

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

BACK TO GODHEAD

Vol. 22 No. 4

THE MAGAZINE OF THE HARE KRISHNA MOVEMENT

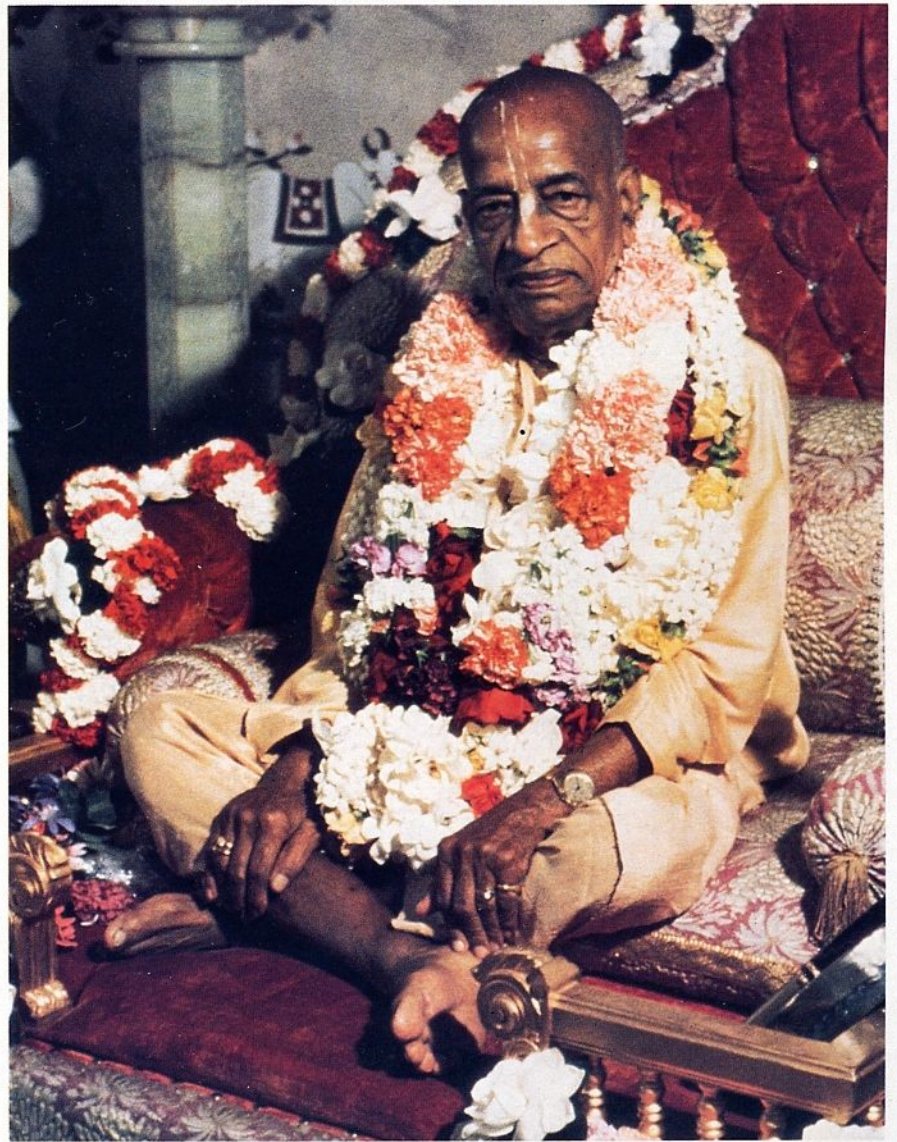


His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda,

Founder-*Ācārya* of the

International Society for Krishna Consciousness, 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. Advanced disciples throughout the world have been authorized to serve in the position of spiritual master, initiating disciples of their own. And these disciples, in turn, become linked with Śrīla Prabhupāda through the transcendental system of disciplic succession.



BACK TO GODHEAD is the monthly journal of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. When Śrīla Prabhupāda began the Society (in New York City, in 1966), he put into writing the purposes he wanted it to achieve. They are as follows:

1. To systematically propagate spiritual knowledge to society at large and to educate all peoples in the techniques of spiritual life in order to check the imbalance of values in life and to achieve real unity and peace in the world.
2. To propagate a consciousness of Kṛṣṇa, as it is revealed in *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.
3. To bring the members of the Society together with each other and nearer to Kṛṣṇa, the prime entity, thus developing the idea within the
- members, and humanity at large, that each soul is part and parcel of the quality of Godhead (Kṛṣṇa).
4. To teach and encourage the *saṅkīrtana* movement, congregational chanting of the holy names of God, as revealed in the teachings of Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.
5. To erect for the members and for society at large a holy place of transcendental pastimes dedicated to the personality of Kṛṣṇa.
6. To bring the members closer together for the purpose of teaching a simpler, more natural way of life.
7. With a view toward achieving the aforementioned purposes, to publish and distribute periodicals, books, and other writings.

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PRONUNCIATION. We spell Sanskrit words and names by a phonetic 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 vowel ṛ like the ri in *rim*, and e like the ch in *chair*. Pronounce the aspirated consonants (*ch, jh, dh*, etc.) as in *staunch-heart*, *hedgehog*, and *red-hot*. Finally, pronounce the sibilants ś and ṣ like *sh*. 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* (*dāśī* for women), meaning "servant." For instance, the name *Kṛṣṇa dāsa* means "servant of Kṛṣṇa."

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COVER: Swarthy-complexioned Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and His elder brother, Balarāma, enter the city of Mathurā. From Kṛṣṇa's own form He expands Balarāma, who, like Himself, possesses unlimited powers. Yet because Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Absolute Truth, He remains the complete whole, undiminished in any way. This is a demonstration of God's inconceivable power. (Painting by Muralīdhara dāsa.)



WITHOUT HIM NOTHING CAN EXIST

The most authoritative opinion
on an age-old controversy.

A lecture in Vṛndāvana on August 13, 1974
by HIS DIVINE GRACE
A. C. BHAKTIVEDANTA SWAMI PRABHUPĀDA
Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

*mataḥ parataram nānyat
kiñcid asti dhanañjaya
mayi sarvam idaṁ protaṁ
sūtre mañi-gaṇā iva*

“O conqueror of wealth, there is no truth superior to Me. Everything rests upon Me, as pearls are strung on a thread.”
(*Bhagavad-gītā* 7.7)

There are many philosophers. Some of them think the Absolute Truth is impersonal, and others say it is personal. In India the impersonalists are known as Māyāvādīs and the personalists are known as Vaiṣṇavas. So, here Lord Kṛṣṇa resolves the controversy about whether

the Absolute Truth is impersonal or personal.

The Absolute Truth is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Bhagavān. And the conclusion of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is that Lord Kṛṣṇa is Bhagavān: *kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam*. The *Ṛg-veda* confirms this: *tad viṣṇoḥ paramaṁ padam*. “Viṣṇu is the Supreme.” And *sadā paśyanti sūrayaḥ*: “The demigods, or those advanced in spiritual knowledge, always look toward the lotus feet of Viṣṇu.”

But the demons do not know that Viṣṇu is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the Absolute Truth. Because they have an atheistic attitude, they cannot understand that the Absolute Truth is the Supreme

In the *Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa states that He is the Supreme Absolute Truth, in no way subordinate to any “higher reality.” Great spiritual teachers throughout history have accepted Kṛṣṇa’s words and have substantiated them with numerous references from the Vedic literature.

PAINTING BY JAYARĀMA DĀSA

Person. *Na te viduḥ svārtha-gatim hi viṣṇum . . . uru-dāmnī baddhāḥ*. The atheists are so conditioned by the laws of nature that they cannot understand that Lord Viṣṇu is actually the goal of life. Suppose your hands and legs are tied up. Then you cannot do anything independently. Similarly, we are so tightly tied up by the stringent laws of nature that we are not at all independent and are covered by ignorance. But we are trying to adjust things in this material world so we can be happy. This is not possible. Therefore, the *sāstras* [scriptures] say, we do not know the real aim of our life. Everyone is self-interested. But we do not actually know what our self-interest is. Our real self-interest is to understand Lord Viṣṇu: *tad viṣṇoḥ paramaṁ padam*. That is our life's aim.

Viṣṇu and Kṛṣṇa are the same, but there is a controversy as to whether Viṣṇu is secondary or Kṛṣṇa is secondary. According to *sāstra*, neither is secondary. Viṣṇu is simply an expansion of Kṛṣṇa. They are not different personalities. As said in the *Brahma-samhitā*, *advaitam acyutam anādim ananta-rūpam*. Govinda, or Kṛṣṇa, has *ananta-rūpam*, unlimited forms.

From one candle you can light another candle, then a second candle, then a third. And while no candle is less powerful than the others, there is still an original candle. Similarly, Viṣṇu, Rāma, Nṛsiṁha, Balarāma—all are expansions of the Supreme Person, Kṛṣṇa, and they are all as powerful as He. But Kṛṣṇa is still the original, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Kṛṣṇa therefore says here, *mattaḥ parataram nānyat*: "There is no authority superior to Me." This is the conclusion of the *sāstra*.

In another place in the *Bhagavad-gītā* [10.2], Kṛṣṇa says, *aham ādir hi devānām*: "I am the origin of all the demigods." The principal demigods are Brahmā and Śiva. They are *guṇa-avatāras*; they create and destroy this material world.

The material world is composed of three *guṇas*, or qualities: goodness, passion, and ignorance. The director of the goodness department is Lord Viṣṇu, the director of the passion department is Lord Brahmā, and the director of the ignorance department is Lord Śiva. But the origin of all of them is Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, after describing all the main incarnations of God, the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* concludes [1.3.28], *ete cāmsa-kalā pumsaḥ kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam*: "All the incarnations mentioned in this chapter are either expansions of Kṛṣṇa or expansions of the expansions." The first expansion of Kṛṣṇa is Balarāma, and from Balarāma expand the *catur-vyūha*: Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna, Vāsudeva, and Aniruddha. All these expansions are

equally powerful. They are not different from each other.

So, Kṛṣṇa is the origin of all incarnations of God. *Īśvaraḥ paramaḥ kṛṣṇaḥ*. The word *īśvara* means "powerful controller." The demigods are *īśvaras*; you are also an *īśvara*; I am also an *īśvara*. Anyone who has a little control over something can be called an *īśvara*. That is the dictionary meaning. But even the topmost *īśvaras* in this universe—namely Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva—are not the supreme *īśvara*. The supreme *īśvara* is Kṛṣṇa. That is the śāstric conclusion. And Kṛṣṇa Himself confirms this here: *mattaḥ parataram nānyat*. "Nothing is superior to Me."

Arjuna understood this conclusion, and

The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement gives you an opportunity to understand who the Supreme Personality of Godhead is. There are so many societies, so many religious systems, but they cannot give an exact idea of the Supreme.

therefore in the *Bhagavad-gītā* [10.13–14] he said to Kṛṣṇa,

*āhus tvām ṛṣayaḥ sarve
devarṣir nāradas tathā
asito devalo vyāsaḥ
svayam caiva bravīṣi me
sarvam etad ṛtam manye
yan mām vadasi keśava*

"Not only are You personally saying that You are the Supreme, but great sages like Vyāsa, Asita, Nārada, and Devala also declare that You are the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Therefore I have no doubt." The conclusion is that Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement gives you an opportunity to understand who the Supreme Personality of Godhead is. There are so many societies all over the world, so many religious systems, but they cannot give an exact idea of the

Supreme Personality of Godhead. Some have one idea, others have another idea, but as far as we are concerned, we know that Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

And that is the correct conclusion. Kṛṣṇa's claim that He is the Absolute Truth is supported not only by the *Vedas* and the demigods, headed by Lord Brahmā, and by authorities like Vyāsa-deva, Asita, Devala, Nārada, and Arjuna, but even by Śaṅkarācārya, although he was the leading impersonalist. He admits, *sa bhagavān svayam kṛṣṇaḥ*: "Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead." And *nārāyaṇaḥ paro 'vyaktāt*: "Nārāyaṇa [Kṛṣṇa] is not a person of this created, material world."

Since all authorities declare Kṛṣṇa to be the Supreme Personality of Godhead, there is no doubt about it. And here Kṛṣṇa personally confirms, *mattaḥ parataram nānyat*: "There is no being superior to Me." Where is the difficulty in understanding what God is? There is no difficulty. But if we are obstinate, if we do not want to understand what God is, that is a different thing.

Now, here Kṛṣṇa also says, *mayi sarvam idam*: "Everything is in Me." It has already been explained in this chapter that Kṛṣṇa has two energies—the material energy and the spiritual energy. They are like heat and light, the energies of a fire. So, Kṛṣṇa is enjoying His spiritual, blissful life with His spiritual energy. He is completely spiritual, possessing a body of eternal knowledge and bliss (*sac-cid-ānanda-vigraha*). He is *ānandamayo 'bhyāsāt*, full of spiritual bliss. He is in the spiritual world, Goloka Vṛndāvana, enjoying *ānanda*, spiritual bliss, with His eternal associates—the *gopīs*; the cowherd boys; His mother, Yaśodā; His father, Nanda Mahārāja; and so on. This is confirmed in the *Brahma-samhitā*, *goloka eva nivasaty akhilātma-bhūtaḥ*: "Kṛṣṇa is in Goloka, but He is also present everywhere." As Kṛṣṇa says in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, *ekāmsena sthito jagat*: "With but a particle of Myself I support this universe." And in the *Brahma-samhitā*, *aṅgāntarastha-paramāṇu-cayāntara-stham*: "He is within every atom in the universe." He is also within your heart: *īśvaraḥ sarva-bhūtānām hṛd-deśe 'rjuna tiṣṭhati*. In one word, without Him, nothing can exist.

Therefore here Kṛṣṇa says, *mayi sarvam idam*: "Everything is existing in Me." The spiritual and the material energies are working in the material world. And since these two energies are emanating from Kṛṣṇa, everything is resting on Him. In another place Kṛṣṇa says, *mayā tatam idam sarvam*: "I am expanded everywhere." He is expanded by His energy, just as a lamp is expanded by its light. When

the illumination of the lamp is stopped, the expansion also stops.

So, whatever we see is all resting on Kṛṣṇa's energy. It is working due to Kṛṣṇa's energy. This is not very difficult to understand. Think about our own position. Am I this body? No, I am not this body. The body is my "house." I am living in this house. Am I the mind? No, I am not the mind. This inquiry is a meditation aimed at understanding that "I am not this body, I am not this mind," and so on. *Neti, neti*—"not this, not this." The conclusion of this meditation is *aham-brahmāsmi*: "I am spirit."

A particle of Brahman, spirit, is within the body. It is very small. This is the *jīvātmā*. But it is stated that in the body there is not only the *jīvātmā* but also the Paramātmā, the Supersoul. They are living together. Where? Kṛṣṇa says [Bg. 18.61], *īśvaraḥ sarva-bhūtānām hṛd-deśe 'rjuna tiṣṭhati*: "The Paramātmā is sitting within the heart of all living beings." So, if the Paramātmā is within my heart and I'm sitting with Paramātmā, then I am also within the heart.

Modern medical science also knows the importance of the heart. They take great care of the heart because they know that when the heart stops, everything stops. But medical science doesn't know that it is because the *jīvātmā* goes out of the heart that death occurs.

On the small scale, the whole construction of our body is dependent on the *jīvātmā*. The *jīvātmā* is so small—one ten-thousandth part of the tip of a hair. Because that small particle is within this body, the body is so beautiful, it is working nicely, its brain is working—everything is going on.

The scientists are trying to find out what the living force is. Sometimes they are examining the blood, sometimes they are examining the cells, sometimes this, sometimes that. But it is all a failure because they cannot examine the *jīvātmā*. The *jīvātmā* is so small that it is not possible to hold it. You cannot even see where it is. But it is perceived that there is *something* within the body that is making the body work. Generally this is called the living force.

Now, this living force is spread all over the body. As Kṛṣṇa says in the *Bhagavad-gītā* [2.17], *avināśi tu tad viddhi yena sarvam idaṁ tatam*: "You cannot destroy that thing which is spread all over the body." What is that thing? Consciousness. My consciousness is spread all over my body. Therefore, as long as I am in this body, I feel pains and pleasures.

Now, I am a very, very minute particle, but Kṛṣṇa is the supreme whole. So, as I am controlling this body, Kṛṣṇa is controlling the whole universe. Where is the dif-

ficulty in understanding? There is no difficulty.

But we'll not understand. That is the difficulty. Here Kṛṣṇa clearly says, *mayi sarvam idaṁ protaṁ sūtre maṇi-gaṇā iva*: "Everything rests upon Me, as pearls are strung on a thread." And in another place [Bg. 9.4] He says, *mayi tatam idaṁ sarvam*: "By Me this whole universe is pervaded." How? That has already been explained: by His two energies, the spiritual energy and the material energy. These are expanded all over the creation. So, where is the difficulty in understanding that everything we see is simply Kṛṣṇa's energy?

Those who are devotees, Vaiṣṇavas,

they can understand that everything is Kṛṣṇa's energy. All of us living entities are part and parcel of Kṛṣṇa. So, the combination of the living entities and matter makes up the whole creation. As Kṛṣṇa says here, *sūtre maṇi-gaṇā iva*: "Everything rests on Me, as pearls are strung on a thread." The pearls are dazzling, but they're all resting on the thread. Similarly, everything is resting on Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is the support.

So, the scientists may discover so many laws of nature, but they do not know that the original support of everything is Kṛṣṇa. That is the Vedic conclusion.

Thank you. Hare Kṛṣṇa. ❏

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FOOD FOR LIFE

A Country Slice

"The elephant gets his hundred pounds,
the ant his grain. Only man has an economic problem."

by SUREŚVARA DĀSA
PHOTOS BY BALI MAHĀRĀJA DĀSA

"God made the country, and man made the city," wrote the poet Cowper. And as one journalist remarked, "The Devil made the small town."

Or so it seemed to us a couple of years ago here in deepest Pennsylvania. At the Lions Club's annual fall parade, a local church had depicted the open sepulcher of the "RISEN SAVIOR" next to three grave markers: one for Buddha, one for Mohammed, and one for Kṛṣṇa. The float had placed first, the newspaper ran a photo, and since we've yet to see a Buddhist or Mohammedan out here, the picture spoke to us like a punch in the nose.

Rascals! Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He never dies. That's ignorance! Besides, why glorify Christ at others' expense. Call the minister!

The reverend was apologetic. Against his advice, some ladies in the church had gone ahead and arranged for the float. He confessed "pastoral neglect."

Call the newspaper!

The editor was frank: "I knew you people weren't at the parade, so I didn't think you'd notice the picture. Write us a letter and we'll print it."

