

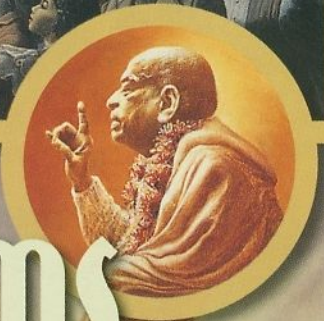
Godhead is light. Nescience is darkness. Where there is Godhead there is no nescience.

BACK TO GODHEAD



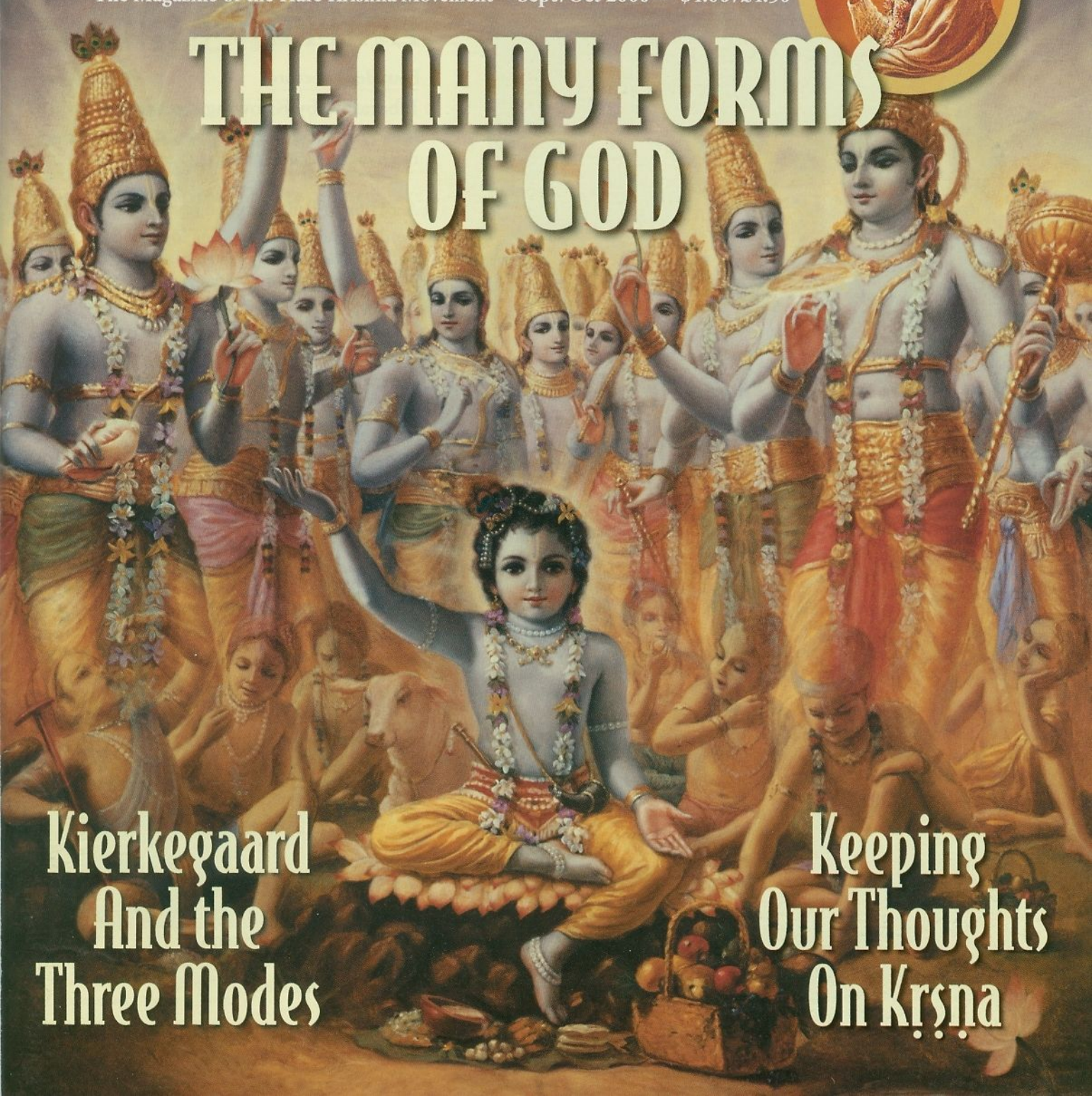
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THE MANY FORMS OF GOD



