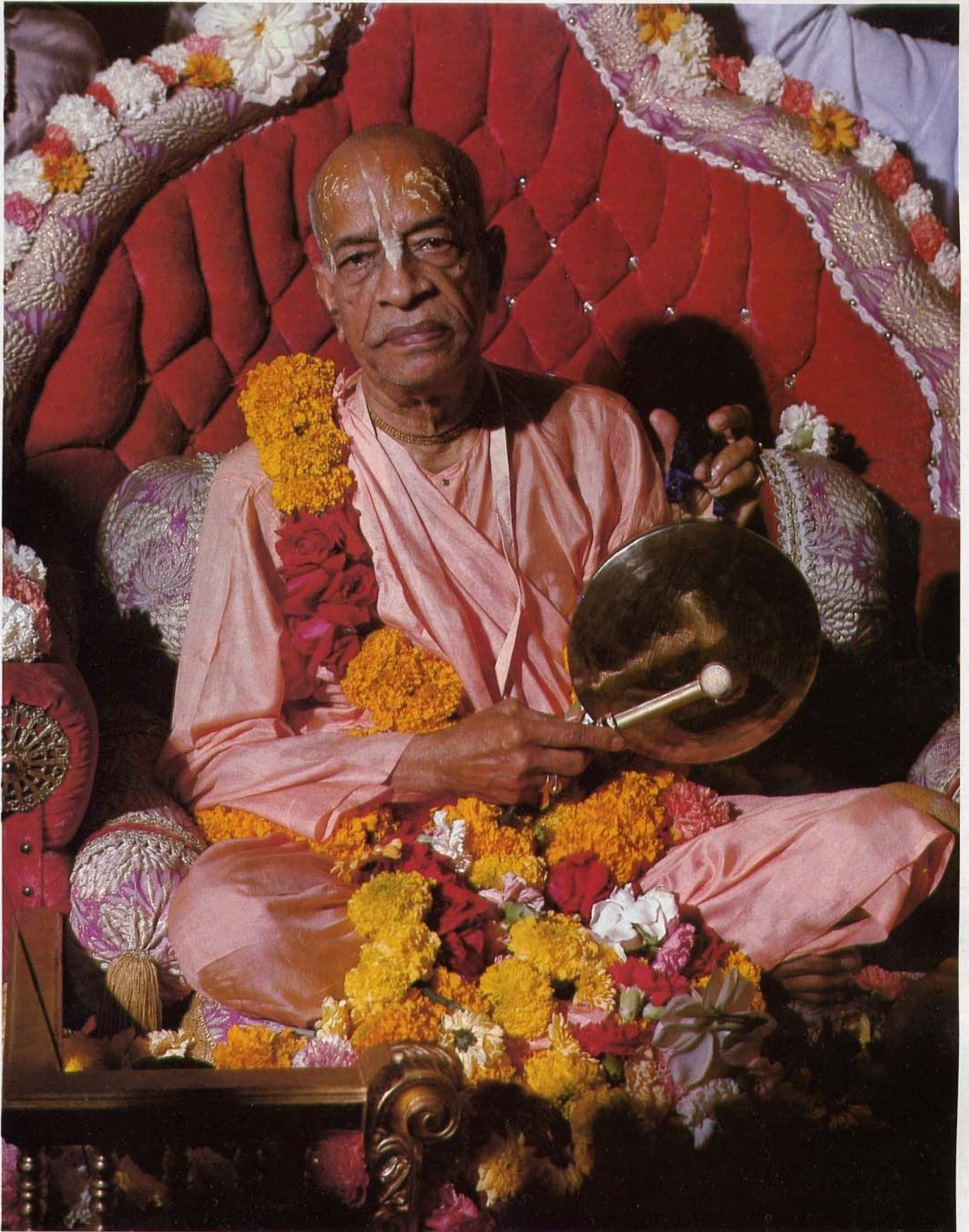


Godhead is light. Nescience is darkness. Where there is Godhead there is no nescience.

BACK TO GODHEAD

Vol.16 No.12 \$1.25 THE MAGAZINE OF THE HARE KRISHNA MOVEMENT





MURALIVADANA DASA

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

BACK TO GODHEAD

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His Divine Grace
A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda

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PRONUNCIATION. 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 (dāsī 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, Śrīla Prabhupāda molded his international society into a worldwide confederation of āśramas, schools, temples, and farm communities. He passed away in 1977 in India's Vṛndāvana, the place most sacred to Lord Kṛṣṇa. His disciples are carrying forward the movement he started.

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CONTENTS

Ascendance to the Personal World of Kṛṣṇa 2

A lecture by His Divine Grace
A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda.

The Biography of a Pure Devotee

A Child Sent by Kṛṣṇa 5

British-ruled Calcutta and a family imbued with devotion to Kṛṣṇa provide the setting for Śrīla Prabhupāda's birth and early childhood.

The Arts

Search for an Art of Transcendence 9

A young man meets a spiritual master who puts the Arts—and the Artist—in their proper place.

Book Section

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 15

The continuing presentation of India's great spiritual classic. Translation and commentary by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda.

Lord Kṛṣṇa's Cuisine

Kṛṣṇa is Requesting 21

Devotional vegetarianism is the theme of a new feature starting in this issue.

Science

Bhakti-yoga: A Method

Of Nonmechanistic Science (Part III) 22

How a transcendental scientist gains knowledge of the Absolute.

Exposing the Cult of Artificial Intelligence 26

Those who live like robots may forget what natural life is all about.

Śrīla Prabhupāda Speaks Out 14

Every Town and Village 19

Letters 25

Notes from the Editor 32

COVER: Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, receives prayers of respect from the four-headed Brahmā, the first created being in the universe. While Lord Kṛṣṇa was performing transcendental pastimes as a cowherd boy, Brahmā, thinking Him an ordinary person, played a trick on Him by stealing away His cows and cowherd friends. Lord Kṛṣṇa, however, created identical cows and friends from His own mystic power and went right on with His pastimes. Ultimately Kṛṣṇa revealed all the varied aspects of creation dancing within the unlimited expanse of His own energies. Brahmā then surrendered to Kṛṣṇa and offered Him humble prayers. This is all described in the Tenth Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. (Painting: Rāmanātha 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."

Ascendance To the Personal World Of Kṛṣṇa

A talk given in December 1966 by
His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda,
Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness,
at the Hare Kṛṣṇa temple in New York City.

*yānti deva-vratā devān
pitṛn yānti pitṛ-vratāḥ
bhūtāni yānti bhūtejyā
yānti mad-yājino 'pi mām*

“Those who worship the demigods will take birth among the demigods, those who worship ghosts and spirits will take birth among such beings, and those who worship Me will live with Me” (*Bhagavad-gītā*, 9.25).

Some people argue that you can worship the Supreme in whatever form you please and still achieve perfection. This is the *māyāvāda* theory: God is actually impersonal, but because we cannot worship or meditate upon something impersonal, let us imagine some form of God and meditate upon that. The impersonalistic *yogīs* have a similar idea: they put a circular design in front of themselves and concentrate upon that.

So here Kṛṣṇa refutes that theory. The impersonal conception of the Supreme, imagining some form of God—these are not the ways of approaching God. He says clearly, “Those who are worshipping the demigods will go to the demigods.” The demigods have their various places in this material world. There are seven higher planetary systems and seven lower plan-

etary systems. We are living on earth, in the planetary system called Bhūrloka, and there are many planets in this system. And above Bhūrloka are Bhuvarloka, Svargaloka, Maharloka, Janaloka, Tapoloka, Brahmalo—there are so many planets, with various kinds of living entities and various kinds of comforts. On some of these planets there are very highly intelligent beings, much more intelligent than human beings, who are called demigods (“those who are almost God”).

So here Kṛṣṇa says that those who are worshipping the demigods will go to the planets of the demigods. Then He says, *pitṛn yānti pitṛ-vratāḥ*. There is a process of worshipping the forefathers, and there is a particular planet where the worshipers of the forefathers go. And *bhūtāni yānti bhūtejyā*: those who worship earthly beings or earthly things will remain on the earthly platform. But, Kṛṣṇa says, *yānti mad-yājino 'pi mām*: “Those who worship Me will come to Me.” This is very clear.

Now, suppose you have purchased a train ticket for an intermediate station between New York and San Francisco. You will have to get out at that station. How can you expect that if you have purchased a ticket for an intermediate station you can go to San Francisco? If you want to go

to San Francisco, you have to purchase a ticket for San Francisco. Similarly, if you worship the demigods you can go to a demigod's planet, but no higher. In the creation of God there are various arrangements for worship. You have freedom of action, and God awards you the result—whatever you want. But if you want to go to the planet where Kṛṣṇa lives, which is called Kṛṣṇaloka or Goloka Vṛndāvana, then you have to worship Kṛṣṇa. That is not unreasonable.

What is the difference between going to Kṛṣṇa's planet and going to other planets? That is explained in a different part of *Bhagavad-gītā* [15.6]: *yad gatvā na nivartante tad dhāma paramam mama*. The supreme planet is that place from which nobody returns to this material world. *Yad gatvā na nivartante*. *Na nivartante* means “does not return.” We have already discussed that even if you go to the highest planets within this material world—the moon planet, the sun planet, the heavenly planets—after exhausting the results of

Not an impersonal force or void, the Absolute Truth is a person: Kṛṣṇa the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Those who worship Him with faith and love return to His supreme planet and enjoy an eternal life of bliss and knowledge.



your pious activities you have to come back to earth again. *Punar āvarinaḥ*. So we are sometimes going up and sometimes coming down. Sometimes we might have an Indian body, sometimes we might have an American body, sometimes we may get the body of a hog or a dog, and sometimes we may get the body of a demigod. These changes of bodily dress are going on in the cycle of birth and death, as the soul transmigrates from one form of life to another.

So, this going up and coming down should be stopped. That is the business of an intelligent person. We should try to go to that planet from which there is no more coming back (*yad gatvā na nivartante*). That planet is Kṛṣṇaloka. *Paras tasmāt tu bhāvo 'nyaḥ*. Beyond this material sky there is the spiritual sky, Vaikuṅṭha, where there are spiritual planets. And Kṛṣṇaloka is there.

Kṛṣṇa says, *yānti mad-yājino 'pi mām*. "Just as others are trying to go to various planets, those who are in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, those who are exclusively worshipping Me—they will come to Me." In another place [Bg. 8.15] Kṛṣṇa says, *mām upetya punar janma duḥkhālayam aśāsvatam nāpnuvanti*: "Those who once attain to me will never come again to this place of misery [the material world]."

If we always remain in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then our transference to the Kṛṣṇaloka planet is guaranteed. *Yaṁ yaṁ vāpi smaran bhāvāṁ tyajaty ante kalevaram*. We are going to get a body in our next life according to our mental condition at the time of our death. So if we are constantly engaged in transcendental loving service to Kṛṣṇa, absorbed in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then naturally we shall be thinking of Kṛṣṇa at the time of death. Then we shall attain a spiritual body and go to join Kṛṣṇa in Kṛṣṇaloka. This is the practice of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Unless you practice you cannot achieve success. Suppose you want to perform on the stage. So, you have to practice for many years. Or if you want to pass some examination, then you have to prepare yourself for the sort of questions you may be asked. Similarly, if we at all want to transfer ourselves to the Kṛṣṇaloka planet, then we have to practice. We have to practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness in this life. The human form of life is meant for this practice. My disciples are just like apprentices, but here even apprentices are already liberated. In Kṛṣṇa consciousness the student who is preparing himself nicely—he has already passed the test. In other words, he's preparing himself in such a nice way that his passing of the examination is guaranteed. So if we take the trouble to become always Kṛṣṇa conscious, then our transference to Kṛṣṇa's planet is guaranteed.

Now, the next question is, How do we perform Kṛṣṇa consciousness? That is explained by the Lord in the next verse [Bg. 9.27]:

*patraṁ puṣpaṁ phalaṁ toyam
yo me bhaktiā prayacchati
tad ahaṁ bhakti-upahṛtam
aśnāmi prayatāmanaḥ*

"If one offers Me with love and devotion a leaf, a flower, fruit, or water, I will accept it." You have to make friends with Kṛṣṇa. If you want to see somebody very great, somehow or other you have to make some connection with him. You have to introduce yourself in a friendly way, in a loving

**As long as
we go on utilizing
God's property
illegally,
there cannot be
any peace. If you
want peace at all,
you have to accept
that everything
belongs to God.**

manner, and then it is possible to make a connection with a great personality. So, if we want to transfer ourselves to that supreme planet, Kṛṣṇaloka, then we have to prepare ourselves by learning how to love Kṛṣṇa, God. If we are intimately in touch with God by love, He will take us back to His supreme planet. But we cannot conquer Him by force. Unless we are in love with God, we cannot claim any favor from Him.

So, there are six principles of loving exchange. What are they?

*dadāti pratigrhṇāti
guhyam ākhyāti pṛcchati
bhūṅkte bhōjayate caiva
śad-vidharṇi pṛiti-lakṣaṇam
(Upadeśāmṛta 4)*

How can one person understand that another person loves him? By these six kinds of exchange, or reciprocation. First are *dadāti pratigrhṇāti*: you must give something to the one whom you love, and you must accept something from him. Then *guhyam ākhyāti pṛcchati*: you must disclose your mind, and you must also hear him. If your beloved is in some difficulty,

you must listen when he discloses his mind. And finally, *bhūṅkte bhōjayate*: you must give your beloved something to eat, and you must accept what he gives you to eat. So, we have to deal with God in this way.

Now, the beginning is offering something. We must offer something to Kṛṣṇa. But suppose a poor man wants to offer something to God. What has he to offer? Here is a description, given by the Lord Himself, of things that can be offered even by the poorest man. *Patraṁ puṣpaṁ phalaṁ toyam*: a small *tulasī* leaf (or any leaf), a little flower, a small fruit, and a little water. Now, these four things are available universally. Nobody is so poor that he cannot collect a leaf or a small fruit or a small flower or a little water. They are universal; they are not expensive. So anyone, in any country, in any place, can offer Kṛṣṇa these four things. There is no bar. A small leaf you can get anywhere—there are so many trees. Even if you are forbidden, when you say, "I am going to offer this leaf to God," anyone will allow you to have it.

So the Lord says, "If one offers Me with love and devotion a leaf, a flower, fruit, or water, I will accept it." The real thing is the love. When one brings these four things with love and devotion, then, God says, *tad ahaṁ . . . aśnāmi*: "I eat the offering." God is *pūrṇam*, full in Himself. We should not think, "Oh, God is depending upon my little flower and fruit. He is very hungry, and when I offer Him this fruit He'll feel satisfied." No. He's *pūrṇam*. So our offering should be made with love and devotion; that is its only qualification. *That* He accepts—your devotional love.

Anybody can worship Kṛṣṇa with these four things: a leaf, a flower, fruit, and water. But we should not think, "Oh, Kṛṣṇa wants only *patraṁ puṣpaṁ phalaṁ toyam*, so let Him have this *patraṁ puṣpaṁ phalaṁ toyam*, and for myself let me eat very sumptuously, the best thing." That is cheating. Kṛṣṇa can understand. This *patraṁ puṣpaṁ phalaṁ toyam* is for the poorest man, but if you have very nice things to offer Kṛṣṇa, you must offer them. If you love Kṛṣṇa you should offer Him the nicest, the choicest, the best things, because everything belongs to Him. So when you offer Kṛṣṇa the best and the choicest, that is proof of your love.

Suppose you offer a fruit to Kṛṣṇa. Can you manufacture the fruit? No, it is manufactured by Kṛṣṇa; it is God's gift. But if you place before Him some choice fruit, some choice flower, then that is a token of your love. This process is already going on within the material world. Suppose there is a nice rose flower. Somebody picks it and thinks, "Oh, it is a very nice rose flower. I shall offer it to my girlfriend." That is sense gratification. But if you take

(continued on page 29)



A Child Sent by Kṛṣṇa

1896: Calcutta.

When this child reaches the age of seventy,
the astrologer predicted, he will cross the ocean,
become a great exponent of religion,
and open 108 temples.

by ŚRĪLA SATSVARŪPA DĀSA GOSWAMI

With this issue of *BACK TO GODHEAD* we begin serializing Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta, the biography of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda, from Volume 1, A Lifetime in

Excerpted from *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta*, by Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami. © 1981 by the Bhaktivedānta Book Trust.

Preparation. This volume recounts the first sixty-nine years of Śrīla Prabhupāda's life, from his birth in Calcutta in 1896 to his departure for the West in 1965.

The vignettes recorded in this first installment reveal that from earliest childhood Śrīla Prabhupāda imbibed from his father the pure devotion to Kṛṣṇa that would remain the central sustaining force

throughout his life. And as this extraordinary history unfolds, we shall see how Śrīla Prabhupāda, through the turbulence of two world wars, years of Hindu-British and Hindu-Muslim strife, and much personal travail, maintained his faith in Lord Kṛṣṇa and carried forward the mission to spread the message of Kṛṣṇa in India and in the West.

It was Janmāṣṭamī, the annual celebration of the advent of Lord Kṛṣṇa some five thousand years before. Residents of Calcutta, mostly Vaiṣṇavas (devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa) but also many Muslims and even some British, were observing the festive day, moving here and there through the city's streets to visit the temples of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Devout Vaiṣṇavas, fasting until midnight, chanted Hare Kṛṣṇa and heard about the birth and activities of Kṛṣṇa from *Srīmad-Bhāgavatam*, one of the principal Vedic scriptures. The devotees continued fasting, chanting, and worshiping throughout the night.

The next day (September 1, 1896), in a little house in the Tollygunge suburb of Calcutta, a male child was born. Since he was born on Nandotsava, the day Kṛṣṇa's father, Nanda Mahārāja, had observed a festival in honor of Kṛṣṇa's birth, the boy's uncle called him Nandulal. But his father, Gour Mohan De, and his mother, Rajani, named him Abhay Charan, "one who is fearless, having taken shelter at Lord Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet." In accordance with Bengali tradition, the mother had gone to the home of her parents for the delivery, and so it was that on the bank of the Ādi Gaṅgā, a few miles from his father's home, in a small, two-room, mud-walled house with a tiled roof, underneath a jack-fruit tree, Abhay Charan was born. A few days later, Abhay returned with his parents to their home at 151 Harrison Road.