A lively exchange of letters ensued, selling out the county paper for weeks. As

Thanksgiving approached, we raised the issue of meat-eating: "Can you picture gentle Jesus—the emblem of compassion—patronizing a slaughterhouse?"

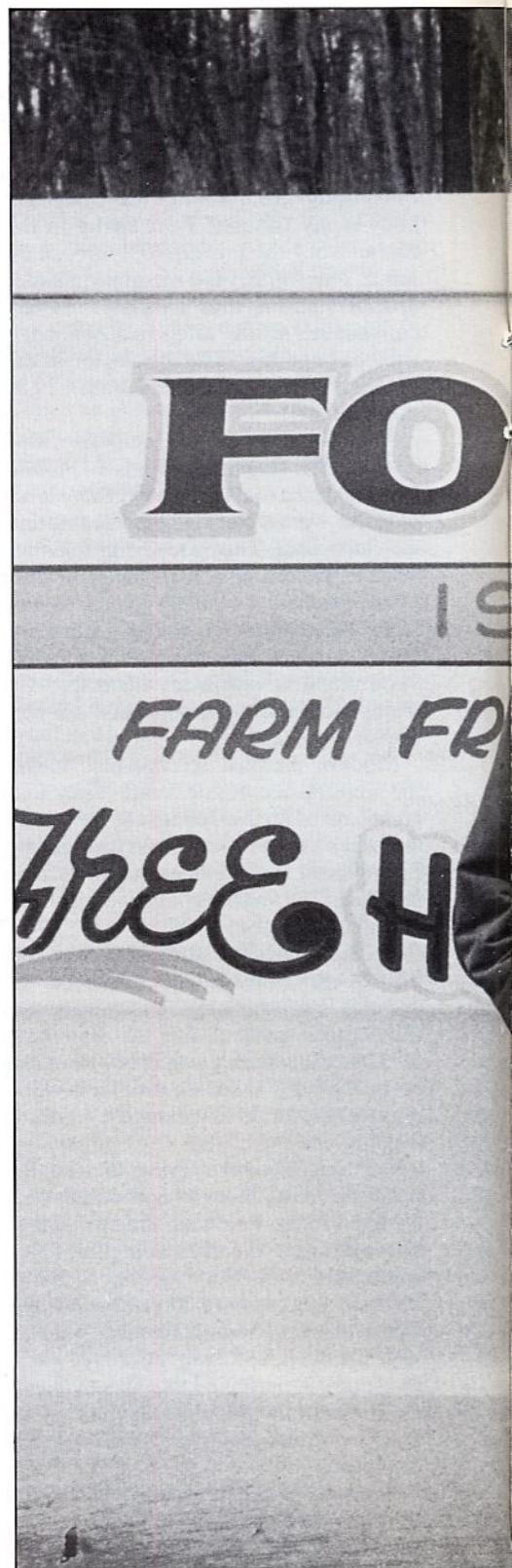
The reply really threw us. From the ox roast to the turkey shoot, from the meat-house to the chicken factory, from the flower-scented valleys to the stony wooded hills (where workers and schoolboys were let out to hunt deer), came the resounding "YES!"

It was then and there we resolved to give our neighbors Food for Life.

Hare Kṛṣṇa Food for Life, like other food distribution programs, arose in the cities to meet the challenge of poverty amidst plenty. By 1983 some 30 million Americans were living at or below the poverty line; about one of every eight able and willing to work was out of a job; and two to three million wandered the streets, homeless and hungry.

By God's natural arrangement, no creature in the jungle starves—the elephant gets his hundred pounds, the ant his grain. Only modern man has an economic problem. Rising hunger amidst rising surpluses—the ultimate mismanagement.

The politicians were embarrassed, but ISKCON especially—with its expanding



network of temples, restaurants, and dairy farms—was ready. Between 1983 and 1986 Food for Life centers sprang up in most major cities throughout the United States and Canada. Good food, too. Freshly baked bread, piping hot curries and casseroles, crisp green salads, fruit and yogurt drinks, delicious Indian desserts—this was no crumbs for bums. What's more, it



was *prasādam*, Kṛṣṇa's mercy, a sumptuous sacrament which, the devotees knew, could arouse one's dormant, natural love for God. The devotees' enthusiasm, therefore, was boundless.

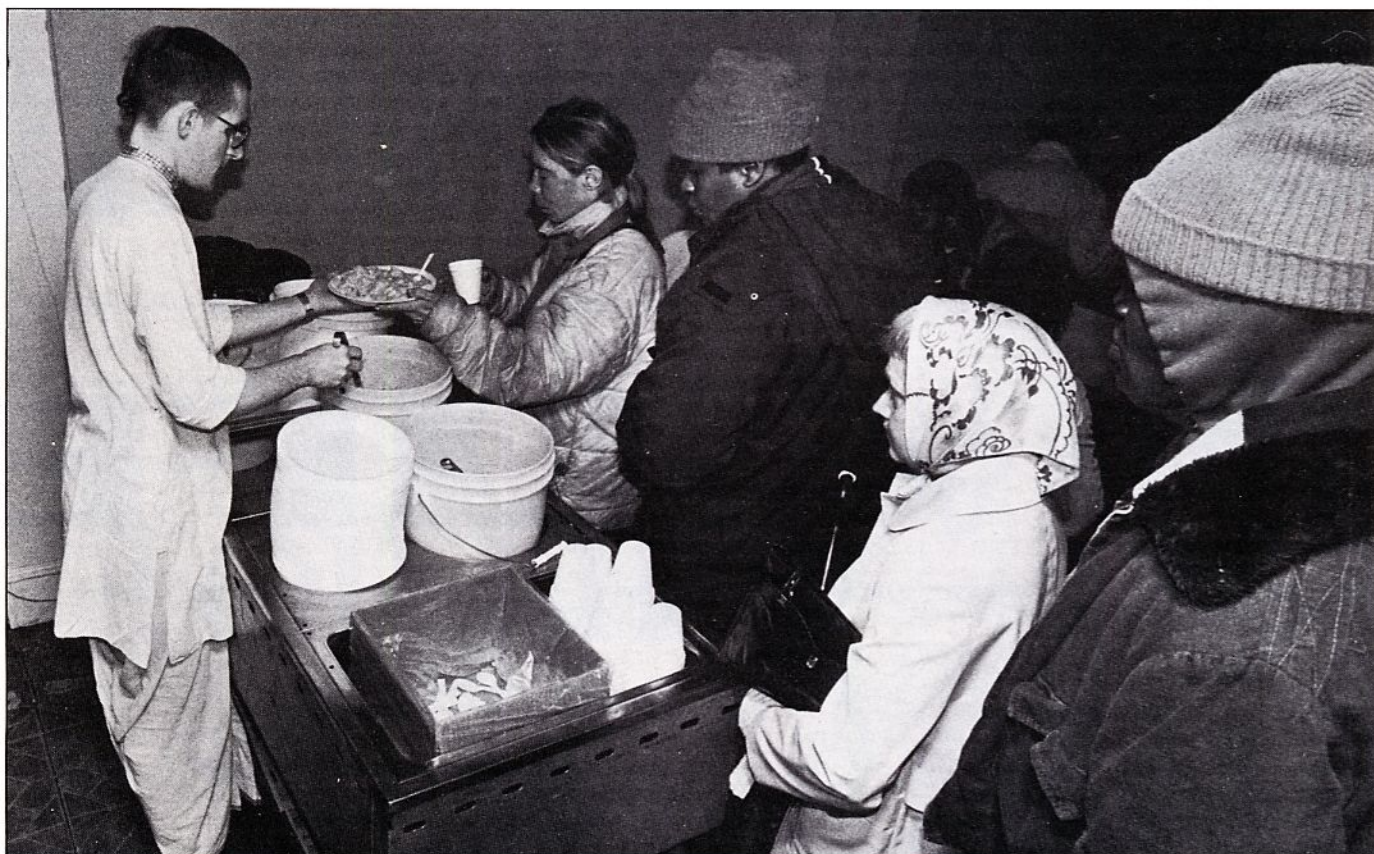
And the politicians took notice. "They can take \$15,000 and do what the average food program does with \$75,000 or \$100,000," said a Cleveland City Councilman.

"It's because of how they cook it."

Grants at the federal, state, and local levels; donations of United States Department of Agriculture surplus foodstuffs; and access to private food banks helped Food for Life expand throughout North America—and beyond. Besides ISKCON's ongoing work in India (over 12 million meals served to date), Food

Sureśvara dāsa (right) and Bhakta Graham stand ready with a van-load of kṛṣṇa-prasādam.

for Life now reaches the needy in Peru, Bolivia, Spain, France, the Philippines, Australia, Nigeria, Kenya, and remote



villages in South Africa. The program seems to grow with the hunger. As one Australian clergyman put it: "Hare Kṛṣṇa, I think, will be the Salvation Army of the twenty-first century."

Just a few hours' drive from us, ISKCON of Philadelphia's Food for Life program is already filling that role. Begun in 1983, the program currently feeds up to 1,500 people a week. An on-site shelter handles twenty-five homeless men nightly, offering them psychological help and job counseling. The program has a \$100,000 annual budget funded by grants from the federal and city governments and Traveler's Aid. A proposed new shelter for 100 women and children would boost the budget to \$500,000, and welfare officials, noting the devotees' skill in helping the needy, are enthusiastic.

In February 1985, encouraged by the devotees' success in the big city, we completed plans to bring Food for Life to the hinterland. We had a good field. The two counties nearest our farm were filled with old-timers, many of them sick, disabled, or struggling on a fixed income. Illiteracy and unemployment were well above the national average. And with that float winning first prize, God knows we needed the public relations.

A cornucopia decorated our first newspaper ad. "FOOD FOR LIFE. Free Hot Meals Delivered To Your Door. Monday, Wednesday, Friday. All Wholesome Farm Fresh Produce And Milk

Products. Sponsored By ISKCON Farm. Call 527-4101."

Mary Catherine Campbell was the first to call. We drove out to Lewistown to make the delivery and found a sweet little old black lady with a heart condition and crippling arthritis.

"I'm not black, honey, I'm colored. The Lord has many flowers in His garden. Now be a good boy and open this jar for me, would you?"

The steaming vegetables, the fresh bread and butter, the salad from the garden, the fruit from the orchard, the homemade cookies—Mary loved every bite and told all her friends. By month's end we were serving a half dozen other folks in her apartment building. And more were calling. A shut-in with terminal cancer; a pregnant mother with cerebral palsy; a little girl's divorced father who hurt his back at work; a widow who ran a kennel with her retarded son. People who had never heard of Kṛṣṇa before were flocking to His Food for Life, and each new tale of suffering told us to get cooking.

By summer we were serving seventy-five people, and the community was taking notice. The newspaper ran a front-page story. The hospital started referring outpatients to us. A radio reporter hopped in our van—now emblazoned with a Food for Life logo—and did a sixty second news spot. Even the laconic old farmers, the guys with the bandanas and Casey Jones hats, were giving us the thumbs-up. They

*B*egun in 1983, ISKCON Philadelphia's Food for Life program currently feeds up to 1,500 people a week. An on-site shelter handles twenty-five homeless men nightly, offering them psychological help and job counseling.

weren't sure what we believed, but they sure believed in our food.

A year had passed: 13,000 meals served, and the count was rising. To help defray the costs of the program, we tapped into a Harrisburg area food bank, but all they could offer us was Planter's Peanuts and Hawaiian Punch. We turned to the USDA. In the cities, USDA surplus regularly contributes bulk foodstuffs—like butter, flour, and cheese—to Hare Kṛṣṇa Food for Life. At any time, government inspectors may come to a central distribution site and see the obvious need of the recipients. The people on our country-style program, though, were somewhat hidden. Wary of invading people's privacy, government officials left it to us to prove our recipients' need, so in May 1986 we did a survey. The results:

1. Fifteen percent of our recipients were practically illiterate and couldn't fill out the questionnaire by themselves.

2. Fifty-five percent reported serious handicaps in their household.

3. Eighty-eight percent were at or below the poverty line.

Those figures qualified us to receive USDA surplus, but even more heartening were the people's answers to the survey question How has Food for Life helped you? Some replies:

"I is near blind. I is mental retarded. I has diabetes. Fresh fruit and salads helps me."

"Bone disease in legs. My food stamps don't go far enough. The boys are very nice and polite. They don't make you feel small because you get help."

"Epilepsy. Sometimes we don't have any food and Food for Life helps us to stay alive. We like the boys for being themselves. Thank you for being yourselves everybody."

"Helps with meals between checks. They can bring a hundred dollar bill if they like."

"Diabetes. High blood pressure. Arthritis. Since receiving food from ISKCON farm, we have been relieved of the anxiety of not having enough to eat. Thanks for the food and for the care shown the recipients. And may God bless you."

Encouraged by the survey (and the

warming weather), we decided to do something we'd never dared. Take off our hats. The shaved head, respected in India, usually shook heads in America—and out here in the woods, the lock of hair on top would make a pretty bull's eye. Yet Śrī Caitanya had said that a devotee is one who, when seen, reminds one of Kṛṣṇa. Simply by seeing us, people should remember who was providing everyone's food for life. The shaved head and the *tilaka** decorating the forehead were the timeless trademarks of Kṛṣṇa's devotee. Would folks mistake *tilaka* for the mark of the beast?

Only one old jezebel canceled. The rest of our recipients didn't mind at all. Not after having eaten so much *prasādam*. Oh, they blinked at first, and some of the kids made fun. But *prasādam* had touched their hearts. Anyone who gave away food like this must be God-sent. We were their friends. To some, their ministers.

As I write, we're serving 150 people thrice weekly over a hundred-mile route. At 7 A.M. Caitanya dāsa starts the cooking in the temple kitchen. The main course to-

*Sacred clay marking the body as a temple of God.
**Deep-fried vegetable-and-batter balls in tomato sauce.

day: spaghetti and *kofta* balls.**

Many nutrition experts call the Hare Kṛṣṇa diet one of the healthiest in the world because its selection of lacto-vegetarian foods contains the most important and basic nutrients. Millions of people are hungry, and millions more are overfed but undernourished. But a properly balanced vegetarian diet easily provides higher-quality protein than a nonvegetarian one—and at much less cost.

Caitanya dāsa cleans as he works. "Cleanliness is next to godliness," he says with a smile. He prepares, spices, and cooks the food to bring out the maximum in taste and nutrition. And like all good devotee cooks, he knows that the most important element—in preparation, in

"We decided to do something we'd never dared: take off our hats. A devotee is one who reminds one of Kṛṣṇa. Simply by seeing us people should remember who was supplying everyone's food for life."





serving, and in offering—is to act with love for कृष्णा.

By 11:30 Graham, Bill, and I are rolling off in the van, anticipating the day's deliveries. Over the river and through the woods to Grandmother Ruth's we go.

Ruth says she was sorry to read that our farm's cow sign was stolen. "I know who done it," she confides. "My nephew. That boy shames me."

Ruth loves Food for Life, but sometimes her hearing confounds us.

Ruth: How much do I owe you for the strawberries?

Bill: They're free.

Ruth: Three? Three dollars for a cup of strawberries?

Bill: No, free! Did you think we were going to make you buy them?

Ruth: What? And I have to divide them! Three dollars and I have to divide them!

Food for laughs. But the next stop always sobers us. Mountains of debris, poor sanitation, contaminated water, faulty diets, poorly heated and overcrowded houses. The Other America. Sign on the Eby's door: THIS HOUSE GUARDED BY SHOTGUN THREE DAYS A WEEK. YOU GUESS WHICH THREE.

"My husband loves your Hindu spaghetti," says Mrs. Eby.

Mr. Eby is out of sight, embarrassed but grateful we're putting food on his table. The Ebys could never afford the school lunch for their kids, whose classmates

made fun of the meager grub they brought from home. Now their kids bring Food for Life to school, and their *prasādam* treats are the envy of the lunchroom.

Alvin Mumma has been blind for sixteen years, and wife Lucy is blind in one eye from crippling arthritis. Surviving on Social Security, the Mummas of McAlisterville live in a tumble-down trailer with their grown son Harold.

Harold is a bona fide *prasādam* addict. All of our McAlisterville recipients called us because Harold told them about *prasādam*. The first time we served *kofta* balls with the spaghetti, Harold went wild. After eating his and his parents' portions, he cycled around town and ate five servings delivered to his neighbors. That made a gallon.

Prasādam changes people. One McAlisterville lady was spreading rumors that we kidnapped kids and made them work on our farm. We had lots of cats and dogs on our farm, she said, so we ground them up and threw them into the food. But when she tasted some *prasādam* that Harold had slipped her, she called us that night to sign up.

Another recipient used to threaten us. He said he found twigs and glass in the food; said he cut his mouth up and had to go to the hospital; showed us an old salad he said had made his daughter sick; said he would get his deer rifle out after us if we came back. His mother said he wasn't

*"Mr. Sassaman, the
Image of Santa
Claus, repairs lawnmowers
and moonlights as a butcher's
helper. . . . These people
never ask me a penny
for their food. It's good food,
and they're good people."*

"wrapped too tight," so we didn't. A month later he called and begged us to come back. Life without *prasādam* was just too painful; today, he is our most respectful recipient.

Autumn leaves lighten the road to Lewistown. An old man rides a bicycle with baskets full of cans; another rummages a barrel for salvage. Past a golden canopy, the big valley spreads its farmlands wide. Harvest colors glisten in the sunshine, cumulus castles sail the blue. Poverty amidst plenty is doubly absurd in the country, the home of health and abundance. Who but a savage would kill or eat an animal when the earth has plenty in store? Clean air, fresh water, peace of mind—you can't buy these gifts in town. Yet most of our recipients live in these bleak industrial backwaters. They strew the valley like litter. Nature's fine: hunger, disease, despair.

Old Mr. Young sits on his porch reading

one of our books. He likes *prasādam* almost as much as his dog, Babe, does. As soon as Babe sees the van coming, he starts roaring and dancing and wagging his tail. I toss him a bun. He leaps, catches it in midair, and has already swallowed once by the time he touches ground. He eats cookies faster.

The Starr's porch is caving in. Food for Life button clacking against my suspender buckle, I bound up the steps, knock, and (to the tune of "London Bridge is Falling Down") sing: "Hare Kṛṣṇa Food for Life. . ."

And from inside: "Food for Life, Food for Life," and ten people roar with laughter. Mrs. Starr flings open the door. "Where's Grambo? Jane wants to learn that *swami* dance. Anyway, come on in."

Family members are draped everywhere. Puppies play in a pile of trash. Over the table where I set the *prasādam*, a fly swatter hangs from a cross. Little Bobby shoots me an obscene gesture. "I hate your damn food."