Kierkegaard
And the
Three Modes

Keeping
Our Thoughts
On Kṛṣṇa

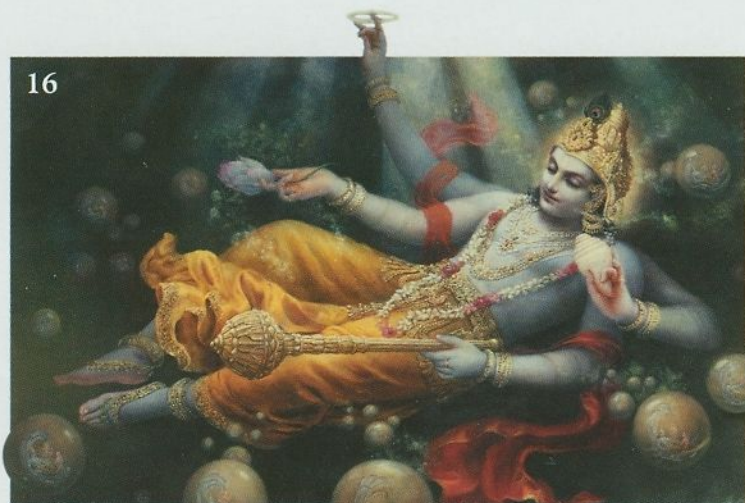


Assisting you in your quest for the Absolute Truth

Back to Godh

Founded 1944 • Vol. 34, No. 5 • September/October 2000

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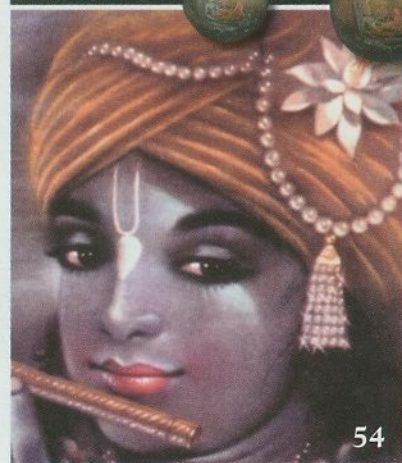
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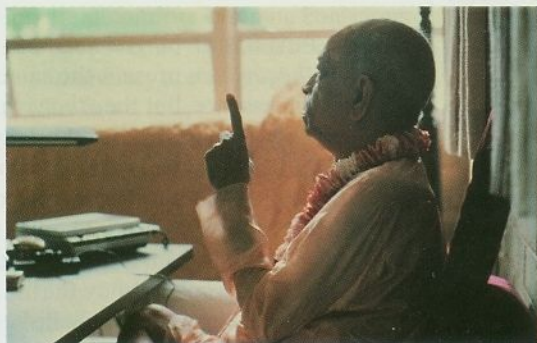
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COVER

The Vedic scripture *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* declares that the original Personality of Godhead (God) is Lord Kṛṣṇa. In the pastime shown here, Kṛṣṇa reveals that His Viṣṇu expansions are temporarily playing the role of His cowherd friends. To learn more about Kṛṣṇa’s expansions and incarnations, please see the article beginning on page 16. (Painting by Muralīdhara Dāsa.)



“Your religious principle—what is the result? Are you enhancing your love for God or dog? That we want to see.”—p. 33

WELCOME



IN THIS ISSUE

we gain an appreciation of what Śrīla Prabhupāda, the founder of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement, meant when he would say that Kṛṣṇa consciousness is a great science. The lead article, a lecture by Śrīla Prabhupāda, introduces us to some of the categories of expansions and incarnations of God, or Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda quotes Lord Kṛṣṇa, who says that if you know Him in truth, you’ll return to Him after death. And there’s plenty to learn, as we see in “Names and Forms of the Absolute Truth,” which includes a chart to help us keep it all straight.

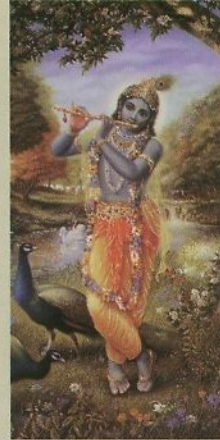
In “Wonderful Kṛṣṇa” we learn of the paradoxes of Kṛṣṇa’s opulences. He’s the all-powerful, limitless controller of everything, yet He’s conquered by His devotees’ love.

The love exchanged between Kṛṣṇa and His devotees is most touchingly displayed in Vṛndāvana, His eternal abode in the spiritual world, a replica of which we can visit in India today. In “Introducing My Daughters to Vṛndāvana,” a family’s trip to that holy place shows its power to instill in pilgrims an appreciation for wonderful Kṛṣṇa.

Hare Kṛṣṇa.—Nāgarāja Dāsa, Editor

OUR PURPOSES

- To help all people discern reality from illusion, spirit from matter, the eternal from the temporary.
- To expose the faults of materialism.
- To offer guidance in the Vedic techniques of spiritual life.
- To preserve and spread the Vedic culture.
- To celebrate the chanting of the holy names of God as taught by Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.
- To help every living being remember and serve Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Personality of Godhead.



Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead and source of all material and spiritual worlds



Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Kṛṣṇa’s most recent incarnation, taught Kṛṣṇa consciousness through the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa



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

BACK TO GODHEAD

The Magazine of the
Hare Krishna Movement

FOUNDER

(under the direction of His Divine Grace
Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda)
His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedānta
Swami Prabhupāda

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Letters

All Because of BTG

Let me first state at the outset that this is the first time I have ever written to a magazine giving feedback about an article I have read. This is noteworthy, because I am a college professor and my friends and associates consider me to be well read. I do not like to waste my time, so I always carry something with me to read while I am waiting for a doctor's appointment, in the bank line, etc. More times than not, I carry the latest issue of BTG.

All of that being said, let me share with you that I was truly touched by your article in the May/June 2000 issue entitled, "Holding Fast in Times of Stress." I have been an enthusiastic reader of BTG for several years, and I have been impressed with a number of articles, but none have moved me to tears as did this fine piece of writing.

One article you did a couple of years ago also stands out in my memory. It was about an "ordinary" guy who explained how he came to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Up until that article I didn't think it was possible to embrace this "science" unless you lived full time in a temple. That one article started me reading all of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books from all available sources. This in turn gave me the hope that one day I too could become an initiated devotee. The next logical step was to put all of this "book knowledge" into practice. I decided to turn to the back of your magazine and find the nearest ISKCON center to me. It took a big leap of faith to visit a center—needless to say, all of my friends thought that I had lost my mind (smile)!

I visited a rural community, New Talavan, and spent three days there getting to know the devotees and more about the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement. I won't go into detail here about how impressed I was with their lifestyle and the love I experienced there, but suffice it to say due to their

efforts I now consider myself to be a full devotee of Kṛṣṇa—living the four principles. All of this happened because of your magazine!

In closing, let me ask you to write more articles about "average" people and how they came to embrace Kṛṣṇa. I guarantee you that articles of this type will be an impetus for others to want to return to Godhead. Thank you for your service—I am already looking forward to your next issue!

Van V. Gignilliat
Mobile, Alabama

Suffering Subtle Body

I happened to come across your Nov./Dec. 1998 issue, in which you have published excerpts from the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Third Canto, Chapter 30, verses 19–31, explaining the plight of the sinful soul after death, after it leaves the material body on earth. The dreadful account can't be true, because the soul cannot reap the fruit of his actions, bad or good, until he gets a material body again. The subtle soul will never suffer any hardship, as explained in *Bhagavad-gītā* 2.22–25.