An astrologer did a horoscope for the child, and the family was made jubilant by the auspicious reading. The astrologer made a specific prediction: When this child reached the age of seventy, he would cross the ocean, become a great exponent of religion, and open 108 temples.

* * *

Abhay Charan De was born into an India dominated by Victorian imperialism. Calcutta was the capital of India, the seat of the viceroy, the Earl of Elgin and Kincardine, and the "second city" of the British Empire. Europeans and Indians lived separately, although in business and education they intermingled. The British lived mostly in central Calcutta, amidst their own theaters, race-tracks, cricket fields, and fine European buildings. The Indians lived more in north Calcutta. Here the men dressed in *dhōtīs* and the women in *sārīs* and, while remaining loyal to the British Crown, followed their traditional religion and culture.

Abhay's home at 151 Harrison Road was in the Indian section of north Calcutta. Abhay's father, Gour Mohan De, was a cloth merchant of moderate income and belonged to the aristocratic *suvarṇa-vaṇīk* merchant community. He was re-

lated, however, to the wealthy Mullik family, which for hundreds of years had traded in gold and salt with the British.

An entire block of properties on either side of Harrison Road belonged to Lokanath Mullik, and Gour Mohan and his family lived in a few rooms of a three-story building within the Mullik properties. Across the street from the Des' residence was a Rādhā-Govinda temple where for the past 150 years the Mulliks had maintained worship of the Deity of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Various shops on the Mullik properties provided income for the Deity and for the priests conducting the worship. Every morning before breakfast, the Mullik family members would visit the temple to see the Deity of Rādhā-

Abhay stood silently, absorbed in seeing the beautiful forms of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhārāṇī, the Supreme Lord and His consort.

Govinda. They would offer cooked rice, *kacaurīs* (fried vegetable patties), and vegetables on a large platter and would then distribute the *prasādam* (the remnants of the offering) to the Deities' morning visitors from the neighborhood.

Among the daily visitors was Abhay Charan, accompanying his mother, father, or servant.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: *I used to ride on the same perambulator with Siddhesvar Mullik. He used to call me Moti ("pearl"), and his nickname was Subidhī. And the servant pushed us together. If one day this friend did not see me, he would become mad. He would not go in the perambulator without me. We would not separate even for a moment.*

* * *

As the servant pushed the baby carriage into the wide expanse of Harrison Road, timing his crossing between the bicycles and horse-drawn hackneys, the two children in the pram gazed up at the fair sky and tall trees across the road. Sounds and sights of the hackneys, with their large wheels spinning over the road, caught the fascinated attention of the two children.

The servant steered the carriage towards the arched gateway within the red sandstone wall bordering the Rādhā-Govinda Mandira, and as Abhay and his friend rode underneath the ornate metal arch and into the courtyard, they saw high above them two stone lions, the heralds and protectors of the temple compound, their right paws extended.

In the courtyard was a circular drive, and on the oval lawn were lampposts with gaslights, and a statue of a young woman in robes. Sharply chirping sparrows flitted in the shrubs and trees or hopped across the grass, pausing to peck the ground, while choruses of pigeons cooed, sometimes abruptly flapping their wings overhead, sailing off to another perch or descending to the courtyard. Voices chattered as Bengalis moved to and fro, dressed in simple cotton *sārīs* and white *dhōtīs*. Someone paused by the carriage to amuse the golden-skinned boys, with their shining dark eyes, but mostly people were passing by quickly, going into the temple.

The heavy double doors leading into the inner courtyard were open, and the servant eased the carriage wheels down a foot-deep step and proceeded through the foyer, then down another step and into the bright sunlight of the main courtyard. The carriage moved ahead past two servants sweeping and washing the stone courtyard. It was just a few paces across the courtyard to the temple.

The temple area itself, open like a pavilion, was a raised platform with a stone roof supported by stout pillars fifteen feet tall. At the left end of the temple pavilion stood a crowd of worshipers, viewing the Deities on the altar. The servant pushed the carriage closer, lifted the two boys out, and then, holding their hands, escorted them reverentially before the Deities.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: *I can remember standing at the doorway of Rādhā-Govinda temple saying prayers to Rādhā-Govinda mūrti. I would watch for hours together. The Deity was so beautiful with His slanted eyes.*

Rādhā and Govinda, freshly bathed and dressed, now stood on Their silver throne amidst vases of fragrant flowers. Govinda was about eighteen inches high, and Rādhārāṇī, standing to his left, was slightly smaller. Both were golden. Rādhā and Govinda both stood in the same gracefully curved dancing pose, right leg bent at the knee and right foot placed in front of the left. Rādhārāṇī, dressed in a lustrous silk *sārī*, held up Her reddish right palm in benediction, and Kṛṣṇa, in His silk jacket and *dhōtī*, played on a golden flute.

At Govinda's lotus feet were green leaves from the sacred *tulasī* bush, with pulp of sandalwood. Hanging around Their Lordships' necks and reaching down

almost to Their lotus feet were several garlands of fragrant night-blooming jasmines, delicate, trumpetlike blossoms resting lightly on Rādhā and Govnda's divine forms. Their necklaces of gold, pearls, and diamonds shimmered.

Beautifully dressed, dancing on Their silver throne beneath a silver canopy and surrounded by flowers, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa appeared most attractive to Abhay. Life outside, on Harrison Road and beyond, was forgotten. In the courtyard the birds went on chirping, and visitors came and went, but Abhay stood silently, absorbed in seeing the beautiful forms of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhārāṇī, the Supreme Lord and His eternal consort.

Then the *kīrtana* began, devotees chanting and playing on drums and hand cymbals. Abhay and his friend kept watching as the priest, or *pūjārī*, offered incense, its curling smoke hanging in the air, then a flaming lamp, a conchshell, a handkerchief, flowers, a whisk, and a peacock fan. Finally the *pūjārī* blew the conchshell loudly, and the *ārati* ceremony was over.

* * *

When Abhay was one and a half years old, he fell ill with typhoid. The family physician, Dr. Bose, prescribed chicken broth.

"No," Gour Mohan protested, "I cannot allow it."

"Yes, otherwise he will die."

"But we are not meat-eaters," Gour Mohan pleaded. "We cannot prepare chicken in our kitchen."

"Don't mind," Dr. Bose said. "I shall prepare it at my house and bring it in a jar, and you simply . . ."

Gour Mohan assented. "If it is necessary for my son to live." So the doctor came with his chicken broth and offered it to Abhay, who immediately began to vomit.

"All right," the doctor admitted. "Never mind, this is no good." Gour Mohan then threw the chicken broth away, and Abhay gradually recovered from the typhoid without having to eat meat.

* * *

In 1900, when Abhay was four, a vehement plague hit Calcutta. Dozens of people died every day, and thousands evacuated the city. When there seemed no way to check the plague, an old *bābājī* organized Hare Kṛṣṇa *saṅkīrtana* all over Calcutta. Regardless of religion, Hindu, Muslim, Christian, and Parsi all joined, and then a large party of chanters traveled from street to street, door to door, chanting the names Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

The group arrived at 151 Harrison Road, and Gour Mohan eagerly received them. Although Abhay was a little child, his head reaching only up to the knees of the chanters, he also joined in the dancing. Shortly after this, the plague subsided.

* * *

Gour Mohan was a pure Vaiṣṇava, and he raised his son to be Kṛṣṇa conscious. Since his own parents had also been Vaiṣṇavas, Gour Mohan had never touched meat, fish, eggs, tea, or coffee. His complexion was fair and his disposition reserved. At night he would lock up his cloth shop, set a bowl of rice in the middle of the floor to satisfy the rats so that they would not chew the cloth in their

**Gour Mohan would
always ask them,
"Please bless my son
so that Śrīmatī
Rādhārāṇī may be
pleased with him
and grant him
Her blessings."**

hunger, and return home. There he would read from *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the main scriptures of Bengali Vaiṣṇavas, chant on his *japa* beads, and worship the Deity of Lord Kṛṣṇa. He was gentle and affectionate and would never punish Abhay. Even when obliged to correct him, Gour Mohan would first apologize: "You are my son, so now I must correct you. It is my duty. Even Caitanya Mahāprabhu's father would chastise Him, so don't mind."

Śrīla Prabhupāda: *My father's income was no more than 250 rupees per month, but there was no question of need. In the mango season when we were children, we would run through the house playing, and we would grab mangoes as we were running through. And all through the day we would eat mangoes. We wouldn't have to think, "Can I have a mango?" My father always provided food—mangoes were one rupee a dozen.*

Life was simple, but there was always plenty. We were middle class but receiving four or five guests daily. My father gave four daughters in marriage, and there was no difficulty for him. Maybe it was not a very luxurious life, but there was no scar-

city of food or shelter or cloth. Daily he purchased two and a half kilograms of milk. He did not like to purchase retail but would purchase a year's supply of coal by the cartload.

We were happy—not that because we did not purchase a motorcar we were unhappy. My father used to say, "God has ten hands. If He wants to take away from you, with two hands how much can you protest? And when He wants to give to you with ten hands, then with your two hands how much can you take?"

My father would rise a little late, around seven or eight. Then, after taking bath, he would go purchasing. Then, from ten o'clock to one in the afternoon, he was engaged in pūjā [worship of the family Deity]. Then he would take his lunch and go to business. And in the business shop he would take a little rest for one hour. He would come home from business at ten o'clock at night, and then again he would do pūjā. Actually, his real business was pūjā. For livelihood he did some business, but pūjā was his main business. We would be sleeping, and father would be doing ārati. Ding ding ding—we would hear the bell and wake up and see him bowing down before Kṛṣṇa.

Gour Mohan wanted Vaiṣṇava goals for his son; he wanted Abhay to become a servant of Rādhārāṇī, to become a preacher of the *Bhāgavatam*, and to learn the devotional art of playing *mṛdaṅga*, a clay drum used in group chanting. He regularly received *sādhus* in his home, and he would always ask them, "Please bless my son so that Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī may be pleased with him and grant him Her blessings."

When Abhay's mother said she wanted him to become a British lawyer when he grew up (which meant he would have to go to London to study), one of the Mullik "uncles" thought it was a good idea. But Gour Mohan would not hear of it; if Abhay went to England he would be influenced by European dress and manners. "He will learn drinking and woman-hunting," Gour Mohan objected. "I do not want his money."

From the beginning of Abhay's life, Gour Mohan had introduced his plan. He had hired a professional *mṛdaṅga* player to teach Abhay the standard rhythms for accompanying *kīrtana*. Rajani had been skeptical: "What is the purpose of teaching such a young child to play the *mṛdaṅga*? It is not important." But Gour Mohan had his dream of a son who would grow up singing *bhajan*s, playing *mṛdaṅga*, and speaking on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. 🌸

Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta continues next month with five-year old Abhay Charan organizing a miniature Ratha-yātrā chariot festival for the pleasure of Kṛṣṇa, and to the delight of his family and friends.





The Arts

SEARCH FOR AN ART OF TRANSCENDENCE

From the museums of New York City to the Latin Quarter of Paris, a young man pursues the ultimate in creative expression.

by YOGEŚVARA DĀSA

I came of age in the mid '60s, at a time when progressives and liberals held sway in American society and the mood was full throttle into the bright future of technology and the unlimited creative potential of man. Odd-kid-out in most social activities (I attended expensive schools on scholarships, which put me in a socially awkward position), I ended up spending weekends and after-school hours wandering through New York City's cavernous museums, filled with stone and canvas monuments to the Creative Animal. In one afternoon I could journey on foot from prehistoric cave paintings to Renaissance pietàs, and from there to modern art and the latest in pop, op, and the psychedelic rest.

Of course, I visited not only the Metropolitan, the Guggenheim, and the Museum of Modern Art, but also the Museum of Natural History. There I was struck by the apparent parallel between the evolution of art and the evolution of man. First came the cavemen, with their cave paintings—rough, simplistic products of an ob-

viously lower order of intelligence. Then, as man began wearing clothes, shaping tools, and tilling the earth, he produced the crude religious paintings and iconography of early civilization. Finally, as man grew more civilized, art grew more sophisticated, until Homo sapien was producing an artistic legacy as complex and unfathomable as his own neurological organs.

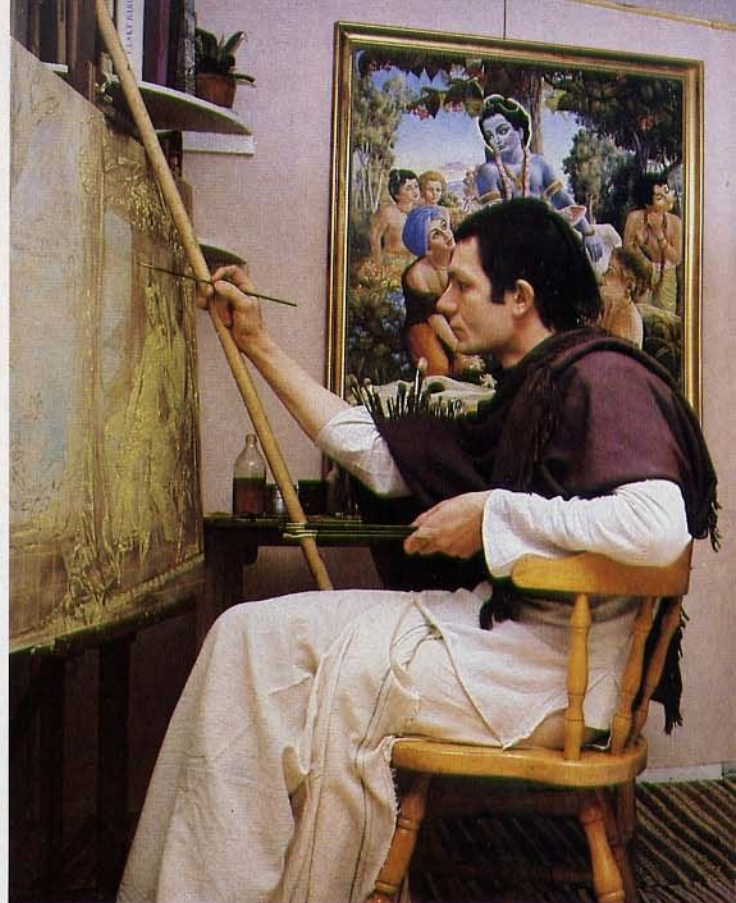
But this apparent parallel evolution of art and man was too pat; it left an empty feeling in my stomach. Though my own culture accepted such a parallel, some part of me disagreed with the premise that art viewed chronologically was synonymous with art viewed progressively. The free-floating Calder mobiles appealed to my sense of aesthetics, but did that place them somehow above the simpler works relegated to sections marked "Tribal Talismans"? The sensual curves of a Moore sculpture attracted my adolescent mind, but were they "better" than the three-thousand-year-old works designated "Hindu Deities"? The open-ended canvases of Jasper Johns made me think about how his work affected me, but did I feel any *less* affected by the delicate miniature encrusted with gold and labeled "Krishna: Indian Forest God"?

These exhibits were consistently ar-

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PAINTING BY MURALIDHARA DASA



YOGESVARA DASA

ranged so as to suggest that objects of art were no more than cultural artifacts. The arrangement was no doubt the work of anthropologists, art historians, sociologists, and others, who had a vested interest in making culture central, who addressed themselves, it seems, to people unwilling to bring themselves to consider anything that might transcend human experience.

Yet despite my intimations of a higher criterion than cultural relativity for evaluating art, when I met devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa for the first time, in 1969, I still believed that art could change the world without recourse to transcendent realities. Universities in Europe and the United States abounded with such courses as “Existentialism and Modern Art,” “Physics for Poets,” “Social Trends in Art History,” “Picasso and the Collective Unconscious,” “Music as a Force for Change.” What these courses all had in common was, first, an insistence on the interrelationship of the arts and, second, the idea that art should be about a personal “inner vision” that judiciously avoids other-worldliness. Like the perfectly ordered historical art exhibits I had known during my high-school days, the university catalogs also treated art as one of the Humanities, as a subject that deals only with human meanings. Art, they too were saying, can be understood only within the context of culture.

The devotees, however, lived with an



MURALIVADANA DASA

art that went beyond such notions. In those early days of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement in France, readings from the *Bhagavad-gītā* and group chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa took place on Sundays in the Latin Quarter, at a gray two-story hang-out for students, artists, poets, and musicians. Perched precariously on a folding chair, in the corner of a room that sat about thirty, was a three-foot-high color poster of Gopāla (Kṛṣṇa), the Supreme

Lord and the speaker of the *Gītā*. The name *Gopāla* means “cowherd boy,” and in the picture Gopāla was sitting gracefully, with His arm around a calf, looking off into the distance.

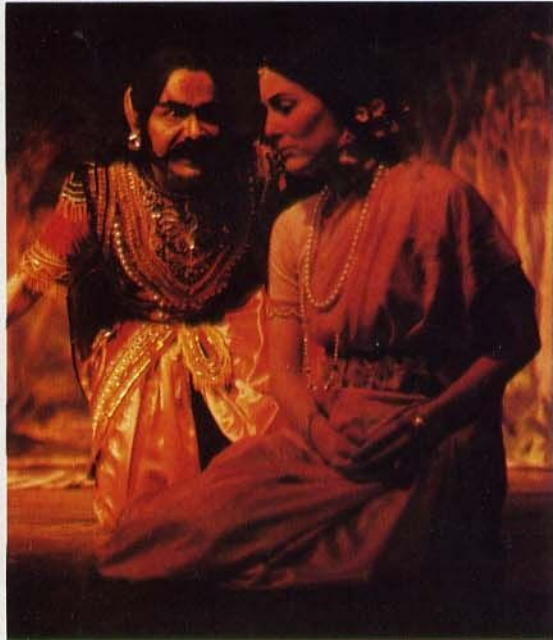
“Who’s that in the picture?” I asked a devotee who stood peeling apples by the door.