"He's mean since he broke his wrist," says Mrs. Starr, flushing. "Bobby, I want you to apologize to the man, *right now*."

Bobby says he's sorry and I sign his cast.

By three o'clock we're nearing the end of the line. And so are many of the old folks at Burgard Apartments and Lawler Place. Recipients here have worked hard all their lives, are more or less disabled, and now live alone on food stamps and Social Security. Their altar is the television. But a human being is meant to die thinking of God, not some sap on the soaps. Our alert recipients agree.

Mary Catherine Campbell has just returned from the hospital with a new hip. She now has six replacements in her hips, shoulders, and knees.

"They'll never replace you, Mary."

"Oh, goodness gracious!" she laughs. "Only the Lord can do that." Then: "Open this letter for me, would you, Honey? Somebody slipped it under my door last night."

I open the letter and see a violent scrawl. Mary asks me to read it aloud.

"You black bitch, you been gettin' too much free stuff. You better work for what you get."

"THE NERVE!" The hurt in Mary's eyes turns to pity. "Anyone with that much hate inside must really be suffering. Anyway, I can't be losing sleep over it. Just leave me a salad today, Honey."

"Okay, Mary." I want to say more. Next time. "See you Friday."

"Lord willin'."

Dante Molinari likes his meals unsalted. He walks with an eagle's-head cane he picked up for ten bucks at the VFW. His favorite World War II memory is

(continued on page 32)

"No One Should Go Hungry"

Mukunda Goswami, director of Hare Kṛṣṇa Food for Life, explains the spiritual significance of *prasādam* distribution.

Profuse distribution of *prasādam*, vegetarian food offered to Kṛṣṇa, is integral to the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes in his commentary on the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*:

In the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement, the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*, the dancing in ecstasy and the eating of remnants of food offered to the Lord are very important. One may be illiterate or incapable of understanding the philosophy, but if he partakes of these three items, he will certainly be liberated without delay.

Elsewhere in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* Śrīla Prabhupāda explains, "Actually, by eating such *mahā-prasādam* one is freed of all the contaminations of the material condition."

Commenting on a great festival held by the saint Mādhavendra Purī at Govardhana Hill in India, Śrīla Prabhupāda explains that all the food in Govardhana village was offered to the Deity of Gopāla and then distributed to everyone.

They brought all the food they had in stock, and they came before the Deity not only to accept *prasāda* for themselves, but to distribute it to others. The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement vigorously approves this practice of preparing food, offering it to the Deity, and distributing it to the general population. This activity should be extended universally. . . .

Giving *prasādam* specifically to the poor is also an important theme in Vedic literature. The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* glorifies King Rantideva, who, at the point of breaking a forty-eight-day fast, fed two beggars the very food he was about to eat. Śrīla Prabhupāda explains this selfless quality thus:

A Vaiṣṇava [devotee of Kṛṣṇa] is therefore described as being . . . very much aggrieved by the suffering of others. As such, a Vaiṣṇava engages in activities for the real welfare of human society.

In India in the early seventies Śrīla Prabhupāda began ISKCON Food Relief (IFR). One of his mandates for the project was that "no one within ten miles of the temple should go hungry." A big task. IFR grew and fed vast numbers of India's poor, but went largely unnoticed in the West.

Hare Kṛṣṇa Food for Life was born out of two needs: first, to extend the IFR concept to the West; and second, to dispel certain misconceptions about the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement. (In the United States, a stereotypical perception of devotees fre-

quently surfaced. We were street chanters, airport solicitors, "cultists," or religious zealots crusading for a kind of salvation that was foreign, even suspect, to the Judeo-Christian tradition.) It was important that Western society understand devotees as Vaiṣṇavas, people who care deeply about others and who show that care through their actions.

In the West, even though many original precepts and practices of the Judeo-Christian tradition are no longer extant, "religious charity" is still a widely supported phenomenon. We knew we would achieve greater public understanding by extending our many existing *prasādam* distribution programs to reach the hungry and destitute. ISKCON's Public Affairs Ministry decided to name the program "Hare Kṛṣṇa Food for Life," remembering that Kṛṣṇa is the essence of all life and that all the food would be prepared for the pleasure of Kṛṣṇa.

We began in 1982 with a small booth from which devotees fed 150 hungry and homeless people free *prasādam* three days a week in downtown San Diego's Horton Plaza. Within five years the program had spanned the globe and is now active in dozens of cities worldwide. Substantial government and private donations of food, money, and other items for the program were significant signs of approval by the establishment.

In a few years Hare Kṛṣṇa Food for Life had, in many regions of the world, dramatically improved the public's perception of the movement. On May 29, 1985, Mayor Goode of Philadelphia delivered the keynote address at the grand opening of that city's Hare Kṛṣṇa Food for Life shelter, heralding a new development in the program's growth—shelters for the homeless. A second shelter about to open in Philadelphia will house one hundred homeless women and children.

Currently Hare Kṛṣṇa Food for Life programs interface with programs for animal rights and with vegetarian groups throughout the world. Hare Kṛṣṇa Food for Life regularly participates in such annual events as the Great American Meatout in the United States and the protest staged against Italy's hunting law on the first day of Italy's hunting season. Future plans include more networking with vegetarian groups, animal rights groups, and hunger-relief and shelter groups around the world, the launching of culinary and nutritional instruction programs for the needy, and more shelters for the homeless.



ROGER ANNEY

Lord Kṛṣṇa's Cuisine

Cuisine and Continence

A vegetarian diet provides an often overlooked benefit for those on the spiritual path.

by VIŚĀKHĀ-DEVĪ DĀSĪ

In the course of my reading I recently learned how a vegetarian diet is closely related to continence.

"Men's interest in sex . . . may be reduced or in some cases eliminated by a totally vegetarian diet. . . . Because animal protein promotes a higher production of sexual secretions, large amounts of meat daily could lead to a need for more frequent orgasmic release," reports *East West Magazine*.

On further study I learned that this concept is not new in the West. Pythagoras, the famous Greek mathematician and philosopher, believed that a strict vege-

tarian diet was necessary to make continence easy and habitual. His followers (the Pythagoreans) married and had children, but also practiced continence in the same way that married Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees do, refraining from sex except for procreation.

Dr. Raymond Bernard writes, "From Pythagoras, Plato and Aristotle learned the doctrines of vegetarianism and continence, to which they both adhered throughout their long lives; and Aristotle taught these doctrines to his pupil Alexander the Great, who was a strict vegetarian. . . ."

Of course, the prospect of continence may make a vegetarian diet unattractive to many. Indeed, Freudian philosophy has so influenced modern thinking that continence is considered a health danger—the cause of nervous and mental disorders—and is scorned as a product of masochism and religious superstition. Writers Aldous Huxley and John Updike judged chastity a "sexual perversion," and Updike banned it from his novels. *East West Magazine* acquiesces: "If after six or eight months on a mostly vegetarian diet, sexual desire has not returned, it may be wise to increase the intake of animal protein. . . ."

However, besides Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans, some of the greatest geniuses in history practiced continence and experienced its physical, mental, and moral benefits. Among them were Newton, da Vinci, Tolstoy, Michelangelo, Raphael, Handel, Beethoven, St. Francis, Locke, Spinoza, Kant, and Gandhi.

Continence is especially important in spiritual life. Śrīla Prabhupāda, the founder and spiritual master of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement, explains, "The highest pleasure in terms of matter is sex pleasure. The whole world is moving under its spell, and a materialist cannot work at all without this motivation. But a person engaged in Kṛṣṇa consciousness can work with greater vigor without sex pleasure, which he avoids. That is the test in spiritual realization. Spiritual realization and sex pleasure go ill together. A Kṛṣṇa conscious person is not attracted to any kind of sense pleasure, due to his being a liberated soul."

One intent on spiritual advancement, therefore, should embrace a vegetarian diet and welcome the resultant subsiding of passions. In fact, one of the reasons continence has been deemed unnatural and repressive is because nonvegetarian foods tend to arouse passions to an unnatural degree. In other words, for one who is accustomed to the artificial stimulation of a nonvegetarian diet, to practice continence may appear repressive. "Of all members of the mammalian family," Dr. Bernard writes, "civilized man alone is a victim of an exaggerated and morbid sexual urge, a condition which he has inflicted, to a certain extent, on the animals which he has domesticated and which have adopted his diet. . . ." Dr. Bernard reports that when apes are fed meats instead of their customary fruit, they become licentious and vicious.

Havelock Ellis, author of *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, confirms that the sex life of civilized man is unnaturally excessive due to certain aphrodisiacal stimuli rather than to instinct; among such stimuli are tobacco, alcohol, and coffee, sexually stimulating literature, motion

(Recipes from *The Hare Krishna Book of Vegetarian Cooking*, by Ādi-rāja dāsa)

Flat Bread Filled with Spiced Potatoes (*Alu Paratha*)

Preparation time: 1½ hours
Servings: 12

10 ounces whole-wheat flour
1 teaspoon salt
½ cup warm water
3 medium-size potatoes
1 tablespoon ghee (clarified butter)
½ teaspoon cumin seeds
1 teaspoon fresh ginger, grated
½ teaspoon cayenne pepper
½ teaspoon turmeric
1½ tablespoons lemon juice
4 tablespoons butter

1. To make the dough, combine the flour and ½ teaspoon of salt in a large bowl. Slowly add water, gathering the flour together as you do so, until a soft dough is formed. Transfer the dough to a work surface and knead it for 6 to 8 minutes until it is smooth and firm. Sprinkle the ball of dough with water, cover it with a damp cloth, and set it aside.

2. Boil the potatoes until soft, rinse under cold water, peel, and mash coarse. Heat a tablespoon of ghee in a medium-size saucepan, put in the cumin seeds, and stir-fry. A few seconds later, add the grated ginger, cayenne pepper, and turmeric. Stir-fry a few seconds more. Add the mashed potatoes and fry for 4 to 5 minutes, stirring all the time. Pour the lemon juice over the mixture, sprinkle in ½ teaspoon of salt, and mix thoroughly. Spread on a plate to cool.

3. When the filling has cooled, form the dough into 12 balls and roll one out into a 6-inch disk. Brush some ghee over the surface of the disk. Place a tablespoon of filling in the center. Lift the edges of the dough over the filling and twist them together. Pull off the excess dough and seal the opening by pinching it firmly. Now dust with flour, flatten into a patty, and roll out as thin as possible, being careful that the filling does not break through.

4. Grease a heavy-bottomed frying pan or griddle with ghee. Fry the *paratha* slowly, turning it over as many times as it takes to cook both sides. When both sides are golden-brown with reddish spots, it is done. Remove from the pan and brush one side with melted butter. Repeat the procedure to make 12 *parathas*. Offer to Kṛṣṇa.

Fried Potato Patties (*Alu ki tikki*)

Preparation time: 40–60 minutes
Servings: 8

5 medium-size potatoes
1 cup fresh peas
½ cup carrots, diced
½ cup cauliflower, minced
1 teaspoon *garam masāla*
½ teaspoon cumin seeds
¼ teaspoon asafoetida
2 dried chilies, crushed
2 tablespoons chopped coriander or parsley leaves
1 teaspoon salt
1 tablespoon lemon or lime juice
3 tablespoons chickpea flour, dry-roasted
2 tablespoons butter or ghee

1. Boil the potatoes. Steam the other vegetables until they are soft. Drain the potatoes and other vegetables. Peel the potatoes; then break them into chunks and combine them in a large mixing bowl with the other drained vegetables, the spices, the lemon juice, and finally the chickpea flour. Use a fork or masher to mash all the ingredients.

2. Form the mixture into 8 patties about 1 inch thick. Then heat a heavy-bottomed frying pan over a low flame and put in a little butter or ghee. Put in several patties at a time, leaving enough room between them to insert a spatula. Cook each side for 12 to 15 minutes. When one side becomes golden-brown, work the spatula under the patty, without breaking the crust, and turn it over. If the patties are cooking too quickly, lower the heat. Offer to Kṛṣṇa.

Chickpea-flour Pancakes (*Pudla*)

Preparation time: 30 minutes
Servings: 6

½ cup chickpea flour
⅓ cup white flour
1 teaspoon cumin seeds
¼ teaspoon asafoetida
¾ teaspoon turmeric
1 teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon black pepper
1 cup cold water
1 teaspoon fresh ginger, grated
2 medium-size tomatoes, chopped
1 green bell pepper, diced
3 tablespoons butter
3 tablespoons lemon juice

1. In a large bowl, mix together the chickpea flour, white flour, cumin seeds, asafoetida, turmeric, salt, and pepper. Slowly add the cold water, stirring as you do, until you have a thick pancake batter. If the batter seems too thick, remember that the juice from the tomatoes will thin it. Now stir in the grated ginger and pieces of tomato and bell pepper. Set aside.

2. Melt a tablespoon of butter in a 10- to 12-inch frying pan over a medium flame. Pour in enough batter to make two 4- to 5-inch pancakes at a time. It is important that the pancakes be uniformly thick; they need not be perfectly round. Cook slowly on both sides so that they become golden-brown and crisp (about 4 to 5 minutes). Finish the batter in this way, putting more butter in the pan if necessary. Sprinkle the lemon juice over the top of the *pudlas*. Offer to Kṛṣṇa hot.

Spinach, Eggplant, Tomatoes, and Chickpeas (*Palak baingan aur channa*)

Preparation time: 45 minutes
Servings: 4–6

½ cup chickpeas, soaked overnight
1 tablespoon ghee or vegetable oil
2 fresh chilies, seeded and minced
1 teaspoon fresh ginger, grated
1 teaspoon ground coriander
1 teaspoon turmeric
1 pound eggplant, peeled and cubed
4 tomatoes, chopped
1 pound fresh spinach, washed, stemmed, and chopped
4 tablespoons water
1 teaspoon salt
1 tablespoon butter

1. Boil the soaked chickpeas in water until tender. Then set them aside to drain. Place a medium-size saucepan over a medium flame and heat the tablespoon of ghee. When it is hot, toss in the cumin seeds, minced chilies, grated ginger, ground coriander, and turmeric, in that order and in quick succession. Stir-fry for about 30 seconds; then drop in the eggplant cubes and turn them with a spoon until they are browned.

2. Now add the tomatoes and spinach. Stir to blend the spices into the vegetables. Pour in the water and add the salt. Lower the flame to medium low and simmer with the pot covered. After 10 minutes, remove the cover and fold in the chickpeas. Then dot with butter and simmer gently, stirring every few minutes, until most of the excess liquid has been cooked off. Offer to Kṛṣṇa hot.

pictures, and conversation, and, of course, a high-protein, nonvegetarian diet.

Dr. John Harvey Kellogg, another believer in the physiological value of continence, writes, "Flesh, condiments, eggs, tea, coffee, chocolate, and all other stimulants have a powerful influence directly upon the blood; and through nervous sympathy with the brain, the passions are aroused. . . . When children are raised on

such articles . . . what wonder that they occasionally turn out bad? How many mothers, while teaching their children the principles of virtue in the nursery, unwittingly stimulate passions at the dinner table until vice becomes a physical necessity? . . . Nothing tends so powerfully to keep the passions in abeyance as a simple diet. . . ."

This facilitating of continence may be

an overlooked benefit of the vegetarian diet—but it is a major one, even from a material viewpoint. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "Everyone should be taught not to discharge semen unnecessarily. This is very important for all human beings. If semen is not discharged unnecessarily, one becomes extremely strong in memory, determination, activity, and the vitality of one's bodily energy." ❏

ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA SPEAKS OUT

A Misleading Civilization

These are the opening remarks by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda from a conversation between him and some of his disciples that took place in Bombay on April 17, 1977.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: From the Vedic literature we learn that the fallen soul transmigrates from body to body. He “evolves” from lower material bodies to higher bodies—from fish to plant to insect to bird to beast. And then he gets the body of a human being. Full consciousness. Now—this is the chance for understanding God.

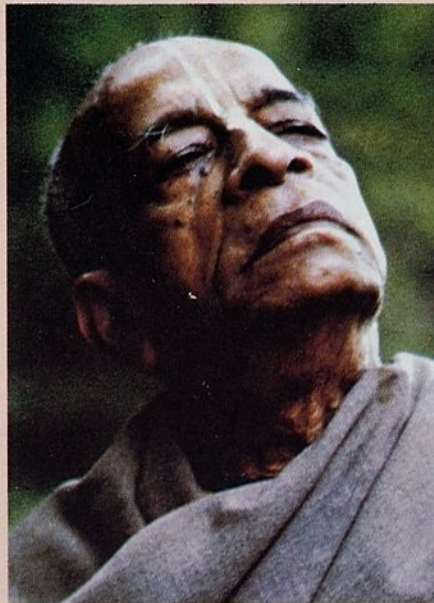
But if the human beings are forced to remain in darkness like the animals, that is a dangerous civilization: denying the soul his priceless chance to become God-realized and return to the spiritual world.

By knowing the science of God, you can get out of this continual evolutionary process. You can go to the antimaterial world—Vaikuṅṭha, the place of no anxiety. In that world, you can actually live. *Na jāyate mriyate vā:* There you do not have to take birth, nor do you have to die. And there you can dance with Kṛṣṇa. That is life. That we want. That we are seeking after.

But that life of lasting happiness is not possible here in this material world. Here you have to go through the evolutionary process again and again—body after body, birth and death, birth and death—unless you take the special human opportunity and go back to the spiritual world, back home.

If you miss this priceless opportunity, just imagine your misfortune. So this so-called modern civilization is keeping all humanity in misfortune. This civilization is cheating us out of our opportunity to understand God and surrender to Him; rather, it is keeping us trapped in the cycle of birth and death. Only in the human form of life do we get the chance to return to the spiritual world. What an opportunity! But now that opportunity is being stolen from us.

And so we are returning, lifetime after lifetime, to the miseries of birth and death: from animal to man, from man to animal—up and down. This business of *dehāntara-prāptiḥ*—accepting new material bodies—is very dangerous. But as



long as you remain in this world, you have to change your body. So stop this process. If you are really interested in science, then learn *this* science: how to stop changing bodies.

You may say, “Why bother? Now I have such a rich and beautiful body—an opulent, educated, American body.” Yes, but if you are so well educated, then continue in that American body forever. Why can you not? Why are you so proud of your so-called scientific education?

You are under control—in actual fact, you are under the control of God’s laws. You say you have constructed this proud skyscraper? Very good. So live here forever. Why do you have to undergo death? Why can’t you live here forever? But no, you will be kicked out.

Kicked out. But because you have got attachment for the skyscraper, nature may give you some slight concession. “Unfortunately, sir, you misused your human body; you ignored God and your own soul. You simply wanted to go on living in the skyscraper. All right. You can go on living in the skyscraper—as a cockroach.”