Whereas the *Bhāgavatam* describes the punishment of the sinful person in hell, the *Gītā* states that after leaving the material body, the soul gets another material body. I find a lot of variance between the two books. Please elucidate the correct position. Both cannot be right.

Raghunath Dhar
Dallas, Texas

OUR REPLY: *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* present the same teachings in essence, but the *Bhāgavatam* elaborates points discussed briefly in the *Gītā*. The *Gītā* (7.4) explains that besides the gross material body, the soul also inhabits a subtle material body, made up of the mind, intelligence, and false ego. It is this subtle body that undergoes punishment in the hellish planets. While it is true, as the *Gītā* says, that the soul goes on to another body, it

What Is the Hare Kṛṣṇa Movement?

Founded in 1966 by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) carries on in the modern world a great ancient tradition rooted in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, the teachings Lord Kṛṣṇa spoke five millenniums ago. The *Gītā* and the other Vedic scriptures declare Kṛṣṇa to be the original person, God Himself, who appears periodically in this world to liberate all living beings.

Only five hundred years ago, Kṛṣṇa descended as Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu to teach the most sublime and effective means of meditation for the present day: the chanting of the names of God, especially as found in the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra.

Today members of ISKCON continue Lord Caitanya's movement by distributing the teachings of Lord Kṛṣṇa and the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra all over the world.

Pronunciation

We spell Sanskrit words and names by a phonetic system that lets you know how to say each word. Pronounce short **a** like the **u** in **but**, long **ā** like the **a** in **far** (and held twice as long as the short **a**). Pronounce **e** like the **a** in **evade**, long **ī** like the **i** in **pique**. Pronounce the vowel **ṛ** like the **ri** in **rim**, and **ḥ** like the **ch** in **chair**. Pronounce consonants like **ch**, **jh**, and **dh** as in **staunch-heart**, **hedg-hog**, and **red-hot**. Pronounce ś and ṣ like **sh**. So for *Kṛṣṇa* say KRISHNA, for *Caitanya* say CHAITANYA.

Spiritual Names

ISKCON members receive names of Lord Kṛṣṇa or His great devotees, combined with Dāsa, for men, or Dāsi, for women, both of which mean "servant." For instance, the name Kṛṣṇa Dāsa means "servant of Kṛṣṇa."

is also true, as the *Bhāgavatam* says, that the sinful soul first of all undergoes punishment in hellish planets. Because the suffering takes place on a subtle plane, the time duration seems very long, when in fact it is brief. (Researchers tell us that although episodes in dreams seem to last a long time, they are actually very short.)

We can understand how the subtle body feels pain by considering what happens in our dreams. During the day we identify with our gross, physical body, and at night we identify with our subtle body, in dreams. When we dream, the experience seems real. If something harms us in a dream, we "feel" it. We might, for example, wake up screaming because of pain or fright. This is an indication of how the subtle body is punished in the hellish planets.

More from the Sixties

Back to Godhead is my favorite magazine. I got the May/June issue in the mail two weeks ago, and it was wonderful. I just loved the story by Dāmodara Dāsa, and I love the old photos of Prabhupāda and the devotees. I'd love to see more articles from devotees who joined ISKCON in the 1960s.

Jugna-Hotra Dāsa
Ashcroft, B. C., Canada

Dealing with Loss

How does one deal with losing one's job? I was a heavy drinker and have found great comfort in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I have started drinking because the pain and anxiety are so great. How do I deal with this?

Carlson
Via the Internet

OUR REPLY: The best remedy is to increase your absorption in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Chant more, read more, and if possible, associate with devotees. Many of our habits come from association. If you had friendships with devo-

tees, you would be much less inclined to look for solace in a bottle. Besides these spiritual solutions, read literature or attend meetings that will convince you that even on a material level, drinking will only make things worse.

Improving Concentration

Congratulations on another fine issue (May/June). The subject discussed in the Letters department brought out a significant dilemma that every devotee I'm sure struggles with daily: concentration in chanting. For my first twenty years or so of regular chanting, the challenge of sixteen straight unbroken rounds might as well be that of climbing Mt. Everest.

My deliverance came in a simple form. I began to intersperse the recitation of the *Śikṣāṣṭaka* prayers of the blessed Lord Caitanya through the rounds. Then, because that seemed to help intensify the experience and focus the mind on its goal, I added some *Bhagavad-gītā* verses and some personal prayers and affirmations. I am sure that there are enough people out there who could be likewise helped, so I thought it would be useful to mention the idea. If one doesn't find success in chanting, the rest is useless.

Gig Peters
Vacaville, California ☀

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CORRECTION

In the May/June issue, the biography for Vedasāra Dāsa at the end of the article "An Ideal Education for a Practical Future" mentioned his birthplace as "Bhutan, India (near China)." Bhutan is not in India. It's an independent country.

LIBERATION BY KNOWING KṚṢṆA

Lord Kṛṣṇa directs us in how to see Him at every moment and thus end our material existence.

A lecture given in Bombay, India, on April 1, 1971

by **His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda**

Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

*mattaḥ parataram nānyat
kiñcid asti dhanāñjaya
mayi sarvam idaṁ protaṁ
sūtre maṇi-gaṇā iva*

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

KṚṢṆA IS PRESENT everywhere, because everything is resting on His energies. In a big factory the proprietor may be out of the factory, but every worker is aware, “This factory belongs to such-and-such person.” As it is possible for a factory worker to be always conscious of the proprietor of the factory, it is possible for everyone to become Kṛṣṇa conscious in every activity. That is the philosophy we are preaching all over the world. That is the philosophy of the *Bhagavad-gītā*.

Lord Kṛṣṇa says, *mām anusmara yudhya ca*: “Think of Me and fight.” This world is so made that everyone has to work. Without working, no one can even keep the body and soul together.

We cannot avoid working. But at the same time, we can remember Kṛṣṇa. That depends only on practice and pure understanding.

Here Kṛṣṇa says, “There is no one greater than Me.” That is the verdict of all ancient Vedic scriptures. In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* the same thing is confirmed by the statement *kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam*: “Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead.”

