

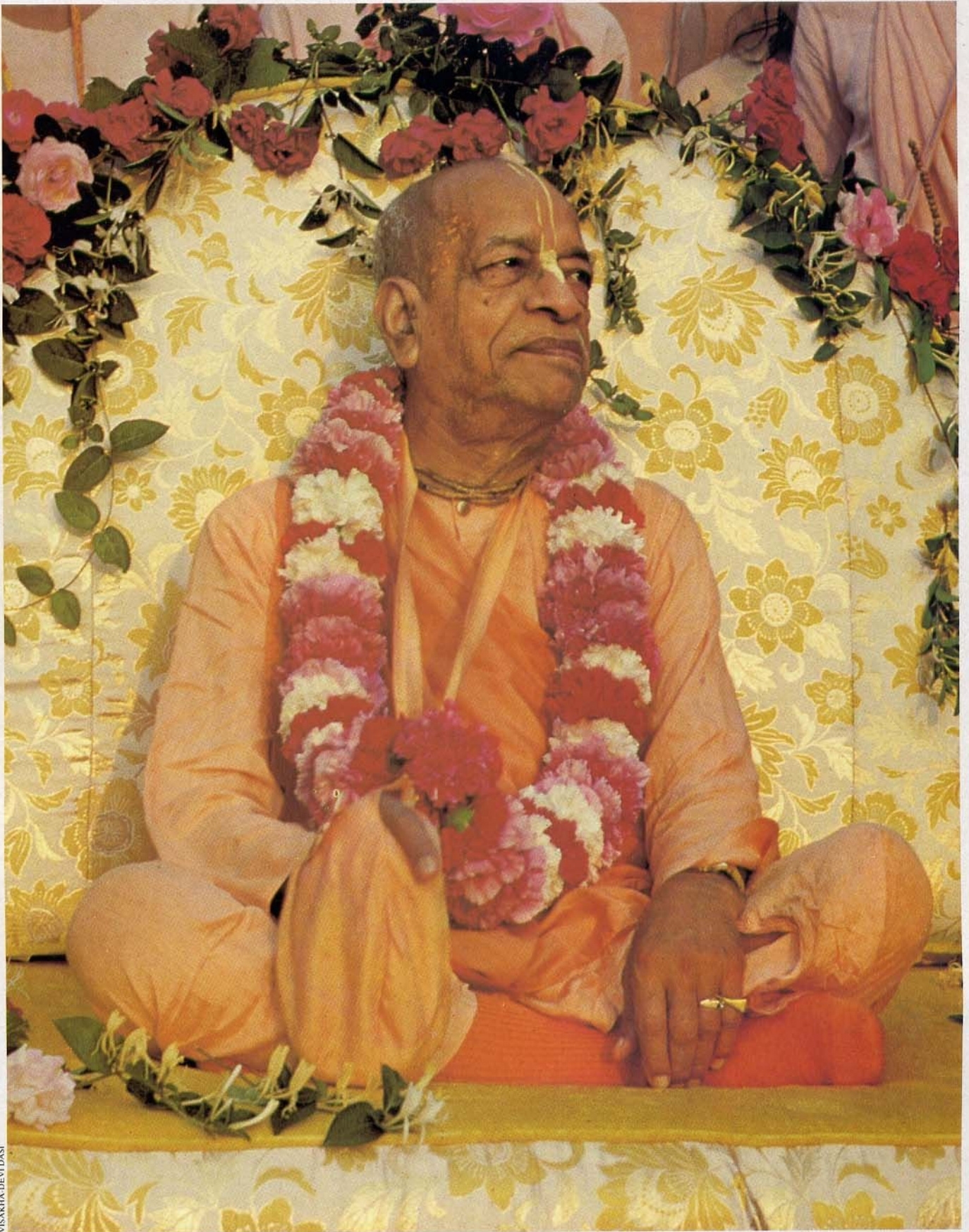
Godhead is light. Nescience is darkness. Where there is Godhead there is no nescience.

BACK TO GODHEAD

Vol.16 No.11

THE MAGAZINE OF THE HARE KRISHNA MOVEMENT





VISAKHA DEVI DAS

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

BACK TO GODHEAD

VOL. 16, NO. 11

THE MAGAZINE OF THE HARE KRISHNA MOVEMENT

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His Divine Grace
A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda

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PRONUNCIATION. We spell Sanskrit words and names by a scholarly system that lets you know how to say each word. 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 **s** like the **s** in **sun**. So for *Kṛṣṇa* say KRISHNA, and for *Caitanya* say CHAITANYA.

SPIRITUAL NAMES. 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 literature, and these are now standard in universities worldwide. Meanwhile, traveling almost nonstop, Śrī Prabhupāda molded his international society into a worldwide confederation of *āśramas*, schools, temples, and farm communities. He passed away in 1977 in India's Vrndāvana, the place most sacred to Lord Kṛṣṇa. His disciples are carrying forward the movement he started.

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COVER: Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is shown here with His eternal consort, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, seated on a lotus in the Lord's eternal abode in the spiritual sky, or the kingdom of God. (Painting: Puṣkārā dāsa)

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



CHANGING BODIES

The Problem We Prefer to Set Aside

A talk given in August 1973 by
His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda,
Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness,
at the Hare Kṛṣṇa temple in London.

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

“As the embodied soul continuously passes, in this body, from boyhood to youth, and then to old age, the soul similarly passes into another body at death. A sober person is not bewildered by such a change.”

Generally, people cannot understand this simple verse. Therefore Kṛṣṇa says, *dhīras tatra na muhyati*: “Only a sober man can understand.” But what is the difficulty? How plainly Kṛṣṇa has explained things! There are three stages of life. The first, *kaumāram*, lasts until one is fifteen years old. Then, from the sixteenth year, one begins youthful life, *yauvanam*. Then, after the fortieth or fiftieth year, one becomes an old man, *jarā*. So those who are *dhīra*—sober-headed, cool-headed—they

The soul transmigrates at every moment as our body changes from childhood, to youth, and then to old age. When the body disintegrates at death, the soul starts another round of transmigration in a new body. For those who wish to break free of this painful cycle of repeated death and rebirth, the Vedic literature provides the method: Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

can understand: “I have changed my body. I remember how I was playing and jumping when I was a boy. Then I became a young man, and I was enjoying my life with friends and family. Now I am an old man, and when this body dies I shall again enter a new body.”

In the previous verse Kṛṣṇa said to Arjuna, “All of us—you, Me, and all the soldiers and kings who are present here—we existed in the past, we are existing now, and we shall continue to exist in the future.” This is Kṛṣṇa’s statement. But rascals will say, “How was I existing in the past? I was born only in such-and-such a year. Before that I was not existing. At the present time I am existing. That’s all right. But as soon as I die, I’ll not exist.” But Kṛṣṇa says, “You, I, all of us—we were existing, we are still existing, and we shall continue to exist.” Is that wrong? No, it is a *fact*. Before our birth we were existing, in a different body; and after our death we shall continue to exist, in a different body. This is to be understood.

For example, seventy years ago I was a boy, then I became a young man, and now I have become an old man. My body has changed, but I, the proprietor of the body, am existing unchanged. So where is the difficulty in understanding? *Dehino 'smin yathā dehe*. *Dehinaḥ* means “the propri-

etor of the body,” and *dehe* means “in the body.” The body is changing, but the soul, the proprietor of the body, remains unchanged.

Anyone can understand that his body has changed. So in the next life the body will also change. But we may not remember; that is another thing. In my last life, what was my body? I do not remember. So forgetfulness is our nature, but our forgetting something does not mean that it did not take place. No. In my childhood I did so many things I do not remember, but my father and mother remember. So, forgetting does not mean that things did not take place.

Similarly, death simply means I have forgotten what I was in my past life. That is death. Otherwise I, as spirit soul, have no death. Suppose I change my clothes. In my boyhood I wore certain clothes, in my youth I wore different clothes. Now, in my old age, as a *sannyāsī* [a renunciant], I am wearing different clothes. The clothes may change, but that does not mean that the *owner* of the clothes is dead and gone. No.

This is a simple explanation of transmigration of the soul.

Also, all of us are individuals. There is no question of merging together. Every one of us is an individual. God is an indi-

vidual, and we are also individuals. *Nityo nityānām cetanaś cetanānām*: “Of all the eternal, conscious, individual persons, one is supreme.” The difference is that God never changes His body but we change our bodies in the material world. When we go to the spiritual world, there is no more change of body. Just as Kṛṣṇa has His *sac-cid-ānanda-vigraha*, an eternal form of bliss and knowledge, so when you go back home, back to Godhead, you will also get a similar body. The difference is that even when Kṛṣṇa comes to the material world, He does not change His body. Therefore one of His names is Acyuta, “He who never falls.”

Kṛṣṇa never changes. He never falls down, because He is the controller of *māyā*, the material energy. We are controlled by the material energy, and Kṛṣṇa is the controller of the material energy. That is the difference between Kṛṣṇa and us. And not only does He control the material energy, but He controls the spiritual energy also—all energies. Everything that we see, everything manifested—that is Kṛṣṇa’s energy. Just as heat and light are the energies of the sun, everything manifested is made up of the energies of Kṛṣṇa.

There are many energies, but they have been divided into three principal ones: the external energy, the internal energy, and the marginal energy. We living entities are the marginal energy. *Marginal* means that we may remain under the influence of the external energy or we may remain under the influence of the internal energy, as we like. The independence is there. After speaking *Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa says to Arjuna, *yatheccchasi tathā kuru*: “Whatever you like, you can do.” Kṛṣṇa gives this independence to Arjuna. He does not force one to surrender. That is not good. Something forced will not stand. For example, we advise our students, “Rise early in the morning.” This is our advice. We do not force anyone. Of course, we may force someone once or twice, but if he does not practice it, force will be useless.

Similarly, Kṛṣṇa does not force anyone to leave this material world. All conditioned souls are under the influence of the external, or material, energy. Kṛṣṇa comes here to deliver us from the clutches of the material energy. Because we are part and parcel of Kṛṣṇa, we are all directly Kṛṣṇa’s sons. And if a son is in difficulty, the father suffers also, indirectly. Suppose the son has become a madman—or, nowadays, a hippy. The father is very sorry: “Oh, my son is living like a wretch.” So, the father is not happy. Similarly, the conditioned souls in this material world are suffering so much, living like wretches and rascals. So Kṛṣṇa is not happy. Therefore He comes personally to teach us how to return to Him. (*Yadā*

yadā hi dharmasya glānir bhavati . . . tad-ātmānam srjāmy aham.)

When Kṛṣṇa comes, He comes in His original form. But unfortunately we understand Kṛṣṇa to be one of us. In one sense He is one of us, since He is the father and we are His sons. But He’s the chief: *nityo nityānām cetanaś cetanānām*. He’s more powerful than us. He’s the most powerful, the Supreme Powerful. We have a little power, but Kṛṣṇa has infinite power. That is the difference between Kṛṣṇa and us. We cannot be equal to God. Nobody can be equal to Kṛṣṇa or greater than Him. Everyone is under Kṛṣṇa.

**The birds and beasts
also eat, sleep, have
sexual intercourse,
and defend
themselves. So
these things are not
our real problems.
The real problem
is that we do not
want to die but
death takes place.**

Ekale īśvara kṛṣṇa, āra saba bhr̥tya: everyone is the servant of Kṛṣṇa; Kṛṣṇa is the only master. *Bhoktāram yajña-tapasām sarva-loka-maheśvaram*: “I am the only enjoyer; I am the proprietor,” Kṛṣṇa says. And that is a fact.

So, we are changing our body, but Kṛṣṇa does not change His. We should understand this. The proof is that Kṛṣṇa remembers past, present, and future. In the Fourth Chapter of *Bhagavad-gītā* you’ll find that Kṛṣṇa says He spoke the philosophy of *Bhagavad-gītā* to the sun-god some 120,000,000 years ago. How does Kṛṣṇa remember? Because He does not change His body. We forget things because we are changing our body at every moment. That is a medical fact. The corpuscles of our blood are changing at every second. But the body is changing imperceptibly. That is why the father and mother of a growing child do not notice how his body is changing. A third person, if he comes after some time and sees that the child has grown, he says, “Oh, the child has grown so big.” But the father and

mother have not noticed that he has grown so big, because they are always seeing him and the changes are taking place imperceptibly, at every moment. So our body is always changing, but *I*, the soul, the proprietor of the body, am not changing. This is to be understood.

We are all individual souls, and we are eternal, but because our body is changing we are suffering birth, death, old age, and disease. The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is meant to get us out of this changing condition. “Since I am eternal, how can I come to the permanent position?” That should be our question. Everyone wants to live eternally; nobody wants to die. If I come before you with a revolver and say, “I am going to kill you,” you will immediately cry out, because you do not want to die. This is not a very good business—to die and take birth again. It is very troublesome. This we all know subconsciously. We know that when we die we’ll have to enter again into the womb of a mother—and nowadays mothers are killing the children within the womb. Then again another mother . . . The process of accepting another body again and again is very long and very troublesome. In our subconscious we remember all this trouble, and therefore we do not want to die.

So our question should be this: “I am eternal, so why have I been put into this temporary life?” This is an intelligent question. And this is our real problem. But rascals set aside this real problem. They are thinking of how to eat, how to sleep, how to have sex, how to defend. Even if you eat nicely and sleep nicely, ultimately you have to die. The problem of death is there. But they don’t care about this real problem. They are very much alert to solve the temporary problems, which are not actually problems at all. The birds and beasts also eat, sleep, have sexual intercourse, and defend themselves. They know how to do all these things, even without the human beings’ education and so-called civilization. So these things are not our real problems. The real problem is that we do not want to die but death takes place. This is our real problem.

But the rascals do not know it. They are always busy with temporary problems. For example, suppose there is severe cold. This is a problem. We have to search out a nice coat or a fireplace, and if these are not available we are in distress. So severe cold is a problem. But it is a temporary problem. Severe cold, winter, has come, and it will go. It is not a permanent problem. My permanent problem is that because of ignorance I am taking birth, I am accepting disease, I am accepting old age, and I am accepting death. These are my real problems. Therefore Kṛṣṇa says, *janma-*

mrtyu-jarā-vyādhi-duḥkha-doṣānudar-śanam: those who are actually in knowledge see these four problems—birth, death, old age, and disease.

Now, Kṛṣṇa says, *dhīras tatra namuhyati*: “A sober man is not perplexed at the time of death.” If you prepare yourself for death, why should you be perplexed? For example, if in your childhood and boyhood you prepare yourself nicely, if you become educated, then you will get a nice job, a nice situation, and be happy. Similarly, if you prepare yourself in this life for going back home, back to Godhead, then where is your perplexity at the time of death? There is no perplexity. You’ll know, “I am going to Kṛṣṇa. I am going back home, back to Godhead. Now I’ll not have to change material bodies; I’ll have my spiritual body. Now I shall play with Kṛṣṇa and dance with Kṛṣṇa and eat with Kṛṣṇa.” This is Kṛṣṇa consciousness—to prepare yourself for the next life.

Sometimes a dying man cries out, because according to *karma* those who are very, very sinful see horrible scenes at the time of death. The sinful man knows he is going to accept some abominable type of body. But those who are pious, the devotees, die without any anxiety. Foolish people say, “You devotees are dying, and the nondevotees are also dying, so what is the difference?” There is a difference. A cat catches her kitten in its mouth, and it also catches the mouse in its mouth. Superficially we may see that the cat has caught both the mouse and the kitten in the same way. But there are differences of catching. The kitten is feeling pleasure: “Oh, my mother is carrying me.” And the mouse is feeling death: “Oh, now I’m

going to die.” This is the difference. So, although both devotees and nondevotees die, there is a difference of feeling at the time of death—just like the kitten and the mouse. Don’t think that both of them are dying in the same way. The bodily process may be the same, but the mental situation is different.

In *Bhagavad-gītā* [4.11] Kṛṣṇa says,

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

If you simply try to understand Kṛṣṇa, you can go to Him at the time of death. Everything about Kṛṣṇa is divine, transcendental. Kṛṣṇa’s activities, Kṛṣṇa’s appearance, Kṛṣṇa’s worship, Kṛṣṇa’s temple, Kṛṣṇa’s glories—everything is transcendental. So if one understands these things, or even *tries* to understand, then one becomes liberated from the process of birth and death. This is what Kṛṣṇa says. So become very serious to understand Kṛṣṇa, and remain in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Then these problems—birth, death, old age, and disease—will be solved automatically, very easily.

A *dhīra*, a sober man, will think, “I want to live eternally. Why does death take place? I want to live a very healthy life. Why does disease come? I don’t want to become an old man. Why does old age come?” *Janma-mrtyu-jarā-vyādhi*. These are real problems. One can solve these problems simply by taking to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, simply by understanding Kṛṣṇa. And for understanding Kṛṣṇa, the *Bhagavad-gītā* is there, very nicely explained. So make

your life successful. Understand that you are not the body. You are embodied *within* the body, but you are not the body. For example, a bird may be within a cage, but the cage is not the bird. Foolish persons take care of the cage, not the bird, and the bird suffers starvation. So we are suffering spiritual starvation. Therefore nobody is happy in the material world. Spiritual starvation. That is why you see that in an opulent country like America—enough food, enough residences, enough material enjoyment—still they are becoming hippies. The young people are not satisfied, because of spiritual starvation. Materially you may be very opulent, but if you starve spiritually you cannot be happy.