Who can check this natural process? *Dehāntara:* If you stay here in this material world, you must change out of your present body and go into another body. And after all, the cockroach body is indeed a body.

So the proprietor of the skyscraper can

become a cockroach in the skyscraper. Now I am a big proprietor; next life, a cockroach. Can you check this process? Say what you will. Nature will do what she will: “Yes. Very good, sir. Rather than go back to the spiritual world, you prefer your skyscraper. Now take your skyscraper. Live here as a cockroach.”

How much time the skyscraper constructor wasted! Instead of centering his life on God, no, he centered it on some huge pile of concrete. And now, though he remains in a photograph in the lobby, actually his life is in the commode. He has become a cockroach in the commode. People are worshiping his photograph in the lobby, and he is living in the commode.

This is called ignorance. What a very misleading civilization this is. So we are trying to save everyone from this misleading civilization. We are trying ourselves to be perfect, and we are trying to teach others the perfect, spiritual way of life.

In the *Bhagavad-gītā* Lord Kṛṣṇa begins His teaching from this understanding: “You are not this material body. You have had many material bodies, but you are the inner spirit. You are a spiritual being. Now realize yourself and come back home to Me.”

This civilization gives everyone a false conception. Where is the question of spiritual knowledge? Where is the opportunity to become self-realized and go back to the spiritual world? Sometimes people may talk of spiritual life, but if they remain in this false, bodily conception, all their talk of spiritual life, spiritual realization, and spiritual liberation is useless.

First of all one has to understand, *aham brahmāsmi*—“I am not this material body; I am a spirit.” And then, *athāto brahmajijñāsā*. If I am Brahman—if I am spiritual—then what is my real, spiritual nature? Thus far, I have led my life in the bodily conception, but in reality I am a spirit, part and parcel of the Supreme Spirit. So how should a spiritual being live? What is my real life, in this world and the next?

Therefore, we should convince people, “You read this book, *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*. You’ll get all information.” And actually, they will get all information. ❏

(To be continued.)

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.

Third Canto: “The Status Quo”

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Description of the Kingdom of God

In this installment of our continuing presentation of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Lord Brahmā, the first created being of the universe, describes the cursing of the two gate-keepers of Vaikuṅṭha (the kingdom of God) by the Kumāras, the four boy-sages, and the appearance of Lord Viṣṇu on the scene.

TEXT 35

तेषामितीरितमुभावघार्यं घोरं
तं ब्रह्मदण्डमनिवारणमस्त्रपूगैः ।
सद्यो हरेरनुचरावुरु बिभ्यतस्तत्-
पादग्रहावपततामतिकारणेण ॥३५॥

*teṣām itīritam ubhāv avadhārya ghoram
tam brahma-daṇḍam anivāraṇam astra-pūgaiḥ
sadyo harer anucarāv uru bibhyatas tat-
pāda-grahāv apatatām atikāreṇa*

teṣām—of the four Kumāras; *iti*—thus; *iritam*—uttered; *ubhau*—both doorkeepers; *avadhārya*—understanding; *ghoram*—terrible; *tam*—that; *brahma-daṇḍam*—curse of a brāhmaṇa; *anivāraṇam*—not able to be counteracted; *astra-pūgaiḥ*—by any kind of weapon; *sadyaḥ*—at once; *hareḥ*—of the Supreme Lord; *anucarau*—devotees; *uru*—very much; *bibhyataḥ*—became fearful; *tat-pāda-grahau*—grasping their feet; *apatatām*—fell down; *ati-kāreṇa*—in great anxiety.

TRANSLATION

When the doormen of Vaikuṅṭhaloka, who were certainly devotees of the Lord, found that they were going to be cursed by the brāhmaṇas, they at once became very much afraid and fell down at the feet of the brāhmaṇas in great anxiety, for a brāhmaṇa’s curse cannot be counteracted by any kind of weapon.

PURPORT

Although, by chance, the doormen committed a mistake by checking the brāhmaṇas from entering the gate of Vaikuṅṭha, they were at once aware of the gravity of the curse. There are many kinds of offenses, but the greatest offense is to offend a devotee of the Lord. Because the doormen were also devotees of the Lord, they were able to understand their mistake and were terrified when the four Kumāras were ready to curse them.

TEXT 36

भूयादघोनि भगवद्भिरकारि दण्डो
यो नौ हरेत सुरहेलनमप्यशेषम् ।
मा वोऽनुतापकलया भगवत्स्मृतिघ्नो
मोहो भवेदिह तु नौ व्रजतोरघोऽधः ॥३६॥

*bhūyād aghoni bhagavadbhir akāri daṇḍo
yo nau hareta sura-helanam apy aśeṣam
mā vo ’nutāpa-kalayā bhagavat-smṛti-ghno
moho bhaved iha tu nau vrajator adho ’dhaḥ*

bhūyāt—let it be; *aghoni*—for the sinful; *bhagavadbhiḥ*—by you; *akāri*—was done; *daṇḍaḥ*—punishment; *yaḥ*—that which; *nau*—in relation to us; *hareta*—should destroy; *sura-helanam*—disobeying great demigods; *api*—certainly; *aśeṣam*—unlimited; *mā*—not; *yaḥ*—of you; *anutāpa*—repentance; *kalayā*—by a little; *bhagavat*—of the Supreme Personality of Godhead; *smṛti-ghnaḥ*—destroying the memory of; *mohaḥ*—illusion; *bhavet*—should be; *iha*—in the foolish species of life; *tu*—but; *nau*—of us; *vrajatoḥ*—who are going; *adhaḥ adhaḥ*—down to the material world.

TRANSLATION

After being cursed by the sages, the doormen said: It is quite apt that you have punished us for neglecting to respect sages like you. But we pray that due to your compassion at our repentance, the illusion of forgetting the Supreme Personality of Godhead will not come upon us as we go progressively downward.

PURPORT

To a devotee, any heavy punishment is tolerable but the one which effects forgetfulness of the Supreme Lord. The doormen, who were also devotees, could understand the punishment meted out to them, for they were conscious of the great offense they had committed by not allowing the sages to enter Vaikuṅṭhaloka. In the lowest species of life, including the animal species, forgetfulness of the Lord is very prominent. The doormen were aware that they were going to the criminal department of the material world, and they expected that they might go to the lowest species and forget the Supreme Lord. They prayed, therefore, that this might not happen in the lives they were going to accept because of the curse. In *Bhagavad-gītā*, Sixteenth Chapter, verses 19 and 20, it is said that those who are envious of the Lord and His devotees are thrown into the species of abominable life; life after life such fools are unable to remember the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and therefore they continue going down and down.

TEXT 37

एवं तदैव भगवानरविन्दनामः
स्नानां विबुध्य सदतिक्रममार्यहृद्यः ।
तस्मिन् यया परमहंसमहासुनीना-
मन्वेषणीयचरणौ चलयन् सहश्रीः ॥३७॥

*evaṁ tadaiva bhagavān aravinda-nābhaḥ
svānām vibudhya sad-atikramam ārya-hṛdyah
tasmīn yayau paramahaṁsa-mahā-muninām
anveṣaṇīya-carāṇau calayan saha-śrīḥ*

evam—thus; *tadā eva*—at that very moment; *bhagavān*—the Supreme Personality of Godhead; *aravinda-nābhaḥ*—with a lotus growing from His navel; *svānām*—of His own servants; *vibudhya*—learned about; *sat*—to the great sages; *atikramam*—the insult; *ārya*—of the righteous; *hr̥dyah*—the delight; *tasmin*—there; *yayau*—went; *paramahansa*—recluses; *mahā-muninām*—by the great sages; *anveṣaṇīya*—which are worthy to be sought; *carāṇau*—the two lotus feet; *calayan*—walking; *saha-śrīḥ*—with the goddess of fortune.

TRANSLATION

At that very moment, the Lord, who is called Padmanābha because of the lotus grown from His navel and who is the delight of the righteous, learned about the insult offered by His own servants to the saints. Accompanied by His spouse, the goddess of fortune, He went to the spot on those very feet sought for by recluses and great sages.

PURPORT

In *Bhagavad-gītā* the Lord declares that His devotees cannot be vanquished at any time. The Lord could understand that the quarrel between the doormen and the sages was taking a different turn, and therefore He instantly came out of His place and went to the spot to stop further aggravation so that His devotees, the doormen, might not be vanquished for good.

TEXT 38

तं त्वागतं प्रतिहृतौपयिकं स्वपुम्भि-
स्तेऽचक्षताक्षविषयं स्वसमाधिभाग्यम् ।
हंसश्रियोर्व्यजनयोः शिववायुलोल-
च्छुभ्रातपत्रशशिकेसरशीकराम्बुम् ॥३८॥

taṁ tv āgatam pratihṛtaupayikam sva-pumbhis
te 'caksatākṣa-viṣayam sva-samādhi-bhāgyam
haṁsa-śriyora vyajanayoh śiva-vāyu-lolac-
chubhrātapatra-śaśi-kesara-śikarāmbum

taṁ—Him; *tu*—but; *āgatam*—coming forward; *pratihṛta*—carried; *aupayikam*—the paraphernalia; *sva-pumbhiḥ*—by His own associates; *te*—the great sages (the Kumāras); *acaksata*—saw; *akṣa-viṣayam*—now a subject matter for seeing; *sva-samādhi-bhāgyam*—visible simply by ecstatic trance; *haṁsa-śriyoh*—as beautiful as white swans; *vyajanayoh*—the *cāmaras* (bunches of white hair); *śiva-vāyu*—favorable winds; *lolat*—moving; *śubhra-ātapatra*—the white umbrella; *śaśi*—the moon; *kesara*—pearls; *śikara*—drops; *ambum*—water.

TRANSLATION

The sages, headed by Sanaka Ṛṣi, saw that the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Viṣṇu, who was formerly visible only within their hearts in ecstatic trance, had now actually become visible to their eyes. As He came forward, accompanied by His own associates bearing all paraphernalia, such as an umbrella and a *cāmara* fan, the white bunches of hair moved very gently, like two swans, and due to their favorable breeze the pearls garlanding the umbrella also moved, like drops of nectar falling from the white full moon or ice melting due to a gust of wind.

PURPORT

In this verse we find the word *acaksatākṣa-viṣayam*. The Supreme Lord cannot be seen by ordinary eyes, but He now became visible to the eyesight of the Kumāras. Another significant word is *samādhi-bhāgyam*. Meditators who are very fortunate can see the Viṣṇu form of the Lord within their hearts by following the yogic process. But to see Him face to face is a different matter. This is only possible for pure devotees. The Kumāras, therefore, upon seeing the Lord coming forward with His associates, who were holding an umbrella and a *cāmara* fan, were struck

with wonder that they were seeing the Lord face to face. It is said in the *Brahma-saṁhitā* that devotees, being elevated in love of God, always see Śyāmasundara, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, within their hearts. But when they are mature, the same God is visible before them face to face. For ordinary persons the Lord is not visible; however, when one can understand the significance of His holy name and one engages himself in the devotional service of the Lord, beginning with the tongue, by chanting and tasting *prasāda*, then gradually the Lord reveals Himself. Thus the devotee constantly sees the Lord within his heart, and, in a more mature stage, one can see the same Lord directly, as we see everything else.

TEXT 39

कृत्स्नप्रसादसुमुखं स्पृहणीयधाम
स्नेहावलोककलया हृदि संस्पृशन्तम् ।
श्यामे पृथानुरसि शोभितया श्रिया स्व-
श्चूडामणिं सुभगयन्तमिवात्मधिष्ण्यम् ॥३९॥

kṛtsna-prasāda-sumukham sprhaṇīya-dhāma
snehāvaloka-kalayā hṛdi saṁsprśantam
śyāme pṛthāv urasi śobhitayā śriyā sva-
cūḍāmaṇim subhagayantam ivātmadhiṣṇyam

kṛtsna-prasāda—blessing everyone; *su-mukham*—auspicious face; *sprhaṇīya*—desirable; *dhāma*—shelter; *sneha*—affection; *avaloka*—looking upon; *kalayā*—by expansion; *hṛdi*—within the heart; *saṁsprśantam*—touching; *śyāme*—unto the Lord with blackish color; *pṛthau*—broad; *urasi*—chest; *śobhitayā*—being decorated; *śriyā*—goddess of fortune; *svaḥ*—heavenly planets; *cūḍā-maṇim*—summit; *subhagayantam*—spreading good fortune; *iva*—like; *ātma*—the Supreme Personality of Godhead; *dhiṣṇyam*—abode.

TRANSLATION

The Lord is the reservoir of all pleasure. His auspicious presence is meant for everyone's benediction, and His affectionate smiling and glancing touch the core of the heart. The Lord's beautiful bodily color is blackish, and His broad chest is the resting place of the goddess of fortune, who glorifies the entire spiritual world, the summit of all heavenly planets. Thus it appeared that the Lord was personally spreading the beauty and good fortune of the spiritual world.

PURPORT

When the Lord came, He was pleased with everyone; therefore it is stated here, *kṛtsna-prasāda-sumukham*. The Lord knew that even the offensive doormen were His pure devotees, although by chance they committed an offense at the feet of other devotees. To commit an offense against a devotee is very dangerous in devotional service. Lord Caitanya therefore said that an offense to a devotee is just like a mad elephant run loose: when a mad elephant enters a garden, it tramples all the plants. Similarly, an offense unto the feet of a pure devotee murders one's position in devotional service. On the part of the Lord there was no offended mood because He does not accept any offense created by His sincere devotee. But a devotee should be very cautious of committing offenses at the feet of another devotee. The Lord, being equal to all, and being especially inclined to His devotee, looked as mercifully at the offenders as at the offended. This attitude of the Lord was due to His unlimited quantity of transcendental qualities. His cheerful attitude towards the devotees was so pleasing and heart-touching that His very smile was attractive for them. That attraction was glorious not only for all the higher planets of this material world, but beyond, for the spiritual world also. Generally a human being has no idea of what the constitutional position is in the higher material planets, which are far better constituted in regard to all paraphernalia, yet the Vaikuṅṭha planet is so pleasing and so celestial that it is compared to the middle jewel or locket in a necklace of jewels.

In this verse the words *sprhaṇīya-dhāma* indicate that the Lord is the reservoir of all pleasure because He has all the transcendental qualities. Although only some of these are aspired for by persons who hanker after the pleasure of merging in the impersonal Brahman, there are other aspirants who want to associate with the Lord personally as His servants. The Lord is so kind that He gives shelter to everyone—both impersonalists and devotees. He gives shelter to the impersonalists in His impersonal Brahman effulgence, whereas He gives shelter to the devotees in His personal abodes known as the Vaikuṅṭhalokas. He is especially inclined to His devotee; He touches the core of the heart of the devotee simply by smiling and glancing over him. The Lord is always served in the Vaikuṅṭhaloka by many hundreds and thousands of goddesses of fortune, as stated by the *Brahma-saṁhitā* (*lakṣmī-sahasra-śata-sambhrama-sevyamānam*). In this material world, one is glorified if he is favored even a pinch by the goddess of fortune, so we can simply imagine how glorified is the kingdom of God in the spiritual world, where many hundreds and thousands of goddesses of fortune engage in the direct service of the Lord. Another feature of this verse is that it openly declares where the Vaikuṅṭhalokas are situated. They are situated as the summit of all the heavenly planets, which are above the sun globe, at the upper limit of the universe, and are known as Satyaloka, or Brahmaloaka. The spiritual world is situated beyond the universe. Therefore it is stated here that the spiritual world, Vaikuṅṭhaloka, is the summit of all planetary systems.

TEXT 40

पीतांशुके पृथुनितम्बिनि विस्फुरन्त्या
काञ्च्यालिभिर्विरुताया वनमालया च ।
वल्गुप्रकोष्ठवल्यं विनतासुतांसे
विन्यस्तहस्तमितरेण धुनानमञ्जम् ॥४०॥

*pītāṁśuke pṛthu-nitambini viṣphurantya
kāñcyālibhir virutayā vana-mālayā ca
valgu-prakoṣṭha-valayam vinatā-sutāṁse
vinyasta-hastam itareṇa dhunānam abjam*

pīta-āṁśuke—covered with a yellow cloth; *pṛthu-nitambini*—on His large hips; *viṣphurantya*—shining brightly; *kāñcyā*—with a girdle; *alibhiḥ*—by the bees; *virutayā*—humming; *vana-mālayā*—with a garland of fresh flowers; *ca*—and; *valgu*—lovely; *prakoṣṭha*—wrists; *valayam*—bracelets; *vinatā-suta*—of Garuḍa, the son of Vinatā; *āṁse*—on the shoulder; *vinyasta*—rested; *hastam*—one hand; *itareṇa*—with another hand; *dhunānam*—being twirled; *abjam*—a lotus flower.

TRANSLATION

He was adorned with a girdle that shone brightly on the yellow cloth covering His large hips, and He wore a garland of fresh flowers which was distinguished by humming bees. His lovely wrists were graced with bracelets, and He rested one of His hands on the shoulder of Garuḍa, His carrier, and twirled a lotus with another hand.

PURPORT

Here is a full description of the Personality of Godhead as personally experienced by the sages. The Lord's personal body was covered with yellow robes, and His waist was thin. In Vaikuṅṭha, whenever there is a flower garland on the chest of the Personality of Godhead or any one of His associates, it is described that the humming bees are there. All these features were very beautiful and attractive for the devotees. One of the Lord's hands rested on His carrier, Garuḍa, and in another hand He twirled a lotus flower. These are personal characteristics of the Personality of Godhead, Nārāyaṇa.

TEXT 41

विद्युत्क्षिपन्मकरकुण्डलमण्डनार्ह-
गण्डस्थलोन्नसमुखं मणिमत्किरीटम् ।

दोर्दण्डषण्डविवरे हरता परार्ध-
हारेण कन्धरगतेन च कौस्तुभेन ॥४१॥

*vidyut-kṣīpan-makara-kuṇḍala-maṇḍanārha-
gaṇḍa-sthalonnasa-mukham maṇimat-kirīṭam
dor-daṇḍa-ṣaṇḍa-vivare haratā parārdhya-
hāreṇa kandhara-gatena ca kaustubhena*

vidyut—lightning; *kṣīpat*—outshining; *makara*—alligator-shaped; *kuṇḍala*—earrings; *maṇḍana*—decoration; *arha*—as it fits; *gaṇḍa-sthala*—cheeks; *unnasa*—prominent nose; *mukham*—countenance; *maṇi-mat*—gem-studded; *kirīṭam*—crown; *doh-daṇḍa*—of His four stout arms; *ṣaṇḍa*—group; *vivare*—between; *haratā*—charming; *para-ardhya*—by the most precious; *hāreṇa*—necklace; *kandhara-gatena*—adorning His neck; *ca*—and; *kaustubhena*—by the Kaustubha jewel.

