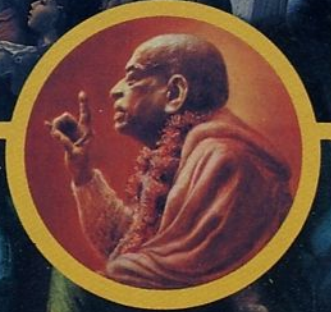


Godhead is light. Nescience is darkness. Where there is Godhead there is no nescience.

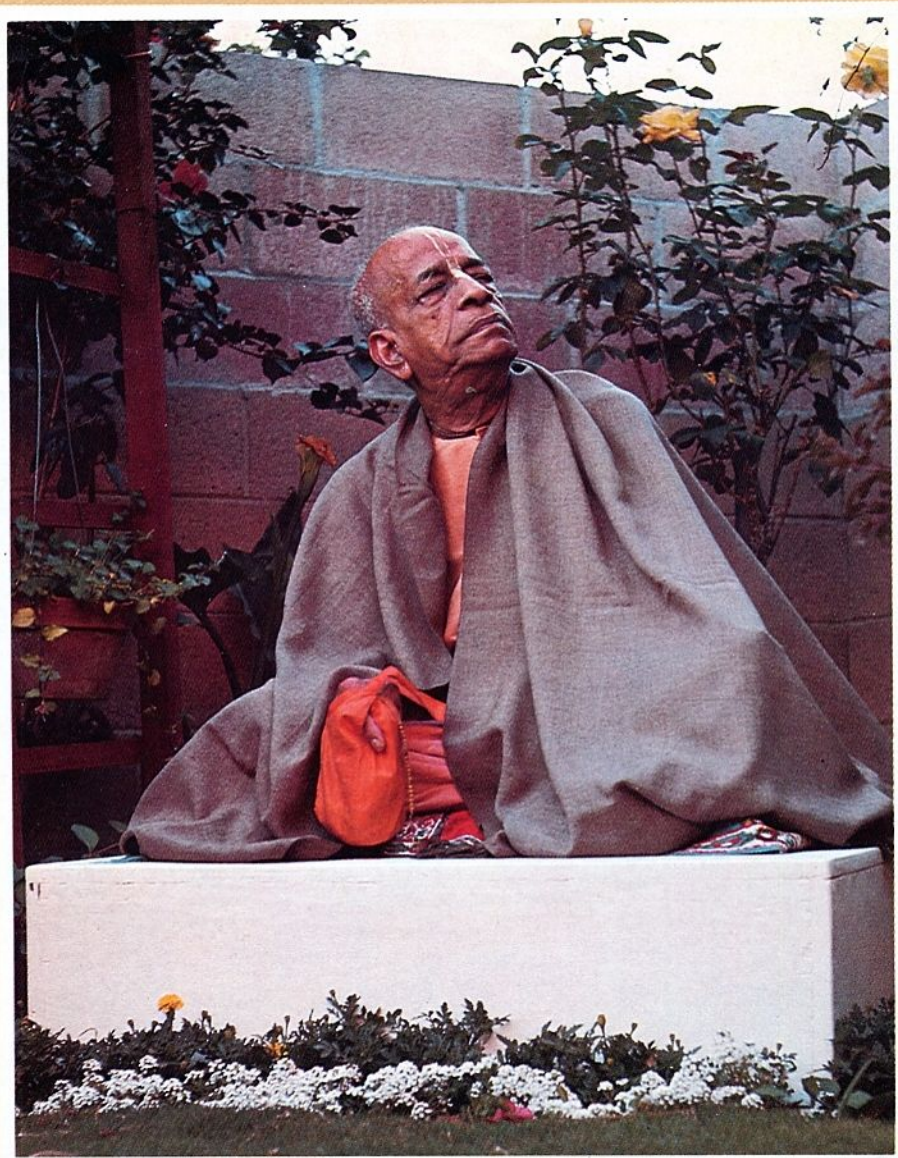
BACK TO GODHEAD

Vol. 22 No. 6

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 Vṛndāvana, India, the place most sacred to Lord Kṛṣṇa. His disciples are carrying forward the movement he started.



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.

The Magazine of the Hare Krishna Movement

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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 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, hedge-hog, 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 (dāstī for women), meaning "servant." For instance, the name Kṛṣṇa dāsa means "servant of Kṛṣṇa."

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COVER: In the eternal kingdom of God, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, enchants His loving devotees with the sweet sound of His flute. Of all His devotees, the *gopīs*, His cowherd girlfriends, are the best. They pray to Kṛṣṇa thus: "Dear Kṛṣṇa, by seeing Your beautiful face decorated with tresses of hair, by seeing the beauty of Your earrings falling on Your cheeks, and by seeing the nectar of Your lips, the beauty of Your smiling glances, Your two arms, which assure complete fearlessness, and Your broad chest, we have simply surrendered ourselves to becoming Your maidservants." (Painting by Jadurāṅgī-devī dāstī)

Science. Education. Economic development. The advances of
a godless civilization are no better than . . .

DECORATIONS FOR A DEAD BODY

A lecture in Los Angeles on December 1, 1973,

by HIS DIVINE GRACE

A. C. BHAKTIVEDANTA SWAMI PRABHUPĀDA

Founder-*Acārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

*tad vai dhanus ta iṣavaḥ sa ratho hayās te
so 'haṁ rathī nṛpatayo yata ānamanti
sarvaṁ kṣaṇena tad abhūd asad tṣa-riktaṁ
bhasman hutarṁ kuhaka-rāddham ivoptam uṣyām*

"I have the very same Gāṇḍīva bow, the same arrows, the same chariot drawn by the same horses, and I use them as the same Arjuna to whom all the kings offered their due respects. But in the absence of Lord Kṛṣṇa, all of them, at a moment's notice, have become null and void. It is exactly like offering clarified butter on ashes, accumulating money with a magic wand, or sowing seeds on barren land."

(*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.15.21)

This important verse explains that everything is null and void when there is no God. The modern civilization has everything except God consciousness. Therefore at any moment this godless civilization can be finished. At any moment. As soon as there is a declaration of war, America will drop the atom bomb on Russia, and Russia will drop the atom bomb on America. Nobody will be victorious, because both of them are ready. America will be finished, and Russia will be finished. That is the situation.

So, you may make advancement of civilization—scientific improvements, economic development—but if it is godless, at any moment it can be finished. Rāvaṇa and Hiraṇyakaśipu are good examples. They were godless demons. Rāvaṇa was a very learned scholar in Vedic knowledge and very powerful materially. He constructed his capital of gold—all the buildings and everything.

It is stated in the *Rāmāyaṇa* that Rāvaṇa's brother was the king on the other side of the globe from Rāvaṇa's kingdom and that Rāvaṇa dug a tunnel through the earth. Rāvaṇa was in Ceylon, and the other side of the globe from there is Brazil. Brazil has many gold mines. Taking all this into considera-

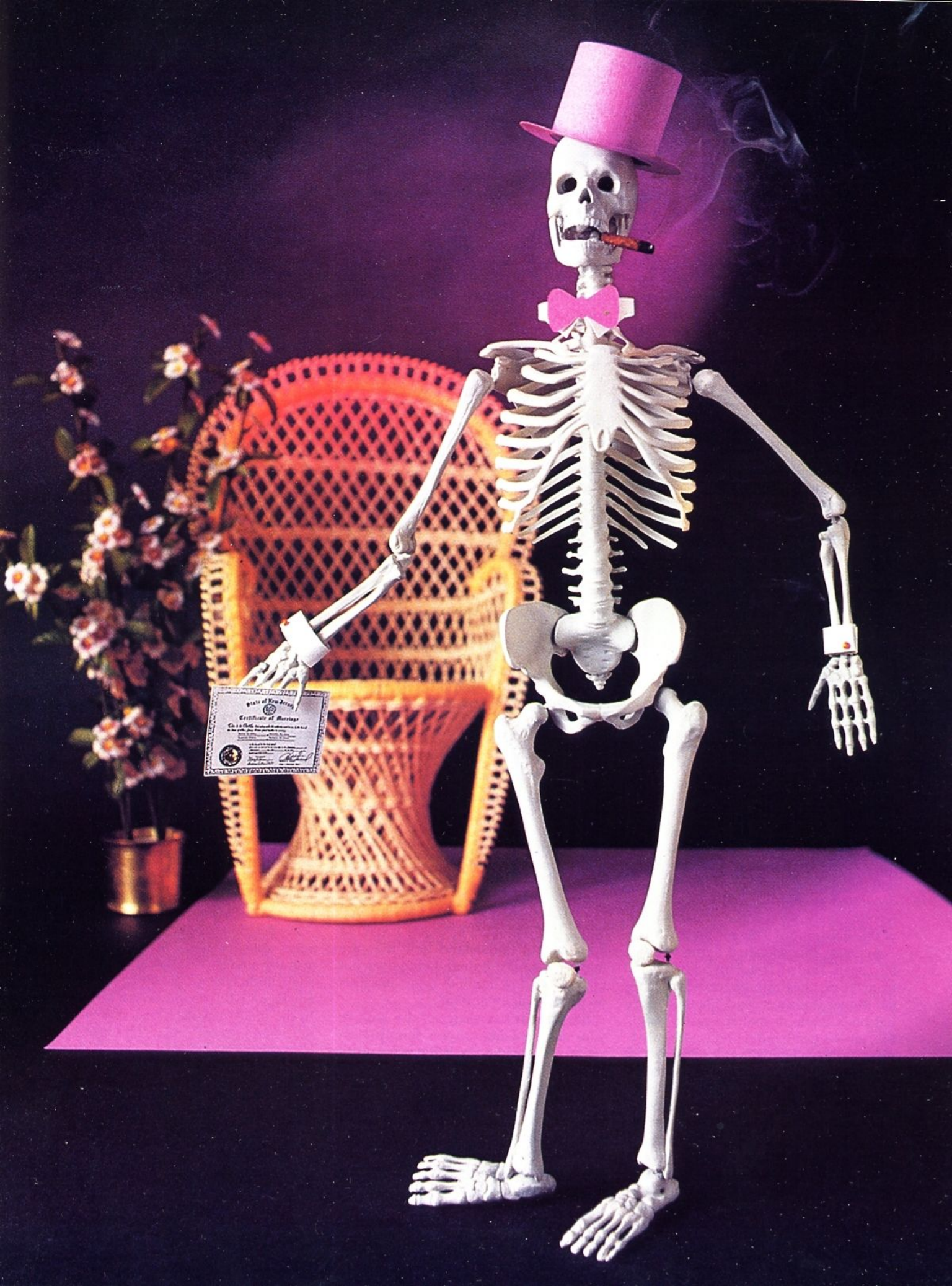
tion, we can suppose that Rāvaṇa imported large quantities of gold from Brazil (this is my suggestion; I do not say there is any scientific proof) and used it in constructing big, big buildings. So, Rāvaṇa was so powerful that he built his capital out of gold. This was very wonderful.

Similarly, we can create very wonderful things, but we have to see the example of Rāvaṇa. Rāvaṇa was very advanced materially and had vast Vedic knowledge. He was the son of a *brāhmaṇa*. He had everything. His only fault was that he did not care about Lord Rāma. That was his only fault. "Oh, who is this Rāma? I don't care for Him. There is no need to perform sacrifices and rituals to be promoted to the heavenly kingdom. I shall construct a staircase up to the moon planet." This was how Rāvaṇa thought.

Similarly, like Rāvaṇa, the people of the modern civilization are trying to enjoy all kinds of material facilities without caring for God. But they should take lessons from Rāvaṇa, whose godlessness doomed him. He lost everything when he was annihilated by Rāma.

Here in this verse we see that Arjuna was defeated by some cowherd men. Arjuna is lamenting, "I have the same bow and arrows with which I fought on the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra. I was victorious because Kṛṣṇa was sitting on my chariot. That was the only reason. But now there is no Kṛṣṇa, so my weapons are useless." The lesson is that without God, without spirit, this material gorgeousness has no value.

Yesterday on our morning walk I gave the example of the well-known scientist Albert Einstein. He was a big, big scientist, but when the small sparklike soul was gone from his body, his brain was useless. And before his death he could not discover any implement or medicine to rejuvenate himself. He could not instruct his students, "My dear students, when I am on the point of death, please inject me with this medicine, and then I shall again have a nice youthful body." No, he could not discover that medicine.



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It was expected that, as a scientist, Einstein could do something wonderful. But even though he might have discovered so many wonderful things, he could not discover anything to solve the real problems of his life—birth, old age, disease, and death. I challenge the scientists: “Discover something by which there will be no death. You are discovering such nice medicines. The drug shop is full of various types of medicine, but none of the medicines is able to save a man from death or prevent all disease. That is not possible.”

So, the advancement of materialistic civilization without God is like the decorations on a dead body. That is stated in the Vedic literature:

*bhagavad-bhakti-hīnasya
jātiḥ śāstram japas tapaḥ
aprāṇasyeva dehasya
mañḍanam loka-rañjanam*

“Without devotional service to Kṛṣṇa, all your good fortune from being born in a very high family, your *mantra* chanting, your Vedic studies, and your austerities are useless—like decorations on a dead body.”

For example, you American people have a big nation, and your activities are very big compared to those in other parts of the world. You have made America so nice by *tapasya*, austerity. It has not come about automatically; you have labored hard. But unless you engage your big activities in the service of Kṛṣṇa, they are all useless.

Similarly, scientific discoveries are very popular, but what kind of popularity is that? It is like the appreciation of simple people for the decorations on a dead body. The body may be dressed in nice clothes and decorated with flowers, and this may be very pleasing to the people in general, but after all, the body is dead. It is not enjoying. You may be complacent and think, “Oh, the body of my father is decorated so nicely.” But if you study scrutinizingly, what is the actual benefit of this decoration? There is no benefit.

Actually, this so-called living body is also dead. That’s a fact. This body is dead from the very beginning because it is matter. Matter is always dead. So, this external body made of matter—earth, water, fire, air—is dead, but it seems to be alive on account of the small spark of spirit that is present within it. That we understand from the *Bhagavad-gītā*: *dehino ’smin yathā dehe*. “There is a small spiritual spark within the body.” This is the first understanding of spiritual knowledge.

When Kṛṣṇa taught the *Bhagavad-gītā* to Arjuna, Arjuna was lamenting for the body. So when Arjuna accepted Kṛṣṇa as his spiritual master, Kṛṣṇa advised him, “You are talking like a very learned

scholar, but actually what you are saying is foolishness” (*aśocyān anvaśocas tvam prajñā-vādāms ca bhāṣase*).

Our so-called scientists are also like that. They speak as if they know everything, but the real thing they do not know. What spirit is, they do not know. They are thinking this body is everything. And according to Vedic knowledge, if one identifies himself with the body, he is an animal. He may be an M.A., B.A., or a Ph.D., but he is an animal because he does not know how the body is moving.

Because the scientists do not accept the existence of the soul, they cannot discover the difference between a living body and a dead body. When the soul is present within the body, the body moves. And when the soul leaves the body, the body no longer moves, just as when the petrol is gone, the motorcar stops. Now there is a

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crisis—a shortage of petrol—so how will their motorcars move? The petrol is the life of the movement of the motorcar. Similarly the spirit soul is the “petrol” of this body. Without knowledge of the soul, one is just like a cat or a dog. Cats and dogs cannot understand how they are moving, and if a human being does not understand how this body is moving, he is no better than an animal.

So, without knowledge of the soul, all your so-called education is simply decoration on a dead body. What is the profit thereof? If you do not know what the real living force within this body is, and if you simply decorate the body, you may get some applause from ordinary men, but it has no value.

We living entities are part and parcel of God, and this body is beautiful because we are within it. You may be a big scientist, philosopher, or politician, but without the soul, your body is useless. A dead

body. You can give it all the titles you want—M.A., B.A., Ph.D.—but they are all useless. Suppose a man is dead, and from Oxford University somebody comes to give him a title: “Now you are a Ph.D.” What is the use of such a title? Or, suppose there is a beautiful woman attractive to many people. Now, when she is dead, if she is offered to you—“Now take this body; you can use it as you like”—you will not like it. Why? The same beautiful body is lying there. Why don’t you take it now? No, it is no longer attractive.

There is a story in this connection. Once a beautiful woman was being pursued by a man. He was wooing and canvassing, but she was a chaste lady. She did not agree to his proposals. But that man kept after her. So one day she said, “All right, come to me after three days. I will accept you.”

Now, the next morning she began taking very strong purgatives and laxatives, and she vomited and passed stool the whole day and night. She kept all the stool and vomit in a bucket. On the third day, when the man came, he couldn’t recognize her; she had become ugly from all that vomiting and passing of stool. He asked her, “Where is that woman?”

She replied, “I am the same woman. You don’t recognize me?”

“No, no, you are not. She was so beautiful, and you are ugly.”

“No, no, I am the same girl.”

“Then why do you look so ugly?”

“Because I have separated my beauty.”

“You have separated your beauty?”

“Yes, I will show you. Come here.”

Then she showed him all the stool and vomit in the bucket. She said, “So, here is my beauty. Now add it to me, and then I shall again be beautiful.”

This is a very good lesson. As Śaṅkarācārya said, *etaṁ māmsa-vāsādi vīkāram*. He is teaching renunciation: “Why are you attracted to this beautiful woman? What is her beauty? It is simply a combination of stool, urine, flesh, and bone. That’s all.” This is actual knowledge.

So, people are after something false—*māyā*. *Māyā* means “that which is not actually a fact.” This so-called advanced civilization is *māyā*. It can be finished at any second. But people do not know this. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa says, *mṛtyuḥ sarva-haraś cāham*: “As death I take away everything.” You may be a philosopher, a scientist, or a rich man, but as soon as death comes, you lose everything. A good example is Hiraṇyakaśipu. He was very powerful, but as soon as Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva appeared—everything finished. Now Hiraṇyakaśipu had to die.

So, people do not understand that without Kṛṣṇa, without God, without Kṛṣṇa consciousness, they are simply wasting

(continued on page 10)

REMEMBERING GAURĪ

Both in living and in dying, this senior disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda's exemplified the essence of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

by DVĀRAKĀDHĪŚA-DEVĪ DĀSĪ



Gaurī-devī dāsī, March 1986

On June 5, 1986, Gaurī-devī dāsī passed from her body in the holy land of Vṛndāvana, India. For seventeen years she had been devotedly serving her spiritual master, Śrīla Prabhupāda, within the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. Gaurī was a sincere and dedicated preacher, giving herself fully to Śrīla Prabhupāda's mission and working tirelessly to distribute his books. Even as she became very ill with cancer in late 1984, she never lost her vigorous determination to give Kṛṣṇa consciousness to others.

