is another way to remember Kṛṣṇa. We are already accustomed to reading newspapers, magazines, and novels. And this ordinary reading absorbs us in subjects of this temporary world. If we read *transcendental* literature and discuss it among devotees, then we shall revive our relationship with the Supreme Lord. Reading Vedic literature helps us transfer our thinking power to spiritual subjects. This will make it possible for us to remember

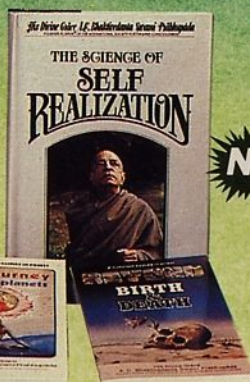
the Supreme at the time of death. And by remembering Kṛṣṇa one returns to Kṛṣṇa in the spiritual world, thus ending the cycle of reincarnation within this material world.

Bhagavad-gītā explains that this release from the cycle of birth and death does not involve the annihilation of our personality. The Supreme is not an impersonal light or void; He is the Supreme Person, Kṛṣṇa, the all-attractive. Kṛṣṇa isn't an ordinary person. He has a transcendental body with inconceivable potency. From Him everything emanates. He is eternal, full of knowledge and bliss. Everything we desire but can never perfectly realize in our relationships in this material world can be found complete in our eternal relationship with Kṛṣṇa in the spiritual world. Although we have now forgotten our relationship with Kṛṣṇa, human life is meant for reviving that God consciousness.

And what if one doesn't cultivate God consciousness? What happens to him at death? According to *Bhagavad-gītā*, as long as the *ātmā* is absorbed in material consciousness, forgetful of his real, eternal relationship with Kṛṣṇa, he is compelled by *karma* to take repeated births in this material world, life after life. "Whatever state of being one remembers when he quits his body," *Bhagavad-gītā* says, "that state he will attain without fail." So a man who misuses the special gift of human life and degrades himself by material consciousness may have to take his next birth as an animal or plant, while a man who is pious and morally good may take his next birth in a fortunate human family. But in all cases, rebirth means another life of mixed happiness and suffering, and, irrevocably, death again . . . and again . . . and again . . .

An intelligent human being, the Vedic literature explains, must live his life with these facts in view. While carrying on our activities in this world, we should cultivate remembrance of Kṛṣṇa and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. The tiger of death is stalking each of us, and he will strike sooner or later. But if we remember to chant God's names, then Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is feared even by death himself, will save us from the tiger's jaws.—SDG

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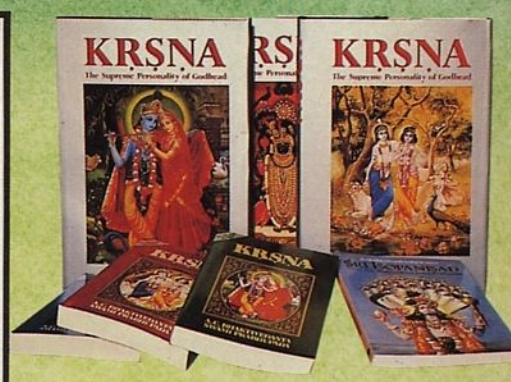
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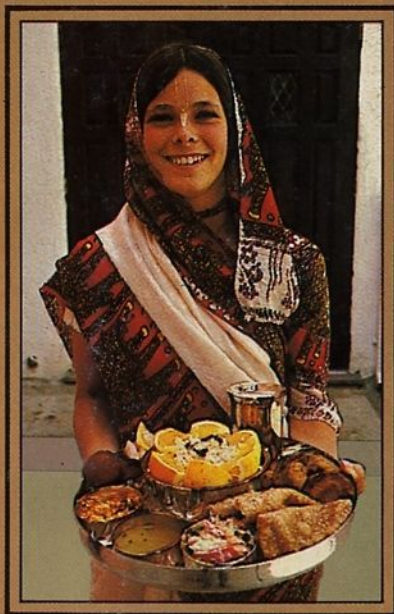
The Sunday Feast

It's a kind of open house. You come alone or with your friends or family. First 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 a bit 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 of the chanting. 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*. In case you don't already know, *Bhagavad-gītā* 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 *Gītā* is 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 *āratis* 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 like ice cream, cake, and cream cheese all rolled into one. There are 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 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.)

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