TRANSLATION

His countenance was distinguished by cheeks that enhanced the beauty of His alligator-shaped pendants, which outshone lightning. His nose was prominent, and His head was covered with a gem-studded crown. A charming necklace hung between His stout arms, and His neck was adorned with the gem known by the name Kaustubha.

TEXT 42

अत्रोपसृष्टमिति चोत्सितमिन्द्रियायाः
खानां धिया विरचितं बहुसौष्ठवाढ्यम् ।
मह्यं भवस्य भवतां च भजन्तमङ्गं
नेमुर्निरीक्ष्य नवितृप्तदृशो मुदा कैः ॥४२॥

*atropasṛṣṭam iti cotsmitam indirāyāḥ
svānām dhiyā viracitām bahu-sauṣṭhavāḍhyam
mahyam bhavasya bhavatām ca bhajantam aṅgam
nemur nirikṣya na vitṛpta-dṛśo mudā kaiḥ*

atra—here, in the matter of the beauty; *upasṛṣṭam*—curbed down; *iti*—thus; *ca*—and; *utsmitam*—the pride of her beauty; *indirāyāḥ*—of the goddess of fortune; *svānām*—of His own devotees; *dhiyā*—by intelligence; *viracitām*—meditated on; *bahu-sauṣṭhava-āḍhyam*—very beautifully decorated; *mahyam*—of me; *bhavasya*—of Lord Śiva; *bhavatām*—of all of you; *ca*—and; *bhajantam*—worshiped; *aṅgam*—the figure; *nemuḥ*—bowed down; *nirikṣya*—after seeing; *na*—not; *vitṛpta*—satiated; *dṛśaḥ*—eyes; *mudā*—joyously; *kaiḥ*—by their heads.

TRANSLATION

The exquisite beauty of Nārāyaṇa, being many times magnified by the intelligence of His devotees, was so attractive that it defeated the pride of the goddess of fortune in being the most beautiful. My dear demigods, the Lord who thus manifested Himself is worshipable by me, by Lord Śiva and by all of you. The sages regarded Him with unsated eyes and joyously bowed their heads at His lotus feet.

PURPORT

The beauty of the Lord was so enchanting that it could not be sufficiently described. The goddess of fortune is supposed to be the most beautiful sight within the spiritual and material creations of the Lord; she has a sense of being the most beautiful, yet her beauty was defeated when the Lord appeared. In other words, the beauty of the goddess of fortune is secondary in the presence of the Lord. In the words of Vaiṣṇava poets, it is said that the Lord's beauty is so enchanting that it defeats hundreds of thousands of Cupids. He is therefore called Madana-mohana. It is also described that the Lord sometimes becomes mad after the beauty of Rādhārāṇī. Poets describe that under those circumstances, although Lord Kṛṣṇa is Madana-mohana, He becomes Madana-dāha, or enchanted by the beauty of Rādhārāṇī. Actually the Lord's beauty is

superexcellent, surpassing even the beauty of Lakṣmī in Vaiṣṇava. The devotees of the Lord in the Vaiṣṇava planets want to see the Lord as the most beautiful, but the devotees in Gokula or Kṛṣṇaloka want to see Rādhārāṇī as more beautiful than Kṛṣṇa. The adjustment is that the Lord, being *bhakta-vatsala*, or one who wants to please His devotees, assumes such features so that devotees like Lord Brahmā, Lord Śiva and other demigods may be pleased. Here also, for the devotee-sages, the Kumāras, the Lord appeared in His most beautiful feature, and they continued to see Him without satiation and wanted to continue seeing Him more and more.

TEXT 43

तस्यारविन्दनयनस्य पदारविन्द-
किञ्जल्कमिश्रतुलसीमकरन्दवायुः ।
अन्तर्गतः स्वविवरेण चकार तेषां
सङ्क्षोभमक्षरजुषामपि चित्ततन्वोः ॥४३॥

*tasyāravinda-nayanasya padāravinda-
kiñjalka-miśra-tulasī-makaranda-vāyuh
antar-gataḥ sva-vivareṇa cakāra teṣāṃ
saṅkṣobham akṣara-juṣām api citta-tanvoḥ*

tasya—of Him; *aravinda-nayanasya*—of the lotus-eyed Lord; *padāravinda*—of the lotus feet; *kiñjalka*—with the toes; *miśra*—mixed; *tulasī*—the *tulasī* leaves; *makaranda*—fragrance; *vāyuh*—breeze; *antar-gataḥ*—entered within; *sva-vivareṇa*—through their nostrils; *cakāra*—made; *teṣāṃ*—of the Kumāras; *saṅkṣobham*—agitation for change; *akṣara-juṣām*—attached to impersonal Brahman realization; *api*—even though; *citta-tanvoḥ*—in both mind and body.

TRANSLATION

When the breeze carrying the aroma of *tulasī* leaves from the toes of the lotus feet of the Personality of Godhead entered the nostrils of those sages, they experienced a change both in body and in mind, even though they were attached to the impersonal Brahman understanding.

PURPORT

It appears from this verse that the four Kumāras were impersonalists or protagonists of the philosophy of monism, becoming one with the Lord. But as soon as they saw the Lord's features, their minds changed. In other words, the impersonalist who feels transcendental pleasure in striving to become one with the Lord is defeated when he sees the beautiful transcendental features of the Lord. Because of the fragrance of His lotus feet, carried by the air and mixed with the aroma of *tulasī*, their minds changed; instead of becoming one with the Supreme Lord, they thought it wise to be devotees. Becoming a servitor of the lotus feet of the Lord is better than becoming one with the Lord.

TEXT 44

ते वा अमुष्य वदानासितपद्मकोश-
मुदीक्ष्य सुन्दरतराधरकुन्दहासम् ।
लब्धाशिषः पुनरवेक्ष्य तदीयमङ्घ्रि-
द्वन्द्वं नखारुणमणिश्रयणं निदधुः ॥४४॥

*te vā amuṣya vadanāsita-padma-kośam
udvikṣya sundaratarādhara-kunda-hāsam
labdhāśiṣaḥ punar avekṣya tadīyam aṅghri-
dvandvaṃ nakhāruṇa-maṇi-śrayaṇaṃ nidadhyuh*

te—those sages; *vai*—certainly; *amuṣya*—of the Supreme Personality of Godhead; *vadana*—face; *asita*—blue; *padma*—lotus; *kośam*—inside; *udvikṣya*—after looking up; *sundara-tara*—more beautiful; *adhara*—lips; *kunda*—jasmine flower; *hāsam*—smiling; *labdha*—

achieved; *āśiṣaḥ*—aims of life; *punaḥ*—again; *avekṣya*—looking down; *tadīyam*—His; *aṅghri-dvandvaṃ*—pair of lotus feet; *nakha*—nails; *aruṇa*—red; *maṇi*—rubies; *śrayaṇam*—shelter; *nidadhyuh*—meditated.

TRANSLATION

The Lord's beautiful face appeared to them like the inside of a blue lotus, and the Lord's smile appeared to be a blossoming jasmine flower. After seeing the face of the Lord, the sages were fully satisfied, and when they wanted to see Him further, they looked upon the nails of His lotus feet, which resembled rubies. Thus they viewed the Lord's transcendental body again and again, and so they finally achieved meditation on the Lord's personal feature.

TEXT 45

पुंसां गतिं मृगयतामिह योगमार्गै-
र्च्यानास्पदं बहु मतं नयनाभिरामम् ।
पौंसं वपुर्दर्शयानमनन्यसिद्धै-
रीत्पत्तिकैः समगृणन् युतमष्टभोगैः ॥४५॥

*pūṁsāṃ gatiṃ mṛgayatām iha yoga-mārgair
dhyānāspadam bahu-mataṃ nayanābhirāmam
pauṁsnaṃ vapur darśayānam ananya-siddhair
autpattikaih samagrṇan yutam aṣṭa-bhogaiḥ*

pūṁsāṃ—of those persons; *gatiṃ*—liberation; *mṛgayatām*—who are searching; *iha*—here in this world; *yoga-mārgaiḥ*—by the process of *aṣṭāṅga-yoga*; *dhyāna-āspadam*—object of meditation; *bahu*—by the great *yogīs*; *matam*—approved; *nayana*—eyes; *abhirāmam*—pleasing; *pauṁsnaṃ*—human; *vapuh*—form; *darśayānam*—displaying; *ananya*—not by others; *siddhaiḥ*—perfected; *autpattikaih*—eternally present; *samagrṇan*—praised; *yutam*—the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is endowed; *aṣṭa-bhogaiḥ*—with eight kinds of achievement.

TRANSLATION

This is the form of the Lord which is meditated upon by the followers of the *yoga* process, and it is pleasing to the *yogīs* in meditation. It is not imaginary but factual, as proved by great *yogīs*. The Lord is full in eight kinds of achievement, but for others these achievements are not possible in full perfection.

PURPORT

The success of the *yoga* process is very nicely described here. It is specifically mentioned that the form of the Lord as four-handed Nārāyaṇa is the object of meditation for the followers of *yoga-mārga*. In the modern age there are so many so-called *yogīs* who do not target their meditation on the four-handed Nārāyaṇa form. Some of them try to meditate on something impersonal or void, but that is not approved by the great *yogīs* who follow the standard method. The real *yoga-mārga* process is to control the senses, sit in a solitary and sanctified place and meditate on the four-handed form of Nārāyaṇa, decorated as described in this chapter as He appeared before the four sages. This Nārāyaṇa form is Kṛṣṇa's expansion; therefore the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement which is now spreading is the real, topmost process of *yoga* practice.

Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the highest *yoga* performance by trained devotional *yogīs*. Despite all the allurements of *yoga* practice, the eight kinds of yogic perfections are hardly achievable by the common man. But here it is described that the Lord, who appeared before the four sages, is Himself full of all eight of those perfections. The highest *yoga-mārga* process is to concentrate the mind twenty-four hours a day on Kṛṣṇa. This is called Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The *yoga* system, as described in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and *Bhagavad-gītā* or as recommended in the Patañjali *yoga* process, is different from the nowadays-practiced *haṭha-yoga* as it is generally understood in the Western countries. Real *yoga* practice is to

control the senses and, after such control is established, to concentrate the mind on the Nārāyaṇa form of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Lord Kṛṣṇa is the original Personality of Godhead, and all the other Viṣṇu forms—with four hands decorated with conch, lotus, club and wheel—are plenary expansions of Kṛṣṇa. In *Bhagavad-gītā* it is recommended that one meditate upon the form of the Lord. To practice concentration of the mind, one has to sit with the head and the back in a straight line, and one must practice in a secluded place, sanctified by a sacred atmosphere. The *yogī* should observe the rules and regulations of *brahmacharya*—to strictly live a life of self-restraint and celibacy. One cannot practice *yoga* in a congested city, living a life of extravagancy, including unrestricted sex indulgence and adultery of the tongue. *Yoga* practice necessitates controlling the senses, and the beginning of sense control is to control the tongue. One who can control the tongue can also have control over the other senses. One cannot allow the tongue to take all kinds of forbidden food and drink and at the same time advance in the practice of *yoga*. It is a very regrettable fact that many unauthorized so-called *yogīs* come to the Western countries and exploit people's inclination towards *yoga* practice. Such unauthorized *yogīs* even dare to say publicly that one can indulge in the habit of drinking and at the same time practice meditation.

Five thousand years ago Lord Kṛṣṇa recommended *yoga* practice to Arjuna, but Arjuna frankly expressed his inability to follow the stringent rules and regulations of the *yoga* system. One should be very practical in every field of activities and should not waste his valuable time in practicing useless gymnastic feats in the name of *yoga*. Real *yoga* is to search out the four-handed Supersoul within one's heart and see Him perpetually in meditation. Such continued meditation is called *samādhi*, and the object of this meditation is the four-handed Nārāyaṇa, with bodily decorations as described in this chapter of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. If, however, one wants to meditate upon something void or impersonal, it will take a very long time before he achieves success in *yoga* practice. We cannot concentrate our mind on something void or impersonal. Real *yoga* is to fix the mind on the form of the Lord, the four-handed Nārāyaṇa who is sitting in everyone's heart.

By meditation one can understand that God is seated within one's heart. Even if one does not know it, God is seated within the heart of everyone. Not only is He seated in the heart of the human being, but He is also within the hearts of cats and dogs. *Bhagavad-gītā* certifies this fact by the declaration of the Lord, *īśvaraḥ sarva-bhūtānām hrd-deśe*. The *īśvara*, the supreme controller of the world, is seated in the heart of everyone. Not only is He in everyone's heart, but He is also present within the atom. No place is vacant or devoid of the presence of the Lord. That is the statement of *Īsopaniṣad*. God is present everywhere, and His right of proprietorship applies to everything. The feature of the Lord by which He is present everywhere is called Paramātmā. *Ātmā* means the individual soul, and Paramātmā means the individual Supersoul; both *ātmā* and Paramātmā are individual persons. The difference between *ātmā* and Paramātmā is that the *ātmā*, or the soul, is present only in a particular body, whereas the Paramātmā is present everywhere. In this connection, the example of the sun is very nice. An individual person may be situated in one place, but the sun, even though a similar individual entity, is present on the head of every individual person. In *Bhagavad-gītā* this is explained. Therefore even though the qualities of all entities, including the Lord, are equal, the Supersoul is different from the individual soul by quantitative power of expansion. The Lord, or the Supersoul, can expand Himself into millions of different forms, whereas the individual soul cannot do so.

The Supersoul, being seated in everyone's heart, can witness everyone's activities—past, present and future. In the *Upaniṣads* the Supersoul is described as being seated with the individual soul as friend and witness. As a friend, the Lord is always anxious to get back His friend, the individual soul, and bring him back home, back to Godhead. As a witness He is the bestower of all benedictions, and He endows each individual with the result of his actions. The Supersoul gives the individual soul all facilities to achieve whatever he desires to enjoy in this material world. Suffering is a reaction to the living entity's propensity to try to

lord it over the material world. But the Lord instructs His friend, the individual soul, who is also His son, to give up all other engagements and simply surrender unto Him for perpetual bliss and an eternal life full of knowledge. This is the last instruction of *Bhagavad-gītā*, the most authorized and widely read book on all varieties of *yoga*. Thus the last word of *Bhagavad-gītā* is the last word in the perfection of *yoga*.

It is stated in *Bhagavad-gītā* that a person who is always absorbed in Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the topmost *yogī*. What is Kṛṣṇa consciousness? As the individual soul is present by his consciousness throughout his entire body, so the Supersoul, or Paramātmā, is present throughout the whole creation by superconsciousness. This superconscious energy is imitated by the individual soul, who has limited consciousness. I can understand what is going on within my limited body, but I cannot feel what is going on in another's body. I am present throughout my body by my consciousness, but my consciousness is not present in another's body. The Supersoul, or Paramātmā, however, being present everywhere and within everyone, is also conscious of everyone's existence. The theory that the soul and the Supersoul are one is not acceptable because it is not confirmed by authoritative Vedic literature. The individual soul's consciousness cannot act in superconsciousness. This superconsciousness can be achieved, however, by dovetailing individual consciousness with the consciousness of the Supreme. This dovetailing process is called surrender, or Kṛṣṇa consciousness. From the teachings of *Bhagavad-gītā* we learn very clearly that Arjuna, in the beginning, did not want to fight with his brothers and relatives, but after understanding *Bhagavad-gītā* he dovetailed his consciousness with the superconsciousness of Kṛṣṇa. He was then in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

A person in full Kṛṣṇa consciousness acts by the dictation of Kṛṣṇa. In the beginning of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, dictation is received through the transparent medium of the spiritual master. When one is sufficiently trained and acts in submissive faith and love for Kṛṣṇa under the direction of the bona fide spiritual master, the dovetailing process becomes more firm and accurate. This stage of devotional service by the devotee in Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the most perfect stage of the *yoga* system. At this stage, Kṛṣṇa, or the Supersoul, dictates from within, while from without the devotee is helped by the spiritual master, who is the bona fide representative of Kṛṣṇa. From within He helps the devotee as *caitya*, for He is seated within the heart of everyone. Understanding that God is seated within everyone's heart is not, however, sufficient. One has to be acquainted with God from both within and without, and one must take dictation from within and without to act in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. This is the highest perfectional stage of the human form of life and the topmost perfection of all *yoga*.

For a perfect *yogī*, there are eight kinds of superachievements: one can become lighter than air, one can become smaller than the atom, one can become bigger than a mountain, one can achieve whatever he desires, one can control like the Lord, and so on. But when one rises to the perfectional stage of receiving dictation from the Lord, that is greater than any stage of material achievements above mentioned. The breathing exercise of the *yoga* system which is generally practiced is just the beginning. Meditation on the Supersoul is just another step forward. But to obtain direct contact with the Supersoul and take dictation from Him is the highest perfectional stage. The breathing exercises of meditation practice were very difficult even five thousand years ago, otherwise Arjuna would not have rejected the proposal of Kṛṣṇa that he adopt this system. This age of Kali is called the fallen age. In this age, people in general are short-living and very slow to understand self-realization or spiritual life; they are mostly unfortunate, and therefore if someone is a little bit interested in self-realization he is likely to be misguided by so many frauds. The only way to realize the perfect stage of *yoga* is to follow the principles of *Bhagavad-gītā* as practiced by Lord Caitanya. This is the simplest and highest perfection of *yoga* practice. Lord Caitanya demonstrated this Kṛṣṇa consciousness *yoga* system in a practical manner simply by chanting the holy name of Kṛṣṇa, as prescribed in the *Ve-dānta*, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, *Bhagavad-gītā*, and many important *Purānas*.

(continued in next issue)

Krishna Consciousness AND THE WORLD

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“At present, it seems the more ‘educated’ one becomes, the less he believes in God, in God’s law, and in the next life. . . . Thus modern education prepares men to become animals. If there is no education to teach a human being whether or not he is this body, he remains no better than an ass.” Read the complete compilation of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s words on *gurukula*, the Kṛṣṇa conscious educational system. *Śrīla Prabhupāda on Gurukula* is available from the ISKCON Ministry of Education, P.O. Box 11093, Dallas, TX 75223. \$3.50 plus \$1 postage; \$2 overseas postage.

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Tired of media stereotypes of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement? Want to understand who the Hare Kṛṣṇa people really are and what they’re about? Then read *Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna: Five Distinguished Scholars on the Krishna Movement in the West*, a collection of interviews with Harvey Cox, Larry Shinn, Thomas Hopkins, A. L. Basham, and Srivatsa Goswami conducted by the book’s editor, Steven J. Gelberg, the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement’s director for interreligious affairs. Together, these dialogues shed much light on relevant historical, sociological, psychological, and theological issues surrounding the movement. This book will help you understand the logic and appeal of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement.