In 1974 Śrīla Prabhupāda heard how the devotees were distributing his books in increasing numbers. This book distribution is called *saṅkīrtana*, a direct means of glorifying the Supreme Lord, Kṛṣṇa. Lord Caitanya specifically cited *saṅkīrtana* as the best process of self-realization in this age. For devotees in ISKCON, a favorite form of *saṅkīrtana* is the distribution of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books, as the words of the pure devotee reveal the true meaning of the scripture and awaken our natural devotion for Kṛṣṇa. Śrīla Prabhupāda was very pleased to hear how his disciples were sincerely selling his books:

Your *saṅkīrtana* reports are very encouraging, especially that one girl, Gaurī dāsī, who has set an all ISKCON women's record of 108 big books. This is very wonderful. For-

merly this would not have been possible, but by Kṛṣṇa's grace everything is becoming possible. Encourage them all to increase more and more. This book distribution is the essence of our mission.

To determinedly face the opposition of a godless society and to continue the exalted service of distributing the confidential knowledge of devotional service requires much conviction and realization. The depth of Gaurī's absorption in the will of her spiritual master was exhibited most clearly, however, in the way she confronted the tremendous pain of disease and death. Rather than lament her

fate or bitterly blame God, she drew upon the knowledge and example given by Śrīla Prabhupāda and faced death fearlessly, maintaining her serene, philosophical vision until the end. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa assures us that one who remembers Him at the end of life returns to the spiritual world after quitting the body. Despite the agonizing pain of the body and the emotional trauma of leaving the world we hold so dear, the devotee who remains fixed in concentration upon the lotus feet of the Lord achieves the highest perfection of returning to the spiritual world. How Gaurī drew closer and closer to Kṛṣṇa in the final stage of her life is wonderful evidence of the efficacy of the process of devotional service.

Here some of the devotees share their memories of Śrīla Prabhupāda's dear book distributor, Gaurī-devī dāsī.

* * *

Jagad-ambikā-devī dāsī: One of Gaurī's outstanding qualities was her desire to go out and distribute Śrīla Prabhupāda's books, no matter what. Even when she was sick, she would go out.

You could see how she was empowered by Prabhupāda in her heart to distribute books on such a high spiritual platform. She was a very special, pure preacher, and she wasn't sentimental at all. She could go all day long distributing books, and she

would never repeat the same thing twice. She was very personal with each person she met. Even if the person was completely rude or obnoxious, she would still see the good in them. Practically everyone she approached, whether they took a book or not, never felt threatened by her. They always left with a good impression of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

On *saṅkīrtana* she used to tell me that I must remember every person is a spirit soul, completely, eternally different from their material body. She said that we should be speaking to that spirit soul and offering something to that spirit soul. She said never to become angry in facial expressions or speech, and that we should always have qualities of compassion and mercy.

Madhu-devī dāsī: Whenever Gaurī chanted *japa* [prayerfully chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*] she really called out to Kṛṣṇa with intensity. Even before she knew about her terminal illness, her chanting was as if her dear life depended on it.

Nothing could stop her service to Śrīla Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa. She had the same mood as Śrīla Prabhupāda for working tirelessly.

Gaṅgāmāyī-devī dāsī: I remember how we would be traveling and she just refused to lie down. She said she didn't want to slip into the mode of ignorance. At night she would sleep in the front seat. She would put some boxes of books between the two seats and stretch out. Although she was so austere, she always wanted to make sure we were comfortable.

Mātā-devī dāsī: When Jagaddhātṛī and I first took Gaurī to UCLA in December of 1984, we knew that she was very sick. It was 10:00 P. M., and I drove as fast as I could. When you first hear the doctor say "cancer," it's quite a shock.

Gaurī was in a lot of pain, but even then she would smile and ask how the *saṅkīrtana* was going. She also said over and over again that she wished her body wasn't sick, so she could distribute books again.

Suruci-devī dāsī: The first time Gaurī got sick and went to India, her God-sisters had *kīrtanas* and prayed to Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva. We used to do this every Tuesday night, and we had a beautiful picture of Gaurī distributing Śrīla Prabhupāda's books at the Los Angeles airport. This picture was especially wonderful because as we sang and prayed for Gaurī the activity of book distribution seemed to come to life. You could feel her presence and remember her sincerity and dedication to Prabhupāda. Book distribution is the activity Gaurī loved so much, and it fills one with great love and appreciation for her to remember all of her labor.

Nārtakī-devī dāsī: Living with Gaurī and serving with her, I became very close to her. So when we found out about her illness, I immediately offered myself to help her. She allowed me to accompany her to Vṛndāvana, India, to help her in her final days. Of course, Kṛṣṇa didn't make those her final days. He allowed her to come once again to the West.

During the time we were in Vṛndāvana, however, Gaurī told me how uncomfortable she felt accepting service from me. Her body was becoming more and more invalid. But I saw total calmness overcome her when different devotees would come and read to her.

"Being in Vṛndāvana," she said, "is like being in the lap of Kṛṣṇa. I feel totally protected."

"Gaurī's greatest qualification was her determination to please Prabhupāda by distributing books. Now, with this same determination, she turned to the business of dying as Prabhupāda had instructed."

Gaurī had gone to Vṛndāvana to meet death, but Kṛṣṇa had another plan. Gaurī began recovering her health. With renewed strength she returned to America to continue preaching. In the summer of 1985 she headed a women's *saṅkīrtana* party traveling across the country. She was as inspired and determined as ever. But once again illness forced her to realize that death was indeed near. In November she returned to Vṛndāvana, confident that one who dies in the sacred land of Vṛndāvana returns to the spiritual abode of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

On February 27, 1986, Gaurī wrote to two of her friends, Virabāhu dāsa and his wife, Kartā-devī dāsī:

Kṛṣṇa is being very kind to me by giving me a little more time here in Vṛndāvana in which to work on my relationship with the holy name and make my pleas to the Lords Gaura-Nitāi to allow me to approach the love of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. . . . I am finding more and more it is becoming my only de-

sire—to be able to chant Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa uninterruptedly in ecstatic love. Why not beg for the topmost thing? There is nothing left for me to desire in this world. My body is completely finished. . . . But I am actually finding all of this because Kṛṣṇa is doing everything in such a gentle way to give me plenty of time to adjust to the idea of giving up this useless body once and for all. I feel that He is just waiting for me to become completely ready, and then He will finish the whole thing off.

I have absolutely no hankering or lamentation left in my heart—at least that I am conscious of. I feel very happy and peaceful, however totally unprepared I still am for the final showdown. So whatever time Kṛṣṇa gives me I feel I can use every bit of it to try to pray more sincerely.

Virabāhu wrote in reply:

I can see from *sāstra* [scripture] that you are getting a rare opportunity—afforded to great souls like Mahārāja Parīkṣit—of being able to prepare for the "final exam" with sufficient notice. From this I understand that you have gained Śrīla Prabhupāda's special favor and his close association. Your life has been made a complete success by your surrendered and renounced service, and the only important thing now is that you get back home, back to Prabhupāda, safe and sound.

Vidyā-devī dāsī: One year ago, when Gaurī first came to Vṛndāvana, she was very strong and heroic. At that time she received so much association from her Godbrothers and God-sisters and good Āyurvedic medical treatment that she appeared to be miraculously cured. Gaurī often said she was grateful to Kṛṣṇa for this gift of one year, as it enabled her to return to the West and finish all the things that were undone. When she returned here to Vṛndāvana in November, she wanted to live. She had so many plans for preaching, and therefore thoughts of death were difficult for her.

Finally, about three weeks before her passing, Gaurī traveled to the cancer specialist hospital in Delhi, where they explained frankly to her that she was in the final stages.

Each day she was noticeably weaker. She spoke quietly of many things, but mostly she was now anxious for death and prayed to Kṛṣṇa to make her suffering short—to quickly finish her suffering material body.

Gaurī's greatest qualification in the eyes of the devotees was her sincere determination to please Prabhupāda in his service to Kṛṣṇa by distributing books to the fallen souls. All of Gaurī's service was marked by this incredible determination. Now, with this same determination, she turned to the business of dying as Prabhupāda had instructed. She often spoke of Prabhupāda's perfect example of how to leave the material body. It was her desire

to leave her body while preaching, as he had done. "My advancement has come from hard work," she said several times.

We told her all the devotees had come to learn from her how to die, so she must show them that even at the end one must chant the holy name. Her tongue was barely able to move, but somehow, barely audibly, she slowly chanted with us: "Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare." After this she began to smile broadly about many things.

Several times Gaurī asked who was present, and she was pleased to hear each name. At one point she asked to sit at the end of the bed. "I want to put my feet flat on the floor, see who is here, and concentrate my mind on Śrīla Prabhupāda." As she was very weak, she began to shake uncontrollably even with our fully supporting her body. So we quickly laid her back again.

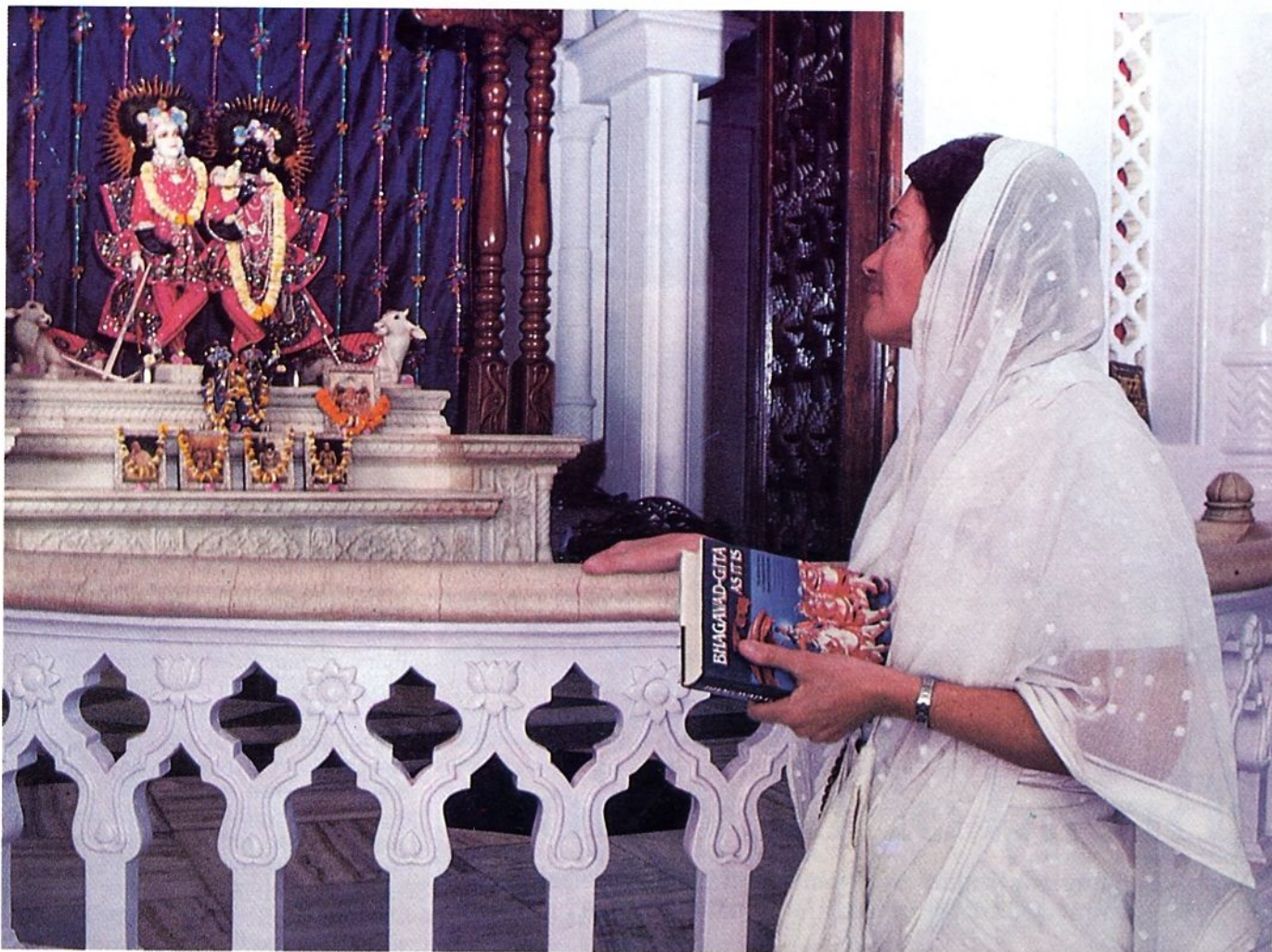
Then she asked that we lower her to the floor. She said she was already so uncomfortable she wouldn't mind. From

took photographs and asked her to smile for her friend in Los Angeles, Vṛndāvanavilāsinī, which she did.

Then, finally, she asked to be rolled over on her back. At that point she opened her eyes very wide and dryly said, "This is very intense." She slowly repeated the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* two more times.

Gaurī then left her body on that day, June 5, surrounded by devotees loudly chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*.

Vidyā-devī dāsī: It is not as if Gaurī was perfect in and of herself. But she had firm



Two months before passing away, Gaurī-devī dāsī stands before the Deities of Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma at the ISKCON temple in Vṛndāvana.

As the days passed Gaurī became more and more childlike. Now she was showing signs of complete submission. She said she knew that when she wanted *only* Kṛṣṇa, then He would take her back.

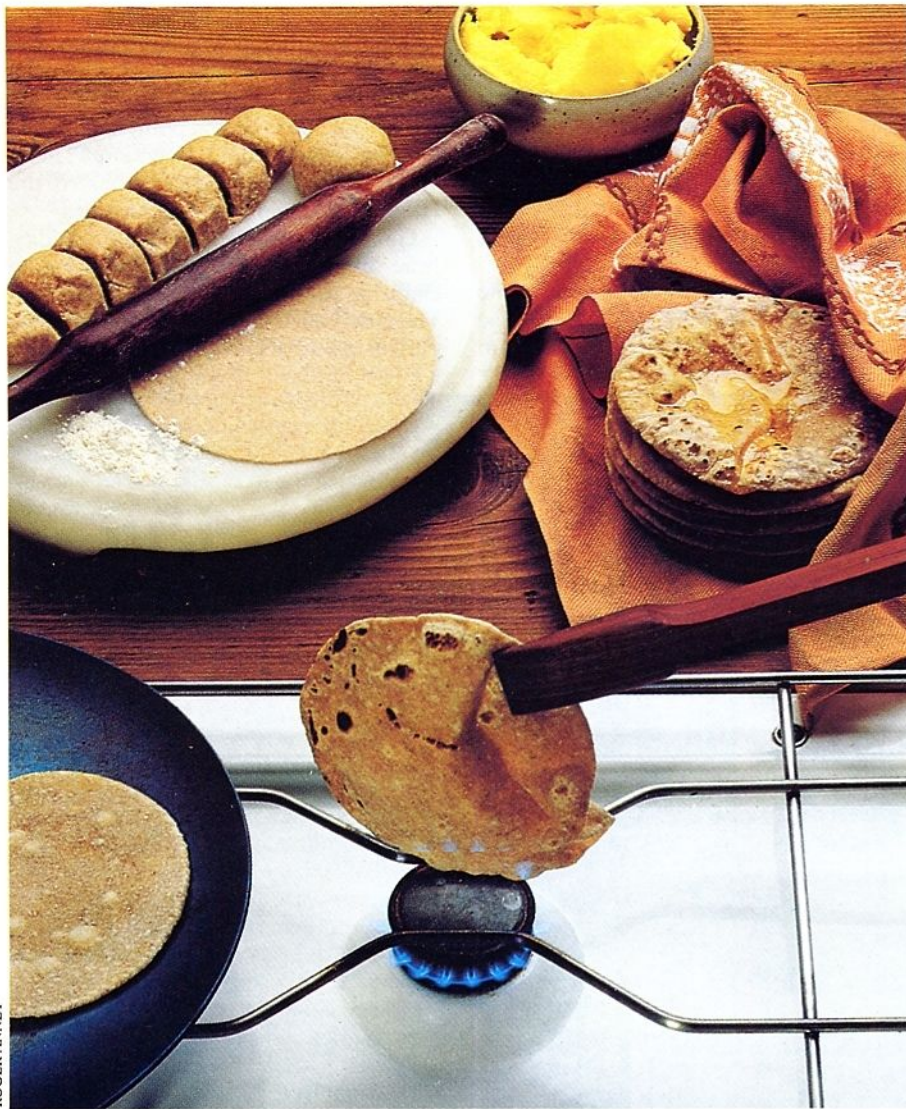
So we could "see" small doubts and thoughts pass through her mind. Sometimes she even looked furtively from one of us to another. But somehow—with our preaching, Prabhupāda's voice, and Gaurī's chanting and absorption in the pictures of Śrīla Prabhupāda—she was always able to pull her consciousness back. And again she would start to smile broadly and lie peacefully.

this vantage point the assembled devotees could see her better. The *kīrtana* consisted mainly of the devotees chanting in response to Prabhupāda on the continuously playing *Happening* album. Dr. Narotama came and said, "One hour more." She was still conscious. We read to her from *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta* about Prabhupāda's passing, and this consoled her greatly. Bhaktisiddhānta dāsa brought remnants from the last water Śrīla Prabhupāda drank before leaving this world, and we gave this to her.

We brought her Deities to stand close to her, and she studied Them tearfully. We

faith and fixed determination to follow her spiritual master's instructions as perfectly as possible. Therefore, we personally witnessed that by the time Gaurī passed from her body, she appeared to be peacefully surrendered to the divine will of Kṛṣṇa.

Jagad-ambikā-devī dāsī: I am eternally indebted to Mother Gaurī, and I know I could never repay her for her unlimited mercy and patience. I'm sure she would be pleased if I would become a pure, unalloyed, eternal preacher and book distributor like she was. I pray to follow in her footsteps. ☐



ROGER ANNEY

Lord Kṛṣṇa's Cuisine

Bread of Devotion

The uncomplicated yet productive life of a devotee is reflected in the simple and nutritious *capāti*.

by VĪŚĀKHĀ-DEVĪ DĀSĪ

Every morning at 6:45 in the Philadelphia ISKCON temple kitchen, Yamarāja dāsa measures ten cups of fine durum wheat flour into a large, stainless-steel bowl, adds ten cups of whole-wheat flour, nine cups of whey, and a little salt. Then he secures the bowl, full with ingredients, in its place on the large power mixer. In a few minutes he mixes and kneads the dough. In the next hour and a half, he will make that dough into one hundred eighty *capātis*—unleavened flat breads.