“That’s Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.”

“And the idealized setting in the back-



VISAKHA-DEVI DASÍ



YAMARAJA DASA

Painting, sculpture, music, and drama have their place in Kṛṣṇa consciousness—as means to glorify God and His devotees. Clockwise from upper left: a painting depicts Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes in His village of Vṛndāvana; an artist works in the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement’s studios near Florence; devotees record songs about Kṛṣṇa in a Los Angeles studio; the demon Rāvaṇa torments Sītā. Lord Rāma’s consort, in a play staged in New York City; milkmaids sing Kṛṣṇa’s glories in this detail from a diorama at the First American Transcendental Exhibition, in Los Angeles.

ground—that’s supposed to be heaven?”

“No, not heaven, but the spiritual world—the *really* ideal setting, where everything is eternally full of knowledge and bliss.”

I watched the devotees meticulously arrange the apple sections on a brass tray, offer the tray before the poster of Gopāla, bow down, and then dance and sing before Him. After a few moments the ceremony stopped, and a young man in robes and a shaved head began reading from the *Bhagavad-gītā* in French. “Kṛṣṇa’s nature,” he explained after one verse, “is spiritual. God is not limited by material elements, as we are. His body is not subject to laws of decay and death. And since He is absolute, He remains spiritual in all His manifestations. His appearance in wood or stone or paint transforms the material medium into His own spiritual substance. We should not think that a Deity or painting of Kṛṣṇa is an idol. It is Kṛṣṇa Himself, graciously appearing in a form

visible to us, to help us remember Him.”

Unexpectedly, here was a challenge to my long-held belief in the cultural relativity of art. Extrapolating freely, I concluded that the *Bhagavad-gītā* had this to say about art: Art can contain more than human elements; under certain conditions a work of art can serve as a vehicle for higher, transcendental forces, whose impact on the viewer or hearer (in the case of music, drama, or poetry) doesn’t depend on intellectual grasp or cultural relevance. The mere act of seeing or hearing spiritual art produces a spiritually uplifting effect. Though one’s intellectual awareness of the image or sound—one’s sense of its meaning or purpose—enhances the effect, such awareness is not prerequisite. Spiritual art is like fire: potent, able to act on anyone who comes near it.

I began spending evenings with some of the devotees. The small room they shared was filled with posters, photos, and drawings of all sizes and shapes. There were

depictions of Kṛṣṇa with His cowherd boy-friends, Kṛṣṇa in His various incarnations, sages and saints from the scriptural histories. None of it struck me as very developed artistry. The features were often naïve, the composition unimaginative, the proportions out of whack. But the greatest travesty, in my eyes, was the lack of a challenge to the viewer. So little in any of these pictures left anything at all to the onlooker’s interpretive skills. It was pure representational art. The spectator did not participate at all; he was a passive watcher. There was Kṛṣṇa tending His cows in His village, Vṛndāvana, and there were the trees and flowers, all neatly dressed, best blossoms forward. It was clear that the artist had done his job quite well by painting exactly what he had seen—or rather exactly what he had read in the scriptures the devotees were always quoting. The artist had painted, and now the observer had only to gaze.

But to the devotees, those pictures were windows on the spiritual world. Each morning they would sit for an hour or more, concentrating on them as they chanted Hare Kṛṣṇa on their beads. It became clear that the artists’ identities were of little importance to the devotees who sat entranced before these paintings. They had been done “right” (according to scripture), and that was all that mattered.

Many months later Śrīla Prabhupāda, the founder and spiritual guide of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, visited Paris. By that time I had myself become a devotee of Kṛṣṇa, and Śrīla Prabhupāda’s visit seemed a good opportunity to clear up some of my lingering questions about the role of art in spiritual life. I waited until I could meet with him in his quarters, and then I dove right in.

“What is the function of art in spiritual life, Śrīla Prabhupāda?” He looked up and studied my face for what seemed a long time.

“It is to put things in their proper place for best utility,” he said.

I didn’t understand what he meant, but rather than ask the same question again, I said, “Some artists might disagree with you. Sometimes it is considered art to take an object *out* of its proper place and give it a life of its own. Some artists argue that a work of art is a reality in itself, that it doesn’t depend for its ‘being’ on anything or anyone else. They say that art is most beautiful when accepted as a self-sufficient reality.”

“Beauty and art are different,” he corrected. “Beauty is something that satisfies my eyes. Your eyes may be satisfied by something, my eyes by something else. According to your idea of beauty, my beauty may be unacceptable. Beauty is a kind of sense gratification.”

“Yet the object of our vision may be

beautiful, even if we can't appreciate it."

"No. If I like it, then it is beautiful. If I don't, then it isn't. There is no such thing as a standard of beauty. Just like nowadays artists make 'beautiful' paintings"—he waved an imaginary paintbrush wildly in the air above his head and laughed. "I don't like it, but someone else may say it is very beautiful. So beauty and art are different. Art means arranging things for the highest utility. Beauty may satisfy but not have any higher utility. A picture, a poem—anything—is art when it serves the very best utility."

Utility was obviously the crux of his definition. "If someone's work fulfills that qualification of highest utility, is he an artist?"

"Yes. An artist is one who knows the standard of best utility."

I opened Webster's. "One definition the dictionary gives for *artist* is 'one specifically skilled in the practice of a manual art or occupation, as cooking.' If we apply that definition to spiritual life, a sincere laborer working for Kṛṣṇa—a carpenter or a cook—is actually an artist."

"Oh, yes, anyone who performs his work for the satisfaction of Kṛṣṇa, who knows His relationship with Kṛṣṇa, is a true artist."

That was the moment when I at last understood his use of the word *utility*. He was defining art as any work that brings the performer, as well as all who come in contact with the work, away from the cycle of birth and death and closer to God. In other words, true art is *yoga*. By this definition of art as *yoga*, Śrīla Prabhupāda was not denying the need, in painting, for rules of composition or balance in color and design. Rather, he was expanding the meaning of art beyond the traditional forms of painting, sculpture, music, drama, poetry, and so on to include every field of human endeavor—a notion described in *Bhagavad-gītā* (2.50):

A man engaged in devotional service rids himself of both good and bad actions even in this life. Therefore, strive for *yoga*, which is the art of all work.

In the simple acts of devotion—the offering of foods to the Lord, the humble recitation of His holy names, the striving for a saintly life—one can also perceive God. The same inspiration is communicated by the art of work as by a work of art. In effect, Kṛṣṇa in the *Gītā* exhorts all members of society to become artists by performing their work as an offering of love to Him.

"In other words," I asked, "would we say that anyone who works on behalf of Kṛṣṇa, according to Kṛṣṇa's direction, is an artist?"

"Yes. A devotee knows the standard of utility. He knows how to put things in their



VIDYANANDA DAS



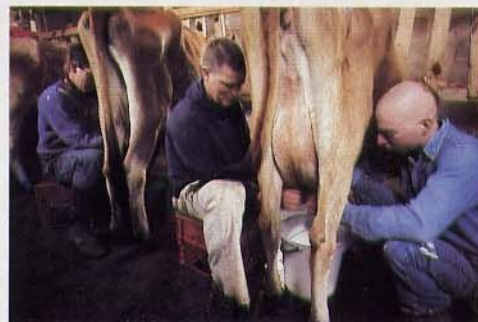
VIKASHA DEVI DAS

Work becomes art when done for the Lord. This page: stringing a garland in Hawaii; repairing a yoke at a farm in Pennsylvania; loading firewood near Seattle; milking cows in Mississippi; making yarn (in Pennsylvania again).

Opposite page: fixing electronic circuits and cooking in Los Angeles; sewing in Fiji.

proper place to inspire love for Kṛṣṇa in himself and others."

Śrīla Prabhupāda stopped speaking, and a thoughtful silence filled the room. I began thinking back to my first days in the movement, when I had met a young Scottish devotee named Digvijaya. No one knew how to "put things in their proper place" better than Digvijaya. He was the



MIRALINDA DAS





MURALIDHARAN DASA

vanced enough spiritually to serve Kṛṣṇa directly. I'm happy just cooking for His pure devotee, Śrīla Prabhupāda. And if he offers the preparations to Kṛṣṇa on my behalf, I know they will be accepted."

This was a young man whose culinary skills could hold their own with many professionals', yet he was obviously humble about his work. During our talk he had revealed to me the secret of spiritual cooking: don't speculate. "The best recipes have been around for thousands of years," he said. "What Kṛṣṇa likes has already been tried and tested, and then recorded in the scriptures. A spiritual chef," he had concluded, "is one who learns how to make a dish just as Kṛṣṇa has always liked it, since time immemorial."

Now, two years later, Śrīla Prabhupāda was confirming the same principle as the essence of spiritual art. Don't speculate. Your work is meant to be an offering of love for Kṛṣṇa, not a product of artistic ego. So let Kṛṣṇa guide your efforts.

"Real art, then," I said, "means simply to do something for Kṛṣṇa's pleasure?"

"Yes," Śrīla Prabhupāda replied. "That is also the definition of love: to do something for the pleasure of the beloved."

"But what about artists as a class of people? What about art as a specific field of creative endeavor—art in the classical sense—painting, sculpture, music? Does spontaneity play no part in Vaiṣṇava [devotional] art? And how do the artists de-

best effort, either in background design, facial details, jewelry, architecture, or whatever. The artists, in their discussions, constantly referred to one or another Vedic scripture. Clearly they had studied their subjects well, and they drew details for the work from the ancient texts.

I asked one young man where he had received his training. He had graduated from a well-known art school, he said, and after becoming a devotee he had gone to India. What was an artist's training like in India? "Oh, very intense," he said. "An artist in the devotional tradition never attempts a sculpture or painting of Kṛṣṇa unless his teacher has sanctioned both the work and his readiness to execute it. The forms of Kṛṣṇa are divine; when depicted by one who is not in the proper devotional mood, they are offensive."

I noticed a young woman prepare her brushes by washing them in a sink down the hall. There was a bathroom closer by, but, she explained, through the agency of these brushes Kṛṣṇa would appear on canvas, and so she preferred not to wash them in the bathroom. Before applying the first strokes to her canvas, she folded her hands and offered Sanskrit prayers before a picture of her spiritual master.

The artists were trained technicians in their craft. In the sculpture workshop a heavyset man with a clean-shaven head applied filler to a bust of Old Age, a character in a diorama depicting birth, death, and rebirth. He looked at the bust, and, for my benefit, broke down the visual impression into colors, contrasts, perspectives, relationships, planes, and other aspects that had escaped my untrained eyes.

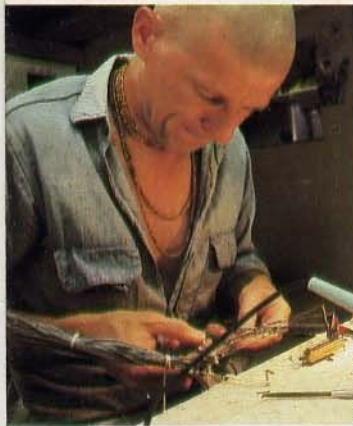
Yet beyond the technical prowess, these artists were seeing Kṛṣṇa, not only in the immediate form of the sculpture or painting but also in the thousand and one details of life's every moment that escape the notice of materialistic men. These artists knew the true value of their resources. The very tools of their trade acted as an inspiration for their work. Kṛṣṇa was in the earth and clay, in the water and paints. He was the light of the sun that illuminated their studios. Nothing in their work was separate from Him, and by His presence the work itself became transformed into an act of meditation and prayer:

I asked several of the artists what they felt was the most important part of their work. Though one or two spoke of abstract concepts—like detachment from the finished product—the majority agreed that the most important part of their work was a strong daily program of morning *sādhana*, the devotional and meditative practices that begin around 4:30 A.M. and end by 8:30 in every temple of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Without that regularity of spiritual discipline, they all

(continued on page 29)



VIŠAKHIA DEVI DASA



YOGESVARA DASA



VIŠAKHIA DEVI DASA

cook in the old London temple. A simple country boy with a knack for detail, Digvijaya cooked liked nobody's business and kept an immaculate kitchen that boasted rows of pots sparkling from the hours of patient scrubbing he had put into them. Attracted by his fastidious habits and feats of cookery, I would sometimes go down to the basement work area and help him prepare an offering for the Deities.

"You like to work for Kṛṣṇa in the kitchen, don't you?" I rather clumsily asked him one evening. Digvijaya looked a little flustered and went on with his cooking. Finally he looked up and said, "Actually, I don't consider myself ad-

rive inspiration if everything is already laid out in the scriptures?"

"All these questions will be answered when you visit the artists who paint for my books."

Many months later I had that opportunity. At the devotee artist studios (then in Los Angeles), much was like what I had seen in dozens of other studios: paintbrushes, canvases, some reference books. But there were new elements as well. Music played constantly in the background—devotional songs that set a mood for the work at hand. Sometimes two or even three artists at a time worked to complete a painting, each contributing his or her

ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA SPEAKS OUT

On Abortion and “Rabbit Philosophy”

The following conversation between His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda and some of his disciples took place on an early-morning walk in December 1973 at Venice Beach, California.

Devotee: Śrīla Prabhupāda, sometimes we argue that although the laws of nature are very powerful, we can overcome such things as disease and death if we surrender to Lord Kṛṣṇa, since He is controlling nature. But skeptics say we can gradually come to control the laws of nature on our own, without God.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: No, we are forced to accept the laws of nature. How can anyone say he has conquered the laws of nature?

Devotee: Well, the doctors and biologists have conquered so many diseases.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: But people are still becoming diseased. How have the doctors stopped disease?

Devotee: In Africa and India, for instance, they are inoculating everyone against smallpox, and they’ve saved many thousands of children from dying.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: But the children will grow up and get old and die eventually in any case. So death has not been stopped. And besides, why do they bother about these children? They don’t want overpopulation, so logically the doctors should let them die. But the doctors are illogical. On one side they want to check the death of children, and on the other side they recommend the use of contraceptives and kill the children in the womb by abortion. Why? Why are they killing? To check the increase in population. Then when children are dying in another part of the world, why are they anxious to save them?

Devotee: Once the child is born, they want to save him. But when the child is still in the womb they feel they can kill him. They say he is not yet a human being.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: But the child is already born as soon as a woman becomes pregnant. Pregnancy means the child is already born. How can they say there is no child? What is this nonsense? When a woman is pregnant, why do we say she is “with child”? This means the child is already born. Therefore, I say this abortion business is simply rascaldom.

Devotee: Well, they’ve rationalized it.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: How?

Devotee: Sometimes they say they’re just doing what they feel is best. And of course they deny that there’s any such thing as



karma to punish them later. It seems like they have a kind of “rabbit philosophy.” When a rabbit closes his eyes so he doesn’t see the wolf bearing down on him, he may actually think he’s safe.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: So, the abortionists believe in rabbit philosophy. It is not a man’s philosophy. It is rabbit’s philosophy, frog’s philosophy, ass’s philosophy. And they have been described in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (2.3.19): *śva-vid-varāhoṣṭra-kharaiḥ sam-stutaḥ puruṣaḥ paśuḥ*. The leaders, who often support abortion, are rascals, and they are glorified by another set of rascals and fools—the people in general. Because the whole population is made up of rascals, they elect a rascal as their leader. Then, being dissatisfied, they throw the first rascal out of office and elect another rascal. This is called *punaḥ punaś carvita-carvaṇā-nām*: chewing the chewed. The people do not know whom to elect. Therefore they have to be educated to choose a leader who is God conscious, who is actually fit to be a leader. Then they will be happy. Otherwise, they will go on electing one rascal and rejecting him, electing another rascal and rejecting him, and so on.

In America there is a slogan “In God we trust.” So, we don’t say, “Elect me president.” We simply say that the standard for a leader should be that he knows who God is and that he trusts in Him. And if people actually want to know who God is, they can

read *Bhagavad-gītā*. They should read it with intelligence and try to understand, and then for further progress they may study *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. It is not that we are theorizing. We are taking our information about God from authorized books.

Devotee: In our leaflet about politics, we list the qualifications of a leader. First we say he must follow the four regulative principles: no meat-eating, no illicit sex, no gambling, and no indulging in intoxicants. And the one positive injunction we give is that the leader chant the holy name of the Lord. But someone might argue that these requirements violate the constitutional principle of separation of church and state.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: If you believe in God, why should you have any objection to chanting the holy name of God? If you say, “In God we trust,” then you must know the name of God and the address of God. Then you can actually trust Him. And if you don’t know these things, then learn them from us. We are giving you God’s name, address, qualities—everything. And if you say there is no God, then what is the meaning of “In God we trust”?

Devotee: They have made propaganda to separate church and state, but they’ve also separated God and country.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Those who are making this propaganda do not understand what God is. God cannot be separated from anything, because everything is God (*mayā tatam idaṁ sarvaṁ*). If they study the *Bhagavad-gītā* they will understand that God is present everywhere. It is not possible to separate anything from Him. Just as your consciousness is present in every part of your body, so the supreme consciousness, God, is present everywhere in the universe. Kṛṣṇa says, *vedāham samatītāni*: “I know everything that has happened.” Unless He is everywhere, how can He know everything? What do you say?