A spiritual rejuvenation is required. You must realize, *aham brahmāsmi*: “I am not this body; I am *brahman*, spiritual soul.” Then you’ll be happy. *Brahma-bhūtaḥ prasannātmā na śocati na kāṅkṣati samaḥ sarveṣu bhūteṣu*. Then there will be equality, fraternity, brotherhood. Otherwise it is all bogus—simply high-sounding words. There cannot be equality, fraternity, and so on without Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Come to the spiritual platform; then you will see everyone equally. Otherwise you will think, “I am a human being with hands and legs, and the cow has no hands and legs. So let me kill the cow and eat it.” Why? What right do you have to kill an animal? You have no vision of equality, for want of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Therefore, in this material world, so-called education, culture, fraternity—all these are bogus. Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the right subject matter to be studied. Then society will be happy. Otherwise not. Thank you very much.

We welcome your letters. Write to
BACK TO GODHEAD
51 West Allens Lane
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19119

LETTERS

In Washington, D.C., on August 20th, a call-in radio show hosted Jean Merritt, who says that the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement is a “destructive cult” with dubious religious status whose members are taught not to think for themselves.

I called Ms. Merritt and told her that about 13 years ago my brother and I experienced something cultlike when we were employed at a resort during our summer vacation—low wages, poor diet, and hard work. That fall my brother went to college at the University of Minnesota. He is a bright person, and he graduated with honors, but he felt something was missing. He had some contact with the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement while he was in college, and he joined the movement in 1974. Although he reported that it was difficult to adjust to

the rules—no meat-eating, no gambling, no illicit sex, and no intoxication—he pulled through. Since he is now quite a thoughtful adult, I informed Jean Merritt that I could not agree with her that the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement is a “destructive cult.”

She said that the rule “no gambling” includes the idea of “no mental speculation.” She quoted Swami Prabhupāda’s *Bhagavad-gītā*. She said that he wrote in that book that devotees have to “suspend the ego function.”

I replied to her by saying that it seems to me that one sacrifices some of his ego whether he works for the above-mentioned resort owner and transfers one’s loyalty to him (although the benefit is negligible) or whether he serves Kṛṣṇa, whom

he considers to be God (in which case the benefit is spiritual and eternal).

Then the moderator ended my call. But as a reader of BACK TO GODHEAD magazine (my brother gave me a complimentary subscription) I want to know whether your rules or the *Bhagavad-gītā* tend to restrict a devotee’s mental or intellectual range. And if so, how?

H. Gullen
Baltimore, Maryland

Your letter raises several interesting points. The first concerns the scope of the prohibition against gambling. This, as you know, is one of the four regulative principles that form the pillars of our spiritual life: no meat-eating, no intoxication, no illicit sex, and no gambling. Gambling, however, refers only to wagering on the outcome of games of chance, sporting events, and so on. While on occasion Śrīla Prabhupāda has added “participating in frivolous
(continued on page 10)

SAṅKĪRTANA

The Perfection of Glorifying God

“Praise ye the Lord. Praise ye the name of the Lord;
praise Him, O ye servants of the Lord. . . .
Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord.”
(Psalms, 135, 150)

by GARUḌA DĀSA

Among all the practices of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement, the most prominent is the public chanting of God's names, ecstatic dancing, and playing of musical instruments—a spontaneous street liturgy common in most major cities throughout the world. Yet upon first seeing devotees chanting and dancing on a busy downtown street of a modern Western city, many people understandably experience a kind of culture shock. Perhaps it's the devotees' uncommon appearance, or the unfamiliar music, or the mere presence of a group of people celebrating something right on the street. In any case, the spectacle of ecstatic dancing, chanting, and music-making certainly warrants an explanation, and we can begin with some historical background.

One day, in early sixteenth-century India, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya requested the people of the Bengali town of Navadvīpa to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* in every one of their homes. Before long, these devotees became so overwhelmed and intoxicated by the chanting of the holy

names of God that they burst out of their homes into the streets. One of Śrī Caitanya's biographers says, “No one in Navadvīpa could hear any sound other than the words ‘Hare Kṛṣṇa! Hare Rāma!’ and the beating of *mṛdaṅga* drums and the clashing of hand cymbals.” Accompanied by these musical instruments, Śrī Caitanya would chant with such devotional ecstasy that huge crowds of people would gather to chant and dance through the streets of Navadvīpa and into the nearby villages.

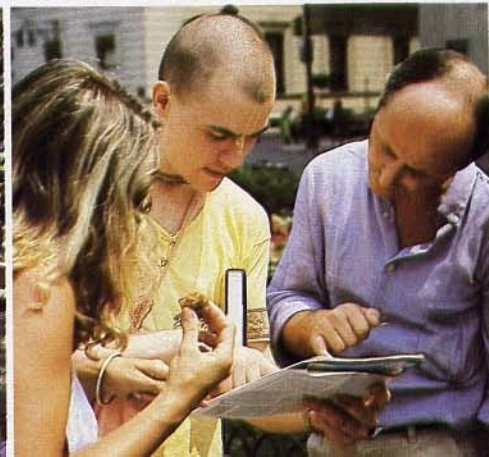
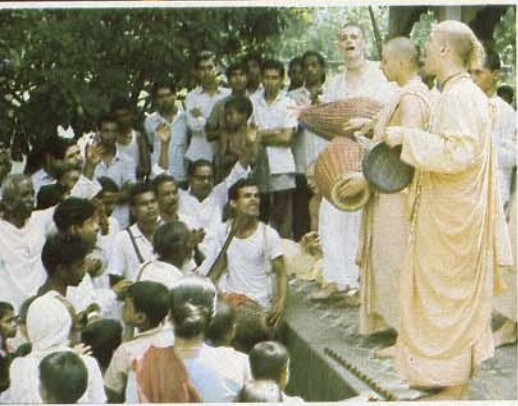
Thus Śrī Caitanya, who is accepted by devotees as an incarnation of Godhead and by historians as one of the greatest devotional mystics in the history of the world's religions, introduced this most dramatic expression of devotion, known as *saṅkīrtana*. Although we can trace the idea of *saṅkīrtana* back thousands of years, not until Śrī Caitanya was its full potential realized, for it was He who first demonstrated its universal attraction. For six years He traveled widely in India by foot, and wherever He went He introduced the practice of *saṅkīrtana*. Thereafter, it was accepted by saints of various religious traditions and sects across the Indian subcontinent.

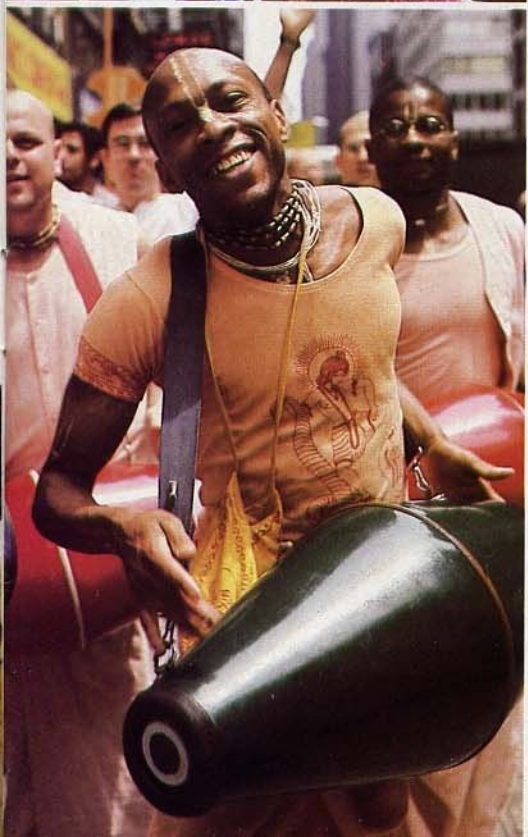
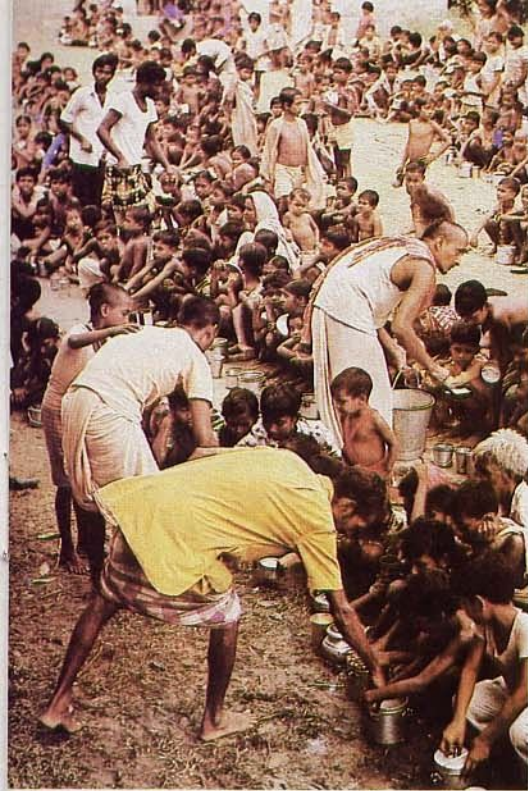
Nearly five centuries later, in 1966, *saṅkīrtana* was introduced in the West

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by its foremost modern exponent, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda (the founder and spiritual guide of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness). Since then, its practice has spread throughout the world. It is precisely this ancient practice of *saṅkīrtana* that the devotees of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement are presenting before the world's plurality of cultures today. Now let us examine more closely the phenomenon of *saṅkīrtana*.

We can understand what *saṅkīrtana* is through a brief analysis of the word. The word *saṅkīrtana* has a twofold meaning, indicated by two distinct translations of its root. The Sanskrit verb *kīrt*, from which the word *kīrtana* derives, means on the one hand "to praise" or "to glorify" and on the other "to tell" or "to call." Thus the act of *kīrtana* is meant to praise or glorify God while telling or calling man to participate in this glorification. *Kīrtana* always takes place in a congregation of saintly people, as indicated by the prefix *sam*, meaning "all together," or "congregationally." The prefix *sam* may also act as an intensive, connoting "perfect" or "complete" *kīrtana*. Therefore *saṅkīrtana* carries the sense that when *kīrtana* is performed congregationally, the glorification of God and the calling of man is perfect or complete.

Saṅkīrtana is the performance of activities that in some way glorify God. There are various forms of *saṅkīrtana*, such as chanting God's holy names, offering and accepting sanctified food, and producing and distributing sacred literature. Each of these is a primary way a pure devotee may glorify God.

Glorifying God pleases Him, purifies the glorifier, develops one's spiritual qualities, and attracts others to this glorification (thus pleasing God even more). How can one please the Supreme Being, upon whom everything is absolutely dependent? We can do this by giving Him the only thing He lacks—our love and devotion to Him. *Saṅkīrtana* is the most complete and perfect way of giving God man's devotion.

As chanting God's name in glorification pleases God, so also do offering food to God and writing and publishing literature about God. When devotees offer food to the Supreme in worship, the food is spiritually transformed, and devotees gladly distribute it to all, for just by tasting such sanctified food one is purified and begins pleasing God. Furthermore, a book that glorifies the Supreme Lord, His name, His form, His qualities, and His manifestations is itself an embodiment of the divinity. Devotees therefore distribute such literature for the spiritual education of others. Śrī Caitanya advocated all three of these forms of *saṅkīrtana*.

The chanting of the holy names of God is a religious principle that genuine prophets and saints of widely varied traditions have tried to promulgate, and therefore it should not be a practice completely foreign to the West. Countless verses in the Old Testament express the importance of the names of God: "So I will sing praise unto Thy name forever," "Sing praises to His name," "Blessed be the name of the Lord," and so on. Many verses even ask us to sing the holy name of God with music and dance: "Let them praise His name in the dance, let them sing praises unto Him with the timbrel and harp." And *saṅkīrtana* should absorb one constantly: "From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, the Lord's name is to be praised." These examples illustrate that God's name must not be ordinary; otherwise, why should a devotee of God occupy himself constantly with praising it?

There is something special about the relationship between God and His name that we don't find between ordinary persons or things and their names. We should note that these passages from the Old Testament don't directly mention God as the one being praised. Rather, it is His *name*. The praising of God takes place through the praising of His holy names, because they actually represent God in a form that enables one to associate with Him while in limited human life. Because God is the supreme absolute being, He is fully present in any one of His names. Therefore, by sounding God's names one associates with the transcendent Lord Himself. *Saṅkīrtana*, then, means to associate with God through the chanting of His sacred names in order to realize our eternal relationship with Him.

Describing the power of God's names, Lord Caitanya says that God has invested all His transcendental potencies in His names and that chanting these names enables anyone to easily approach Him. Although there are many names of God that one may chant, the especially potent formula given by Śrī Caitanya and His followers is the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. This formula is known as the "greatest chant," or the *mahā-mantra*, because it contains the most powerful names of God for the process of *saṅkīrtana*. Anyone may benefit from chanting these names, regardless of sex, race, nationality, religious belief, or social status.

One cannot overestimate the potency of *saṅkīrtana*, for in each of its forms it brings about a permanent spiritual effect. But *saṅkīrtana* with sacred literature has a special quality. We have mentioned that devotees recognize sacred literature as an embodiment of the divinity, as they recognize the holy names and sanctified

food. Such sacred literature is very dear to the devotees because it conveys the message of God and thus invokes His very presence. But although chanting God's names and partaking of sanctified food have a powerful, permanent effect and these methods have their own special applications, they provide the purifying presence of God only during the time they are performed. The special quality of sacred literature, therefore, is that it provides continuous access to the Deity and association with Him. The *Padma Purāna* says that if one just keeps such literature in one's home, the Lord resides there. The devotee understands that sacred literature is the greatest gift, so he naturally tries to distribute this gift profusely for everyone's benefit.*

The distribution of sacred literature is not a new form of *saṅkīrtana*. It was highly

regarded even during Lord Caitanya's time, when literature was not mass-produced. Lord Caitanya ordered His immediate disciples the Six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana to write copious works on the spiritual science. And later, as printing technology developed, the importance of literary *saṅkīrtana* increased. In the early twentieth century one great Vaiṣṇava teacher called the distribution of sacred literature the "great drum," or *brhat mrdāṅga*; the sound of a drum may be heard for half a mile, but books can be heard around the world.

The process of *saṅkīrtana* is so complete and powerful that while it glorifies God through its various forms, it spiritually uplifts all who participate or have even remote contact with it. Thus, as Lord Caitanya states, it is "the prime benediction for humanity at large." It is the direct

*Sacred literature plays an essential role in the Vaiṣṇava tradition, from which the *saṅkīrtana* movement emerges. For example, among the tradition's many texts is the *Mahābhārata*, the longest epic poem in the world (eight times the

length of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* combined). One section of the *Mahābhārata* is the *Bhagavad-gītā*, the most loved sacred text of India. And many thousands of other works belong to this same rich literary heritage.

and genuine experience of the soul proper. It is the outpouring of the most natural tendency of the human heart in its lasting relation with the Supreme Being. It is that for which man ultimately hankers in his higher self, after realizing the futility of trying to satisfy worldly appetites and passions. *Saṅkīrtana* "enables us to fully taste the nectar for which we are always anxious."

As demonstrated by the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement, the worldwide spread of this powerful religious force can spiritually transform people from all cultures. This fact, along with evidence about *saṅkīrtana* from other scriptural texts, points to the universality of *saṅkīrtana*: *saṅkīrtana* brings forth the ultimate religious dimension of human existence. Because *saṅkīrtana* so thoroughly arouses man's spiritual potential in his relation to the Supreme Person, it brings forth love of God par excellence. Indeed, in our materialistic society, which pushes us toward utter forgetfulness of God, *saṅkīrtana* powerfully reasserts the genuine spiritual character of man. ❀

LETTERS

(continued from page 5)

sports" to this prohibition, he also personally corrected someone who had added "mental speculation" to "gambling." "No," Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "just 'no gambling.'" So the idea that "no gambling" includes "no mental speculation" is simply a speculation.

Nevertheless, Śrīla Prabhupāda taught that a habit of mental speculation will impede a devotee's spiritual development. Even though this rule lacks the weight of the four regulative principles, devotees take it very seriously. Ms. Merritt, however, is simply speculating on the meaning of this prohibition, which she doesn't understand at all. Had she the good sense to inquire from a valid source, as you have done, she would have discovered the regulation's meaning. She would then have seen that it certainly allows devotees to think for themselves and that it has nothing to do with some supposed "suspension of the ego function."

"Mental speculation," as we use the term, refers to the attempt to discover the nature of the Absolute Truth—the ultimate source of all manifestations—solely by the strength of hypothesis, reasoning, and arguments. In India, this endeavor has been formalized into a spiritual path called jñāna-yoga, which leads to the understanding that God is impersonal, that the world is unreal, and that the individual is identical in all respects with God. This is a position

known as kevalādvaita, or undifferentiated monism. Kṛṣṇa consciousness, or bhakti-yoga, on the other hand, aims at establishing an eternal personal relationship between the subordinate individual and the Supreme Personality of Godhead through the practice of devotional service, which includes the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra.

According to the *Bhagavad-gītā*, the personal feature of the Absolute Truth is higher than the impersonal, and the method of bhakti superior to jñāna. The personal feature is called adhokṣaja, beyond the range of mental speculation; He is knowable only through pure devotion of the soul. But pure devotion must be free from karma, the endeavor for material enjoyment, and jñāna, the endeavor to become one with God by mental speculation. Therefore, jñāna, mental speculation, is useless in developing love for and knowledge of the highest feature of the Absolute Truth.