"I learned how to make *capātis* in the Brooklyn temple in 1973," Yamarāja told me. "At that time all the older devotees were expected to spend some time in the kitchen, and the head cook assigned me to the *capāti* crew. We were a crew of four—one to make the dough, one to put it through a machine that rolled it into rounds, one to cook the *capātis*, and one to butter them. Our first *capātis* were stiff, burnt, and totally unappetizing. We made two hundred fifty *capātis* a day, and it

took us about two months to get the process down." It was so difficult to keep a crew of four trained devotees together—one or another of them would change services or change temples—that after awhile the Brooklyn temple switched to making bread sticks or rolls instead of *capātis*. But for Yamarāja there was just no substitute for *capātis*.

"When Śrīla Prabhupāda started cooking for the devotees at 26 Second Avenue in 1966, he made rice, *dāl*, vegetables, and *capātis*," Yamarāja pointed out. "Prabhupāda himself ate *capātis* throughout his stay with us. That was the simple standard he preferred. He would wonder at how Westerners could eat dry bread. *Capātis* are soft, tender, and moist with butter."

In the kitchen I watched Yamarāja roll his fresh dough into a rope about an inch and a half in diameter and then cut it with a knife into inch-size pieces. He took one piece in his hands, rolled it into a ball, pressed it into a small mound of flour, and rolled it out with a rolling pin until it became a disk six inches in diameter. He did a second one the same way and then, after checking his griddle to make sure it was hot enough, put both *capātis* on it and immediately started rolling out two more.

By the time he'd rolled out the second pair of *capātis*, the two on the griddle were cooked on one side. He turned them over and, after they'd cooked for a few seconds on that side, picked one up with some large tongs and placed it directly over the flame. A large bubble started forming inside the *capāti*, and in a matter of moments that bubble enlarged until the formerly flat *capāti* had puffed up into a six-inch ball. Yamarāja turned the puffed bread over on the flame for a second or two and then put it on the side of the stove, where it leaked steam until it was flat again. He did the same with the other *capāti* on the griddle. Then he placed the next two *capātis* on the griddle and began rolling out two more.

"A devotee is concerned with simplicity as well as utility," Yamarāja said. "Generally, in modern society, particularly in the West, if something is simple in its makeup then people don't think much can be accomplished with it. Thus we see so many complicated industrial enterprises for maintaining an artificial standard of living. *Capātis* are symbolic of a devotee's simple lifestyle; devotees are very simple in their ways, yet very productive. In the same way, *capātis* are made with just flour, water, and salt, yet they are wholesome and nutritious. When they're properly made, devotees appreciate them and aren't satisfied with any substitute. To master *capāti*-making takes practice, but it's worth it." As Yamarāja speaks, he

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

Whole-wheat Flat Bread (*Capātī*)

Preparation time: 15 minutes
Standing time: 30 minutes to 2 hours
Rolling and cooking time: 2–3 minutes for each *capātī*
Servings: 12 *capātīs*

2 cups *atta* or sifted whole-wheat flour
¾ cup lukewarm water
½ teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons melted butter

1. Combine the flour and salt in a large bowl. Slowly add water, gathering the flour together as you do, 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 for half an hour to two hours.

2. When the dough is ready, place a heavy cast-iron griddle over a medium flame. With moistened hands, knead the dough again; then shape into 12 equal-size patties. Dip them into flour and roll them out thin and even on a floured board. Make them as round as possible and about 6 inches across. Keep some plain whole-wheat flour on the side to dust the *capātīs* as you roll them.

3. Knock the excess flour off a *capātī* with a few slaps and place it on a preheated griddle. (You can cook several at a time if the size of your griddle allows.) When small white blisters appear on the surface of the *capātī* and the edges begin to turn up, turn it over with a pair of flat tongs and cook the other side until the surface bulges with air pockets. Lift the *capātī* and toast both sides over a direct flame for a few seconds until it puffs up like a ball. A finished *capātī* should be cooked completely (no wet spots) and should be freckled with brown spots on both sides. Press the air out and brush one surface with melted butter.

To cook a *capātī* on electric heat, let it stay on the griddle. Turn it over as many times as it takes for both sides to cook; then gently press the top of the *capātī* all over with a soft cloth, and the *capātī* will swell. Offer to Kṛṣṇa.

Whole-wheat Pancakes (*Atta dosa*)

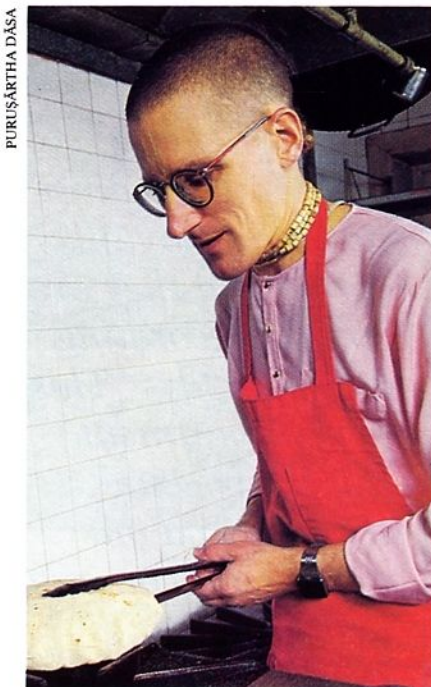
Preparation time: 1 hour
Servings: 15

1½ cups sifted whole-wheat flour
1 tablespoon chopped fresh coriander leaves
1 fresh chili, minced

2 pinches salt
1½ cups lukewarm water

1. Mix all the dry ingredients together in a large bowl. Slowly add the water and whisk it into the flour to make a smooth pancake batter. Cover the bowl with a cloth and let stand for at least half an hour.

2. When you're ready to cook, put a griddle over a medium flame. Beat the batter again—it should be of pouring consistency. Flick a few drops of water onto the griddle. If they bounce and sputter, the griddle is ready. Pour on 4 tablespoons of batter and use the back of a spoon to spread the batter out thin with a circular motion, starting from the center. This amount of batter should make a thin *dosa* about 8 inches across. (The



Yamarāja dāsa grapples with a giant *capātī*.

art of making *dosas* lies in the ability to spread the batter thin before the heat of the griddle hardens the mixture.) Cook for 2 or 3 minutes until it becomes golden-brown. Turn once. Cooking the second side takes only about half as long as the first. The second side never browns as evenly as the first.

3. Continue making *dosas* until the batter is finished, greasing the griddle only when the *dosas* stick. Pile them on a plate to keep them warm and moist. Offer to Kṛṣṇa.

Urad dāl with Spiced Yogurt (*Gujarati urad dāl*)

Preparation time: 1 hour
Servings: 4–6

1 cup plain yogurt
1 tablespoon brown sugar
5 cups water
1 cup *urad dāl*
½ teaspoon turmeric
4 bay leaves
2 teaspoons salt
1 tablespoon ghee (clarified butter) or vegetable oil
1 teaspoon black mustard seeds
2 dried chilies, crushed

1. Mix the yogurt and the brown sugar in 1 cup of water. Set aside. Clean, wash, and drain the *dāl*. In a large saucepan bring 4 cups of water to a boil. To this water, add the *urad dāl*, turmeric, bay leaves, and salt. Bring to a boil again and cook uncovered for 10 minutes. Remove any froth that accumulates on the surface. Stir once, cover the pot, and cook for 20 minutes over a medium-low flame until the *dāl* beans can be mashed between two fingers. Then let simmer.

2. Put the ghee in a small saucepan over a medium flame and fry the black mustard seeds and crushed chilies. Cover the pan to prevent the mustard seeds from jumping out. When the mustard seeds have finished popping, put this *masāla* into the yogurt and pour it into the *dāl*. Stir to blend well. Continue cooking for 5 minutes. Offer to Kṛṣṇa.

Apple Chutney (*Seb ki chatni*)

Preparation time: 30 minutes
Servings: 4–6

2 pounds apples
1 tablespoon ghee or vegetable oil
1 teaspoon fresh ginger, grated
2 cinnamon sticks, each 2 inches long
½ teaspoon anise seeds
2 or 3 dried chilies, crushed
5 cloves
1 teaspoon turmeric
1 pinch asafetida (optional)
4 tablespoons water
4 tablespoons sugar

1. Wash, peel, and core the apples. Then cut them into small chunks. Heat the ghee in a saucepan over a medium flame. When the ghee begins to smoke, drop in the ginger, cinnamon sticks, anise seeds, chilies, and cloves. Stir-fry until the anise seeds darken. Immediately add the turmeric and asafetida, then the apple chunks. Stir-fry for 5 or 6 minutes to brown the apples. Then add the water.

2. Cover and cook for about 15 minutes, stirring often, until the apples are soft. Mash the apples in the pot. Add the sugar, increase the heat, and stir continuously until the chutney thickens. Offer to Kṛṣṇa at room temperature.

moves rhythmically from rolling to griddle-cooking to puffing and buttering and back to rolling. He concentrates on making each one perfect. It's his personal crusade to keep *capātīs* popular in the

Hare Kṛṣṇa movement.

By 8:30 A.M. Yamarāja is finished. His *capātīs* are offered to the Deities on the altar and are then saved until lunch, when they will be served to all devotees and

guests. Yamarāja takes breakfast with the devotees and then begins his service. He's been designing and doing layout for *Back to Godhead* magazine since 1973—the same year he made his first *capātī*. ❧

DECORATIONS

(continued from page 4)

their time searching after false things. At the time of death everything we have accumulated in this life will be useless. Today or tomorrow or the day after, it will all be useless. But we do not care for the real thing, the spirit soul.

Kṛṣṇa says in *Bhagavad-gītā*, *na hanyate hayamāne śarīre*: “The soul is never vanquished, even after the annihilation of the body.” Still, people are so ignorant, so foolish, that they do not care to know about the soul. This is a civilization of ignorance. Therefore people are committing so many sinful acts for the satisfaction of the tongue. They are killing so many animals. Why? There are so many nice foodstuffs—vegetables, fruits, milk products—so why are people committing these sins?

The answer is that today people do not know what activities are sinful and what activities are pious. That is stated in the *Bhagavad-gītā*: *pravṛtīm ca nivṛtīm ca janā na vidur āsurāḥ*. We have an inclination to accept some things and to reject other things. But the demons do not know what should be accepted and what should be rejected. Only the devotees of Kṛṣṇa know these things. For example, we are advising our students to reject illicit sex, intoxication, gambling, and meat-eating and to accept the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa.

If we accept this path, we are going to be liberated. What is liberation? Liberation means to get out of the bondage of the material body. As Kṛṣṇa says in the *Bhagavad-gītā* [4.9],

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

“If one understands My transcendental appearance and disappearance and pastimes, he is liberated—he does not take another material body but comes to Me in the spiritual world.” This knowledge is lacking in today’s civilization. There are so many universities, educational institutions, big, big professors, scientists—all rascals. You can declare it: They are all rascals. Let them come and argue with us. As it is said in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*: *harāv abhaktasya kuto mahad-guṇā*. “Where are the good qualities of the atheists?” Here Arjuna is giving a practical example. He says, “I have the same arrows, the same bow, the same chariot, the same horses, and I am the same Arjuna who was being honored by many kings. But now nobody cares for me. All my qualifications are useless because Kṛṣṇa is no longer here.”

Therefore, your advanced civilization will be perfect when it is properly com-

bined with God consciousness. Otherwise, it is all useless. Don’t be misled by the so-called leaders. Prahāda Mahārāja has declared them to be *andhā-yathāndhair upanīyamānāḥ*: “the blind leading the blind.” The people of the modern civilization are such rascals that they expect material advancement to make them happy. Recently a doctor from Sweden told me that on the average the people there are the richest in the world, but they also have the greatest percentage of suicides.

So, material wealth will not help you. We have practical experience that every nation is dissatisfied, although they may have advanced so much materially. In America, why have many of the young people become hippies? University students are becoming hippies. Why? Frustration. They think, “What is this life?

People are hoping against hope to enjoy this world. But they are simply decorating a dead body: “This is my apartment, this is my country . . .” And one day Kṛṣṇa comes as death and takes everything away.

Even if I become educated, what is my future? There is no future.”

People do not know the actual aim of life: *na te viduḥ svārtha-gatim hi viṣṇum*. These rascals do not know that the aim of life is God realization. How can we realize God? You are given everything in the *śāstras* [scriptures]: “There is God, His name is Kṛṣṇa, His address is Vaikuṅṭha, He has many friends, He has many lovers.” But still the rascals will not understand. We are giving God’s name, address, activities—everything—and inviting everyone to go to Him, but they will not listen. This is their misfortune. Kṛṣṇa Himself is coming and canvassing—*sarvadharmān parityajya mām ekam śaraṇam vraja*: “Give up all your nonsense and surrender to Me”—but still they are researching God. God is canvassing, and they are researching. Somebody says “There is no God.” Somebody else says “God is dead; He is finished. Now we are

God.” These things are going on.

Why? Because everyone is trying to become happy in this material existence. That is their fault. In a library in Delhi I presented my book *Easy Journey to Other Planets* to one gentleman. “Oh,” he said, “you have written this book called *Easy Journey to Other Planets*?”

“Yes.”

“Then I shall go and come back.”

“No, the book teaches one how to go to the supreme planet, the kingdom of God. Why should you come back?”

“No, no, then I don’t want to go.” The rascal wants to go to Kṛṣṇa’s planet and then come back.

Now the scientists are sending people to the so-called moon and bringing them back. When the first astronaut from Russia was far, far above the earth, he was looking down to find Moscow: “Where is my Moscow?” You see? This is his intelligence—simply absorbed in material existence. Another example is the vulture. Vultures have very good eyesight. From several miles above the earth they can see a carcass. So, although they have good eyesight, they are only searching after a carcass. That is their business. Similarly, the so-called scientists and philosophers are very advanced, but their only business is how to become happy on this planet. That’s all. Their minds are not very broad; their minds are crippled.

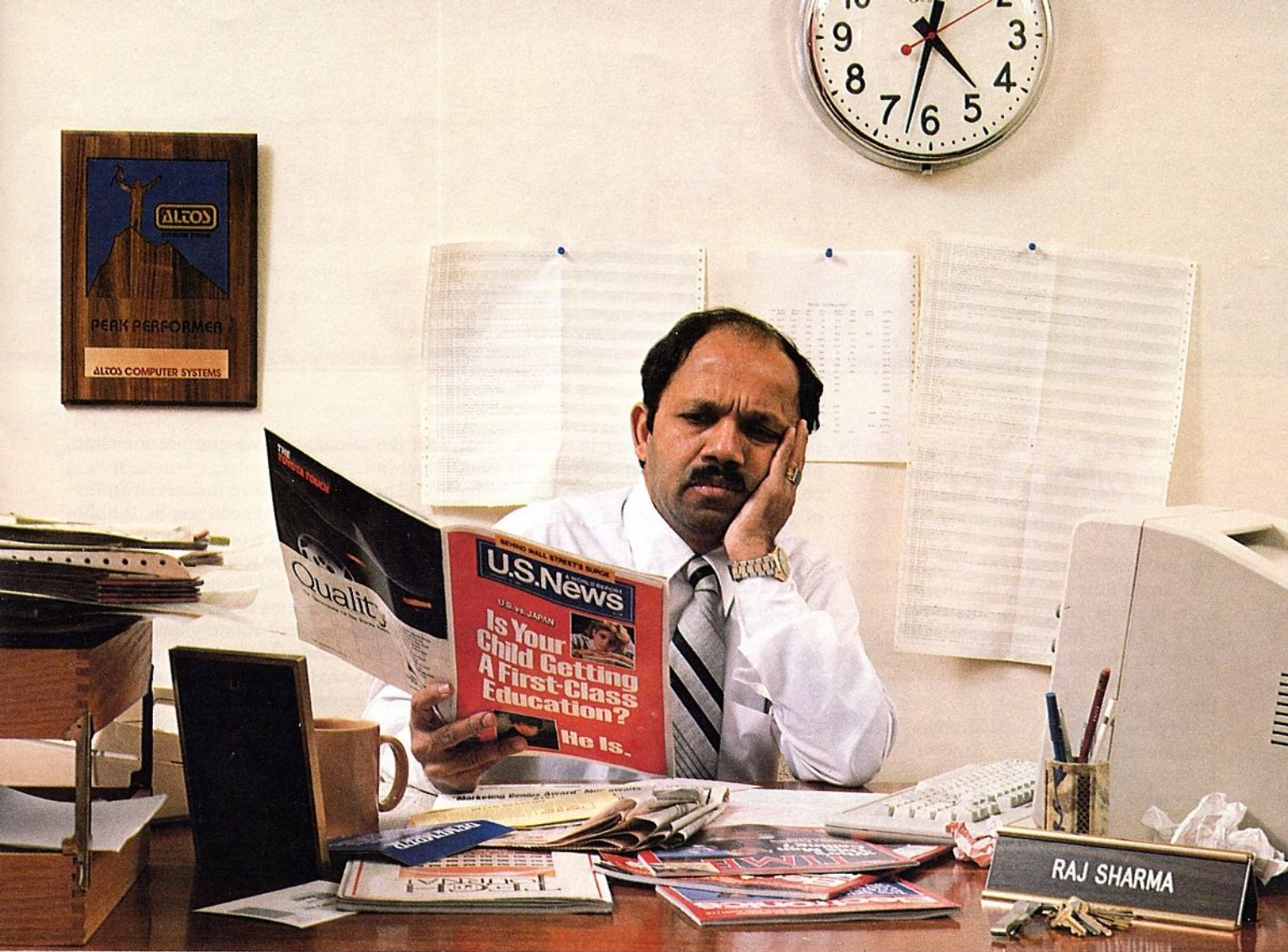
People are hoping against hope to enjoy this world. But they are simply decorating a dead body: “This is my apartment, this is my house, this is my country, this is my skyscraper building.” And one day, *mṛtyuḥ sarva-haraḥ*: Kṛṣṇa comes as death and takes everything. Hiraṇyakaśipu is a good example. He challenged his son Prahāda, “Where is your God?” So God came as Nṛsiṁhadeva and finished him. “Ah, here is God!”

God appears to everyone. The godless see God at death, and after seeing Him they are finished. He takes away all their possessions, all their scientific knowledge, their bank balance, their skyscraper buildings. Then they understand what God is, as Hiraṇyakaśipu did.