That statement appears at the end of a list of incarnations of God. The list contains Lord Buddha’s name: *buddho nāmāñjana-sutaḥ kikaṭeṣu bhaviṣyati*. Lord Buddha is mentioned as a future incarnation. *Bhaviṣyati* means “will appear,” and *kikaṭeṣu* means “in the province of Gaya.”

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam was composed five thousand years ago, and Lord Buddha appeared 2,600 years ago. Therefore it is said *bhaviṣyati*: “He will appear.” The writers of the *śāstra*, Vedic scripture, were not ordinary men. Here in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, for example, Kṛṣṇa is speaking. He is not an ordinary man. No one would be interested in the *Bhagavad-gītā* if it had been



If we scrutinizingly study the Vedic literature, we shall come to the conclusion that Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

• • •

written by an ordinary man. It was spoken by the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and it was recorded by His incarnation Vyāsadeva. So it is transcendental literature.

Ordinary literature cannot be perfect, because the authors are subject to the four defects of all conditioned souls: *bhrama-pramāda-karaṅpāṭava-vipralipsā*. *Bhrama* means “to commit mistakes,” *Pramāda* means “illusion,” *vipralipsā* means “cheating,” and *karaṅpāṭava* means “inefficiency of the senses.” *Śāstra* is above these defects.

Five thousand years ago the *śāstra* predicted Lord Buddha’s appearance. Similarly, there is a prediction about Kalki-avatāra, who will come after 427,000 years. Kalki-avatāra’s name, his father’s name, and where he will appear—everything is there. That is the standard of *śāstra*.

We have to understand Kṛṣṇa from the *śāstra*. Kṛṣṇa Himself says, *mattaḥ paratarāṃ nānyat kiñcid asti dhanañ-jaya*: “There is no one greater than Me.” And when Arjuna understood *Bhagavad-gītā*, he also accepted Kṛṣṇa like that. *Paraṃ brahma paraṃ dhāma pavitraṃ paramaṃ bhavān*: “You are Parabrahman....”

EXPANSIONS FROM KṚṢṆA

Kṛṣṇa is Parabrahman. We are all *brahman*, spirit, because we are part of Parabrahman, the supreme spirit, but we are not Parabrahman. We are subordinate *brahman*. *Eko bahūnāṃ yo vidadhāti kāmān*. We are supported by Kṛṣṇa, God. God is one, and the supported *brahman*s, or living entities, are innumerable. No one can count how many living entities there are, but God is one.

From the ancient literature we learn *kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam*: “Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead.”

There are many incarnations and expansions of Kṛṣṇa. Some of the expansions are direct personal expansions (*svāmśa*), such as Lord Rāma, Nṛsiṃhadeva, Varāha. There are many in this category. *Rāmādi-mūrtiṣu kalāniyamena tiṣṭhan*. Kṛṣṇa is existing and expanding Himself in various forms. There are different kinds of incarnations, or *avatāras*—*śaktyāveśa-avatāra*, *guṇa-avatāra*, *manvantara-avatāra*, *yuga-avatāra*. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* concludes that the Lord’s incarnations are so numerous that you cannot count them. If you sit down on the bank of a river, you cannot keep an account of how many waves are passing. Similarly, there is no account of how many incarnations are coming out from Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Kṛṣṇa is above all. Here Kṛṣṇa personally says so, and it is confirmed by the previous sages and authorities. Formerly it was confirmed by great sages like Nārada Muni, Vyāsadeva, Asita, and Devala, and in the modern age by Śaṅkarācārya, Madhvācārya, Rāmānujācārya, Viṣṇusvāmī, and many other *ācāryas*, or spiritual authorities. Everyone of them accepts that Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. So how can we deny it? We have to be guided by the *ācāryas*. *Ācāryavān puruṣo veda*: “One who follows the principles of the *ācāryas* knows things as they are.” That is the verdict.

In the *Bhagavad-gītā* we find the word *ācāryopāśanam*, which means that we have to follow in the footsteps of the *ācāryas*, because they can give us right direction. And one who does not follow the *ācāryas* and creates his own mental concoction will not be accepted. There are many commentaries on the *Bhagavad-gītā*, but not all of them are according to the direction of the *ācāryas*. You have to accept *Bhagavad-gītā* as it is, under the direction of the *ācāryas*. They do not make

any changes. They explain how Kṛṣṇa is the greatest. They don’t comment in a different way and divert you by saying that Kṛṣṇa is an ordinary man.

From Kṛṣṇa, the next expansion is Baladeva, in the category of *svayaṃ-prakāśa*. From Baladeva comes the *catur-vyūha*: Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna, and Aniruddha. From Saṅkarṣaṇa comes Nārāyaṇa. From Nārāyaṇa comes another *catur-vyūha*. And from the Saṅkarṣaṇa of that *catur-vyūha* comes the first *puruṣ-avatāra*: Mahā-Viṣṇu. From Mahā-Viṣṇu comes Garbhodakaśāyī Viṣṇu. From Garbhodakaśāyī Viṣṇu comes Kṣīrodakaśāyī Viṣṇu. Kṣīrodakaśāyī Viṣṇu is situated in everyone’s heart: *iśvaraḥ sarva-bhūtānāṃ hṛd-deśe ’rjuna tiṣṭhati*.

Kṛṣṇa expands in so many ways—by personal expansion, by the expansion of His energy, by the expansion of His differentiated parts. We living entities are differentiated parts, *vibhinnāmśa*. We are also expansions of Kṛṣṇa. He expands Himself in so many ways. He also has categories of energy, or *śakti*: *taṭastha-śakti*, *cit-śakti*, *antaraṅga-śakti*, *bahiraṅga-śakti*. We have to understand Kṛṣṇa through these categories.

If we scrutinizingly study the Vedic literature, we shall come to the conclusion that Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. And if there is any name for God, it is perfectly given in the word *Kṛṣṇa*, “all-attractive.” There are many diverse meanings of *Kṛṣṇa* given by the *ācāryas*, but on the whole, Kṛṣṇa is the actual name of God.

