

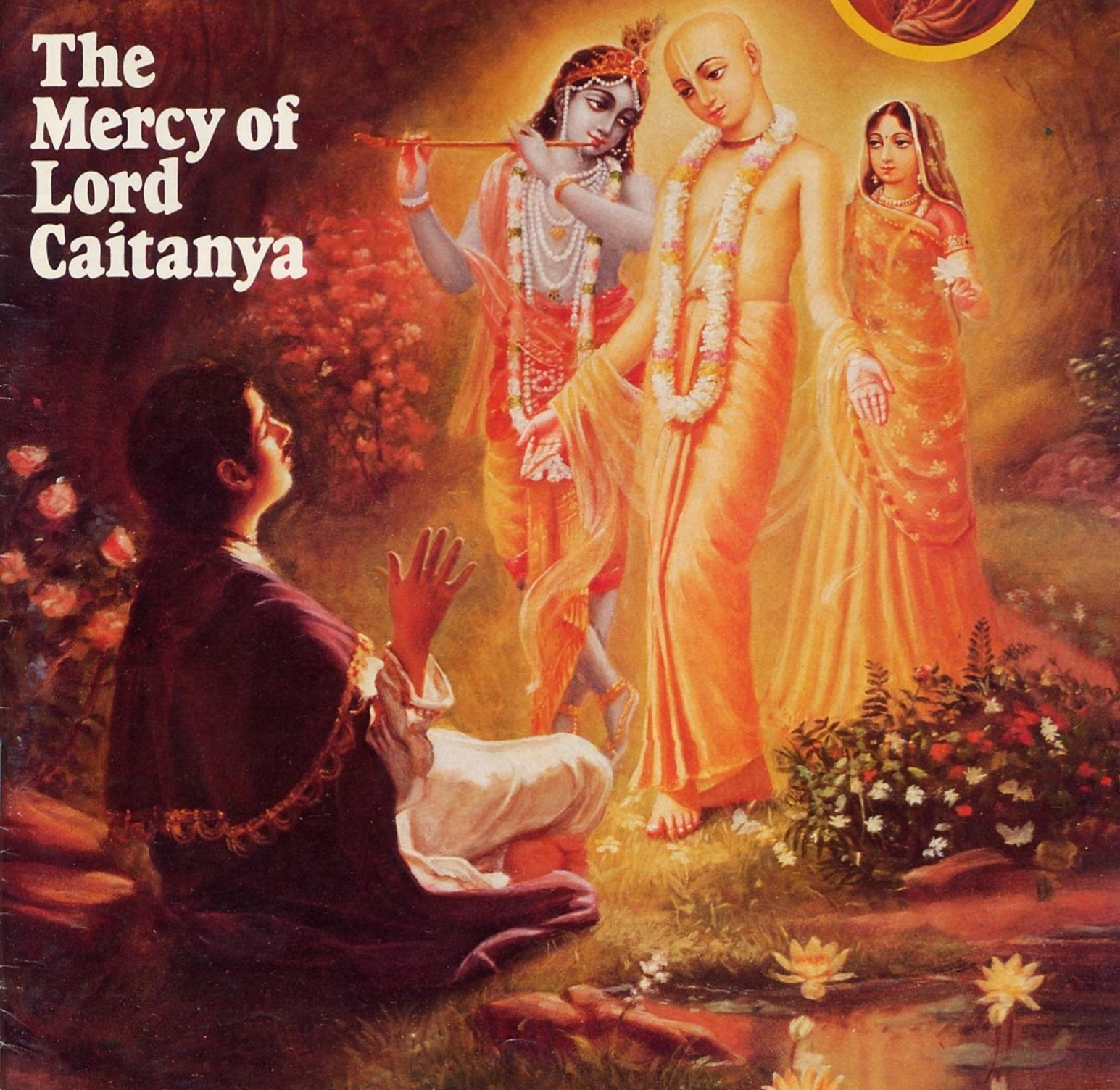
Godhead is light. Nescience is darkness. Where there is Godhead there is no nescience.

BACK TO GODHEAD

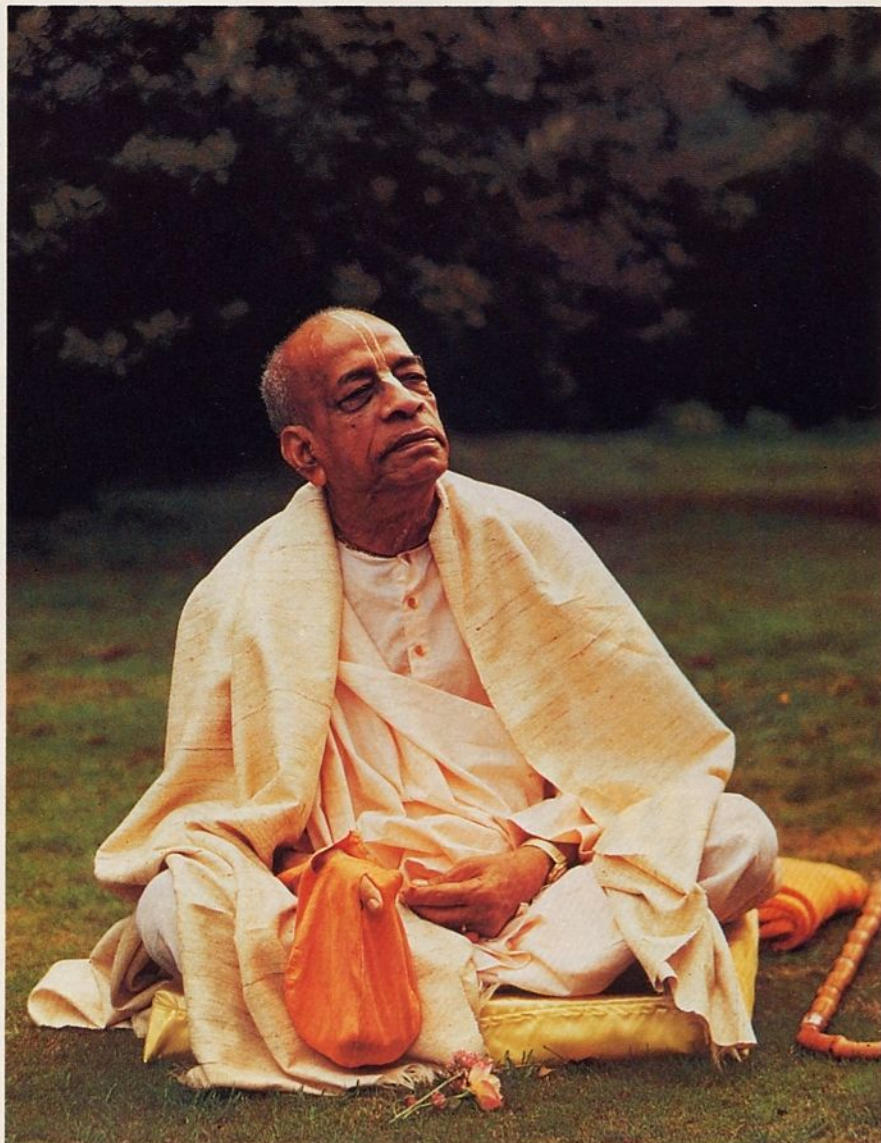
Vol. 23 Nos. 2-3

THE MAGAZINE OF THE HARE KRISHNA MOVEMENT

The Mercy of Lord Caitanya



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

BACK TO GODHEAD

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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 *a* like the *a* in *far* (and hold it twice as long as the short *a*). Pronounce *e* like the *a* in *evade*, long *i* like the *i* in *pique*. Pronounce the vowel *r* like the *ri* in *rim*, and *c* 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* (dāst for women), meaning "servant." For instance, the name *Kṛṣṇa dāsa* means "servant of Kṛṣṇa."

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No, we're not wallflowers, aloof from the dance of life. On the contrary, Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the best reason to dance and jump for joy.

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COVER: When Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, appeared on earth five centuries ago as Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, He assumed the golden complexion and devotional mood of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, His greatest devotee and the personification of His pleasure potency. Lord Caitanya once revealed His identity as the combined form of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa to the learned devotee Rāmānanda Rāya, who became filled with ecstatic love and fell to the ground, overwhelmed with transcendental emotions. This year Gaura-pūrṇimā, the anniversary of Lord Caitanya's appearance, falls on March 3, when devotees of Lord Caitanya around the world will hold joyful celebrations commemorating His auspicious appearance. (Painting by Muralidhara dāsa.)

THE MERCY OF LORD CAITANYA

Although in this age people do not even know who God is,
Lord Caitanya came to freely distribute love of Godhead.

A Sunday Feast lecture in Atlanta on March 2, 1975

by HIS DIVINE GRACE

A. C. BHAKTIVEDANTA SWAMI PRABHUPĀDA

Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

*namo mahā-vadānyāya
kṛṣṇa-prema-pradāya te
kṛṣṇāya kṛṣṇa-caitanya-
nāmne gaura-tviṣe namaḥ*

"O most munificent incarnation! You are Kṛṣṇa Himself appearing as Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu. You have assumed the golden color of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, and You are widely distributing pure love of Kṛṣṇa. We offer our respectful obeisances unto You."

(*Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Madhya* 19.53)

Caitanya Mahāprabhu wanted to preach love of Kṛṣṇa, love of God, not only in India but all over the world. Different religions have many different names of God, and in the Vedic scriptures there are many demigods and incarnations of God. But Kṛṣṇa is the original name of God. As said in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* [1.3.28], *ete cāmśa-kalāḥ puṁsaḥ kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam*. There is a list of incarnations, and at the conclusion of the list the *Bhāgavatam* says, "In this long list there are many names, but Kṛṣṇa is the original Supreme Personality of Godhead."

God is not like us—He can expand Himself. Even some *yogīs* (not these ordinary, third-class *yogīs*, but those who have attained yogic perfection) can expand their bodies up to at most eight times.

There are instances of *yogīs* doing that. So if an ordinary *yogī* can do that, just imagine how much potency the Supreme Lord has for expanding Himself!

In the *Bhagavad-gītā* [18.61] Kṛṣṇa says, *tīsvaṛaḥ sarva-bhūtānāṁ hṛd-deśe 'rjuna tiṣṭhati*: "My dear Arjuna, the Supreme Lord is situated in every living being's heart." Just imagine how many living entities there are! They cannot be counted. There are many millions of trillions, but even millions of trillions is insufficient. There is no counting them. Yet they are all part and parcel of God, and He is living within the heart of all of them. This is the unlimited potency of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Consider the sunshine, the sun globe, and the sun-god. The sun-god is within the sun globe, and the inhabitants of the sun globe are all glowing, luminous. On account of their bodies' glowing, the whole sun planet is glowing. And on account of the sun planet's glowing, the sunshine reaches us from ninety-three million miles away, and we perceive heat and light. The sun is an ordinary, material thing, but it has such great power.

So just imagine what is the potency of the Supreme Personality of Godhead! Actually, we cannot imagine what great energy He has. We cannot even estimate the temperature of the sun globe. We may try to approach the sun globe in our rockets,

but before reaching it we will be finished. The temperature is so high; everyone knows it.

Now, if an ordinary thing like the sun globe is so powerful, how much more powerful must be the Supreme Personality of Godhead! We say, "God is almighty, all-powerful," but we have no idea what is meant by "all-powerful." We think, "I am somewhat powerful, so God may be ten times as powerful as I am." Somebody else may say "twenty times." "All right, let us compromise—fifty times." [*Laughter.*]

This kind of speculation is like the frog's speculation within the well. Once there was a frog within a well, and one of his friends came to him and said, "My dear friend, I have seen a vast mass of water, the Atlantic Ocean."

"What is that Atlantic Ocean?"

"It is vast."

In an ecstatic reunion with their eternal Lord, Rūpa Gosvāmī and his younger brother, Vallabha, fall at the lotus feet of Lord Caitanya at Prayag, present-day Allahabad. Rūpa Gosvāmī gave up an exalted post in the government of West Bengal to join Lord Caitanya's movement. Being a highly learned scholar, he served the Lord by elucidating the philosophical foundation of the *sankīrtana* movement and firmly establishing that the Vedic literature reveals Lord Caitanya as Kṛṣṇa Himself.



"How vast? Is it ten times bigger than this well? Or twenty times? Come on!" [Laughter.]

"No, no, it is very, very vast."

So, the rascal speculation about God is like the speculation of the frog about the Atlantic Ocean. These mundane philosophers and scientists are thinking of God in that way. Dr. Frog's philosophy. Dr. Frog's philosophy will not help you understand what God is.

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's preaching was to distribute love of God. This human life is especially meant for understanding what God is and loving Him. That's all. This is our only business. The cats and dogs and other lower animals—if you preach to them about Kṛṣṇa consciousness, they will not understand. But human beings can understand. For example, this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is being spread all over the world, and as you can see, here in your country people are understanding. That is the special advantage of human life.

One Christian priest in Boston was astonished to see our devotees. He issued a leaflet saying, "These Hare Kṛṣṇa boys are our boys. Before they joined this movement, they did not care to see us or come to the church, but now they are mad after God." So this movement is certified by a Christian priest.

And actually, you can see the potency of Lord Caitanya's movement. I am a poor Indian; I came to America with forty rupees. I had no money to bribe these young people. [Laughter.] But now they are mad after God. It is practical. Now if you try to bribe them to leave this movement, they will not go. Many fathers and mothers have tried to induce them to go home, but they are not going.

So, what is the intoxication? These boys and girls have given up all intoxication, but they are now "intoxicated" with "Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa." This is the mercy of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu. A draft-board officer came to see one of our centers. He said, "What is the facility you have given these boys who have joined the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement? It must be much easier than the army." But when he investigated, he saw that these boys and girls are prohibited from engaging in illicit sex, intoxication, meat-eating, and gambling. So he concluded that this movement is actually harder than the army. The army does not make these restrictions, which are very, very difficult to follow. But by the mercy of Caitanya Mahāprabhu, these boys and girls are following them.

Every human being should accept the mercy of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. That is the purport of the verse Rūpa Gosvāmī offered to Lord Caitanya upon first seeing Him: *namo mahā-vadānyāya*. "You are the most munificent incarnation of God."

Why? "You are distributing *kṛṣṇa-prema*, love of God. People do not know what God is, yet You are distributing love of Godhead."

Ordinarily one cannot love anybody unless he knows the other party very well. Only then is there a question of love. If you and I live ten thousand miles apart, there is no question of love. For love there must be intimacy.

So, to understand God is very difficult. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* [7.3], Kṛṣṇa says,

*manuṣyānāṃ sahasreṣu
kaścid yatati siddhaye
yatatām api siddhānāṃ
kaścin mām vetti tattvataḥ*

"Out of many millions of persons, one is interested in making his life perfect. And out of all those who are actually perfect, hardly one knows Me as I am."

Perfection does not mean that I can eat

Perfection does not mean that I can eat whatever I like, without any restriction. Or that I have a very nice car and a big bank balance. This is not perfection, because I remain under the grip of the laws of material nature.

whatever I like, without any restriction. Or that I have a very nice car, a very nice apartment, and a big bank balance. This is not perfection, because I remain under the grip of the laws of material nature. *Prakṛteḥ kriyamāṇāni guṇaiḥ karmāṇi sarvaśaḥ*. Material nature is controlling me.

How is the material nature controlling? She has a machine made of the three modes of nature. *Kāraṇam guṇa-saṅgo 'sya sad-asad-yoni-janmasu*. People are contacting these three modes of nature and thus being "infected." We know that if we contract some disease, knowingly or unknowingly, that disease will develop. This is the law of nature. Even if you do not know when or how you contracted a particular disease, that is no excuse. You must suffer.

Similarly, there are three modes of material nature one can become "infected"

by—goodness, passion, and ignorance. Not knowing about this is no excuse. If in the law court you say, "Your Honor, I did not know I would be punished for stealing," the magistrate or judge will not excuse you. And if the government law is so strict, you can imagine how strict are the stringent laws of material nature.

Knowingly or unknowingly, in this life we are being infected by a particular combination of the modes of material nature and thus creating our next body. There are 8,400,000 different varieties of life forms. Why? The answer is in the *Bhagavad-gītā*: *kāraṇam guṇa-saṅgaḥ*. There are so many different species of life because each living entity is becoming infected with a particular combination of the qualities of material nature. This is going on perpetually. "Perpetually" means we do not know when this process began or when it will end. Therefore we say it is perpetual.

So, in this human form of life we have the great advantage of being able to study all these things—what is the living entity, how he is being infected by material nature, and how he is taking different bodies. The first thing we must understand is that we are not the body. Therefore in the very beginning of the *Bhagavad-gītā* Lord Kṛṣṇa tries to impress upon us that we are not this body but rather the owner or occupier of the body. This is His first instruction. If we understand this instruction, we can rise above the bodily platform.

Caitanya Mahāprabhu's movement is not on the bodily platform; it is on the spiritual platform. This He explained when He talked with Sanātana Gosvāmī. Sanātana asked, "What is my identity?" He was a very learned man—a minister and a *brāhmaṇa*. He knew Sanskrit and Urdu very well. Because the kingdom he lived in was Mohammedan, Urdu was the state language, just as during the British period the state language was English. So, Sanātana was quite conversant with Urdu, Farsi, and Sanskrit. Therefore he said to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, "Ordinary people address me as *paṇḍīti*, a very learned man, but I know my position. I do not know what I am. This is my position."

Now, if you ask a big, big doctor, scientist, or philosopher, "What are you?" he will say, "I am an Indian," "I am an American," "I am this, I am that." Bodily designations, that's all. He is fool number one, and still he is passing as a great scientist, a great philosopher.

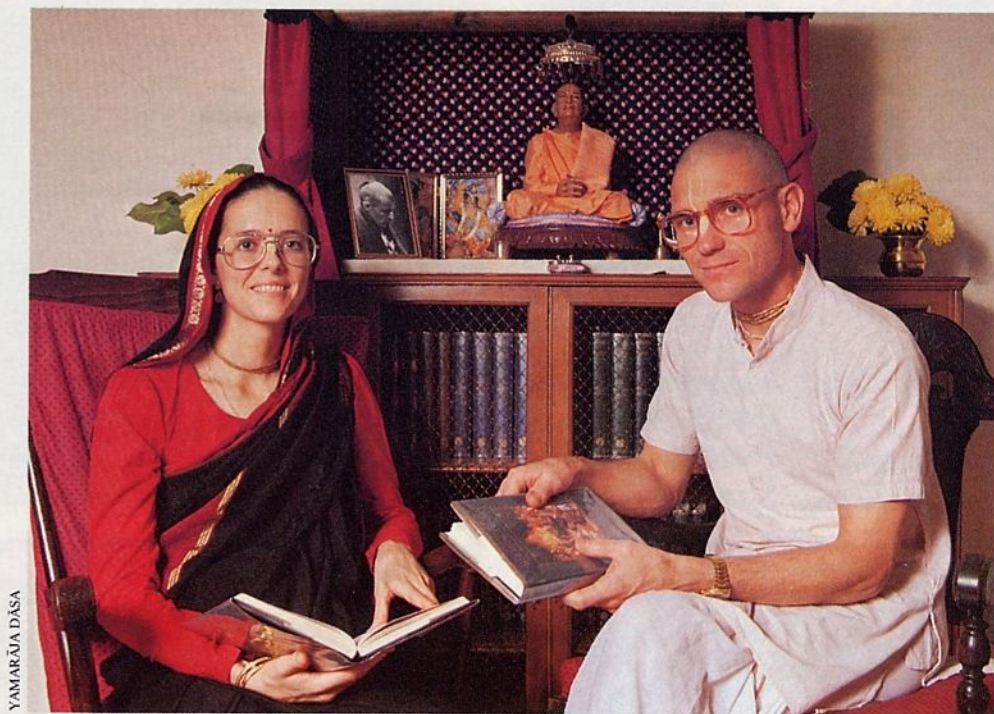
If one does not know himself, what is the value of his learning? One must know his own identity. Everyone is identifying with his body: "I am Hindu," "I am Muslim," "I am Christian," "I am Indian," "I am American," "I am German," "I am English." This is why so much fighting is

(continued on page 8)

Won't You Join the Dance?

A day in the life of a "typical" devotee shows that, along with hard work and regulation, there are freedom, satisfaction, and ever-increasing pleasure.

by NĀGARĀJA DĀSA



Nāgarāja dāsa and Prāṇadā-devī dāśī

Many people think the members of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement have failed to join the dance of life. They think we are no longer free to experience life's joys. "Your lives are too restricted," they say. "How can you be happy? You've given up so many of the normal pleasures of life. How can you reject all the things that everyone else holds so dear? Why are you wasting your lives?"

But devotees of Kṛṣṇa don't feel they're wasting their lives, and although they have given up many things, they don't experience any lack. A devotee's life is filled with variety, though the variety is different from what materialistic persons are accustomed to. Modern society encourages us to be open-minded and to experience life to the fullest, but even the most energetic persons can't experience all the variety of this world. They have to make choices. For example, how many "open-minded" persons have experienced a Sunday Feast at the Hare Kṛṣṇa temple?