Devotee: This is logical, Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: How can you separate God from the government? You may reject any so-called church, any so-called religion that agrees, “Yes, God and the state should be separate.” And that is God’s instruction—that we reject such so-called religions. *Sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇam vraja*: “Give up all kinds of so-called religion and simply surrender to Me,” Kṛṣṇa says in *Bhagavad-gītā*. People may say they believe in God, but you can know they are ignorant of what God is when they try to separate God from government. 🌸

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

As our serialized presentation of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam continues, Mahārāja Parikṣit inquires from his spiritual master, Śukadeva Gosvāmī, about creation, religion, mysticism, the Vedic rituals, the existence of living beings, and devotional service to Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

TEXT 18

नृणां साधारणो धर्मः सविशेषश्च यादृशः ।
श्रेणीनां राजर्षीणां च धर्मः कृच्छ्रेषु जीवताम् ॥१८॥

*nṛṇām sādharmaṇo dharmah
saviśeṣaś ca yādṛśah
śreṇīnām rājarṣīnām ca
dharmah kṛcchreṣu jīvātām*

nṛṇām—of human society; *sādharmaṇah*—general; *dharmah*—religious affiliation; *sa-viśeṣaś*—specific; *ca*—also; *yādṛśah*—as they are; *śreṇīnām*—of the particular three classes; *rājarṣīnām*—of the saintly royal order; *ca*—also; *dharmah*—occupational duty; *kṛcchreṣu*—in the matter of distressed conditions; *jīvātām*—of the living beings.

TRANSLATION

Please also explain what may generally be the common religious affiliations of human society, as well as their specific occupational duties in religion, the classification of the social orders as well as the administrative royal orders, and the religious principles for one who may be in distress.

PURPORT

The common religion of all classes of human beings, regardless of whosoever and whatsoever one may be, is devotional service. Even the animals may be included in devotional service to the Lord, and the best example is set by Śrī Vajrāṅgajī, or Hanumān, the great devotee of Lord Śrī Rāma. As we have already discussed, even the aborigines and cannibals can also be engaged in the devotional service of the Lord if they happen to be under the guidance of a genuine devotee of the Lord. In the *Skanda Purāṇa* there is a narration that a hunter in the jungle became the most enlightened devotee of the Lord by the guidance of Śrī Nārada Muni. Therefore devotional service to the Lord can be equally shared by every living being.

Religious affiliation in terms of different countries and cultural circumstances is obviously not the common religion of the human being; rather, the basic principle is devotional service. Even if a particular type of religious principle does not recognize the supremacy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the followers still have to obey the disciplinary principles laid down by a particular leader. Such a leader of a religious sect is never the supreme leader because such a circumstantial leader

comes to the position of leadership after undergoing some penance. The Supreme Personality of Godhead does not, however, require to be under disciplinary action to become leader, as we see in the activities of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

The occupational duties of the castes and the orders of society, following the principles of livelihood, also depend on the principle of devotional service. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* it is stated that a person can achieve the highest perfection of life simply by awarding the results of his occupational duty unto the devotional service of the Lord. People following the principles of devotional service to the Lord can never be put into difficulty, and thus there cannot be any question of *āpad-dharma*, or religion in distress. As will be explained in this book by the greatest authority, Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī, there is no religion save and except the devotional service of the Lord, though this may be presented in different forms.

TEXT 19

तत्त्वानां परिसंख्यानं लक्षणं हेतुलक्षणम् ।
पुरुषाराधनविधिर्योगस्याध्यात्मिकस्य च ॥१९॥

*tattvānām parisankhyānaṁ
lakṣaṇaṁ hetu-lakṣaṇam
puruṣārādhana-vidhir
yogasyādhyātmikasya ca*

tattvānām—of the elements that constitute the creation; *parisankhyānam*—of the number of such elements; *lakṣaṇam*—symptoms; *hetu-lakṣaṇam*—the symptoms of the causes; *puruṣa*—of the Lord; *ārādhana*—of devotional service; *vidhiḥ*—rules and regulations; *yogasya*—of cultivation of the *yoga* system; *ādhyātmikasya*—spiritual methods leading to devotional service; *ca*—also.

TRANSLATION

Kindly explain all about the elementary principles of creation, the number of such elementary principles, their causes, and their development, and also the process of devotional service and the method of mystic powers.

TEXT 20

योगेश्वरैश्वर्यगतिलिङ्गभङ्गस्तु योगिनाम् ।
वेदोपवेदधर्माणामितिहासपुराणयोः ॥२०॥

*yogeśvaraīśvarya-gatiḥ
liṅga-bhaṅgas tu yoginām
vedopaveda-dharmānām
itihāsa-purāṇayoḥ*

yoga-īśvara—of the master of the mystic powers; *aiśvarya*—opulence; *gatiḥ*—advancement; *liṅga*—astral body; *bhaṅgaḥ*—detachment; *tu*—but; *yoginām*—of the mystics; *veda*—transcendental knowledge; *upaveda*—knowledge in pursuance of the *Veda* indirectly; *dharmaṇām*—of the religiosities; *itihāsa*—history; *purāṇayoḥ*—of the *Purāṇas*.

TRANSLATION

What are the opulences of the great mystics, and what is their ultimate realization? How does the perfect mystic become detached from the subtle astral body? What is the basic knowledge of the Vedic literatures, including the branches of history and the supplementary Purāṇas?

PURPORT

The *yogeśvara*, or the master of mystic powers, can exhibit eight kinds of wonders of perfection by becoming smaller than the atom or lighter than a feather, getting anything and everything he desires, going anywhere and everywhere he likes, creating even a planet in the sky, etc. There are many *yogeśvaras* having different proficiencies in these wonderful powers, and the topmost of all of them is Lord Śiva. Lord Śiva is the greatest *yogī*, and he can perform such wonderful things, far beyond the ordinary living beings. The devotees of the Lord, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, do not directly practice the process of mystic powers, but, by the grace of the Lord, His devotee can defeat even a great *yogeśvara* like Durvāsā Muni, who picked a quarrel with Mahārāja Ambarīṣa and wanted to show the wonderful achievements of his mystic powers. Mahārāja Ambarīṣa was a pure devotee of the Lord, and thus without any effort on his part the Lord saved him from the wrath of *Yogeśvara* Durvāsā Muni, and the latter was obliged to beg pardon from the King. Similarly, at the time of Draupadī's precarious position, when she was attacked by the Kurus who wanted to see her naked in the open assembly of the royal order, the Lord saved her from being stripped by supplying an unlimited length of sari to cover her. And Draupadī knew nothing of mystic powers. Therefore the devotees are also *yogeśvaras* by the unlimited power of the Lord, just as a child is powerful by the strength of the parents. They do not try to protect themselves by any artificial means, but are saved by the mercy of the parents.

Mahārāja Parīkṣit inquired from the learned *brāhmaṇa* Śukadeva Gosvāmī about the ultimate destination of such great mystics or how they attain such extraordinary powers by their own efforts or by the grace of the Lord. He inquired also about their detachment from the subtle and gross material bodies. He inquired also about the purports of the Vedic knowledge. As stated in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (15.15), the whole purport of all the *Vedas* is to know the Supreme Personality of Godhead and thus become a transcendental loving servant of the Lord.

TEXT 21

सम्प्लवः सर्वभूतानां विक्रमः प्रतिसंक्रमः ।
इष्टापूर्तस्य काम्यानां त्रिवर्गस्य च यो विधिः ॥२१॥

samplavaḥ sarva-bhūtānām
vikramaḥ pratisaṅkramaḥ
iṣṭā-pūrtasya kāmyānām
tri-vargasya ca yo vidhiḥ

samplavaḥ—the perfect means or complete devastation; *sarva-bhūtānām*—of all living beings; *vikramaḥ*—specific power or situation; *pratisaṅkramaḥ*—ultimate destruction; *iṣṭā*—performance of Vedic rituals; *pūrtasya*—pious acts in terms of religion; *kāmyānām*—rituals for economic development; *tri-vargasya*—the three means of religion, economic development and sense satisfaction; *ca*—also; *yaḥ*—whatsoever; *vidhiḥ*—procedures.

TRANSLATION

Please explain unto me how the living beings are generated, how they are maintained, and how they are annihilated. Tell me also of the advantages and disadvantages of discharging devotional service unto the Lord. What are the Vedic rituals and injunctions of the supplementary Vedic rites, and what are the procedures of religion, economic development and sense satisfaction?

PURPORT

Samplavaḥ, in the sense of “perfect means,” is employed to denote the discharging of devotional service, and *pratisamplavaḥ* means just the opposite, or that which destroys the progress of devotional service. One who is firmly situated in the devotional service of the Lord can very easily execute the function of conditional life. Living the conditional life is just like plying a boat in the middle of the ocean. One is completely at the mercy of the ocean, and at every moment there is every chance of being drowned in the ocean by slight agitation. If the atmosphere is all right, the boat can ply very easily, undoubtedly, but if there is some storm, fog, wind or cloud, there is every possibility of being drowned in the ocean. No one can control the whims of the ocean, however one may be materially well-equipped. One who has crossed the oceans by ship may have sufficient experience of such dependence upon the mercy of the ocean. But one can ply over the ocean of material existence by the grace of the Lord very easily, without any fear of storm or fog. It all depends on the will of the Lord; no one can help if there is some unfortunate danger in the state of conditional life. The devotees of the Lord, however, cross the ocean of material existence without anxiety because a pure devotee is always protected by the Lord (Bg. 9.13). The Lord gives special attention to His devotees in their activities within material, conditional life (Bg. 9.29). Therefore everyone should take shelter of the lotus feet of the Lord and be a pure devotee of the Lord by all means.

One should know, therefore, from the expert spiritual master, the advantages and disadvantages of discharging devotional service, just as Mahārāja Parīkṣit asked his spiritual master, Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī. According to *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, the science of devotional service, one should not eat more than what he requires to maintain body and soul together. Vegetable diets and milk are sufficient for maintenance of the human body, and therefore one has no need to eat anything more to satisfy the palate. One should also not accumulate money to become puffed up in the material world. One should earn his livelihood easily and honestly, for it is better to become a coolie for an honest livelihood than to become a great man in society by hook and crook. There is no harm if one becomes the richest man in the world by honest dealings, but one should not sacrifice the honest means of livelihood simply to accumulate wealth. Such an endeavor is harmful to devotional service. One should not talk nonsense. A devotee's business is to earn the favor of the Lord. Therefore a devotee should always glorify the Lord in His wonderful creations. A devotee should not decry the creation of the Lord, defying Him by saying that He has created a false world. The world is not false. Factually we have to take so many things from the world for our maintenance, so how we can say that the world is false? Similarly, how can one think of the Lord as being without form? How can one become formless and at the same time have all intelligence and consciousness, direct and indirect? So there are many things for a pure devotee to learn, and he should learn them perfectly from a bona fide personality like Śukadeva Gosvāmī.

The favorable conditions for discharging devotional service are that one should be very enthusiastic in serving the Lord. The Lord in His form of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu wanted the cult of devotional service to the Lord to be preached all over the world, in every nook and corner, and therefore a pure devotee's duty is to discharge this order as far as possible. Every devotee should be very enthusiastic, not only in performing his daily rituals of devotional service, but in trying to preach the cult peacefully by following in the footsteps of Lord Caitanya. If he is not superficially successful in such an attempt, he should not be deterred from the discharge of his duty. Success or failure has no meaning for a pure devotee because he is a soldier in the field. Preaching the cult of devotional service is something like declaring war against materialistic life. There are different kinds of materialists, such as the fruitive workers, the mental speculators, the mystic jugglers, and so many others. All of them are against the existence of Godhead. They would declare that they are themselves God, although in every step and in every action they are dependent on the mercy of the Lord. Therefore a pure devotee may not associate with such gangs of atheists. A strong devotee of the Lord will not be misled by such atheistic propaganda of the nondevotees,

but a neophyte devotee should be very cautious about them. A devotee should see to the right discharge of devotional service under the guidance of a bona fide spiritual master and should not stick only to the formalities. Under the direction of the bona fide spiritual master, one should see how much service is being executed, and not simply in the matter of rituals. A devotee should not hanker after anything, but he should be satisfied with things that may automatically come to him by the will of the Lord. That should be the principle of a devotional life. And all these principles are easily learned under the guidance of a spiritual master like Śukadeva Gosvāmī. Mahārāja Parikṣit inquired from Śukadeva correctly, and one should follow his example.

Mahārāja Parikṣit inquired about the process of creation, maintenance and destruction of the material world, the process of Vedic rituals and the method of executing pious activities in terms of the supplementary *Vedas* like the *Purāṇas* and *Mahābhārata*. As explained before, the *Mahābhārata* is the history of ancient India, and so also are the *Purāṇas*. Pious acts are prescribed in the supplementary *Vedas* (*smṛtis*), which specifically mention digging tanks and wells for the water supply of the people in general. To plant trees on the public roads, to construct public temples and places of worship of God, to establish places of charity where the poor destitutes can be provided with foodstuff, and similar activities are called *pūrta*.

Similarly, the process of fulfilling the natural desires for sense gratification was also inquired about by the King for the benefit of all concerned.

TEXT 22

यो वानुशायिनां सर्गः पाषण्डस्य च सम्भवः ।
आत्मनो बन्धमोक्षौ च व्यवस्थानं खरूपतः ॥२२॥

*yo vānuśāyināṃ sargaḥ
pāṣaṇḍasya ca sambhavaḥ
ātmano bandha-mokṣau ca
vyavasthānam sva-rūpataḥ*

yaḥ—all those; *vā*—either; *anuśāyinām*—merged into the body of the Lord; *sargaḥ*—creation; *pāṣaṇḍasya*—of the infidels; *ca*—and; *sambhavaḥ*—appearance; *ātmanaḥ*—of the living beings; *bandha*—conditioned; *mokṣau*—being liberated; *ca*—also; *vyavasthānam*—being situated; *sva-rūpataḥ*—in an unconditioned state.

TRANSLATION

Please also explain how, merged in the body of the Lord, living beings are created, and how the infidels appear in the world. Also please explain how the unconditioned living entities exist.

PURPORT

The progressive devotee of the Lord must inquire from the bona fide spiritual master how living entities merged in the body of the Lord again come back at the time of creation. There are two kinds of living entities. There are the ever-liberated, unconditioned living beings as well as the ever-conditioned living beings. Of the ever-conditioned living beings, there are two divisions. They are the faithful and the infidels. Of the faithful there are again two divisions, namely the devotees and the mental speculators. The mental speculators desire to merge into the existence of the Lord, or to become one with the Lord, whereas the devotees of the Lord desire to keep separate identities and constantly engage in the service of the Lord. The devotees who are not fully purified, as well as the empiric philosophers, become conditioned again during the next creation for further purification. Such conditioned souls become liberated by further progress of devotional service to the Lord. Mahārāja Parikṣit asked all these questions from the bona fide spiritual master in order to become fully equipped in the science of God.

TEXT 23

यथात्मतन्त्रो भगवान् विक्रीडत्यात्ममायया ।
विसृज्य वा यथा मायामुदास्ते साक्षिब्द् विभुः ॥२३॥

*yathātma-tantro bhagavān
vikrīḍaty ātma-māyayā
visṛjya vā yathā māyām
udāste sākṣivad vibhuḥ*

yathā—as; *ātma-tantraḥ*—independent; *bhagavān*—the Personality of Godhead; *vikrīḍati*—enjoys His pastimes; *ātma-māyayā*—by His internal potency; *visṛjya*—giving up; *vā*—as also; *yathā*—as He desires; *māyām*—the external potency; *udāste*—remains; *sākṣivat*—just as the witness; *vibhuḥ*—the almighty.

TRANSLATION

The independent Personality of Godhead enjoys His pastimes by His internal potency and at the time of annihilation gives them up to the external potency, and He remains a witness to it all.

PURPORT

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, being the Supreme Personality of Godhead and fountainhead of all other incarnations, is the only independent person. He enjoys His pastimes by creation as He desires and gives them up to the external energy at the time of annihilation. By His internal potency only, He kills the demon Pūtānā, even though enjoying His pastimes in the lap of His mother Yaśodā. And when He desires to leave this world He creates the pastimes of killing His own family members (Yadu-kula) and remains unaffected by such annihilation. He is the witness of everything that is happening, and yet He has nothing to do with anything. He is independent in every respect. Mahārāja Parikṣit desired to know more perfectly, for a pure devotee ought to know well.

TEXT 24

सर्वमेतच्च भगवन् पृच्छतो मेऽनुपूर्वशः ।
तत्त्वतोऽर्हस्युदाहर्तुं प्रपन्नाय महामुने ॥२४॥

*sarvam etac ca bhagavan
pṛcchato me 'nupūrvaśaḥ
tattvato 'rhasy udāhartum
prapannāya mahā-mune*

sarvam—all these; *etat*—inquiries; *ca*—also that I have not been able to ask; *bhagavan*—O great sage; *pṛcchataḥ*—of the inquisitive; *me*—myself; *anupūrvaśaḥ*—from the beginning; *tattvataḥ*—just in accordance with the truth; *arhāsi*—may kindly be explained; *udāhartum*—as you will let know; *prapannāya*—one who is surrounded; *mahā-mune*—O great sage.

TRANSLATION

O great sage, representative of the Lord, kindly satisfy my inquisitiveness in all that I have inquired from you and all that I may not have inquired from you from the very beginning of my questionings. Since I am a soul surrendered unto you, please impart full knowledge in this connection.

PURPORT

The spiritual master is always prepared to impart knowledge to the disciple and specifically when the disciple is very inquisitive. Inquisitiveness on the part of a disciple is greatly necessary for the progressive disciple. Mahārāja Parikṣit is a typical disciple because he is perfectly inquisitive. If one is not very inquisitive about self-realization, one need not approach a spiritual master simply to make a show of discipleship. Not only is Mahārāja Parikṣit inquisitive concerning all he has inquired about, but he is also anxious to know about what he has not been able to inquire. Factually it is not possible for a man to inquire about everything from the spiritual master, but the bona fide spiritual master is able to enlighten the disciple in every way for the disciple's benefit.

TEXT 25

अत्र प्रमाणं हि भवान् परमेष्ठी यथात्मभूः ।
अपरे चानुतिष्ठन्ति पूर्वेषां पूर्वजैः कृतम् ॥२५॥

*atra pramāṇam hi bhavān
parameṣṭhī yathātmabhūh
apare cānutiṣṭhanti
pūrveṣāṃ pūrva-jaiḥ kṛtam*

atra—in this matter; *pramāṇam*—evidential facts; *hi*—certainly; *bhavān*—yourself; *parameṣṭhī*—Brahmā, the creator of the universe; *yathā*—as; *ātma-bhūh*—born directly from the Lord; *apare*—others; *ca*—only; *anutīṣṭhanti*—just to follow; *pūrveṣāṃ*—as a matter of custom; *pūrva-jaiḥ*—knowledge suggested by a previous philosopher; *kṛtam*—having been done.