UNDERSTANDING KṚṢṆA BY HIS DIRECTION

How can one understand that Kṛṣṇa is all-pervading? That direction is given by Kṛṣṇa Himself. If we follow His direction on how to appreciate Him, then

naturally and surely we shall come to the point of understand Kṛṣṇa, although He is all-expansive. Kṛṣṇa says,

*raso 'ham apsu kaunteya
prabhāsmi śaśi-sūryayoh
praṇavaḥ sarva-vedeṣu
śabdaḥ khe pauruṣaṁ nṛṣu*

“O son of Kuntī, I am the taste of water, the light of the sun and the moon, the syllable *om* in the Vedic mantras; I am the sound in ether and ability in man.” Just try to understand Kṛṣṇa by your daily experiences. Kṛṣṇa says, “When you drink water and quench your thirst—when you experience the nice taste of water—I am that taste.” So you can understand Kṛṣṇa daily as soon as you drink water. Why should anyone say that there is no God? Just try to appreciate God according to the prescription given by God. Then you’ll understand.

A doctor gives you medicine, and he gives you directions: “Drink this medicine. Take two drops.” Then gradually you understand that by taking the medicine, you are being cured, you are feeling healthy. Similarly, Kṛṣṇa gives us a prescription for seeing Him. When we meditate upon the taste of the water, we are meditating on Kṛṣṇa.

Similarly, Kṛṣṇa says *prabhāsmi śaśi-sūryayoh*: “I am the sunshine and the moonshine.” Who has not seen the sunshine? If you have seen sunshine and if you follow the prescription given by Kṛṣṇa, then early in the morning you’ll see Kṛṣṇa. Why do you say, “I have not seen Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is not present before Me”? Follow Kṛṣṇa’s instruction, and He will be present. He is present; we simply have to purify our eyes and senses to understand Him. That is required.

Suppose you have a beloved friend. As soon as you hear his voice on the telephone you immediately see him. Why? Because you love him. Similarly, if you develop your dormant love of Kṛṣṇa, you’ll see Kṛṣṇa at every moment.

It is not at all difficult to see Kṛṣṇa. Why do you say, “Can you show me God?” Why are you not seeing God? Here is God. Kṛṣṇa says, *raso 'ham apsu kaunteya prabhāsmi śaśi-*

sūryayoh. Who has not seen sunshine? Who has not seen moonshine? One simply has to understand that sunshine is the reflection of Kṛṣṇa’s bodily effulgence. Just as moonshine is the reflection of the sunshine, the sun is a reflection of the *brahmajyoti*. And what is the *brahmajyoti*? Kṛṣṇa’s bodily effulgence. Then why do you say that you have not seen Kṛṣṇa?

There are many other examples. Kṛṣṇa is giving some of them. If you study, if you meditate upon them, then gradually you will see Kṛṣṇa. He will be revealed. He’ll be present. It is all revelation. Not that by your eyes you can see. But if you follow the prescription, the direction, you will see Kṛṣṇa daily, always, twenty-four hours.

So when one is an elevated devotee—a *mahā-bhāgavata*—he does not see anything but Kṛṣṇa. Everywhere he sees Kṛṣṇa. The *mahā-bhāgavata* may be standing on the shore of a great sea, but he is not seeing the sea; he is seeing Kṛṣṇa. He’s seeing Kṛṣṇa’s energy: how Kṛṣṇa’s energy is working and producing such a vast sea. He is thinking like that. That is meditation. Anywhere he goes, he simply thinks of Kṛṣṇa. *Sthāvara-jaṅgama dekhe, nā dekhe tāra mūrti*. He does not see the material form of anything. *Sarvatra haya nija iṣṭa-deva-sphūrti*. Everywhere he sees Kṛṣṇa. That is called Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

So one has to develop. How can one develop? This is the process: *śravaṇādi-śuddha-citte*. You have to hear. And as you go on hearing, the dirty things in your heart become clean. The process of hearing is so nice.

*śṛṅvatām sva-kathāḥ kṛṣṇaḥ
puṇya-śravaṇa-kīrtanaḥ
hṛdy antaḥ stho hy abhadrāṇi
vidhunoti suhṛt satām*

“To hear about Kṛṣṇa from Vedic literature, or to hear from Him directly through *Bhagavad-gītā*, is itself righteous activity. And Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is dwelling in everyone’s heart, acts as a best-wishing friend and purifies the devotee who constantly engages in hearing of Him.”

Simply hear about Kṛṣṇa. We are speaking about Kṛṣṇa from the *Gītā*.
(please turn to page 57)

BACK TO GODHEAD

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QA on the & AGĪTĀ

Compiled by Krishan B. Lal



Detail from a painting by Bharadvāja Dāsa

Lord Kṛṣṇa drives Arjuna's chariot into battle at Kurukshetra.

PART 6

The Gītā, or Bhagavad-gītā (“The Song of God”), was spoken five thousand years ago by Lord Kṛṣṇa to the prince Arjuna. It contains the essence of Vedic knowledge.

The compiler has applied a question/answer format to the Introduction to Bhagavad-gītā As It Is, by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda.

How should we engage our mind for spiritual benefit?

Bhagavad-gītā teaches how to absorb the mind and intelligence in the thought of the Lord. Such absorption will enable us to transfer to the kingdom of God. That is the secret of Bhagavad-gītā: total absorption in the thought of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (7.5.23) gives nine devotional processes for cultivating remembrance of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The easiest process is *śravaṇam*, hearing the Bhagavad-gītā from a realized person. Yet the practice of any one of the nine processes will lead to remembering the Supreme Lord and will enable one, upon leaving the body, to attain a spiritual body fit for association with the Supreme Lord.