This hardly means that a devotee should avoid thinking for himself. On the contrary, it is only by thinking for himself that a person can arrive at the conclusion to dedicate himself fully to the service of God. It is impossible for anyone else to enact such dedication for him. Accordingly, an aspirant has to apply all his mental faculties to understanding the philosophy of devotional service, explicated in works like the *Bhagavad-gītā*. Moreover, a devotee also exercises his intelligence in logically establishing the conclusion of devotional service against the inimical teachings of voidistic

and impersonalistic philosophies.

Devotional service entails not suspending the ego function but rather engaging the ego, intelligence, and every other faculty in the service of Kṛṣṇa. It is the mental speculators, the jñānīs, who aspire after the destruction of individuality. We are opposed to such spiritual suicide; we wish to retain individuality, purified of selfishness, for the unending service of Kṛṣṇa.

As Śrīla Prabhupāda has written in his commentary to Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam: "All sages and devotees of the Lord have recommended that the subject matter of art, science, philosophy, physics, chemistry, psychology, and all other branches of knowledge should be wholly and solely applied in the service of the Lord. . . . There is no use presenting dry speculative theories for sense gratification. Philosophy and science should be engaged to establish the glory of the Lord. . . . A great scientist should endeavor to prove the existence of the Lord on a scientific basis. Similarly, philosophical speculations should be utilized to establish the Supreme Truth as sentient and all-powerful. Similarly, all other branches of knowledge should always be engaged in the service of the Lord."

In this way there is unlimited scope for the use of intelligence in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Avoiding mental speculation is no more a limitation on intelligence than avoiding ignorance is on knowledge. Someone may charge that our becoming intelligent has limited our freedom to be stupid, but we would rather leave that freedom to Ms. Merritt. ❀

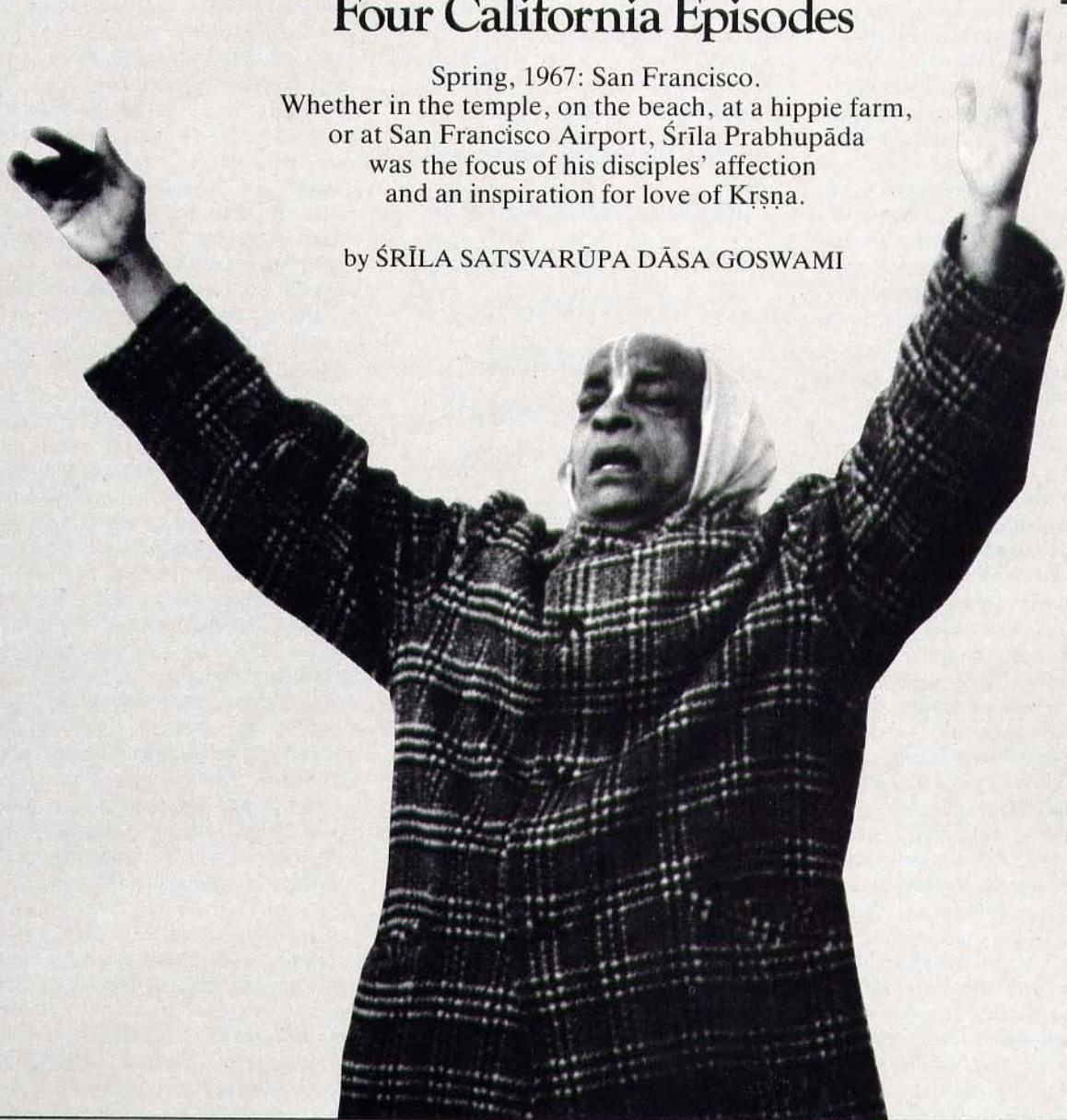
The Biography of a Pure Devotee

Waves of Ecstasy

Four California Episodes

Spring, 1967: San Francisco.
Whether in the temple, on the beach, at a hippie farm,
or at San Francisco Airport, Śrīla Prabhupāda
was the focus of his disciples' affection
and an inspiration for love of Kṛṣṇa.

by ŚRĪLA SATSVARŪPA DĀSA GOSWAMI



Śrīla Prabhupāda had planted the seed of Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the fertile ground of New York's Lower East Side and seen it take root and flourish. But when he came to San Francisco, his International Society for Krishna Consciousness truly began to blossom. Just a few days after he arrived, in January 1967, Śrīla Prabhupāda found himself on center stage in the Avalon Ballroom, leading thousands of young people

in the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa, accompanied by exciting new "acid-rock" bands like the Jefferson Airplane.

Śrīla Prabhupāda soon developed his small storefront temple on Frederick Street, in the heart of the Haight-Ashbury district, into a spiritual haven for the troubled youth living in local crash pads and on the streets. His chanting in Golden Gate Park brought a good response, as did his free-lunch pro-

gram at the temple, and when he installed Jagannātha deities there he increased the devotion of his disciples and guests alike.

And all through these adventures—up until his emotion-packed departure after just two and a half months—Śrīla Prabhupāda showed a spiritual depth, a warmth of personality, and a loving concern that endeared him to all who met him.

Above: On a picnic at Stinson Beach, San Francisco, Śrīla Prabhupāda lifts his arms in ecstasy as he leads his disciples in the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa.

(Excerpted from Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta, by Satsvarīpa dāsa Goswami. © 1981 by the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust.)

Govinda dāsī had a question for Swamiji. He had mentioned briefly that Lord Caitanya used to cry in separation from Kṛṣṇa and had once even thrown Himself into a river, crying, "Where is Kṛṣṇa?" She was unsure whether her question would be proper, but she waited for an opportunity to ask it.

One evening after the lecture, when Prabhupāda asked for questions and there were none, Govinda dāsī thought, "This is my chance." But she hesitated. Her question wasn't on the subject of the lecture, and besides, she didn't like to ask questions in public.

"No question?" Śrīla Prabhupāda looked around. Govinda dāsī thought Swamiji seemed disappointed that there were no questions. He had several times said that they should ask questions and clear up any doubts. Again he asked, "Have you got any questions?"

Govinda dāsī: "Uh, well, could you tell about Lord Caitanya asking . . ."

Prabhupāda: "Hmm?"

Govinda dāsī: ". . . asking where is Kṛṣṇa?"

Prabhupāda: "Hmm?"

Govinda dāsī: "Could you tell about Lord Caitanya asking where is Kṛṣṇa and falling in the water? Or would that be not . . ."

Prabhupāda smiled. "Yes, yes. Very nice. Your question is very nice. Oh, I am very glad.

"Lord Caitanya—He was the greatest symbol of *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*, a devotee of Kṛṣṇa. So just see from His life. He never said that, 'I have seen Kṛṣṇa.' He was *mad* after Kṛṣṇa. That is the process of Caitanya philosophy. It is called *viraha*. *Viraha* means separation . . . separation: 'Kṛṣṇa, You are so good, You are so merciful, You are so nice. But I am so rascal, I am so full of sin, that I cannot see You. I have no qualification to see You.' So in this way, if one feels the separation of Kṛṣṇa—'Kṛṣṇa, I want to see You, but I am so disqualified that I cannot see You'—these feelings of separation will make you enriched in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Feelings of separation. Not that 'Kṛṣṇa, I have seen You. Finished. All right. I have understood You. Finished. All my business finished.' No! *Perpetually*. Think of yourself that 'I am unfit to see Kṛṣṇa.' That will enrich you in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

"Caitanya Mahāprabhu displayed this—these feelings of separation. This is Rādhārāṇī's separation.* When Kṛṣṇa went from Vṛndāvana to His father's place, Rādhārāṇī

was feeling in that way—always mad after Kṛṣṇa. So Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, Caitanya Mahāprabhu, took the separation feeling of Rādhārāṇī. That is the best way of worshipping Kṛṣṇa, becoming Kṛṣṇa conscious. So you know that Lord Caitanya fell into the sea: 'Kṛṣṇa, if You are here. Kṛṣṇa, if You are here.'

"Similarly, the next devotees, Lord Caitanya's direct disciples, the Gosvāmīs—Rūpa Gosvāmī, Sanātana Gosvāmī—they also, the same disciplic succession, they also worship Kṛṣṇa in that separation feeling. There is a nice verse about them . . ."

Śrīla Prabhupāda sang:

**Śrīla Prabhupāda
remained silent.
His hands
were folded,
his eyes closed.
And he became
overpowered by
devotional ecstasy.**

*he rādhe vraja-devike ca lalite he nanda-
sūno kutah
śrī govardhana-kalpa-pādapa-tale kālindi-
vanye kutah
ghoṣantāv iti sarvato vraja-pure khedair mahā-
vihvalau
vande rūpa-sanātanau raghu-yugau śrī-jīva
gopālakau†*

"These Gosvāmīs also, later on when they were very much mature in devotional service—what were they doing? They were *daily* wandering in the Vṛndāvana *dhāma*, just like *madmen*: 'Kṛṣṇa, where

†"I offer my respectful obeisances to the six Gosvāmīs, namely, Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī, Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī, Śrī Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī, Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī, and Śrī Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, who were chanting very loudly everywhere in Vṛndāvana, shouting, 'O Rādhārāṇī, Queen of Vṛndāvana! O Lalitā! O Kṛṣṇa, son of Nanda Mahārāja! Where are you all now? Are you just on the hill of Govardhana, or are you under the trees on the bank of the Yamunā? Where are you?' These were their moods in executing Kṛṣṇa consciousness." Vṛndāvana, Lord Kṛṣṇa's eternal abode in the spiritual world, also has its counterpart on earth, in a village area ninety miles south of Delhi. This song sung by Śrīla Prabhupāda describes how Lord Caitanya's followers the Gosvāmīs, living in Vṛndāvana on earth, expressed their ecstatic feelings.

are You?' That is the quality.

"It is a very nice question."

Śrīla Prabhupāda paused and uttered a thoughtful *mmm*. He remained silent. The devotees also remained silent, watching him. He sat cross-legged on the black velvet pillow on the redwood dais. His hands were folded, his eyes closed. And he became overpowered by inner feelings of ecstasy. Although the simple devotees present could not know what was happening, they could feel the atmosphere transform into awesome devotional stillness. They kept their eyes fixed on him.

A minute and a half passed. Śrīla Prabhupāda uttered another thoughtful *mmm* and opened his eyes—they were filled with tears. He reached over and grasped his *karatālas*, hand cymbals, which rattled in his hand. But he moved no further. Again he withdrew from external consciousness.

Another minute of silence passed. The minute seemed extremely calm, yet intense and long. Another minute passed. After almost four minutes, Prabhupāda cleared his throat and struck the *karatālas* together, beginning the slow rhythm. A devotee began the one-note drone on the harmonium. Prabhupāda sang: *govinda jaya jaya gopāla jaya jaya/ rādhā-ramaṇa hari govinda jaya jaya*,‡ building the chanting to a lively pace. After about ten minutes the *kīrtana* (chanting) stopped, and Prabhupāda left the room.

As the devotees rose and began their various duties—some leaving through the front door behind Prabhupāda and going to the kitchen, others coming together for conversation—they all knew that their spiritual master had been intensely feeling separation from Kṛṣṇa. They had no doubt that it was a deep ecstasy, because just by being in his presence during that long and special stillness they also had felt a glimmer of the same love for Kṛṣṇa.

* * *

On the invitation of his disciples, Śrīla Prabhupāda agreed to hold *kīrtana* on the beach. On a Tuesday night, with no *kīrtana* or lecture scheduled in the temple, he got into the back seat of one of the devotees' cars. About a dozen initiated followers and a couple of dogs got into other cars, and together they traveled to the beach. When they arrived, some devotees were running across the beach, gathering driftwood and building a fire in the shelter of a sand dune.

The late afternoon air was cool, and

‡"All glories to Lord Kṛṣṇa, Govinda, the reservoir of all pleasure. All glories to Lord Kṛṣṇa, the protector of the cows. All glories to Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the enjoyer of Rādhārāṇī. All glories to Lord Kṛṣṇa, the reservoir of transcendental pleasure."

there was a seaside wind. Prabhupāda was dressed in a long checkered coat over a hooded sweatshirt. During the *kīrtana*, he clapped and danced while the devotees joined hands, forming a circle around him. As the sun was setting, all the devotees faced the ocean, raising their arms and singing as loudly as they could. But with the surf pounding in on the coast and with the great expanse of windy air around them, their *kīrtana* sound very small.

Gathering around the fire, the devotees buried foil-wrapped potatoes and foil-wrapped apples filled with raisins and brown sugar under the coals. It was their idea, but Prabhupāda was happy to comply with their ideas of California *kīrtana* fun.

Walking together along the beach, they came upon an old dilapidated Dutch windmill. "Mukunda," Prabhupāda said, "you should approach the government and tell them that we will restore this windmill if they let us build a temple on this site." Mukunda took it as a joke at first, but then he saw that Prabhupāda was completely serious. Mukunda said he would inquire about it.

Prabhupāda, in his oversized checkered coat buttoned up to the neck, was the beloved center of the devotees' outing. After their walk, he sat with them on a big log, eating baked potatoes smeared with melted butter; and when he finished he threw his remnants to the dogs.

As the night grew dark, stars appeared high over the ocean, and the devotees stood close around Prabhupāda for a last *kīrtana*. Then, just as in the temple, they bowed down, and Prabhupāda called out the prayers to the Lord and the disciplic succession. But he ended: "All glories to the assembled devotees! All glories to the assembled devotees! All glories to the Pacific Ocean!"

They all laughed. Swamiji was doing what his disciples wanted: enjoying an evening *kīrtana*-cookout at the beach with them. And they were doing what he wanted: chanting the *mahā-mantra*, becoming devotees of Kṛṣṇa, becoming happy.

* * *

On Saturday, April 1, near the end of his stay in San Francisco, Prabhupāda accepted an invitation from Lou Gottlieb, head of the Morningstar Ranch, a nudist hippie commune. Morningstar was a bunch of young people living in the woods, the devotees explained to Prabhupāda. The hippies there had spiritual aspirations. They grew vegetables and worshiped the sun. They would hold hands and listen to the air. And naturally they were involved in lots of drug-taking and free sex.

When Lou came in the morning to pick up the Swami, they talked, and Prabhupāda gave him a *rasagullā* (a bite-sized ball

of curd simmered in sugar water). After a few minutes together in Prabhupāda's room, they started for Morningstar, sixty miles north of San Francisco.

Lou Gottlieb: *On the way out I was showing off all my vast erudition in having read a biography of Ramakrishna. That's when Bhaktivedanta gave the best advice to the aspirant I ever heard. We were talking about Ramakrishna and Vivekananda and Aurobindo and this and that. So he said, "You know," putting a gentle hand on my knee, "when you have found your true path, all further investigation of comparative religion is merely sense enjoyment."*

Situated in a forest of redwoods more

“They were all dopers, that’s for sure, but they definitely gave that up once they got in touch with the mahā-mantra.”

than two hundred feet tall, Morningstar Ranch occupied what had once been an egg farm. Some of the land had been cleared for farming. There were a few tents, some insubstantial little huts, a couple of tree houses, but the only decent, insulated building was Lou's place, an old chicken house. The commune had about one hundred full-time members, with the number of residents rising to as many as three hundred on the weekends in the warm weather, when people would come out to work in the garden or just walk around naked and get high.

Prabhupāda arrived at one in the afternoon on a beautiful sunny day. He first wanted to rest, so Lou offered his own house. Walking to Lou's place, Prabhupāda noticed a few nude men and women hoeing in the garden. One of the workers, a short, stocky young man, Herbie Bressack, stopped his work in the garden and came to greet the Swami.