TRANSLATION

O great sage, you are as good as Brahmā, the original living being. Others follow custom only, as followed by the previous philosophical speculators.

PURPORT

It may be argued that Śukadeva Gosvāmī is not the only authority of perfect knowledge in transcendence because there are many other sages and their followers: Contemporary to Vyāsadeva or even prior to him there were many other great sages, such as Gautama, Kaṇāda, Jaimini, Kapila and Aṣṭāvakra, and all of them have presented a philosophical path by themselves. Patañjali is also one of them, and all these six great ṛṣis have their own way of thinking, exactly like the modern philosophers and mental speculators. The difference between the six philosophical paths put forward by the renowned sages above mentioned and that of Śukadeva Gosvāmī, as presented in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, is that all the six sages mentioned above speak the facts according to their own thinking, but Śukadeva Gosvāmī presents the knowledge which comes down directly from Brahmājī, who is known as *ātma-bhūh*, or born of and educated by the Almighty Personality of Godhead.

Vedic transcendental knowledge descends directly from the Personality of Godhead. By His mercy, Brahmā, the first living being in the universe, was enlightened, and from Brahmājī, Nārada was enlightened, and from Nārada, Vyāsa was enlightened. Śukadeva Gosvāmī received such transcendental knowledge directly from his father, Vyāsadeva. Thus the knowledge, being received from the chain of disciplic succession, is perfect. One cannot be a spiritual master in perfection unless and until one has received the same by disciplic succession. That is the secret of receiving transcendental knowledge. The six great sages mentioned above may be great thinkers, but their knowledge by mental speculation is not perfect. However perfect an empiric philosopher may be in presenting a philosophical thesis, such knowledge is never perfect because it is produced by an imperfect mind. Such great sages also have their disciplic successions, but they are not authorized because such knowledge does not come directly from the independent Supreme Personality of Godhead, Nārāyaṇa. No one can be independent except Nārāyaṇa; therefore no one's knowledge can be perfect, for everyone's knowledge is dependent on the flickering mind. Mind is material and thus knowledge presented by material speculators is never transcendental and can never become perfect. Mundane philosophers, being imperfect in themselves, disagree with other philosophers because a mundane philosopher is not a philosopher at all unless he presents his own theory. Intelligent persons like Mahārāja Parikṣit do not recognize such mental speculators, however great they may be, but hear from the authorities like Śukadeva Gosvāmī, who is nondifferent from the Supreme Personality of Godhead by the *paramparā* system, as is specially stressed in the *Bhagavad-gītā*.

TEXT 26

न मेऽसवः परायन्ति ब्रह्मन्ननशनादमी ।
पिबतोऽच्युतपीयूषम् तद् वाक्याभिविनिःसृतम् ॥२६॥

*na me 'savaḥ parāyanti
brahmann anaśanād amī
pibato 'cyuta-pīyūṣam
tat vākya-abdhi-viniṣṭram*

na—never; *me*—mine; *asavaḥ*—life; *parāyanti*—becomes exhausted; *brahman*—O learned brāhmaṇa; *anaśanāt amī*—because of fasting; *pibataḥ*—because of my drinking; *acyuta*—of the Infalible; *pīyūṣam*—nectar; *tat*—your; *vākya-abdhi*—ocean of speech; *viniṣṭram*—flowing down from.

TRANSLATION

O learned brāhmaṇa, because of my drinking the nectar of the message of the infallible Personality of Godhead, which is flowing down from the ocean of your speeches, I do not feel any sort of exhaustion due to my fasting.

PURPORT

The disciplic succession from Brahmā, Nārada, Vyāsa and Śukadeva Gosvāmī is particularly different from others. The disciplic successions from other sages are simply a waste of time, being devoid of *acyuta-kathā*, or the message of the infallible Lord. The mental speculators can present their theories very nicely by reason and arguments, but such reasons and arguments are not infallible, for they are defeated by better mental speculators. Mahārāja Parikṣit was not interested in the dry speculation of the flickering mind, but he was interested in the topics of the Lord because factually he felt that by hearing such a nectarean message from the mouth of Śukadeva Gosvāmī he was not feeling any exhaustion, even though he was fasting because of his imminent death.

One can indulge in hearing the mental speculators, but such hearing cannot endure for any length of time. One will be exhausted very soon from hearing such hackneyed ways of thinking, and no one in the world can be satisfied simply by hearing such useless speculations. The message of the Lord, especially from a personality like Śukadeva Gosvāmī, can never be tiring, even though one may be exhausted from other causes.

In some editions of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the text of the last line of this verse reads *anyatra kupitād dvijāt*, which means that the King might be overwhelmed by the thought of his imminent death by snakebite. The snake is also twice-born, and its anger is compared to the cursing brāhmaṇa boy who was without good intelligence. Mahārāja Parikṣit was not at all afraid of death, for he was fully encouraged by the message of the Lord. One who is fully absorbed in *acyuta-kathā* can never be afraid of anything in this world.

TEXT 27

सूत उवाच

स उपामन्त्रितो राज्ञा कथायामिति सत्पतेः ।
ब्रह्मरातो भृशं प्रीतो विष्णुरातेन संसदि ॥२७॥

*sūta uvāca
sa upāmantrito rājñā
kathāyām iti sat-pateḥ
brahmarāto bhṛṣaṃ prīto
viṣṇurātena saṁsadi*

sūtaḥ uvāca—Śrīla Sūta Gosvāmī said; *saḥ*—he (Śukadeva Gosvāmī); *upāmantritaḥ*—thus being inquired; *rājñā*—by the King; *kathāyām*—in the topics, *iti*—thus; *sat-pateḥ*—of the highest truth; *brahmarātaḥ*—Śukadeva Gosvāmī; *bhṛṣam*—very much; *prītaḥ*—pleased; *viṣṇu-rātena*—by Mahārāja Parikṣit; *saṁsadi*—in the meeting.

TRANSLATION

Sūta Gosvāmī said: Thus Śukadeva Gosvāmī, being invited by Mahārāja Parikṣit to speak on topics of the Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa with the devotees, was very much pleased.

(continued in next issue)



Every Town and Village

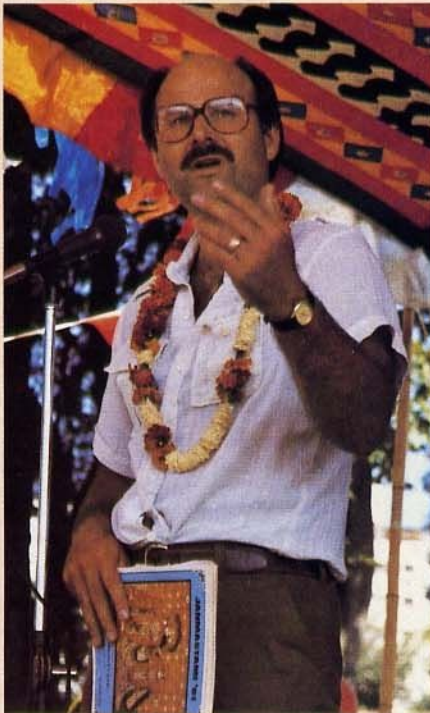
A look at the worldwide activities of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

Mayor Praises Vancouver Ratha-yātrā

Vancouver—The Ratha-yātrā Festival of the Chariots, celebrated here annually for the last five years by the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, has apparently won the hearts of British Columbia's officialdom. After this year's gala procession of chariots carrying carved Deity forms of Lord Jagannātha (Lord of the Universe), His sister Subhadrā, and His brother Balarāma, Mayor Michael Harcourt praised the festival with these words:

"On this great occasion of Ratha-yātrā . . . I should like to offer my best wishes on behalf of the city of Vancouver. . . . The Vedic culture is one of the oldest known to mankind, and this Ratha-yātrā is one of its most ancient and colorful festivals. It is a joyous occasion for all peoples, regardless of race, religion, or creed. In Canada, especially, the East Indian community has contributed a great deal to the development of a great multicultural Canadian nation. Festivals such as this, preserved and taken from the heart of the Indian culture, show the great spiritual heritage that India has to offer to the rest of the world. Therefore, I am happy to convey my greetings and best wishes to ISKCON on this auspicious Ratha-yātrā Festival."

The premier of British Columbia, Bill



Mayor Michael Harcourt of Vancouver addresses crowds at the recent Ratha-yātrā festival.

Bennet, sent his best wishes for the festival through Peter Hyndman, minister of consumer and corporate affairs.

helps the patient overcome fear as he faces death and gives him a chance to escape the cycle of birth and death altogether."

Alaṅkāra's talk prompted this appreciation from Dr. Allen Fields, director of the intensive-care unit: "Your talk has given us new light on the care of the dying, and as time goes on I hope to see many of the practices you outlined incorporated by clergy of all faiths."

Śrīla Prabhupāda's Books Win Acclaim from Costa Rican Professor

San Jose, Costa Rica—Recently Rodrigo Cordero Víquez, Professor of General Studies at the University of Costa Rica, gave this assessment of the books of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda.

"It has been both an honor and a pleasure for me to study the scholarly translations of Vedic literature by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. I consider His Divine Grace a worthy successor to the exalted school of metaphysics enunciated by Śrīla Vyāsadeva. By reference to the profound commentaries of such an eminent author, Western philosophers will better understand the thinking of intellectuals of the stature of Plato, Aristotle, St. Thomas Aquinas, Kant, Hegel, and Heidegger, and modern statesmen will gain the necessary knowledge by which to establish a just and united society."

Hare Kṛṣṇa Ministry Counsels the Living and the Dying

Washington, D.C.—The volunteer ministrations of a Hare Kṛṣṇa devotee to terminally ill Hindu patients and their families at Children's Hospital here so impressed directors of the intensive-care unit that they sponsored an interfaith conference on death and dying with the devotee as principal speaker.

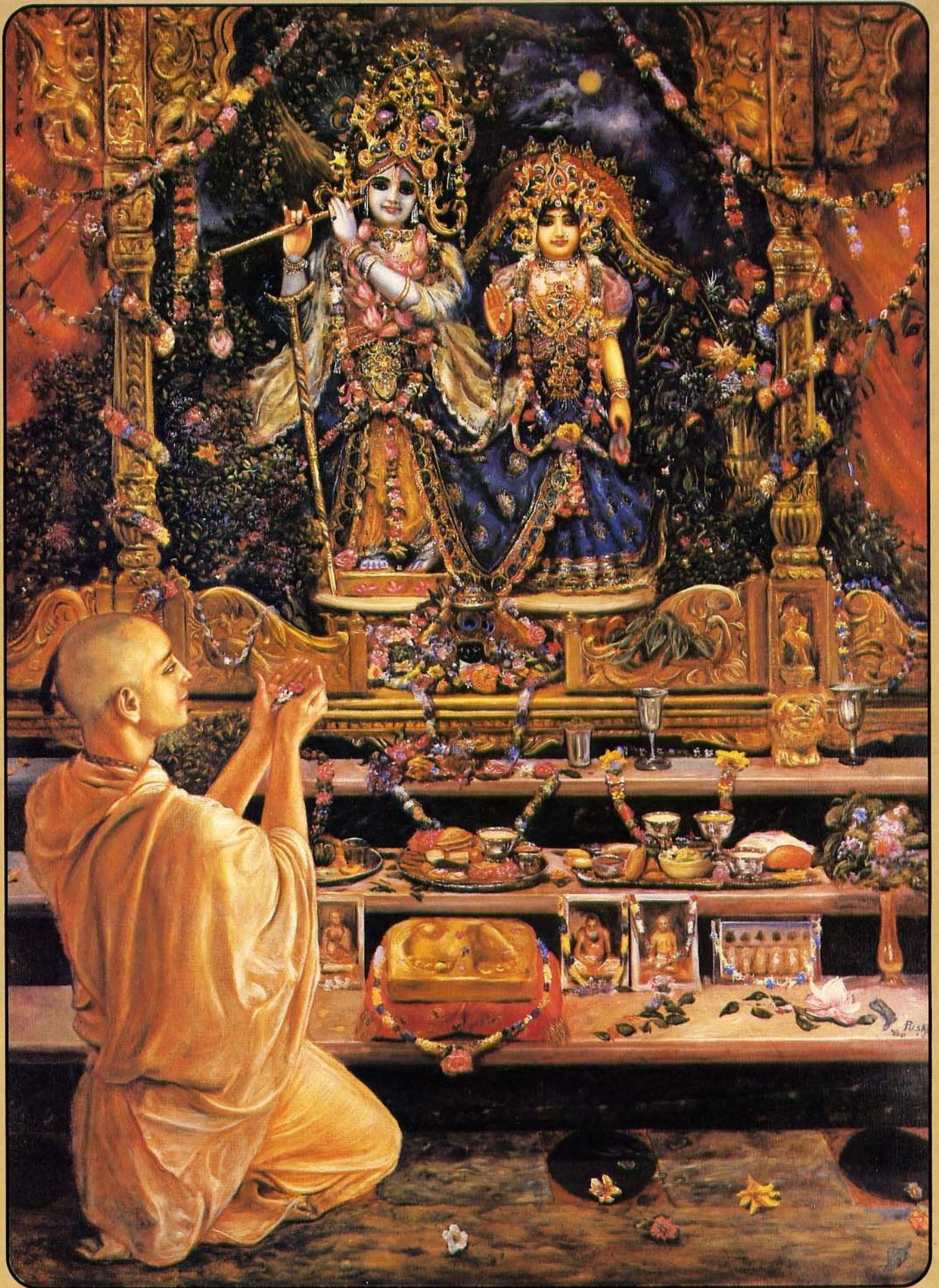
Conference coordinator Cheryl Finkelstein told Alaṅkāra dāsa, of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), "We have been very impressed with your work in crisis situations. You project a kind of rapport and professionalism that we have never experienced before, although many other members of the clergy come here in the same role of counselor. You have taught us all a lot."

At the conference, which also included a Roman Catholic nun, a Muslim clergyman, and a Jewish rabbi, Alaṅkāra explained that the Vedic literature gives the most scientific and practical knowledge available anywhere about the soul and the experience of death. "Life does not end at the death of the body," he said. "The self, or soul, is eternal and enters into a new body after the death of the old one. According to the Vedic literature, the sense of hearing is the last to fail at death, and the dying person feels the most excruciating pain at the lamentation of his family members. Therefore we encourage the family to read from the scriptures by the patient's bedside. The patient should hear the glories of God and, if possible, chant His names. This spiritual process

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 Keśava		
		December 7
		Mokṣadā Ekādāsi (fasting from grains and beans).
Vaiṣṇava month of Nārāyaṇa		
December 15	December 22	December 27
Disappearance of Śrīla Bhakṣiddhānta Sarasvatī Thākura (fasting till noon).	Uṇmilāni Mahādvādāsi (fasting from grains and beans.)	Appearance of Śrīla Locana dāsa Thākura.
December 29	January 6	January 7
Disappearance of Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī and Śrīla Jagadīsa Paṇḍita.	Putradā Ekādāsi (fasting from grains and beans).	Appearance of Śrīla Jagadīsa Paṇḍita.



Lord Kṛṣṇa's Cuisine

KṚṢṆA IS REQUESTING

BACK TO GODHEAD introduces a new feature:
a series on Vedic vegetarianism.

by VIŚĀKHĀ-DEVĪ DĀSĪ

When guests visit a temple of Kṛṣṇa for the first time, they're often puzzled by the ceremonial offering of vegetarian dishes to the Deity form of the Lord. And their puzzlement, in a way, is well founded. After all, what does the omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent Lord want with our plate of rice and vegetables? Has He suddenly become hungry? But He has created countless tons of rice—and every other edible. And besides, He is self-sufficient. Kṛṣṇa doesn't need to ask anyone for anything.

Yet He asks. Not exactly for our rice and vegetables, but for our love and devotion. In *Bhagavad-gītā* (9.26) Lord Kṛṣṇa says, "If one offers Me with love and devotion a leaf, a flower, fruit, or water, I will accept it."

When we hear that Kṛṣṇa wants us to offer our food to Him, we should know that He is inviting us to reawaken our eternal loving relationship with Him. We may comply at first in a mood of tender, pliable faith mixed with a sense of duty. Later, as our realization matures, we offer our food with affection and love. Just as a man offers the best thing he has to his beloved, so the devotee, out of love, offers Kṛṣṇa the best of himself—his life, wealth, and intelligence—and his most delicious vegetarian food.

In the West, religion has deeply influenced the development of art, music, architecture, and literature. In India Kṛṣṇa consciousness has permeated all these pursuits and the art of cooking as well. With vegetables, fruits, grains, milk, and water one can prepare hundreds of thousands of superlative dishes, each suitable for offering to God.

Six hundred and fifty recipes for such dishes have found their way into a forthcoming vegetarian cookbook by Yamunā-devī dāsī. A disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda for fifteen years, Yamunā learned many recipes directly from him. In addition, she spent four years in India studying the tech-

niques and ingredients involved in Kṛṣṇa conscious cooking, a refined art that has been passed down from generation to generation for many centuries.

I first met Yamunā in March of 1971, when my husband Yadubara and I were traveling in India as itinerant photographers. That summer he and I, not yet devotees of Kṛṣṇa, resided and photographed in Vṛndāvana, the holy village about ninety miles south of Delhi where Lord Kṛṣṇa passed His childhood some fifty centuries ago.

One day Yamunā and her husband arrived in Vṛndāvana on pilgrimage. To find relief from the summer heat, she and I would occasionally spend the afternoon sitting neck-deep in the Yamunā River. (Śrīla Prabhupāda had named my friend "Yamunā" after this sacred river, which figures prominently in Kṛṣṇa's childhood pastimes.) Here Yamunā would express her Kṛṣṇa conscious thoughts to me and patiently tolerate my negative and skeptical viewpoints. A few months later she watched happily as Śrīla Prabhupāda gave me formal spiritual initiation, and in the years that followed Yamunā and I traveled extensively throughout India, sometimes together and sometimes separately.