Lord Kṛṣṇa says:

*abhyāsa-yoga-yuktena
cetasā nānya-gāminā
paramaṁ puruṣaṁ divyaṁ
yāti pāthānucintayan*

“He who meditates on Me as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, his mind constantly engaged in remembering Me, undeviated from the path, he, O Arjuna, is sure to reach Me.” (Bg. 8.8)

This is not a very difficult process. But one must learn it from an experienced person. *Tad vijñānārthaṁ sa gurum evābhigacchet*: one must approach a person who is already in the practice. The mind is always flying to this and that, but one must practice concentrating the mind always on the form of the Supreme

Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, or on the sound of His name. One must meditate on the Supreme Personality of Godhead in the spiritual kingdom and thus attain Him.

How can we transfer our thoughts from matter to spirit?

There is so much literature that fills our thoughts with the material energy—newspapers, magazines, novels, and so on. Our thinking, now absorbed in this literature, must be transferred to Vedic literature. Great sages, therefore, have written so many Vedic books.

Why did Vyāsa write Vedic literature?

The forgetful living entities, or conditioned souls, have forgotten their relationship with the Supreme Lord and are engrossed in thinking of material activities. Just to transfer their thinking power to the spiritual sky, Kṛṣṇa-dvaipāyana Vyāsa has given a great number of Vedic books. First he divided the Vedas into four. Then he explained them in the *Purāṇas*, and for less capable people he wrote the *Mahābhārata*, which contains the Bhagavad-gītā. Then he summarized all Vedic literature in the *Vedānta-sūtra*, and for future guidance he gave a natural commentary on the *Vedānta-sūtra*, called *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

We must transfer our reading to these books, given to us by Vyāsa-deva. Then it will be possible to remember the Supreme Lord at the time of death.

Is Kṛṣṇa consciousness open to all?

Bhagavad-gītā gives the means for ultimate realization, and its door to knowledge is open for everyone. Anyone can approach Lord Kṛṣṇa by hearing from Him and thinking about Him. The Lord says that anyone can attain the Supreme. One does not need highly developed intelligence. Anyone who accepts the principle of *bhakti-yoga* and accepts the Supreme Lord as the goal of life can approach the Lord in the spiritual sky. If one adopts the principles enunciated in

Bhagavad-gītā, he can make his life perfect and make a permanent solution to all the problems of life. This is the essence of the Bhagavad-gītā.

What is sanātana-dharma?

Sanātana-dharma refers to the eternal occupation of the living entities in relationship with the Supreme Lord, irrespective of race, religion, or nationality. The great spiritual authority Śrīpāda Rāmānujācārya has explained the word *sanātana* as “that which has neither beginning nor end.” The Supreme Lord and His transcendental abode are both *sanātana*, as are the living entities, and the association of the Supreme Lord and the living entities in the *sanātana* abode is the perfection of human life.

When we speak of *sanātana-dharma*, we must understand that it has neither beginning nor end. Therefore, that which has neither end nor beginning must not be sectarian, for it cannot be limited by any boundaries. Thus, *sanātana-dharma* does not refer to any sectarian process of religion; it is the business of all the people of the world—nay, of all the living entities of the universe.

Dharma refers to that which constantly exists with a particular object. Without heat and light, for example, there is no meaning to the word *fire*. Similarly, we must discover the essential part of the living being, that part which is his constant companion. That constant companion is his eternal quality, and that eternal quality is his eternal religion.

What is the difference between dharma and religion?

The English word *religion* is a little different from *sanātana-dharma*. Religion conveys the idea of faith, and faith may change. One may have faith in a particular process and may change that faith and adopt another, but *sanātana-dharma* refers to that activity which cannot be changed. For instance, liquidity cannot be taken from water, nor can heat be taken from fire. Similarly, the eternal function of the eternal living entity cannot be taken from the living entity. *Sanātana-dharma* is eternally

Daily recitation of *Bhagavad-gītā* provides nourishment for the soul.



integral with the living entity.

Non-*sanātana* religious faith may have some beginning in the annals of human history, but there is no beginning to the history of *sanātana-dharma*, because it remains eternally with the living entities. Yet man professes to belong to a particular type of faith with reference to particular time and circumstance and thus claims to be a Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Buddhist, or an adherent of any other sect. Such designations are non-*sanātana-dharma*. A Hindu may change his faith to become a Muslim, or a Muslim may change his faith to become a Hindu, or a Christian may change his faith, and so on. But in all circumstances the change of religious faith does not affect the eternal occupation of rendering service to others.

What are the major benefits of studying *Bhagavad-gītā*?

Bhagavad-gītā is a transcendental literature that one should read very carefully. The *Gītā-māhātmya* (“The Glories of the *Gītā*”) lists many benefits derived from reading and following the instructions of the *Gītā*:

(1) One can be freed from all the miseries and anxieties of life.

(2) One will be freed from all fears in this life, and one’s next life will be spiritual.

(3) The reactions of one’s past misdeeds will not act upon him.

The Lord declares in *Bhagavad-gītā* (18.66), “Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reactions. Do not fear.” Thus the Lord takes all responsibility for one who surrenders unto Him, and He indemnifies such a person against all reactions of sins.

(4) One may cleanse himself daily by taking a bath in water, but if one takes a bath even once in the sacred Ganges water of *Bhagavad-gītā*, for

him the dirt of material life is altogether vanquished.

(5) Because *Bhagavad-gītā* is spoken by the Supreme Personality of Godhead, one need not read any other Vedic literature. One need only attentively and regularly hear and read *Bhagavad-gītā*.

In the present age, people are so absorbed in mundane activities that it is not possible for them to read all Vedic literature. But this is not necessary. One book—*Bhagavad-gītā*—will suffice, because it is the essence of all Vedic literature and especially because it is spoken by the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

(6) One who drinks the water of the Ganges attains salvation, so what to speak of one who drinks the nectar of *Bhagavad-gītā*, which is spoken by Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself, the original Viṣṇu.

Bhagavad-gītā comes from the mouth of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and the Ganges is said to emanate from the lotus feet of the Lord. Of course, there is no difference between the mouth and the feet of the Supreme Lord, but from an impartial study we can appreciate that *Bhagavad-gītā* is even more important than the water of the Ganges.

(7) Daily recitation of *Bhagavad-gītā* provides nourishment for the soul.