Herbie: *Lou Gottlieb introduced us. We were planting potatoes at the time. He said, "This is Swami Bhaktivedanta." I came out of the garden and shook Swami's hand. I said, "Hello Swami." He asked me, "What are you doing?" I told him that I was just planting potatoes. He then asked me what I was doing with my life. I didn't answer.*

After resting for a few minutes, Prabhu-

pāda was ready for the *kīrtana*. He and Lou went to a hilly pasture where the hippies had placed a wooden seat for Prabhupāda before a bower of wild flowers arranged like a band shell. Prabhupāda took his seat and began chanting. The commune members, all of whom had been anticipating the Swami's visit, gathered eagerly for the group meditation.

Mike Morrisey: *Some people had clothes on, some people didn't. Some were dancing around. But Swamiji wasn't looking at our bodies; he was looking at our souls and giving us the mercy we needed.*

The *kīrtana* was well received. One of the members of the commune was so enthralled by the *kīrtana* that he decided to put on his clothes and go back to San Francisco with the Swami. Prabhupāda spoke very briefly, and then he prepared to leave, shaking hands and exchanging courtesies as he walked to the car.

Although Śrīla Prabhupāda hadn't spoken much philosophy, his *kīrtana* left a deep impression on the hippies at Morningstar. While leaving he had told one of the young men, "Keep chanting this Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra here." And they did.

Lou Gottlieb: *The Swami was an extremely intelligent guy with a job to do. There was no sanctimony or holy pretension, none of that eyes-lifted-silently-to-the-sky. All I remember is just a very pleasant, incredibly safe feeling. There's no doubt that the mahā-mantra—once you get the mantra into the head, it's there. It never stops. It's in the cells. It awakens the DNA or something. Shortly thereafter, half of the people at Morningstar got seriously into chanting. Those that did were extremely sincere God-seekers. Their aspiration was a thousand percent sincere, considering the circumstances in which they were found. They were all dopers, that's for sure, but they definitely gave that up once they got in touch with the mahā-mantra.*

* * *

His top cloth wrapped loosely around his shoulders, Prabhupāda stood a last moment by the open door of the car and looked back in farewell to the devotees and the storefront temple. It was no longer a mere storefront but had become something worthy: New Jagannātha Purī, the new home of Lord Jagannātha—Kṛṣṇa, Lord of the universe. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had asked Śrīla Prabhupāda to come here. Who among his Godbrothers could imagine how crazy these American hippies were—hallucinating on drugs, crying out, "I am God!" So many girls and boys—unhappy, mad, despite their wealth and education. But now, through Kṛṣṇa consciousness, some were finding happiness.

The first day he had arrived the reporter
(continued on page 20)

ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA SPEAKS OUT

On Responsibility

The following conversation between His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda and some of his disciples took place in August 1975 on an early-morning walk in Paris.

Devotee: Śrīla Prabhupāda, many people say that because we have quit college or a job to become Kṛṣṇa conscious, we are irresponsible.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: We are not irresponsible. But we are in such a position that we have passed all material responsibilities. This is stated in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* [11.5.41]: *devarṣi-bhūtāpta-nṛṇām pitṛṇām na kiṅkaro nāyam ṛṇī ca rājan*. “One who has fully surrendered to Kṛṣṇa no longer has any responsibility to demigods, great sages, relatives, society—anyone.” As long as you are not Kṛṣṇa conscious, you have a responsibility to all these persons. But one who has taken to Kṛṣṇa consciousness without any reservation—he has no material duties, no material responsibility. This is the statement of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Our only responsibility is to serve Kṛṣṇa.

Devotee: So, Śrīla Prabhupāda, when you told the guest last night that she should give up her responsibilities—

Śrīla Prabhupāda: And take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Not that you give up all responsibilities and do nothing. First take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Give up something, take something. Then it is all right.

Devotee: Śrīla Prabhupāda, when you speak of taking care of our responsibilities for Kṛṣṇa, doesn't that also have a material aspect to it? For instance, in our movement parents must also bring up their children, take care of them, train them to read and write, and so on.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes. But *why* are we taking care of the children? Just to make them Kṛṣṇa conscious. This is our responsibility in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. We should think, “Here is my child. Let me make him Kṛṣṇa conscious.” This is why we are taking so much care to train our children in the *gurukulas* [Kṛṣṇa conscious schools]. We are not irresponsible.

Devotee: So when we say that we have finished all material responsibilities by surrendering to Kṛṣṇa, that doesn't mean we've abandoned execution of duty?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: No. Who says that?

Devotee: Well, some people say that we've taken to Kṛṣṇa consciousness and now we've given up all our social duties.



Śrīla Prabhupāda: Spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the main social duty. This is the main duty of the human form of life. Kṛṣṇa says, *sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja*: “Give up all other duties and just surrender to Me.” So we have surrendered to Kṛṣṇa, and we are taking responsibility for pushing forward the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. I am an old man, yet I am traveling all over the world, thrice in a year. Who else would take such a responsibility? In Kṛṣṇa consciousness we have *greater* responsibility. It is just like when you become a big officer in the government: you become overburdened with responsibility.

Fulfilling material responsibilities is useless. Simply a waste of time. Here in Kṛṣṇa consciousness is real responsibility. I explained this to the guest last night. Even if you take responsibility, what can you do? You cannot do anything. Suppose your son is diseased. He is suffering, and you have taken responsibility for seeing that he is cured. You have brought a good physician, you have brought good medicine—everything. But in spite of all your efforts, your son dies. Then what is the value of your responsibility? Actually, you cannot do anything. So what is the use of saying, “I am responsible”?

Andhā yathāndhair upanīyamānāḥ. One blind man says, “I take responsibility. All of you other blind men—follow me.” So what is the *use* of such responsibility? Both the leader and his followers will simply fall into a ditch. Similarly, the leaders of all the nations in the world are

saying, “Follow me. I am responsible. I will bring peace.” But as soon as there is a war, thousands and thousands will be killed. Where is the leaders' responsibility? As soon as one atom bomb is dropped, many thousands will be finished. Where is the leaders' responsibility? They cannot bring peace. They can make a monument: “This soldier has died. This soldier has died.” But they cannot save the people from death.

Devotee: But these people say that we devotees also must die. Everyone must die.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes, but we die to live forever. *Tyaktvā dehaṁ punar janma naiti*. This is our last death.

Devotee: Then they will say, “How do you know?”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Become my student; then you will also know. Therefore there is a Vedic injunction: *tad vijñānārthaṁ sa gurum evābhigacchet*. Because you are a fool, a rascal, you must approach a *guru*. That is the only way to know the Absolute Truth. Otherwise there is no possibility of knowing about eternal life; you will remain foolish forever and suffer.

Devotee: So, how do you define the word *responsibility* in Kṛṣṇa consciousness?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: You have this human form of life: realize God. This is responsibility. Otherwise, you are finished. Your only responsibility is to understand God. Vedic culture is meant for understanding God. In the past many, many kings left everything and went to the forest to realize God. Bharata Mahārāja, after whom India is called Bhārata-varṣa, was the emperor of this planet thousands of years ago. At the age of twenty-four he left everything to realize God. This is Vedic culture. Caitanya Mahāprabhu had a very nice position as a *grhastha* [householder]. He had a beautiful wife, an affectionate mother, good friends. He belonged to a *brāhmaṇa* family. He was a learned scholar—everything first class. He was God Himself, yet He left everything just to teach us the process of realizing God. This is Vedic culture.

So, you asked me, “What is the definition of responsibility?” Do you understand what responsibility is?

Devotee: We have this human life; we must realize God.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes—nine words. We define the whole of responsibility in nine words. Let the rascals understand it. ❁

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 EIGHT

Questions by King Parikṣit

Our serialized presentation of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam finds us in the midst of a series of questions placed by Mahārāja Parikṣit before his spiritual master, Śukadeva Gosvāmī. He asks about the original cause of the soul's acquiring a material body. He also wants to know about the positions of the planetary systems, the duration of the cosmos, and the difference between the body of the Lord and the bodies of ordinary living entities.

(Continued from Text 6)

PURPORT

One who is not a pure devotee of the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa is not completely cleansed in the heart. But a perfectly cleansed person never quits the devotional service of the Lord. In discharging such devotional service, as ordered by Brahmājī to Nārada in the preaching of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, sometimes a representative of the Lord engaged in preaching work meets various so-called difficulties. This was exhibited by Lord Nityānanda when He delivered the two fallen souls Jagāi and Mādhāi, and similarly Lord Jesus Christ was crucified by the nonbelievers. But such difficulties are very gladly suffered by the devotees in preaching because in such activities, although apparently very severe, the devotees of the Lord feel transcendental pleasure because the Lord is satisfied. Prahāda Mahārāja suffered greatly, but still he never forgot the lotus feet of the Lord. This is because a pure devotee of the Lord is so purified in his heart that he cannot leave the shelter of Lord Kṛṣṇa in any circumstances. There is no self-interest in such service. The progress of culturing knowledge by the *jñānis* or the bodily gymnastics by the *yogīs* are ultimately given up by the respective performers, but a devotee of the Lord cannot give up the service of the Lord, for he is ordered by his spiritual master. Pure devotees like Nārada and Nityānanda Prabhu take up the order of the spiritual master as the sustenance of life. They do not mind what becomes of the future of their lives. They take the matter very seriously as the order comes from the higher authority, from the representative of the Lord, or from the Lord Himself.

The example set herein is very appropriate. A traveler leaves home to search for wealth in far distant places, sometimes in the forest and sometimes on the ocean and sometimes on hilltops. Certainly there are many troubles for the traveler when he is in such unknown places. But all such troubles are at once mitigated as soon as the sense of his family affection is remembered, and as soon as he returns home he forgets all such troubles on the way.

A pure devotee of the Lord is exactly in a family tie with the Lord, and therefore he is undeterred in discharging his duty in a full affectionate tie with the Lord.

TEXT 7

यदधातुमतो ब्रह्मन् देहारम्भोऽस्य धातुभिः ।
यदृच्छया हेतुना वा भवन्तो जानते यथा ॥ ७ ॥

*yad adhātu-mato brahman
dehārambho 'sya dhātubhiḥ
yadṛccayā hetunā vā
bhavanto jānate yathā*

yat—as it is; *adhātu-mataḥ*—without being materially constituted; *brahman*—O learned *brāhmaṇa*; *deha*—the material body; *ārambhaḥ*—the beginning of; *asya*—of the living being; *dhātubhiḥ*—by matter; *yadṛccayā*—without cause, accidental; *hetunā*—due to some cause; *vā*—either; *bhavantaḥ*—your good self; *jānate*—as you may know it; *yathā*—so you inform me.

TRANSLATION

O learned *brāhmaṇa*, the transcendental spirit soul is different from the material body. Does he acquire the body accidentally or by some cause? Will you kindly explain this, for it is known to you.

PURPORT

Mahārāja Parikṣit, being a typical devotee, is not only satisfied by confirming the importance of hearing the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* from the representative of Brahmājī by disciplic succession, but he is still more anxious to establish the philosophical basis of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the science of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and as such all questions that may arise in the mind of a serious student must be cleared by the statements of the authority. A person on the path of devotional service may inquire from his spiritual master all about the spiritual position of God and the living beings. From the *Bhagavad-gītā*, as well as from the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, it is known that qualitatively the Lord and the living beings are one. The living being in the conditioned state of material existence is subjected to many transmigrations by continuous changing of the material body. But what are the causes of the material embodiment of the part and parcel of the Lord? Mahārāja Parikṣit inquires about this very important matter for the benefit of all classes of candidates on the path of self-realization and devotional service to the Lord.

Indirectly it is confirmed that the Supreme Being, the Lord, makes no such material changes of body. He is spiritually whole, with no difference between His body and His soul, unlike the conditioned soul. The liberated living beings, who associate with the Lord in person, are also exactly like the Lord. Only the conditioned souls awaiting liberation are subjected to change of bodies. How was the process first begun?

In the process of devotional service, the first step is to take shelter of the spiritual master and then inquire from the spiritual master all about the process. This inquiry is essential for immunity to all kinds of offenses on the path of devotional service. Even if one is fixed in devotional service like Mahārāja Parikṣit, he must still inquire from the realized spiritual master all about this. In other words, the spiritual master must also be well versed and learned so that he may be able to answer all these inquiries from the devotees. Thus one who is not well versed in the authorized scriptures and not able to answer all such relevant inquiries should not pose as a spiritual master for the matter of ma-

terial gain. It is illegal to become a spiritual master if one is unable to deliver the disciple.

TEXT 8

आसीद् यदुदरात् पद्मं लोकसंस्थानलक्षणम् ।
यावानयं वै पुरुष इयत्तावयवैः पृथक् ।
तावानसाविति प्रोक्तः संस्थावयवानिव ॥ ८ ॥

*āsīd yad-udarāt padmaṁ
loka-saṁsthāna-lakṣaṇam
yāvān ayaṁ vai puruṣa
iyattāvayavaiḥ pṛthak
tāvān asāv iti proktaḥ
saṁsthāvayavān iva*

āsīd—as it grew; *yad-udarāt*—from whose abdomen; *padmaṁ*—lotus flower; *loka*—world; *saṁsthāna*—situation; *lakṣaṇam*—possessed of; *yāvān*—as it were; *ayaṁ*—this; *vai*—certainly; *puruṣaḥ*—the Supreme Personality of Godhead; *iyattā*—measurement; *avayavaiḥ*—by embodiments; *pṛthak*—different; *tāvān*—so; *asau*—that; *iti proktaḥ*—it is so said; *saṁsthā*—situation; *avayavavān*—embodiment; *iva*—like.

TRANSLATION

If the Supreme Personality of Godhead, from whose abdomen the lotus stem sprouted, is possessed of a gigantic body according to His own caliber and measurement, then what is the specific difference between the body of the Lord and those of common living entities?

PURPORT

One should note how Mahārāja Parikṣit intelligently put questions before his spiritual master for scientific understanding of the transcendental body of the Lord. It has been described in many places before this that the Lord assumed a gigantic body, like that of Kāraṇodakaśāyī Viṣṇu, from whose hair pores innumerable universes have generated. The body of Garbhodakaśāyī Viṣṇu is described as sprouting the lotus stem within which all the planets of the universe remain, and at the top of the stem is the lotus flower on which Lord Brahmā is born. In the creation of the material world the Supreme Lord undoubtedly assumes a gigantic body, and living entities also get bodies, big or small, according to necessity. For example, an elephant gets a gigantic body according to its needs, and so also an ant gets its body according to its needs. Similarly, if the Personality of Godhead assumes a gigantic body to accommodate the universes or the planets of a particular universe, there is no difference in the principle of assuming or accepting a particular type of body in terms of necessity. A living being and the Lord cannot be distinguished simply by the difference in the magnitude of the body. So the answer depends on the specific significance of the body of the Lord, as distinguished from the body of the common living being.

TEXT 9

अजः सृजति भूतानि भूतात्मा यदनुग्रहात् ।
ददृशे येन तद्रूपं नाभिपद्मसमुद्भवः ॥ ९ ॥

*ajāḥ sṛjati bhūtāni
bhūtātmā yad-anugrahāt
dadṛśe yena tad-rūpaṁ
nābhi-padma-samudbhavaḥ*

ajāḥ—one who is born without a material source; *sṛjati*—creates; *bhūtāni*—all those materially born; *bhūta-ātmā*—having a body of matter; *yad*—whose; *anugrahāt*—by the mercy of; *dadṛśe*—could see; *yena*—by whom; *tad-rūpaṁ*—His form of body; *nābhi*—navel; *padma*—lotus flower; *samudbhavaḥ*—being born of.

TRANSLATION

Brahmā, who was not born of a material source but of the lotus flower coming out of the navel abdomen of the Lord, is the creator of all those who are materially born. Of course, by the grace of the Lord, Brahmā was able to see the form of the Lord.

PURPORT

The first living creature, Brahmā, is called *ajāḥ* because he did not take his birth from the womb of a mother materially born. He was directly born from the bodily expansion of the lotus flower of the Lord. Thus it is not readily understandable whether the body of the Lord and that of Brahmā are of the same quality or different. This must also be clearly understood. One thing is, however, certain: Brahmā was completely dependent on the mercy of the Lord because after his birth he could create living beings by the Lord's grace only, and he could see the form of the Lord. Whether the form seen by Brahmā is of the same quality as that of Brahmā is a bewildering question, and Mahārāja Parikṣit wanted to get clear answers from Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī.

TEXT 10

स चापि यत्र पुरुषो विव्यथित्युद्भवाप्ययः ।
मुक्त्वात्ममायां मायेः शेते सर्वगुहाशयः ॥ १० ॥

*sa cāpi yatra puruṣo
viśva-sthity-udbhavāpyayaḥ
muktvātma-māyāṁ māyeṣaḥ
śete sarva-guhāśayaḥ*

saḥ—He; *ca*—also; *api*—as He is; *yatra*—where; *puruṣaḥ*—the Personality of Godhead; *viśva*—the material worlds; *sthiti*—maintenance; *udbhava*—creation; *apyayaḥ*—annihilation; *muktvā*—without being touched; *ātma-māyāṁ*—own energy; *māyā-īśaḥ*—the Lord of all energies; *śete*—does lie on; *sarva-guhā-śayaḥ*—one who lies in everyone's heart.

TRANSLATION

Please also explain the Personality of Godhead, who lies in every heart as the Supersoul, and as the Lord of all energies, but is untouched by His external energy.