During this time (the early and mid '70s) Yamunā often cooked for Śrīla Prabhupāda, and she was always eager to learn new recipes from expert local cooks. She would carefully note down how a dish was made so that later on she could make it for her spiritual master. Meanwhile, I was busy photographing Śrīla Prabhupāda during his many morning walks, classes, informal meetings, and public appearances.

Some three or four years later, after Yamunā and I had returned to America, we met again. This time my mission was to shoot pictures of her dishes to illustrate her cookbook. After several months of intensive studio work I finally completed the photographs, and then it was time to test the recipes one last time. Since Yamunā had already tested them, she wanted others to try: one experienced cook, Śruti-rūpa-devī dāsī (who had also cooked for Śrīla

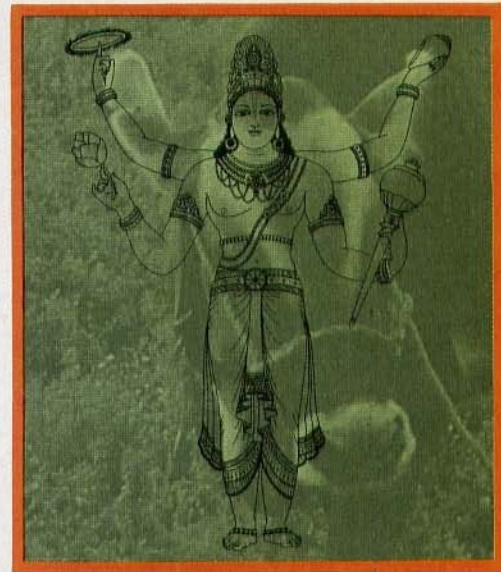
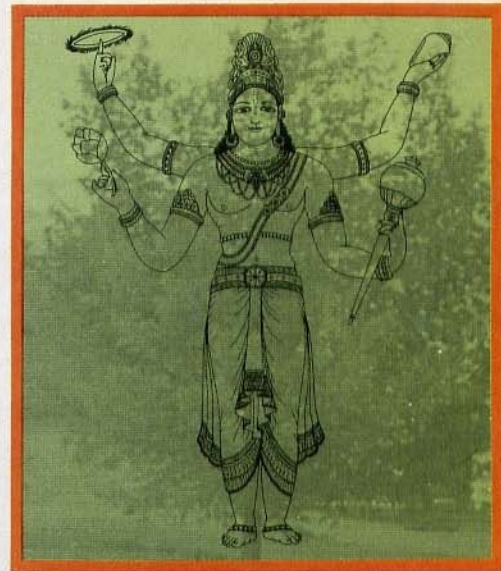
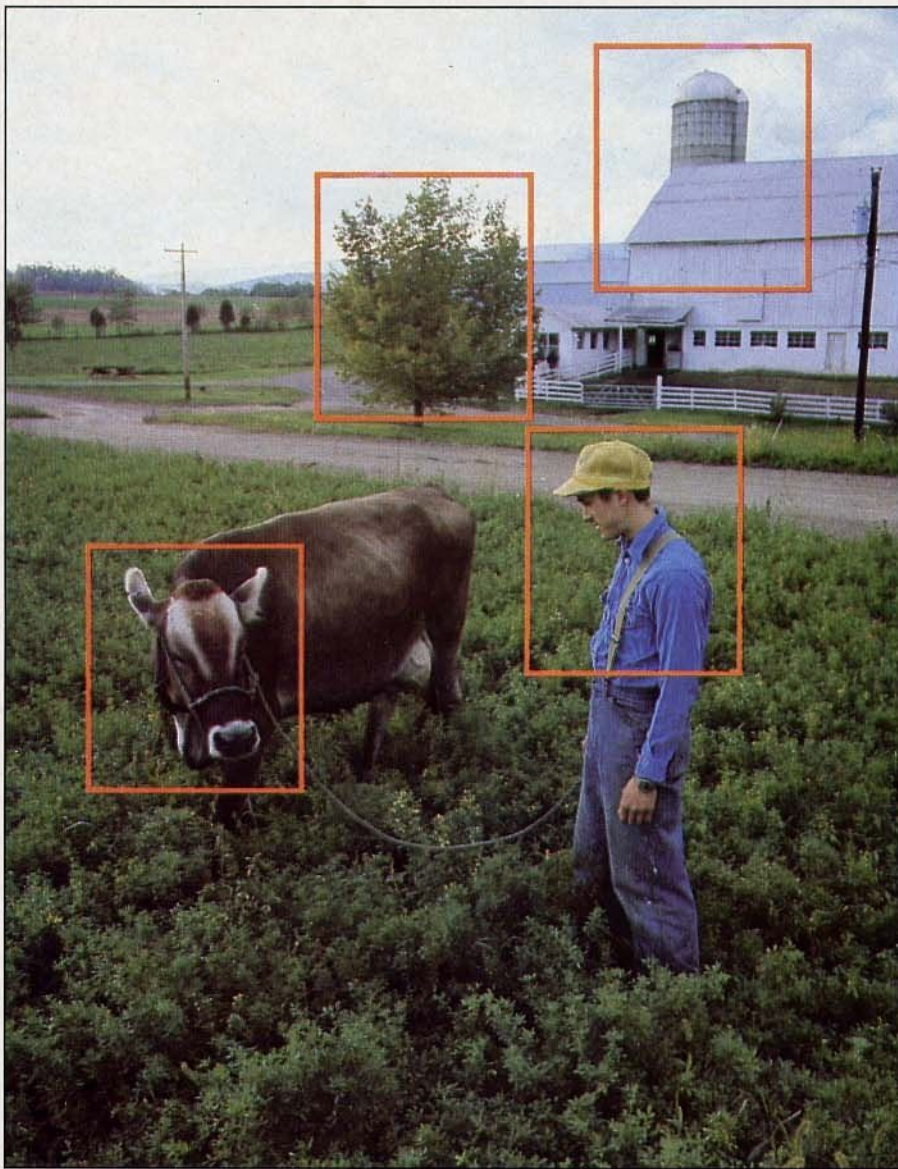
Prabhupāda in India), and one utterly inexperienced cook—me (who had never cooked for anyone, anywhere).

Śruti would go into the kitchen with a stack of recipes to test, effortlessly put the dishes together (or so it seemed to me), and emerge a little while later with a lovely full-course luncheon for us all to taste and rave about. But when my turn came, I felt like a freshman chemistry student on his first day in the lab. I would struggle to distinguish mustard seeds from cumin seeds, urad *dāl* from mung *dāl*, *garam masālā* from asa-fetida. I didn't know how to mix spices, how to knead dough, or how to use any of the kitchen machinery (blender, grinder, and so on).

Nonetheless, I found myself in the kitchen every day with a stack of recipes to test and Yamunā somewhere in the vicinity, ready to instruct, correct, encourage, and cajole me, and sometimes to reprove me for making careless mistakes. One month and more than two hundred recipes later, I wasn't an expert cook (I'm still not), but I could follow her wonderful recipes well enough to make dishes that, she assured me, would please Śrīla Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa.

I've just returned from another stay with Yamunā, this time for six months, during which I helped her in some small way to complete her cookbook. Now she's put introductory paragraphs before many of the recipes to explain their special attractive features, and she's added detailed introductions to each of the twenty chapters in the book. As her cookbook nears completion, we will be whetting your appetite for it by presenting some of its choicest recipes in BACK TO GODHEAD, along with articles about the art and philosophy of cooking for Kṛṣṇa. We'll discuss transcendental vegetarianism from the economic, esthetic, ethical, and ecological viewpoints, and we'll see why it's healthy for the body and the soul. And, of course, we'll be looking for your comments as you begin trying out the recipes from Yamunā's cookbook and adopting the principles of Kṛṣṇa consciousness in your own life.

In the temple of Lord Kṛṣṇa, a devotee presents an offering to the Lord and His eternal consort Rādhārāṇī.



Science

BHAKTI-YOGA

A Method of Nonmechanistic Science

(Part III)

by SADĀPŪTA DĀSA

The term science refers to knowledge we can reliably verify by practical methods. So to study a subject scientifically, we must clearly understand how to use our senses to obtain trustworthy knowledge of what we are studying. This article, which concludes a series from the forthcoming

book Mechanistic and Nonmechanistic Science, examines how a person can take advantage of his innate transcendental senses to obtain direct knowledge of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, who is the ultimate object of study in the science of bhakti-yoga.

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.

One of the basic principles of *bhakti-yoga*, or devotional service, is that the Absolute Truth is not an impersonal void but rather the Supreme Person, full of variegated attributes. The Supreme Person, Kṛṣṇa, possesses unlimited personal qualities, and He also performs unlimited transcendental activities in reciprocation with the innumerable *jīvātmās* (living beings) who enjoy His association in a state of pure consciousness. The goal of one who practices devotional service is to revive that state of pure consciousness and enter Kṛṣṇa's personal association.

Service to Lord Kṛṣṇa can take many forms, but since becoming aware of our relationship with Kṛṣṇa requires that we first hear about Him, the process of hearing (*śravaṇam*) is fundamental. Hearing about the attributes and pastimes of Kṛṣṇa reminds the materially conditioned *jīvātmā* of his own natural relationship with the Lord. Gradually, as the *jīvātmā* continues



Philosophies based on mundane sense perceptions lead us to believe that God must be remote and inaccessible—if He exists at all. Yet according to *Bhagavad-gītā* all phenomena issue forth from the energy of Kṛṣṇa (above right), the Supreme Personality of Godhead, whose energy is nondifferent from Himself. Even though transcendental to all material manifestations, Kṛṣṇa is personally present everywhere through His expansion as Viṣṇu (above left), “the all-pervading one.” So perceiving Kṛṣṇa is not difficult for one who knows how to employ one’s senses properly.

hearing, his desire to know about Kṛṣṇa increases, and simultaneously his attachment to the affairs of the material body and mind diminishes.

The philosophy of *bhakti-yoga* holds that knowledge of the Absolute must descend directly from the Absolute. Kṛṣṇa is the original source of all material forms, and He is also the source of the literature of *bhakti-yoga*. This literature consists of scriptures that are either directly produced by Kṛṣṇa Himself or else written by persons who are directly linked with Kṛṣṇa in a transcendental relationship. *Bhagavad-gītā* is a scripture of the former type, and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* are scriptures of the latter type. As we have already pointed

out (BACK TO GODHEAD, Vol. 16, No. 9), the subject matter of *bhakti-yoga* is preserved and disseminated by a community of *gurus* and *sādhus* (highly advanced souls), whose role in the regulation of transcendental knowledge is like that of the community of experts in a scientific field.

All literature is simply information encoded in sequences of symbols, and unlimited amounts of information about Kṛṣṇa can be encoded in this form. But since Kṛṣṇa is all-pervading, information about Him differs from information describing ordinary configurations of matter. In our everyday experience we encounter patterns of symbols arranged according to the conventions of a language so as to rep-

resent certain events in a limited region of time and space. When we hear or read this information we are able to interpret the coded patterns, and as a result we become aware of a mental image of the events. But this mental image is something quite different from the events themselves.

In contrast, when a *jīvātmā* perceives information describing the Supreme Person, the resulting mental images actually bring the *jīvātmā* into direct contact with the Supreme Person. Since Kṛṣṇa is all-pervading, images and sounds representing Kṛṣṇa are nondifferent from Kṛṣṇa Himself, and the *jīvātmā* can directly understand this identity when free of his material conditioning. Such understanding cannot, of course, be simply a matter of

manipulating material symbols; it directly involves the higher sensory and cognitive faculties of the conscious self.

Since this point is quite important, let us explore it in greater detail. According to the philosophy of *Bhagavad-gītā*, nothing is different from Kṛṣṇa and yet nothing is Kṛṣṇa except His own primordial personality. This seeming paradox is resolved in the following way: Kṛṣṇa is the cause and the essence of all phenomena, and in this sense all phenomena are identical with Him; yet the phenomena of this world are merely external displays projected by Kṛṣṇa's will, and His real nature is His eternal personality. The Absolute is highly specific, and therefore only certain symbolic patterns, and not others, can represent Kṛṣṇa. By means of these patterns Kṛṣṇa can make Himself available to the conditioned *jīvātmā*, and thus these material configurations are, nondifferent from Kṛṣṇa in a direct personal sense. Such configurations remind the *jīvātmā* of Kṛṣṇa, by whose mercy the *jīvātmā* soon revives his own higher vision and can see the Lord directly.

This explanation may convey some idea of how the embodied *jīvātmā*, restricted entirely to material modes of sense perception, can begin to perceive the transcendental Supreme Person. In the initial stages of *bhakti-yoga*, the *jīvātmā*'s perception of Kṛṣṇa may seem to be completely dependent on the interactions of matter, but the essence of the *jīvātmā*'s experience is not material. We can begin to understand this by considering that matter itself is a manifestation of Kṛṣṇa and that material perception is simply a limited, impersonal way of seeing Him.

In the highest stage of realization, the reciprocity between the *jīvātmā* and Kṛṣṇa has nothing to do with the material manifestation. This relationship does not depend on the material body of the *jīvātmā* in any way, and it continues after the body has ceased to exist. According to the philosophy of *bhakti-yoga*, the material manifestation represents only a minor aspect of the total reality. There is a higher realm, inaccessible to material sense perception but nonetheless full of variegated form and activity. Since we are concerned here with how a materially embodied person can acquire knowledge, we shall not discuss this higher realm in detail. (Readers interested in this subject may consult *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*.)

The process of *śravaṇam*, or hearing, is complemented by the process of *kīrtanam*, or glorifying the Lord by singing or reciting His names, qualities, and pastimes and by discussing these with others. We have argued (BACK TO GODHEAD, Vol. 16, No. 10) that the process of *bhakti-yoga* is scientific in the sense that it is a

practical method of obtaining verifiable knowledge about the Absolute Truth. In the science of *bhakti-yoga*, however, the researcher approaches the Absolute with an attitude of reverence and devotion, in stark contrast to the aggressive and exploitative approach prevalent in modern science. By glorifying Kṛṣṇa, the *jīvātmā* can awaken his natural love for Kṛṣṇa, and then Kṛṣṇa will be fully accessible to him on a personal level.

One important form of *kīrtanam* is the chanting of Kṛṣṇa's names. Kṛṣṇa has innumerable names, and there are innumerable ways to chant them, but by far the most common way of performing *kīrtanam* is to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*:

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

The Sanskrit term *mantra* refers to a pattern of sound that has a purifying effect on the mind. The Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* consists of two names of the Supreme Person (Kṛṣṇa and Rāma) and one name of His energy (Harā). Grammatically the *mantra* is in the vocative case, so it is, in effect, an address to the Lord and His energy. (Please see page 31.)

The names that constitute the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* are examples of patterns of symbols that directly represent the absolute person and therefore have an absolute, inherent meaning. According to the philosophy of *bhakti-yoga*, Kṛṣṇa's holy names are nondifferent from Kṛṣṇa Himself, and one who chants and hears these names is brought into personal contact with Him. A person who has awakened his higher sensory capacities can actually perceive Kṛṣṇa in His name. For others, the chanting of Kṛṣṇa's names purifies them by reminding them of Kṛṣṇa, and thereby brings about this awakening.

One can obtain the results of chanting the holy names of the Lord by using any names that are actually connected with the Supreme Person and that are not mere concoctions of the material imagination. In His *Śikṣāṣṭaka* (*Eight Verses of Instruction*), Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the great teacher of *bhakti-yoga* who appeared in India in the fifteenth century, describes the significance of chanting the holy names of God:

O My Lord, O Supreme Personality of Godhead, in Your holy name there is all good fortune for the living entity, and therefore You have many names, such as "Kṛṣṇa" and "Govinda," by which You expand Yourself. You have invested all Your potencies in those names, and there are no hard and fast rules for remembering them. My dear Lord, although You bestow such mercy upon the fallen, conditioned souls by liberally teaching Your holy names, I am so unfortunate

that I commit offenses while chanting the holy name, and therefore I do not achieve attachment for chanting. (*Śikṣāṣṭaka* 2).

From this statement we see that the conditioned *jīvātmā*, benumbed by his preoccupation with the material mind and senses, will initially feel little desire to chant the Lord's holy names. Yet by regularly chanting the holy names and following the regulative injunctions of *bhakti-yoga*, the *jīvātmā* gradually awakens his transcendental taste for the name and attains the stage of loving reciprocation with Kṛṣṇa.

Since the goal of one who chants the names of God is to develop love for Him, one must chant with an attitude compatible with this emotion. Caitanya Mahāprabhu described this attitude as follows:

One who thinks himself lower than the grass, who is more tolerant than a tree, and who does not expect personal honor but is always prepared to give all respect to others, can very easily always chant the holy name of the Lord. (*Śikṣāṣṭaka* 3).

Generally a person who has no direct knowledge of the Supreme Person cannot understand at first what it might mean to love the Supreme. But such a person can lay the groundwork for this understanding by adopting a nonexploitative attitude toward the Supreme Person and His creation. Indeed, this attitude is the key to success in *bhakti-yoga*. For one who wishes to exploit the Supreme, the Supreme will remain unknowable. But if one truly gives up the desire for such exploitation, then the Supreme Person will reveal Himself by His own mercy.

Once, in a letter to Max Born, Albert Einstein declared that his goal was to capture the Absolute Truth. Unfortunately, Einstein went about it the wrong way. The Absolute Truth cannot be forcibly captured by a minute part of the Absolute, but according to the philosophy of *bhakti-yoga*, the Absolute can be captured by love. Once one attains this love, direct knowledge of the Absolute becomes readily available. Yet, ironically, the development of this love is incompatible with the desire for knowledge or power. Knowledge is indeed a by-product of the process of *bhakti-yoga*, but it cannot be the goal of that process, for the key to the process itself lies in a fundamental reassessment of one's innermost goals.