276 pages, softbound.

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ISKCON REVIEW, a biannual, interdisciplinary journal dedicated to the academic study of ISKCON, includes articles from both inside and outside the movement, in-depth interviews with devotees, book reviews, and so on. To subscribe for one year, mail a check or money order for \$6 payable to ISKCON (\$10 foreign) to Śubhānanda dāsa, Editor, ISKCON REVIEW, 41 W. Allens Lane, Philadelphia, PA 19119.

Radio KHQN, ISKCON’s Utah station, offers taped, serialized programs. Each series consists of from thirty to one hundred half-hour programs and is based on ISKCON publications and the Vedic literature. Programs include such topics as Kṛṣṇa, Śrīla Prabhupāda, *Mahābhārata*, *Rāmāyaṇa*, plus programs on diet, reincarnation, science, abortion, and issues of the day. A demo is available for \$1.50 that includes samples of each series. Cost is \$3.00 per sixty-minute tape (postage paid in U.S. only). Write KHQN, P.O. Box 379, Spanish Fork, UT 84660, or call (801) 798-3559.

Help produce artistic translations of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books. The Cultural Institute for the Vedic Arts will be producing picture books and comic-book classics of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books, as well as arranging exhibitions

of transcendental art. If you’re interested in these projects, register now for training in any of the media involved. Write to Jadurāṅgi-devī dāsi, 2445 Collins Ave., Miami Beach, FL 33140, or call (305) 532-5042.

FESTIVALS & 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 Hare Kṛṣṇa center nearest you will gladly tell you more about the meaning of the festivals listed here.

Month of Viṣṇu (March 16–April 14)

April 3—Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Rāmānujācārya, a famous eleventh-century philosopher and spiritual master.

April 7—Śrī Rāma-navamī. The appearance anniversary of Lord Rāmacandra. Fasting till moonrise, then feasting.

April 10—Kāmadā Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans.

April 14—Śrī Kṛṣṇa-vasanta-rāsa. Śrī Balarāma Rāsa-yātrā.

Month of Madhusūdana (April 15–May 13)

April 23—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Vṇḍāvana dāsa Ṭhākura, author of *Śrī Caitanya-Bhāgavata*, a famous biography of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

April 24—Varuthinī Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans.

April 28—Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Gadādhara Paṇḍita, a close associate of Lord Caitanya.

May 1—Beginning of Candana-yātrā, the festival of anointing Lord Jagannātha with sandalwood pulp for twenty-one days.

May 7—Appearance anniversary of Śrīmatī Sitā-devī, the consort of Lord Rāmacandra. Appearance anniversary of Śrīmatī Jāhnava-devī, the consort of Lord Nityānanda. Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Madhu Paṇḍita, a great devotee of Lord Caitanya.

May 9—Mohini Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans.

May 12—Nṛsimha Caturdaśī, the appearance anniversary of Lord Nṛsimhadeva, the half-man, half-lion incarnation. Fasting till dusk, followed by feasting.



Every Town and Village

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

Bolivia's President Receives Books



Bolivia's president, Dr. Victor Paz Estenssoro, received some of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books when he visited a Kṛṣṇa consciousness booth at a fair held in Santa Cruz recently. The president's acceptance of the books was an encouraging sign for the devotees, who have been struggling against harassment by certain government agencies for several years.

New Cookbook to be Released

New York City—E. P. Dutton, one of the top ten publishers in the United States, and Bala Books, publisher of Kṛṣṇa cultural books for children, recently signed an agreement to publish and distribute *Lord Kṛṣṇa's Cuisine: The Art of Indian Vegetarian Cooking*, by Yamunā-devī dāśī. Bala Books will begin distributing the new cookbook early this year. It will be available in bookstores throughout the United States by October.

Yamunā-devī spent ten years compiling and testing the six hundred recipes that make up most of the nine-hundred-page book. She learned much about Indian cuisine from her spiritual master, His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, and her extensive travels in India have added to that knowledge and experience. Her book also contains numerous anecdotes about Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Augmenting the volume are three hundred thirty illustrations by David Baird, widely known for his drawings in the *Good Housekeeping* and *Reader's Digest* cookbooks.

Traveling Ratha-yātrā Gears Up

Los Angeles—The crew of ISKCON's traveling Ratha-yātrā/Festival of India is busy here preparing for another year of festivals throughout North America. Last year the traveling festival crew, headed by Madhuhā dāsa, held more than fifty festivals—in New York, San Francisco, Washington, D. C., Vancouver, Toronto, and many other cities.

ISKCON's founder and spiritual master, His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, introduced Ratha-yātrā to the West in San

Francisco. (He had been observing the ancient religious festival since his childhood and saw it as an ideal way to present Kṛṣṇa consciousness to the American people.) Each year the San Francisco Ratha-yātrā grew larger and more popular, and Ratha-yātrā spread to other North American cities.

In the mid-seventies, Jayānanda dāsa, who had organized the first American Ratha-yātrā, was eager to fulfill Śrīla Prabhupāda's desire that Kṛṣṇa consciousness spread through the distribution of transcendental literature, *prasādam* (sanctified, vegetarian food), and the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra. The Ratha-yātrā festival seemed the ideal way to fulfill that desire.

In 1978 in Toronto, Cāru dāsa and Devī-deva dāsa, inspired by Jayānanda's vision and by the success of the Ratha-yātrā festivals already held in a few American cities, received a grant from the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust to start a traveling festival program that would bring Kṛṣṇa conscious festivals to cities all over North America. Cāru and Devī-deva went to Los Angeles, where they were assisted by Vatsala dāsa, Drutakarmā dāsa, Vaibhavī-devī dāśī, and others. The result was an impressive, transportable festival: huge chariots, informative exhibits, dioramas, a stage, a sound system, and colorful Indian tents.

Over the years the program has steadily expanded, and today residents of many North American cities consider Ratha-yātrā and the Festival of India among the most colorful and exciting events of the year. The organizers of ISKCON's traveling Ratha-yātrā/Festival of India are planning more and bigger festivals than ever this year. Watch *Back to Godhead* magazine for information about festivals in your area.



Festival-goers admire chariot at Montreal's 1986 Festival of India.

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greatest literature of this world. For all pleasures, all wonderful and magnificent things, are present most fully and completely in God. Since God is unsurpassable, He is called Bhagavān, or the one who fully possesses (*vān*) the six opulences (*bhaga*)—wealth, power, fame, beauty, knowledge, and renunciation. That's why *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the beautiful book of Bhagavān, contains everything you ever wanted in a book—and much more.

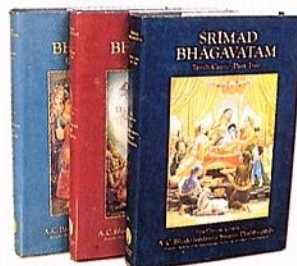
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For more information inquire at your local ISKCON center or write *Back to Godhead*, P.O. Box 133, Line Lexington, PA 18932-0133 for a catalog and price list.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON THE SCIENCE OF GOD

Are we all on the same path?
Are we going in the same direction?
Will we all reach the same destination?

This is an extract from questions and answers that followed a lecture by His Holiness Hridayananda dāsa Goswami at the University of Florida.

Hridayananda dāsa Goswami: If we accept the arguments of the so-called *yogīs* that no matter what we do we merge into the same point, then there is no question of free will, because we would all be compelled to come together, although we are acting and desiring differently. And without free will, what is the use of liberation? Liberation is meaningless without free will. Therefore the Supreme Lord, Kṛṣṇa, advises us to surrender freely to Him. But if we are stubborn and want to worship someone other than the Supreme Lord, we will get an inferior result.

Question: But in *Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa Himself says, "Everyone is on the Lord's path in all respects." Therefore it seems to me that although everyone may appear to be on a different path, actually we are on the same one path.

HGD: Yes, but you have not given the complete quotation. The other part of that verse says, *ye yathā māṁ prapadyante tāṁs tathaiiva bhajāmy aham*: "I reward all men proportionately as they surrender to Me." If all paths are the same, as you say, there would be no proportionate exchange.

We should examine this concept of a "path." We should study this analogy. Let's say there's a pathway going all the

way from Miami to New York City. That is a path also. And if you examine this path, you will find many thousands of cars on the highway. But are any two cars in exactly the same position? Can you say that any two cars are exactly at the same point? Of course not! And the argument that all cars end up in the same place is also false, because some cars are going one way and some are going the opposite way. Similarly, anyone can see that living beings are all in different situations in different species of life. And just as cars go in different directions, some people are becoming elevated and others are becoming degraded. Nowhere in the world do we see that people are automatically becoming perfect. Actually, the world is becoming more and more nasty, but although everyone is worried and unhappy, blind so-called spiritualists go on assuring people, "There's no need to worry. Just be happy. Everything will automatically be all right."

Another practical observation is that on a highway there are many exits, and very few cars take a road to the farthest point. For example, on the highway leaving Miami many cars will stop at Atlanta; others will stop at Washington, others at Baltimore, and others at Philadelphia. But very few will take the road to the end.

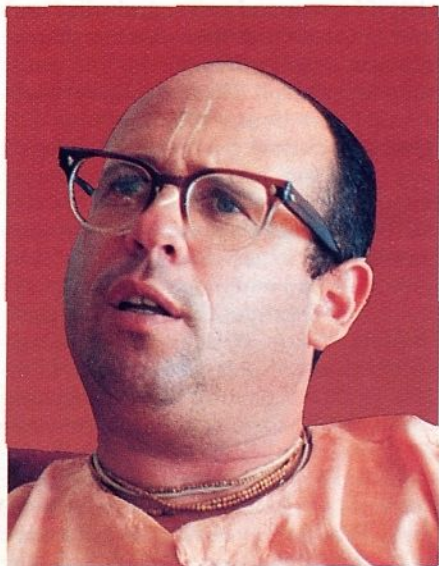
Similarly, almost everyone exits prematurely from the *yoga* system. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa says that hardly any-



one finishes the path. Many people exit prematurely from the *yoga* path to chase the illusion of becoming God. Others exit to indulge in material sense gratification. And others consider mere contentment the perfection of life, although anyone can see that many animals are also content.

But according to Kṛṣṇa and all other authorities, that is not the perfection of *yoga*. Perfection lies in returning to our original, eternal positions as servants of Kṛṣṇa. One may argue that merely performing gross bodily exercises or silent meditation is equal to direct surrender unto the Supreme Personality of Godhead, directly serving Him twenty-four hours a day in *bhakti-yoga*. But such an argument shows no knowledge of actual *yoga* and its purpose.

So, we accept that there is only one



“We accept that there is only one path, but that does not mean that we can immediately jump to conclusions and flatter ourselves that we are perfect. . . . That path stretches a long, long way.”

path, but that does not mean that we can immediately jump to conclusions and flatter ourselves that we are perfect. There is only one path, but that path stretches a long, long way—all the way from Kṛṣṇaloka, the highest planet in the spiritual sky, down to the wretched Pātāloka, the lowest planet within this universe. That one path winds its way up from the pit of this nasty material world, up through the antimaterial Vaikuṅṭha planets, and all the way up to Kṛṣṇaloka and the transcendental forest where Kṛṣṇa dances with the *gopīs* in the moonlight.

It is natural for modern fools to flatter themselves that they are automatically going to the highest point regardless of their qualifications, but our practical observations of ourselves and others cannot justify this lazy and self-aggrandizing attitude. We find many people are in

difficulty, and often their difficulty is increasing—unhappy people whose unhappiness increases daily. It is rare to find someone elevating himself. In this age of quarrel, Kali-yuga, we are naturally inclined to be lazy, and we are always eager to get something for nothing and cheat someone. But we should give up wishfully thinking we will automatically become perfect. We should try to deal with our situation honestly.

Our situation is that we are eternally part and parcel of the Supreme Lord, Kṛṣṇa, but we are now conditioned by material nature. Being part of God, however, we do have minute independence. When we exercise our independence by surrendering to Kṛṣṇa, we release ourselves from this dilemma.

On the other hand, the attempt to avoid the ominous repercussions of our sinful life by merely wishfully thinking that we are God, or that our sinful activities may be offered to God, will only prolong our entanglement and the stupor of our material life. We should admit just what we want—and take it! If someone wants Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme, let him say it directly, chant it directly, and accept it directly. That is Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Therefore Kṛṣṇa summarized the entire issue of spiritual life by saying that worshipers who pray to demigods, such as Durgā and Śiva, for material benedictions are dispatched to the planets of the demigods; worshipers of ghosts and spirits become ghosts and spirits; and those who offer everything to the Supreme Lord, Kṛṣṇa, go to live eternally with Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa indicates that those who worship something other than God are going backward on the path. The Lord says, *pravṛtīm ca nivṛtīm ca janā na vidur āsurāḥ*: “Those who are demons do not know what is to be done and what is not to be done.” So how can we argue that everything gets the same result? If we want to see Kṛṣṇa, God, face to face, we should focus intensely on that objective.

Question: But I don't see any need to worship an external God like Kṛṣṇa. To my way of thinking, since everyone has the same divine spark within, I can also be God.

HDG: Yes, we may say we are God, because things are easier said than done. But by my mere say-so can I become God? Does an ordinary man become God? If I can collect a band of naive followers, then I become an incarnation by their votes. That is the democratic spirit: incarnations of the people and by the people. But that is nonsense. In *Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa teaches us that we can know the authentic incarnations by consulting Vedic literature, where the incarnations of Kṛṣṇa are carefully catalogued.

Kṛṣṇa is called Urukrama because

whenever He incarnates He performs wonderful activities impossible for an ordinary man. But pseudoincarnations never do anything wonderful like Kṛṣṇa. Therefore any intelligent man who studies the authoritative literature will not be cheated very easily.

Question: I don't see why we should accept any God beyond our own selves. Each person has to have his own realization, not just read about the realization of others. I have to be my own God.

HDG: Yes, you may want to be God. But what can you *do*? For example, if someone comes here to purchase a car from you and gives you a check for five thousand dollars, what do you immediately say to him? This is business. What's the first thing you say to him?

Response: Credit references—

“So if someone claims, ‘I am God,’ we may politely say, ‘Yes, probably you are God, but our policy is to check your credit; we want to see what you can do.’ The activities and qualifications of God are mentioned in the revealed scriptures.”

HDG: Yes! Credit references. “Let me call your bank and check this out.” Because one has to be polite in business, we say, “Oh, it's not that I don't trust you, but it's just our company policy. Let me call your bank and check your credit references.” That's because we don't want to be cheated. Similarly, if someone claims to be God, we don't want to be cheated and waste our lives serving an imposter.

But if a man comes and gives us a check and argues with us, “No, you cannot call my bank, nor have I any credit references, but still you must take the check,” will you take it?

Response: You see, what I mean is—

HDG: No, no, answer the question. Will you take the check with no references?

Response: No.

HDG: So if someone comes and claims, “I

am God,” we may politely say, “Yes, probably you are God, but our policy is to check your credit; we want to see what you can *do*.” The activities and qualifications of God are all mentioned in the revealed scriptures.

Response: The scriptures give some idea, but they're limited because they're words. You have to get knowledge for yourself. The scriptures are material.

HDG: So first you have to concede my first point—that you can't act like God. But why do you say the scriptures are material? What is the evidence that Vedic literature is material? Material means temporary. There's no evidence that Vedic literature is temporary. It is said in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* that Kṛṣṇa spoke this literature to Brahmā billions of years ago (*tene brahma hṛdā*). Brahmā was supposed to create the universe, but he was faltering until Kṛṣṇa delivered the Vedic scriptures to him from within his heart. Then he could do it. And the *Bhāgavatam* describes very clearly that long before the creation, personified Vedic knowledge existed. Great saintly persons accept these descriptions, and the Vedic literature is still going strong all over the world. “Material” refers to temporary things that have a beginning and an end. But where is the evidence that the *Bhagavad-gītā* is temporary?

Response: Do you really think it's eternal? After all, it's just printed on temporary paper with temporary ink. In a few years it will just be dust.

HDG: That is nonsense. *Bhagavad-gītā* is not paper and ink. *Bhagavad-gītā* is sound vibration. For example, I am speaking, and you can write down on paper what I'm saying and distribute it. That's another thing. But where is the evidence that *Bhagavad-gītā* has a beginning or end?

Response: It is said that the sage Vyāsa-deva wrote it five thousand years ago.

HDG: I have already given the example that if I speak and you record what I say and type it out, that does not mean that the day you type it out is the day the words were first spoken. These are not very substantial objections.

Question: But how do you know that Kṛṣṇa was anything more than an ordinary man?

HDG: If Kṛṣṇa was ordinary, how then was He able to act extraordinarily? Why did all the contemporary authorities say that Kṛṣṇa is extraordinary? People argue that the descriptions can be psychologically explained. But actually such faithless demons can be psychologically explained. These fools are simply envious of Kṛṣṇa. All the saintly authorities declare that Kṛṣṇa is extraordinary, but the demons convince themselves that He is a myth. Why do they do that? If they are not sure, they should investigate. But they

cannot stand to deeply investigate Kṛṣṇa consciousness, because Kṛṣṇa is actually the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Response: But that's your interpretation.

HDG: No! It is not *our* interpretation. It is Arjuna's interpretation—Asita's, Devala's, Nārada's. It is the opinion of all the great transcendental authorities. They all insist that Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. So if the great say yes and the fools say no, whom shall we believe?

Say I want to invest some money. A highly successful businessman says to invest, but a poor beggar says not to invest. Why should I listen to the poor beggar? If I do, I will also become a beggar. Similarly, who are these people who deny Kṛṣṇa? They have no definite transcendental knowledge, nor any experience of real Vedic study. So what is their caliber?

Who are these critics compared to great souls like Nārada and Vyāsadeva? Vyāsadeva simply sat down alone in a secluded place, without a tinge of material desire, and spontaneously sang hundreds of thousands of perfectly composed Sanskrit verses so beautiful that five thousand years later they are studied everywhere in the world. And his language is so sophisticated that scholars cannot surpass it. All the philosophies of the earth can be found within these verses, and at last Vyāsadeva defeated all other philosophies to establish Kṛṣṇa above everything as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Vyāsadeva was able to pinpoint in detail our modern condition of life.

Which of these petty critics could dare presume exactly what life will be like five thousand years from now? Actually, despite their lofty notions on life, many modern philosophers and scientists have personal habits like dogs and cats. They are simply addicted to material sense gratification. But Vyāsadeva was pure, uncontaminated. He was not a hypocrite; he was saintly. He was ecstatic twenty-four hours a day. So who are these critics who dare to challenge the transcendental status of Vyāsadeva? Kṛṣṇa demonstrated that He is God, and all the greatest spiritual authorities confirm it.