Devotees are sometimes diminutively labeled "otherworldly." We still live in the world, however, and have many of the same experiences everyone else has. But because we see things differently, we don't experience them in exactly the same way as the nondevotees. We try to see everything in terms of the absolute knowledge of the Vedic literature, which is the philosophical basis for the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. We value those things that contribute to our spiritual lives.

I'd like to describe a day in the life of a typical devotee, but it's difficult to pick one devotee and say he or she is typical. We're individuals, though we do have many things in common. For example, in Philadelphia, where I live, some devotees live in apartments in a building connected to the temple, some live in the neighborhood, and some live farther away. Some devotees work full-time directly for the temple, and others have secular jobs. To give an idea of a devotee's life—at the risk of sounding vain—I'll describe a typi-

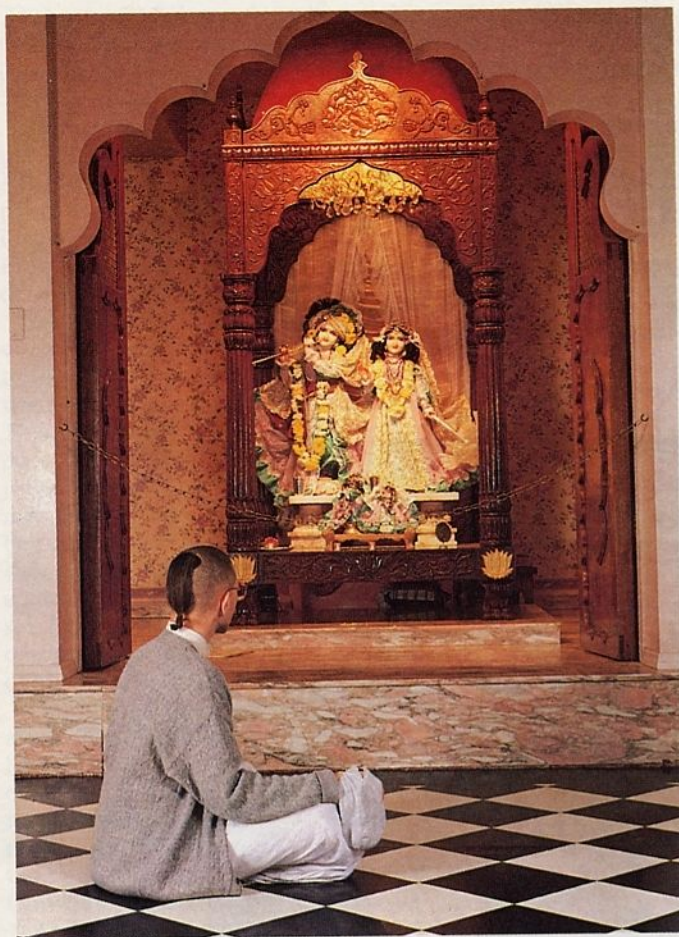
cal day in my own life.

I'm married and live in an apartment near the temple. I work full-time for *Back to Godhead* magazine. My wife, Prāṇadā-devī dāśī, who works part-time for *Back to Godhead*, has a typesetting business and somehow manages to have time for cooking and housekeeping in our apartment. Our day begins at 3 A.M.

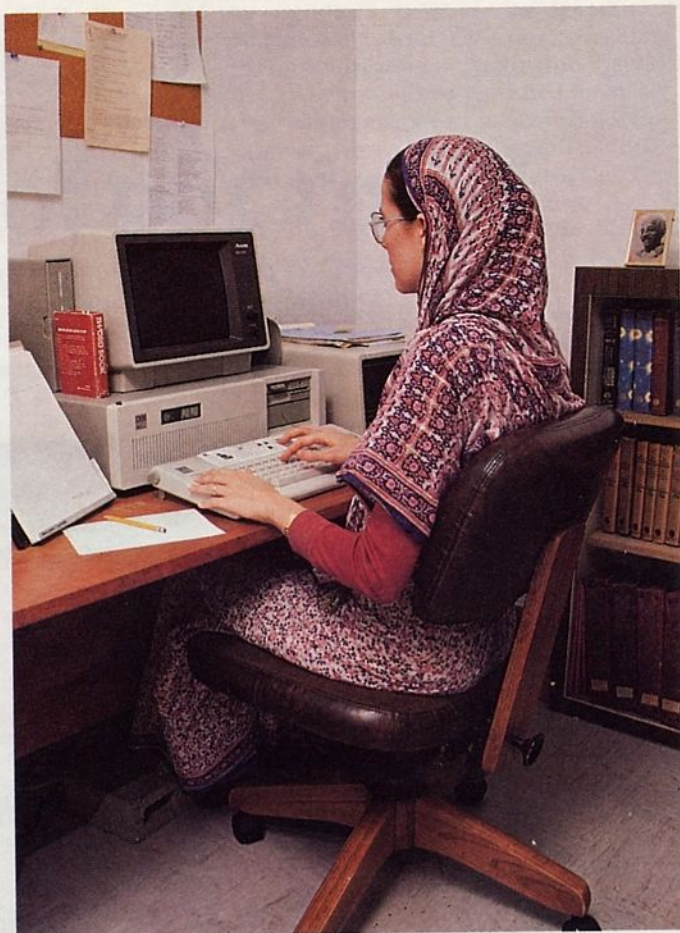
"Three o'clock! Why get up at such an ungodly hour?"

Precisely because it's not "ungodly"—it's godly. The Vedic literature explains that the last couple of hours before sunrise are especially conducive to spiritual practices. Anyone who rises early in the morning (not necessarily at three o'clock) can verify how one naturally feels more peaceful than at other times of the day. The peaceful atmosphere helps us concentrate on God.

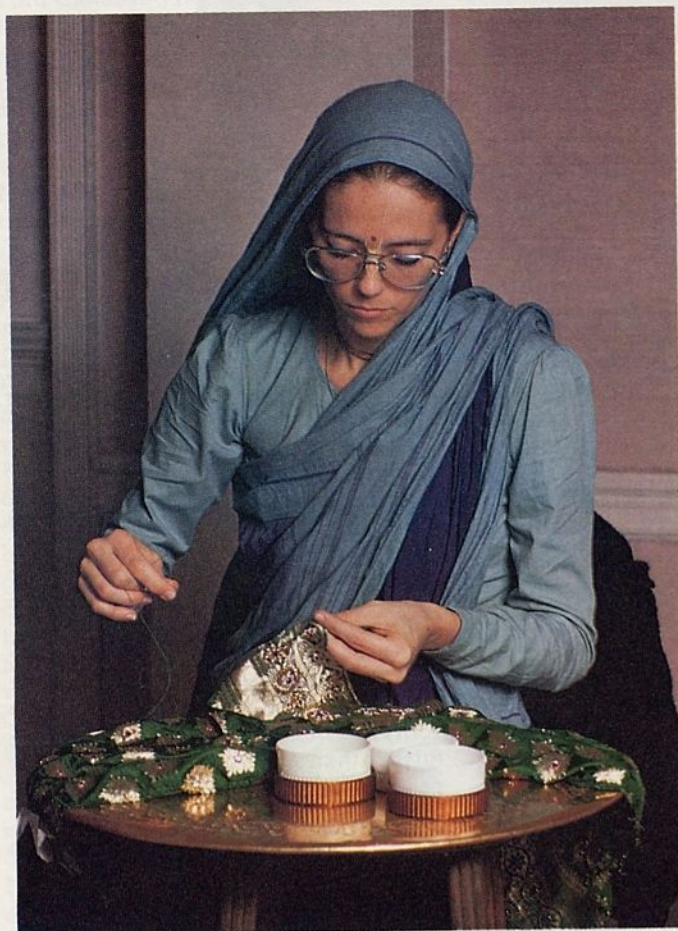
There's another reason why we get up so early: we don't want to sleep too much. Most devotees sleep six to eight hours, which is plenty for a healthy person.



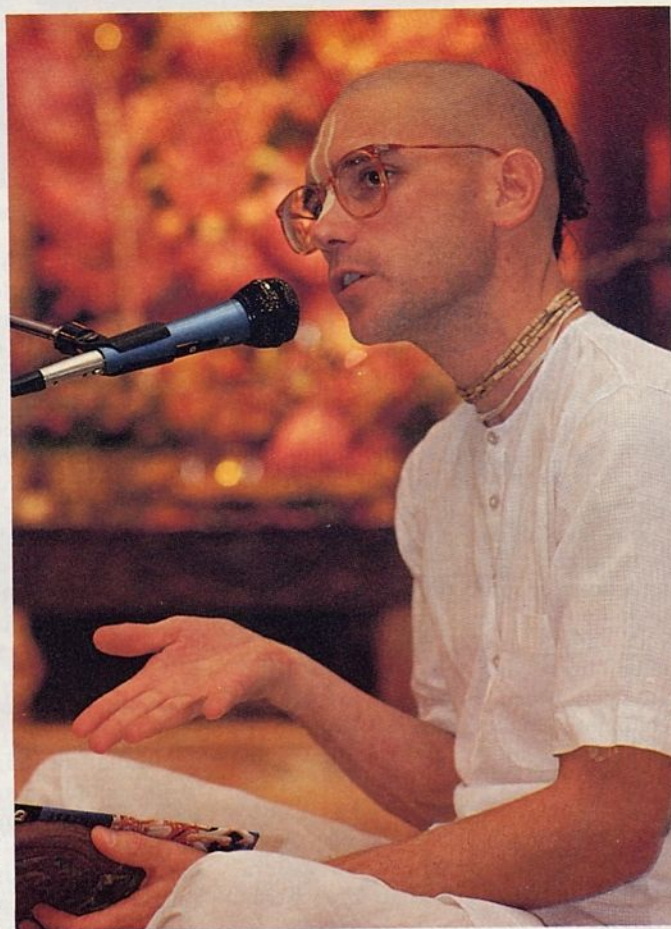
YAMARAJA DASA



YAMARAJA DASA



YAMARAJA DASA



PURUSARTHA DASA

Sleeping is necessary to keep the body healthy, but too much sleep is unhealthy. It's also a waste of time, and time is very valuable to a devotee. People sometimes criticize us as being lazy; we seem to live a carefree life of chanting and dancing. Actually, we are very busy endeavoring to advance in spiritual realization.

Self-realization is not an easy task. It takes a lifetime of dedication to free oneself from the illusion that one is the material body. That illusion is the source of all suffering. Self-realization is so important and human life is so short that devotees want to be sure they make the best use of their time; therefore, they try not to sleep too much.

After rising, I shower, then apply *tilaka* (sacred clay) to my forehead and twelve other places on my body. By consecrating my body with *tilaka*, I remind myself that Kṛṣṇa is within my body as the Supersoul, and that my body is meant for serving Him. Afterwards, I dress in the traditional Vaiṣṇava (devotee of Kṛṣṇa) clothes, a *dhoti* and *kurtā*.

While applying *tilaka* and dressing, I like listening to a recorded lecture by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, my spiritual master and the founder of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement. During his twelve years with us, no matter where he was, Śrīla Prabhupāda lectured daily on the science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Most of his lectures, as well as conversations with professors, clergymen, students, and others, were recorded. I relish hearing his voice in the early morning, declaring the immortal truths of the *Vedas* with complete conviction.

After dressing, I chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* on my beads. Like all initiated devotees I have taken a vow to chant the sixteen-word *mantra* nearly two thousand times daily, which takes about two hours to complete.

I chant Hare Kṛṣṇa to attain pure love for God. I try to chant with devotion and hear the transcendental sound of God's names without any distracting thoughts. Since the mind is naturally restless, this is not an easy task. To chant purely takes practice. That's why I have to chant in a regulated way.

Even though my chanting isn't perfect, I have faith that by practice I can reach the stage of pure chanting, when I'll see Kṛṣṇa

face to face at every moment. I have that faith because the teachings of the Vedic literatures and the testimonies of many great devotees proclaim the benefits of chanting Kṛṣṇa's names. Indeed, all scriptures declare the spiritual rewards of chanting God's holy names.

I chant on my beads for about an hour before walking half a block to the temple for *maṅgala-ārati* at 4:15. *Maṅgala* means "auspicious," and *ārati* is a ceremony in which a priest offers various articles to the Deities while the congregation sings prayers and songs glorifying the Lord.

For devotees who daily attend the *maṅgala-ārati*, it becomes a most cherished event. I've been going daily for thirteen years now, and though we sing the same songs every day, I still love singing them. The inspiring sound of a roomful of singing voices, the fragrance of incense

Chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa in the early morning inspires the devotees to dance and jump with joy. I feel jubilant while I'm chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, and that's natural, because Kṛṣṇa is the source of all joy.

and flowers, the rhythms of the drums and the chiming of the cymbals create a festive atmosphere that stimulates remembrance of Kṛṣṇa and of my position as His eternal servant.

The chanting begins slowly with prayers to the spiritual master and builds gradually into exuberant chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa that inspires the assembled devotees to dance and jump with joy. I feel jubilant while chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, and that's natural, because Kṛṣṇa is the source of all joy. When I dance it's not artificial or contrived, nor am I in a mesmeric trance, as some people like to believe. I dance because I feel happy and because I want to please Kṛṣṇa. If I feel tired or unenthusiastic, I try to chant and dance anyway, and Kṛṣṇa helps me from within by giving me real enthusiasm.

After *maṅgala-ārati* I complete the prescribed chanting on my beads, then spend an hour or so in my office or at home

studying Śrīla Prabhupāda's books or writing. Reading his books is extremely valuable for anyone who wants to understand the purpose of life and how to attain it. Śrīla Prabhupāda also encouraged his disciples to write about their understanding of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, so every day I try to make some time for writing.

I return to the temple by seven o'clock and wait with the other devotees for the doors to the Deities' chamber to open and reveal the Deities, freshly bathed and dressed in gorgeous garments and jewelry.

The devotees sing and offer prayers to the Deities for about ten minutes. Then the blowing of conchshells announces *guru-pūjā*, an *ārati* ceremony in which we worship Śrīla Prabhupāda. *Bhagavad-gītā* and other Vedic scriptures recommend such worship of saintly representatives of God. Although many of Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples are now spiritual masters with disciples of their own, *guru-pūjā* in the temple is reserved for Śrīla Prabhupāda, without whom most of us would never have heard of Kṛṣṇa, what to speak of dedicating our lives to loving and serving Him. For this great benediction, devotees for generations will recognize Śrīla Prabhupāda for his special contribution to their spiritual lives.

At *guru-pūjā* we especially pray for dedication to the spiritual master, because through him we receive the mercy of Kṛṣṇa. Without the blessings of the spiritual master, one cannot make any spiritual advancement. This is emphatically stated in all the Vedic literatures. Kṛṣṇa Himself says that no one can be His devotee without first becoming a devotee of His devotee. Like the *maṅgala-ārati*, the *guru-pūjā* ends with enthusiastic chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa.

At 7:30 *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* class begins. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* means "The Beautiful Story of the Personality of Godhead." It is the cream of the Vedic literature because it specifically deals with the activities and pastimes of Kṛṣṇa. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, written by Śrīla Vyāsadeva—the compiler of all the Vedic literature—in his mature stage of God realization, contains many conclusive statements about the Absolute Truth. As one of its verses states, regularly hearing from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* clears all impurities from our hearts, enabling us to perfect our lives by becoming lovers of God. This essential Vedic text is excerpted in *Back to Godhead* each month.

In the class, we chant the day's *Bhāgavatam* verse, which is in Sanskrit, and a devotee reads Śrīla Prabhupāda's translation and commentary. He then speaks on the verse, saying only what is supported by the Vedic scriptures. To speak on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is a great privilege, and one

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By serving Kṛṣṇa in a variety of ways, a few of which are shown at left, Nāgarāja dāsa and Prāṇadā-devī dāśī fill their day with spiritual thoughts. Here Nāgarāja chants on his beads before the Deities of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Śaradvihārī in Philadelphia and conducts the morning class on the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Prāṇadā works at a computer while typesetting *Back to Godhead* magazine and sews sequins on a new outfit for the Deities.

LORD CAITANYA

(continued from page 4)

going on. The living entity is part and parcel of God, a spiritual spark covered by a material body. For example, we are all human beings covered by different clothes. That does not mean we are different. We are one as human beings, as inhabitants of this earth. But due to our different bodily dress, I am thinking you are my enemy, and you are thinking I am your enemy.

The *Bhāgavatam*'s conclusion is *yasyātma-buddhiḥ kuṇape tri-dhātuke svadhīḥ kalarādiṣu bhauma-ijya-dhīḥ . . . sa eva go-kharah*: "Anyone who is identifying himself with his body, and also with the land his body has taken birth in, is no better than an ass or a cow." Everyone is thinking, "This land of my birth is worshipable." And from this mentality comes nationalism or this "ism" or that "ism." But no one thinks, "How long shall I be allowed to occupy this body and this land?" This is ignorance.

So, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's movement starts from the understanding that we are spirit souls, eternal servants of Kṛṣṇa. This is the same teaching as Kṛṣṇa's in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. There the Lord says, *sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja*: "Give up your so-called man-made duties, or *dharma*s, and just surrender unto Me." This is real *dharma*, or religion—to surrender to God.

God is one. He is neither Hindu nor Muslim nor Christian. The Vedic injunction is *ekaṁ brahma dvitīyaṁ nāsti*: "God is one; He cannot be two." So whether you are Hindu, Muslim, or Christian, God is one. This is to be understood.

Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the science of God. Try to understand scientifically what you are and what God is and what religion is. That is Caitanya Mahāprabhu's teaching. He begins His teachings to Śaṅkara Gosvāmī by saying *jīvera 'sva-rāpa' haya—kṛṣṇera 'nitya-dāsa'*: "Every living being is an eternal servant of God." This is religion. Religion does not mean stamping oneself as a Hindu, a Muslim, or a Christian. No. Religion means to know that God is great and that we are subordinate to Him and maintained by Him. This is religion. If anyone simply knows these things—that God is great and we are subordinate, and that our duty is to abide by the orders of God—he is religious.

Unity can be established on the spiritual platform, not on the bodily platform. The United Nations is trying to unite the nations of the world, but every year the number of flags is increasing. This kind of so-called unity will never be successful. The United Nations was established many years ago to bring unity among nations. So, what has it done? It has not done anything, nor can it do anything.

If you want to be united, you have to be united on the spiritual platform. And what is that spiritual platform? The spiritual platform means to understand thoroughly that God is great, that we are subordinate, and that God is maintaining us. All the property everywhere belongs to God, and while we can use our father's property as much as we require, we should not take more than we need and stock it.

The birds are a good example. If you put a bag of rice here, the birds will come and eat a few grains and go away. But if you put, say, one thousand bags of wheat here and declare that anyone can take them, there will be a fight. Everyone will try to take as much as he can carry. This is human civilization: "Oh, there is so much wheat. Let me take as much as possible and stock it for tomorrow or the day after tomorrow. Let me stock it for my son,

Unity can be established on the spiritual platform, not on the bodily platform. The United Nations is trying to unite the nations of the world, but every year the number of flags is increasing.

my grandson, and my great-grandson." [Laughter.]

This foolishness is going on because of a lack of spiritual consciousness. As stated in the *Vedas*, *iśāvāsyam idaṁ sarvaṁ*: "Everything belongs to God." The food belongs to God, the mine belongs to God, the ocean belongs to God, the land belongs to God, the air belongs to God—everything belongs to God. So we should feel obliged to God that He has given us so much for our maintenance. We should take as much as we need and use as much as possible in His service. This is Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Kṛṣṇa consciousness is actually perfect communism. The communists think in terms of the human beings within the state, but a Kṛṣṇa conscious person thinks in terms of all living beings. In the *Bhāgavatam* it is stated that a householder, before taking his lunch, should call out on the street: "If anyone is hungry, please

come to my place and eat!" And he should see that in his household even the lizard does not go hungry. Even a snake should not go hungry. This is the Vedic principle, God consciousness. The householder thinks, "Somehow or other some living entity has taken a snake's body. So at my house why should he remain hungry? Let me give him some food." Nobody likes snakes, but in the scripture it is said that one should see to it that even a snake does not go hungry.

Of course, this is a very high ideal, but it is the complete ideal of real communism. It is not that national leaders should be concerned only with human beings. The definition of *native* is "one who takes birth in a particular nation." So, the cow is also a native. Then why should the cow be slaughtered? The cow is giving milk and the bull is working for you, and then you slaughter them? What is this philosophy? In the Christian religion it is clearly stated, "Thou shalt not kill." Yet most of the slaughterhouses are in the Christian countries.

This is all a misunderstanding of spiritual life. Every animal should be given protection. That is the Vedic idea. Otherwise, by killing, killing, killing, you become entangled in sinful activities. Therefore now the women are killing their own children in the womb. This is going on.