But why don’t you try to understand God before that moment comes? Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, see the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities, eat *prasādam*—live nicely. That is real intelligence. In the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* it is said that unless one has first-class intelligence, he cannot take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The last-class fools and rogues cannot take it up. So by the grace of Kṛṣṇa you have first-class intelligence and have taken to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Now try to continue it. Don’t give it up. Don’t be foolish. Continue. Then you will be happy, and all the problems of your life will be solved.

Thank you very much.





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THE VEDIC

Transcendental Comment

THE QUALITY OF SERVICE

by Kuṇḍalī dāsa

The quality of service in America is at an all-time low, say the media. Now, more than ever, the worn cliché “You just can’t get good help nowadays” has a resounding ring of truth to it.

Across the land we hear the woeful tales: A plumber arrives only after your leaky pipe becomes a gush that floods the basement; a company representative leaves you on hold long enough to read this entire magazine; a banker treats your loan application like it’s a demand for his personal fortune; a check-out clerk makes you feel it’s your fault an item is not tagged with the price or department code; and at the restaurant the price is first class but all else is third class, or worse.

I have a tale of my own. In India last year I was held up for three days because an American airline did not inform an Indian airline, with which I had an onward ticket, that I’d arrived in Bombay, so I lost my seat and missed my connections. A mistake? Sure. And we all make one sooner or later, of course, but this time neither party accepted responsibility for the inconvenience and the expense to me and my family.

Since satisfied customers are the very bricks that build any solid service enterprise, one naturally wonders, “Why such slipshod service?”

I’ve heard a few explanations: “People just don’t care anymore”; “It’s a sign of the times; bad economy puts people on edge”; “This is the machine age; depersonalization has set in.” All of these have some merit. But no analysis homes in on the problem as accurately as one based on the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Kṛṣṇa teaches in the *Bhagavad-gītā* that everyone in this material world is here primarily for sense gratification. That is to say, everyone came here from the spiritual world wanting to be served. No one came because of a desire to serve. Indeed, it was rebellion against serving Kṛṣṇa—we became envious of Him—that got us

out of His spiritual kingdom in the first place. We rejected Kṛṣṇa’s service, and, consequently, we had to leave the realm of pure consciousness and come to the mundane world, where we imagined we could set ourselves up as all in all. In other words, each of us came here on his own “god project.”

Unfortunately our scheme is doomed. Our struggle for the post “Primary Object of Service” is very much like the fighting of nursery school kids over the same toy. I’ve even seen a bumper sticker that read, “The one with the most toys wins.” Each child thinks he is more entitled to the toy than the others. Even if one child gets it, moments later he loses it to another. He ends up frustrated, depressed, and angry.

As adults vying for the most service for ourselves, we generally use more sophisticated—“cultured”—ways than kids: codes of dress, etiquette, modesty, and what have you. But, like everything material, the facade doesn’t last. It eventually splits

at the seams, and we glimpse the chaos behind.

The current crisis in the service industry is an instance of such a split. It holds no surprise for a Kṛṣṇa conscious person. After all, when you consider that formerly we refused to serve Kṛṣṇa, who is the all-attractive Supreme Person, the proprietor of all opulences—namely fame, wealth, beauty, knowledge, strength, and renunciation—why should we now want to serve anyone less qualified than He?

Rendering service, however, is unavoidable. Except for a distinction in motive and quality, rendering service is common to both the spiritual and the material worlds. In the spiritual world all service is rendered out of love, with full care and attention, without ulterior motive, and without cessation. Here in the material world, although the husband serves the wife, the teacher serves the student, the clerk serves the customer, the politician serves the public, and so on, the service is largely contingent on some sort



OBSERVER

ary on the Issues of the Day

of remuneration, some means to sense gratification—usually money.

Service rendered on that basis is self-serving, or selfishness, performed primarily for the aggrandizement of the servant. But even our selfish motives do not instill in us a satisfactory service attitude. Thus we have a crisis in America's service industry. That's one excellent reason why we should practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness: because rendering service to others with God in the center can *alone* inspire us to serve with care and attention, which is the way service ought to be done, every time.

THE LAW AND THE PROFITS

by Mathureśa dāsa

Over the past twenty years Americans have been suing each other with increasing frequency—and winning (or losing) a growing number of million-dollar settlements. Million-dollar verdicts rose from two in 1963 to 401 in 1984.

Although most of the plaintiffs in the more than 15 million civil suits filed each year have some legitimate grievance, the opportunity for easy riches lures plaintiffs and lawyers alike into using the tort system like a lottery: file the lucky suit, legitimate or not, and hit the jackpot.

Even when the grievance is clearly legitimate, awards are often outrageously high. This is particularly true when the plaintiff gets reimbursed for "pain and suffering" resulting from personal injury, from losing a relative, and so on. Pain and suffering are hard to measure, harder still to put a price on. Pain and suffering may also be invisible, and the court may have only the testimony of the plaintiff and his doctor or psychiatrist to go by. If the testimony is convincing and the judge and jury are sympathetic, the award can be astronomical.

Advocates of tort reform point out that since money can pay for medical bills, disabilities, or property damage but can't really allay pain and suffering per se,

there should be a cap on awards. Colorado has already passed a law limiting compensation for pain and suffering to \$250,000. In other states similar legislation is pending.

In the *Bhagavad-gītā* Arjuna comes to a

have to take shelter of Lord Kṛṣṇa, as Arjuna did. "Those who worship Me," says Kṛṣṇa in the *Gītā* (12.6), "being devoted to me without deviation, . . . for them I am the swift deliverer from the ocean of birth and death." Surrender to



similar conclusion about the efficacy of money in eliminating suffering. Faced with the painful possibility of his relatives being killed in battle, Arjuna declares that his entire kingdom (what to speak of a few million dollars in tort awards) would appear worthless to him if his loved ones died.

Commenting on this part of the *Gītā*, Śrīla Prabhupāda explains that no amount of wealth can eliminate life's problems. By economic means alone we cannot succeed in making ourselves or our families happy. Even if we can afford the good things in life, we have to face the miseries of disease, old age, death, and rebirth, as well as a host of lesser afflictions—law suits among them.

Every one of us is trapped in the painful cycle of repeated birth and death. To become free from this repeated suffering we

Kṛṣṇa is the only way to escape misery.

This should be a lesson not only for plaintiffs with legitimate pain and suffering, but also for plaintiffs and lawyers who are merely playing the tort "lottery." After all, everyone is trying to escape suffering of some sort, and everyone thinks money is the solution.

For instance, an American lawyer has to pay bills, taxes, mortgages, and so on, just like everybody else. To avoid the pain and suffering of not being able to afford all these things, he has to compete with 700,000 other American lawyers (which is two-thirds of all the lawyers in the world) and he also has to charge exorbitant fees. Legal expenses eat up about two thirds of all tort settlements.

In fact, the overabundance of lawyers is often cited as the primary cause of the tort crisis. Just as having too many surgeons

may lead to unnecessary operations, so having too many lawyers leads to phony lawsuits.

I have a relative who was persuaded by a lawyer to file suit against one of her former friends. "If we win," the lawyer told her, "you can get rid of your old VW bus and buy a brand new Cadillac." A year later when my relative relented and de-

cidated to call off the suit, the lawyer delivered his ultimatum: either pay my legal fees for the past year or let me finish the suit and take my fees from the settlement. So the suit was really the lawyer's from beginning to end, and the "grievance" is the lawyer's crying need for money, which he mistakenly feels will end his own pain and suffering.

So the tort crisis might diminish if plaintiffs, lawyers, judges, and juries learned to rely on the court system only for reasonable payment of tangible expenses—like medical bills and property damage—and for payment of reasonable legal fees, while learning to rely solely on Lord Kṛṣṇa for the ultimate alleviation of all pain and suffering. ☐

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

LETTERS

I am an older lady and a very long-time reader of your magazine. I find it special and most enjoyable and have often thought to write you but hesitated, as I was not sure if I would receive a reply in this part of the world.

I would like to refer to the excerpt from *Perfect Questions, Perfect Answers* in Vol. 21, No. 6. I do understand Śrīla Prabhupāda's stress in placing Kṛṣṇa before all and that science at times is open to question. But I myself am glad that over the years there have been people who have questioned and found ways to assist with the daily chores of life. I would not like to go back to the conditions women had to tolerate even a hundred years ago. I am grateful for the fridge to keep my food fresh, the stove on which I can cook without stoking up with wood and coal, and the electric light with which I can sit and read my books in the lonely hours of the night—these same books that are not hand-produced but now mass-produced and within my means to buy. I have even the ability to read them. I can even fly to the other side of the world in a few hours, and you will have this letter long before a sailboat would reach you.

I felt I had to put my view, for feeling there is nothing wrong in questioning. How else can we learn?

Birthe Warburg
New Zealand

OUR REPLY: You refer to a conversation in which Śrīla Prabhupāda is making the point that scientists should not claim to know more than they actually know. Because scientists have the respect of the layman, whatever the scientists speak is usually accepted as truth. So a problem arises when they assert as fact things they cannot prove. At present scientists guess about many things but pass off their speculations as scientific knowledge.

We do not object when scientists or technologists tell us about a radio or a microphone, which they may know about. But when they start telling us that in the beginning there was a big bang and from

that everything has come, then we must object. They have overstepped their limits and misled millions of people to believe that life comes from matter, that there is no God, and that in the ultimate analysis life is meaningless. There are many examples (evolution is one) where scientific theories are accepted as truth and as a result people are led away from God.

Another point is that for every comfort science has given us, many discomforts have also resulted. We enjoy reading by electric light, but what are the consequences? One obvious drawback is that our energy supply is rapidly becoming depleted. To solve it we come up with things like nuclear reactors—all potential Chernobyls and Three Mile Islands.

And for the so-called technological advantage of improved transportation, for example, we must accept the disadvantage of jet crashes and car accidents that kill hundreds of thousands of people every year. The automobile, with all its comforts, has brought us many discomforts: noise pollution, air pollution, hellish factories, and on and on, just so we can get around a little faster and with a little more comfort. Is it really worth it?

Our comfort and discomfort are already allotted to us according to our past good and bad acts. In other words, we're not really living any better with all these modern inventions. Because when we compare the advantages of modern technology with the disadvantages, we'll see that we're really not any happier than we would be without them.

Hearing our apparently negative outlook on technology, people naturally question, "If you're so much against technology, why do you use it?" Our answer is that the devotee can use everything in the service of God. We are not attached to the amenities created by modern technology and will not waste our energy trying to produce them. Human life is meant for understanding God not for trying to become more comfortable. But if technologists insist on producing such commodities, we will find some use for them in the

service of Kṛṣṇa. Then their actual value will become realized.

* * *

Hare Kṛṣṇa. I'm wondering about Śrī Jayādvaīta Swami's article "A Journey for the Sake of Our Fathers" (BTG Vol. 21, No. 10). This offering made for the benefit of one's departed father I don't really understand. How can the soul receive the benefit of the offering if he has already left his body? Who can say where he is and what his situation is like? Also, the family connection is gone; it is a temporary bodily connection. Isn't this worship in the lower mode as stated in the *Gītā*? If there is a possibility of offering the merit of worship to a dead father, can the merit of worship be offered to living friends and family?

Mike Levine
Worcester, Massachusetts

OUR REPLY: Kṛṣṇa knows everything about where the soul is and what type of life he is in. So the devotee who wants to benefit his forefathers worships Viṣṇu, or Kṛṣṇa, who gives the benefit where it belongs. This is not ancestor worship, but worship of Kṛṣṇa, so it's transcendental to all material modes.

We can benefit living friends and relatives, surely, just as we can benefit all other living beings—by giving them a chance to hear the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa, learn more about the science of Kṛṣṇa, eat delicious *kṛṣṇa-prasādam*, and in other ways take part in the sublime process of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Kṛṣṇa Himself says in *Bhagavad-gītā* that Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the highest form of worship because its merits are shared by all.

* * *

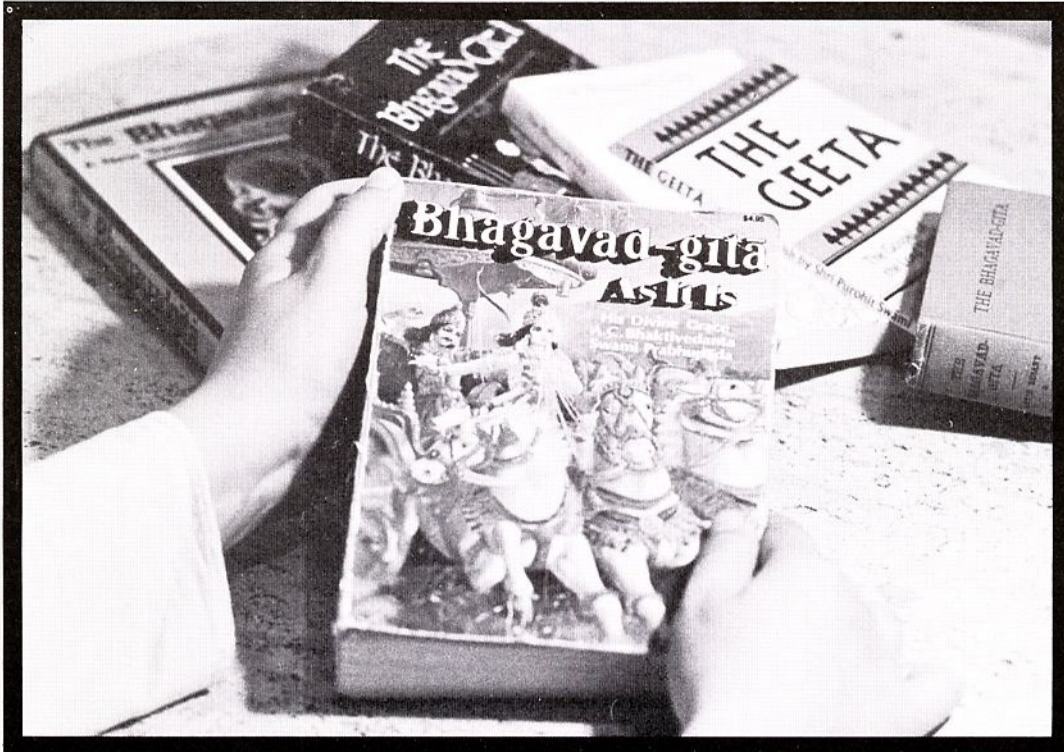
Just a quick note to thank you for the Feb/March 1987 issue of *Back to Godhead*. I am very pleased to see the return of the "Letters" column, and it was very helpful that you focused on the issue of personal/impersonal God. This is an issue I struggle with often. I must add that the whole magazine was interesting and stimulating, particularly the piece "On Chanting." The photography in black and white was powerful and inspiring.

Cynthia C. Kessler
New York, New York

SEARCH FOR THE GENUINE GĪTĀ

As it is at last!

by SATYARĀJA DĀSA



In 1969, my first year at New York's High School of Art and Design, I happened upon a copy of *Bhagavad-gītā*, a battered Penguin paperback. I was intrigued. I really couldn't make heads or tails of the message, but I appreciated that it was some sort of spiritual philosophy and was written with great poetic style.

I decided to look up "Bhagavad-gītā" in Webster's Unabridged Dictionary: "a philosophical poem relating a discourse between Krishna (God) and a warrior, Arjuna; it is a sacred Hindu text."

Throughout my high-school years I rummaged through old bookstores, looking for different editions of *Bhagavad-gītā*. Some editions were versified translations, some were prose. All were alluring, and all were mysterious. The *Gītā*, it seemed, was a book of inscrutable wisdom, of contradictory truths. Was it, for instance, a glorification of war, or a treatise on

nonviolence? Was it allegory, or was it to be taken literally?

Although my friends and I were reading Hesse, Castaneda, Buber, Tillich, and many other popular existentialist writers of the time, I maintained a special fascination for the *Gītā* that lasted all through high school. Then, during my senior year, I picked up a copy of *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the founder and spiritual master of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. Here was a refreshing change. Śrīla Prabhupāda did not explain the *Gītā* in a metaphorical or analogical way. His approach was literal, giving the essential message of each text according to the ancient Vaiṣṇava tradition.

I remember the day I received *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* as if it were yesterday, although it was

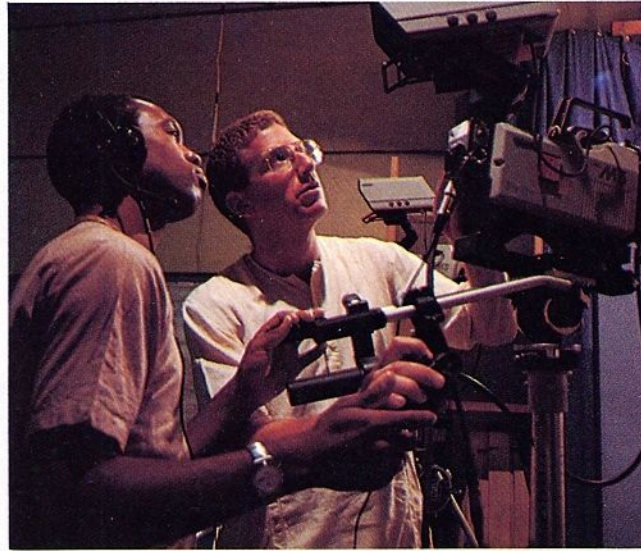
(continued on page 28)



BEYOND THE SCHOOL OF ILLUSION

At the ISKCON television network, devotees use their video skills to focus on reality.