Response: Kṛṣṇa may have been a very wonderful man, but—

HDG: Yes, Kṛṣṇa was wonderful. So why should you think He misunderstood His own position? Kṛṣṇa said over and over, "I am the Supreme God." But you say Kṛṣṇa is a man. So if Kṛṣṇa misunderstood Himself, how was He wonderful? Someone who does not know his own position cannot be wonderful. A man becomes wonderful by self-realization. So if Kṛṣṇa is wonderful, we should accept Kṛṣṇa's statement that He is God.

Response: Kṛṣṇa may have understood Himself, but today we don't understand His real teaching.

HDG: That is still nonsense. Kṛṣṇa spoke very clearly. Kṛṣṇa said, "I am God." *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* explains that Kṛṣṇa spoke *Bhagavad-gītā* for the least intelligent people. (*Strī-sūdra-dvijabandhūnām . . . iti bhāratam ākhyānam kṛpayā muninā kṛtam.*) So if Kṛṣṇa was speaking for the least intelligent people, which is what we are in this age, why should He speak in riddles? Riddles are for clever people. Riddles and esoteric language are not meant for slow learners. The *Bhāgavatam* specifically states that because in this age we cannot understand the esoteric and sophisticated language of the *Vedas*, Vyāsadeva included *Bhagavad-gītā* in the *Mahābhārata*. According to the simple and clear language of the *Gītā*, Kṛṣṇa is the original person, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

"Discrimination based on ignorance is useless, but discrimination based on quality is necessary. The professor says that if he allows us to teach, he has to allow everyone. But why does he marry one girl and not another? What is your answer?"

Response: There are many editions of *Bhagavad-gītā*.

HDG: There are not many editions according to Kṛṣṇa. One must understand *Bhagavad-gītā* as it is, as Kṛṣṇa spoke it, without adding or subtracting anything. One should therefore hear the message of *Bhagavad-gītā* from a pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa, the original speaker of *Bhagavad-gītā*.

To understand God, one needs intelligent discrimination. But people do not understand this. For example, the schools say, "If we allow everyone to come and teach his idea . . ." Why don't they argue this way in hiring their faculty? If there are one hundred applications to join the faculty and one man is accepted, does everyone have to be accepted? If a university admits one student, must it then ad-

mit every student? If the cafeteria serves one kind of food, does it have to serve every kind of food? The answer is no in every case. They will discriminate between different students, teachers, and foods according to their quality. If I use one book in a course, do I have to use every book in the world?

Discrimination based on ignorance is useless, but discrimination based on quality is necessary. The professor says that if he allows us to teach, he has to allow everyone. But why does he marry one girl and not another? What is your answer? Why doesn't he marry all the girls? In every other field they discriminate: in the choice of books, faculty, administration, architecture, landscaping. Even the cafeteria discriminates. Why then in our case do they suddenly say, "No discrimination. If you come, everyone must come"?

Response: Because you are a religion.

HDG: Yes, they say, "Because it is a religion, it cannot be proven." But they teach poetry, don't they? In the field of poetry, how can anything be proven? How can you prove that one poem is better than another?

Response: Simply by taste.

HDG: But how can you *prove* it? How can you prove Shakespeare is better than an ordinary man?

Response: You can't actually prove it because it all depends on your personal taste.

HDG: But still they make judgments.

Response: No, the schools are there to educate, not to make judgments.

HDG: Yes, they *do* make judgments because they offer courses in Shakespeare in every school, but there are no courses in your writings or mine. They offer courses in Beethoven. But will they offer a course in your singing? Why Beethoven and not others? Why Shakespeare and not others? What is your answer?

Response: It's because of personal taste.

HDG: No! It's not personal taste. Shakespeare is actually better. Beethoven is actually better. There's a difference in quality, and that quality can be ascertained.

Response: Then why will they not accept your knowledge?

HDG: Yes, that is what I'm asking you. But we are not trying to impose a particular religion. We are not sectarian. We are presenting a philosophy and technique that brings one to the point of God consciousness, which nullifies all sectarian designations. So the government should give us the facility to offer courses everywhere in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. It is not an imposition on anyone's freedom, but it will give intelligent and serious students inquiring about the essential problems of life an opportunity to receive sublime and authoritative answers. ☐

THE VEDIC

Transcendental Comment

RELIEF SHORT-LIVED

by Dvārakādīśa-devī dāśī

Nancy Wexler is a forty-one-year-old neuropsychologist who, having witnessed her mother's agonizing battle with fatal Huntington's disease, now faces a fifty percent chance of dying in the same wretched way. She is also one of the developers of a test for detecting the incurable disease. Wexler used to think she would want to know if she herself would fall victim, but now she's not so sure. She notes, "Before the test you can always say, 'Well, it can't happen to me.' After the test, if it's positive, you can't say that anymore."

If the test is positive, you face certain dementia and death. Yet look at the irony. Even if you test positive, who's to say you'll live long enough to die from Huntington's disease? You—or I or Ms. Wexler—could die tomorrow.

And if the test is negative, is this a guarantee against suffering and death? There are thousands of varieties of disease, none of them pleasant, that still threaten to strike. All it takes is one blow, or one virus, to finish this fragile body.

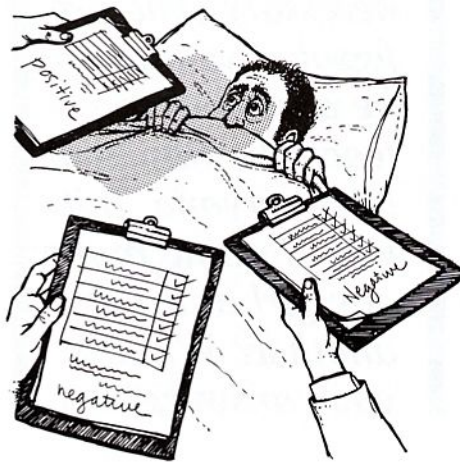
Every living body is potentially and inevitably a dead body. Death means that the body has reached such a degenerated condition that the soul is no longer able to remain. How you come to this point is irrelevant, but one way or another, all of us are going to die.

We are living under a death sentence. If the doctor were to tell you, "You have just six months to live," how would you change your life? Would you buy a new home? Look for a better-paying job? Probably not. You'd probably focus on understanding the meaning and purpose of your existence. Since we all have the limitation that we don't know how much time we have remaining, we should consider, even in our healthiest moments, that death may be just ahead.

How to face death? The ideal attitude was shown by Mahārāja Parīkṣit, a great saintly monarch. The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* relates how Mahārāja Parīkṣit, although emperor of the world, was unfairly cursed

to die by a young *brāhmaṇa* boy. Mahārāja Parīkṣit accepted the curse as the will of the Lord and took advantage of his final seven days to renounce his worldly opulence and hear of the glorious Supreme Lord.

Observing strict vows of fasting and renunciation, Mahārāja Parīkṣit left his throne and went alone to the bank of the sacred Ganges, where he met the great sage Śukadeva Gosvāmī. Many other sages also assembled to hear the exalted exchange between the emperor and his *guru*, as Mahārāja Parīkṣit inquired on behalf of all people about the nature of the material and spiritual worlds, the posi-



tion of the living entities, the power of devotional service, and, most important, the activities of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* centers on this exchange between Śukadeva Gosvāmī and Mahārāja Parīkṣit, as the king exemplifies the prime duty of a person facing death.

He expressed himself to all the sages assembled (*Bhāgavatam* 1.19.15):

O *brāhmaṇas*, just accept me as a completely surrendered soul, and let mother Ganges, the representative of the Lord, also accept me in that way, for I have already taken the lotus feet of the Lord into my heart. Let the snake-bird—or whatever magical thing the *brāhmaṇa* created—bite me at once. I only desire that you all continue singing the deeds of Lord Viṣṇu.

Śrīla Prabhupāda comments on this verse:

As soon as one is given up completely unto the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord, he is not at all afraid of death. The atmosphere created by the presence of great devotees of the Lord on the bank of the Ganges and Mahārāja Parīkṣit's complete acceptance of the Lord's feet were sufficient guarantee to the king for going back to Godhead. He thus became absolutely free from all fear of death.

Death signals the end of this particular body and all its involvements in the material world, but not the end of the soul. The soul is an eternal spiritual person with a full existence beyond this temporary world. To attain that original identity, we must awaken the love for God that is always present in our hearts—although it's covered now by illusion. Through patient and submissive service to Kṛṣṇa, we can rekindle that sublime love.

The most important forms of service are hearing and chanting the holy name of the Supreme Lord, Kṛṣṇa, and absorbing our minds in His pastimes and attributes. Gradually our natural taste for hearing and speaking about Lord Kṛṣṇa will grow, and this taste will pull us from the illusions created by the material mind and body.

The good news for some is that they can now know for certain that they won't die from Huntington's disease. Yet, as Nancy Wexler says, "I wonder if I would really be that much happier if I knew I wouldn't get the disease." Who can be happy knowing that death—in whatever form—looms in the future? Only that pure soul who has embraced the lotus feet of Lord Kṛṣṇa as his sole shelter can face the final moments with true peace and certitude.

A POLICY FOR THE HIGHEST EDUCATION

by Basu Ghosh dāśa

An official publication from the Indian government's Ministry of Human Resource Development informs us that the new "National Policy on Educa-

OBSERVER

ary on the Issues of the Day

tion" is geared not only for the "material" but also for the "spiritual" development of the citizens. That's an improvement: India's educational policy-makers now recognize the need for spiritual development. Without Kṛṣṇa consciousness, however, that need will remain unsatisfied.

Underlying the many problems now facing India's educational planners is the prevalent mistake of accepting the self to be the temporary body and of considering the material world to be all in all. Modern education, therefore, does not teach any goal in life beyond ephemeral, materialistic goals. The new National Policy on Education may claim to be fully comprehensive from the "womb to the tomb," but without educating people about the self *before* the womb and *beyond* the tomb, education remains materialistic, and "spiritual" development remains but an empty political premise.

Spiritual development must refer to that which is beneficial for the spiritual self, the soul. The *Vedānta-sūtra*, the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and many other Vedic texts teach that human life is especially for spiritual inquiry and development. And the *Hitopadeśa* says that one who is busy only with eating, sleeping, mating, and defending—without spiritual development—is no better than an animal. Spiritual development, therefore, is the most essential part of a complete education. It provides a direction and a goal for the eternal soul—a definite destination for the self beyond the "tomb." To provide this missing essence, is the greatest need in modern Indian education, and educational policy-makers would do well to consider the fundamental principles of education that have been presented in the Vedic literatures and elucidated in the writings of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, founder-*ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

The Kṛṣṇa conscious approach to education does not mean that material education and development should be abandoned. Rather, in India's ancient Vedic scriptures, spiritual and vocational (material) development complement one another. The Vedic literature outlines a

program of vocational training that, if implemented, could lead to much gainful employment for the mass of people and could also improve the overall management of human resources. This could also eliminate much unnecessary competition in the job market. And since it stresses balanced simple living, instead of consumerism, it will help curb the depletion of our natural resources. In other words, when human life is turned toward cultivating a destination for the eternal soul, sense gratificatory diversions and material possessions take on a new perspective. This is the God conscious, theistic



world view: The world is God's property, and we (God's servants) should use it in God's service.

An atheistic world view—"I am this body; this world is for my enjoyment"—has led to much unnecessary endeavor for materialistic and hedonistic goals, which in turn has brought about a lot of suffering and but a little pleasure. For example, one effect of this world view on education is that students believe they must go all out for pleasure. Consequently, drug and alcohol abuse is high among students in Bombay, New Delhi, Bangalore, and elsewhere.

Students should learn the Upaniṣadic principle taught in the *Īsopaniṣad*: "Everything animate and inanimate that is within

the universe is controlled and owned by the Lord. One should therefore accept only those things necessary for himself, which are set aside as his quota, and one should not accept other things, knowing well to whom they belong." This education would go a long way toward eliminating the above anomalies.

A Kṛṣṇa conscious education puts the most essential knowledge first:

"Humility; pridelessness; nonviolence; tolerance; simplicity; approaching a bona fide spiritual master; cleanliness; steadiness; self-control; renunciation of the objects of sense gratification; absence of false ego; the perception of the evil of birth, death, old age, and disease; detachment; freedom from entanglement with children, wife, home, and the rest; evenmindedness amid pleasant and unpleasant events; constant and unalloyed devotion to Me; aspiring to live in a solitary place; detachment from the general mass of people; accepting the importance of self-realization; and philosophical search for the Absolute Truth—all these I declare to be knowledge, and besides this whatever there may be is ignorance" (Bg. 13. 8-12).

If this knowledge could be imparted on a mass scale in India, material, spiritual, and moral instruction would follow, and the myriad problems facing India's educational policy-makers would come under control.

HELL-BENT FOR HEAVEN

by Kuṇḍalī dāsa

A whopping seventy-two percent of the American people rate their chances of going to heaven as "good to excellent." That's about 150 million people. The figure is based on a poll by *USA Today*.

"This can't be," I thought. "That would mean seventy-two percent of the people were practically saints. If this is a nation with that many saints, who are the people indulging in tobacco and alcohol, abusing drugs and having illicit sex? And who's responsible for the 1.5 million abortions per year and for making herpes and AIDS the twentieth century's bubonic

plague? Who patronizes the gambling meccas and supports the merciless animal-slaughter industry by consuming billions of Chicken McNuggets, hamburgers, steaks, and so on each year? Who's doing all the murdering, mugging, raping, lying, cheating, and stealing?"

Please don't misunderstand me. I'm all in favor of as many people as possible going back to Godhead. At the same time I can't help but distinguish between the poll's results and my experience. I certainly can't accept that all those sinful activities are conducted and supported by that twenty-eight percent whose chances of going to heaven rate less than good.

FOOD FOR LIFE

(continued from page 11)

pulling up to the Rhine with General Patton a week after D-day and urinating "in Hitler's backyard." Close your eyes and he's George Burns.

"The day the stock market crashed I was standing on a corner with a cop. I was a kid, a Wall Street runner. All of a sudden people started jumpin' outa windows. I said, 'Murphy, you gotta do somethin!' He said, 'There ain't nothin' I can do.' What a mess! But my father, he didn't jump outa no window. He said, 'The good Lord will take care of us.' And He did."

And at last the Sassamans. Mr. Sassa-

I showed the article to a friend and asked him what he thought. "I guess this is what advocates of human potential mean when they talk about 'incurable optimism'" he replied.

"Optimism I can understand," I said, "but this is about as realistic as missing all your classes and expecting to graduate with honors."

"But then some of them may argue that you're seeing things in terms of your values [Kṛṣṇa consciousness] rather than their values [Christianity]."

"Even so," I said, "if people are serious about going to the spiritual world, whether they follow the Bible or the *Bhagavad-gītā*,

they should live by their scripture.

"Yes, of course. Otherwise there is no meaning to religion."

"Then I think it's fair to say that both the biblical and the Vedic traditions advocate detachment from the world and attachment and love for God as basic and essential for entering the spiritual world."

"So by those standards," he said, "I doubt that even twenty-eight percent would qualify, what to speak of seventy-two."

"That's right. Other than the incredible power of positive thinking, I can't fathom any basis for their optimism."

"Yeah, positive thinking. Or sheer sentimentality." ❧

man, the image of Santa Claus, repairs lawnmowers and moonlights as a butcher's helper. He loves *prasādam* and says, "Hare Kwithna." But at his door today, Graham hears a stranger's voice inside.

"I'm telling you, Mr. Sassaman, they're a cult, and their food is fit for the Devil."

"Then how come, whenever I go to church, all they want is money? But these people never ask me a penny for their food. It's good food, and they're good people."

"Food for Life!" Graham walks in and sets the food on the table.

The stranger's voice loudens. "I'm gonna tell him to his face. Son, you belong to a cult!"

"So did Christians till they got some political clout."

"Lord, save this boy!"

"Save yourself and eat up," says Sassaman. "This food's mighty good."

"Thanks, Mr. Sassaman."

"Hare Kwithna."

Back at the farm, our kids charge the van for leftovers. We served our thirty-thousandth meal today, and the kids say that two new families called up while we were out. I smile and wonder what those church ladies are thinking about us. It was the Supreme Lord Himself who inspired that float, for strange and wonderful are His ways. And His *prasādam* is out of this world. ❧

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LETTERS

Please send me a copy of your catalog. I found your magazine so enlightening. I especially enjoyed the article on cooking. I tried the recipes at home, and they were delicious. If you have any further information with recipes or other insights into cooking, please send them along with the catalog. At the present time I am a practicing Mormon, but I am interested in exploring alternate spiritual paths.

Fred Westervelt
Portland, Oregon

* * *

What gives Jayādvaīta Swami the right to judge who are pure devotees? In his article *Entering Orissa* (BTG Vol. 21, Nos. 2-3) he states, "Yet for the most part these *kīrtana* singers are not what we'd consider pure devotees. Some smell of fish and sugarcane-liquor. And when the chanting is over we see singers and *mṛdaṅga* drum players relaxing with a smoke." I object. We all serve God in our own way. In the Sixth Chapter of the *Gītā* Kṛṣṇa says that those who are sin-

cere will reach the goal. God is the father of all, and He doesn't discriminate between the pure and the impure. We should follow His example and not self-righteously pass judgements.

P. B. Patel
Rajkot, India

JAYĀDVAITA SWAMI REPLIES: Although Jayādvaīta Swami considers himself a neophyte devotee and lacking in realization, as a servant of a learned and bona fide spiritual master, he thinks it his duty to speak the message of *Bhagavad-gītā* as it is, as handed down from spiritual master to disciple.

In *Bhagavad-gītā* (7.28) Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa clearly tells us that the steadfast, pure devotees are those who have left behind all sins.

The four main sins, say the Vedic scriptures, are intoxication, gambling, illicit sex, and eating meat, fish, or eggs. So we consider a devotee pure only when these are cleansed from his life.

One who sets out on the spiritual path

but later goes astray may turn again to spiritual life in his next birth. After many such births, when free from all sins, he becomes a pure devotee and attains the supreme goal. In the verse you cite from *Bhagavad-gītā*, Sixth Chapter, Lord Kṛṣṇa uses the word *samśuddha-kilbiṣaḥ* to point out that for perfection one must be sinless.

A person who chants Hare Kṛṣṇa under proper guidance, following the regulative principles of *bhakti-yoga*, can cleanse his heart and reach purity and perfection quickly, even without waiting many births. Our article therefore expressed the hope that this is what the sincere people we met in Orissa would do.