We cannot be happy in this way, because we shall become more and more entangled in sinful actions and their resultant reactions. Then we will have to take various types of bodies, perpetually.

Therefore, we have begun this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. By taking advantage of this movement, people can awaken to God consciousness, stop sinful activities, and become purified. Without becoming purified, one cannot understand God. It is not possible. As Kṛṣṇa says in the *Bhagavad-gītā* [7.28],

*yeṣāṁ tv anta-gataṁ pāpam
janānāṁ puṇya-karmaṇāṁ
te dvandva-moha-nirmuktā
bhajante mām dṛḍha-vratāḥ*

"One who is completely free from sinful life can take to devotional service."

That is why we have prescribed four regulative principles: no illicit sex, no meat-eating, no gambling, and no intoxication. Especially in your country, America, you have so many nice vegetables, fruits, grains, and milk products. So why should you kill the cow? You have taken our *prasādam* feasts. How delicious they are! So why kill the cow?

Sometimes people argue that vegetables also have life. Yes, we admit this. But that is why we eat only *prasādam*, food offered to Kṛṣṇa before being eaten. Whatever Kṛṣṇa leaves, we take. This is our

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EULOGY FOR THE SOUL

At his mother's funeral a devotee of Kṛṣṇa draws on the wisdom of the *Bhagavad-gītā* to enlighten mourners and relieve their grief.

by ŚRĪ NANDANANDANA DĀSA

My mother had been a kidney dialysis patient for nine years. Since the average life expectancy for dialysis patients is five years, her recent death was not unexpected. But when someone dear to you dies, you are never really ready for it. Even if you try to prepare yourself, you can't avoid the sense of loss.

For years I had wondered how I would react to my mother's death. What would I say? What would I do? I had decided years ago that no matter how I felt, I would give at least part of the eulogy at her funeral. I knew she had wanted a son who was a minister. And although I never became a minister in the conventional Western sense, my life centers on my spiritual commitments. So I thought giving part of the eulogy would be the most appropriate way of paying my last respects to her.

I always had a good relationship with my parents, and I would regularly write and phone them and visit them over the holidays. When I became a full-time devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa, they would come to visit me at the temple community where I lived. My father developed a great appreciation for *prasādam*, vegetarian food offered to Kṛṣṇa. My mother liked my pure and simple life, as well as the Bengali sweets I would send her every so often.

When my wife, Cintāmaṇi, and I would go home for a visit, my parents would always be eager and happy to eat her delicious cooking. Cintāmaṇi would offer everything to Kṛṣṇa and then serve everyone. My parents were convinced that my mother's health improved whenever she ate Cintāmaṇi's cooking.

Gradually, my mother's health became so bad, however, that my parents were not able to continue visiting us, so we always tried to visit them at least a few times a year, especially at Christ-



mas. During the Christmas season of 1986 I had a feeling that it would be our last holiday together as a family. I tried to make sure that the last impression we had of each other as a family was a good one, with no last-minute arguments unresolved or feelings unexpressed.

A few weeks later, I got a call from my dad telling me that my mother had died. I felt sad but, at the same time, relieved. I was relieved that she no longer had to struggle with her sickly body, which had caused her so much pain. But I felt a loss. When I went home for the funeral, there was a definite emptiness to the house. All the memories and the little things I usually took for granted now had a special meaning.

At the funeral the Lutheran minister conducting the service said thoughtful and comforting things. But he also said that we do not know why God causes some of His faithful to suffer, or why some of us have to endure so much heartache and pain.

When I got up to speak, I began answering the minister's questions, basing my talk on the *Bhagavad-gītā*, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and the *Upaniṣads*, as well as the Bible. I explained the universal spiritual knowledge that

the soul is eternal and transcendental to the limited, physical body. Though the body appears to die, the soul continues on to another body according to its destiny. Only the body undergoes the troubles of birth, old age, disease, and death. This suffering is one way God reminds us that this world is not our real home. Our real home is in the eternal, spiritual kingdom of God. God is our actual well-wisher and guardian. By focusing our love on Him, we can solve the most difficult problems. Regaining our love for Him is the price for returning to our eternal, spiritual home, the goal of human life.

After I had spoken, many persons told me how much they appreciated what I had said. Even persons I didn't know came forward and shook my hand, saying how much they were impressed by the eulogy. Days later people still spoke to my father about my talk and asked if I was a minister. I could understand that true spiritual knowledge, as presented in the *Vedas*, can relieve people of their confusion about life and their anxiety caused by not knowing what lies beyond death.

Several times over the next few days, my father told me that after I had spoken he suddenly felt better. He hadn't found anything faulty in what the minister had said, but after my talk he could understand that he had known my mother on the physical level, and that now she had gone on to another realm to continue her destiny. He understood that although he would miss her, there was no reason to grieve.

I was happy that I could help my father by giving him enlightenment through spiritual knowledge during this difficult time. And I felt increased conviction for the teachings of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, so mercifully given to us by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. ☐



Lord Kṛṣṇa's Cuisine

A Gracious Hostess

How welcoming guests can be a pleasing meditation on Lord Kṛṣṇa.

by VIŚĀKHĀ-DEVĪ DĀSĪ

The apartment door opens and you first notice a small, slender, smiling young woman, swathed gracefully in a *sārī*. You return her smile and glance past her to a clean, brightly lit ten-by-fifteen-foot room with a varnished parquet floor, white walls broken only by two pictures, a couch at the far end, and a bookshelf/altar on the left.

Invited in, you leave your shoes on a straw mat reserved for that purpose and seat yourself comfortably on the couch with your hostess. In a moment she is up and handing you a cup of herbal tea. In the time it takes you to have one sip, she returns from the kitchen with a dish of *chidwa*, a deep-fried snack of flat rice,

spices, and nuts.

"My husband likes *chidwa*," she explains, "and since it keeps well, I make a large batch of it and always have it on hand for guests."

You relax and enjoy. The *chidwa* tastes good; the atmosphere is pleasant; your hostess is gracious.

Your hostess, Madhumatī-devī dāśī, is of Indian background, but she was born in Washington, D.C. She's spent only four of her twenty-six years in India. Her father, a diplomat for India, kept her, her twin brother, and her mother with him as his duties took him to Washington, D.C., for three years, Zambia for four years, Italy for four years, Libya for one year, India for four years, and Ireland for four years.

Beginning from her eleventh year—when she was in Libya—Madhumatī

helped her mother cook for the thirty or forty people her father hosted from the Indian embassy every month.

Recently, memories of those dinners came back strongly, for in February last year she and her husband, Śeṣa dāsa, moved into an apartment (where you are now seated) and within a month began having evening get-togethers at their place.

Madhumatī: "At first my husband wanted to invite all the devotees in the community. I said, 'There's no room for all of them.' He said, 'It's all right; we'll have them sit in rows and serve them all.' But I felt uncertain of my cooking, so he agreed to invite one couple over the first time. Two weeks later we had two couples over, a week later three couples, and so it went. Then just before Mathurēśa and his family moved out of town, we had a going-

Above, Madhumatī-devī dāśī prepares *chidwa* in her apartment.

(Recipes from Madhumati-devi dāsl.)

Chidwa

Preparation time: 1½ hours
Servings: 10

1 tablespoon fennel seeds
½ teaspoon turmeric
½ teaspoon cayenne pepper
1¼ teaspoons salt
1½ tablespoons sugar
1 tablespoon *ajwain*
2 hot green chilies, seeded and minced
¾ cup raisins
1¼ cups flat rice
½ cup cashews
1 large baking potato, peeled, coarsely shredded, soaked ½ hour in cold water, drained, and patted dry
vegetable oil for deep-frying

1. In a small frying pan roast the fennel seeds over a medium flame until they turn a few shades darker. Remove from the flame and set aside.

2. In a small bowl combine the turmeric, cayenne pepper, salt, sugar, *ajwain*, and chilies and set aside.

3. Line two plates with several thicknesses of paper towel and keep them near the frying area.

4. Heat the vegetable oil in a wok or saucepan over a high flame. Drop in a handful of shredded potato, stirring occasionally until it is golden brown. Remove with a slotted spoon and drain on the paper towels. Fry the remaining potato in the same way.

5. Reduce the flame to medium. Place a handful of flat rice in a metal strainer and lower it into the hot oil. Within a minute the frothing will settle. The flat rice is done when it is crisp but not brown. Remove the strainer and place the flat rice on the paper towels to drain. Fry the remaining flat rice in the same way.

6. Fry the cashews in the same manner as the flat rice, until they are golden brown. After all the ingredients have cooled to room temperature, mix them together in a mixing bowl. Add the fennel seeds, raisins, and spice mixture and mix well. Offer to Kṛṣṇa and then store in an air-tight container.

Dosa Stuffed with Spiced Potatoes

Dal soaking time: 4–6 hours

Batter standing time: 20 hours
Preparation time for stuffing and cooking: 30 minutes
Servings: 6–8

Dosas:

½ cup *urad dāl*
1½ cups *basmati* rice
warm water as needed
1 teaspoon salt

Stuffing:

2 tablespoons ghee
1 teaspoon black mustard seeds
½ teaspoon green chilies, seeded and minced
2 medium-size boiling potatoes, boiled, peeled, and chopped
¼ teaspoon turmeric
½ teaspoon *amchur*
¼ teaspoon ground coriander
1 tablespoon lemon juice
3 tablespoons chopped fresh coriander
ghee for pan-frying

1. Sort through the *dāl* beans (to remove stones) and wash in several changes of water. Cover with 4 cups of water. In a separate bowl, wash the rice with several changes of water, then cover with 4 cups of water. Allow both to soak for 4–6 hours.

2. Drain the *dāl* and place ½ cup of *dāl* in a blender. Blend, stopping now and then to add 1 tablespoon of water and to push down the beans toward the blade with a rubber spatula to help the grinding. Continue adding the *dāl* and blending until light and frothy. Transfer the *dāl* beans to a bowl and set aside. Drain the rice, put it into the blender, and blend for about 2 minutes. Stop now and then to push the rice down toward the blades. Blend until the rice is smoothly ground. Scrape the blended rice into the bowl with the *dāl* and stir until well mixed. Cover with a plate and set aside in a warm place for 20 hours.

3. Heat 2 tablespoons of ghee in a large frying pan over a medium flame. Add the black mustard seeds and chili and cover. After the mustard seeds finish popping, stir in the potatoes. Add the turmeric, *amchur*, and ground coriander. Stir-fry for 3 minutes, then stir in the lemon juice and fresh coriander and remove from the flame.

4. Preheat an iron skillet over a medium flame. Brush the skillet with ghee. Test the temperature of the skillet by sprinkling a few drops of water on it; if the drops sputter and vanish, it is ready.

5. Add the salt and warm water to the *dāl* and rice mixture until it is the consistency of a

light cake batter. With a ladle, place ½ cup of batter in the center of the pan. Using the bottom of the ladle, spread the batter out evenly in an outward spiral motion to form a circle. Make the *dosa* as thin as possible. Sprinkle a tablespoon of ghee around the outer edges of the *dosa* and cook it for about 2 minutes until the bottom is golden red. Ease the *dosa* up with a spatula and flip it over. Cook for 1 minute and remove from the pan.

6. Place about 2 tablespoons of the spiced potatoes in the center of the *dosa* and roll the *dosa* as you would to make a jellyroll. Cook all the *dosas* in the same way and offer to Kṛṣṇa hot.

Sambar

Dāl soaking time: 4–5 hours
Preparation time: 1½ hours
Servings: 6–7

1 cup *toovar dāl*
7 cups water
½ teaspoon turmeric
1 tablespoon butter
4 tablespoons ghee
¼ teaspoon black mustard seeds
2 teaspoons minced green chilies
¼ teaspoon fenugreek seeds
4 tomatoes, washed, chopped, and blended until smooth
2 tablespoons *sambhar masālā*
2 teaspoons salt
1 cup green beans, cut into 1-inch pieces and boiled until tender
¼ cup dried shredded coconut
3 teaspoons tamarind concentrate

1. Sort and wash the *toovar dāl*. Place in a bowl, cover with 3 cups of water, and let soak 4–5 hours. Drain.

2. Combine the *dāl*, water, turmeric, and butter in a 4-quart saucepan and bring to a boil over a high flame. Reduce the flame to medium-low and then cook until the *dāl* is soft.

3. In a small frying pan heat the ghee over a medium flame. Stir in the black mustard seeds, green chilies, and fenugreek seeds and fry until the mustard seeds sputter and pop and the fenugreek seeds darken a few shades. Add the blended tomatoes, *sambhar masālā*, and salt and cook for 5 minutes over a medium flame. Add the green beans, coconut, and tamarind concentrate and cook for another 5 minutes. Then mix this with the *dāl* and let it cook for 10–15 minutes. Offer to Kṛṣṇa.

away party with twenty-eight people over—including ten children. Now, *that* was a big group for this apartment."

Madhumati begins thinking a week ahead about the menu for these gatherings, choosing complementary dishes—the rice and soup, bread and vegetable, savory, sweet, and a special dish. She often changes the menu completely as the day approaches. "It's a kind of meditation on

satisfying the devotees and Lord Kṛṣṇa," she says. "My husband and I feel pleased after we've served the devotees; it's an intimate way to relate with them, and we all become closer through *prasādam*."

"I want my guests to feel happy and appreciate the Vedic culture we've imbibed. And I would like them to serve guests this way in their homes. It's satisfying for the hosts and the guests."

By now you've finished your *chidwa* and tea, and it's time to go, although you'd like to stay longer. Madhumati has to baby-sit for the devotee child next door, so reluctantly you cross the room to your shoes, thinking, "Yes, I would like to create this mood in my home and have happy gatherings like the ones I just heard about, but Madhumati must come to make it complete." ❧

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London, England (country)—Bhaktivandana Manor, Letchmore Heath, Watford, Hertfordshire WD2 8EP/ (09276) 7244

FARM COMMUNITIES

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London, England—(contact Bhaktivandana Manor)

RESTAURANTS

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ITALY

Bologna—Via Saliceto 1, 40013 Castelmaggiore (BO)/ (51) 700-868
Catania—Via San Nicolò al Borgo 28, 95128 Catania, Sicily/ (95) 522-252

Naples—Via Torricelli 77, 80059 Torre del Greco (NA)/ (81) 881-5431
Padua—Via delle Granze 107, 35040 Loc. Camin (PD)/ (49) 760-007
Pisa—Via delle Colline, Loc. La Meridiana, 56030 Perignano (PI)/ (587) 616-194
Rome—Via di Tor Tre Teste 142, 00169 Roma/
Turin—Strada Berra 15/1, Loc. Tetti Gariglio, 10025 Pino Torinese (TO)/ (11) 840-957
Varese—Via Volta 19, 21013 Gallarate (VA)/ (331) 783-268

FARM COMMUNITY

Florence (Villa Vṇḍāvana)—Via Comunale degli Scopeti 108, S. Andrea in Percussina, San Casciano Val di Pesa (FI) 50026/ (55) 820-054

RESTAURANTS

Milan—Govinda's, Via Valpètroso 3/5, 20123 Milano/ (2) 862-417
Rome—Govinda's, Via di San Simone 73/A, 00186 Roma/ (6) 654-8856

OTHER COUNTRIES

Amsterdam, Holland—Kṛṣṇa Dham, 225 Ruysdaelkade, 1072 AW/ (020) 751 404
Athens, Greece—Poseidonos 27, Ilioupoli, 16 345/ 020-751404
Barcelona, Spain—c/de L'Obit, 67-08026/ (93) 347-9933
Bergen, Norway—Storhaugen 6, 5000 Bergen/ (05) 29 05 45
Brussels, Belgium—49 rue Marché aux Poulets-1000 Bruxelles/ (02) 513 86 05/04
Copenhagen, Denmark—Govinda's, Soldalen 21, 2100 Copenhagen/ (01) 18-43-78
Düdingen, Switzerland—Im Stillen Tal, CH3186 Düdingen (FR)/ (037) 43-26-98
Göthenburg, Sweden—Govinda's, Västra Hamngatan 20, 41117 Göthenburg/ (031) 116166
Grödinge, Sweden—Korsnäs Gard, 140 32 Grödinge/ 0753-29151
Helsinki, Finland—Govinda's, Jäkärintatu 10D, Helsinki 15/ (065) 0039
Heidelberg, W. Germany—Kurfürsten Anlage 5, 6900 Heidelberg/ 06221-15101
Madrid, Spain—c/Pablo Vidal, 13-28043/ (91) 4135-779
Septon, Belgium—Chateau de Petit Somme, Septon 5482/ 086-322480
Stockholm, Sweden—Fridhemsgatan 22, 112 40 Stockholm/ 08-549002
Valencia, Spain—c/de Almirante Cadorso #12, Vedat de Torrente/ (961) 55962
Vienna, Austria—Center for Vedic Studies, Liechtensteinstrasse 23/11, 1090 Vienna/ (0222) 512-98-25
Zürich, Switzerland—Bergstrasse 54, 8032 Zürich/ (01) 69-32-79

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Lugano, Switzerland—The Gokula Project, La Pampa, 6981 Sessa (Malcantone) TI/ (091) 73-25-73
Valencay, France (New Mayāpur)—Lucay-Le-Male, 36 600/ (54) 40-26-88

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AUSTRALIA

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Sydney—112 Darlinghurst Rd., Darlinghurst, N.S.W. 2010 (mail: P.O. Box 159, Kings Cross, N.S.W. 2011)/ (02) 3575162

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Riverina (New Gaudadesh)—Old Renmark Rd., via Wentworth, N.S.W. 2648 (mail: P.O. Box 2446, Mildura, Victoria 3500)/ (050) 278226

RESTAURANTS

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Melbourne—Gopal's, 139 Swanston St., Melbourne, Victoria 3000/ (03) 650-1578
Sydney—Gopal's, 180 Falcon St., N. Sydney, N.S.W. 2060/ (02) 926164
Sydney—Govinda's and Govinda's Take-away (both at ISKCON Sydney)/ (075) 501642
Sydney—Hare Kṛṣṇa Free Food Centre, 231 Victoria St., King's Cross, N.S.W. 2011/ (02) 3575162

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Auckland, New Zealand (New Varshan)—Hwy. 18, Riverhead (next to Huapai Golf Course) (mail: R.D. 2, Kumeu, Auckland)/ (9) 4128075
Christchurch, New Zealand—83 Bealey Ave. (mail: P.O. Box 25-190 Christchurch)/ (3) 61965
Labasa, Fiji—Delailabasa (mail: Box 133)/ 82916
Lautoka, Fiji—5 Tavewa Ave. (mail: P.O. Box 125)/ 61-633, ext. 48
Rakira, Fiji—Rewasa (mail: Box 129)/ 94243
Suva, Fiji—P.O. Box 6376, Nasinu/ 391-282
Wellington, New Zealand—2 Kensington St., (mail: P.O. Box 2753, Wellington)/ (4) 850876

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Abidjan, Ivory Coast—01 BP 8366, Abidjan
Accra, Ghana—582 Blk. 20, Odokor, Official Town (mail: P.O. Box 01568, Osu)
Buea, Cameroon—Southwest Province (mail: c/o Yuh Laban Nkeshah, P and T, VHS)
Cape Town, South Africa—15 Bishoplea Road, Claremont 7700/ (21) 641 559
Durban (Natal), S. Africa—Chatsworth Circle, Chatsworth 4030 (mail: P.O. Box 56003)/ (31) 435-815
Freetown, Sierra Leone—13 Bright St. Brookfields (mail: P.O. Box 812, Freetown)
Johannesburg, South Africa—"Misty Hills," Plot 69, Reifontein Rd. (mail: P.O. Box 723, Muldersdrift (Tvl.), 1747)/ (11) 666-2716
Harare, Zimbabwe—46 Crowhill Rd. (mail: P.O. Box 2090)/ 8877801

or Krishna Consciousness UND THE WORLD

E. A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

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Lagos, Nigeria—No. 2 Murtala Mohammed International Airport Expressway, Mafaluku (mail: P.O. Box 8793, Lagos)
Mauritius—123 Sir Guy Forget Ave., Quatre Bornes (mail: P.O. Box 108, Quatre Bornes/ 46804
Mombasa, Kenya—Hare Krishna House, Sauti Ya Kenya and Kisumu Rds. (mail: P.O. Box 82224, Mombasa)/ 312248
Nkawkaw, Ghana—P.O. Box 69, Nkawkaw
Nairobi, Kenya—Muhuroni Close, off West Nagara Rd. (mail: P.O. Box 28946, Nairobi)/ 744365
Port Harcourt, Nigeria—2 Elgham Rd. (corner of Obana Obhan St.), G.R.A. II (mail: P.O. Box 4429, Trans Amadi)
Tokoradi, Ghana—64 Windy Ridge (mail: P.O. Box 328)
Warri, Nigeria—1 Ogunu St., Bendel Housing Estate, Ughorikoro (P.O. Box 1922, Warri)/ 053-230-262