Text and photos by
VIŚĀKHĀ-DEVĪ DĀSĪ



“Here’s your degree from The School of Illusion,” said the dean of the London Film School as he handed graduate David Shapiro his master’s degree on June 27, 1971. Later that day, while walking on Oxford Street, David met a devotee and received his first copy of *Back to Godhead* magazine. After reading it, David thought, *This magazine makes sense.*

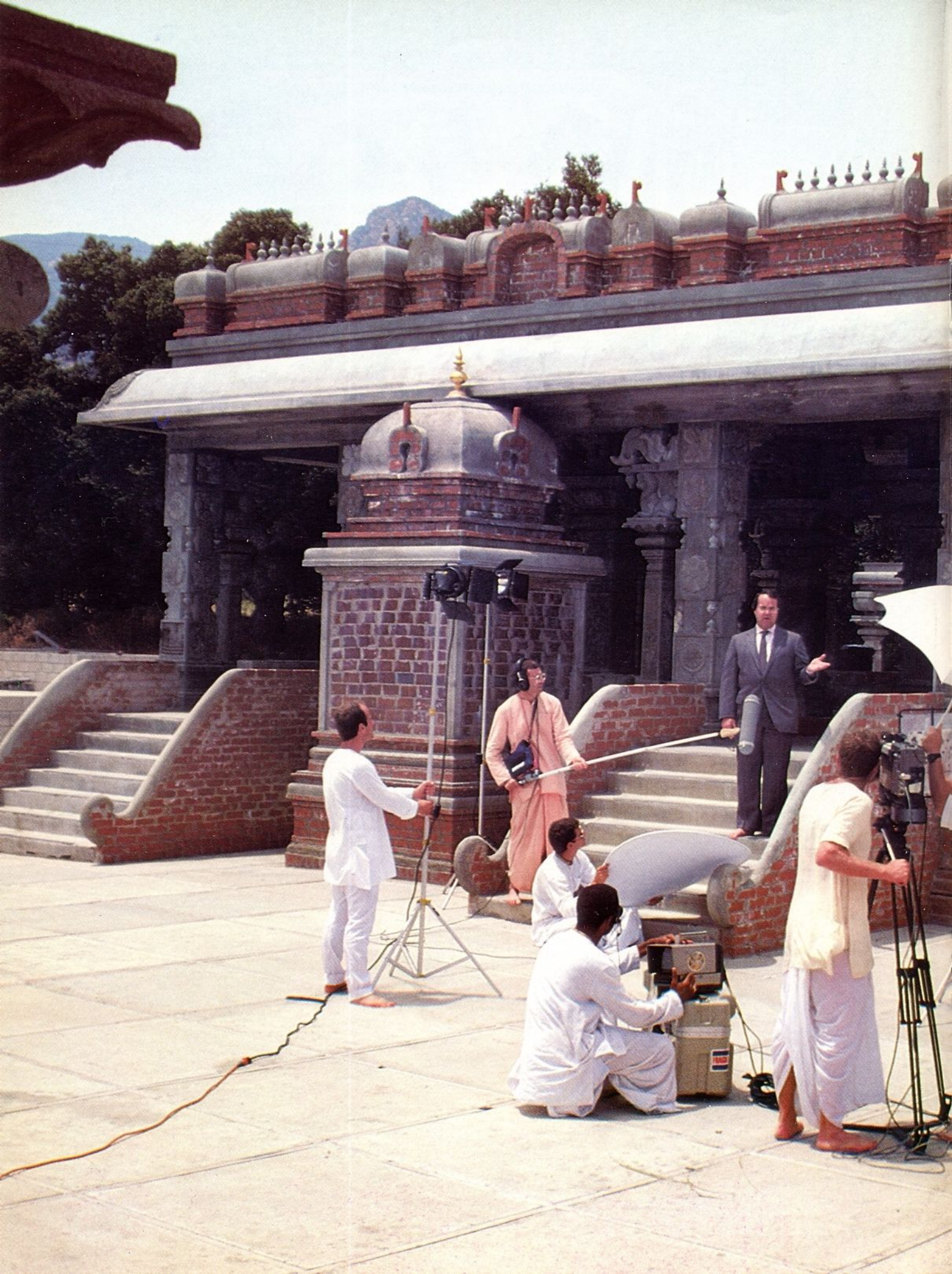
Three days later David flew back to his

home in Chicago. But curiosity made his first stop the Hare Kṛṣṇa temple he had seen listed in the magazine. “The moment I walked in the door in the middle of a *Bhagavad-gītā* class, I felt I had really come home,” David recalls. “Right away I loved the Deities, the devotees, the chanting, the philosophy, and of course the *prasādam* [spiritual food]. I didn’t want to leave, so I stayed the night.”

David would have lived and worked in

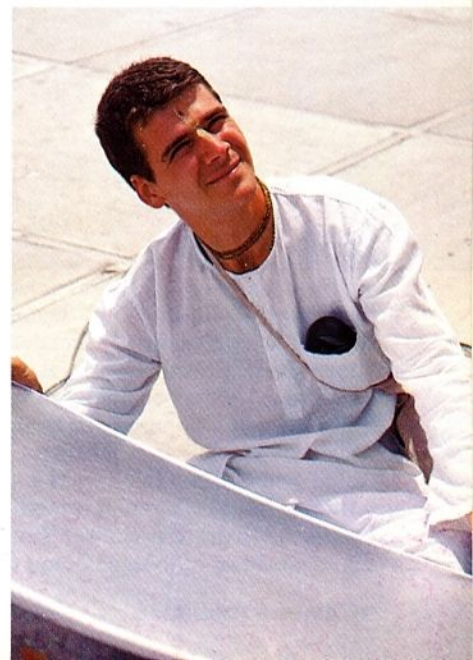
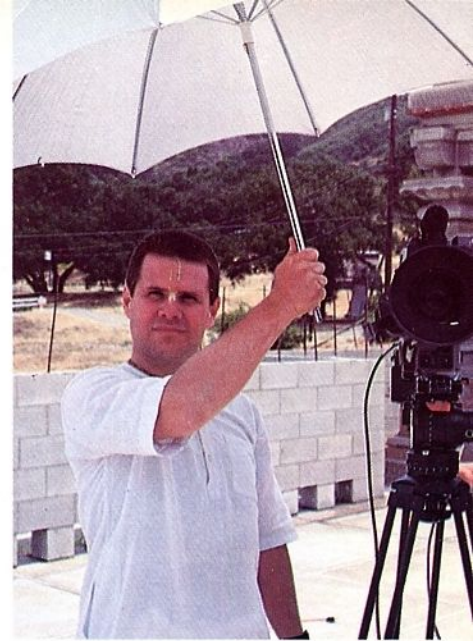
Kṛṣṇa’s cuisine on camera (right) at ITV’s Culver City studio, where the staff is producing a series of vegetarian cooking classes, one of the many educational series produced by ITV. Above, ITV director Nṛsimhānanda dāsa (wearing glasses) gives on-the-set camera training.







Tucked away in California's Malibu Hills, a South Indian-style Viṣṇu temple, still under construction, makes an ideal backdrop for an ITV production. Ādi-puruṣa dāsa (right, top) protects the camera from the heat of the sun, Raṇajit dāsa (right, middle) holds the microphone, and Guy (right, bottom) bounces light with a reflector.





the temple full time, but his mother strongly objected to his spiritual leanings. To placate her, David lived in the temple but worked outside doing animation films at Crocus Company in Evanston.

One of David's first jobs was a film called *Gnosis*. The Greek word *gnosis* refers to an intuitive apprehension of spiritual truths. In the film a ball of clay comes into a world of nothingness and creates

things for itself. David saw this as directly analogous to what he was learning in the *Bhagavad-gītā*—that the spirit soul is placed in the material world and, from its desire, creates an illusory world to enjoy. Not long after completing this film, David, now initiated and bearing the spiritual name Nṛsiṁhānanda dāsa, moved to Los Angeles. Here he worked with Danny Thomas Productions, first as an assistant

in the production of movies for television and eventually as a producer.

Five years later Nṛsiṁhānanda was ready to use his propensity and training fully in Kṛṣṇa's service. In 1979 Nṛsiṁhānanda and Yadubara dāsa founded ISKCON Television (ITV), dedicated to producing videos for spiritual enlightenment. Before long, Siddhānta dāsa, an expert film editor, joined them, as did



A maestro of editing, Siddhānta dāsa has been working with ITV since 1979 and still masterminds the editing of all of ITV's productions, now numbering over two hundred.

dren, including puppet shows. "There's an ITV video tape for everyone, whatever one's nationality, age, interests, familiarity or unfamiliarity with spiritual life," Nṛsimhānanda says.

ITV's *Healthy, Wealthy and Wise* is used widely by cable TV companies and universities and is distributed by *Vegetarian Times*. In fact, many Indians, both here and in India, have seen the show and been inspired to reject their Westernized diet and again become vegetarian. And, based on that show, many Westerners have begun to look askance at their nonvegetarian diet.

This year Mauritius television stations will air ITV programs on a weekly basis, and the broadcasting network of Tamil Nadu, India, will air ITV's *Rāmāyaṇa* drama on statewide television to an audience of eighty million. In the U. S., cable TV stations have aired ITV's thirteen-part series *Inside Hare Kṛṣṇa*. Such exposure has evoked interest where there was none, replaced disdain with inquiries, and caused many to reexamine their preconceptions about Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Entering ITV's studio and office in Culver City two blocks from the Los Angeles Hare Kṛṣṇa community, one is impressed with the commitment that Nṛsimhānanda and the other devotees have given to this project. On a small bulletin board next to Siddhānta's editing room, the source of the ITV devotees' motivation and inspiration is revealed in a posted letter, dated March 22, 1972. The letter is from Śrīla Prabhupāda to one of his disciples in Los Angeles:

If we are successful in this [television] programme, then my dreamt mission of life to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness all over the world will be fulfilled. I wish to speak on the great philosophy of Bhagawat Dharma [Kṛṣṇa consciousness] at least once a week on television, so if arrangement is made by you for this, then you will be doing the highest service for Kṛṣṇa.

ITV videos are now distributed on *saṅkīrtana* as a visual form of Prabhupāda's books, and thus Śrīla Prabhupāda's desire is being fulfilled. "Materialistic films are measured by their box-office success," Nṛsimhānanda explains, "but our receipts are the people who are becoming more Kṛṣṇa conscious. The feedback we get enlivens us in our devotional video service for Lord Kṛṣṇa."

Nṛsimhānanda may have graduated from The School of Illusion, but now he's producing shows on reality—shows that are touching people spiritually. ❏

Raṇadhīra dāsa, a marketer and writer.

"I'm fortunate to have found a way to engage in Lord Kṛṣṇa's service and introduce others to Kṛṣṇa consciousness," Nṛsimhānanda says. "Through videos, anybody can grasp the history, scope, and theological basis of Kṛṣṇa consciousness and learn about His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, ISKCON's founder-*ācārya*."

In the eight years since its inception, ITV has produced over two hundred programs, including programs on vegetarianism and reincarnation, programs on special events and special people in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and programs on international spiritual festivals, temple openings, and the devotional arts of cooking and playing musical instruments. There are even special programs for chil-

ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA SPEAKS OUT

“People Are Living Like Hogs and Dogs”

This concludes the conversation that took place between His Divine Grace A. C. Bhakti-edanta Swami Prabhupāda and some of his disciples on April 17, 1977, in Bombay.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Today there is no full-brained man. All restless dogs and hogs. In fact, they have taken this as their first business—to become restless dogs and hogs. They are living like dogs and hogs while claiming they are highly civilized.

If you study very analytically, you'll find no essential difference between dogs' and hogs' life and that of modern man. The dogs and hogs—all day long working restlessly, on and on. *Kaṣṭhān kāmān arhate*: no end to the animals' bodily whims and their work. And in London, in New York, from early in the morning the people are driving, rushing to work. *Put-put-put-put*.

They cannot even get their rest at night peacefully. The anxiety is, “If I do not arrive early at the factory, I will jeopardize my salary—perhaps my whole income will be put at risk.” They are always anxious. *Sadā samudvigna-dhiyām*: nowadays people are always full of anxieties.

Why so many anxieties? *Asad-grahāt*: they are clutching very tightly to something that will not stay—namely, this material body. All our anxiety is due to overattachment to this body.

So just consider: What is the difference between human society and hog society? Nice clothes? Then if you dress a hog in nice clothes, he becomes a human being? Unfortunately, people nowadays are after the outward dress, the outward appearance of being human beings. They do not know what is real civilization, what is real life. They do not know anything.

And when you go to give spiritual knowledge to them, they say, “Oh, we have to take knowledge from poverty-stricken India?” They do not know that this spiritual knowledge does not come from that India—that Westernized, industrially despoiled India. Rather it comes from old, Kṛṣṇa conscious, full-of-knowledge, farm-and-village, prosperous India.

Those who have forsaken this spiritual knowledge—they are poverty-stricken. We who are cultivating this spiritual knowledge are not poverty-stricken.

Even from the standpoint of everyday affairs, this knowledge is so very important. Let people understand, “I am not this body—I am not Nigerian or American or Albanian or Iranian or this or that. I am pure spirit soul, part and parcel of



the Supreme Soul.” Then you will have, at last, your real United Nations.

Otherwise, what do you have? These restless rascals in bodily consciousness—“I am Indian,” “I am Irish,” “I am Lebanese”—simply barking for the last thirty years. Calling themselves “united,” but blind to the real basis of unity, their spiritual identity. Blind to the simple, peaceful life. Just barking about their various bodily misconceptions.

Disciple: Several times, Śrīla Prabhupāda, you have told people connected with the U.N. that theirs is simply an association of barking dogs. And they are always surprised to hear such a strong statement.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes. But actually, it is a fact. People today are no different from some dogs barking. “I am a bulldog,” “I am a terrier,” “I am a collie,” “I am a Greek,” “I am a Frenchman,” “I am a Swede.” And with this misunderstanding of who they are, they waste so much energy and money and time, simply for barking about this or that bodily concern.

The result of all this barking is nothing. No United Nations. Rather, every other day sees the appearance of some new national flag. *Bharam udvahato vimūḍhān*: they have made a big bombastic arrangement for unity, but the result is nothing. *Bharam udvahato vimūḍhān*: these rascals they are simply making a big, big arrangement. The result is nothing.

And despite their obvious failure, they are determined to remain rascals. “Oh, the United Nations. What a gorgeous attempt we are making toward unity. Of course, we have no unity, but our building

is adorned by 300,000 flags.”

The problem is, they are offering their obeisances to their flag, not to God. Kṛṣṇa says, *mām namaskuru*: “All of you are in fact spiritual beings, so be happy by offering your obeisances to Me.” But they are thinking, “No. ‘Flagnamaskuru.’ We must offer our obeisances to a flag.” Just see what rascals they are! What will they gain by offering obeisances to some flag?

Disciple: In their next life, instead of going back to the spiritual world, they may be born as a cockroach in that same country.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: And then their countrymen will kill them.

“No, friends, please don't kill me. I am your countryman. I am your countryman. I belong to the same nation.”

“Who cares about you flies and cockroaches? We shall kill you. ‘American cockroach’? Who cares about you?”

“No, you don't understand. In my past life I was a staunch nationalist. Yes, due to this material misconception and over-attachment I have now received the body of a cockroach. But please don't kill me.”

If you become a cockroach, even an American cockroach, who will care about you? Will anyone show special consideration to you? But *dehāntara-prāptiḥ*: after this body, you must accept another body. That you cannot avoid. Then what good will your nationalism do you? Now you are a great nationalist. But when you have to accept another body, how can you save yourself and not become a cockroach?

Unfortunately, your next body is not your choice. It is in another's hands. *Karmaṇā daiva-netreṇa*: according to your actions in this body, you'll get a suitable next body by the arrangement of nature.

But that is under nature's supervision. You cannot say, “Give me a beautiful body in a very wealthy American family.”

“No, no,” Mother Nature will say. “You no longer have that discretionary power. You had it; you had a human life. Now you have to accept my discretion. I will now give you your new body according to your past actions, just according to how you are infected by the material modes.”

So this spiritual knowledge is the greatest science. But sadly, these great educators and leaders do not know it. No one knows it. Instead of understanding that their way of life is a fallacy, they are asking whether God and the soul and the next life are a fallacy. This is their intelligence. What rascaldom! ❏

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, the Supreme Personality of Godhead Lord Viṣṇu, after hearing the prayers of the Kumāras (the four boy-sages), begins to describe to them the glories of His devotees.

TEXT 50

प्रादुश्चकथं यदिदं पुरुहूत रूपं
तेनेश निर्वृतिमवापुरलं दृशो नः ।
तस्मा इदं भगवते नम इद्विधेम
योऽनात्मनां दुरुदयो भगवान् प्रतीतः॥५०॥

*prāduścakartha yad idaṁ puruhūta rūpaṁ
teneśa nirvṛtim avāpur alam dṛśo naḥ
tasmā idaṁ bhagavate nama id vidhema
yo 'nātmanāṁ durudayo bhagavān pratītaḥ*

prāduścakartha—You have manifested; *yat*—which; *idaṁ*—this; *puruhūta*—O greatly worshiped; *rūpaṁ*—eternal form; *tena*—by that form; *īśa*—O Lord; *nirvṛtim*—satisfaction; *avāpuḥ*—obtained; *alam*—so much; *dṛśaḥ*—vision; *naḥ*—our; *tasmā*—unto Him; *idaṁ*—this; *bhagavate*—unto the Supreme Personality of Godhead; *namaḥ*—obeisances; *it*—only; *vidhema*—let us offer; *yaḥ*—who; *anātmanāṁ*—of those who are less intelligent; *durudayaḥ*—cannot be seen; *bhagavān*—the Supreme Personality of Godhead; *pratītaḥ*—has been seen by us.

TRANSLATION

O Lord, we therefore offer our respectful obeisances unto Your eternal form as the Personality of Godhead, which You have so kindly manifested before us. Your supreme, eternal form cannot be seen by unfortunate, less intelligent persons, but we are so much satisfied in our mind and vision to see it.

PURPORT

The four sages were impersonalists in the beginning of their spiritual life, but afterwards, by the grace of their father and spiritual master, Brahmā, they understood the eternal, spiritual form of the Lord and felt completely satisfied. In other words, the transcendentalists who aspire to the impersonal Brahman or localized Paramātmā are not fully satisfied and still hanker for more. Even if they are satisfied in their minds, still, transcendently, their eyes are not satisfied. But as soon as such persons come to realize the Supreme Personality of Godhead, they are satisfied in all respects. In other words, they become devotees and want to see the form of the Lord continually. It is confirmed in the *Brahma-saṁhitā* that one who has developed transcendental love of Kṛṣṇa by smearing his eyes with the ointment of love sees constantly the eternal form of the Lord. The particular word used in this connection, *anātmanāṁ*, signifies

those who have no control over the mind and senses and who therefore speculate and want to become one with the Lord. Such persons cannot have the pleasure of seeing the eternal form of the Lord. For the impersonalists and the so-called *yogīs*, the Lord is always hidden by the curtain of *yogamāyā*. *Bhagavad-gītā* says that even when Lord Kṛṣṇa was seen by everyone while He was present on the surface of the earth, the impersonalists and the so-called *yogīs* could not see Him because they were devoid of devotional eyesight. The theory of the impersonalists and so-called *yogīs* is that the Supreme Lord assumes a particular form when He comes in touch with *māyā*, although actually He has no form. This very conception of the impersonalists and so-called *yogīs* checks them from seeing the Supreme Personality of Godhead as He is. The Lord, therefore, is always beyond the sight of such nondevotees. The four sages felt so much obliged to the Lord that they offered their respectful obeisances unto Him again and again.