PURPORT

Undoubtedly the form of the Lord who was seen by Brahmā must be transcendental, otherwise how could He simply look upon the creative energy without being touched? It is understood also that the same *puruṣa* lies in the heart of every living entity. This also requires proper explanation.

TEXT 11

पुरुषावयवैर्लोकैः सपालाः पूर्वकल्पिताः ।
लोकैरमुष्यावयवाः सपालैरिति शुश्रुम ॥ ११ ॥

*puruṣāvayavair lokāḥ
sapālāḥ pūrva-kalpitāḥ
lokair amuṣyāvayavāḥ
sa-pālair iti śuśrūma*

puruṣa—the universal form of the Lord (*virāt-puruṣaḥ*); *avayavaiḥ*—by different parts of the body; *lokāḥ*—the planetary system; *sa-pālāḥ*—with respective governors; *pūrva*—formerly; *kalpitāḥ*—discussed; *lokaiḥ*—by the different planetary systems; *amuṣya*—His; *avayavāḥ*—different parts of the body; *sa-pālaiḥ*—with the governors; *iti*—thus; *śuśrūma*—I heard.

TRANSLATION

O learned brāhmaṇa, it was formerly explained that all the planets of the universe with their respective governors are situated in the different parts of the gigantic body of the virāt-puruṣa. I have also heard that the different planetary systems are supposed to be

in the gigantic body of the virāt-puruṣa. But what is their actual position? Will you please explain that?

TEXT 12

यावान् कल्पो विकल्पो वा यथा कालोऽनुमीयते ।
भूतभव्यभवच्छब्द आयुर्मानं च यत् सतः ॥१२॥

yāvān kalpo vikalpo vā
yathā kālo 'numīyate
bhūta-bhavya-bhavac-chabda
āyur-mānaṁ ca yat sataḥ

yāvān—as it is; kalpaḥ—the duration of time between creation and annihilation; vikalpaḥ—subsidiary creation and annihilation; vā—either; yathā—as also; kālaḥ—the time; anumīyate—is measured; bhūta—past; bhavya—future; bhavat—present; śabdaḥ—sound; āyuh—duration of life; mānam—measurement; ca—also; yat—which; sataḥ—of all living beings in all planets.

TRANSLATION

Also please explain the duration of time between creation and annihilation, and that of other subsidiary creations, as well as the nature of time, indicated by the sound of past, present and future. Also, please explain the duration and measurement of life of the different living beings known as the demigods, the human beings, etc., in different planets of the universe.

PURPORT

Past, present and future are different features of time to indicate the duration of life for the universe and all its paraphernalia, including the different living beings in different planets.

TEXT 13

कालस्यानुगतियां तु लक्ष्यतेऽन्वी बृहत्त्यपि ।
यावत्यः कर्मगतयो यादृशीर्द्विजसत्तम ॥१३॥

kālasya anugatiḥ yā tu
lakṣyate 'nvi brhaty api
yāvatyah karma-gatayo
yādṛśīr dvija-sattama

kālasya—of eternal time; anugatiḥ—beginning; yā tu—as they are; lakṣyate—experienced; anvi—small; brhati—great; api—even; yāvatyah—as long as; karma-gatayah—in terms of the work performed; yādṛśīḥ—as it may; dvija-sattama—O purest of all brāhmaṇas.

TRANSLATION

O purest of the brāhmaṇas, please also explain the cause of the different durations of time, both short and long, as well as the beginning of time, following the course of action.

TEXT 14

यस्मिन् कर्मसमावायो यथा येनोपगृह्यते ।
गुणानां गुणिनां चैव परिणाममभीप्सताम् ॥१४॥

yasmin karma-samāvāyo
yathā yenopagṛhyate
guṇānām guṇinām caiva
pariṇāmam abhīpsatām

yasmin—in which; karma—actions; samāvāyah—accumulation; yathā—as far as; yena—by which; upagṛhyate—takes over; guṇānām—of the different modes of material nature; guṇinām—of the living beings; ca—also; eva—certainly; pariṇāmam—resultant; abhīpsatām—of the desires.

TRANSLATION

Then again, kindly describe how the proportionate accumulation of the reactions resulting from the different modes of material nature act upon the desiring living being, promoting or degrading him among the different species of life, beginning from the demigods down to the most insignificant creatures.

PURPORT

The actions and reactions of all works in the material modes of nature, either in the minute form or in the gigantic form, are accumulated, and thus the result of such accumulated actions and reactions of karma, or work, become manifested in the same proportion. How such actions and reactions take place, what the different procedures are, and in what proportion they act are all subject matters of Mahārāja Parikṣit's inquiries from the great brāhmaṇa Śukadeva Gosvāmī.

Life in the higher planets, known as the abodes of the denizens of heaven, is obtained not by the strength of spacecraft (as is now being contemplated by the inexperienced scientists), but by works done in the mode of goodness.

Even on the very planet where we are now living, there are restrictions upon the entrance of foreigners into a country where the citizens are more prosperous. For example, the American government has many restrictions for the entrance of foreigners from less prosperous countries. The reason is that the Americans do not wish to share their prosperity with any foreigner who has not qualified himself as a citizen of America. Similarly, the same mentality is prevailing in every other planet where there are more intelligent living beings residing. The higher planetary living conditions are all in the mode of goodness, and anyone desiring to enter the higher planets like the moon, sun and Venus must qualify thoroughly by activity in complete goodness.

Mahārāja Parikṣit's inquiries are on the basis of proportionate actions of goodness which qualify one in this planet to be promoted to the highest regions of the universe.

Even on this planet of our present residence, one cannot achieve a good position within the social order without being qualified with proportionate good work. One cannot forcibly sit on the chair of a high-court judge without being qualified for the post. Similarly, one cannot enter into the higher planetary systems without being qualified by good works in this life. Persons addicted to the habits of passion and ignorance have no chance of entering the higher planetary systems simply by an electronic mechanism.

According to the statement of the Bhagavad-gītā (9.25), persons trying to qualify themselves for promotion to the higher, heavenly planets can go there; similarly, persons trying for the Pitṛlokas can go there; similarly, persons trying to improve the conditions on this earth can also do that, and persons who are engaged in going back home, back to Godhead, can achieve that result. The various actions and reactions of work in the mode of goodness are generally known as pious work with devotional service, culture of knowledge with devotional service, mystic powers with devotional service and (at last) devotional service unmixed with any other varieties of goodness. This unmixed devotional service is transcendental and is called parā bhakti. It alone can promote a person to the transcendental kingdom of God. Such a transcendental kingdom is not a myth, but is as factual as the moon. One must have transcendental qualities to understand the kingdom of God and God Himself.

TEXT 15

भूपातालककुब्जोमग्रहनक्षत्रभृशुताम् ।
सरित्समुद्रद्वीपानां सम्भवश्चैतदोकसाम् ॥१५॥

bhū-pātāla-kakub-
vyoma-graha-nakṣatra-
bhūbhṛtām
sarit-samudra-dvīpānām
sambhavaś caitad-okasām

bhū-pātāla—underneath the land; kakub—the four sides of the heavens; vyoma—the sky; graha—the planets; nakṣatra—the stars;

bhūbhṛtām—of the hills; *sarit*—the river; *samudra*—the sea; *dvīpānām*—of the islands; *sambhavaḥ*—appearance; *ca*—also; *etat*—their; *okasām*—of the inhabitants.

TRANSLATION

O best of the brāhmanas, please also describe how the creation of the globes throughout the universe, the four directions of the heavens, the sky, the planets, the stars, the mountains, the rivers, the seas and the islands, as well as their different kinds of inhabitants, takes place.

PURPORT

The inhabitants of different varieties of land, etc., are differently situated, and not all of them are equal in all respects. The inhabitants of the land are different from the inhabitants of the water or the sky, and similarly the inhabitants of the different planets and stars in the sky are also different from one another. By the laws of the Lord, no place is vacant, but the creatures of one particular place are different from those of other places. Even in human society the inhabitants of the jungles or the deserts are different from those of the cities and villages. They are so made according to different qualities of the modes of nature. Such adjustment by the laws of nature is not blind. There is a great plan behind the arrangement. Mahārāja Parīkṣit requests the great sage Śukadeva Gosvāmī to explain all these authoritatively, in accordance with proper understanding.

TEXT 16

प्रमाणमण्डकोशस्य बाह्याभ्यन्तरभेदतः ।
महतां चानुचरितं वर्णाश्रमत्रिनिश्चयः ॥१६॥

pramāṇam aṇḍa-kośasya
bāhyābhyantara-bhedataḥ
mahatām cānucaritam
varṇāśrama-viniścayaḥ

pramāṇam—extent and measurement; *aṇḍa-kośasya*—of the universe; *bāhya*—outer space; *abhyantara*—inner space; *bhedataḥ*—by division of; *mahatām*—of the great souls; *ca*—also; *anucaritam*—character and activities; *varṇa*—castes; *āśrama*—orders of life; *viniścayaḥ*—specifically describe.

TRANSLATION

Also, please describe the inner and outer space of the universe by specific divisions, as well as the character and activities of the great souls, and also the characteristics of the different classifications of the castes and orders of social life.

PURPORT

Mahārāja Parīkṣit is a typical devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa, and as such he is anxious to know the complete significance of the creation of the Lord. He wants to know the inner and outer space of the universal form. It is quite fitting for the real searcher of knowledge to know all about this. Those who are of the opinion that the devotees of the Lord are satisfied with mere sentiments can find in the inquiries of Mahārāja Parīkṣit good lessons as to how inquisitive a pure devotee is to know things in their true perfection. The modern scientist is unable to know about the inner space of the universal horizon, and what to speak of the space which covers the universe.

Mahārāja Parīkṣit is not satisfied with only material knowledge. He is inquisitive about the character and activities of the great souls, the devotees of the Lord. The glories of the Lord and the glories of His devotees, combined together, comprise the complete knowledge of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. Lord Kṛṣṇa showed His mother the complete universal cre-

ation within His mouth, while she, completely charmed by her son, wanted to look inside the mouth of the Lord just to see how much earth the child had eaten. By the grace of the Lord the devotees are able to see everything in the universe within the mouth of the Lord.

The very idea of the scientific divisions of four classes of human society and four orders of life is also inquired about herewith on the basis of individual personal quality. The four divisions are exactly like the four divisions of one's personal body. The parts and parcels of the body are nondifferent from the body, but by themselves they are only parts. That is the significance of the whole scientific system of four castes and four social orders. The value of such scientific divisions of human society can be ascertained only in terms of the proportionate development of devotional service to the Lord. Any person employed in government service, including the president, is a part and parcel of the entire government. Everyone is a government servant, but no one is the government himself. That is the position of all living entities in the government of the Supreme Lord. No one can artificially claim the supreme position of the Lord, but everyone is meant to serve the purpose of the supreme whole.

TEXT 17

युगानि युगमानं च धर्मो यश्च युगे युगे ।
अवतारानुचरितं यदाश्चर्यतमं हरेः ॥१७॥

yugāni yuga-mānam ca
dharmo yaś ca yuge yuge
avatārānucaritam
yad āścaryatamaṁ hareḥ

yugāni—the different ages; *yuga-mānam*—the duration of each age; *ca*—as well as; *dharmah*—the particular occupational duty; *yaḥ ca*—and which; *yuge yuge*—in each and every *yuga*, or particular age; *avatāra*—the incarnation; *anucaritam*—and the activities of the incarnation; *yad*—which; *āścaryatamaṁ*—the most wonderful activities; *hareḥ*—of the Supreme Lord.

TRANSLATION

Please explain all the different ages in the duration of the creation, and also the duration of such ages. Also tell me about the different activities of the different incarnations of the Lord in different ages.

PURPORT

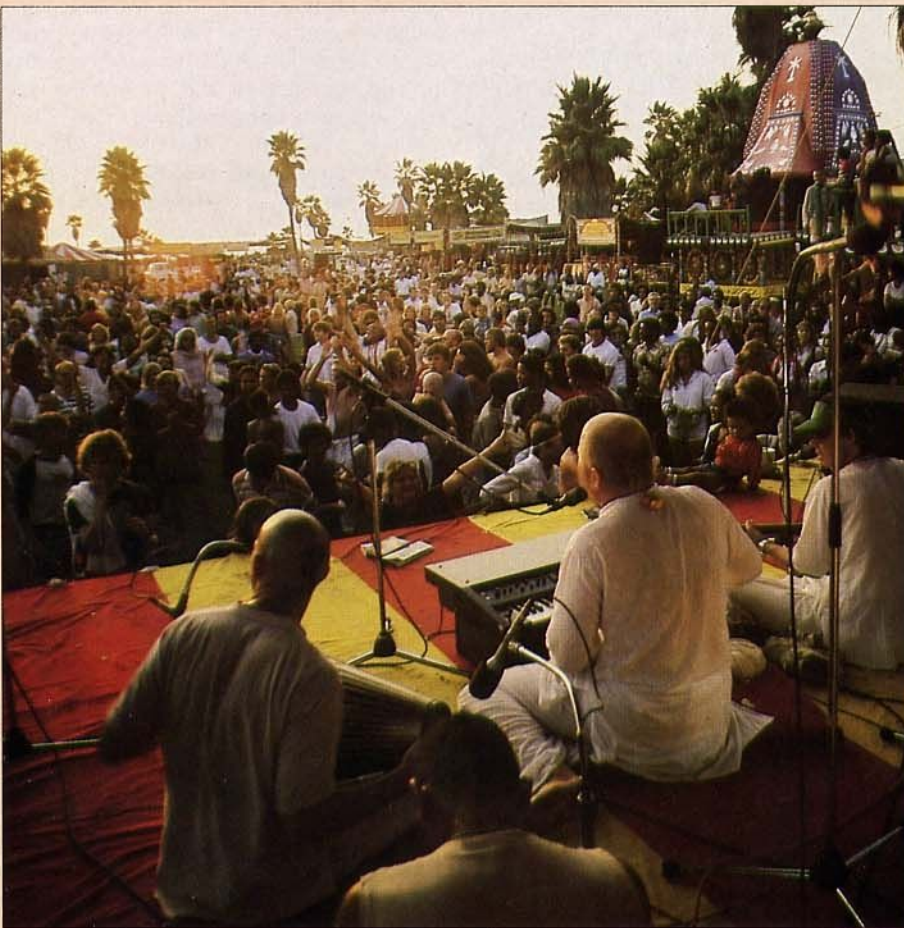
Lord Kṛṣṇa is the original Personality of Godhead, and all the incarnations of the Supreme Lord, although nondifferent from Him, are emanations from the Supreme. Mahārāja Parīkṣit inquired from the great and learned sage Śukadeva Gosvāmī about the different activities of such incarnations so that the incarnation of the Lord might be confirmed by His activities in the authoritative scriptures. Mahārāja Parīkṣit was not to be carried away by the sentiments of the common man to accept an incarnation of the Lord very cheaply. Instead he wished to accept the incarnation of the Lord by symptoms mentioned in the Vedic literatures and confirmed by an *ācārya* like Śukadeva Gosvāmī. The Lord descends by His internal energy without any obligation to the laws of material nature, and thus His activities are also uncommon. The specific activities of the Lord are mentioned, and one should know that the activities of the Lord and the Lord Himself are identical due to being on the absolute plane. Thus to hear the activities of the Lord means to associate with the Lord directly, and association with the Lord directly means purification from material contamination. We have already discussed this point in the previous volume.

(continued in next issue)



Every Town and Village

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



At the recent Ratha-yātrā festival in Los Angeles, Bahūdaka dāsa (center) and his fellow devotees from Vancouver lead the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa.

100,000 Attend Ratha-yātrā in L.A.

Los Angeles—This summer a record 100,000 people took part in the fifth annual Hare Kṛṣṇa Ratha-yātrā Festival of the Chariots at Venice Beach, California—the largest such festival in the Western Hemisphere. The thousands who followed the chariots down the beach promenade arrived at a four-acre park, where they discovered elephant rides, a multicourse feast; video exhibits, children's drama, fine art, sculpture, and continuous entertainment.

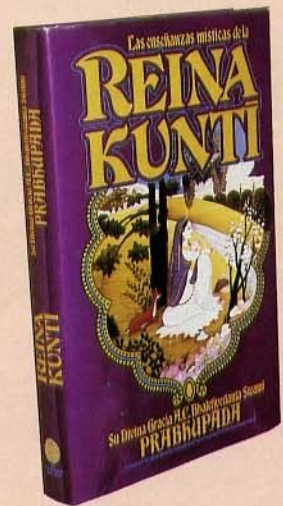
The all-day entertainment featured Dr. L. Subramaniam, classical Indian violinist, Srimati Jayalaksmi, one of India's foremost singers, and Alla Rakha, India's leading *tabla* drum player. Bahūdaka dāsa and other devotees from the Hare Kṛṣṇa center in Vancouver sent amplified, pulsating Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantras* out to the crowd, and visitors, local Los Angelenos,

and devotees danced together in ecstasy for hours.

Scholar Praises Biography Of Śrīla Prabhupāda

Canberra, Australia—Dr. R.K. Barz, of the Department of Asian Studies, Australian National University, has reviewed *Planting the Seed* and *A Lifetime in Preparation*, the first two volumes of the biography of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda by Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami.

Dr. Barz writes: "No one who reads these books could fail to be impressed. . . . Both *A Lifetime in Preparation* and *Planting the Seed* are essential reading for anyone interested either in Indian devotional religion or in current trends in modern religious life."