FARM COMMUNITY

Mauritius (ISKCON Vedic Farm)—Beau Bois, Bon Accueil RESTAURANT

Durban, S. Africa—Govinda's (contact ISKCON Durban)

ASIA

INDIA

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Ahmedabad, Gujarat—7, Kailas Society, Ashram Rd., 380 009/ 449935
Bamanore, Gujarat—N.H. 8-B, Surendranagar (city office: 32 Ananta Nagar, Kalavad Rd., Rajkot 360 003)
Bangalore, Karnataka—210 Bellary Road, Sadashiva Nagar, 560 080/ 361 539
Bangladesh, Bengal—Sarkarkhil, Raozan, P.O. Fakir Takia, Chittagong
Baroda, Gujarat—Hare Krishna Land, Gotri Rd., 390 015/ 326299
Bhubaneswar, Orissa—National Highway No. 5, Nayapali, 751 001/ 53125
Bombay, Maharashtra—Hare Krishna Land, Juhu 400 049/ 626 860
Calcutta, W. Bengal—3 Albert Rd., 700 017/ 443757
Chandigarh, Punjab—Hare Krishna Land, Dakshin Marg, Sector 36-B, 160 036/ 44634
Chhaygharia (Haridaspur), W. Bengal—Thakur Haridas Sripatbari Sevashram, P.O. Chhaygharia, P.S. Bongaon, Dist. 24 Paraganas
Gauhati, Assam—Post Bag No. 127/ 781 001
Hyderabad, A.P.—Hare Krishna Land, Nampally Station Rd., 500 001/ 51018
Imphal, Manipur—Hare Krishna Land, Airport Road, 795 001
Kakinada, A.P.—7-1-919, Vishnupriya, behind boat club, 533 003/ 5961
Madras, Tamil Nadu—232 Kilpaik Garden Rd., Madras 600 010/ 662286
Mayapur, W. Bengal—Shree Mayapur Chandrodya Mandir, P.O. Shree Mayapur Dham (Dist. Nadia)
Moirang, Manipur—Nongban Ingkhon, Tidim Rd.
Nagpur, Maharashtra—70 Hill Road, Ramnagar, 440 010/ 33513
New Delhi—M-119 Greater Kailash I, 110 048/ 6412058
Pandharpur, Maharashtra—Hare Krishna Asrama, across Chandrabhaga River, Dist. Sholapur, 413304
Patna, Bihar—Rajendra Nagar Road No. 12, 800 016/ 50765
Peta-Kakani, A.P.—Guntur District
Pune, Maharashtra—4 Tarapoor Rd.
Silchar, Assam—Ambikapatti, Silchar, 788004, Cachar District
Siliguri, W. Bengal—Subash Pally, Siliguri
Surat, Gujarat—Rander Rd., Jahangirpura, Surat, 395 005/ 84215
Triputi, A.P.—Hare Krishna Land, Hare Krishna Road, 517 501/ 2285
Trivandrum, Kerala—T.C. 24/1485, W.C. Hospital Rd., Thycad, 695 014/ 68197
Vrindavana, U.P.—Krishna-Balaram Mandir, Bhaktivedanta Swami Marg, Raman Reti, Mathura/ 178

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Chamorshi, Maharashtra—78 Krishnagar Dham, District Gadchiroli, 442 603
Hyderabad, A.P.—P.O. Dabulpur Village, Medchal Taluc, Hyderabad District, 501 401
Mayapur, W. Bengal—(contact Mayapur)

RESTAURANTS

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Vrindavana—Krishna-Balaram Mandir Guesthouse

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Bangkok, Thailand—139, Soi Puttha-Osoth, New Road/ 233-2488
Chittagong, Bangladesh—Caitanya Cultural Society, Sri Pundarik Dham, Mekhala, Hathazari/ 108 (city office and mail: 23 Nandan Kanan, Chittagong/ 20-229)
Colombo, Sri Lanka—188 New Chetty St., Colombo 13/ 33325
Hong Kong—27 Chatam Road South, 6/F, Kowloon/ 3-7396818
Jakarta, Indonesia—Yayasan Kesadaran Krsna Indonesia, J.L. Kamboja 10-12, Tomang Raya/ 599 301
Kathmandu, Nepal—Vishnu Gaun Panchayat Ward No. 2, Budhanilkantha/ 4-10368
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia—Lot 9901, Jalan Awan Jawa, Taman Yari, off 5½ Mile, Jalan Kelang Lama, Petaling/ 730172
Manila, Philippines—170 R. Fernandez, San Juan, Metro Manila/ 707410
Taipei, Taiwan—(mail: c/o ISKCON Hong Kong)
Tehran, Iran—Keshavarz-Dehkedeh Ave., Kamran St. No. 58/ 658870
Tel Aviv, Israel—[17 B] Gordon St., P.O. Box 48163, Tel Aviv 61480/ 03-238-239
Tokyo, Japan—2-41-12 Izumi, Suginami-ku, Tokyo T168/ (3) 327-1541

FARM COMMUNITY

Cebu, Philippines (Hare Krishna Paradise)—231 Pagsabungan Rd., Basik, Mandaue City/ 83254

RESTAURANT

Cebu, Philippines—Govinda's, 26 Sanchiangko St.

LATIN AMERICA

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Campo Grande, MS—Rua Carlos Chagas, 32-Caicara
Campos, RJ—Av. Bezamath, 35, Pq. Califórnia
Curitiba, PR—Av. 7 de Setembro, 1594, Alto da Rua 15/ (041) 264-6634

Florianópolis, SC—Rua Duarte Schutel, 61-Centro
Fortaleza, CE—Rua José Laureço, 2114, Aldeota/ (085) 244-7068
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Manaus, AM—Rua dos Andradas, 465, Centro/ (092) 233-3709
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Ribeirão Preto, SP—Rua Cerqueira Cesar, 480, Centro
Rio de Janeiro, RJ—Ladeira da Glória, 98, Glória/ (021) 285-5643
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Vitória, ES—Rua Chafic Murad, 218, Praia do Soá/ (027) 227-9860

FARM COMMUNITIES

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RESTAURANT

Belém, Pará (Sri Kṛṣṇa Prasāda)—Av. Gentil Bittencourt, Passagem Mac Dowell, 96 (entre Dr. Moraes e Benjamin Constant/ (091) 222-1886

MEXICO

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Mexico City—Gob. Tiburcio Montiel 45, San Miguel Chapultepec, Mexico, D.F. 18/ (905) 271-0132
Mexico City—Govinda's Cultural Center, Insurgentes Sur 2384-1, Mexico City 01000 D.F./ 548-9323
Monterrey—Zaragoza 1007, nte. Zona centro, 74-69-76
Morelia—Ticamete No. 52 pte., Col. Selix Ireta 58070, Morelia, Mich.
Vera Cruz—Calle 3, Carabelas No. 784, Fraccionamiento Reforma/ 50759

FARM COMMUNITY

Tulancingo, Hidalgo (Nueva Gauda-Manḍala Bhūmi)—(contact ISKCON Mexico City)

PERU

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Cuzco—San Juan de Dios 285 Altos/ 222353
Chosica—Parque Echenique 122
Huancayo—(contact ISKCON Lima)
Lima—Avenida San Martín 135, Barranco/ 670405
Lima—Jiron Junin No 415/ 289491
Trujillo—Bolívar 738

FARM COMMUNITY

Asociacion Krishna—Correo De Bella Vista, DPTO, De San Martin

RESTAURANTS

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Chosica—(at ISKCON Chosica)
Cuzco—Calle Espáderos 128 (near Plaza de Armas)
Lima—Av. Grau 137, Barranco
Lima—Av. Schell 634, Miraflores

OTHER COUNTRIES

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Buenos Aires, Argentina—Centro Bhaktivedanta, Andonaegui 2054, (1431)
Calí, Colombia—Avenida 9 Norte, 17-33/ 621688
Caracas, Venezuela—Prolongación Ave. Las Palmas, Calle Capriles, Quinta Pollita/ 782-1939
Christ Church, Barbados—31 Goodland Park/ (809) 42-84209
Cochabamba, Bolivia—P.O. Box 3988/ 46441
Concepción, Chile—Nonguen, 588/ 23150
Córdoba, Argentina—Montevideo 950, Paso de los Andes/ (051) 262229
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Cuenca, Ecuador—Pje. Paucarabamba & Gral. Veintimilla Barrio-las-Chirimollas/ (07) 82-93-58
Georgetown, Guyana—24 Uitylvt Front, West Coast Demerara
Guatemala, Guatemala—Apartado Postal 1534
Guayaquil, Ecuador—Velez 1915 (between Carchi & Tulcan)/ 36-16-47
La Paz, Bolivia—Calle 16 Obrajes 460 (mail: P.O. Box 10278)/ 783556
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San Jose, Costa Rica—100 mtrs. sureste de aptos. Torre Blanca, Urbanización Carmiol, Montes de Oca, Casa No. 49 (mail: P.O. Box 166, Paseo Estudiantes, Z-1002)
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Guayaquil, Ecuador (Nuevo Nilacala)—(contact ISKCON Guayaquil)
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San Salvador, El Salvador—Carretera a Santa Ana, Km. 34, Canton Los Indios, Zapotitán, Dpto. de La Libertad

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Cuenca, Ecuador—Govinda's, Anexo Hotel, Crespo
Guatemala, Guatemala—Callejor Santandes a una cuadra abajo de Guatel, Panajachel Solola
Guatemala, Guatemala—Govinda's (contact ISKCON Guayaquil)
La Paz, Bolivia—Restaurant Manjari, Calle Potosí 1315, esq. Colón
San Salvador, El Salvador—25 Avenida Norte 1132
Santa Cruz, Bolivia—Restaurant Govinda's, Calle Florida 594, esq. Cañoto
Santa Cruz, Bolivia—Snack Govinda, Av. Argomosa (1° anillo), esq. Bolívar
Santiago, Chile—Govinda's (contact ISKCON Santiago)

LETTERS

Please let me tell all of you there that in my opinion *Back to Godhead* magazine has never been better. Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted things in ISKCON to expand, improve, etc., and surely *Back to Godhead* has set the standard of constant endeavor in this direction. He wanted it to be on a par with the likes of *Time* and *Life*. Actually, this magazine is already surpassing them.

Ekādaśī dāsa
Kowloon, Hong Kong

* * *

What a great magazine you have! It's a blessing to receive such inspirational messages and photos every month. As a graphic artist, I applaud your magazine's design and illustrations. Every issue is proof of the living reality of the message of Swami Prabhupāda. *Haribol!*

S. Nagabhushanam
Hyderabad, India

* * *

Due to my present circumstances, I cannot yet fully enter into ISKCON and become an initiated devotee. For a long time I was upset with this situation, but after speaking with the devotees about my problem, I am comforted to know that Kṛṣṇa will protect me as long as I continue following the four regulative principles and chanting Kṛṣṇa's holy name.

I have a few questions: (1) I often talk to friends about Kṛṣṇa. But I have been wondering, is it O.K. for me as a lay person to be discussing what little I know about Kṛṣṇa consciousness and distributing books on Kṛṣṇa consciousness, or should I avoid such activities? (2) Is it offensive for one who is not initiated to wear *tilaka*? (3) Even though I am not initiated, is it appropriate for me to honor Śrīla Prabhupāda by placing a picture of him on a *vyāsāsana* [a seat of honor reserved for the spiritual master] in my home? (4) Is it all right for a person such as me to invite Tulasi-devī into my home?

Wade A. Ryan
Anaheim, California

OUR REPLY: It is very good that you are telling others about Kṛṣṇa. Don't worry that you don't know everything. If you can present what you know with conviction, that will be effective preaching. Śrīla Prabhupāda encouraged his disciples to immediately begin preaching according to their realizations. As you preach, your realizations will increase.

Of course, preaching should also in-

spire you to read Śrīla Prabhupāda's books to be better equipped to preach. If you read his books regularly, you will be able to preach nicely. The basic philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is actually very simple. There may be many details in the books, and you may not be able to remember or explain everything, but if you present the basic philosophy, that will be good. You can also encourage others to read Śrīla Prabhupāda's books. Don't be hesitant. Do it as much as you can.

As for wearing *tilaka*, you don't have to be initiated. But you must remember that wearing *tilaka* means you are declaring that you are a devotee of Kṛṣṇa, so you must act like a devotee. That means, of course, that you shouldn't wear *tilaka* and then engage in nonsense or sinful activities. Otherwise, your desire to wear *tilaka* is a good sign; it shows your allegiance to Kṛṣṇa.

Yes, you can worship Śrīla Prabhupāda directly. He is the *śikṣā-guru* (instructing spiritual master) for everyone. We have to go to Kṛṣṇa through the *guru*. If you see Śrīla Prabhupāda as your *śikṣā-guru*, that is very good. Eventually, though, you should formally accept a spiritual master through initiation, because that is a Vedic injunction. You can feel sure that if you sincerely accept Śrīla Prabhupāda's guidance through his books and his International Society for Krishna Consciousness, then he will help you find a bona fide spiritual master from whom you can take initiation.

You can worship Tulasi-devī in your home if your home is pure. In other words, there should be no breaking of the regulative principles there—no meat-eating, no illicit sex, no intoxication, and no gambling. If you want to worship Tulasi-devī, always remember that she is a very exalted devotee of Kṛṣṇa. You should care for her as you would an ordinary plant, but there are also certain things that devotees don't do in caring for her, like using chemical insecticides, for example. We suggest you ask the devotees at the Los Angeles temple who take care of Tulasi-devī for more guidance concerning the details of her worship.

To have a pure devotee like Tulasi-devī in your home is a powerful advantage for making spiritual advancement. But just as fire is beneficial if used properly but dangerous if misused, associating with Tulasi-devī can be dangerous if you commit offenses to her. That can hurt you spiritually. So the best thing is to take ad-

vantage of the benefits of worshipping Tulasi-devī sincerely, while being very careful to avoid offenses.

* * *

I would like you to explain the following statements taken from a lecture by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda in the September 1987 issue of your magazine: "Now, according to the state law, if I kill somebody, I should also be killed. The law of nature, or the law of God, works similarly. But we forget our past life. No one thinks, 'It is because I killed this person in my past life that he is now killing me.' But although we forget our past life, Kṛṣṇa does not forget. And He reminds us: 'This child killed you in his past life, so now you can kill him in the womb.' Kṛṣṇa is described as *upadrashtā* and *anumantā*, 'the witness and permitter.' So He sees everything, and then He reminds everyone how to act in order to enjoy or suffer the fruits of their actions. Sometimes He reminds us to kill someone, and sometimes He reminds us to protect someone."

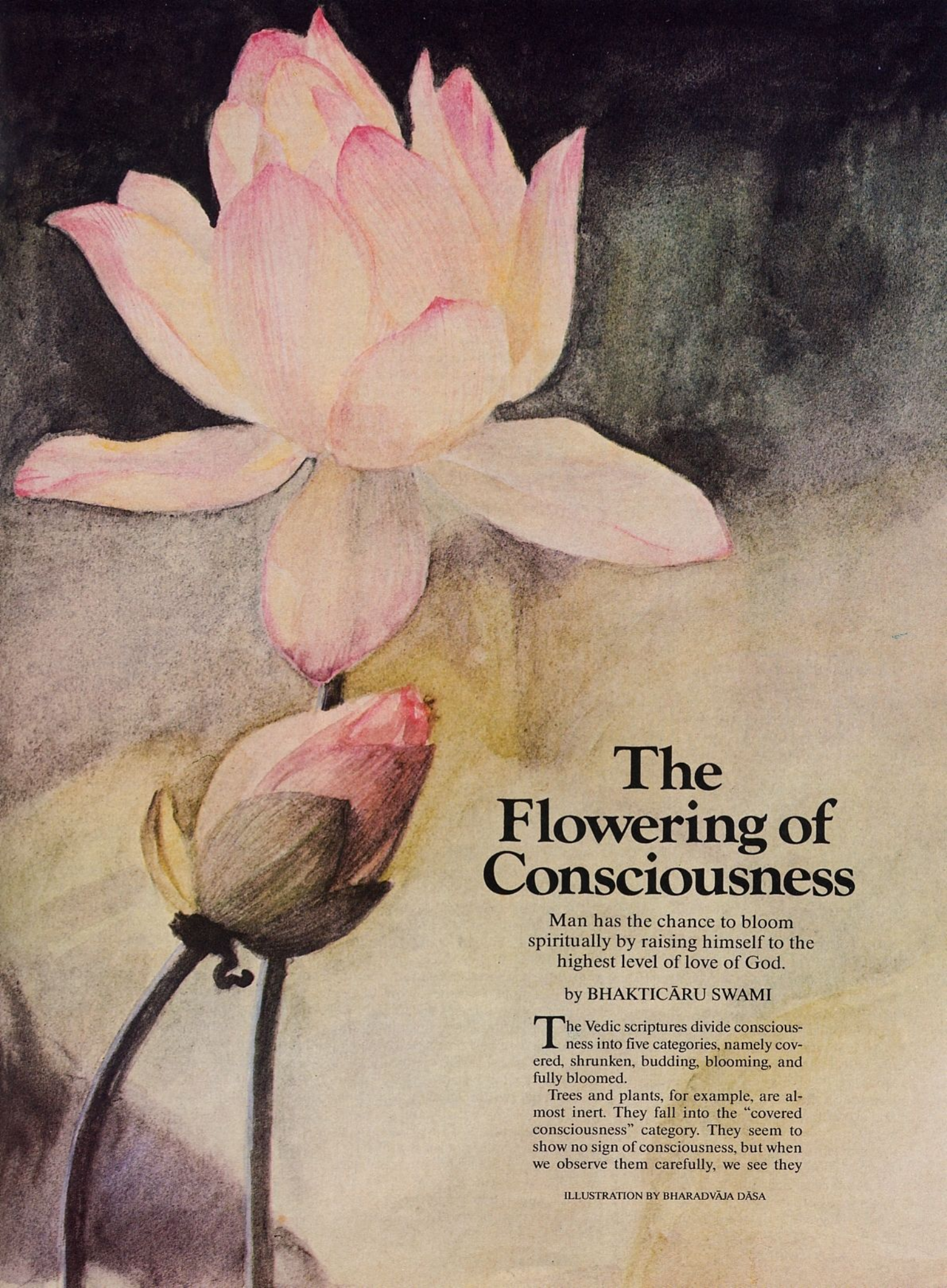
These statements seem to allow us to justify killing. Also, in the *Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa says, "One who is not conducted by false ego and whose intelligence is not entangled, even though killing in this world, is not killing." But surely it would take a great soul to be able to tell when killing is justified. Otherwise, everyone could kill as they like, offer it to God, and consider it justified.

Jeri Haas
Perry Hall, Maryland

OUR REPLY: In these statements Śrīla Prabhupāda is making the point that *karma* is retributive. In other words, we reap what we sow. As an example, he explains that if I kill someone, that person will have the opportunity to kill me in our next life. Śrīla Prabhupāda says that the person I kill may not remember in his next life that I killed him previously, but Kṛṣṇa, as the witness of everything, does remember, and He—in a sense—reminds him that he should kill me. That means the person will feel a desire to kill me, even though he doesn't realize where the desire comes from.

The interactions of the living entities according to the laws of *karma* are very complicated. It is impossible for us to understand how *karma* is working in all the events of our lives. But we shouldn't think that we have no free choice. We can't use *karma* as an excuse for our sinful acts. We are forced to act strictly under the laws of *karma* only as long as we maintain desires to enjoy the material world. Even though Kṛṣṇa "reminds" me to kill someone, if I

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The Flowering of Consciousness

Man has the chance to bloom
spiritually by raising himself to the
highest level of love of God.

by BHAKTICĀRU SWAMI

The Vedic scriptures divide consciousness into five categories, namely covered, shrunken, budding, blooming, and fully bloomed.

Trees and plants, for example, are almost inert. They fall into the “covered consciousness” category. They seem to show no sign of consciousness, but when we observe them carefully, we see they

ILLUSTRATION BY BHARADVĀJA DĀSA

have a limited consciousness.

Other living entities, such as worms, insects, and other animals, are in "shrunkened consciousness." They are not as covered as the plants, but their consciousness is not fully developed either.

Human beings have "budding consciousness." A bud appears shrunkened, but it has the potential to bloom into a flower. Human consciousness has similar potential; it appears shrunkened like the animal's, but humans have the innate ability to develop their consciousness to an almost unlimited extent, up to the point of knowing the Absolute Truth, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Other species do not have this special ability. That's why the Vedic scriptures consider the human form of life the most elevated. Indeed, all scriptures consider human life especially sacred.

When a human being begins to inquire sincerely about the Absolute Truth, his budlike spiritual consciousness begins to expand or evolve. That is the "blooming" state of consciousness. When as a result of his inquiry he practices regulated spiritual discipline, he evolves further and further. Finally, he attains complete God realization, the "fully bloomed" state of consciousness.