Thus end the Bhaktivedanta purports of the Third Canto, Fifteenth Chapter, of the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, entitled “Description of the Kingdom of God.”

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

The Two Doorkeepers of Vaikuṇṭha, Jaya and Vijaya, Cursed by the Sages

TEXT 1

ब्रह्मोवाच

इति तद् गुणतां तेषां मुनीनां योगधर्मिणाम् ।
प्रतिनन्द्य जगादेदं विकुण्ठनिलयो विशुः ॥ १ ॥

*brahmovāca
iti tad gṛṇatām teṣāṁ
munināṁ yoga-dharminām
pratinandya jagādedaṁ
vikuṇṭha-nilayo vibhuḥ*

brahmā uvāca—Lord Brahmā said; *iti*—thus; *tat*—speech; *gṛṇatām*—praising; *teṣāṁ*—of them; *muninām*—those four sages; *yoga-dharminām*—engaged in linking with the Supreme; *pratinandya*—after congratulating; *jagāda*—said; *idaṁ*—these words; *vikuṇṭha-nilayaḥ*—whose abode is bereft of anxiety; *vibhuḥ*—the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

TRANSLATION

Lord Brahmā said: After thus congratulating the sages for their nice words, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, whose abode is in the kingdom of God, spoke as follows.

TEXT 2

श्रीभगवानुवाच

एतौ तौ पार्षदौ मह्यं जयो विजय एव च ।
कदर्थाकृत्य मां यद्वो बहूकृतामतिक्रमम् ॥ २ ॥

śrī-bhagavān uvāca
etau tau pārśadāu mahyam
jaya vijaya eva ca
kadarthī-kṛtya mām yad vo
bahv akrātām atikramam

śrī-bhagavān uvāca—the Supreme Personality of Godhead said; *etau*—these two; *tau*—they; *pārśadāu*—attendants; *mahyam*—of Mine; *jayaḥ*—named Jaya; *vijayaḥ*—named Vijaya; *eva*—certainly; *ca*—and; *kadarthī-kṛtya*—by ignoring; *mām*—Me; *yat*—which; *vaḥ*—against you; *bahv*—great; *akrātām*—have committed; *atikramam*—offense.

TRANSLATION

The Personality of Godhead said: These attendants of Mine, Jaya and Vijaya by name, have committed a great offense against you because of ignoring Me.

PURPORT

To commit an offense at the feet of a devotee of the Lord is a great wrong. Even when a living entity is promoted to Vaikuṅṭha, there is still the chance that he may commit offenses, but the difference is that when one is in a Vaikuṅṭha planet, even if by chance one commits an offense, he is protected by the Lord. This is the remarkable fact in the dealings of the Lord and the servitor, as seen in the present incident concerning Jaya and Vijaya. The word *atikramam* used herein indicates that in offending a devotee one neglects the Supreme Lord Himself.

By mistake the doormen held the sages from entering Vaikuṅṭhaloka, but because they were engaged in the transcendental service of the Lord, their annihilation was not expected by advanced devotees. The Lord's presence on the spot was very pleasing to the hearts of the devotees. The Lord understood that the trouble was due to His lotus feet not being seen by the sages, and therefore He wanted to please them by personally going there. The Lord is so merciful that even if there is some impediment for the devotee, He Himself manages matters in such a way that the devotee is not bereft of having audience at His lotus feet. There is a very good example in the life of Haridāsa Ṭhākura. When Caitanya Mahāprabhu was residing at Jagannātha Purī, Haridāsa Ṭhākura, who happened to be Muhammadan by birth, was with Him. In Hindu temples, especially in those days, no one but a Hindu was allowed to enter. Although Haridāsa Ṭhākura was the greatest of all Hindus in his behavior, he considered himself a Muhammadan and did not enter the temple. Lord Caitanya could understand his humility, and since he did not go to see the temple, Lord Caitanya Himself, who is nondifferent from Jagannātha, used to come and sit with Haridāsa Ṭhākura daily. Here in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* we also find this same behavior of the Lord. His devotees were prevented from seeing His lotus feet, but the Lord Himself came to see them on the same lotus feet for which they aspired. It is also significant that He was accompanied by the goddess of fortune. The goddess of fortune is not to be seen by ordinary persons, but the Lord was so kind that although the devotees did not aspire for such an honor, He appeared before them with the goddess of fortune.

TEXT 3

यस्त्वेतयोर्धृतो दण्डो भवद्भिर्मामनुव्रतैः ।
स एवानुमतोऽस्माभिर्मुनयो देवहेलनात् ॥ ३ ॥

yaś tv etayor dhṛto daṇḍo
bhavadbhir mām anuvrataiḥ
sa evānumato 'smābhir
munayo deva-helanāt

yaḥ—which; *tu*—but; *etayor*—regarding both Jaya and Vijaya; *dhṛtaḥ*—has been given; *daṇḍaḥ*—punishment; *bhavadbhiḥ*—by you; *mām*—Me; *anuvrataiḥ*—devoted to; *saḥ*—that; *eva*—certainly; *anumataḥ*—is approved; *asmābhiḥ*—by Me; *munayaḥ*—O great sages; *deva*—against you; *helanāt*—because of an offense.

TRANSLATION

O great sages, I approve of the punishment that you who are devoted to Me have meted out to them.

TEXT 4

तद्दः प्रसादयाम्यद्य ब्रह्म दैवं परं हि मे ।
तद्भित्वात्मकृतं मन्ये यत्स्वपुम्भिरसत्कृताः ॥ ४ ॥

tad vaḥ prasādayāmy adya
brahma daivam paraṁ hi me
tad dhity ātma-kṛtam manye
yat sva-pumbhir asat-kṛtāḥ

tat—therefore; *vaḥ*—you sages; *prasādayāmi*—I am seeking your forgiveness; *adya*—just now; *brahma*—the *brāhmaṇas*; *daivam*—most beloved personalities; *param*—highest; *hi*—because; *me*—My; *tat*—that offense; *hi*—because; *iti*—thus; *ātma-kṛtam*—done by Me; *manye*—I consider; *yat*—which; *sva-pumbhiḥ*—by My own attendants; *asat-kṛtāḥ*—having been disrespected.

TRANSLATION

To Me, the *brāhmaṇa* is the highest and most beloved personality. The disrespect shown by My attendants has actually been displayed by Me because the doormen are My servitors. I take this to be an offense by Myself; therefore I seek your forgiveness for the incident that has arisen.

PURPORT

The Lord is always in favor of the *brāhmaṇas* and the cows, and therefore it is said, *go-brāhmaṇa-hitāya ca*. Lord Kṛṣṇa, or Viṣṇu, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is also the worshipable Deity of the *brāhmaṇas*. In the Vedic literature, in the *ṛg-mantra* hymns of the *Ṛg Veda*, it is stated that those who are actually *brāhmaṇas* always look to the lotus feet of Viṣṇu: *om tad viṣṇoḥ paramaṁ padaṁ sadā paśyanti sūrayaḥ*. Those who are qualified *brāhmaṇas* worship only the Viṣṇu form of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, which means Kṛṣṇa, Rāma and all Viṣṇu expansions. A so-called *brāhmaṇa* who is born in the family of *brāhmaṇas* but performs activities aimed against the Vaiṣṇavas cannot be accepted as a *brāhmaṇa*, because *brāhmaṇa* means Vaiṣṇava and Vaiṣṇava means *brāhmaṇa*. One who has become a devotee of the Lord is also a *brāhmaṇa*. The formula is *brahma jānātīti brāhmaṇaḥ*. A *brāhmaṇa* is one who has understood Brahman, and a Vaiṣṇava is one who has understood the Personality of Godhead. Brahman realization is the beginning of realization of the Personality of Godhead. One who understands the Personality of Godhead also knows the impersonal feature of the Supreme, which is Brahman. Therefore one who becomes a Vaiṣṇava is already a *brāhmaṇa*. It should be noted that the glories of the *brāhmaṇa* described in this chapter by the Lord Himself refer to His devotee-*brāhmaṇa*, or the Vaiṣṇava. It should never be misunderstood that the so-called *brāhmaṇas* who are born in *brāhmaṇa* families but have no brahminical qualifications are referred to in this connection.

TEXT 5

यन्मामानि च गृह्णाति लोको मृत्ये कृतागसि ।
सोऽसाधुवादस्तकीर्तिं हन्ति त्वचमिवामयः ॥ ५ ॥

yan-nāmāni ca grhṇāti
loko bhṛtye kṛtāgasi

so 'sādhu-vādas tat-kīrtim
hanti tvacam ivāmayah

yat—of whom; nāmāni—the names; ca—and; grhṇāti—take; lokaḥ—people in general; bhṛtye—when a servant; kṛta-āgasi—has committed something wrong; saḥ—that; asādhu-vādaḥ—blame; tat—of that person; kīrtim—the reputation; hanti—destroys; tvacam—the skin; iva—as; āmayah—leprosy.

TRANSLATION

A wrong act committed by a servant leads people in general to blame his master, just as a spot of white leprosy on any part of the body pollutes all of the skin.

PURPORT

A Vaiṣṇava, therefore, should be fully qualified. As stated in the *Bhāgavatam*, anyone who has become a Vaiṣṇava has developed all the good qualities of the demigods. There are twenty-six qualifications mentioned in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. A devotee should always see that his Vaiṣṇava qualities increase with the advancement of his Kṛṣṇa consciousness. A devotee should be blameless because any offense by the devotee is a scar on the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The devotee's duty is to be always conscious in his dealings with others, especially with another devotee of the Lord.

TEXT 6

यस्यामृतामलयज्ञःश्रवणावगाहः
सद्यः पुनाति जगदाश्वपचाद्विकुण्ठः ।
सोऽहं भवद्भ्य उपलब्धसुतीर्थकीर्ति-
च्छिन्द्यां स्वबाहुमपि वः प्रतिकूलवृत्तिम् ॥ ६ ॥

yasyāmṛtāmala-yaśaḥ-śravaṇāvagāhaḥ
sadyaḥ punāti jagad āśvapacād vikunṭhaḥ
so 'haṁ bhavadbhya upalabdha-sutīrtha-kīrtiś
chindyām sva-bāhum api vaḥ pratikūla-vṛttim

yasya—of whom; amṛta—nectar; amala—uncontaminated; yaśaḥ—glories; śravaṇa—hearing; avagāhaḥ—entering into; sadyaḥ—immediately; punāti—purifies; jagat—the universe; āśva-pacāt—including even the dog-eaters; vikunṭhaḥ—without anxiety; saḥ—that person; aham—I am; bhavadbhyaḥ—from you; upalabdha—obtained; su-tīrtha—the best place of pilgrimage; kīrtiḥ—the fame; chindyām—would cut off; sva-bāhum—My own arm; api—even; vaḥ—towards you; pratikūla-vṛttim—acting inimically.

TRANSLATION

Anyone in the entire world, even down to the caṇḍāla, who lives by cooking and eating the flesh of the dog, is immediately purified if he takes bath in hearing through the ear the glorification of My name, fame, etc. Now you have realized Me without doubt; therefore I will not hesitate to lop off My own arm if its conduct is found hostile to you.

PURPORT

Real purification can take place in human society if its members take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. This is clearly stated in all Vedic literature. Anyone who takes to Kṛṣṇa consciousness in all sincerity, even if he is not very advanced in good behavior, is purified. A devotee can be recruited from any section of human society, although it is not expected that everyone in all segments of society is well behaved. As stated in this verse and in many places in *Bhagavad-gītā*, even if one is not born in a brāhmaṇa family, or even if he is born in a family of caṇḍālas, if he simply takes to Kṛṣṇa consciousness he is immediately purified. In *Bhagavad-gītā*, Ninth Chapter, verses 30–32, it is clearly stated that even though a man is not well behaved, if he simply takes to Kṛṣṇa consciousness he is understood to be a saintly person. As long as a person is

in this material world he has two different relationships in his dealings with others—one relationship pertains to the body, and the other pertains to the spirit. As far as bodily affairs or social activities are concerned, although a person is purified on the spiritual platform, it is sometimes seen that he acts in terms of his bodily relationships. If a devotee born in the family of a caṇḍāla (the lowest caste) is sometimes found engaged in his habitual activities, he is not to be considered a caṇḍāla. In other words, a Vaiṣṇava should not be evaluated in terms of his body. The *śāstra* states that no one should think the Deity in the temple to be made of wood or stone, and no one should think that a person coming from a lower-caste family who has taken to Kṛṣṇa consciousness is still of the same low caste. These attitudes are forbidden because anyone who takes to Kṛṣṇa consciousness is understood to be fully purified. He is at least engaged in the process of purification, and if he sticks to the principle of Kṛṣṇa consciousness he will very soon be fully purified. The conclusion is that if one takes to Kṛṣṇa consciousness with all seriousness, he is to be understood as already purified, and Kṛṣṇa is ready to give him protection by all means. The Lord assures herein that He is ready to give protection to His devotee even if there is need to cut off part of His own body.

TEXT 7

यत्सेवया चरणपद्मपवित्ररेणुं
सद्यःक्षताखिलमलं प्रतिलब्धशीलम् ।
न श्रीर्विरक्तमपि मां विजहाति यस्याः
प्रेक्षालवार्थ इतरे नियमान् वहन्ति ॥ ७ ॥

yat-sevayā caraṇa-padma-pavitra-reṇuṁ
sadyaḥ kṣatākhila-malaṁ pratilabdha-śīlam
na śrīr viraktam api mām vijahāti yasyāḥ
prekṣā-lavārtha itare niyamān vahanti

yat—of whom; sevayā—by the service; caraṇa—feet; padma—lotus; pavitra—sacred; reṇuṁ—the dust; sadyaḥ—immediately; kṣata—wiped out; akhila—all; malaṁ—sins; pratilabdha—acquired; śīlam—disposition; na—not; śrīḥ—the goddess of fortune; viraktam—have no attachment; api—even though; mām—Me; vijahāti—leave; yasyāḥ—of the goddess of fortune; prekṣā-lava-arthah—for obtaining a slight favor; itare—others, like Lord Brahmā; niyamān—sacred vows; vahanti—observe.

TRANSLATION

The Lord continued: Because I am the servitor of My devotees, My lotus feet have become so sacred that they immediately wipe out all sin, and I have acquired such a disposition that the goddess of fortune does not leave Me, even though I have no attachment for her and others praise her beauty and observe sacred vows to secure from her even a slight favor.

PURPORT

The relationship between the Lord and His devotee is transcendently beautiful. As the devotee thinks that it is due to being a devotee of the Lord that he is elevated in all good qualities, so the Lord also thinks that it is because of His devotion to the servitor that all His transcendental glories have increased. In other words, as the devotee is always anxious to render service to the Lord, so the Lord is ever anxious to render service to the devotee. The Lord admits herein that although He certainly has the quality that anyone who receives a slight particle of the dust of His lotus feet becomes at once a great personality, this greatness is due to His affection for His devotee. It is because of this affection that the goddess of fortune does not leave Him and that not only one but many thousands of goddesses of fortune engage in His service. In the material world, simply to get a little favor from the goddess of fortune, people observe many rigid regulations of austerity and penance. The Lord cannot tolerate any inconvenience on the part of the devotee. He is therefore famous as *bhakta-vatsala*.

(continued in next issue)

For Your Information

RESOURCES

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.

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To find out more, get in touch with the ISKCON farm community nearest you (you'll find them in the list of centers on pages 20–21 of this magazine).

Or write or call Paramānanda dāsa, who is the ISKCON minister for farm communities. His address is the Gītā-nāgarī Farm, R.D. No. 1, Box 839, Port Royal, Pennsylvania 17082; phone: (717) 527-4101.

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For life membership service inquiries and reports, please correspond with your local temple or the International Life Membership Trust, 230A Kenton Road, Harrow, Middlesex HA3 8BY, United Kingdom. The International Life Membership Trust is the coordinating body for life membership in ISKCON and operates under the auspices of the International Life Membership Committee, a committee of the Governing Body Commission of ISKCON.

Going to Bombay?

Visit the ISKCON cultural center—Hare Krishna Land, in beautiful Juhu Beach. A short ride from the Bombay airports, Hare Krishna Land features a gorgeous traditional

Kṛṣṇa temple, together with a multistory modern guesthouse, Govinda's pure vegetarian *prasādam* restaurant, musical and theatrical performances in the 425-seat auditorium, and a sublime atmosphere of spiritual realization in the association of Kṛṣṇa's devotees.

For further information, inquire at your local ISKCON center or get directly in touch with ISKCON in Bombay.

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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.

Food for the Spirit: Vegetarianism and the World Religions, by Steven Rosen (Satya-rāja dāsa), with a preface by Isaac Bashevis Singer, is available from Bala Books, 268 West 23rd St., New York, NY 10011, (212) 929-8073. Hardbound, \$9.95; paperback \$6.95; shipping \$1.50. Make checks payable to Bala Books.

Prepare your child to go back to Godhead.

ISKCON now has more than twenty primary and secondary schools worldwide, and some of these schools are now prepared to accept students from outside their local communities. Here's your opportunity to give your child a strong spiritual foundation, in addition to standard academic knowledge.

For more information, write to Śrī Rāma dāsa, ISKCON Gurukula Education Office, Almviks Gärd, 15300 Järna, Sweden.

Note to Subscribers. Planning to move? Let us know when and where so we can keep your BACK TO GODHEAD coming without a break. Write Circulation Dept., P.O. Box 70, Emmaus, PA 18049/ (215) 822-0787. Please send a recent mailing label or invoice.

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 Trivikrama (May 14–June 11)

June 7—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa, a famous spiritual master in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *sampradāya* (disciplic succession) and the author of *Govinda Bhāṣya*, an important commentary on *Vedānta-sūtra*. Appearance anniversary of Śrīmatī Gaṅgamātā Gosvāmīnī, a famous woman spiritual master in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *sampradāya*.

June 8—Pañḍava-nirjalā Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans.

June 10—Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī's chipped-rice-and-yogurt festival at Pānihāṭī.

June 11—Sñāna-yātrā, the bathing festival of Lord Jagannātha. Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Mukunda Datta and Śrīla Śrīdhara Pañḍita, two great devotees of Lord Caitanya.