New Spanish Book A Best-Seller In Latin America

Los Angeles—The Spanish division of the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust has announced the publication of *Teachings of Queen Kuntī* in Spanish. The book consists of a series of prayers from the devotional classic *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, with commentary by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. Translated by Vira-bāhu dāsa, *Las Enseñanzas Místicas de la Reina Kuntī* has won such a following among people in Central and South America that the first printing of 65,000 has quickly sold out. "We've printed an additional 57,000 copies," said His Holiness Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Swami, head of the Spanish Book Trust, "but we expect those to be gone long before Christmas."

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 495 Caitanya era—Month of Dāmodara		
November 5	November 8	November 10
Gopāṣṭami. Disappearance of Śrīla Srinivāsa Ācārya.	Uttānā Ekādāśī (fasting from grains and beans); Disappearance of Śrīla Gauṛāṅkora dāsa Bābājī (fasting till noon).	Last day of Cāturmāsya.
November 11	Vaiṣṇava Month of Keśava	
Disappearance of Śrīla Bhūgarbha Gosvāmī and Śrīla Kāśīyāra Paṅḍita. Last day of Kārtika-vrata.	November 12	November 22
	Rāsa dance of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Appearance of Nimbarka Ācārya.	Upanā Ekādāśī (fasting from grains and beans).

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.)

Bhakta. One who performs *bhakti*; a devotee (in particular, a devotee of the Supreme Lord).

Bhakti (bhakti-yoga). *Bhakti-yoga* is the cultivation of activities favorable for satisfying Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Lord. Such activities must be free from all misguided attempts to attain spiritual knowledge by one's own feeble speculative powers. *Bhakti-yoga* also excludes all activities directed merely toward satisfying one's own senses instead of the senses of the Supreme Lord. When one is free from all false identification with the temporary body and the temporary families, societies, and nations with which the body is allied, when one's consciousness is fully purified, and when one engages one's senses in serving the supreme master of the senses—the Supreme Lord, Kṛṣṇa—one is said to be situated in pure *bhakti-yoga*.

One may engage one's senses in the service of Kṛṣṇa in any of nine different ways: by hearing about Kṛṣṇa, chanting about Kṛṣṇa, remembering Kṛṣṇa, serving the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa, worshipping Kṛṣṇa, offering prayers to Kṛṣṇa, carrying out the orders of Kṛṣṇa, becoming Kṛṣṇa's friend, or surrendering everything to Kṛṣṇa. By serving Kṛṣṇa in any or all of these ways, one makes one's life perfectly successful in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Bhakti-yoga begins when one develops an interest in spiritual or transcendental understanding. Impelled by such an interest, one associates with devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa, and gradually, under the guidance of a pure devotee, one molds one's life in a devotional way. As one renders devotional service to the Lord, one gradually becomes free from all unwanted materialistic habits and develops firm faith in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. As a result, one increasingly appreciates the taste of devotional service and becomes strongly attached to Kṛṣṇa. This attachment then evolves into transcendental ecstasy, which culminates in pure, unalloyed love for Kṛṣṇa. This is the step-by-step process for attaining perfection in *bhakti-yoga*.

The *Bhagavad-gītā* says that of all systems of *yoga*, *bhakti-yoga* is the highest. Particularly in the present age, it is also the system most easy to follow.

Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. The spiritual master of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī

Ṭhākura (1874–1936), a great devotee and scholar, wrote and published a wealth of literature explaining the science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness in Sanskrit, Bengali, English, and other languages. He taught how to live a spiritual life of perfect renunciation not by artificially giving everything up but by using everything in the service of Kṛṣṇa. He established sixty-four centers of Kṛṣṇa consciousness in various parts of India, and in 1922 he instructed His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda to teach Kṛṣṇa consciousness in English. It was this order that led to the advent of Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the West, and throughout the world.

Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda. His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda (1896–1977), the founder and original spiritual guide of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, founded *BACK TO GODHEAD* magazine in 1944. It was he who introduced *bhakti-yoga* and the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* to the West and spread them around the world. He is the author of *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, *The Nectar of Devotion*, *Teachings of Lord Caitanya*, and multi-volume translations (with commentary) of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, as well as many other books. An adequate appreciation of Śrīla Prabhupāda is not possible here. A biography of Śrīla Prabhupāda—*Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta*—is appearing in condensed installments in *BACK TO GODHEAD*. The name *Bhaktivedānta* indicates that he taught *bhakti-yoga* as the culmination of spiritual knowledge.

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. A great poet, scholar, and devotee in the disciple line of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura (1838–1914) was the father of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. While living as a householder and working as a government magistrate, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura vigorously wrote and published devotional poetry and scholarly expositions of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. During a time of spiritual confusion, he reestablished the integrity of the cultural movement of pure devotional service inaugurated centuries earlier by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the great proponent of love of Kṛṣṇa. *BACK TO GODHEAD*, Vol. 16, No. 8, carried an appreciation by Dr. Thomas J. Hopkins (Franklin and Marshall College) of how Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's work preserved and strengthened the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement and carried it forward toward its eventual journey to the West.

Waves of Ecstasy

(continued from page 13)

had asked him why he had come to Haight-Ashbury. "Because the rent is cheap," he had replied. His desire was to spread the movement of Lord Caitanya; why else would he have come to such a dilapidated little storefront to live next to a Chinese laundry and the Diggers' Free Store? The reporters had asked if he were inviting the hippies and Bohemians to take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. "Yes," he had said, "everyone." But he had known that once joining him, his followers would become something different from what they had been before.

Now the devotees were a family. If they followed his instructions they would remain strong. If they were sincere, Kṛṣṇa would help them. Lord Jagannātha was present, and the devotees would have to worship Him faithfully. They would be purified by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa and following their spiritual master's instructions.

Prabhupāda got into the car, accompanied by some of his disciples, and a devotee drove him to the airport. Several carloads of devotees followed behind.

At the airport the devotees were crying. But Prabhupāda assured them he would return if they would hold a Ratha-yātrā festival. "You must arrange a procession down the main street," he told them. "Do it nicely. We must attract many people. They have such a procession yearly in Jagannātha Purī. At this time the Deity may leave the temple."

He would have to return, he knew, to tend the delicate devotional plants he had placed in their hearts. Otherwise, how could he expect these neophytes to survive in the ocean of material desires known as Haight-Ashbury? Repeatedly he promised them he would return. He asked them to cooperate among themselves—Mukunda, Śyāmasundara, Guru dāsa, Jayānanda, Subala, Gaurasundara, Hayagrīva, Haridāsa, and the girls.

Only two and a half months ago he had arrived here at this terminal, greeted by a throng of chanting young people. Many were now his disciples, although just barely assuming their spiritual identities and vows. Yet he felt no compunction about leaving them: He knew that some of them might fall away, but he couldn't stay with them always. His time was limited.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, the father of two small bands of neophytes, tenderly left one group and headed East, where the other group waited in a different mood, a mood of joyful reception.

(Next month we shall begin serializing *Volume One of Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta*, recounting the sixty-nine years Śrīla Prabhupāda spent in India before coming West.)

The Vedic Observer

Two Faces of Kṛṣṇa

To those who refuse to love His smiling, gentle form,
Kṛṣṇa shows another . . .

by SUHOTRA DĀSA

Early one morning in April 1945, a housewife was driving along a lonely deserted road near Alamogordo, New Mexico. Suddenly she saw a brilliant red glare light up the horizon. "It looked as if the sun popped up for a second and then went back down," she said later. The light was followed by a rumbling roar that echoed across the desert landscape.

A few miles away, Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer saw the same brilliant flash of light from the shelter of a top-secret United States Army observation bunker. That light, so bright that it seemed momentarily to rival the sun, was the world's first atomic explosion, the result of nearly five years of frantic scientific development first commissioned by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt just prior to America's entry into the Second World War. This first bomb was tiny by today's standards, yet it almost totally vaporized the 100-foot-high steel tower supporting it and turned a vast tract of sandy desert floor to glass.

The awesome release of atomic might early that spring morning near Alamogordo moved Dr. Oppenheimer, the chief scientist of the project and a dabbler in Eastern philosophy, to quote from *Bhagavad-gītā* (11.32): "Time I am, destroyer of worlds." These were

Lord Kṛṣṇa's words to His personal friend and devotee Arjuna, who had been filled with awe upon seeing the Lord's *viśva-rūpa*, His all-powerful universal form. Arjuna had cried aloud, "O all-pervading Viṣṇu [Kṛṣṇa]! I can no longer maintain my equilibrium! Seeing Your radiant colors fill the skies and beholding Your eyes and mouths, I am afraid." Lord Kṛṣṇa had revealed to Arjuna a side of Himself that Arjuna had never considered before: His terrible feature as irresistible time, which ultimately devours the entire universe.

Most of us, if we believe in God at all, do not like to identify Him with the destructive face of nature. Our natural tendency is to pray to God for shelter from destruction. "After all," we reason, "God is love. He created the world for our enjoyment, and if any danger arises we should pray to Him to preserve our existence here."

But if God is the single prime mover behind this manifest existence, He must also be its destroyer. If He is actually all-powerful, then He can't be rivaled by some separate destroyer who comes along like the proverbial bully at the beach to kick down what God has wrought.

Kṛṣṇa's purpose for revealing the universal form was to convince Arjuna

(and us) that He has no rival in creation, and that His will must be executed. Now, Arjuna wasn't an ordinary person praying to God for the preservation of his meager sense enjoyment in this temporary world of birth and death. He was a devotee of Kṛṣṇa in the spiritual relationship called *sakhya-rati*, or friendly exchange. On the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra, where Kṛṣṇa spoke *Bhagavad-gītā*, Arjuna was blinded by his friendship with Kṛṣṇa and forgot for a few moments that He was in fact God Almighty, who had personally arranged for the vast destruction to come when the battle would take place. So Kṛṣṇa showed Arjuna His fearsome side as *kāla*, or time, just to remind His dear friend of His real position as the creator, maintainer, and destroyer of everything in the material world.

But Kṛṣṇa's aim was not to frighten Arjuna into submission. Kṛṣṇa's real purpose was to clearly demonstrate Arjuna's auspicious position as the Lord's dear friend. Only Arjuna and his four brothers, all intimate devotees of the Lord, would survive the battle and fulfill Kṛṣṇa's purpose in the world. All others on the field of battle would perish. Thus the most confidential secret Kṛṣṇa conveyed to Arjuna in *Bhagavad-gītā* is that a devotee who is completely

surrendered to the will of God need fear no adversity, for in every case the Lord directly guides the destiny of such a devotee. Even the moment of death holds no fear for a pure devotee, for he knows that Kṛṣṇa has simply come to take him from the material world back to the spiritual world, where he will eternally serve and love Kṛṣṇa in a personal relationship. "O son of Kuntī," Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna in the Ninth Chapter, "declare it boldly that My devotee never perishes."

Materialists, however, must always fear God in His feature of all-devouring time, for they lack spiritual knowledge and thus identify their total existence with their own temporary bodies and those of their family, friends, and countrymen. To the materialistic non-devotee, God may be "a force" or "a provider," but never a personal friend. Such crippled theistic conceptions sometimes lead one to follow a religion based on fear of God, in which He is seen as the awesome authority behind the benedictions of Mother Nature, as the authority who must be obeyed to insure continued prosperity.

Yet "time marches on," bringing continuous death, destruction, and renewal. Despite our prayers and best wishes for the good health of friends and relatives, we must watch them die off one by one, until death comes at last to claim us too. Where we go from there depends on our *karma*. But one thing is certain: if we haven't developed a personal relationship with Kṛṣṇa, we shall surely *not* go to Him. Instead, we shall continue suffering the ravages of time—birth, old age, disease, and death—somewhere in the material world.

So there doesn't seem to be much value in a religion based upon the preservation of one's bodily identity. And in fact this is precisely Kṛṣṇa's message to Arjuna in *Bhagavad-gītā*. "Engage your mind always in thinking of Me and become My devotee," He says. "Offer your obeisances to Me and worship Me. Being completely absorbed in Me, surely you will come to Me" (Bg. 9.34). In other words, Kṛṣṇa is saying that we should worship Him in a personal way, with the idea of reviving our eternal relationship with Him. We shouldn't divert religion into the service of our petty sense enjoyment, which ends with the inevitable death of the body. When we develop an eternal loving relationship with Kṛṣṇa, one that absorbs all our

attention, we go to Kṛṣṇa at the time of death and there attain shelter at the Lord's lotus feet. The price of deathlessness—of complete safety from all-devouring time—is *love* of God.

Kṛṣṇa wants our *love*. Loving our temporary bodies and fearing God for taking them away from us can't save us from birth and death, any more than a car thief's fear of the owner can save him from arrest and prosecution. Love means being attached to a person for himself, not for his wealth and possessions. Attachment to things that don't

Lord Kṛṣṇa reserves His face of all-devouring, devastating time for those who fear or deride or ignore Him, and who desire simply to exploit His creation for their own ends.

belong to us brings us only fear and anger when the owner comes to reclaim them. Therefore Kṛṣṇa says, "Being free from attachment, fear, and anger, being fully absorbed in Me and taking refuge in me, many, many persons in the past became purified by knowledge of Me—and thus they all attained transcendental love for Me" (Bg. 4.10).

Yet most people remain stubbornly attached to the bodily conception of life, refusing to surrender to Lord Kṛṣṇa and often reacting with fear and anger toward His devotees, who *do* surrender everything to Him. Some people even accuse the devotees of being "fanatical cultists" and urge them to return to "the real world." Not caring for Lord Kṛṣṇa's desires, such inveterate materialists concoct various conceptions of proper duty based on nationalism, communism, capitalism, and the like. But because these ideas rest on ignorance of man's real spiritual identity and his relation-

ship to God, they always result in sinful activities, such as widespread animal slaughter and abortion. Thus men by their own foolishness insure victimization at the hands of time. Not only will they be cut down unceremoniously in the midst of their plan-making, but they will also have to spend more time in the material world, suffering in hellish, nonhuman species.

Our "real world" is rapidly becoming a dangerous place in which to live. Not that it wasn't always so, but the danger is becoming more and more obvious every day as human culture becomes progressively more depraved. Since the manifestation of Lord Kṛṣṇa's time factor as the twenty-kiloton bomb at Alamogordo, the potential for nuclear destruction on this planet has multiplied beyond human conception. The United States now has 7,192 strategic nuclear warheads aimed at the Soviet Union, each thousands of times more powerful than the Alamogordo bomb. The Soviet Union has 6,302 similar warheads aimed at the United States and its allies. And to further "insure peace," President Reagan has ordered the deployment of two hundred new MX "high-survivability" missiles, which will undoubtedly spur the Russians to develop even more sophisticated weapons. By late 1983 the United States plans to have 572 cruise missiles and medium-range Pershing-2 rockets in Western Europe, adding to an already prodigious nuclear arsenal of more than 5,000 NATO warheads stockpiled there. As the "nuclear club" grows and the materials and knowledge needed to build nuclear weapons proliferate, the danger of strategic miscalculation, human or mechanical accident, and nuclear terrorism increases. The "balance of terror" grows ever more precarious. At any time the long-feared nuclear holocaust could become a reality.

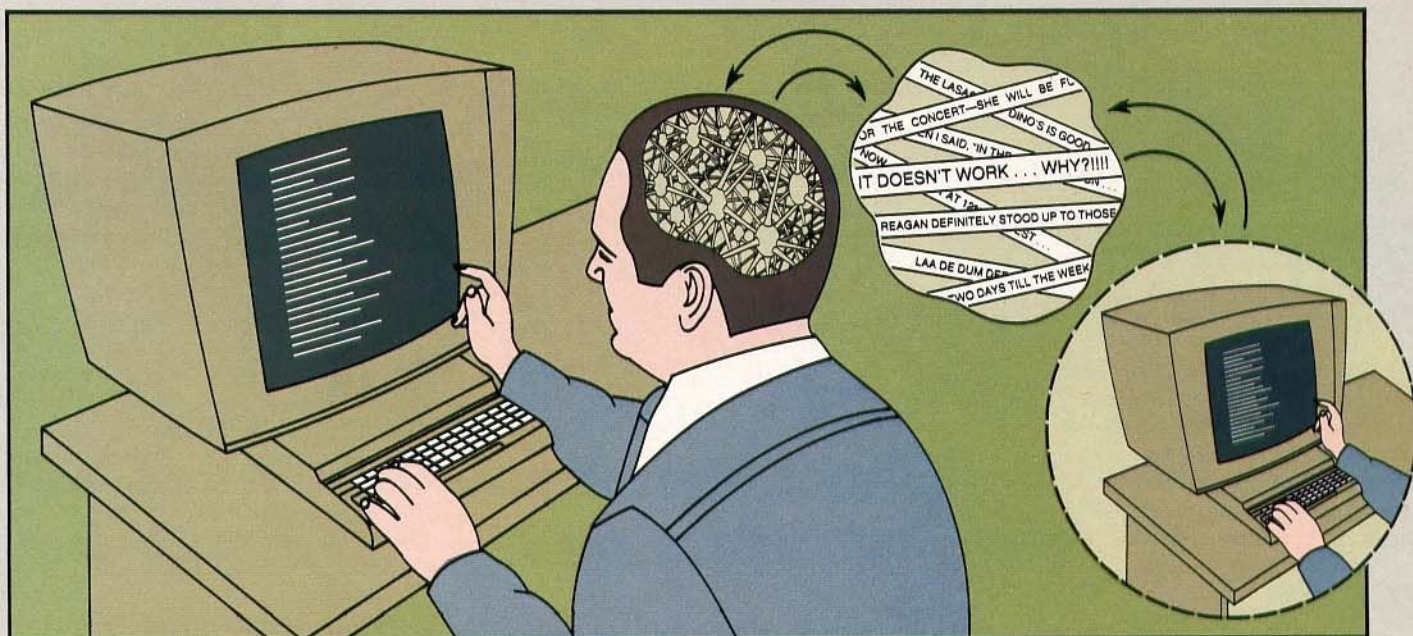
Kṛṣṇa has two faces: His smiling face of love for those who surrender to Him, and His fearsome face of the universal form, "whose effulgence is like the radiance of a thousand suns bursting forth at once in the sky." Lord Kṛṣṇa reserves this face of all-devouring, devastating time for those who fear or deride or ignore Him, and who desire simply to exploit His creation for their own ends. Should *that* face manifest itself in the world, we can only hope that the people for whom it is meant will remember Kṛṣṇa then. ❀

BHAKTI-YOGA

A Method of Nonmechanistic Science

(Part II)

by SADĀPŪTA DĀSA



According to the *Bhagavad-gītā*, the brain, the mind, and the conscious self are distinct entities. Here we indicate the brain by a network of neurons, the mind by an array of thoughts, and the self by an image representing a person's conscious perceptions. The brain and the mind are symbol-processing systems made of material energy and may be compared to a computer. In contrast, the conscious self transcends mechanistic descriptions.