God realization is possible because the real identity of a living being is the spirit soul, not the material body. The soul is not a product of material nature; it comes from the spiritual nature. When the soul falls into the lower levels of consciousness, it becomes covered by matter—first by a subtle, or ethereal, material body made of mind, intelligence, and false ego, then by a gross material body made of earth, water, fire, air, and ether.

The bodies we perceive with our material vision are gross material bodies. Within the gross body is the subtle body, which we cannot see with our eyes but can perceive by our intelligence.

Finer than this subtle material body of mind, intelligence, and false ego is the nonmaterial soul, which animates the body. The soul is the source of consciousness, the source of life in the body. The soul is the "I." As long as the soul is in the body, the body appears alive, consciousness flows through the body, and the covered soul misidentifies the body as the self.

An embodied soul transmigrates from one body to another as a result of his previous activities. His every action leaves an imprint on the mind, or the subtle body, and accordingly the subtle body takes its shape.

For example, if one acts like an angel, his subtle body becomes like that of an angel. If one acts like a pig, his subtle body becomes like that of a pig. When the soul leaves the gross body at death, the subtle

body carries the soul to an appropriate womb determined by the shape of the subtle body. In this way the soul transmigrates from one body to another according to the state of consciousness it has developed.

The Vedic scriptures describe that one gets a human body after transmigrating through eight million lower species. Gradually each fallen soul evolves through the various stages of consciousness—covered, shrunkened, and budding. At the budding stage the embodied soul has the chance to develop fully his spiritual consciousness by awakening his relationship with God, the supremely conscious being. If he neglects that opportunity, he may again undergo transmigration through the covered, shrunkened,

Less intelligent persons often consider sensual enjoyment the goal of life and squander their lives struggling for objects pleasing to their senses. Their absorption in material ambitions makes lower consciousness their choice by default.

and budding stages.

The subhuman species are engrossed in bodily consciousness. Often human beings are also, but human beings can raise themselves to higher levels. That is the main difference between man and the animals. If a man, in spite of his higher faculties, simply pursues the animal propensities of eating, sleeping, mating, and defending, he grossly misuses a wonderful gift. He misses a rare opportunity.

A human being, because of his elevated intelligence, has the freedom to choose, either to evolve spiritually and get out of material consciousness altogether or to go down to lower consciousness again.

Less intelligent persons often consider sensual enjoyment the goal of life and squander their lives struggling for objects pleasing to their senses. Their absorption

in material ambitions makes lower consciousness their choice by default.

Intelligent persons realize the futility of such endeavors for bodily pleasures. They realize that *everything* in the material realm is temporary. By finer intelligence they understand that all attempts to enjoy end in bondage and misery. That's why throughout history our greatest thinkers were averse to material enjoyments.

But mere aversion is not enough. One may be averse to material enjoyments and renounce the world, but the desire for enjoyment is natural. Because the soul is a minute sparklike part of the supreme enjoyer, Kṛṣṇa, the soul has all His qualities in minute degree; therefore the innate tendency for seeking enjoyment is inseparable from the soul. To understand the soul is to understand that we cannot altogether suppress or eliminate desire for enjoyment.

A truly intelligent person, therefore, tries to find the standard of real enjoyment. If such a person is serious and has good fortune, he comes in touch with a genuine spiritual teacher, by whose mercy he gets to know what real enjoyment is. With the spiritual master's guidance he gets the opportunity to reestablish his long-lost relationship with God.

This awakening of the soul's dormant love of God is an absolute necessity because the soul, as a sparklike part of God, is never fully satisfied unless united with Him. This is the central message of the Vedic texts.

The Vedic scriptures advise us that even if we want to enjoy material things, instead of making independent attempts for fulfilling our desires, we should render devotional service and pray to the Lord for the fulfillment of such desires. This is not the purest standard of loving devotion, but at least it acknowledges the Lord as the supreme proprietor. Naturally, as one grows in this awareness, one realizes the need to offer everything to its true proprietor. The making of such offerings is the beginning of devotional service to the Lord.

The word *devotion* implies an intense, trancelike love. We experience that love by offering God objects we consider valuable or beautiful. We know how intense is the love between a young man and woman, but how often does our love for the Lord reach that high intensity? Still, the love between a man and a woman is nothing but a perverted reflection of the true love of the individual soul for the Lord.

Material nature is itself a perverted reflection of the spiritual reality. It is illusory, like a dream. The only difference is that a dream is individual while this dream called physical reality is collective. But beyond this so-called reality is the

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1987 Festival of the Chariots, Venice Beach, Los Angeles

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.





Śrī Pañca-tattva

The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, is the fountainhead and enjoyer of all energies. To display the variegatedness of the Absolute Truth, Lord Caitanya manifests as the Pañca-tattva, or the five categories of transcendental subject matter. The members of the Pañca-tattva are (from left to right) Śrī Advaita, the form of a devotee's incarnation; Śrī Nityānanda, the form of a devotee's spiritual master; Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the form of a devotee; Śrī Gadādhara, the energy of a devotee; and Śrī Śrīvāsa, the pure devotee. Accompanied by the other members of the Pañca-tattva, Lord Caitanya began the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement to inundate the entire world with love of Godhead.



ESCAPING THE REALITY ILLUSION

Though some scientists are realizing
that our world is like a house of mirrors, they are
not yet able to lead us out of it.

by KUNḌALĪ DĀSA

You probably have no reason to believe that your senses are unreliable sources of knowledge. Your seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, and touching faculties may deceive you occasionally—as when you see an optical illusion—but it's nothing too serious. They give an accurate picture of reality most of the time. Besides, other persons confirm this by agreeing with you about the nature of the objects and events you perceive.

But do your eyes and other senses actually give you a true picture of reality? Look closely at the picture at left. Do you see anything wrong? (Other than that balloons don't usually fly.)

In the *Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa says that our world is not an objective one; rather, it's subjective, pliant, endlessly mutable. In other Vedic literature it's explained that our senses, the very means by which we gather data about the world, are unreliable because they are prone to illusion. They don't give us direct access to an objective world; rather, they give an illusion of objectivity. Kṛṣṇa calls this illusion *māyā*.

Sometimes the concept of *māyā* is taken to mean the world is an illusion, but that's not exactly what Kṛṣṇa says. According to Him, the material world is very real, but, like a house of mirrors, its purpose is to delude us. In a house of mirrors, the house

and the observer are real, but because the mirrors distort reality within the house, the images perceived within it are illusory.

Similarly, the physical world is real, you and I are real, but like the mirrors in a fun house, our material senses distort our perceptions. Being oblivious to this built-in imperfection, however, we take our distorted perceptions as reality. Since we rely on our senses all the time for access to the external world, we're no better off than a person trapped in a house of mirrors. We're continuously in illusion, or *māyā*.

For a long time the concept of *māyā* made little sense to us in the Western world. Few persons, even if curious about Vedic thought, gave serious attention to Kṛṣṇa's doctrine of illusion. It made for interesting discussion on occasion, but few wanted to take it any further than that.

This is changing in recent years. In some circles it's now fashionable to try to reconcile various aspects of Vedic thought with the physical sciences, and a few books on this theme have gone over well with the public. The prime objective of these science-and-spirituality books has been to show similarities between the theoretical subatomic world of quantum physics and the Vedic world view. By demonstrating that Western science and hoary Eastern spirituality are moving toward the same end, these books offer hope

ILLUSTRATION BY MARK KELLY
(With respects to M.C. Escher)

that we may yet see a happy union of science and spirituality.

Data Reduction Systems

Still, despite any apparent agreement between Vedic thought and the new physics, and despite the increasing popularity of that view, for most people the idea that life's an illusion remains untenable, and to sold-out materialists it's downright ridiculous.

But according to Charles Tart, a psychology professor at the University of California, the doctrine of illusion is far from ridiculous. In *The Psychobiology of Consciousness*, a collection of papers by researchers in related fields of psychology and biology, Tart draws on his twenty-odd years of research and on the work of others to present evidence that confirms, inadvertently, Kṛṣṇa's depiction of our condition as one of deep illusion.

Tart is not alone in his conclusions. Robert Ornstein and Richard Strauch, authors of *The Psychology of Consciousness* and *The Reality Illusion*, respectively, both make a case to show that our world is an illusion-generating one, in which much of the illusion mechanism is built right into the instruments we rely on to observe and analyze the world: our senses.

These up-to-date findings by various individuals and groups researching consciousness—the most essential element of our existence—show that much of what we experience as reality is in our own heads.

Our senses, rather than giving us unadulterated access to the physical world, limit how much data we receive. The resultant partial picture combines with our expectations, pre-existing beliefs and assumptions, and past experiences to give us our personally constructed reality. The sights, sounds, smells, and shapes you experience are to some degree perceptions you create yourself. Hence reality, like beauty, is in the eyes of the beholder.

Our senses work on the world the way a sculptor works on his block of marble. As he chisels, he discards pieces of marble and extracts his statue from a wide range of possibilities. Another sculptor may give a different interpretation to the same piece of marble. Or the same sculptor, at another time, may give it an entirely new interpretation.

So it is with physical reality: we interpret or shape it according to what we discard, and at different times we give it different interpretations. The main difference between us and the sculptor is that we are not usually as conscious of the selection process.

A familiar but good example of the selection process at work is the faces/vase drawing in Figure 1. Depending on which image you choose to discard, the drawing



Figure 1

is either a black vase or the outline of two white faces looking toward each other. Both images are present, but you can't see them both at the same time. Consciously or unconsciously, you select one and discard the other.

Figure 2 is a similar example of the selection process at work. The picture is either a young woman or an old woman,



Figure 2

depending on how you choose to interpret the data before you. This is usually a more difficult one than the faces/vase picture, but see if you can spot both women.

The context in which you see something also plays an important role in perception and interpretation. The middle character in Figure 3 is either a number or a letter, depending on the context you choose to see it in. Without a context you wouldn't be able to tell whether it is the letter B or the number 13.

Our senses also distort things and supply information not given. In Figure 4, for example, our eye imagines the lines that form a white triangle.

All the senses have many known deceptions. To our tongues carbonated water tastes colder than ordinary water at the same temperature. Prolonged contact with dry ice registers in the brain as a burning sensation. In addition, we know there are sound frequencies our ear cannot hear, like the dog whistle, for example. Similarly, our eyes can perceive only a small portion of the light rays that we know exist. (Figure 5).

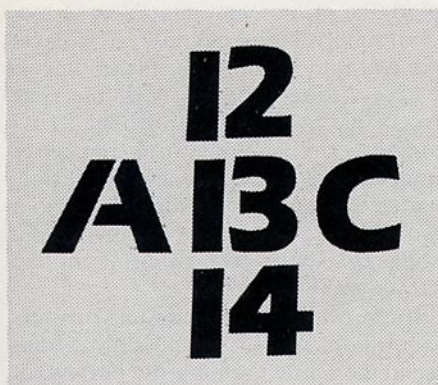


Figure 3

A frog's eyes take in even less of the external world than ours do. In experiments where hundreds of colors, shapes, sizes, and movements were placed within seven inches of a frog's eyes, only four kinds of messages went from its eyes to its brain. The frog's eyes can (1) give it a general outline of the environment, (2) enable it to detect sudden movements of shadows, and (3) enable it to detect sudden decreases in light.

Predictably, the frog's fourth kind of visual response is that it can see small dark objects, like flies and other insects, approaching. A frog's eyes so limit how much the frog perceives that even within the range of seven inches, the rich and varied visual world our eyes enjoy is non-existent to it. In a frog's world, elephants don't exist as elephants, but probably as earth-shaking shadows. Frogs—or ants or rhinos or seagulls—live their own reality illusion.

Consensus Reality Illusion

These are just a few relatively simple examples out of dozens, but they give us some idea how unreliable our senses are and how subjective and relative reality is. Not only does the same reality appear differently when perceived from different viewpoints—a tree seen from the air and from the ground, say—but even from a single perspective, a fixed set of data may be interpreted in more than one way. The same set of facts may appear differently to different persons, or even to the same person at different times, as in the faces/vase figure. Or the same facts may be seen differently in different settings, as in Figure 3.

All this knowledge about how the senses function—or malfunction—gives rise to a few intriguing questions: Of what we perceive, how much of it is a distortion of what's actually there? How much of the world are we not perceiving at all? And how much of it do we imagine by aural, visual, and tactile hallucinations? In short, how can we distinguish reality from illusion?

The answer is, we don't know. We'll never know. For, as the research indicates,

we simply have no method for perceiving the world without its being filtered and therefore distorted by our senses. Alert to this fact, the Vedic literature sometimes uses another word to describe our condition: *durga*, or "prison." We are imprisoned in the illusions fed to us by our senses.

But if we don't live in an objective reality, if we are so entrenched in *māyā*, how are we able to agree on so much of our experience? How can we even converse about objects and events in the world?

Tart explains that we can talk about reality as objective because of the high degree of agreement we share in our individual realities. From birth we condition our senses to select and interpret phenomena the same way others around us do, forming in effect a consensus reality illusion: many individuals sharing an agreed-upon way of interpreting their environment. Through this consensus illusion we perpetuate belief in an objective reality from one generation to the next.

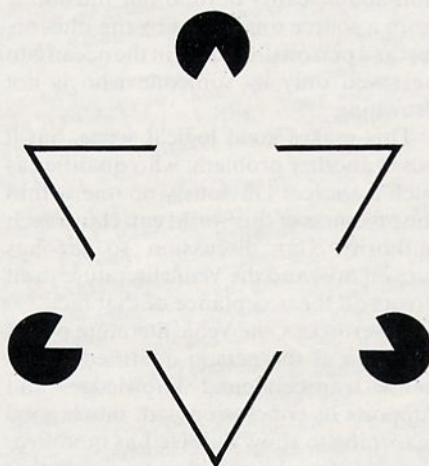


Figure 4

Stalking the Best Culture

Wherever a group of people adhere to the same consensus reality, it's called a culture. As the diverse cultures around the world testify, there are many ways of interpreting the physical world, many different consensus reality illusions. And, as with individual realities, sometimes consensus realities overlap.

Tart and other researchers, like Robert

Rivlin and Karen Gravelle, co-authors of *Deciphering the Senses*, believe that in light of this cultural relativity, while the temptation to compare cultures in terms of best and worst is strong, it would be unfair to do so. We have no absolute criteria by which to evaluate the world's diverse cultures.

This makes sense. If our individual and collective values are ultimately relative and arbitrary, any assumption or ruling that culture A is better than culture B is more likely a result of our prejudices than an unbiased conclusion.

While this seems reasonable, it's not entirely true. If a culture existed which recognized that we live in an illusion, if it actually had a goal beyond making us snug in the illusion, and if it could train us to distinguish reality from illusion, that culture would be immeasurably better than any other. It would be the best culture.

Clearly this is a great claim to make on behalf of any culture. Nevertheless, one has to agree in principle that if such a culture existed, it could justly lay claim to being the best. The question is, does such a culture exist?

The answer is yes. It is the Vedic culture, the same culture from which the concept of *māyā* originated. Unlike other cultures, Vedic culture is specifically geared toward ridding us of illusion. It does this by teaching a technique of living in a way that transcends the senses. As Kṛṣṇa describes it, true Vedic culture trains its adherents—man, woman, and child—to penetrate the relative world to the plane of absolute reality, the spiritual world.

When you consider that no other culture makes such a claim for its masses and that our chances of getting out of *māyā*'s fun house are otherwise remote, it makes sense not pass up too hastily the opportunity the Vedic world view offers. This proposal is even more attractive when you throw in the following considerations.

Some Conclusions

An especially significant outcome of the revelation that we are inextricably snarled in illusion is that it voids the philosophers' long-standing tradition of

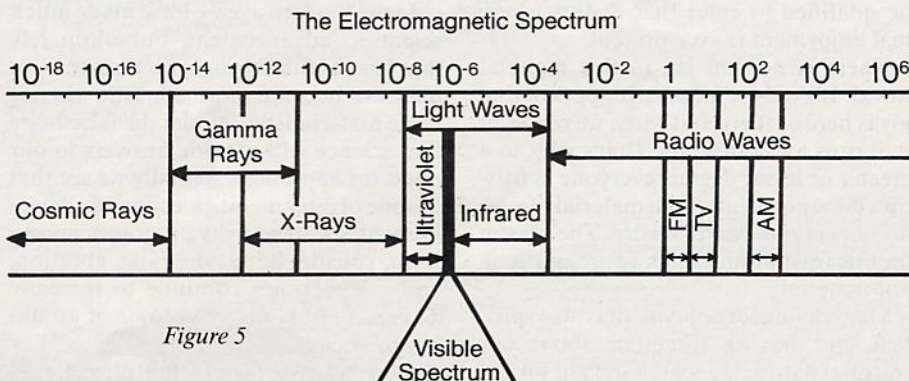


Figure 5

speculating about the Absolute Truth. After all, apart from its merit as a diversion—a creative way to kill time—what's the value of our conjecturing over something beyond our ability to confirm it?

This revelation voids the physical sciences as well, at least as far as any hope that they will one day yield a definitive understanding of our existence, for our scientists are as hopelessly deluded by their senses as everyone else. For all their hypothesizing, analyzing, observing, and naming, they are no more qualified to deliver perfect knowledge than you or I.

A third and equally significant outcome of this discovery is that while we have heard "Everything is relative" many times before, we have no idea how relative everything actually is. The recognition of the reality illusion pulls all the stops on the range of possible explanations about the world. No longer can we assume that this is the best of all possible worlds and that we are the best of all beings in it.

For instance, if we can accept that in a frog's reality elephants don't exist as elephants but as earth-shaking shadows, then we can accept as reasonable the Vedic literature's assertion that demigods and other higher beings exist, and that although we might not perceive them in our reality, their actions affect our existence.

The thought that we could be so limited by our senses is humbling, but it's not preposterous when we consider the lessons learnt from the frog example. We know that in our reality an ant living in our flower bed is insignificant, but in the ant's reality we may not exist at all. And yet every time we turn on the garden hose, we may affect that ant's life. Why couldn't our position relative to the demigods be a similar one? For all we know, our rain

could be a demigod's garden hose.

It's hard to believe at first that we could be that insignificant, but actually without the prospect of getting out of illusion, such as the Kṛṣṇa conscious Vedic culture offers, the reality illusion reduces our existence to insignificance anyway. It reduces us to wormlike creatures that eat, sleep, mate, writhe, and contort for some time, and then die. All our achievements are but another loop and twist in the endless snarl called *māyā*. They are laudable only until we realize they add up to zero.

Once you appreciate this, you can easily see how the assumption, based on a tacit acceptance of the body as the true self, that somehow we will create a comfortable and lasting arrangement for happiness in a temporary world is an abjectly foolish one.

This is precisely Kṛṣṇa's point to Arjuna early in the *Gītā*, and it is echoed throughout the Vedic literature. The conclusion is that the only way to get information about reality beyond our illusion is from a source unaffected by the illusion, just as a person drowning in the ocean can be saved only by someone who is not drowning.

This makes good logical sense, but it poses another problem: who qualifies as such a source? Obviously no one within the precincts of this world can claim such authority. Our discussion so far has proven this, and the Vedic literature itself pivots on the acceptance of that fact.

Nevertheless, the Vedic literature points to Kṛṣṇa as the person qualified to dispense transcendental knowledge, and supports its conclusion with much good reasoning to show that He has qualifications no one else can claim, namely that He is the Supreme Personality of God-

head, the creator and controller of material nature. Consequently, He is never subject to any illusion, even for a moment.

Like a king, who can visit the state prison and not become a prisoner, Kṛṣṇa comes to the material world but never comes under the influence of illusion. Rather, He delivers the knowledge that can liberate us from *māyā*. This He did when He spoke *Bhagavad-gītā* on the Kurukṣetra battlefield.

In the *Gītā* you'll find Kṛṣṇa's answers to questions such as: Is it possible to transcend the senses? What is the purpose of the world of *māyā*? Is there an absolute reality beyond this relative one? Is it possible for us to perceive that reality as it is? Arjuna, the hearer of the *Gītā*, asserts that no one less qualified than Kṛṣṇa can answer these questions and remove all our doubts.

But if it takes someone as qualified as Kṛṣṇa to answer our questions, then why not consider His answers? Even if you are reticent to accept Him as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, which admittedly is no casual affair, still, as the original propounder of the doctrine of illusion, He deserves some credit for doing so. And that He did it back in an era we hardly consider civilized only makes His accomplishment all the more remarkable, credible enough in most eyes to merit a more in-depth scrutiny of His ideas.

(By the way, if you couldn't figure out the old-woman/young-woman picture, go back and try again. Most people see the young woman first. Her chin is the old woman's nose; her ear, the old woman's eye; her neckband, the old woman's mouth. And remember, there may be a dozen more images in that one picture that our eyes do not select.)

Consciousness

(continued from page 16)

absolute reality, upon which the perverted reflection is based. When our consciousness evolves and we transcend bondage to the material body, we can develop a loving relationship with the Lord. Then we will be qualified to enter that reality, where real enjoyment is ever-present.