Month of Vāmana (June 12–July 11)

June 20—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Śrīvāsa Pañḍita, one of the principal associates of Lord Caitanya.

June 22—Yoginī Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans.

June 26—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Gadādhara Pañḍita, one of the principal associates of Lord Caitanya. Also, disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura. Fasting till noon.

June 27—Guṇḍicā-marjana. Festival of the cleansing of the Guṇḍicā temple.

June 28—Lord Jagannātha's Ratha-yātrā in Purī, India. Also, disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Svarūpa Dāmodara Gosvāmī and Śrīla Śivānanda Sena, intimate associates of Lord Caitanya.

July 7—Śayanā Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans.

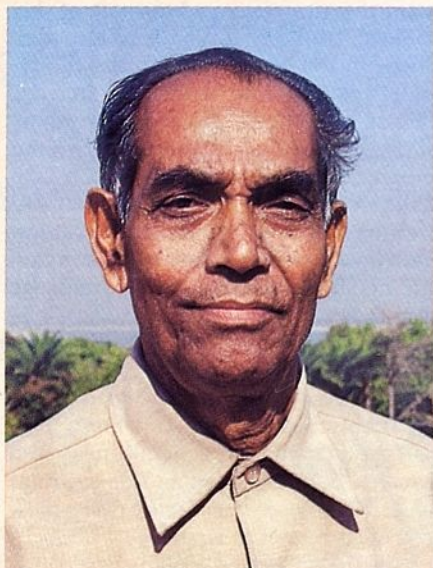
July 11—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī, one of the six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana. First month of Cāturmāsya begins (fasting from spinach).



Every Town and Village

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

New Guesthouse-Resort for ISKCON Māyāpur



YAMARAJA DĀSA

Mr. A. K. Raya (above) helped finance ISKCON Māyāpur's new guesthouse. At right, Mr. Raya, wearing a yellow ceremonial headband, takes part in a fire sacrifice during the cornerstone-laying functions.



YAMARAJA DĀSA

Māyāpur, West Bengal—During the annual ISKCON festival celebrating Lord Caitanya's appearance here five hundred years ago, an international gathering of devotees and guests took part in the cornerstone-laying ceremony for a 264-room guesthouse. To be called the Surabala-Ramani Mohan International Vedic Resort, the guesthouse was named after the parents of A. K. and B. K. Raya, Calcutta businessmen who donated funds for the project. The ceremony included a traditional Vedic fire sacrifice, with the chanting of purificatory *mantras*, and

the distribution of *kṛṣṇa-prasādam*.

The four-story guesthouse will contain three wings. The first wing, with seventy rooms, is expected to be completed by the spring of 1988. The resort will include a pavilion for serving *prasādam* to two thousand guests at a time. At present, ISKCON Māyāpur, with its beautiful gardens and fountains, receives about forty to fifty busloads of pilgrims every weekend. About ten percent of these visitors, or about 250 guests, stay overnight. The new guesthouse promises to be another attractive feature for visitors to this holy place.

Kalachandji's Restaurant Voted Best in Texas

Dallas, Texas—*Vegetarian Times* magazine recently selected Kalachandji's Restaurant, at ISKCON Dallas, as one of the best vegetarian restaurants in America. After asking its staff and correspondents to send reviews of their favorite purely vegetarian restaurants, the magazine chose Kalachandji's as "the best bet for excellent vegetarian food" in the Lone Star state.

"The ambience of Kalachandji's is magical," the article in the March issue of *Vegetarian Times* states. "As you enter, you are greeted by the aroma of incense and a host dressed in traditional Indian garb. You can dine either indoors or on the outdoor patio. Soothing Indian music plays as sari-clad women serve your meal."

The article describes the dinner offered at Kalachandji's as "more than any diner could ask for," and notes that Kalachandji's has never served the same menu twice since it opened, in 1983.

Consul General Visits Dallas Temple

Dallas, Texas—His Excellency K.K.S. Rana, consul general of India based in San Francisco, recently visited ISKCON's Dallas temple and its famous Kalachandji's Restaurant. His Excellency (at right, wearing a garland) received a copy of Śrīla Prabhupāda's *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* from temple president Navīna Kṛṣṇa dāsa (left). ISKCON Life member Mr. Naryan Misra coordinated the visit. Also



pictured is the temple's gift shop manager, Mīrābhāi-devī dāsī.

GENUINE GĪTĀ

(continued from page 15)

fourteen years ago. I was on the train on my way home from school. I was reading a popular translation of the *Gītā* when a Hare Kṛṣṇa devotee approached me. He was asking for donations, and he was selling, of all things, copies of *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, Śrīla Prabhupāda's *Gītā*.

What the devotee said to me I'll remember for the rest of my life. "You're reading poison!" he exclaimed. I was shocked.

"The *Gītā* is as pure as milk," he continued, "but even milk becomes poison when touched by the lips of a serpent." I could understand that he was criticizing the particular translation I was reading. I had misgivings about this edition myself, as only the first six chapters were translated. Why would the translator leave out the remaining twelve chapters? Agreeing with the devotee that something was amiss, I accepted a copy of *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, which he gave me free.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's *Gītā* was fabulous. Unlike other editions, it provided me with a clear understanding of the personalities involved and of the entire *Bhagavad-gītā*. The *Gītā*'s clear and almost simple message became apparent: surrender unto Kṛṣṇa, God. And Śrīla Prabhupāda was the first to give this direct and obvious meaning of the *Gītā*. It became apparent that many of the other translators and commentators were missing the essence of the *Gītā*.

But I wanted to be certain. And after I enrolled in Queens College that fall, I took a course in Sanskrit. Now I would be able to compare translations. After all, Prabhupāda's conclusion was obvious.

I learned that most scholars agreed with Prabhupāda, praising his work as the definitive *Bhagavad-gītā*. And his particular edition was read and accepted worldwide. His books were in ninety-five percent of America's college and university libraries and were sometimes used as course material and supplementary reading in philosophy, religion, literature, and Asian studies. Dr. Rasik Vihari Joshi, chairman of the department of Sanskrit at the University of Delhi, had said, "Indian religion and Indology will both forever remain indebted to Śrīla Prabhupāda for making Vaiṣṇava thought and philosophy available around the world through his translations of and commentaries on *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Words fail to express my joy and appreciation for these excellent editions." Similarly, Dr. Samuel D. Atkins, professor of Sanskrit at Princeton University, wrote, "I am most impressed with A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda's scholarly and authoritative edition of *Bhagavad-gītā*. It is a most valuable

work for the scholar as well as the layman and of great utility as a reference book as well as a textbook."

Śrīla Prabhupāda's *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, I was learning, stands as a challenge to all armchair philosophers who depart from the *Gītā*'s central teaching of devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Kṛṣṇa. Even Mahatma Gandhi, his dedication notwithstanding, is guilty of offering a metaphorical interpretation of the *Gītā* to help authorize and popularize his philosophy of *satyagraha*, passive resistance.

In the *Gītā*'s Ninth Chapter Lord Kṛṣṇa categorically advises Arjuna to surrender to Him and to love and worship Him only. Kṛṣṇa specifically uses the Sanskrit word *mām*, meaning "unto Me." Yet one commentator, a renowned Indian philosopher and one-time political leader, be-

Since Charles Wilkins first translated the *Gītā* into English in 1785, there have been hundreds of translations. But until Prabhupāda's *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, not one Westerner had become a devotee of Kṛṣṇa.

gins his commentary on this crucial verse, "It is not to Kṛṣṇa that we have to surrender. . . ."

In the *Gītā* Kṛṣṇa is telling Arjuna to surrender to Him. The *Gītā* makes careful record of the fact that it is not metaphorical by using the words *kṛṣṇāt sākṣāt kathayataḥ svayam* (Bg. 18.75), which clearly indicate that Kṛṣṇa was directly (*sākṣāt*) in front of Arjuna preaching personally (*svayam*). Since I was studying Sanskrit at Queen's college, my knowledge of the language was developing, and it became increasingly obvious that Śrīla Prabhupāda's *Gītā* was the most accurate. Those interpretations that differed did so for ulterior motives—political, financial, religious, and so on. But Śrīla Prabhupāda was a pure devotee of the Lord. Significantly, he entitled his *Gītā* "As It Is," and he called his comments "Purports," not "Interpretations." In these purports, he gives the actual significance

of the verses, the direct meaning without speculation.

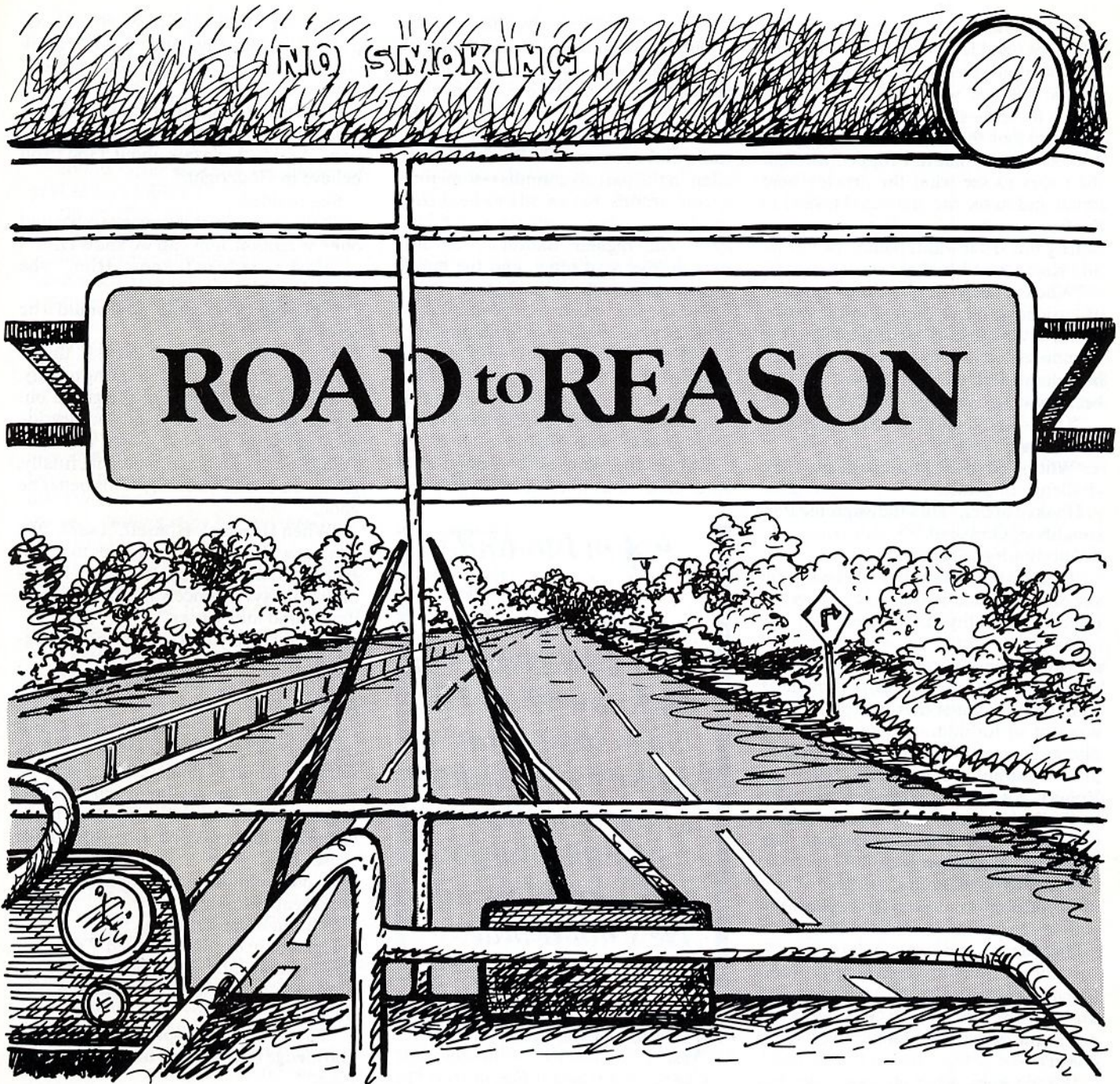
Why Śrīla Prabhupāda entitled his edition *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* is apparent from Kṛṣṇa's statement to Arjuna in the beginning of the Fourth Chapter. Regarding Arjuna's qualification for receiving the teachings of the *Gītā*, Lord Kṛṣṇa explains that it is not that Arjuna is a great *yogī*, ascetic, or scholar. Rather, Kṛṣṇa said, it is "because you are My devotee and My friend; therefore you can understand the transcendental mystery of this science" (Bg. 4.3). Kṛṣṇa has also disclosed in the *Gītā* that its truths can be understood only by those who are in a line of authorized devotees known as *paramparā*, or disciplic succession. Of the four such successions recognized by the Vedic literatures, the line from Lord Brahmā is flourishing, and Śrīla Prabhupāda was the thirty-second teacher in that line, his students carrying on the message even today.

Vedic knowledge is like a family secret that has been carefully handed down through many generations. Just as present family descendants can know precisely what took place generations ago, so sincere disciples of a bona fide spiritual master can clearly receive the *Gītā*'s message of surrender to Kṛṣṇa.

Ever since Charles Wilkins first translated *Bhagavad-gītā* into English in 1785, there have been literally hundreds of translations. Until Śrīla Prabhupāda released his *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, however, not one Westerner had become a devotee of Kṛṣṇa. And this is quite strange, since Lord Kṛṣṇa makes it completely clear in the *Gītā* that becoming His devotee is life's goal: "Always think of Me and become My devotee. Worship Me and offer your homage unto Me. Thus you will come to Me without fail. I promise you this because you are My very dear friend" (Bg. 18.65).

According to *Bhagavad-gītā*, spiritual truths reach the most sincere students by a descending process, from the scriptures themselves, the great sages, and through a genuine and qualified spiritual teacher, who guides one on the path of devotion to God. Thus the real import of the *Bhagavad-gītā* is not to be had by incessant wrangling and a dazzling display of philosophical hermeneutics, but by surrendering to Kṛṣṇa and His pure representatives in this world.

By 1973 I had found the authentic *Bhagavad-gītā* and was convinced that Śrīla Prabhupāda, through his books, would guide me to unravel the mystery of the *Gītā* once and for all. As I look back on my search, I can understand that Śrīla Prabhupāda was guiding and that Kṛṣṇa had been guiding me all along from within my heart. ☐



“Kṛṣṇa is God,” I explained. “No He’s not,” she shot back aggressively. *Uh, oh*, I thought, *a fundamentalist*.

by KUṆḌALĪ DĀSA

The seven fifty-five Greyhound out of Baltimore was almost full when I boarded. I made my way to the only vacant seat on the side of the bus that would be out of the morning sun as we traveled north. The window seat was occupied by a well-dressed, middle-aged woman. When she saw me with my shaven head and *tilaka* and wearing a *dhotti*, she immediately averted her eyes, and a dis-

approving look came over her face. *Maybe I should sit somewhere else*, I thought. Then, *What does it matter? I’m just going to sit here and read*. I sat down.

The bus left the station and slowly made its way across town in the morning rush-hour traffic to Interstate 83. The stop-and-go motion caused the bus to pitch and toss like a dinghy at sea. I eased my seat back to make myself comfortable for the

DRAWING BY DHRUVA MAHĀRĀJA DĀSA

two-hour ride to Harrisburg.

Before I had left the Baltimore temple, a devotee had given me a copy of the latest *Back to Godhead*, which I planned to read during the trip—if the drive didn't lull me to sleep. I took the magazine from my bag, and, as was my habit, I flipped through the pages to see what the articles were about and to see the pictures. I turned to the front cover and spent some time admiring the art. It was a picture of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, one I had never seen before.

"Who is that?" The question, a mixture of curiosity and challenge in the voice, broke my reverie. I turned to face the woman seated next to me: late forties, auburn hair, stern face in a frown. She had been looking over my shoulder.

"That's Kṛṣṇa and His eternal consort, Rādhārāṇī," I said.

"Who is Kṛṣṇa?" More curiosity than challenge this time.

I looked at her. "He's the Supreme Personality of Godhead."

A long silence ensued.

"Kṛṣṇa is God," I explained, seeing that she didn't seem to make sense of "the Supreme Personality of Godhead."

"No, He's not," she shot back. Aggressive. Sure of herself.

Uh, oh! *A fundamentalist*, I thought. I would have left it at that, except her tone was not so forbidding as to completely discourage me. I also remembered how Śrīla Prabhupāda had said, "They say Kṛṣṇa is not God, but when you ask, 'Who is God?' they cannot say." I decided to pursue his line of reasoning with her. "Okay," I said. "Who is God?"

"I don't know. But it's not Kṛṣṇa."

"If you don't know who God is, how can you be so sure Kṛṣṇa isn't God?"

"Because God doesn't look like that."

I sat up from my reclining position feigning surprise. "Am I to understand that you don't know who God is but you do know what He looks like? That doesn't—"

"I don't know what He looks like, but I'm sure He's not a blue Indian god with flowers and a flute."

"How can you be so sure?"

"Look," a hint of annoyance in her voice, "I'm old enough to be your mother, and if God was named Kṛṣṇa and was blue, I'm sure I would have known that by now."

"But if you'd heard about Kṛṣṇa long ago, when you were ten years old, say, would it have been easier to accept Him?"

"No, it wouldn't."

"So your age has nothing to do with it, then."

"No."

"Then what is it? You have a predisposed conviction, a sort of prejudice, that Kṛṣṇa just can't be God, no matter what?"

"No."

"You have an alternative idea of God?"

Our bus was now cruising on Interstate 83, and conversation was easier without the pitching and rolling of city driving. I'd been traveling back and forth between our farm community in central Pennsylvania and our temple in Baltimore fairly often in the past six months—sometimes to run errands, but mostly to help cover some of the temple services from time to time. The regular Baltimore devotees were on the road often, and the temple was sometimes short-handed.

On my previous trips, because I'd not been very successful in stimulating interest in Kṛṣṇa consciousness among my fellow travelers, I had developed a routine of reading or chanting silently during the ride. Today, when I least expected it, here was someone taking an interest in Kṛṣṇa.

I broke the silence. "You don't know what God looks like, and yet you're cer-

"Am I to understand that you don't know who God is but you do know what He looks like? That doesn't —" "I don't know what He looks like," she said, "but I'm sure He's not a blue Indian god . . ."

tain He's not Kṛṣṇa, right?"

"Yes."

I decided to take a different tack. "Let me ask you this, then. Do you agree that God is inconceivable?"

"Yes, He's inconceivable," she said with a nod.