The *Gītāopaniṣad*, *Bhagavad-gītā*—the essence of all the *Upaniṣads*—is just like a cow, and Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is famous as a cowherd boy, is milking this cow. Arjuna is just like a calf, and learned scholars and pure devotees drink the nectarean milk of *Bhagavad-gītā*.

What universal needs can *sanātana-dharma* and *Bhagavad-gītā* fill today?

People are eager to have one scripture, one God, one religion, and one

occupation, but they do not know that *sanātana-dharma*, or eternal religion, has always existed on this planet, is still existing today, and will continue to exist as long as the human race endures.

The vision for *Bhagavad-gītā* as a universal scripture for mankind was boldly proclaimed in the *Gītā-māhātmya* more than ten centuries ago by Śrīpāda Śaṅkarācārya:

ekaṁ śāstram devakī-putra-gītam

“Let there be one scripture only—
one common scripture for the whole world—*Bhagavad-gītā*.”

eko devo devakī-putra eva

“Let there be one God for the whole world—Śrī Kṛṣṇa.”

eko mantras tasya nāmāni

“Let there be one hymn, one mantra, one prayer—the chanting of His name: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.”

karmāpy ekaṁ tasya devasya sevā

“Let there be one work only—the service of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.” ☀

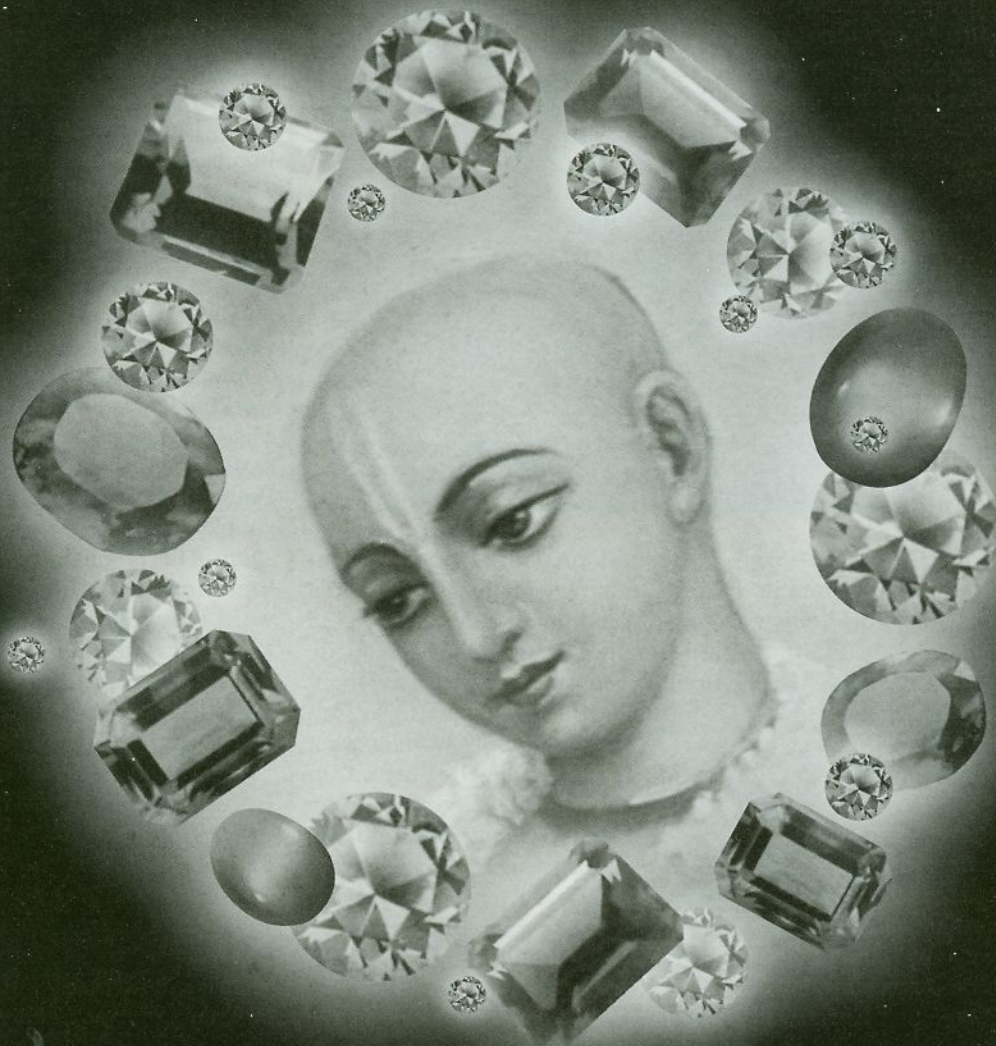
Krishan B. Lal, an ISKCON Life Member, is retired and lives in Huntington Beach, California.

This completes our serialization of the Introduction to Bhagavad-gītā As It Is adapted to a question-and-answer format. We thank Shri Krishan B. Lal for his devotion in preparing this series and pray that Lord Kṛṣṇa bless him with many more years of dedicated service.—The Editors

A Brilliant Book On the Jewel of the Age

An appreciation of a profound biography of Lord Caitanya.

by Tattvavit Dāsa



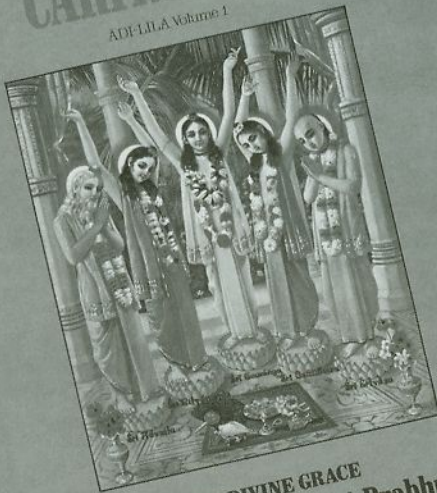
ALTHOUGH Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu appeared in West Bengal way back in 1486, His name and fame stayed confined to parts of India for five centuries. But by 1986—the quinentennial of His advent—suddenly He had been discovered as a new hero, the jewel of this age, in dozens of countries with no Vedic culture like India's. This marvel took place thanks to His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, who translated and published an impressive