There is no real joy in this material world. It's only a mirage. It appears that joy is here or there, but when we run after it, it runs away from us. That's why, to a greater or lesser degree, everyone is frustrated sooner or later with material life; we do not get our heart's desire. The reason for this frustration is that we are spiritual, not material.

Our craving for enjoyment is also spiritual, but having forgotten about our spiritual nature, we search in vain for en-

joyment within the material world. We identify with the material body and try to enjoy matter, but we can't. Naturally we become frustrated. If you take a fish out of water and offer it all comforts on land, will it ever be happy? In the same way, we are of the spiritual nature. We can never be made truly happy by material enjoyments.

In the modern age we have made much scientific advancement, but ultimately that has confused people even more. People have become more atheistic—hence more materialistic—under the false hope that science will provide answers to our quest for happiness. Actually we see that in spite of our amenities, economic development, social security programs, and so forth, suicide, homicide, rape, abortion, and other crimes continue to increase. These are obvious symptoms of an unhappy society.

If one wants to taste factual pleasure, he

must develop spiritual consciousness, which culminates in love of God. That's why every religion teaches us to pray, to call out the name of the Lord in all earnestness, so that we can become conscious of His divine form. All scriptures recommend the chanting of the Lord's holy name. The spiritual sound penetrates the coverings of matter and enables the spiritual self to see the Absolute Truth face to face. That is the topmost state of consciousness, consciousness in full bloom. It is the ultimate evolution of man, not only for today, but for all time.

This is a lecture given at last year's Kirchentag ("Day of the Church"), an annual convention of Protestant churches in Germany. Last year's convention, held in June at the University of Frankfurt, was attended by eighty thousand people, including Chancellor Helmut Kohl, and marked the first time non-Christian groups were invited to participate.

A Letter From a Special Friend

The Lord in the heart reveals a confidential secret to the soul.

by PĀLIKĀ-DEVĪ DĀSĪ

Dear Friend,

I've been with you for a very long time. Day and night I've witnessed your actions and thoughts. I know you, but do you remember Me? I see that another year has passed, and you duly honored the annual American traditions. On Valentine's Day you bought your true love roses, in April you filed your tax forms, and on Mother's Day and Father's Day you expressed your gratitude. On the Fourth of July you watched fireworks, and on Halloween you went out in disguise. After a meaningful Thanksgiving you yearned to discover the uplifting revelations of Christmas. At the dawn of a new year you resolved to find lasting contentment.

But a month of the new year has elapsed, and I see you are not content. Your true love isn't true, and the lawmakers raised taxes, forcing you to a lower standard of living. Your mother and father are elderly and need hospital care. Now I see an unhappy and anxious friend.

Come closer, friend, for I have a secret to tell. This is no ordinary confidence. No, what I will reveal can free you. You say you are already free? Well, My friend, this kind of freedom you've not known. Truly this is the revelation you're looking for.

Most certainly, dear friend, you are not your body! Wait. Don't let my statement scare you. Think about it. That frame you so easily refer to as "me" is flesh, blood, and bones. After a short time it will dwindle and decay. Who are you, then? You are an eternal being, a spiritual person, who has taken only temporary residence in your present form. Let this knowledge free you from the worldly conception you're in—that you are a man or a woman, black or white, young or old. These designations—and the yearly observances that rest on them—are fleeting and meaningless, and the hand of time moves quickly, forcing your body to age. This simple yet sublime statement—"You are not your body"—can lead you to true knowledge of yourself. You must simply realize it.

How do I know? Who am I? I am the Supersoul, and I reside within your heart as your dearest friend, your eternal mother, father, and true love. Ever awaiting your return to Me, I speak the divine truth for your benefit. I've given this topmost knowledge in the Bhagavad-gītā, where I state, "For the soul there is neither birth nor death at any time. He has not come into being, does not come into being, and will not come into being. He is not slain when the body is slain."

Friend, as you begin the second month of the new year, let this be the first day of a life reborn. Receive this knowledge humbly and inquire further into the nature of our relationship. Hear from self-realized souls, through whom I speak. They can impart this knowledge unto you. You can become free...if you so choose.

I look to the future and see a pure soul, happy, relieved, exhilarated, liberated from material bondage—and finally making a New Year's resolution come true.

Your ever well-wisher,
The Lord in the heart

LETTERS

(continued from page 14)

no longer desire to enjoy material life by engaging in fruitive activities, I do not have to act on that reminder. And if I do

act on it, then I implicate myself in more karma.

You see, as Kṛṣṇa says in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, He is the source of all remembrance. If we desire spiritual life, Kṛṣṇa will help us remember Him. If we want material

life, He will remind us how to fulfill our material desires.

As you point out, people may also want to take advantage of Kṛṣṇa's statements in the *Gītā* to justify killing. But no one can cheat Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa's direction is not just some impulse within one's mind. For Kṛṣṇa's pure devotee, the direction is perfectly clear. As Śrīla Prabhupāda once said, "Kṛṣṇa tells me directly." So unless we are actually on the stage of receiving direct instruction from Kṛṣṇa, we must be guided by Kṛṣṇa's pure representative, whose symptoms are given throughout the Vedic literature. One important symptom is that he is always engaged in glorifying Kṛṣṇa. And He has no selfish interests. One who claims to be acting on behalf of God must exhibit the qualities of a pure devotee.

Kṛṣṇa asked Arjuna to kill on His behalf because it was part of Kṛṣṇa's plan to rid the world of demoniac kings and establish God conscious leadership for the benefit of the whole world. Kṛṣṇa always acts to save the fallen souls, and sometimes His mission involves killing. Of course, since the soul never dies, Kṛṣṇa's so-called killing is really meant for the "victim's" purification. In this age, however, Kṛṣṇa has come as Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who is Kṛṣṇa in His most merciful form. Lord Caitanya doesn't kill anyone, but He kills the demoniac mentality of people in this age by inducing them to chant the holy names of God. Everyone should follow His example, as He has requested, and not concoct some program for killing on behalf of the Lord.

Yet we should still understand the philosophical point that killing can be good if the cause is Kṛṣṇa's cause. Anything used in Kṛṣṇa's service is good. Śrīla Prabhupāda gave the example that a knife can be either good or bad, depending on how it is used. Out of lust a person can kill with it, but a devotee can use it to cook for Kṛṣṇa. What is apparently violence may also be used for Kṛṣṇa. But then it is not actually violence. For example, if you were to intentionally cut into someone with a knife, you would probably go to jail, but when a surgeon uses a knife to cut into someone—to, say, remove a tumor—then his action is certainly not violence; it is beneficial to the patient.

Arjuna's fighting was also not real violence, in the sense that it was ultimately for the good of the world. A devotee cannot perform violent acts, and Arjuna was perplexed on the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra because he thought he was being asked to commit violence. Kṛṣṇa had to convince him otherwise. Then for Arjuna the order to kill was clear and direct. Unless we are definitely getting direct instructions from Kṛṣṇa, we shouldn't presume that we can kill on His behalf.

A Prayer to the Lotus Feet of Lord Caitanya

by Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura

*śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya prabhu dōyā koro more
tomā binā ke dōyālu jagat-samsāre*

*patita-pāvana-hetu tava avatāra
mo sama patita prabhu nā pāibe āra*

*hā hā prabhu nityānanda, premānanda sukhi
kṛpābalokana koro āmi boro dūkhī*

*dōyā koro sītā-pati adwaita gosāi
tava kṛpā-bale pāi caitanya-nitāi*

*hā hā swarūpa, sanātana, rūpa raghunātha
bhaṭṭa-juga, śrī-jīva hā prabhu lokanātha*

*dōyā koro śrī-ācārya prabhu śrīnivāsa
rāmacandra-saṅga māge narottama-dāsa*

PURPORT

by
His Divine Grace
A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami
Prabhupāda

This is a song composed by Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura. He prays to Lord Caitanya, "My dear Lord, please be merciful to me, because who can be more merciful than Your Lordship within these three worlds?" Actually, this is a fact. Not only Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura, but Rūpa Gosvāmī also prayed to Lord Caitanya in this way. At the time of the first meeting of Lord Caitanya and Rūpa Gosvāmī at Prayāga (Allahabad), Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī said, "My dear Lord, You are the most munificent of all incarnations, because You are distributing love of Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa consciousness." When Kṛṣṇa was personally present He simply asked us to surrender, but He did not distribute Himself so easily. He made conditions—"First of all you surrender." But this incarnation, Lord Caitanya, although Kṛṣṇa Himself, makes no such condition. He simply distributes: "Take love of Kṛṣṇa." Therefore Lord Caitanya is approved as the most munificent incarnation. Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura says, "Please be merciful to me. You are so magnanimous because You have seen the fallen souls of this age and are very much compassionate to them, but You should know also that I am the most fallen. No one is more greatly fallen than me." *Patita-pāvana-hetu tava avatāra*: "Your incarnation is just to reclaim the conditioned, fallen souls, but I assure You that You will not find a greater fallen soul than me. Therefore, my claim is first."

Then he prays to Lord Nityānanda. He says, *hā hā prabhu nityānanda premānanda-sukhi*: "My dear Lord Nityānanda, You are always joyful in spiritual bliss. Since You always appear very happy, I have come to You

because I am most unhappy. If You kindly put Your glance over me, I may also become happy." Then he prays to Advaita Prabhu. *Dōyā koro sītā-pati adwaita gosāi*. Advaita Prabhu's wife's name was Sītā. Therefore He is sometimes addressed as *sītā-pati*. Thus Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura prays, "My dear Advaita Prabhu, husband of Sītā. You are so kind. Please be kind to me. If You are kind to me, naturally Lord Caitanya and Nityānanda will also be kind to me." Actually, Advaita Prabhu invited Lord Caitanya to come down. When Advaita Prabhu saw that the fallen souls were all engaged simply in sense gratificatory processes, not understanding Kṛṣṇa consciousness, He felt very much compassionate toward the fallen souls, and He also felt Himself incapable of claiming them all. He therefore prayed to Lord Kṛṣṇa, "Please come Yourself. Without Your personal presence it is not possible to deliver the fallen souls." Thus by His invitation Lord Caitanya appeared. Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura prays to Advaita Prabhu, "If You will be kind to me, naturally Lord Caitanya and Nityānanda also will be kind to me."

Then he prays to the Gosvāmīs. *Hā hā swarūp, sanātana, rūpa, raghunātha*. *Swarūp* refers to Svarūpa Dāmodara, the personal secretary of Lord Caitanya. He was always with Caitanya Mahāprabhu and immediately arranged for whatever Caitanya Mahāprabhu wanted. Two personal attendants, Svarūpa Dāmodara and Govinda, were always with Lord Caitanya. Therefore, Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura also prays to Svarūpa Dāmodara and then to the six Gosvāmīs, the next disciples of Lord Caitanya—Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī, Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī, Śrī Bhaṭṭa Raghunātha Gosvāmī, Śrī Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī, and Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī. These six Gosvāmīs were directly instructed by Lord Caitanya to spread this movement of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura also prays for their mercy.

After the six Gosvāmīs, the next *ācārya* was Śrīnivāsa Ācārya. Actually, Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura was in the disciplic succession after Śrīnivāsa Ācārya and was almost his contemporary, and Narottama dāsa's friend was Rāmacandra Cakravartī. Therefore he prays, "I always desire the company of Rāmacandra Cakravartī." He desires a devotee's company. The whole process is that we should always pray for the mercy of the superior *ācāryas* and keep company with pure devotees. Then it will be easier for us to advance in Kṛṣṇa consciousness and receive the mercy of Lord Caitanya and Lord Kṛṣṇa. This is the sum and substance of this song sung by Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura.

Every Town

The worldwide activities of the International



And Village

Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON)

Amazon Preaching Expedition

Amazon State, Brazil—Mrs. Tarcila Mendes, wife of the governor of the Amazon state, recently offered the devotees here use of a 100-ton, 85-foot touring boat for traveling up the Amazon to distribute *prasādam*, Śrīla Prabhupāda's books, and Kṛṣṇa's holy names. Twenty-one devotees left from the port of Manaus for a two-month, 1,000-mile cruise aboard the *Piraiba*.

had outfitted it with a month's supply of foodstuffs, a ton of grains for *prasādam* distribution, and a crew of six men: a captain, first lieutenant, engine man, plus three deckhands."

Each day the boat plies through the jungle region, anchoring offshore when a village is in sight. The devotees then board a small boat with a fifteen-horsepower engine and go ashore.

"In this area people don't often



Onboard the *Piraiba*, devotees prepare to cast off for a 1,000-mile cruise up the Amazon River to distribute Śrīla Prabhupāda's books, *kṛṣṇa-prasādam*, and the holy names.

Indradyumna Swami, who organized the cruise, met Mrs. Mendes while traveling and preaching in Brazil. "I'd heard that she visits our preaching center in Manaus regularly," he said. "So I thought to ask her for something special. When I told her of our desire to take Lord Caitanya's *saṅkīrtana* deep into the Amazon jungle, she immediately liked the idea. I requested she find a boat so we could travel by river, and she responded two days later. She had discussed the matter with her husband and decided to let us use their own boat.

"The next day when she took me to the docks, I couldn't believe my eyes. It was a three-deck touring boat that sleeps twenty people. She

see visitors, so you can imagine how surprised they are when they see twenty blissful devotees approaching their village chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa," Indradyumna Swami said.

Despite all the facilities, including gasoline furnished by the government, the trip is not without risk. Indradyumna Swami said, "The governess told me the Amazon jungle is one of the last frontiers and quite dangerous. We soon learned that a wild jungle is always a wild jungle, and a big river is a precarious place. The first day out the captain told us that if anyone fell overboard, he'd be devoured by piranhas within three minutes."

Indradyumna Swami also mentioned tropical storms, "unlimited"

mosquitoes (some carrying yellow fever and malaria), snakes, and alligators. He said, "It's not like an adventure cruise at Disney World. The heat and the humidity in the jungle have already taken their toll, and we had to send one devotee back."

But to Indradyumna Swami and the other devotees, the satisfaction is worth all the austerities and risks they encounter. "We're hoping Śrīla Prabhupāda is pleased," he said, "and we've already experienced that chanting, dancing, and taking *prasādam* is as popular in the Amazon jungle as it is everywhere else in the world."

New Temple Opens In Hong Kong

Kowloon, Hong Kong—Devotees recently moved from the three out-of-the-way rented flats that have served as the temple here for the last ten years, and they have opened a new temple in the Tsim Sha Tsui business center with help from the local Indian community.

The project was made possible by the Indian Art Circle, a local group that helped raise funds through benefit concerts by famous Indian singers. The first concert, by Asha Bhosle, provided a down payment on a large flat in Tsim Sha Tsui, Hong Kong's trade and tourist center. A second concert, by Anup Jalota, helped finance the renovation plans, drawn by ISKCON's Minister of Architecture, Surabhīrabhipālayantam Swami.

The grand opening, held on Govardhana-pūjā day (Oct. 23), included the installation of a *mūrti* (deity) of Śrīla Prabhupāda and a ribbon-cutting ceremony by Mrs. Rani Hiranand, president of the Indian Arts Circle and chairperson for the fund-raising campaign. Tamāla Krishna Goswami, ISKCON's Governing Body Commissioner for Hong Kong, and Giridhārī Swami welcomed guests and dedicated the new temple.



Mrs. Rani Hiranand addresses the guests at the opening of the new ISKCON center in Hong Kong as Governing Body Commissioner Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami looks on.

Kṛṣṇa consciousness was first introduced in Hong Kong when Śrīla Prabhupāda visited here in the early 1970's. In 1981 the *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* was published in Chinese. Since then more than twenty titles have been printed, including *Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Cantos One and Two. Twenty Chinese devotees go out daily in Vaiṣṇava clothing to distribute Prabhupāda's books door-to-door. To date one-and-a-half million books have been distributed.

NEWS BRIEFS

Guyana President Desmond Hoyt met recently with Agraṇī Swami (ISKCON's Governing Body Commissioner for the Caribbean), Bāla-Kṛṣṇa dāsa, and Rādhā-kuṇḍa dāsi, an ISKCON *gurukula* (elementary school) student. The president received *Back to Godhead* magazines and some of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books. He discussed philosophy with the devotees and told them he reads *Bhagavad-gītā*.

The Bhaktivedanta Archives is working on a project to put all of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books and transcriptions of his lectures on compact disk. Though the manuscripts total about seventy thou-

sand pages, they will all fit on one CD-Rom disk. The disk will no doubt be a valuable research tool. The equipment required to read the disk now costs about \$1,500. Though the project could be finished in less than a year, the Bhaktivedanta Archives must raise \$50,000 to complete it. Contributions are appreciated. (See RESOURCES for the address of the Bhaktivedanta Archives.)

RESOURCES

Hear the message of Kṛṣṇa from His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, founder-ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. Śrīla Prabhupāda's lectures, interviews, and conversations are available on more than seven hundred audiocassettes. Also available, on microfilm: all his letters and transcriptions of his recorded lectures. For a catalog, send \$5 to the Bhaktivedanta Archives, P.O. Box 34453, Los Angeles, CA 90034.

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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 Mādhava (January 5–February 2)

February 2—Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Narottama dāsa Thākura, a famous spiritual master in the disciplic line from Lord Caitanya who composed many devotional songs in Bengali.

Month of Govinda (February 3–March 3)

February 8—Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Thākura, the spiritual master of Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the founder-ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. Fasting till noon.

February 14—Trisprśā Mahā-dvādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans.

February 16—Śrī Śiva-rātri (appearance anniversary of Lord Śiva).

February 18—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Jagannātha dāsa Bābājī, the great devotee in the disciplic line from Lord Caitanya who confirmed Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura's discovery of Lord Caitanya's birthplace.

February 28—Āmalakī Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans.

February 29—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Mādhavendra Purī, the spiritual master of Lord Caitanya's spiritual master.

March 3—Śrī Gaura-pūrṇimā, appearance anniversary of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who is Kṛṣṇa Himself in the role of His own devotee. Fasting till moonrise, followed by feasting.

March 14—Pāpamocanī Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans.

Book Section

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. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda, Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

Third Canto: “The Status Quo”

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

The Battle Between Lord Boar and the Demon Hiranyākṣa

In this installment of our continuing presentation of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, the sage Maitreya describes to Vidura, a great devotee of the Lord, how Lord Viṣṇu in His boar incarnation fought with the powerful demon Hiranyākṣa.

TEXT 7

तं निःसरन्तं सलिलादनुद्रुतो
हिरण्यकेशो द्विरदं यथा श्वषः ।
करालदंष्ट्रोऽशननिखनोऽब्रवीद्
गतहियां किं त्वसतां विगर्हितम् ॥ ७ ॥

*taṁ niḥsarantaṁ salilād anudruto
hiranya-keśo dviradam yathā jhaṣaḥ
karāla-daṁṣtro 'śani-nisvano 'bravīd
gata-hriyāṁ kiṁ tv asatāṁ vigarhitam*

taṁ—Him; *niḥsarantaṁ*—coming out; *salilāt*—from the water; *anudrutaḥ*—chased; *hiranya-keśaḥ*—having golden hair; *dviradam*—an elephant; *yathā*—as; *jhaṣaḥ*—a crocodile; *karāla-daṁṣtraḥ*—having fearful teeth; *aśani-nisvanaḥ*—roaring like thunder; *abravīt*—he said; *gata-hriyāṁ*—for those who are shameless; *kiṁ*—what; *tu*—indeed; *asatām*—for the wretches; *vigarhitam*—reproachable.

TRANSLATION

The demon, who had golden hair on his head and fearful tusks, gave chase to the Lord while He was rising from the water, even as an alligator would chase an elephant. Roaring like thunder, he said: Are You not ashamed of running away before a challenging adversary? There is nothing reproachable for shameless creatures!

PURPORT

When the Lord was coming out of the water, taking the earth in His arms to deliver it, the demon derided Him with insulting words, but the Lord did not care because He was very conscious of His duty. For a dutiful man there is nothing to fear. Similarly, those who are powerful have no fear of derision or unkind words from an enemy. The Lord had nothing to fear from anyone, yet He was merciful to His enemy by neglecting him. Although apparently He fled from the challenge, it was just to protect the earth from calamity that He tolerated Hiranyākṣa's deriding words.

TEXT 8

स गामुदस्तात्सलिलस्य गोचरे
विन्यस्य तस्मामदधात्वसत्तम् ।
अभिष्टुतो विश्वसृजा प्रध्वनै-
रापूर्वमाणो विबुधैः पश्यतोऽरेः ॥ ८ ॥

*sa gām udstāt salilasya gocare
vinyasya tasyām adadhāt sva-sattvam
abhiṣṭuto viśva-srjā prasūnair
āpūryamāṇo vibudhaiḥ paśyato 'reḥ*

saḥ—the Lord; *gām*—the earth; *udastāt*—on the surface; *salilasya*—of the water; *gocare*—within His sight; *vinyasya*—having placed; *tasyām*—to the earth; *adadhāt*—He invested; *sva*—His own; *sattvam*—existence; *abhiṣṭutaḥ*—praised; *viśva-srjā*—by Brahmā (the creator of the universe); *prasūnair*—by flowers; *āpūryamāṇaḥ*—becoming satisfied; *vibudhaiḥ*—by the demigods; *paśyataḥ*—while looking on; *areḥ*—the enemy.