"What do you understand by 'inconceivable'?"

She took some time figuring out her answer. "He's beyond imagination," she said finally.

"Okay."

"That's why you can't have a picture of God."

"True. But it's also true that if He's inconceivable and you don't know what He looks like, by the same token you can't say what He *doesn't* look like either. In which case, you really have to allow that He could be Kṛṣṇa. At least it's a possibility. No?"

"No. If He's inconceivable," she pointed to the magazine, "I don't think you can have any picture or conception of Him at all."

I turned the magazine face down on my lap. "Okay, but let's forget about Kṛṣṇa for now," I said. "Let's talk about 'God.' You believe in God, right?"

She nodded.

"If the creator of this universe is beyond our conception, how can we know Him?"

"Maybe we can't know Him," she replied.

"But suppose we could, how would it be possible?"

She shifted position in the seat, thinking. I fingered my beads, chanting quietly. Leaning back in her seat, she gazed out the window at the Maryland countryside rushing by at fifty-five miles an hour. "Why don't you tell me?" she said, finally, giving me a look that said, "This better be good."

"When He reveals Himself," I said. "We can know Him when He chooses to reveal Himself. Otherwise, by definition, He remains always inconceivable to our mundane mind and senses."

"So you're saying God revealed Himself as Kṛṣṇa?"

"No, no, we're not back to Kṛṣṇa yet. All I'm saying so far is that if there is a remote possibility for us to know inconceivable God, it's by His revealing Himself to us. Short of that, we can't really be sure. We can't know Him by our speculation and conjecture, no matter how interesting our ideas may be. Does that make sense?"

"It does, philosophically, but how does He reveal Himself?"

"Through the scriptures."

Her face lit up. She pounced. "Yes," she said emphatically. "And in the Bible the Lord tells us not to worship any graven image."

"That's true, but you agree that our knowledge of God must have a scriptural basis?"

"Yes."

"Okay. Now, getting back to Kṛṣṇa, our scriptures—the *Bhagavad-gītā*, the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and other Vedic literature—give us clear information of the name, identity, and form of God, His kingdom, His qualities, His activities, and His entourage. So this picture is based on those descriptions. The Vedic scriptures also advise us to worship the form of the Lord and tell how such worship should—"

"But the Bible says, 'Thou shalt not worship a graven image; Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.'"

"Yes, but the form of Kṛṣṇa is not a graven image concocted in someone's fertile imagination; it's the actual form, based on scriptural descriptions—"

"It's not mentioned in the Bible."

"Ahh, but it is—'God made man in His own image and likeness.'"

"But it doesn't say we should paint a picture. It doesn't say God is blue and has a flute. I've never heard of any scripture that does."

"You've never heard of the *Bhagavad-gītā*? India's bible?"

"No, and I'm not sure I accept any other scripture either."

She had raised her voice as she became more assertive, and I was aware that other passengers were trying to follow our conversation. A man and a woman in front of us, presumably husband and wife, were visibly interested in what was going on. Their seats were all the way back, their heads cocked to one side, listening. I heard the man say, "There ain't no scripture 'cept the Baable, the holy word of God." I thought he wanted to get drawn into our conversation, but my companion seemed unaffected by his statement, so I ignored him.

"Why not?" I asked. "The Bible recognizes that other scriptures are valid. And, as anyone can see, there are religious traditions besides the biblical tradition that have many saintly men and women who display the same godly characteristics as Christian saints. The Vedic tradition is full of such examples, so I don't think it's fair to reject all scriptures but the Bible."

"Then why haven't I heard about them?"

"Maybe you haven't looked into the matter deeply enough. You must have heard of the Koran, the scripture of the Muslims?"

"Yes, I've heard of the Koran, but I can't say I've researched the various scriptures." She shifted again, making herself comfortable. She seemed more at ease with me. "But still, if, as you say, Kṛṣṇa is God and He is described in your scriptures, I think I would have heard about it before now. Why didn't Jesus mention Him? Jesus never said anything about God being blue or carrying a flute."

The couple in front of me started muttering to each other. I couldn't make out what they were saying, but they seemed to be disturbed by my religious views.

"I can't exactly say why the Bible doesn't mention Kṛṣṇa," I said, "but I do know that it quotes Jesus as saying, 'I have much to tell you, but you are not ready for it.' Jesus never gave much detailed information about the soul or about God and His kingdom. In fact, for the little bit of spiritual teachings he did try to impart, the people had him killed. But at least we know he had more to reveal. Should we assume that knowledge was not revealed anywhere else in the world? Is God so limited that the people in the Middle East were the only ones to whom He gave

some revelation or the highest revelation?" I paused, to let her consider.

"The answer is, 'no,'" she said. "He could have given knowledge elsewhere, but if you were brought up a Christian, it takes awhile to see beyond the outlook you've been trained in."

"Certainly, but let's be honest. Considering his audience and his main followers, who were not highly educated in philosophy and theology, how much could Christ actually teach? A teacher can only teach to the degree that his students—"

"I'm a teacher."

I laughed. "So you appreciate my point, then: A teacher can only teach to the degree that his students are able to assimilate his message. Christ had more to teach. If in another part of the world the audience was more qualified, it makes sense that the Lord would reveal more about Himself there."

The man in front of me clearly intended us to hear him. "They know how to make it soun' like it makes sense. But if it ain't in the Baable, it's the Devil's work." His wife made sounds of agreement.

"I can see your point, but I have a hard time accepting Kṛṣṇa. If everything makes as much sense as you make it sound, it seems I would have heard of Him before."

This time the man in front of me clearly intended us to hear him. "They know how to make it soun' like it makes sense. But if it ain't in the Baable, it's the Devil's own work." His companion made sounds of agreement while nodding slowly.

Again my questioner ignored them, and I did likewise. I responded to her. "I can understand your feelings. I felt the same way when I first heard about Kṛṣṇa: 'If this is so right, how come I never heard about it before?' But then I had to admit that this question can be raised whenever you first hear about anything new. It misses the point entirely. It has no bearing on whether or not Kṛṣṇa is indeed God.

"Suppose you first heard about Kṛṣṇa's being God when you were ten. You could say, 'Hey, how come I didn't hear about Kṛṣṇa when I was nine or eight or three or two? How come it's only now? How come nobody in America heard about Kṛṣṇa in 1780? Or in Europe in 1212, for that matter?'"

"The real thing is that we are wandering in the material world, which is like an ocean of birth and death. If someone throws a rope to help us get out of that ocean, it's really of no value to ask, 'Why weren't you here sooner?' Better to take full advantage of the opportunity the rope provides and get out of the ocean. It's not 'Where has Kṛṣṇa been all this time?' It's whether or not Kṛṣṇa is in fact the Supreme Personality of Godhead."

"So you're saying we should just accept Kṛṣṇa as God and we'll be in the real religion?"

"Not exactly, although that might be the conclusion. I'm saying, first you study Kṛṣṇa as He explains Himself in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. Become satisfied that Kṛṣṇa is God. Then you'll easily appreciate that this is a picture of God."

For no reason I could discern, our eavesdroppers up front were now silent. I was thankful. I preferred that they would not disrupt our discussion of transcendental knowledge.

My companion asked to see the magazine, and I gave it to her, then dug into my bag for the back issues I had there. I offered them to her and introduced myself. She told me her name, Jean Mitchell. Jean and her husband were high school teachers near Harrisburg. Both were Episcopalians. For the remainder of the trip we talked intermittently about different points of Kṛṣṇa consciousness while she browsed through the magazines. Jean told me she had never met a Hare Kṛṣṇa person before, although she'd read about us in the news. All in all, she was very appreciative of the encounter. So was I.

Later, standing in the Harrisburg bus station, she wished me success on the path of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I thanked her and invited her to visit our local farm community, Gītā-nāgarī.

"The trip went quickly because of our talk," she said. "I have a confession to make. I was a little annoyed when you came and sat next to me, but something made me talk to you in spite of myself. And I'm glad I did."

"I have something to confess too," I said, laughing. "I thought you looked unfriendly, and I considered moving to another seat. But since I was already sitting, I decided not to bother. I enjoyed the trip too. You never know, do you?"

We said good-bye. The next leg of my trip was uneventful, so I read the new magazine. ❏

Kṛṣṇa Meditation



Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and His elder brother, Balarāma, enjoy transcendental pastimes in the forests and groves of Vṛndāvana.

Though Balarāma, being Kṛṣṇa's first expansion, possesses the same unlimited opulences as Kṛṣṇa, He naturally desires to please Kṛṣṇa by serving

His lotus feet. Balarāma thus sets the example for everyone to follow. Indeed, Balarāma is the source of the sentiment of servitude to Lord Kṛṣṇa. In the material



PAINTING BY RAMADASA ABHIRAMA DASA AND DHRTI-DEVI DAS

world, although materialists want to compete with God, they are forced to serve God indirectly: they must submit to Kṛṣṇa's powerful material energy. The more we forget

the service of Kṛṣṇa, the more we suffer in material existence. When we develop pure Kṛṣṇa consciousness by thinking ourselves servants of Kṛṣṇa, we imme-

diately awaken our eternal relationship with Him and gain entrance into His ever-blissful abode. Attaining this goal is the ultimate achievement of human life. ❧

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Krishna Consciousness AND THE WORLD

C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

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NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

The Worst Age and the Best Remedy

Five-thousand-year-old predictions from the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* are now coming true. According to the *Bhāgavatam*, the present age is Kali-yuga, the age of quarrel and hypocrisy. Already the qualities conducive to human goodness—qualities such as austerity, truthfulness, cleanliness, and mercy—have diminished. And they will continue to diminish as the age progresses. Materialists may consider each century more improved than the previous, but those who cherish spiritual values see the twentieth century as backward in many ways. But despite the bad features of this age, we have one great saving grace. “The age of Kali is an ocean of vices,” says the *Bhāgavatam*. “But the age contains one great quality: One can become liberated simply by chanting the holy names of Kṛṣṇa.”

Saṅkīrtana, chanting the holy names of God, is a special dispensation of divine mercy for persons born into the age of Kali. For former ages the Vedic scriptures recommended more difficult spiritual disciplines: yogic meditation, opulent sacrificial ceremonies, and elaborate temple worship. Foreseeing the degradation of Kali-yuga, the sages and scriptures have recommended the chanting of God’s names with this assurance: “In this fallen age all perfection of life will come to those who perform *saṅkīrtana*.” Men and women in the age of Kali, however, are so unintelligent that they find even the blissful and easy chanting of God’s names too difficult.

In his commentary on the First Canto of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda elaborates on the degenerative features of Kali-yuga.

In Kali-yuga, the last millennium of a round of four millenniums, the power of all material objects deteriorates by the influence of time. In this age the duration of the material body of the people in general is much reduced, and so is the memory. The action of matter also has not so much incentive. The land does not produce food grains in the same proportion as it did in other ages. The cow does not give as much milk as it used to give formerly. The production of vegetables and fruits is less than before. As such, all living beings, both men and animals, do not have sumptuous, nourishing food. Due to want of so many necessities of life, naturally the duration of life is reduced, the memory short, the intel-

ligence meager, mutual dealings are full of hypocrisy, and so on.

Until I heard *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* from Śrīla Prabhupāda, I was not aware that I was living in the worst of ages. I saw many faults and problems, but I also mistook certain faults—the sexual revolution, technological amenities—to be signs of progress. Now I see the modern age as slow and degraded, missing entirely the higher purpose of life. Because of the presence of the *Bhāgavatam*, knowledge of the real purpose of human life, self-realization, exists *despite* the main features of Kali-yuga.

Some features of degeneration Prabhupāda mentions are lowered milk production, diminished agricultural yield, and shortage of food for men and animals. Politicians claim that natural production is increasing, but there is a great decrease in the percentage of individuals who are farming and taking care of cows.

In the Vedic culture those who farm and protect cows are the main population. But in today’s society no one *protects* the cow. The dairymen scientifically drain the cows of milk and then kill them. The cows are milked only at their peak production time, then slaughtered. How can we hail this as increased milk production! The karmic reaction for cow slaughter far outweighs any economic benefits of efficient, modern milking. Besides, when you terminate a cow’s life, you severely decrease that cow’s total milk production.

Much agricultural land is used for harmful products, such as tobacco. Much farmland becomes depleted and poisoned with chemicals. All these acts are done with an attitude of godlessness. None of them are guided by the scriptural principles regarding God’s proprietorship of all things in the universe.

The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* mentions other deteriorating effects of Kali-yuga. Marriage, says the *Bhāgavatam*, will deteriorate to casual relationships based on sex, and a husband and wife may separate over even the slightest disturbance. A person will not be able to get justice in court unless he has money. Government leaders will be mostly thieves. Spiritual hermitages will be no different from mundane houses. Plants and herbs will be tiny, and trees will be dwarfed. Life expectancy will decrease. Seeking to escape the harassment of civilization, many people will

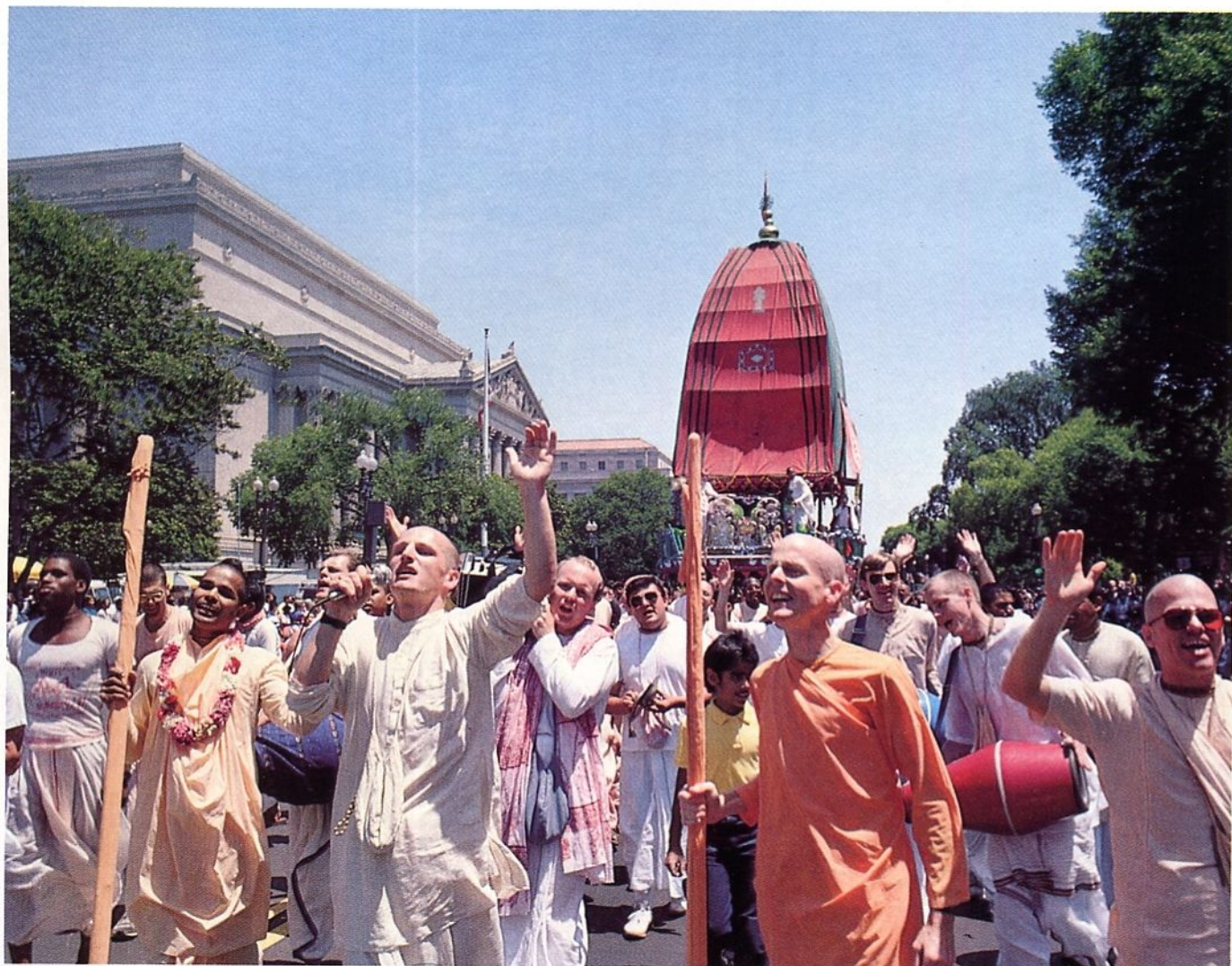
choose to live in the wilderness. And, because this is the Age of Quarrel, dissension and violence will manifest—from petty family quarrels to international wars. For this worst of times *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.3.43) prescribes a remedy:

This *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is as brilliant as the sun, and it has arisen just after the departure of Lord Kṛṣṇa to His own abode, accompanied by religion, knowledge, etc. Persons who have lost their vision due to the dense darkness in the age of Kali shall get light from this scripture.

Śrīla Prabhupāda began translating *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* into English in 1960, while the Cold War between Russia and America chilled the world. Prabhupāda was convinced that the deadly struggles of the superpowers as well as the miseries of the Third World could be mitigated if *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* were widely broadcast. With this conviction he yearned to go to the West to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness. As he wrote in one *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* commentary: “Due to the Age of Quarrel, Kali, there is always a chance of fighting on the slightest provocation. . . . therefore there is a great need for disseminating the message of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.”

Because the *Bhāgavatam* is an ancient literature, we may sometimes doubt its efficacy. Can it, for instance, resolve complicated economic and political problems? In answer to this doubt, we must remember that the *Bhāgavatam* is on the transcendental plane. Since all living beings are also transcendental by nature, the transcendental *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* can bring about a miraculous change.

The principles of Kṛṣṇa consciousness worked in the past, when the world was dominated by Vedic, godly culture. And they are working today for millions of people. Unfortunately, there is propaganda by a section of the people to stop glorification of the Supreme Lord. The devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa, who have attained relief from some of the worst features of the age, are not discouraged. Although the odds are in favor of atheism and hedonism, a sincere devotee knows that if even a few souls can be brought out of darkness, it is a tangible gain. As stated in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, “My dear Lord, pious and saintly persons who in the age of Kali hear about Your transcendental activities and glorify them will easily cross over the darkness of the age.”—SDG



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.

Above: 1986 Independence Day Parade, Washington, D.C. / Photo: Puruṣārtha dāsa

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 34–35 for the center nearest you.)