This excerpt from Mechanistic and Non-mechanistic Science, a book in progress, is the second in a series on bhakti-yoga as an objective science of self-realization. Here we discuss the relationship between the brain, the mind, and the conscious self.

Perhaps the main reason for the widespread dismissal of religion as "blind faith" is that many systems of theistic thought are not backed up by any verifiable direct interaction with the Supreme Person. Why is this so, we may ask, if the Supreme Person is as readily accessible as the proponents of *bhakti-yoga* claim? The following statement from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* [2.6.41] suggests an interesting answer to this question:

SADĀPŪTA DĀSA studied at the State University of New York and Syracuse University and later received a National Science Fellowship. He went on to complete his Ph.D. in mathematics at Cornell, specializing in probability theory and statistical mechanics.

The great thinkers can know Him [Kṛṣṇa] when completely freed from all material hankerings and when sheltered under undisturbed conditions of the senses. Otherwise, by untenable arguments, all is distorted, and the Lord disappears from our sight.

As indicated here, one of the most important principles of *bhakti-yoga* is that higher realization is impossible until the material senses are brought under control. In the materially conditioned state of consciousness, the *jīvātmā* (living entity) desires to enjoy his material situation and is completely preoccupied with the barrage of stimuli presented by his material senses. With his sensory channels overloaded, the *jīvātmā* is unable to perceive the presence of the Supersoul (the form of the Supreme Person in one's heart), although constitutionally able to do so. Since direct access to the Supreme Person is denied the *jīvātmā* with uncontrolled senses, he is prone to indulge in fanciful speculations that simply lead him further and further from the truth.

To understand some of the practical problems involved in controlling the senses, we must first understand the concept of the material mind. As already pointed out (BACK TO GODHEAD, Vol. 16, No. 10), the *jīvātmā* is a complete conscious individual and, as such, is inherently able to carry out the mental functions of thinking, feeling, and willing. Yet the machinery of the body includes a psychic subsystem that duplicates some of these functions. This subsystem acts as an intermediate link between the natural senses of the *jīvātmā* and the sensory apparatus of the body. Before reaching the *jīvātmā*, data from the bodily senses pass through this subsystem, which enriches and modifies them by additional information representing various thoughts, feelings, and desires.

This intermediate link consists of two components, one of which is the brain. Modern science conceives the brain to be the seat of all mental functions. According to *Bhagavad-gītā*, however, the mind has

an additional component (known in Sanskrit as *manah*, or “material mind”) that is distinct from both the brain and the conscious self. This material mind serves as a connecting link between the brain and the self. Since the material mind is composed of a kind of material energy, it could, in principle, be studied by ordinary empirical methods. At present there is no widely accepted scientific theory of the material mind, but parapsychological research may provide the basis for such a theory.

A discussion of the higher physics of the material mind would take us far afield, so here we shall simply make a few remarks about the functional relationship between the material mind and the brain. According to *Bhagavad-gītā*, the material mind interacts directly with the brain, and the conscious self interacts with the material mind through the agency of the Supersoul. The relationship between the brain and the material mind is like that between a computer and a computer programmer. Consider a businessman who has programmed a computer to process his accounts. The computer, with its own memory and data-processing facilities, is an extension of the man’s mind. Although the man is a complete person in his own right, he may come to depend heavily on the computer, and thus any damage to it would greatly impair his ability to conduct his business affairs. Similarly, the brain is a computerlike extension of the material mind, and even though the material mind can function independently of the brain, the mind tends to become dependent on the brain for the execution of certain data-processing operations.

Together, the material body and the material mind act as a kind of false self, in which the real self (the *jīvātmā*) rides as a passenger. The false self is not conscious in its own right, though it *seems* conscious because it is animated by the *jīvātmā*. Both the brain and the material mind are mechanisms for symbol manipulation, and so they resemble man-made computers. The “thoughts” of the material mind are mere patterns of symbols, which are represented by actual thoughts only when perceived by the *jīvātmā*. But the embodied *jīvātmā* tends to accept the “thoughts,” “feelings,” and “desires” of the material mind as his own, and thus he falsely identifies himself as the persona these patterns of symbols represent.

Since the material mind is the director of the material senses, we can control these senses by controlling the mind. Most of us, however, have never made a real effort to practice such control. So we may tend to underestimate both its importance and the difficulties involved in achieving it. We get some idea of these difficulties when we consider the powerful role that

habit plays in our normal activities. The material mind is a reservoir of elaborate programs governing everything from gross movements to subtle attitudes, and thus our mental life consists of a succession of conditioned thoughts and feelings unfolding inexorably according to their own logic and the stimuli of the senses.

Since we normally tend to identify the self with the material mind, we have no real idea what it would be like to be free from the material mind’s endless torrent of mundane images and associations. The *Bhagavad-gītā* [6.7] describes such freedom as follows:

**The ultimate goal of
one who practices
bhakti-yoga is to
serve Kṛṣṇa directly
—a goal attainable
when one is freed
from the material
mind and senses.**

For one who has conquered the mind, the Supersoul is already reached, for he has attained tranquility. To such a man happiness and distress, heat and cold, honor and dishonor are all the same.

Once the material mind is under control, the natural senses of the *jīvātmā* are free to perceive the Supreme Person directly.

In *bhakti-yoga* one achieves control of the material mind and senses by following certain positive and negative injunctions. The negative injunctions restrict one from activities that tend to agitate the material mind and distract one from the process of self-realization. The most fundamental of these injunctions prohibit indulgence in intoxication, meat-eating, illicit sexual affairs, and gambling. We do not have sufficient space to discuss in detail the psychological dynamics of these activities, but we may note simply that those who engage in them tend to become more and more preoccupied with the actions and reactions of their material senses.

For many scientific experiments, success depends on our carefully adjusting the physical conditions in the experimental apparatus. The process of *bhakti-yoga* is an experiment in which the body and the material mind are the experimental apparatus, and in which the negative injunctions are necessary (but not sufficient) conditions for success. These injunctions

are essential. A person who neglects them will not be able to free himself from material entanglement, and his “transcendental realizations” will indeed be nothing more than products of self-deception.*

The positive injunctions of *bhakti-yoga* prescribe activities that directly engage the *jīvātmā* in service to the Supreme Person, Kṛṣṇa. Ultimately these activities awaken the *jīvātmā*’s natural love for Kṛṣṇa. As a corollary to this reawakening, the *jīvātmā* automatically loses his attraction for the manifestations of his material mind, which are false theatrical displays inherently less interesting than the absolute reality of Kṛṣṇa. Thus by engaging in active service to Kṛṣṇa, one is able to attain the goal of mental control and free one’s senses for *further* service to Kṛṣṇa.

The ultimate goal of one who practices *bhakti-yoga* is to serve Kṛṣṇa directly—a goal attainable when one is freed from entanglement in the affairs of the material mind and senses. One can readily obtain this freedom, in turn, by performing service to Kṛṣṇa. *Bhakti-yoga* may thus seem like a vicious circle, but in practice it is a gradual process of development. First, one must bring the material mind under moderate control by adhering to the negative injunctions. Then one must render practical service to Kṛṣṇa under the guidance of the *guru*. This service invokes Kṛṣṇa’s mercy, and one attains some realization of the Lord. As a result, one’s attachment to the material mind is lessened, and one can further serve Kṛṣṇa on a higher platform of realization. This leads one to further freedom from material desire and further realization of one’s constitutional nature as a servant of Kṛṣṇa. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* [1.2.19–20] sums up this process and its results as follows:

As soon as irrevocable loving service is established in the heart, the effects of nature’s modes of passion and ignorance (effects such as lust, desire, and hankering) disappear from the heart. Then the devotee is established in goodness, and he becomes completely happy. Thus established in the mode of unalloyed goodness, the man whose mind has been enlivened by contact with devotional service to the Lord gains positive scientific knowledge of the Personality of Godhead in the stage of liberation from all material association. ❀

(Next month we shall conclude this series by examining how two practices fundamental to *bhakti-yoga* can awaken our higher cognitive faculties and bring us directly in touch with the Supreme.)

*We stress this point because there are many watered-down systems of *yoga* or meditation that neglect even the most basic rules for sense control. Seeking self-realization through such systems is like trying to ignite wood while pouring water on it.



Marco Ferrini

Master Designer / Servant of Kṛṣṇa

Italy's leading producer of fine furniture
heads up a devotional community in Florence.

by YOGEŚVARA DĀSA

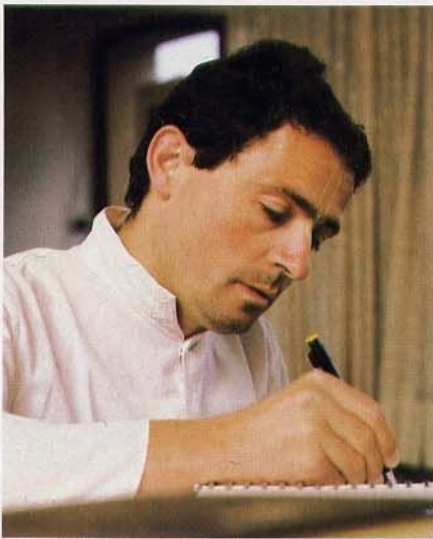
“Hey, Marco! How’s your father?” an old woman calls out, seeing him pass by in his Mercedes. Marco Ferrini waves and laughs jovially. He is the local boy who made good, Ponsacco’s favorite son, and Italy’s largest furniture designer and manufacturer. With more than eighty lines of furniture ensembles for living room, dining room, bedroom, and office, the Ferrini collection represents a skillful blend of cultural insight (Marco is a former professor of art history) and innovation (he holds patents on production techniques that have revolutionized Italy’s

billion-dollar-a-year furniture industry). But, in his own words, Marco Ferrini is a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa first and a businessman second.

At the end of each day, after trading in his Gucci suit for a simple cotton *dhoti*, Marco spends the evening hours chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa on beads, reading *Bhagavad-gītā*, and speaking with visitors about the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He lives with his wife Marisa and his father and mother in an elegant three-story villa overlooking the Ponsacco countryside. One large room has been converted into a

temple, complete with Deity forms of Lord Kṛṣṇa, an altar, musical instruments, and a library of spiritual literature. He makes good use of his managerial skills, too. Apart from being a member of the board of directors for the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) in Italy, Marco is president of Villa-Vrindāvana, ISKCON’s rural *āśrama* and artists’ center near Florence.

Marco Ferrini grew up in Ponsacco. He served his apprenticeship there before going on to earn his M.A. at the Magistero dell’ Arte in Florence. By age twenty-five



Marco works on plans for a new line of furniture at his villa in Ponsacco (above). At right, the plans undergo a stringent review by Marco and some of his staff.



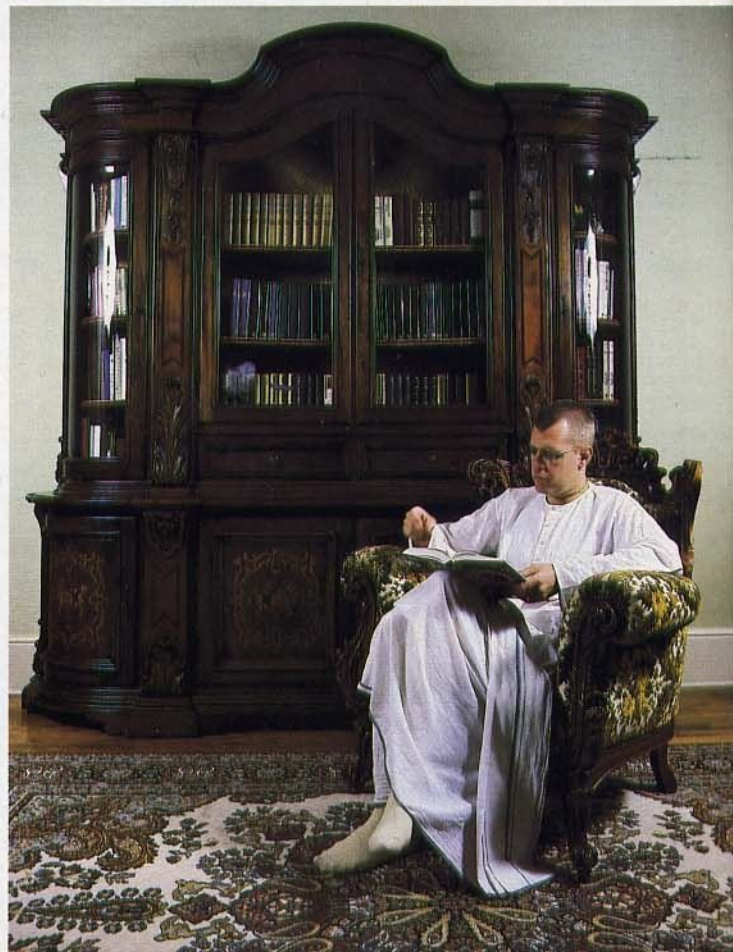
he had already made his first million, won the coveted Golden Legion Award for craftsmanship, and received dozens of other honors for innovative design and production—all of which left him with the sour taste of success.

“Wealth at first was intoxicating,” he remembers. “I left my parents, whose religious life was always something of an anachronism to me, and moved to the Riviera. Yachts, big money, fancy cars and women. The whole useless picture of affluence. I turned to philosophy in disgust, but quickly grew nauseous of Nietzsche. On the pretext of studying ancient techniques of woodworking, I grabbed a plane to India, thinking perhaps someone in the East would know what life was really all about.”

Marco traveled through India, Tibet, Thailand, China. “It was very intriguing, but inevitably all the so-called *gurus* I met just stared at my gold watch.”

On a subsequent trip Marco met Śrīla Prabhupāda at the Kṛṣṇa temple in Vṛndāvana (where Kṛṣṇa appeared five thousand years ago) and heard from him the teaching of *Bhagavad-gītā*: that within the body is the eternal soul, part and parcel of Kṛṣṇa, or God, and that one’s true satisfaction lies in reviving that lost relationship with Him by chanting His holy names and offering everything for His service. “I left India that time with something very special in my heart. Everything I had seen and heard had impressed me: the devotees’ dedication to Kṛṣṇa, the chanting, the elegant simplicity of their lives, and, above all, the purity of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s teachings. ‘Your talents, like everything else, also belong to Kṛṣṇa,’ he told me. ‘Go back and work for Kṛṣṇa, and He will protect you.’”

Elegant creations from the Ferrini collection: at right, a bookcase of walnut and ebony, the front panels inlaid with floral marquetry; at far right, a lotus-shaped crystal chandelier with dew-drop pendants. Marco designed the bookcase for the Kṛṣṇa āśrama in Valencay, France.





Marble slabs, cut and shaped for tabletops, receive a final washing at a Ferrini workshop (left), one of five near Ponsacco. “Some of my artisans have become enthusiastic about the hand-crafted pieces for Kṛṣṇa’s temples,” says Marco, “and they volunteer their services as a devotional offering.” Each Ferrini catalog (below left) displays a name associated with Kṛṣṇa, such as *Ganga* (the sacred river Ganges), *Garuda* (a divine bird), and *Tulasi* (a plant very dear to Lord Kṛṣṇa).



Upon returning to Ponsacco, Marco spoke frankly with his wife and parents about what he had learned. To his great pleasure, they found his arguments appealing, and the next day housecleaning began. Out went the television, out went the wine and meats, out went Nietzsche, and in came Kṛṣṇa.

Soon Marco received spiritual initiation from Śrīla Prabhupāda. Later, after Śrīla Prabhupāda had passed away, Marco (now Matsya-avatāra dāsa) received brahminical

initiation from Śrīla Bhagavān Goswami, one of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s disciples who has been designated to accept new initiates. On that joyous occasion Matsya’s entire family also took initiation from Śrīla Bhagavān Goswami.

If the transition from magnate to monk seemed inconsistent to some of his neighbors and friends, Matsya eased the shock with a demeanor as affable and winning as *linguini a la pomo d’oro*. Municipal officials, factory owners, architects, delivery

boys, the telephone repairman—everyone received an equally warm “*Haribol!*” (“Chant the name of Hari [Kṛṣṇa]!”), and no one left his villa-turned-temple without sampling the milk sweets offered to Lord Kṛṣṇa and stocked in a large cookie jar by the front door.