TRANSLATION

The Lord placed the earth within His sight on the surface of the water and transferred to her His own energy in the form of the ability to float on the water. While the enemy stood looking on, Brahmā, the creator of the universe, extolled the Lord, and the other demigods rained flowers on Him.

PURPORT

Those who are demons cannot understand how the Supreme Personality of Godhead floated the earth on water, but to devotees of the Lord this is not a very wonderful act. Not only the earth but many, many millions of planets are floating in the air, and this floating power is endowed upon them by the Lord; there is no other possible explanation. The materialists can explain that the planets are floating by the law of gravitation, but the law of gravitation works under the control or direction of the Supreme Lord. That is the version of *Bhagavad-gītā*, which confirms, by the Lord's statement, that behind the material laws or nature's laws and behind the growth, maintenance, production and evolution of all the planetary systems—behind everything—is the Lord's direction. The Lord's activities could be appreciated only by the demigods, headed by Brahmā, and therefore when they saw the uncommon prowess of the Lord in keeping the earth on the surface of the water, they showered flowers on Him in appreciation of His transcendental activity.

TEXT 9

परानुषक्तं तपनीयोपकल्पं
महागदं काञ्चनचित्रदंशम् ।
मर्माण्यभीक्ष्णं प्रतुदन्तं दुरुक्तैः
प्रचण्डमन्युः प्रहसन्तं वभाषे ॥ ९ ॥

*parānuṣaktaṁ tapanīyopakalpaṁ
mahā-gadam kāñcana-citra-daṁṣam
marmāṇy abhikṣṇaṁ pratudantaṁ duruktaiḥ
pracanda-manyuḥ prahasantaṁ vabhāṣe*

parā—from behind; *anuṣaktaṁ*—who followed very closely; *tapanīya-upakalpaṁ*—who had a considerable amount of gold ornaments; *mahā-gadam*—with a great mace; *kāñcana*—golden; *citra*—beautiful;

daṁṣam—armor; marmāṇi—the core of the heart; abhikṣam—constantly; pratudantam—piercing; duruktaiḥ—by abusive words; pra-caṇḍa—terrible; manyuḥ—anger; prahasam—laughing; tam—to him; babhāse—He said.

TRANSLATION

The demon, who had a wealth of ornaments, bangles and beautiful golden armor on his body, chased the Lord from behind with a great mace. The Lord tolerated his piercing ill words, but in order to reply to him, He expressed His terrible anger.

PURPORT

The Lord could have chastised the demon immediately while the demon was deriding the Lord with ill words, but the Lord tolerated him to please the demigods and to show that they should not be afraid of demons while discharging their duties. Therefore His toleration was displayed mainly to drive away the fears of the demigods, who should know that the Lord is always present to protect them. The demon's derision of the Lord was just like the barking of dogs; the Lord did not care about it, since He was doing His own work in delivering the earth from the midst of the water. Materialistic demons always possess large amounts of gold in various shapes, and they think that a large amount of gold, physical strength and popularity can save them from the wrath of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

TEXT 10

श्रीभगवानुवाच

सत्यं वयं भो वनगोचरा मृगा
युष्मद्विधान्मृगये ग्रामसिंहान् ।
न मृत्युपाशैः प्रतिमुक्तस्य वीरा
विकत्थनं तव गृह्णन्त्यमद्र ॥१०॥

śrī-bhagavān uvāca

satyaṁ vayaṁ bho vana-gocarā mṛgā
yuṣmad-vidhān mṛgaye grāma-siṁhān
na mṛtyu-pāśaiḥ pratimuktasya vīrā
vikatthanam tava gṛhṇanty abhadra

śrī-bhagavān uvāca—the Supreme Personality of Godhead said; satyaṁ—indeed; vayaṁ—We; bho—O; vana-gocarā—dwelling in the forest; mṛgāḥ—creatures; yuṣmat-vidhān—like you; mṛgaye—I am searching to kill; grāma-siṁhān—dogs; na—not; mṛtyu-pāśaiḥ—by the bonds of death; pratimuktasya—of one who is bound; vīrāḥ—the heroes; vikatthanam—loose talk; tava—your; gṛhṇanti—take notice of; abhadra—O mischievous one.

TRANSLATION

The Personality of Godhead said: Indeed, We are creatures of the jungle, and We are searching after hunting dogs like you. One who is freed from the entanglement of death has no fear from the loose talk in which you are indulging, for you are bound up by the laws of death.

PURPORT

Demons and atheistic persons can go on insulting the Supreme Personality of Godhead, but they forget that they are subjected to the laws of birth and death. They think that simply by decrying the existence of the Supreme Lord or defying His stringent laws of nature, one can be freed from the clutches of birth and death. In *Bhagavad-gītā* it is said that simply by understanding the transcendental nature of God one can go back home, back to Godhead. But demons and atheistic persons do not try to understand the nature of the Supreme Lord; therefore they remain in the entanglement of birth and death.

TEXT 11

एते वयं न्यासहरा रसौकसां
गतद्वियो गदया द्रावितास्ते ।

तिहामहेऽपि कथञ्चिदाज्ञौ
स्वयं क यामो बलिनोत्पाद्य वैरम् ॥११॥

ete vayaṁ nyāsa-harā rasaukasām
gata-hriyo gadayā drāvitās te
tiṣṭhāmahe 'tāpi kathañcid ājau
stheyam kva yāmo balinotpādyā vairam

ete—Ourselves; vayaṁ—We; nyāsa—of the charge; harāḥ—thieves; rasā-okasām—of the inhabitants of Rasātala; gata-hriyaḥ—shameless; gadayā—by the mace; drāvitāḥ—chased; te—your; tiṣṭhāmahe—We shall stay; atha api—nevertheless; kathañcit—somehow; ājau—on the battlefield; stheyam—We must stay; kva—where; yāmaḥ—can We go; balinā—with a powerful enemy; utpādyā—having created; vairam—enmity.

TRANSLATION

Certainly We have stolen the charge of the inhabitants of Rasātala and have lost all shame. Although bitten by your powerful mace, I shall stay here in the water for some time because, having created enmity with a powerful enemy, I now have no place to go.

PURPORT

The demon should have known that God cannot be driven out of any place, for He is all-pervading. Demons think of their possessions as their property, but actually everything belongs to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who can take anything at any time He likes.

TEXT 12

त्वं पद्धानां किल यूथपाधिपो
घटस्व . नोऽस्वस्तय आभ्यन्तः ।
संस्थाप्य चास्मान्प्रमृज्याश्व स्वकानां
यः स्वां प्रतिज्ञां नातिपिपत्यसम्यः ॥१२॥

tvam pad-rathānām kila yūthapādhipo
ghaṭasva no 'svastaya āśv anūhaḥ
saṁsthāpya cāsmān pramṛjāśru svakānām
yaḥ svām pratijñām nātipiparty asabhyah

tvam—you; pad-rathānām—of foot soldiers; kila—indeed; yūthapa—of the leaders; adhipaḥ—the commander; ghaṭasva—take steps; naḥ—Our; asvastaye—for defeat; āśu—promptly; anūhaḥ—without consideration; saṁsthāpya—having killed; ca—and; asmān—Us; pramṛja—wipe away; āśru—tears; svakānām—of your kith and kin; yaḥ—he who; svām—his own; pratijñām—promised word; na—not; atipiparty—fulfills; asabhyah—not fit to sit in an assembly.

TRANSLATION

You are supposed to be the commander of many foot soldiers, and now you may take prompt steps to overthrow Us. Give up all your foolish talk and wipe out the cares of your kith and kin by slaying Us. One may be proud, yet he does not deserve a seat in an assembly if he fails to fulfill his promised word.

PURPORT

A demon may be a great soldier and commander of a large number of infantry, but in the presence of the Supreme Personality of Godhead he is powerless and is destined to die. The Lord, therefore, challenged the demon not to go away, but to fulfill his promised word to kill Him.

TEXT 13

मैत्रेय उवाच

सोऽपि क्षिप्तो मगवता प्रलब्धश्च रुषा मृशम् ।
आजहारोल्बणं क्रोधं क्रीड्यमानोऽहिरादिव ॥१३॥

maitreya uvāca
so 'dhikṣipto bhagavatā
pralabdhāś ca ruṣā bhṛṣam

ājahārolbaṇaṁ krodhaṁ
kṛīḍyamāno 'hi-rāḍ iva

maitreya—the great sage Maitreya; *uvāca*—said; *saḥ*—the demon; *adhikṣiptaḥ*—having been insulted; *bhagavatā*—by the Personality of Godhead; *pralabdhaḥ*—ridiculed; *ca*—and; *ruṣā*—angry; *bhṛṣam*—greatly; *ājahāra*—collected; *ulbaṇam*—great; *krodham*—anger; *kṛīḍyamānaḥ*—being played with; *ahi-rāḍ*—a great cobra; *iva*—like.

TRANSLATION

Śrī Maitreya said: The demon, being thus challenged by the Personality of Godhead, became angry and agitated, and he trembled in anger like a challenged cobra.

PURPORT

A cobra is very fierce before ordinary persons, but before an enchanter who can play with him, he is a plaything. Similarly, a demon may be very powerful in his own domain, but before the Lord he is insignificant. The demon Rāvaṇa was a fierce figure before the demigods, but when he was before Lord Rāmacandra he trembled and prayed to his deity, Lord Śiva, but to no avail.

TEXT 14

सृजन्मर्षितः श्वासान्मनुप्रचलितेन्द्रियः ।
आसाद्य तरसा दैत्यो गदयान्यहनद्धरिम् ॥१४॥

srjann amarṣitaḥ śvāsān
manyu-pracalitendriyaḥ
āsādy tarasā daityo
gadayā nyahanad dharim

srjan—giving out; *amarṣitaḥ*—being angry; *śvāsān*—breaths; *manyu*—by wrath; *pracalita*—agitated; *indriyaḥ*—whose senses; *āsādyā*—attacking; *tarasā*—quickly; *daityaḥ*—the demon; *gadayā*—with his mace; *nyahanat*—struck; *harim*—Lord Hari.

TRANSLATION

Hissing indignantly, all his senses shaken by wrath, the demon quickly sprang upon the Lord and dealt Him a blow with his powerful mace.

TEXT 15

भगवांस्तु गदावेगं विसृष्टं रिपुणोरसि ।
अवञ्चयतिरक्षीनो योगारूढ इवान्तकम् ॥१५॥

bhagavāns tu gadā-vegam
visṛṣṭam ripuṇorasi
avañcayat tiraścīno
yogārūḍha ivāntakam

bhagavān—the Lord; *tu*—however; *gadā-vegam*—the blow of the mace; *visṛṣṭam*—thrown; *ripuṇā*—by the enemy; *urasi*—at His breast; *avañcayat*—dodged; *tiraścīnaḥ*—aside; *yoga-ārūḍhaḥ*—an accomplished yogi; *iva*—like; *antakam*—death.

TRANSLATION

The Lord, however, by moving slightly aside, dodged the violent mace-blow aimed at His breast by the enemy, just as an accomplished yogi would elude death.

PURPORT

The example is given herein that the perfect yogi can overcome a deathblow although it is offered by the laws of nature. It is useless for a demon to beat the transcendental body of the Lord with a powerful mace, for no one can surpass His prowess. Those who are advanced transcendentalists are freed from the laws of nature, and even a deathblow cannot act on them. Superficially it may be seen that a yogi is attacked by a deathblow, but by the grace of the Lord he can overcome many such at-

tacks for the service of the Lord. As the Lord exists by His own independent prowess, by the grace of the Lord the devotees also exist for His service.

TEXT 16

पुनर्गदां स्वामादाय भ्रामयन्तमभीक्ष्णशः ।
अभ्यधावद्धरिः क्रुद्धः संरम्भादष्टदच्छदम् ॥१६॥

punar gadām svām ādāya
bhrāmayantam abhikṣṇaśaḥ
abhyadhāvad dharīḥ kruddhaḥ
saṁrambhād aṣṭa-dacchadam

punaḥ—again; *gadām*—mace; *svām*—his; *ādāya*—having taken; *bhrāmayantam*—brandishing; *abhikṣṇaśaḥ*—repeatedly; *abhyadhāvat*—rushed to meet; *dharīḥ*—the Personality of Godhead; *kruddhaḥ*—angry; *saṁrambhāt*—in rage; *aṣṭa*—bitten; *dacchadam*—his lip.

TRANSLATION

The Personality of Godhead now exhibited His anger and rushed to meet the demon, who bit his lip in rage, took up his mace again and began to repeatedly brandish it about.

TEXT 17

ततश्च गदयारतिं दक्षिणस्यां भ्रुवि प्रधुः ।
आजघ्ने स तु तां सौम्य गदया कोविदोऽहनत् ॥१७॥

tataś ca gadayāratiṁ
dakṣiṇasyāṁ bhruvi prabhuḥ
ājaghe sa tu tāṁ saumya
gadayā kovido 'hanat

tataḥ—then; *ca*—and; *gadayā*—with His mace; *arātim*—the enemy; *dakṣiṇasyām*—on the right; *bhruvi*—on the brow; *prabhuḥ*—the Lord; *ājaghe*—struck; *saḥ*—the Lord; *tu*—but; *tām*—the mace; *saumya*—O gentle Vidura; *gadayā*—with his mace; *kovidāḥ*—expert; *ahanat*—he saved himself.

TRANSLATION

Then with His mace the Lord struck the enemy on the right of his brow, but since the demon was expert in fighting, O gentle Vidura, he protected himself by a maneuver of his own mace.

TEXT 18

एवं गदाम्यां गुर्वीम्यां हर्यक्षो हरिरेव च ।
जिगीषया सुसंरब्धान्योन्यमभिजघ्नतुः ॥१८॥

evam gadābhyām gurvibhyām
haryakṣo harir eva ca
jigīṣayā susaṁrabdhaṁ
anyonyam abhijaghnatuḥ

evam—in this way; *gadābhyām*—with their maces; *gurvibhyām*—huge; *haryakṣaḥ*—the demon Haryakṣa (Hiraṇyākṣa); *hariḥ*—Lord Hari; *eva*—certainly; *ca*—and; *jigīṣayā*—with a desire for victory; *susaṁrabdhaḥ*—enraged; *anyonyam*—each other; *abhijaghnatuḥ*—they struck.

TRANSLATION

In this way, the demon Haryakṣa and the Lord, the Personality of Godhead, struck each other with their huge maces, each enraged and seeking his own victory.

PURPORT

Haryakṣa is another name for Hiraṇyākṣa, the demon.

(continued in next issue)

THE VEDIC

Transcendental Commentaries

IT'S NOT FUNNY

by Kuṇḍali dāsa

When Mikhail Gorbachev's government ran an ad campaign in the *Wall Street Journal* inviting Western corporations to do business in the Soviet Union, many Americans became convinced about his commitment to *glasnost*, his openness policy. This action of Gorbachev's, along with his seemingly greater enthusiasm than America's President for a solution to the nuclear arms race, has won him kudos in the West.

But Ronald Reagan—not to be outdone by his rival—has a new strategy for dealing with the Soviets: joking. In place of his usual heavy rhetoric against Moscow, he now tells jokes lampooning life under the hammer and sickle. The practice allows him to point up differences between the Russian and American societies, but without a harsh or antagonistic edge.

One joke Mr. Reagan enjoys telling is about the man who goes to a state agency in Moscow to buy a car. After the deal is settled, the buyer asks when he can expect delivery on the car.

"You can take delivery in exactly ten years," comes the reply.

"Good. And will I have it in the morning or the afternoon?" asks the anxious buyer.

"What will it matter ten years from today whether you get your car in the morning or the afternoon?" queries the state official.

"Well," the buyer says, "the plumber's coming that morning."

A White House aide said Mr. Reagan's joke-telling reflects his genuine sympathy for the Russian people, who he believes are getting a raw deal from their government.

The Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees in Russia can attest to that. *Glasnost* has not opened to them yet. Twenty-three devotees have been locked up on false charges and subjected to various forms of psychiatric abuse because of their practicing Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Under those circumstances, I imagine they must on occasion long for a system where they could prac-

tice the religion and life-style of their choice without official harassment, as we are able to do in America.

Nevertheless, a Kṛṣṇa conscious Russian, being a transcendentalist, would look upon Mr. Reagan's oblique pointing to Russia's foibles as an instance of the pot calling the kettle black. A transcendentalist would not just look at the material disparities between the two nations and agree that one nation is so much better off than the other. That would be folly to him, like saying a heap of wet dung is better than a heap of dry dung, when, in point of fact, it's all dung.

A Kṛṣṇa conscious transcendentalist

ments of one nation over another: speedier car delivery, a better phone system, one-stop supermarkets, bigger and better bombs and weapons.

Ignorant of the unique opportunity of human life—the chance to transcend the body and taste the happiness of the soul—people imagine that material amenities will solve the problems of life, when in fact they keep people in ignorance. Both the difficulties of waiting for a car in Russia and the ease and speed of acquiring one in America keep people in ignorance by distracting them from introspection that may lead to self-realization.

In either case the result is the same: Peo-



sees that everyone in this world is getting a raw deal, but the rawness is not defined by how slowly the plumber or the new car comes. The rawness stems from ignorance.

Though they will rarely admit it, most people don't know the actual standard of human progress and happiness; consequently, they don't know the standard of good government either. That's why they place a higher value on the trivial achieve-

ple squander their human life and die ignorant of their full potential. A saintly transcendentalist sees, therefore, that ignorance is the problem everywhere.

The solution is knowledge—not material knowledge, but spiritual knowledge, which governments should provide. Instead materialistic governments keep their people in ignorance. By giving undue emphasis to nationalism, leaders dis-

OBSERVER

ntary on the Issues of the Day

tract people from the real problem. The people mistakenly place higher value on mundane achievements and conclude that one government is giving a raw deal but another one isn't.

A transcendentalist, on the other hand, sees that all versions of materialism—whether theistic consumerism or atheistic communism—are based on exploiting the planet's resources for sense gratification, and thus create a hellish condition for human society.

This brings to mind another joke Mr. Reagan is fond of telling, about the American who makes acquaintance with a Russian while on a visit to Moscow. Inevitably, the two start comparing countries.

"In America," the tourist says, "I can stand in front of the White House and yell, 'To hell with Ronald Reagan,' and nothing would happen to me."

"Well," comes the reply, "here in Moscow I can stand in front of the Kremlin and shout, 'To hell with Ronald Reagan,' too, and nothing would happen to me either."

Of course, no devotee would wish that fate on Ronald Reagan or anyone else. Yet a devotee, whether Russian or American, would ask, "What does it profit a nation if it gains the whole world but suffers the loss of its citizens' souls?"

BEYOND PUPPY LOVE

by Tivrabhakti dāsa

A Buffalo, New York, man was recently sentenced to a thirty-day jail term for killing his ten-week-old mixed-breed terrier puppy, making him the first person ever to serve time in the local jail for the death of a domesticated animal.

City court judge Michael Broderick imposed the jail term on Michael Haley, 30, who broke the neck of his puppy, Bruno, and watched television as his pet slowly died.

Judge Broderick said that Haley's act was "unforgivable" and that the offense warranted a jail term because it involved the "killing of a living creature."

We would like to commend Judge Brod-

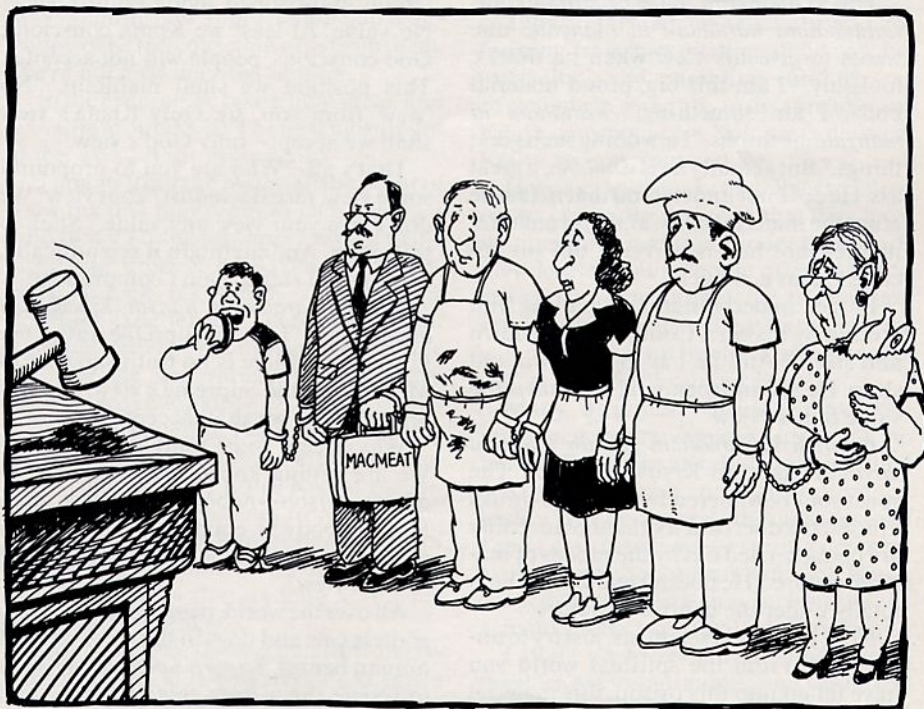
erick for his decision, even though as devotees of Kṛṣṇa, the father of all creatures, we might have suggested a stiffer punishment for Mr. Haley. Nonetheless, we hope this case will set the precedent for future cases involving the "unforgivable act of killing a living creature."