Although superficially this reassessment may seem simple, carrying it out requires a deep insight into one's own psychology. By bringing the inner self into personal contact with the Absolute, the process of *bhakti-yoga* enables one to attain this insight. Only by this means can one capture the Absolute—once all desire to conquer the Absolute has been forsaken.

LETTERS

In reference to your article "Spiritual Strategies for the Age of Iron" [by Ravindra-svarūpa dāsa, in BTG Vol. 15, No. 8]:

One must be happy to see the attempt to build a cogent case for spreading knowledge of the Lord. But it would have been more appreciated if some falsehoods had not been introduced to meet various aptitudes of people who may read the article.

Bhagavān Vyāsa is Kṛṣṇa Himself, and hence he is not "sent by" Kṛṣṇa. I suggest that the learned author of the article read the *Mahābhārata-tatpārya-nirṇaya* of Ācārya Śrī Madhva, who happily is in the same disciplic succession as the devotees of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement, and be benefited by a study of his works. Vyāsa did not "master all the knowledge of the Vedic culture." He is verily its director and is aware of that knowledge at all times. Nārada is the son of Brahmā, while Bhagavān Vedavyāsa is Viṣṇu Himself. Hence, Bhagavān Vedavyāsa has nothing to learn from Nārada.

None can circumvent the Vedic *dharma* and reach the highest goal. Devotion to the Lord helps one to observe the Vedic *dharma* willingly. Vedic *dharmas* do not become obsolete at any time, for the *Vedas* are eternal and the *dharmas* prescribed by it are also eternal.

There is no authority to say that Caitanya is Kṛṣṇa Himself! *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is clear that the Lord takes *avatāra* [incarnates] only in three *yugas*. Hence, the *Bhāgavatam* itself is verily the spiritual form of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa in this Age of Kali. Caitanya is doubtlessly a great devotee of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

If the author would only read the *Mahābhārata-tatpārya-nirṇaya* and *Bhāgavata-tatpārya-nirṇaya* of Ācārya Śrī Madhva, the true position of the scriptures on these points will be clear to him.

Yours in the service of the Lord,
 K. Raghupathi Rao
 Madras, India

Ravindra-svarūpa replies:

I am glad that you have so carefully read my article and that you appreciate our attempt to spread knowledge of Kṛṣṇa all over the world.

It is true that Śrīla Vedavyāsa, being directly empowered with all Vedic knowledge, did not have to learn either from *guru* or from scripture. But *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* specifically describes Vedavyāsa as *kalā*, an empowered plenary portion of the Lord. This is technically called a *śaktyāveśa-avatāra*. So it is not incorrect to refer to him as "sent by the Lord." Moreover, he accepted Nārada Muni as

guru just to teach by his own example the necessity of accepting a spiritual master; for the same reason, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself became the disciple of Sāndīpani Muni. These are divine pastimes, and they are not unimportant. I have described them as they are given in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

I do not find support in the scriptures for the idea, implied in your letter, that the value of devotion to God lies in its helping one willingly observe the Vedic *dharmas*. On the contrary, we should observe Vedic *dharmas* only to bring us to the level of devotional service. Service to Kṛṣṇa is not a means to something else; it is the goal of all the *Vedas*. As stated in *Bhagavad-gītā* (15.15), *vedaiś ca sarvair aham eva vedyaḥ*: all the *Vedas* are just meant for knowing Kṛṣṇa.

When one has attained the devotional service of Kṛṣṇa, one may give up all other *dharmas*. This is explained in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (11.11.32):

*ājñāyaivam guṇān doṣān
 mayādiṣṭān api svakān
 dharmān santyajya yaḥ sarvān
 mām bhajet sa ca sattamaḥ*

"Occupational duties, *dharmas*, are described in the legendary scriptures. If one analyzes them, he can fully understand their qualities and their faults and then give them up completely to render service unto the Supreme Personality of Godhead. A person who does so is considered a first-class man."

Similarly, in *Bhagavad-gītā* (18.66) Śrī Kṛṣṇa orders:

*sarva-dharmān parityajya
 mām ekaṁ śaraṇam vraja
 ahaṁ tvām sarva-pāpebhyo
 mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ*

"Abandon all varieties of *dharma* and just surrender unto Me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reactions. Do not fear." Kṛṣṇa here promises that we need not fear we will incur some sin by giving up prescribed *dharmas*, for He will protect us. And one who practices Kṛṣṇa consciousness need not follow any other Vedic practice, since "all purposes served by the small pond can at once be served by the great reservoirs of water" (Bg. 2.46).

Even those who were born outside of Vedic culture and had no chance to undergo the standard purificatory procedures (*samskāras*), to observe the various injunctions of *varṇāśrama-dharma*, or to practice penances, austerities, and sacrifices prescribed for spiritual elevation can still come to devotional service. If they

do, they must be considered to have sufficiently performed all such practices. As clearly stated in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (3.33.6-7), even a person born in a family of dog-eaters immediately becomes eligible to perform Vedic sacrifices if he once utters the holy name of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, chants about Him, hears about His pastimes, offers Him obeisances, or even remembers Him. Persons who chant the Lord's holy name are considered to have executed all kinds of austerities and sacrifices, bathed at all holy places of pilgrimage, studied the *Vedas*, achieved all the good manners of the Aryans, and fulfilled everything required.

Vedic *dharmas*, such as the *varṇāśrama-dharma*, may be helpful to devotional service, and therefore they should be instituted wherever possible. Yet one may come to devotional service without going through such *dharmas*, which are unnecessary after one has attained it. For devotional service is the goal of all *dharmas*. On these points the scriptures are quite clear.

Even though the *Vedas* are eternal, different practices are prescribed for different times. Thus the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* (6.2.17) says:

*dhyāyan kṛte yajan yajñais
 tretāyām dvāpare 'rcayan
 yad āpnoti tad āpnoti
 kalau saṅkirtya keśavam*

"Whatever one may achieve by meditation in Satya-yuga, by performance of sacrifice in Tretā-yuga, or by the worship of Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet in Dvāpara-yuga one may also obtain in the Age of Kali simply by chanting and glorifying Lord Kṛṣṇa." The same text appears in the *Padma Purāṇa* and the *Bṛhan-nārādīya Purāṇa*, and one very similar in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (12.3.52). For that reason, various Vedic practices become nonfunctional, obsolete in a relative sense. This is confirmed by Ācārya Śrī Madhva, who, in his commentary on the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, quotes the *Nārāyaṇa-saṁhitā*:

*dvāpariyair janair viṣṇuḥ
 pañcarātraiś ca kevalam
 kalau tu nāma-mātreṇa
 pūjyate bhagavān hariḥ*

"In the Dvāpara-yuga people should worship Lord Viṣṇu only by the regulative principles of the *Nārada-pañcarātra* and other such authorized books. In the Age of Kali, however, people should simply chant the holy names of the Supreme Personality of Godhead."

Thus it is well established that in our age there is no means of deliverance except the chanting of the holy names of the Lord.

It is not true that the Lord descends only
 (continued on page 28)

EXPOSING THE CULT OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

In a society of robots,
synthetic minds may seem only natural.

Last April a meeting took place in Milan, Italy, between a researcher in artificial intelligence and Śrīla Bhagavān Goswami, one of the disciples of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda who has become a spiritual master for new disciples. What follows is an excerpt from their conversation.

Śrīla Bhagavān Goswami: How many scientists are working in the field of artificial intelligence?

Scientist: Well, there is a large contingent at M.I.T., and also at Stanford. And then there are smaller numbers at institutions across the United States. And, of course, the Japanese and the Russians have put a lot of effort into this field. So, I would say from one thousand to two thousand scientists are working on artificial intelligence full time.

Śrīla Bhagavān Goswami: So it is a very highly skilled field. Out of billions of people, only a few million are scientists, and out of those, only two thousand or so are working on artificial intelligence. Two thousand scientists engaged in creating artificial intelligence, for which natural intelligence is the template.

Scientist: Okay. Template is a correct term.

Śrīla Bhagavān Goswami: Yes. But since natural intelligence is the template for artificial intelligence, who has made natural intelligence? Where does *natural* intelligence come from? If it takes two thousand scientists to make artificial intelligence, is it logical to think it takes *no* scientist to

make natural intelligence?

In artificial intelligence there is logic. Agreed?

Scientist: Exactly.

Śrīla Bhagavān Goswami: So, since the template for artificial intelligence is natural intelligence, that means there must also be logic in natural intelligence.

Scientist: Yes.

Śrīla Bhagavān Goswami: And since behind the logic of artificial intelligence there must be a programmer, a director, what is the sense in saying that behind the logic of natural intelligence there is no purpose, no director? That is our challenge. There is nothing wrong with your science, if by your science you appreciate how great God, or Kṛṣṇa, is. For instance, those who work in the field of artificial intelligence can see that we can never come near to creating natural intelligence.

Scientist: Yes.

Śrīla Bhagavān Goswami: You may take one tiny part of the creation and master it. Kṛṣṇa will allow you that. But even that takes great intelligence. That is why sincere scientists always agree with the motto "The more you know, the more you realize how much you don't know."

Scientist: I agree.

Śrīla Bhagavān Goswami: By science one should demonstrate the existence of God, not try to disprove it. We are not against science, but we urge that everything be used in the pursuit of the Absolute Truth—to gain greater appreciation of God. The scientist should be the greatest worshiper of God, because he can know in

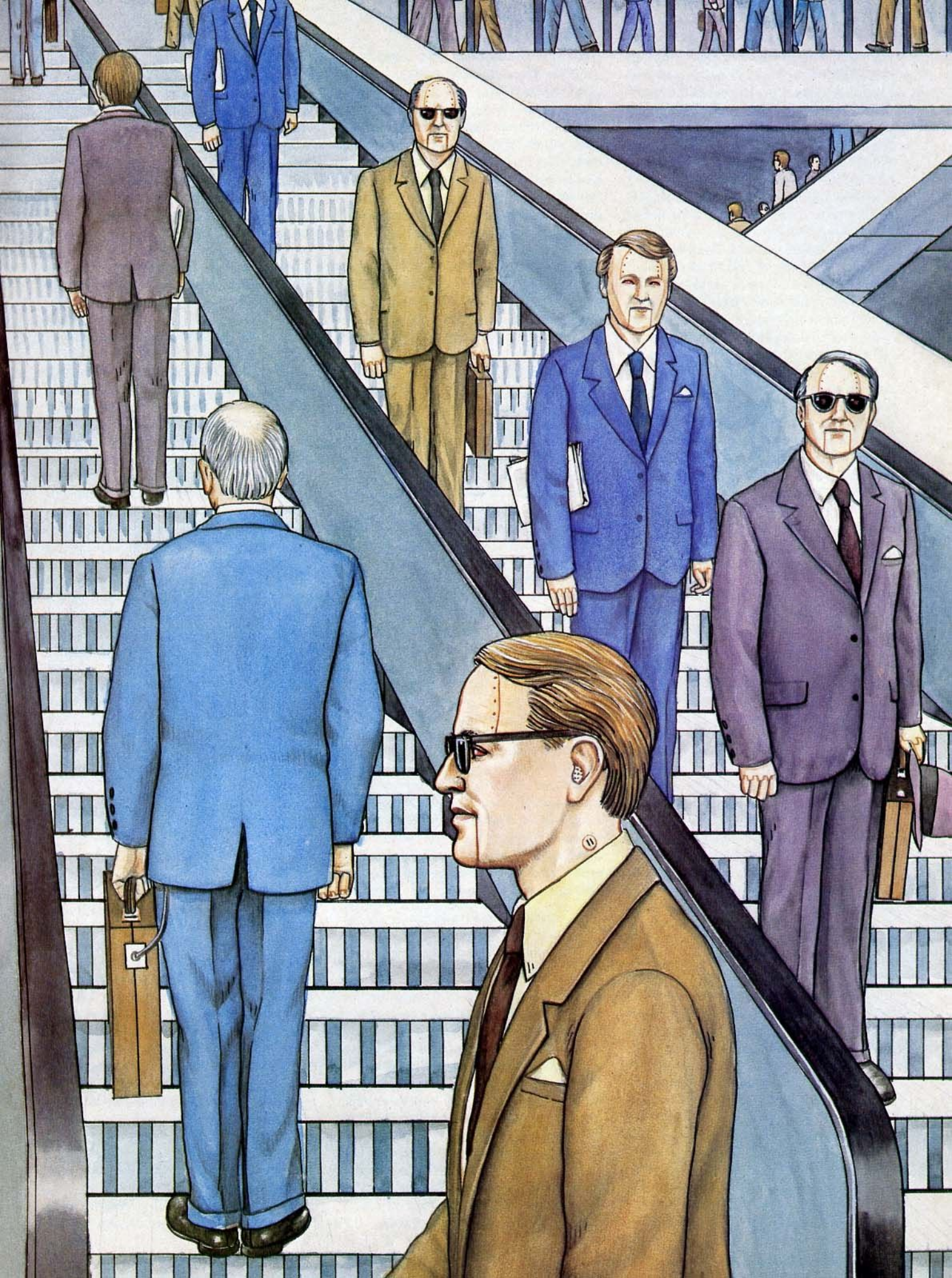
the greatest detail the mastery of God. The ideal scientist is like the artist who tries to duplicate the beauty of a flower through sculpture, painting, or poetry but still knows his work of art is just an imitation of God's creation. In other words, one should appreciate how great the original creator is and not try to artificially take His position.

Scientist: Yes. I see your point.

Śrīla Bhagavān Goswami: A scientist likes to analyze things in a certain way. There is nothing wrong with that, provided his analysis ultimately leads to his establishing his relationship with God, who for Him is the Supreme Scientist. For someone else God is the Supreme Artist; for someone else, the Supreme Poet, and so on. Everyone is attracted to something in this material world that gives him his idea of the Supreme, but where do all these ideas of perfection come from?

Obviously, our ability to build an intelligent machine is far from perfect. Mechanically, you may make artificial, cybernetic intelligence, but can you make one machine love another machine? Can you make one machine be compassionate toward another machine? So we are limited by nature. We shouldn't become proud savants, thinking we can do everything because we can do one little thing imperfectly. Knowledge should make us humble, not proud.

No matter how hard the scientists work, they are a long way from creating a person. You make the little connections on your computer board and tie in one circuit



to another and program in some information, but when you compare that mechanical circuit to the little neurons in the brain, which do you find is the superior creation? Both circuits are doing basically the same thing, but which is the superior creation? Who is the real mastermind, the artificial intelligence researcher or God?

We should ask ourselves why this logic doesn't prevail among scientists. It is because so many scientists are envious of God. That is why this logic is not apparent to them. By *envious* we mean that they are trying to figure out by their science how we can manipulate and enjoy this material world. But actually the real law of nature is that we are the subordinate enjoyers; our enjoyment is relative, dependent on God's enjoyment. We are dependent, relative truth, and God is independent, Absolute Truth. Relative truth depends on the Absolute Truth and is meant to serve the Absolute Truth. But when we don't want to accept that position, everything becomes illogical. Instead of appreciating the creator of our natural intelligence and using that intelligence to serve Him, we use it to create a robot with artificial intelligence.

We already have natural intelligence. Why not try to perfect that natural intelligence? Why try to make robots with artificial intelligence? Besides, people are already robots, because they are acting with artificial intelligence. Their intelligence is artificial because their goal of life is arti-

cial: to enjoy this material world. That is artificial intelligence, and those who act with that intelligence are robots.

People are being manipulated by the modes of nature just as you manipulate your robots. A robot just doesn't go and do whatever it wants. You manipulate it. Similarly, those who are acting with artificial intelligence are being manipulated by the modes of nature—ignorance, passion, and goodness. These robotlike people are forced to act according to the attraction and repulsion of the senses and the sense objects. Everyone is moving mechanically: "I hate this." "I like that." "I eat this." "I don't eat that." Even though they know smoking cigarettes is not good, they smoke. Robots. No feeling. A robot performs mechanical acts without feeling. So people can kill animals, even their own children, because they are acting mechanically, with no feelings. They can go through the mechanical processes—eat, sex, kill, sleep—but without real feeling. So the problem is that there are too many robots already. That is why there is no feeling in society.

Just like robots, people want to have a relationship with matter. A robot cannot relate person-to-person; it must relate matter-to-matter. So when people don't see that the actual active principle in a human being is consciousness, the soul within the body, then they relate to themselves and others like robots. Even if you program one robot to love another, and

the first robot embraces the second, is there any feeling? Similarly, if a person simply relates to another person as if he were his body, this relationship is on the robot platform.

In Sanskrit this kind of relationship is called *sparsa*, and sense gratification is called *saṁsparsaja-bhoga*, "the enjoyment that comes from rubbing skin." Basically, the same elements that are in skin are in your robot. But when a body, a bag of skin, is lying dead, no one wants to rub it; everyone wants to get rid of it. So actually it is the active spark of life, the soul *within* the body, that we are attracted to. Without you, the robot is useless, and without the soul in the body, the body is useless. That soul, the active principle in the body, is the real person.

Kṛṣṇa explains all of these ideas in *Bhagavad-gītā*, which is a great science. He says, *adhyātma-vidyā vidyānām*: "Of all sciences, I am the science of the soul." There are so many sciences, but out of all of them the supreme science is that which teaches how to discover the self, the real person, and how to liberate this person from birth and death. This science takes real intelligence. And that intelligence comes from Kṛṣṇa. So the real thing is not to create artificial intelligence, which is already there in the billions, but to lift people up from artificial intelligence to real intelligence, from robotic character to real human character. This is a greater service. ❀

LETTERS

(continued from page 25)

in three ages. At the name-giving ceremony of Lord Kṛṣṇa, Gargamuni specifically says (*Bhāg.* 10.8.13) that in the four different *yugas* the Lord descends as the *yuga-avatāra* in four different bodily colors—white, red, black, and yellow—to teach the *yuga-dharma*, the path for each age. The Lord is indeed, as you say, called "tri-yuga," one who appears in three ages, but this is explained by Prahlāda Mahārāja (*Bhāg.* 7.9.38). He is known as *tri-yuga* because in the Kali-yuga He is covered; that is, He does not assert Himself as the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

The white, red, and black incarnations appeared in previous ages. So from these verses we see that the Lord descends in Kali-yuga in a yellowish color, as the *yuga-avatāra* to spread the *yuga-dharma* of the chanting of the Lord's glories. These are all features of Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who was covered in that He came as the Lord's devotee, and not as the Lord Himself.