Just to reassure his staff and clients, Matsya maintained his familiar aristocratic appearance. Still, everyone knew he had changed. For one, he was now vegetarian and took no liquor, in a region where wine and venison were high social tradition. For another, little things always gave him away: three strands of small wooden beads, signifying spiritual initiation, peeked shyly out from beneath his starched collar; a photo of his spiritual master hung conspicuously in his office among the Renaissance portraits of Italian nobility; on his shelf, books of Sanskrit stood out next to the collected works of Dante.

Ponsacco is a small municipality. News spreads fast. Matsya’s clients grew nervous.

“They couldn’t understand why a successful Italian businessman would become a devotee,” he says. “People here are victims of a historical allergy to saints. The word *priest* is pejorative, synonymous with hypocrisy.”

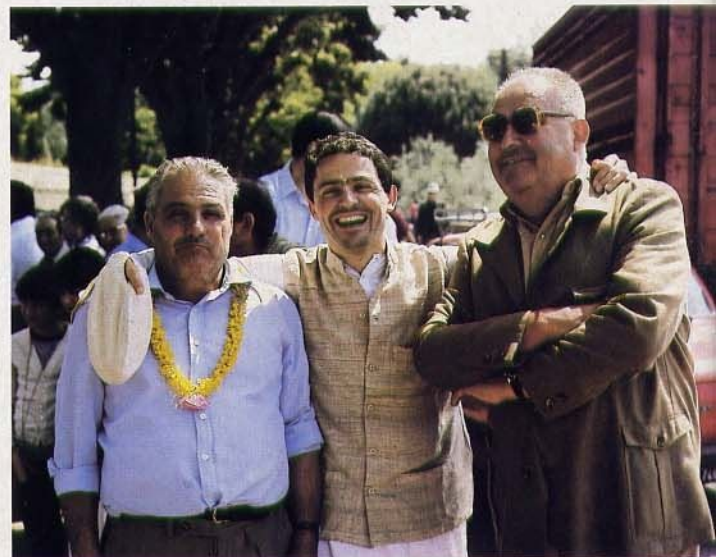
Matsya’s competition called Matsya’s biggest client and said that Matsya was leaving everything to become a monk. “Now, this client is a man who trusts me with his entire fortune. One line of furniture alone may cost him ten million dollars



to put into production. He raced to my office to ask if becoming Kṛṣṇa conscious meant having to leave one's work. 'Listen, Luigi,' I told him, 'Kṛṣṇa never tells you to give up what you're supposed to do. He just wants us to do our work conscientiously as an offering to Him.' The man was relieved. Eventually he even began making donations to the Kṛṣṇa temples in Italy. Now he says that he never even doubted my decision. 'I was just testing your sincerity,' he says."

Others, however, took a poor view of Matsya's spiritual dedication. "Some people were afraid to order millions of dollars in goods from a Hare Kṛṣṇa devotee," Matsya explains. "They thought it might affect sales somehow." Among his inner staff, Matsya discovered three men playing on those sentiments to steal the

Marco and friends pose triumphantly (right) at the annual farm competition in San Casciano, where cows from Kṛṣṇa's farm outside Florence took first and second prizes as best milkers. At dinner (above) Marco and his wife, father, and mother share sanctified food with guests. Afterward, Marco chants Hare Kṛṣṇa with his two-year-old son (far right).





Dressed in traditional clothes and carrying prayer beads, Marco sets off to inspect renovation work on the Kṛṣṇa farm near Florence (left). Above: Each morning in his villa, Marco leads a discussion on the Sanskrit literatures that form the basis of Kṛṣṇa conscious philosophy.

accounts of doubting clients. Matsya was undeterred. He dismissed the traitors, released the accounts, and continued chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa.

“I studied *Bhagavad-gītā* and learned how to lecture on *yoga*, on work as a sacrifice to God, and also how to cook *prasādam* [sanctified foods]. On Sundays my wife and I would take our daughter and drive to Pisa to chant and distribute Hare Kṛṣṇa magazines and sweets we had prepared. People were amazed to learn who I was. Some even became clients. Business tripled in three years.”

But how to reconcile a life of comfort and wealth with a belief in the nonmaterial soul and detachment from the world?

“The question is not how much or how little you have,” Matsya says, “but what you do with your resources. Perhaps, by nature’s arrangements, one is poor, another rich. But nothing is ours, really. I am fortunate. I have a chance to make money and spend it for Kṛṣṇa. After all, it is His, so I help build temples, print translations of scriptures. And I also try to be a good

example for others by following spiritual principles very carefully.”

To receive initiation, Matsya agreed to follow four regulative principles—no meat, fish, or eggs; no intoxicants, including coffee, tea, or cigarettes; no illicit sex; and no gambling—commitments that have even influenced his designs. Leather, for example, is out in all Ferrini creations, since using leather tacitly condones animal slaughter. Instead, his research team has invented a fabric stronger, warmer, and more versatile than leather. Now other designers have begun imitating the Ferrini leather substitute (partly because it’s also cheaper than the real thing.)

Today, five years after his initial meeting with devotees, Matsya-avatāra and his family lead busy lives of service to Kṛṣṇa. His wife, Manu-patnī dāsī, engages her talents as bookkeeper to manage Ferrini Designs. Matsya’s mother, sixty-five-year-old Ānanda-vṛndāvana dāsī, cooks, cares for the temple, receives their many weekly guests, and keeps an immaculate temple. Matsya’s father, sixty-seven-year-old Caitanya-Nitāi dāsa, retired from the large construction firm he once directed, now heads renovation work on the Hare Kṛṣṇa farm in nearby Florence.

If you’re ever in Ponsacco and would like to meet Matsya-avatāra and his family, just say “Hare Kṛṣṇa.” Anyone can tell you where they live.



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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 literature singles 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.

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NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

Transcending the Laws of Karma

Nadine is the mother of four children. Her son Ravi, age seven, was born deaf and dumb. The other day, using sign language, Ravi asked his mother why he cannot speak or hear like his brother and sisters. Nadine, who has recently taken up Kṛṣṇa consciousness, answered by explaining in a very simple way the law of *karma*. Ravi understood.

Nadine feels that had her son asked this question prior to her coming to understand the law of *karma*, she would have been unable to give him a satisfying explanation. Surely such questions as this are perplexing. Why does one person enjoy, while another suffers? But the answers to such questions are crucial to all of us, because they give us a direct clue to how we can become free from all future suffering.

Nowadays people tend to accept only explanations based on the authority of material sciences, such as physics, mathematics, and chemistry. Ideologists also stress economic, political, psychological, and sociological explanations, as well as philosophical speculations, the interpretations of astrology, and the dogmas of sectarian religions. But none of these explanations for good and ill fortune is as scientific, or as intellectually and morally satisfying, as the Vedic literature's explanation of the law of *karma*.

According to the Vedic literature, *karma* is the law of cause and effect: there is a reaction for everything we do. If we throw a coin up, it will come down. If we regularly put money in the bank, our wealth will accumulate. If we drink too much, we'll get drunk. These are natural laws of cause and effect. Similarly, the law of *karma* states that if we do something sinful we shall get a bad result and if we do something pious we shall get a good result.

According to the Vedic literature, the activities we perform in our present life determine the happiness and distress we meet in our future life. The body we have now is not our real self but is only a covering. Our real identity is the *ātmā*, the eternal spirit soul within the body. Impelled by the law of *karma*, we, the *ātmā*, transmigrate from one species to another, suffering and enjoying the results of our

activities in the human form of life.

The Vedic literature distinguishes between *karma*, acts which are allowed, and *vikarma*, acts which are forbidden. *Vikarma* will bring us unfortunate reactions in this life and the next. These unfortunate reactions are sometimes popularly referred to as "bad *karma*." Our present sufferings—chronic disease, poverty, and so on—are the bad karmic reactions of our past sinful activities.

These are not the beliefs of a particular religious faith; they are natural laws governing all activities in the material world. There is individual *karma* and collective *karma*. Individual *karma* accounts for our personal misfortune, and collective *karma* accounts for the sufferings of an entire nation: an epidemic, a war, a natural holocaust. Society's sins of abortion and cow-killing, for example, must eventually result in severe collective bad *karma*. On the other hand, one who acts piously may be rewarded by a good birth on this planet or even on higher planets, where there is greater longevity and better enjoyment than on earth.

In the ultimate sense, however, all *karma*, whether good or bad, is bondage. Even pious activities bind us to the cycle of repeated birth and death. Whether rich or poor, weak or strong, learned or ignorant, beautiful or ugly, pious or impious, famous or obscure, everyone in the material world must suffer, birth after birth. As Lord Kṛṣṇa states in *Bhagavad-gītā* (8.16), "From the highest planet to the lowest planet, all are places of misery wherein repeated birth and death take place. But one who attains to My abode, O Arjuna, never takes birth again in this material world." Therefore, until we become free of all *karma*, we have to undergo repeated birth and death.

Neither God nor the laws of nature are responsible for our *karma*; we make our own destiny. Out of our particular desires to enjoy this world in various ways, we create our own good or bad *karma*. We can attain freedom from *karma* only when we give up acting according to our material desires and instead act to serve the Supreme Personality of Godhead. When we are purified of all material desires and repose all our thoughts, words, and actions

in loving service to Kṛṣṇa, then only can we transcend the law of *karma*. Otherwise *karma*, good or bad, will lead us to repeated suffering, birth after birth.

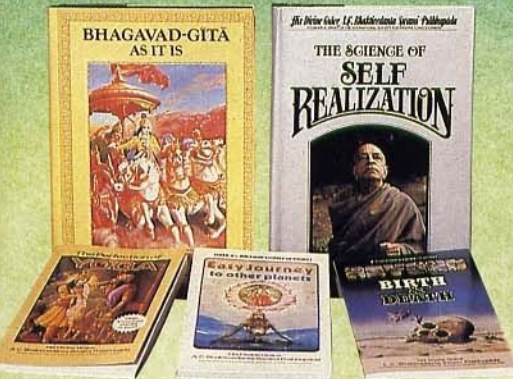
We have to understand that the law of *karma* is actually operating, and then we can consider extricating ourselves from *karma*'s influence. Even if a mother can educate her deaf and dumb child by alternative methods and help him adjust to his handicapped life, the main problems of material life still remain. There are no material means for avoiding *karma*. Freedom from *karma* is possible only when we understand how to act transcendently.

Nadine understands the laws of *karma* and was therefore able to solve her son's dilemma. Usually psychologists, doctors, and parents of deaf and dumb children can explain only the immediate cause: "During pregnancy your mother was very sick." "You had meningitis when you were a baby." But such explanations don't really answer the question. And Ravi's reaction to such explanations had been like that of so many other handicapped children: "Yes, but why me?" Therefore he had remained dissatisfied.

Then Nadine had learned about Kṛṣṇa consciousness and the Vedic literature's explanation of *karma*. So one day when her son approached her in great frustration, demanding to know why he was deaf and dumb, she showed him a painting in *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. The painting depicted the soul as it transmigrates from birth to childhood to youth to adulthood to old age and finally, at death, to another body. Pointing to the picture, Nadine told Ravi that during one of his many previous lives he must have performed sinful activities and because of those sinful activities he was now being forced to accept the karmic reaction. Ravi looked up at his mother and smiled, and then he looked down at the picture again for a long, long time. He was no longer complaining, and he didn't hit her or blame her as before. He just kept looking at the picture, satisfied.

Nadine is also satisfied. Ravi will learn to use his life so he won't have to take another birth and suffer the results of his *karma*. —SDG

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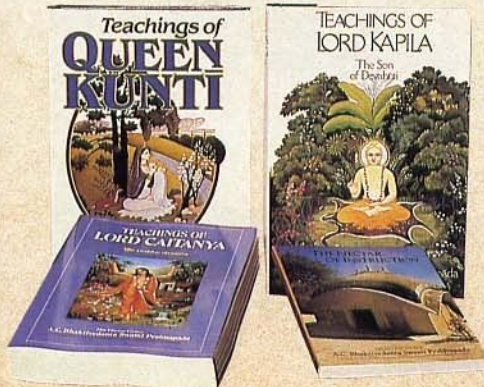
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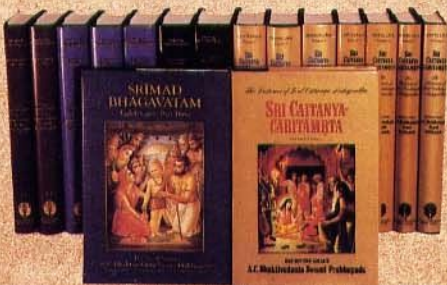
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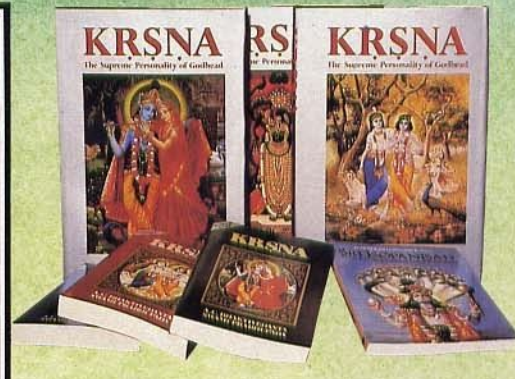
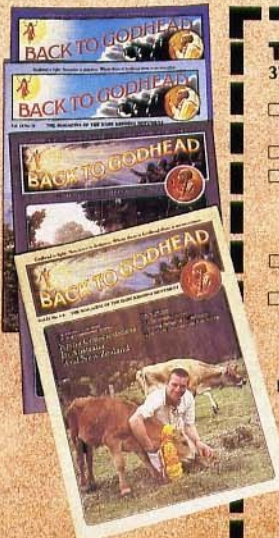
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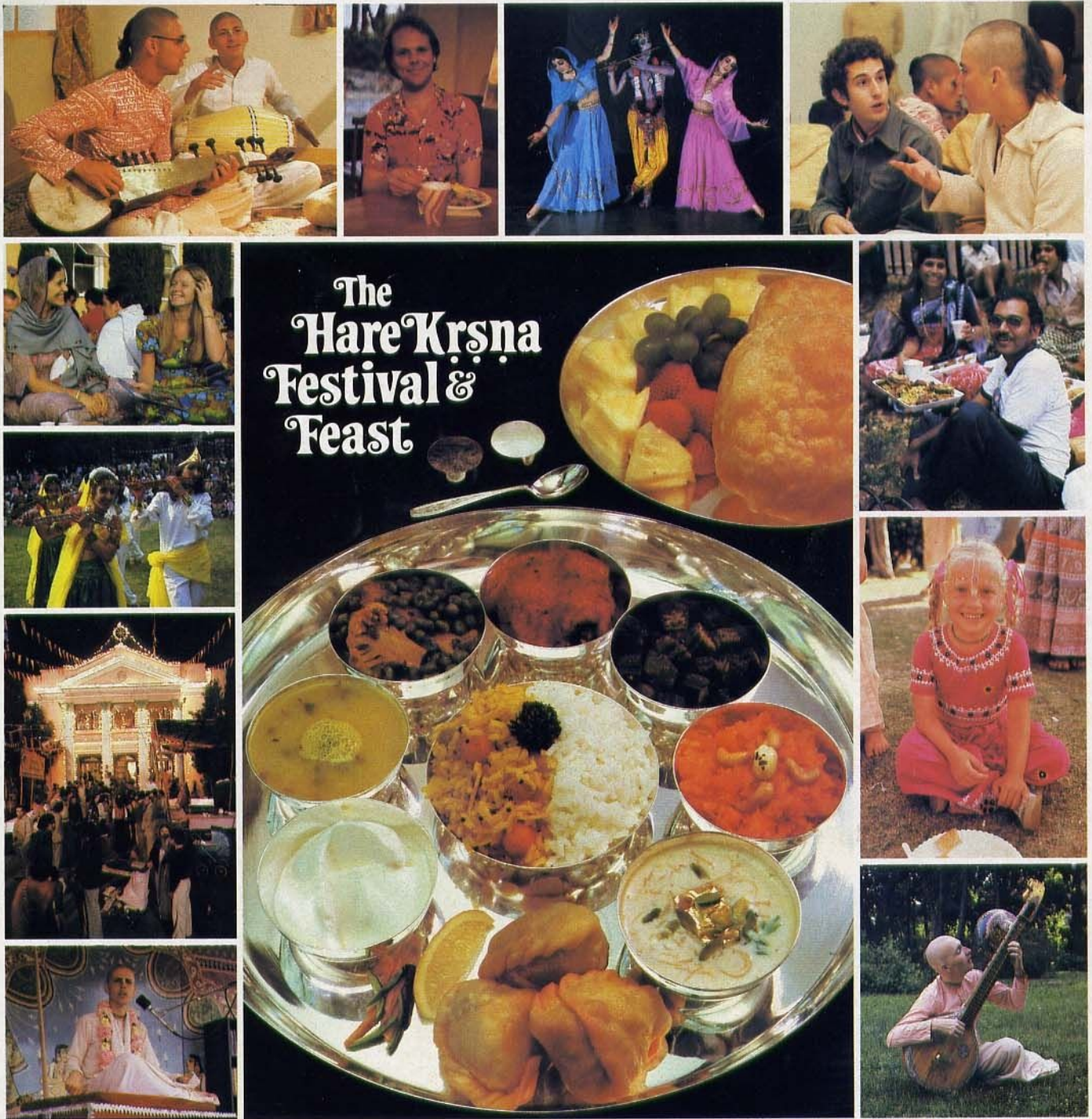
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