Unknowningly, the judge has touched upon a point enunciated in the pages of the spiritual classic *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*: any living being who takes birth in a state, including human beings and animals, has the primary right to live under the protection of the government. Therefore, anyone who unnecessarily kills an animal

the one who kills the animal, the one who sells the meat, the one who purchases it, the one who cooks it, and the one who eats it. They all become implicated in the reaction to the killing. If we give another living entity unnecessary pain, by the laws of nature we will certainly be punished by a similar pain.

So, despite Judge Broderick's intelligent decision in the Hayes case, we can't fail to note a possible hypocrisy: odds are he's a meat-eater and therefore guilty of the same crime as Mr. Haley.

We might also point out another apparent double standard: the law requires



"I find the defendants guilty of conspiracy to kill innocent living creatures."

should be punished. All living beings, in whatever shape they may be, are sons of God, and by the law of the Supreme Lord no one has the right to kill another living being.

According to *Manu-saṁhitā* ("the lawbook for mankind"), when animals are slaughtered for meat, six persons connected with the killing are responsible: the one who gives permission for the killing,

punishment for killing one species—man's best friend, the dog—but does not extend that law to the millions and billions of animals slaughtered every year and served in restaurants and at dinner tables around the world.

Still, we say "bravo" to Judge Broderick, for his decision could be the beginning of a judicial trend to stop the senseless killing of all innocent living creatures. ❏

ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA SPEAKS OUT

The Highest Law of Nature

This is the conclusion of a conversation that took place between His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda and biochemist Thoudam Singh, Ph.D., in Bhubanesvara, India, on February 3, 1977.

Dr. Singh: Nowadays it seems everyone has his “view.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes. Every rascal will give his own “view.” But we don’t have to accept this.

“Modern world” means “I think,” “in my opinion,” “in my view.” This is going on. But we don’t accept this.

Dr. Singh: We hear these very words all the time from so-called scientific authorities. “In my opinion.” “In my view.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: In your opinion. In your view. But first of all, who are you? A soul shackled inside a material body, totally under the control of the material laws. So what is the value of your view?

This is *ahankāra*, false ego. *Ahankāra-vimūḍhātmā kartāham iti manyate*: one wants to give his view when he thinks, foolishly, “I am this big, proud material body. I am something.” *Kartāham iti manyate*: he thinks, “I am doing such great things.” But actually he is *vimūḍha*, a great ass. He does not understand that in fact he is not the material body, and that material nature—not he—is carrying out his so-called great activities.

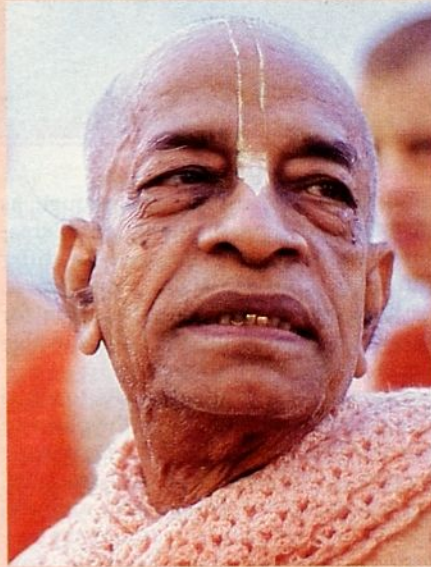
In fact, material nature is pulling him around by his ear: “Come here. Lie down and sleep.” And he has to lie down and sleep. He’s so independent. So what is the value of his “view”?

Prakṛteḥ kriyamāṇāni guṇaiḥ karmāṇi sarvaśaḥ. As Lord Kṛṣṇa explains, “The spirit soul bewildered by false ego thinks himself the doer of activities that in reality are being carried out by the modes of material nature.” He doesn’t realize that he is totally under the control of nature.

Now, you rascal scientists, just try to understand. From the spiritual world you have fallen into this prison, this material world. You have your prison uniform, this material body. So shall I have to accept your view? You are a fallen criminal, and I have to accept your view? What is the value of your view?

Dr. Singh: These rascal scientists are so arrogant. They won’t listen.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Make them listen. “What is the value of your proud view? You have become a criminal. You are being punished. And we have to accept your view?”



Again, what is the value of this materially imprisoned living entity’s view? No value. At least we Kṛṣṇa conscious, God conscious, people will not accept it. This position we shall maintain. “No ‘view’ from you, sir. Only Kṛṣṇa’s view shall we accept—only God’s view.”

That’s all. “Who are you to propound some view, rascal scientist? Your view? We don’t give your view any value.” Stick to this point. And maintain it scientifically. Then it will stand. Don’t compromise.

Mataḥ parataram nānyat kiñcid asti dhanañjaya. “I am the supreme truth,” the Lord says. “There is no truth superior to Me.” This is the Supreme’s view. The Supreme’s view we shall accept.

Why accept some puny rascal’s view? We are getting knowledge from the supreme person—nobody is greater than Him; nobody is equal to Him. So why shall we accept some puny nonsensical rascal’s view?

All over the world, people are becoming godless cats and dogs in the mere dress of human beings. So *para-upakāra*: we have to rescue them from this nonsense and make them truly happy—restore their God consciousness. The first step is to disprove their nonsensical pseudoscientific “view” that life comes from matter, with no need for the soul or the supreme soul. This is simply incorrect.

Dr. Singh: How true. This materialistic view is incorrect. So we are holding these nonsensical ideas—this pseudoscience—under the light of honest scientific scrutiny. And we’re showing that it is all wrong.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: That is required. Now,

as you say, sometimes scientists bring data to amplify the God conscious understanding. And that is nice. We can employ their data to restore people’s sense of God. **Dr. Singh:** Yes. Unfortunately, pseudoscientists often use the phrase “the laws of nature” to imply a universe without a lawmaker. So to suggest the lawmaker, we can say, “the higher laws of nature.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Oh, yes. These so-called scientists—they do not even know all the laws of nature.

Dr. Singh: They don’t know all the natural laws. They know only a few.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes. And they do not know who the lawmaker is. They do not know that the laws of nature can be changed by the lawmaker. It is just as we see in ordinary, mundane governmental affairs: today something is the law, but tomorrow the government can change it. So this is the real meaning of God: the supreme governor, the person who makes the natural law—and who can change it.

Kṛṣṇa says, *daivī hy eṣā guṇa-mayī mama māyā duratyayā*: “No one can overcome My natural laws.” And then He goes on to say, “But anyone who surrenders unto Me—he can cross beyond My natural laws.” That is the difference between the ordinary being and the supreme being. God can change the laws.

For example, Kṛṣṇa’s natural law states that if you have sinned, you must suffer. Now, you and I are not God; so if we break His law and commit sin, we must suffer. That’s all. But Kṛṣṇa can change the law and say, *aham tvam sarva-pāpabhayo mokṣayiṣyāmi*: “Even though you have sinned, I will deliver you from the resultant suffering. Don’t be afraid. Simply surrender to Me.”

How can Kṛṣṇa say this? He can say this because He is the Supreme. So here is God realization. Here is the supreme science: to realize, “Yes, all around me I see so many natural laws that no one can change. Certainly I cannot change them. I am under the laws of nature. Therefore, let me search out that one person who is above the laws of nature—that one person who made the laws and can even change them. I must make Him the goal of my life.”

Dr. Singh: That’s why it seems best to say “the higher laws of nature.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes. And be sure to mention the highest law of nature: God, the lawmaker—who can do anything, even change the laws—requests us, “Just become My devotee and surrender to Me. I’ll protect you.”

LORD CAITANYA

(continued from page 8)

process. We don't take directly. So, while the vegetables have life, Kṛṣṇa says, *patraṁ puṣpaṁ phalaṁ toyam yo me bhaktyā prayacchati tad aham . . . aśnāmi*: "If one lovingly offers Me a leaf, a flower, a fruit, or water, I will accept it." Then there is no sin in eating the vegetables.

We have invited Kṛṣṇa as our guest, and He has consented to come here. So we must offer Him the foods He wants. That is proper etiquette. If some respectable guest comes to your house, you should ask

him, "What would you like to eat, sir?" Whatever he asks for, you have to supply. That is the real way of receiving a guest.

So Kṛṣṇa says, "Give Me food among these items: fruits, vegetables, grains, and milk products. And that also with devotion, not neglectfully. Then I will accept it." Therefore we prepare hundreds of items with these ingredients and offer them to Kṛṣṇa, and you can also do that. They are all delicious and full of vitamins. Then why should you unnecessarily kill the poor animals and become vicious and sinful?

This is Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu's

teaching: Live peacefully, be a gentleman, realize God, and make your life happy in this world and the next. He wanted this teaching spread to every town, every city, every village in the world. And the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement is just trying to serve Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu. You can see how beneficial this Kṛṣṇa consciousness is. Please don't be blind, but try to consider it a little liberally, without any—what is it called?—sophistry. Without any bias or prejudice. Don't be carried away by prejudice. Try to understand the philosophy of Caitanya Mahāprabhu and be happy.

Thank you very much.



Join the Dance?

(continued from page 7)

who does so is considered to be representing Śrīla Vyāsadeva. He must not speak anything contrary to Vyāsadeva's conclusions. I get the opportunity about once a week to give the *Bhāgavatam* class, and I always find it to be a challenging and enlivening experience.

After speaking for about half an hour, the person conducting the class opens for discussion. Śrīla Prabhupāda said that his followers should never be "dull-headed" but should apply their intelligence to understanding the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. In the *Bhāgavatam* class devotees sometimes offer challenges, testing the Vedic conclusions. Or they ask for clarification on points raised by the speaker or the text. These discussions often bring about lively debates, yet they always end with the superiority of Vedic wisdom shining forth.

Following the discussion the members of our community take breakfast together, relishing *prasādam* (food offered to Kṛṣṇa) while conversing or listening to a reading from one of our many texts on the science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. By the time breakfast is over, it's nine o'clock. Enlivened by six hours of spiritual practices, and refreshed with Kṛṣṇa's *prasādam*, I'm ready to begin my day's work.

Other devotees are ready to start work, too. Some have duties running the temple, some of them go out for preaching, and others tend to their businesses or go to their places of employment.

At *Back to Godhead's* offices, I edit most of the articles that go into the magazine. Working with other members of the *Back to Godhead* staff, I also help plan and select articles, illustrations, captions, titles, subtitles, and so forth. I answer readers' letters, some of which are used in our "Letters" column, and I correspond with contributors to the magazine. In addition, I try to write articles regularly. It is challenging and satisfying work, and I feel fortunate to be able to contribute toward spreading

Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

At 1:00 P.M. I break for lunch, which Prāṇadā has prepared at our apartment and offered to our deity of Śrīla Prabhupāda. Then I return to the office and work until around 6:30 P.M.

Prāṇadā and I spend the evening together reading Śrīla Prabhupāda's books. We don't own a television. Even though there may be something of value on TV, we feel our time is better spent in the pure association of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books. Though we read them every day, we're always gaining new appreciation and realization of Kṛṣṇa consciousness from them. We're not growing tired of them.

In the evening we take a light meal, and we retire around 8:30. The next morning at three, we start the cycle again.

Though from the materialistic point of view my day may seem to lack variety, I find that if I diligently apply myself to the purifying process of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, I lack no variety of satisfying spiritual experiences. There is plenty of external variety even in regulated temple life, but the real variety, the real taste, takes place internally.

Like everyone else, I want to feel that my activities have value. As an aspiring devotee of the Supreme Lord, Kṛṣṇa, I know that my real worth comes from my being an eternal spirit soul, an eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa. I know—both theoretically and by my experience—that as long as I serve Kṛṣṇa, I'll be happy.

Everyone can serve Kṛṣṇa. It's everyone's spiritual, constitutional right. If you want to serve Kṛṣṇa, despite the burdens of social, professional, and family responsibilities, you will find a way. In the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement there is a whole range of services available, and as Kṛṣṇa explains in *Bhagavad-gītā*, if one cannot serve Him directly by preaching, he can give money to help the preaching work. Kṛṣṇa sees this as valuable service and as the process for purifying one's ordinary work.

In many ways my situation is ideal for making spiritual advancement—I live

near the temple, I work directly for spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and I don't have many worldly responsibilities. While the description of my day may sound simplistic or unrealistic, actually what I have described is my normal day, which changes slightly for things like taking my wife grocery shopping once a week or taking my car to a mechanic once in a while.

But no matter what your occupation, if you follow the rules and regulations for advancing in Kṛṣṇa consciousness—chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa regularly and refraining from meat-eating, illicit sex, intoxication, and gambling—and if you contribute in some way to the spreading of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, you are a devotee. Kṛṣṇa accepts your service.

Devotees try to make their lives so full of Kṛṣṇa conscious activities that they have no time for things that hinder their spiritual development. People often claim to have no time for spiritual life, but if we are serious about spiritual advancement, we will find time for it by eliminating unnecessary activities from our lives.

Many activities outside Kṛṣṇa consciousness may appear innocent to materialistic persons, but because such activities increase our absorption in bodily consciousness—the antithesis of Kṛṣṇa consciousness—aspiring devotees avoid them. Serious students of Kṛṣṇa consciousness know that such mundane activities retard spiritual advancement.

I don't go to restaurants, nightclubs, theaters, or football games, and I don't feel I'm missing anything. These so-called joys of life are insignificant compared to the pleasure I experience in my regular activities, in the association of people who are seriously trying to purify their consciousness so they can experience life—real life—to the fullest.

We aren't missing out on anything. We have experienced many things, and now we're experiencing Kṛṣṇa consciousness. We're not naive. And we're not wallflowers. We're just dancing to the beat of a different drummer.



NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

The Meaning of the Mahābhārata

As the Festival of India spreads around the world, epics such as the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata* grow in popularity. For example, a recent dramatic rendition of *Mahābhārata* was acclaimed as “a triumph of sustained inspiration and high intelligence.” Devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa are particularly pleased to see the *Mahābhārata* made popular, since *Mahābhārata* is known as “the *Veda* of Kṛṣṇa” and contains the *Bhagavad-gītā* as its most important chapter. But as with all spiritual subject matters, the original intention of the Vedic epics must be preserved. If in a rendition of *Mahābhārata* the scripture is misunderstood, one goes away from it thinking that Kṛṣṇa is but an incidental character or a faulty human being.

Mahābhārata literally means “the story of the greater kingdom of Bhārata-varṣa.” It describes the history of the ancient world empire, formerly known as Bhārata-varṣa. Comprising some one hundred thousand couplets, the *Mahābhārata* is the longest poem in world literature. The epic relates how the pious Pāṇḍava brothers overthrew the demoniac dynasty of the Kurus. The Kurus had cheated the five Pāṇḍavas of their right to the throne, exiled them to a forest and, on their return, denied them their land. The work centers on the ensuing eighteen-day battle between the Kurus and their cousins, the Pāṇḍavas.

The *Mahābhārata* is Vedic scripture, but it was especially composed for the uneducated classes. The essence of what is presented in *Vedānta-sūtra* as terse philosophical codes is given in the *Mahābhārata* as a saga of palace intrigues, chivalry, and the loves of heroes and heroines. But the *Mahābhārata* should never be treated as a mundane literature or as fiction. The status of the *Mahābhārata* is described in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.4.25):

Out of compassion, the great sage Vyāsadeva thought it wise to edit the *Vedas* in order to enable men to achieve the ultimate goal of life. Thus he compiled the great historical narration called the *Mahābhārata* for the less intellectual masses.

The statement that the *Mahābhārata* is intended for the less intelligent should not be considered a slur on either the work or its audience. The profound subjects of the *Vedas* had to be carefully explained even to the greatest

sages. Unless one practices *yoga* and purifies one's mind and senses, one cannot understand the Absolute Truth. The ultimate goal of Vedic knowledge is to know Lord Kṛṣṇa as the Personality of Godhead, but this Personality is rarely understood. Therefore for the general mass of people the powerful, kind-hearted sage Vyāsadeva presented the *Mahābhārata*. This does not make the *Mahābhārata* less important, but rather, as Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “In this age, the *Mahābhārata* is more essential than the original *Vedas*.”

The purpose of the *Mahābhārata* is to administer the philosophy of the *Vedas*, and therefore within the *Mahābhārata* the summary *Veda*, known as *Bhagavad-gītā*, was placed. Śrīla Vyāsadeva is the author of all the Vedic literatures, and he is considered an incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa. So Vyāsadeva and Lord Kṛṣṇa, who are both on the transcendental plane, collaborated in doing good to the fallen souls of this age by giving *Bhagavad-gītā*, the essence of all Vedic knowledge. It is the first book of spiritual values and contains all the sublime teachings of the *Upaniṣads* and the *Vedānta-sūtra*, but in a way that can be assimilated quickly and easily.

Still, Vedic literature must always be understood with the guidance of a bona fide spiritual master or pure devotee. One of the most critical issues to be understood rightly is the identity of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Although Kṛṣṇa is repeatedly addressed in the verses of *Bhagavad-gītā* as “Śrī Bhagavān” (the Supreme Personality of Godhead), nondevotees often try to dismiss Kṛṣṇa or relegate Him to minor importance. This gross misinterpretation renders the actual meaning of *Bhagavad-gītā* incomprehensible. Śrī Kṛṣṇa states the conclusion of *Bhagavad-gītā*: “Give up all religion and surrender to Me. I will release you from all the reactions to your sins; do not fear.” Without understanding that Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Truth and the object of devotion, we miss the *Bhagavad-gītā*'s unifying goal.

Although *Bhagavad-gītā* is the essence of *Mahābhārata*, set within the epic like a jewel within a ring, the activities of the Pāṇḍavas take up more verses than the direct activities of Kṛṣṇa. This is in tune with Vyāsadeva's intent: to give his readers interesting instructions that bring them to the level of understanding *Bhagavad-gītā*. Yet whenever Kṛṣṇa does appear in the *Mahābhārata*, we

should understand that He is the same Supreme Person who speaks the *Bhagavad-gītā*. The Pāṇḍavas never misunderstood Kṛṣṇa to be an ordinary person, and neither should we. But commentators throw doubt on some of Kṛṣṇa's activities in the *Mahābhārata*, such as His advising Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira to tell a lie.

When Kṛṣṇa asked His devotee Yudhiṣṭhira to lie, Yudhiṣṭhira hesitated because he had never told a lie. Kṛṣṇa was testing His devotee, and only because of Yudhiṣṭhira's ultimate surrender to Kṛṣṇa did he keep his reputation as a pure devotee of the Lord. Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and all His actions are absolute. When to the mundane vision He appears to steal butter from the householders in Vṛndāvana, when He dances at night with the *gopīs*, or when He asks Yudhiṣṭhira to transcend ordinary morality, these are all *līlā*, or pastimes, of the Supreme Lord. They are not acts that can be imitated.

In presenting *Mahābhārata*, Vyāsadeva intended to give spiritual instruction, and yet he was criticized by his spiritual master, Nārada, for his undue emphasis on ordinary topics. Nārada said that human beings already have a strong inclination to act for sense gratification, and if this is sanctioned by religion, then it will be a great disservice to humanity and to God.

Nārada therefore advised Vyāsa to compile another scripture, which would be free of all material forms of religion, and which could elevate people to pure love of God. Vyāsadeva then meditated and received the divine vision for describing the ultimate Vedic scripture, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

In an age where time is short and we cannot pore over voluminous scriptures, we should concentrate on scriptures that can elevate us directly to pure love of God. *Bhagavad-gītā*, the essence of *Mahābhārata*, will serve this purpose excellently. For further study, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* gives us the full pastimes and teachings of Lord Kṛṣṇa. And when we find time to read the *Mahābhārata*, it should be with an understanding that Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Lord. Having understood this conclusion from the *Bhagavad-gītā*, we can then enjoy readings or theatrical renditions of *Mahābhārata*, provided they are performed by those who know the conclusion of the Vedic literature. —SDG

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