Great authorities such as Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī, and Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī have all accepted Śrī Cai-

tanya as Kṛṣṇa Himself. This is not asserted whimsically or out of sentiment. An incarnation of God is known because the scriptures describe His personal features and His activities. In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Karabhājana Muni (one of the nine Yogendras) explains all about the different *yuga-avatāras* to Mahārāja Nimi, and he describes the *yuga-avatāra* for the present age as follows:

*kṛṣṇa-varṇaṁ tviṣākṛṣṇaṁ
sāṅgopāṅgāstra-pārṣadam
yajñaiḥ saṅkīrtana-prāyair
yajanti hi sumedhasaḥ*

This means that in the Kali-yuga the Lord teaches the *yuga-dharma* of *saṅkīrtana*, the congregational chanting of the holy name. He is accompanied by His associates. *Kṛṣṇa-varṇam* means both that He is Kṛṣṇa Himself and that He is repeating the syllables *kṛṣ-ṇa*. Yet His radiance or luster (*tviṣā*) is not black (*akṛṣṇa*); that is, it is golden.

There are many other scriptural texts that clearly describe Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. For example, from the *Vāyu Purāṇa*: *kalau saṅkīrtanārambhe bhaviṣyāmi śacī-sutaḥ*. "In the Age of Kali when

the *saṅkīrtana* movement is inaugurated, I shall descend as the son of Śacī-devī." And from the *Brahma-yāmala*:

*athavāhaṁ dharādhāme
bhūtvā mad-bhakta-rūpa-dhṛk
māyāyāṁ ca bhaviṣyāmi
kalau saṅkīrtanāgame*

"Sometimes I personally appear on the surface of the world in the garb of a devotee. Specifically, I appear in the Kali-yuga to start the *saṅkīrtana* movement." There are similar statements in the *Kṛṣṇa-yāmala* and the *Ananta-saṁhitā*.

So there is no lack of authority for saying that Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is Kṛṣṇa Himself, descended in the Kali-yuga to teach the world the process of salvation through the chanting of the holy names. I simply ask you to read *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* by Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī, which has been translated into English from the Bengali, with purports, by Śrīla Prabhupāda. No one who reads this book can doubt the true position of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, by whose grace the *saṅkīrtana-yajña* is now performed all over the world, delivering even the most fallen in the present Age of Kali. ❀

Personal World

(continued from page 4)

the same flower and think, "Oh, it is a very nice flower; I shall offer it to Kṛṣṇa," that is your service to the Lord. In either case the flower is there, you are there, and the offering is there. You simply have to change your consciousness. That's all. You have to change your consciousness to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. If you utilize things for sense gratification, then you go to the darkest region of this material atmosphere, but if you take the same things and offer them to Kṛṣṇa, you go to Kṛṣṇaloka, the spiritual world.

Now, when you offer something to Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa does not take it away. He leaves the remnants of the offering, and then we can partake of the *prasādam* ["the Lord's mercy," i.e., spiritual food]. The whole process becomes spiritual—the preparation, the offering, and the partaking. In this way we can spiritualize the whole world, simply by changing our consciousness.

We're anxious for peace. This is the process for attaining peace: change your consciousness to Kṛṣṇa consciousness; don't accept anything for your sense gratification. Everything is supplied by the Supreme Lord, and therefore everything is the property of the Supreme Lord. You are falsely claiming that you are the proprietor. How can you be the proprietor? Suppose you have taken your birth in America. Before your birth the land was there, and after your death the land will be there. Therefore the land is God's property. Why do you claim that this is your land? The earth belongs to God. Everything belongs to God.

This consciousness should be adopted if you at all want peace. If you encroach upon God's property and take it as your own and try to use it for your sense gratification, you cannot expect any peace. Suppose you have stolen something from somebody and you want to enjoy it. You are always in anxiety, because you know that the police will search for you and that as soon as you are caught you will be in trouble. Similarly, nature is God's police agent. As soon as you want to gratify your senses by utilizing God's property, you're in trouble. Nature will inflict misery upon you. This is the law of nature.

Kṛṣṇa clearly states in *Bhagavad-gītā* [7.14],

*daivī hy eṣā guṇamayī
mama māyā duratyayā
mām eva ye prapadyante
māyām etāṁ taranti te*

This material nature is *guṇamayī*, a combination of the three modes of nature—the mode of goodness, the mode of passion, and the mode of ignorance. So Kṛṣṇa says this material nature is *duratyayā*, most difficult to overcome. You cannot surpass the stringent laws of material nature. That is not in your power.

You are just like a prisoner. However stout and strong you are, when you are under police custody no amount of strength will help you. You'll be offered all kinds of tribulations. Similarly, nature is very strong. As long as we go on utilizing God's property illegally, encroaching upon His possessions, there cannot be any peace. If you want peace at all, you have to accept that everything belongs to God. We can use things, but only after offering them to Him. We should think, "I under-

stand that this belongs to You, God. You have sent me all these things for my subsistence. So first of all You taste this food; then I shall take Your *prasādam*." This is Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

The Lord is supplying you everything you need. He'll not take away what He has given you. It is for you. But you must simply acknowledge, "God, you have given us such nice things for eating. Please, You take first." A small child is provided with everything by his father. But while eating, the child may offer the father something: "My dear father, this is a very nice thing. You take it." How pleased the father will be! Just imagine. The father knows that he has supplied everything to his child, but if the child offers something to the father, the father says, "Oh, it is very nice? All right. I shall eat it." This is love.

So, here Kṛṣṇa is explaining how you can offer your love to Him. *Patraṁ puṣpaṁ phalaṁ toyāṁ yo me bhaktyā prayacchati*. And if God accepts your things and eats them, then what more do you want? He becomes your most intimate friend. If you can make God your intimate friend, then there is nothing else wanted (*yaṁ labdhvā cāparaṁ lābhaṁ manyate nādhikaṁ tataḥ*). Also, you will remain undisturbed, even in the greatest difficulty (*yasmin shīto na duḥkhena guruṇāpi vicālyate*).

When we become convinced that Kṛṣṇa is our intimate friend and protector, how happy and peaceful we will be! So just be in love with Kṛṣṇa. Then you will see how much tranquility you feel, how you are protected by Kṛṣṇa, how you avoid insufficiency, how you become pure, and how you make progress in spiritual life. Thank you very much.

SEARCH

(continued from page 13)

agreed, they could never put brush to canvas or chisel to stone.

Over the course of the last few years, my deepening appreciation for spiritual art has cast in a different light the culturally based ideas of art that I grew up with. Instead of a progressive development in the arts, the contents of our museums seem to evince man's increasing estrangement from his spiritual roots. The further we divorce ourselves from the notion of a higher being and a life beyond matter, the more abstract and cerebral and sterile our artistry grows. And what usually passes as spiritual is in fact merely a negation of what we take to be material: form, personality, recognizable elements of creation. As a result, the spiritual reality—a world filled with spiritual variety, spiritual form and personality—remains hidden from our

view. That spiritual reality, says the *Bhagavad-gītā*, is revealed in proportion to one's renunciation of such concepts as "I am the creator" and "I am the artist" and one's acceptance of one's role as a servant of God.

No matter how innovative, lyrically spontaneous, or technically adept, the artist with no spiritual training or vision can never transcend in his work the limitations placed upon him by his alienation from God. Because such an artist is competing with God, he can never become a pure medium for the expression of God's infinite creativity.

On the other hand, even an untrained devotee artist *can* become such a medium. This is true because the transcendental quality of a work of art is a result not of technical skill but of the artist's purity of devotion, his desire to glorify God through his work. Properly guided, even an unskilled devotee artist can bring out the Su-

preme Spirit for all to see, as exemplified by the following anecdote told to me by one of the artists in Los Angeles.

Once, while traveling by plane, Śrīla Prabhupāda chanted Hare Kṛṣṇa around his beads with a drawing of Kṛṣṇa pinned to the back of the seat in front of Him. This is a common practice among devotees who travel, but it was striking that Śrīla Prabhupāda had chosen this particular drawing to meditate upon. It was done in crayon—the straightforward, untutored work of a child. It had little aesthetically redeeming value. But to Śrīla Prabhupāda it was finer than a Rembrandt, more meaningful than a Degas, more intriguing than a Picasso, because it was Kṛṣṇa drawn by the loving (albeit naïve) hand of His young devotee. In that simple sketch was abundant subject matter for Śrīla Prabhupāda's artistic contemplation: devotion, sincerity, earnest labor, and a six-year-old's humble offering of love to God.

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

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

Ancient India's Vedic 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.

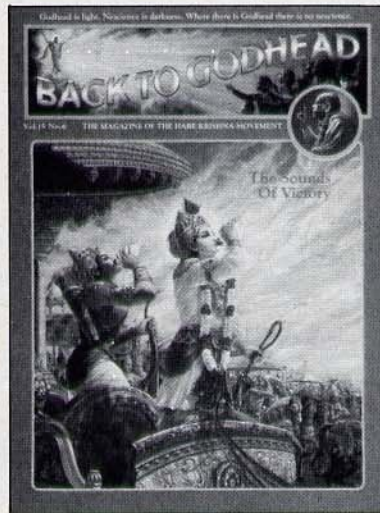
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NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

The Experience of Dying: A Hellish Ordeal or A Glorious Transition?

A recent article of mine contained an ancient account from the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* dealing with Ajāmīla's frightening near-death experience. Several readers have since written me to say that this view of death as horrifying contradicts the accounts of near-death experiences recorded by Dr. Raymond Moody, author of *Life after Life*, and other researchers. Of course, there *are* researchers, such as Dr. Maurice Rawlings (of the Diagnostic Center in Chattanooga, Tennessee) and Dr. Philip Swihart (of the Midwest Colorado Mental Health Center), who have recorded near-death experiences fully as horrifying as Ajāmīla's. But it seems that people who describe such ordeals have a much harder time remembering them than people who describe pleasant experiences. Thus they're not reported as often.

The Vedic literature agrees, of course, that death is not always terrifying. For the successful transcendentalist entering the spiritual world, death is a glorious experience. For the sinful person, however, death is ultimately a painful and horrifying passage into a hellish life of suffering. In either case, understanding death and rebirth is essential for everyone. We appreciate hearing from our readers, many of whom accept that there is life after death and who want to understand the subject of reincarnation scientifically.

The science of how, when, and under what conditions one should leave the body has been presented in the Vedic literature as the science of *yoga*. Formerly, expert *yogīs* knew this science so well that they could determine the exact time they would leave their body. *Bhagavad-gītā* tells which months and times of day are auspicious or inauspicious for the soul's departure. *Yogīs* would practice for many years and then, at an astrologically auspicious moment, give up the body and enter one of the higher planets or the spiritual world, according to their specific desire.

Bhagavad-gītā also describes the *bhakti-yogīs*, who do not need to wait for a particular auspicious moment to leave the body. Because the *bhakti-yogīs* are always absorbed in meditating on the Supreme Personality of Godhead, every moment is auspicious for them. They are therefore ready to leave their body at any time Kṛṣṇa desires. The Vedic literature relates accounts of both pleasant and unpleasant

experiences at the time of death, and some of our readers who were disturbed by the article on Ajāmīla may be relieved to read the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam's* account of the passing away of Bhīṣmadeva.

A contemporary of Lord Kṛṣṇa, Bhīṣma was a great general as well as a *yogī* and a pure devotee of the Lord. As a *yogī*, he knew the art of leaving the body at will. After the Battle of Kurukṣetra, Bhīṣma lay severely wounded, pierced by many arrows. But by his yogic prowess he was able to keep his life within his body. He had chosen to keep body and soul together a while longer so that he could impart some invaluable instructions to his nephew Yudhiṣṭhira, who would ascend the throne after the battle. After instructing Yudhiṣṭhira, Bhīṣma entered into deep meditation on the Supreme Lord, Kṛṣṇa, and thus transcended all pain.

Being a pure devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa, Bhīṣma was neither afraid of death nor interested in elevating himself to the heavenly planets in his next life. Nor was he anxious simply to gain liberation from the material world. His only concern at the time of death was to be rapt in thoughts of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa. As *Bhagavad-gītā* explains, one's thoughts at the time of death determine one's next life. And Bhīṣmadeva, in his pure devotion, thought simply of being always engaged in loving service to Kṛṣṇa. In response to the great devotion Bhīṣma had for Kṛṣṇa, the Lord personally came to his side as he lay on the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra during the last hours of his life.

Fixing his attention on the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Bhīṣmadeva said, "Let me now invest my thinking, feeling, and willing, which were so long engaged in various subjects and occupational duties, in the all-powerful Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. . . . He has appeared on this earth in His transcendental body, which resembles the bluish color of the *tamāla* tree. . . . May His glittering yellow dress and His lotus face, covered with paintings of sandalwood pulp, be the object of my attraction. . . . Let my mind thus go to Śrī Kṛṣṇa" (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.9.32-34).

Bhīṣma, a perfect *yogī*, fully absorbed his mind in Kṛṣṇa meditation (*samādhi*) by remembering the various transcendental pastimes of the Lord. First he remem-

bered Kṛṣṇa fighting on the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra, defending His devotee Arjuna. Kṛṣṇa's flowing hair had turned ashen from the dust raised by the horses' hooves, and beads of perspiration had wet His face. Bhīṣma next remembered the Lord as Arjuna's chariot driver, standing with a whip in His right hand and a bridle rope in His left. Bhīṣma prayed that at the moment of death his mind would be fixed on Lord Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet.

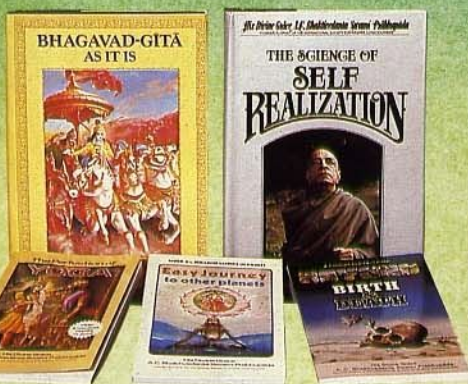
Next Bhīṣma remembered Lord Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana, enchanting the milkmaids with His graceful gestures and loving smiles. Then Bhīṣmadeva recalled Lord Kṛṣṇa in the great assembly of world leaders, where the elite royalty had accepted and worshiped Him as the most exalted of all, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Finally Bhīṣma meditated on Kṛṣṇa as the Supersoul within everyone's heart. (Although one, Lord Kṛṣṇa is simultaneously present everywhere as the Supersoul.)

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam records these Kṛṣṇa meditations of Bhīṣmadeva's, and just as they benefited Bhīṣma, they can benefit us. Anyone can fix his mind on Lord Kṛṣṇa by hearing these descriptions.

Because Bhīṣma was such a great personality, many eminent Vedic figures joined Lord Kṛṣṇa in witnessing his death. And everyone who saw his glorious death understood that he had reached the ultimate destination of life: returning back home, back to Godhead. The *Bhāgavatam* (1.9.44) relates, "Thus knowing that Bhīṣmadeva had merged into the unlimited eternity of the Supreme Absolute, all present [on the battlefield] became silent, like birds at the end of day."

The lives of Ajāmīla and Bhīṣma were vastly different, yet their ultimate goal was the same. As I described in the article about Ajāmīla, he beheld with horror the messengers of death coming to take him, but because he was fortunate enough to chant the name of God at the last moment, he was saved. So the essential thing is to remember Kṛṣṇa at the time of death. Regardless of outward circumstances, whoever dies remembering Kṛṣṇa with sincere devotion and helpless prayer will transcend the cycle of birth and death and enter the spiritual world. And this is truly the harmonious and peaceful destination that the subjects of Dr. Moody's research might hope for.—SDG

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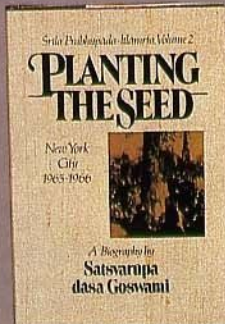
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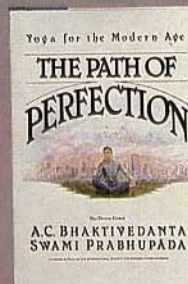
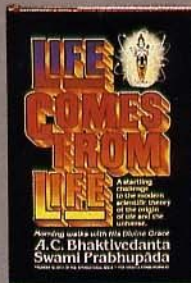
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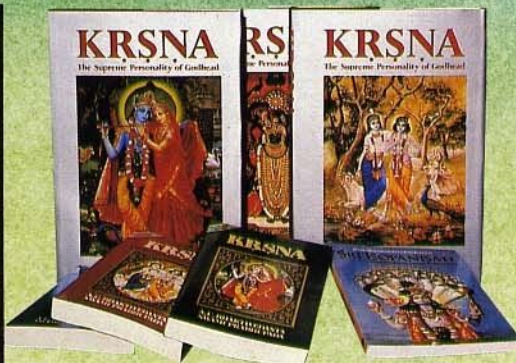
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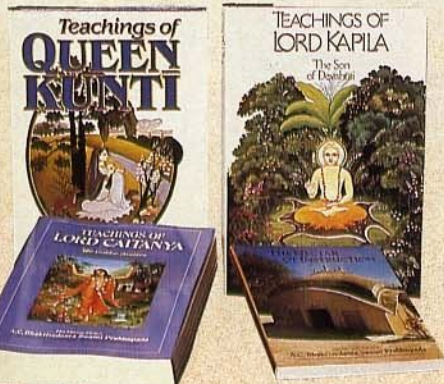
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