If, despite one's sins, one single-mindedly devotes oneself to Kṛṣṇa, one must be considered saintly. Why? The *Bhagavad-gītā* (9.31) tells us: Such a person quickly becomes righteous, free from sins.

Despite our bad habits, if we simply chant Hare Kṛṣṇa with sincerity, we will be pulled toward the Lord. We shall then give up our bad habits for the higher taste of Kṛṣṇa consciousness and become pure devotees.

The *Bhagavad-gītā* explains this science of pure devotional service. So if we
(continued on page 34)

SINCE 1971

What do devotees of Kṛṣṇa have to show
for their years of devotion?

by VIŚĀKHĀ-DEVĪ DĀSĪ

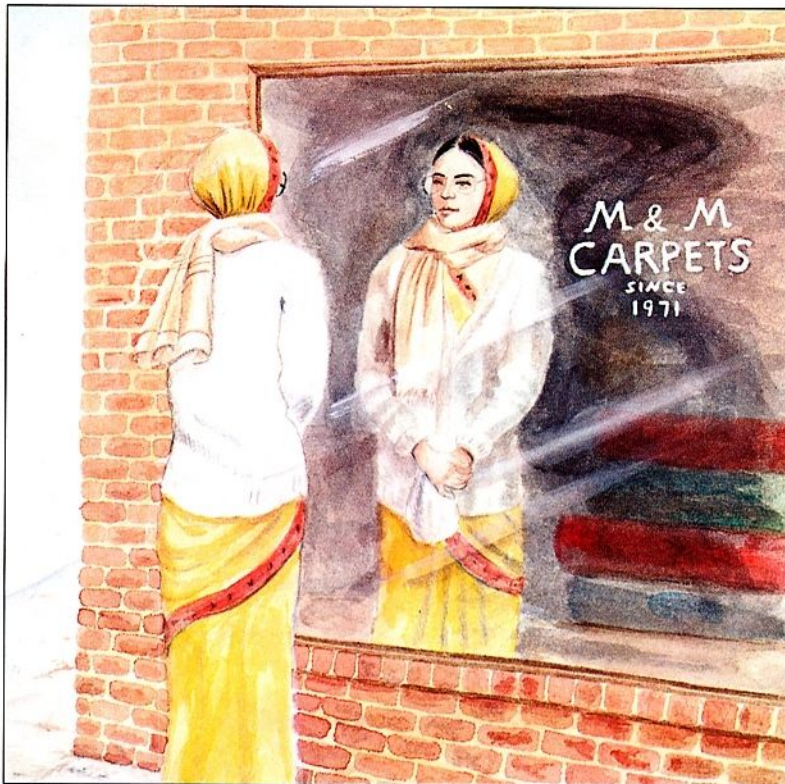
The unrelieved grayness of the sky seemed to cast a pall over everything during a leafless, lifeless, mid-January morning in Moundsville, West Virginia. The town was almost vacant, and I wondered if perhaps today were some holiday I'd forgotten about. Then I noticed a store I had passed many times: "M & M Carpets, Inc." A large sign above the door read: "Since 1971."

"1971," I thought. "That's just a few years back. What's that to proudly advertise?" Then I was jolted—it's sixteen years gone!

Sixteen years. What had I achieved in that time? Messrs. M & M had obviously built a small but viable retail carpet business, something they were proud of. What had I to be proud of?

In one sense the comparison was unfair: my goal differed radically from theirs. My goal was not for an establishment, not for fortune or prestige. My goal was to rid myself of material desires and to thus become qualified to go back to Godhead.

My spiritual master, His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, writes,



Vedic literatures state that there is nothing superior to the abode of the Supreme Godhead, and that that abode is the ultimate destination. When one attains to it, he never returns to the material world. . . . Every one of us has to go back home, back to Godhead. If we do so immediately and voluntarily, we save time; otherwise we waste time.

The Lord is more anxious to take us back to His kingdom than we can desire. Most of us do not desire at all to go back to Godhead. Only a very few men want to go back to Godhead. But anyone who desires to go back to Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa helps in all

respects.

One should be captivated by this information. He should desire to transfer himself to that eternal world and extricate himself from this false reflection of reality.

It so happens that 1971 is the year that Śrīla Prabhupāda initiated me. He explained to me then that to become qualified to go back to Godhead, one must hear about Lord Kṛṣṇa, chant His holy names and serve Him and His devotees. Although I was a neophyte in spiritual understanding, Śrīla Prabhupāda's attractive presence and teachings, my husband's encourage-

ment, and the association of other devotees had given me faith to set out on the spiritual path. My husband and I were with Śrīla Prabhupāda in India at the time, and I saw that the villagers there made no great endeavor for economic development. They were satisfied with whatever they had. Often even the street sweepers were devotees, and in the evening, after their work and a bath, they would sit down to chant the names of God and worship the Deity. Happiness, I began to understand, was in self-realization, not in self-aggrandizement. What was the use in

being unnecessarily ambitious?

This concept was confirmed in Śrīla Prabhupāda's books. For example, when Kuvera, the treasurer of the demigods, offered the devotee Dhruva Mahārāja untold riches, Dhruva said, "Please bless me that I may have unflinching faith in the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa." And when Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva, Lord Kṛṣṇa's incarnation as half man, half lion, offered Prahlāda Mahārāja whatever boon he wanted, Prahlāda said, "What should I ask from You? My father was a great materialist, so great that the demigods feared his anger. Yet You have finished him in one second. What then is the value of material power and opulence? Please engage me in the service of Your servants. That is all I want."

As this knowledge and this mood of surrender gradually strengthened my spiritual ambitions, my material ambitions waned. I accepted that—from a material view—even after a lifetime of spiritual activity (what to speak of sixteen years) one may not have much to show for it. There were examples in the Vedic tradition of devotees who were rich both spiritually and materially, but there were also examples of advanced devotees who had (and wanted) nothing more than a tree to live under and some cloth to wear. If Lord

Kṛṣṇa chose to bestow wealth upon a devotee, the devotee accepted it as the Lord's spiritual gift, and if the Lord chose not to, the devotee accepted that also.

It became clear to me that assets and accomplishments not used in Kṛṣṇa's service are of no enduring benefit. In fact, for the beginning transcendentalist, material possessions and qualifications are distractions from spiritual life: "Your Lordship can easily be approached, but only by those who are materially exhausted. One who is on the path of material progress, trying to improve himself with respectable parentage, great opulence, high education, and bodily beauty, cannot approach You with sincere feeling" (*Bhāg.* 1.8.26).

But now, in 1987, I didn't feel fully qualified to go back to Godhead. Had I wasted my time? Was I simply a two-time loser, with no position in either the material sphere or the spiritual? No. In the words of Lord Kṛṣṇa, "In this endeavor there is no loss or diminution, and a little advancement on this path can protect one from the most dangerous type of fear. . . . A transcendentalist engaged in auspicious activities does not meet with destruction either in this world or in the spiritual world; one who does good is

never overcome by evil" (Bg. 2.40, 6.40).

In other words, even though I hadn't attained perfection in my Kṛṣṇa consciousness, still I was not a loser. Material activities and their results end with the body. But any work begun in Kṛṣṇa consciousness has a permanent effect, even if not finished. Therefore, although my work in Kṛṣṇa consciousness was incomplete, I was still successful.

This is not merely consolation for those who don't make the grade; it's transcendental truth. One in devotional service has a spiritual account with accruing assets that can never be diminished. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "One percent done in Kṛṣṇa consciousness bears permanent results, so that the next beginning is from the point of two percent. . . ." I didn't know what percentage I was up to, but whatever it was, it was mine eternally and it was gradually propelling me back to Godhead.

As it turned out, that January day wasn't a holiday. The bleakness and cold had kept people home. I did my errand for the devotees and considered that since I was initiated into spiritual life in 1971, in many ways my life had begun then. I was "since 1971." And one day I would have a lot to show for it. ❏

LETTERS

(continued from page 32)

simply hear *Bhagavad-gītā* from a bona fide spiritual master, as directed in the *Gītā* itself, we'll soon come to pure consciousness, kick the fish and smoke and liquor, and attain to the kingdom of God.

Kṛṣṇa is not a devotee but God Himself, and we are children of God. Kṛṣṇa fully loves each of us. But some of us love smoking, drinking, woman-hunting, and meat-eating more than we love Kṛṣṇa. And Kṛṣṇa is no fool. As our companion in our hearts, He knows what's what and who's who, and He responds accordingly.

If God didn't discriminate between pure and impure, He'd give all of us liberation at once, regardless of what we think or do. But it's clear from *Bhagavad-gītā* that God does judge. According to our desires and our acts, He takes some of us back to Godhead and sends others back to repeated birth and death.

Sometimes we may twinge at criticism of someone's low habits, because we may have the same habits ourselves. But Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa in *Bhagavad-gītā* and saintly teachers throughout the ages kindly point out our attachments and illusions. When we humbly recognize our mundane habits for what they are, our sincere chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa helps us

overcome them. We then leave them behind, become pure devotees, and attain the perfection of life.

* * *

I very much enjoyed Mathuresha das's article on the laws of *karma* (BTG Vol. 21, 4). However, I still have one major apprehension about the moral implications of a karmic theology: If we accept the existence of *karma*, then it means no one is an innocent victim of someone else's cruelty. To stop cruelty would therefore be wrong, because it would be interfering with the laws of nature, which are properly punishing those who deserve it.

Vasu Murty
La Jolla, California

MATHUREŚA DĀSA REPLIES: While you would be correct to say that the victims of both natural and man-made calamities are receiving the results of their *karma*, or past activities, it does not follow that a man or nation can perpetrate cruelty without being held accountable.

The laws of *karma* are the laws of God. Therefore, just as it is criminal to whimsically take enforcement of state laws into your own hands, so also a cruel person who holds that his victims are merely getting their just karmic deserts is punishable under that very system of karmic laws he is citing.

Even ordinary law courts make a dis-

inction between "acts of God"—events beyond the defendant's control—and events for which the defendant may be held liable. The same is true of karmic judgments. In either case, a human being must take responsibility for his actions.

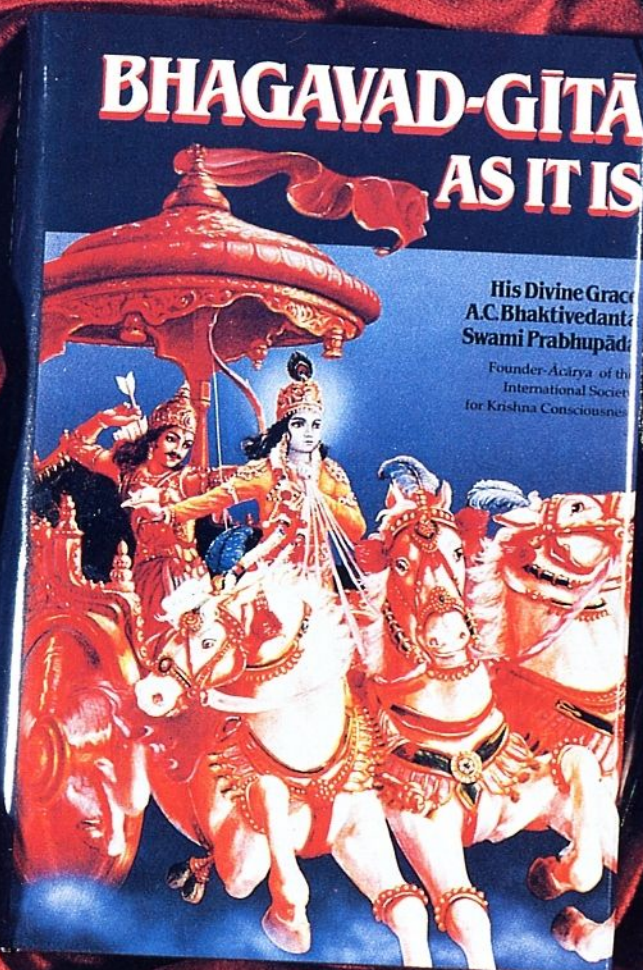
It also betrays a shallow understanding of *karma* for a witness to glibly say that the victims of either natural or man-made disasters simply suffered their fate, and that we therefore could not have done anything to help them.

There is much we could have done, because *karma* and karmic reactions are changeable.

The best way to change our *karma* is to directly render devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Kṛṣṇa, who in the *Bhagavad-gītā* promises to liberate His devotee from all karmic reaction. Kṛṣṇa is the karmic lawmaker, and He therefore has the power to commute or nullify our karmic sentences. Furthermore, as long as we remain servants of the lawmaker, there is no chance of our breaking His laws and accruing further karmic reaction.

So those who know the laws of *karma* are neither callous toward suffering nor complacent toward cruelty. But they understand that economic, political, and altruistic attempts to help their fellow man are in the long run doomed to failure unless they are coupled with programs to change their fellow man's *karma*. ❏

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—Dr. S. Shukla
Asst. Professor of Linguistics
Georgetown University

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

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NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

“Did Shakespeare Know the Lord?”

Joseph Gallagher, a liberal clergyman serving in Baltimore, is the author of *Diary of a City Priest*. In his chronicle for 1979 he noted, “One morning I preached on some of the secrets life had taught me about itself.” But after his sermon a young girl approached him and said she would have preferred quotes from the Bible to the quotes he used in his talk. “Did Shakespeare know the Lord?” she inquired.

Father Gallagher writes:

I suddenly realized that I was facing a person whose narrow kind of religion I loathe. I told her that Catholic tradition regards God as the author of the second book, too—creation and the gifted human beings who see life in their own special way and talk about it with a special beauty and power. I cited St. Ambrose’s belief that whatever truth is spoken it is spoken by the Holy Spirit. I doubt that I converted her.

I can sympathize both with Father Gallagher and the girl. Father Gallagher’s broad vision is somewhat reminiscent of the vision of enlightened devotees of the Lord. As Lord Kṛṣṇa says, “For one who sees Me everywhere and sees everything in Me, I am never lost to him nor is he ever lost to Me.” The pure devotee, who sees God everywhere, certainly sees Him within empowered human beings. Empowered beings derive their special potency (*śakti*) from God. In the Tenth Chapter of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, empowered beings are referred to as *vibhūti* incarnations of God. Such a literary genius as Shakespeare could be regarded as a *vibhūti* incarnation, in that he manifests a tiny fragment of Kṛṣṇa’s poetic and dramatic prowess.

Religion that restricts God to the church or temple or to one particular scripture is religion of a lower order. An advanced devotee of God will see the object of his devotion not only in the temple or church but also in the

hearts of all God’s creatures. Some sectarian Christians think that Kṛṣṇa conscious devotees are devil worshipers, because Vedic scriptures describe ethics of spiritual life apparently different from the teachings of Christ. Such persons are narrow-minded and misinformed, and I welcome Father Gallagher’s ecumenical spirit and his attempt to appreciate God wherever He appears.

God’s creation, in all its aspects, glorifies the creator. It’s as if all existence were within the pages of the holy scriptures. When my spiritual master, Śrīla Prabhupāda, was asked if St. Joan of Arc was in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, he replied that she wasn’t within the traditional twelve cantos of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. He explained, however, that authentic writings describing her activities were Vedic, since all knowledge derives from the *Vedas*. Certainly there is no loathsome narrow-mindedness in such a view.

Of course the question still remains, “Did Shakespeare know the Lord?” And the answer would have to be, “No.” At least, he didn’t glorify God directly, despite thousands of eloquent words. Therefore, although Shakespeare’s capabilities seem almost God-like, he nevertheless failed in the most important mission of a writer: to specifically glorify the Personality of Godhead. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes in his commentary on the First Canto of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*:

Not only ordinary literatures devoid of the transcendental qualifications of the Lord are condemned, but also Vedic literatures and speculations on the subject of impersonal Brahman when they are devoid of devotional service. When speculation on the impersonal Brahman is condemned on the above grounds, then what to speak of ordinary fruitive work which is not meant to fulfill the aim of devotional service?

...There are thousands and thou-

sands of literary men all over the world. They have created many, many thousands of literary works for the information of the people in general for thousands and thousands of years. Unfortunately none of them have brought peace and tranquillity on the earth. This is due to a spiritual vacuum in these literatures. Therefore the Vedic literatures, especially the *Bhagavad-gītā* and the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, are specifically recommended to the suffering humanity to bring about the desired effect of liberation of the material civilization, which is eating the vital part of human energy.

Sensitive persons—many empowered writers, artists, and so on—sense that human life is a tragedy. Most people try to hide the unpleasant facts of our death-bound existence; therefore, the deeper realizations expressed by poets and writers may serve to awaken people to a reality deeper than surface attempts for sense gratification. This attempt to pierce through the superficiality of materialistic life is, at least indirectly, service to truth; therefore it is a preliminary form of God consciousness. But we must progress beyond this preliminary stage to the stage of understanding our spiritual nature and our relationship with God.

Those who follow the path of Kṛṣṇa consciousness recognize the special potency of the world’s great scriptures (the Bible, Koran, *Gītā*, Torah, and so on) to raise human consciousness to the platform of eternal liberation. Among the many sacred scriptures of the world, however, the *Bhagavad-gītā* and the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* hold a special place, since they give the fullest presentation of the science of God, including confidential revelations about how to develop pure love of God. And certainly authorized preachers have the responsibility to quote scriptures and to speak about the Personality of Godhead, not just “the secrets life had taught me about itself.”—SDG



BHARGAVA DASA

CHANT!

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

Chanting is easy, and it works. In fact, it is the most effective means of God realization in the world.

Here's why. God is unlimitedly powerful, and His name is Himself. When we chant God's names, God is totally present through the transcendental sound. So potent are God's names that the Vedic scriptures consider chanting the essential, universal religion of the age.

So why don't more people chant?

Maybe they're embarrassed. Or busy. Or doubtful. Or maybe they think chanting is a

sectarian religious practice—something only for the Hare Krishnas.

Yet what could be less sectarian than calling out to God? All the great scriptures of the world praise the holy names of God. God's names may vary from religion to religion or from culture to culture, but the person—the supreme father of all—is the same.

Don't be embarrassed. Chanting is for everyone. Don't feel you're too busy. Chanting is easy. And don't remain doubtful. Try chanting and see the results.

Chant. It's easy, effective, and universal.

The Sunday Feast



This Sunday why not take the opportunity to reunite with Kṛṣṇa in a very personal way? Join in the chanting and dancing, hear a discourse on Kṛṣṇa's time-honored *Bhagavad-gītā*, and feast on sumptuous vegetarian dishes offered to Kṛṣṇa with devotion. A spiritual experience awaits you—every Sunday at the Hare Kṛṣṇa temple. (See pages 20–21 for the center nearest you.)