Painting of Lord Caitanya by Muralidhara Dāsa
Collage by Yamarāja Dāsa

The Pastimes of Lord Caitanya Mahāpranau

ŚRĪ CAITANYA-CARITĀMṚTA

ADI-LILA Volume 1



HIS DIVINE GRACE

A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda

Besides the English edition (in nine volumes), Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta is published in Bengali, Hindi, Gujarati, German, French, Italian, Polish, Hungarian, Portuguese, Ukrainian, Swedish, Finnish, and Serbocroatian. Editions nearing completion: Dutch, Danish, Spanish, and Russian.

biography of Lord Caitanya—*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*—and inspired its distribution around the world. Over the past thirty years, Śrīla Prabhupāda's book trust published this biography in English and seventeen other languages for the first time, giving millions access to a book everyone in the world should read.

Caitanya-caritāmṛta literally means "the character of the living force in immortality," and readers of the book learn about the immortal Lord Caitanya. When I first read about Lord Caitanya, I learned He was mirific—a miracle worker. The only miracle workers I knew of were Biblical personalities. As an innocent American boy, I had prayed beside stained-glass windows with radiant images of supernatural acts—and had awakened my inner life. Ten years later the news of Lord Caitanya's equally potent acts impressed upon me His divinity. God, I learned, embarks on miraculous adventures whenever He descends.

Besides providing books about Lord Caitanya to millions like me, Śrīla Prabhupāda founded the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement and traveled worldwide from 1965 through 1977, teaching thousands of new followers of Lord Caitanya. People naturally wonder what would make a non-Hindu join an apparently Bengali religion like the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement. Even Indians, to whom Lord Caitanya is less well known than Lord Kṛṣṇa, wonder what would make someone follow Him or study His life and teachings. One explanation is that devotees of Lord Caitanya learn the highest transcendental truths from *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, which gives an integrated understanding of Lord Caitanya and Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta reveals, with reference to Vedic texts, that Lord Caitanya is the incarnation of God for this age. Internally He is Kṛṣṇa (*antaḥ-kṛṣṇa*), the effulgent bluish Supreme Personality of Godhead. Externally He has the glowing golden complexion

(*bahir gaura*) of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, Lord Kṛṣṇa's eternal consort. Concealing Himself as Śrī Caitanya, Kṛṣṇa tastes Rādhārāṇī's mood as the most rapt devotee of Kṛṣṇa. Lord Caitanya comes to teach everyone to chant Śrī Kṛṣṇa's holy names and to dance in moods of devotion.

Devotees of Lord Caitanya naturally study His favorite scripture, the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, often quoted in the *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. In describing the loving pastimes of Kṛṣṇa, the *Bhāgavatam* helps us realize the eternal pleasures enjoyed by Kṛṣṇa and His devotees. The unique truths of the *Bhāgavatam* shine with authentic value, like fine jewelry, and Lord Caitanya freely distributed these gems, hoping everyone would accept them. Therefore Śrīla Prabhupāda translated and published the jewellike *Bhāgavatam* and quoted it in all his books—some of which are published in eighty languages. Why shouldn't everyone in the world read them?

Soon after Lord Caitanya left this world in 1534, Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavīrāja Gosvāmī wrote the *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, in Bengali couplets. Śrīla Prabhupāda sensitively translated the couplets into prose. To encourage close study of the original, he provided transliterations and synonyms for every word. He wrote extensive commentaries, making the highest and most difficult spiritual concepts accessible to everyone. So people find it spiritually enlivening to read *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. Śrīla Prabhupāda's latest English edition comes to nine big volumes, averaging 730 pages each, fully describing Lord Caitanya's mercy, emotions, and opulences.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta contains the nectar for which everyone is always anxious. There is no solace for the soul in the mirage of material happiness; everyone must find the supreme spiritual shelter. That oasis is in *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. ☸

Recently, Tattvavī Dāsa edited the Interactive "Bhāgavad-gītā As It Is" CD and the first memoir about Prabhupāda written by one of his female disciples: Śrīla Prabhupāda Is Coming! by Mahāmāyā Devī Dāsi.

“Our Kṛṣṇa Is Love”

Here we continue an exchange between His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda and the poet Allen Ginsberg. It took place on May 12, 1969, in Columbus, Ohio.

Allen Ginsberg: Well, Your Divine Grace, my so-called popularity doesn't seem to be having much effect. That's why I'm asking you very specifically what to do, because I've been chanting for five years, six years. Since 1963 I've been chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa on this continent, beginning in Vancouver in July 1963. And I am finding there is a limitation to how many people will join that chant. Or I have found a limitation. Part of the limitation is the fact that it seems strange and new to people here.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: They may think it unfamiliar, but there is no loss.

Allen Ginsberg: Well, and as it becomes familiar, it might spread a little. Part of the limitation is just a natural resentment or resistance—people wanting a prayer in their own tongue, in their own language. I don't know. For the same reason, an American Indian chant would not take hold, or even a Latin chant would not take universal hold.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: The Lord's names, though, are a mantra.

Allen Ginsberg: And as a result, many of us are asking, “Is it possible to find an American mantra?”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Mantra means transcendental sound.

You see. Take, for example, *omkāra*.

Allen Ginsberg: So you think the chanter experiences transcendence by the very nature of the sound. O.K. But now, *om* is an absolutely natural sound, the way it flows from the throat to the mouth—and yet even *om*, natural as it is, sounds foreign.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: *Om* is natural, yes. Therefore, it is also found as a *pranāma* that begins many longer mantras. *Om* is accepted.

Allen Ginsberg: But even *om* sounds foreign here. It's hard to get people to say *om*, even. I tried in Chicago, with *om* and with Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: But there is no alternative.

Allen Ginsberg: Well, we haven't been able to think of one yet. I'll tell you that.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: That is people's misfortune—if they don't appreciate.

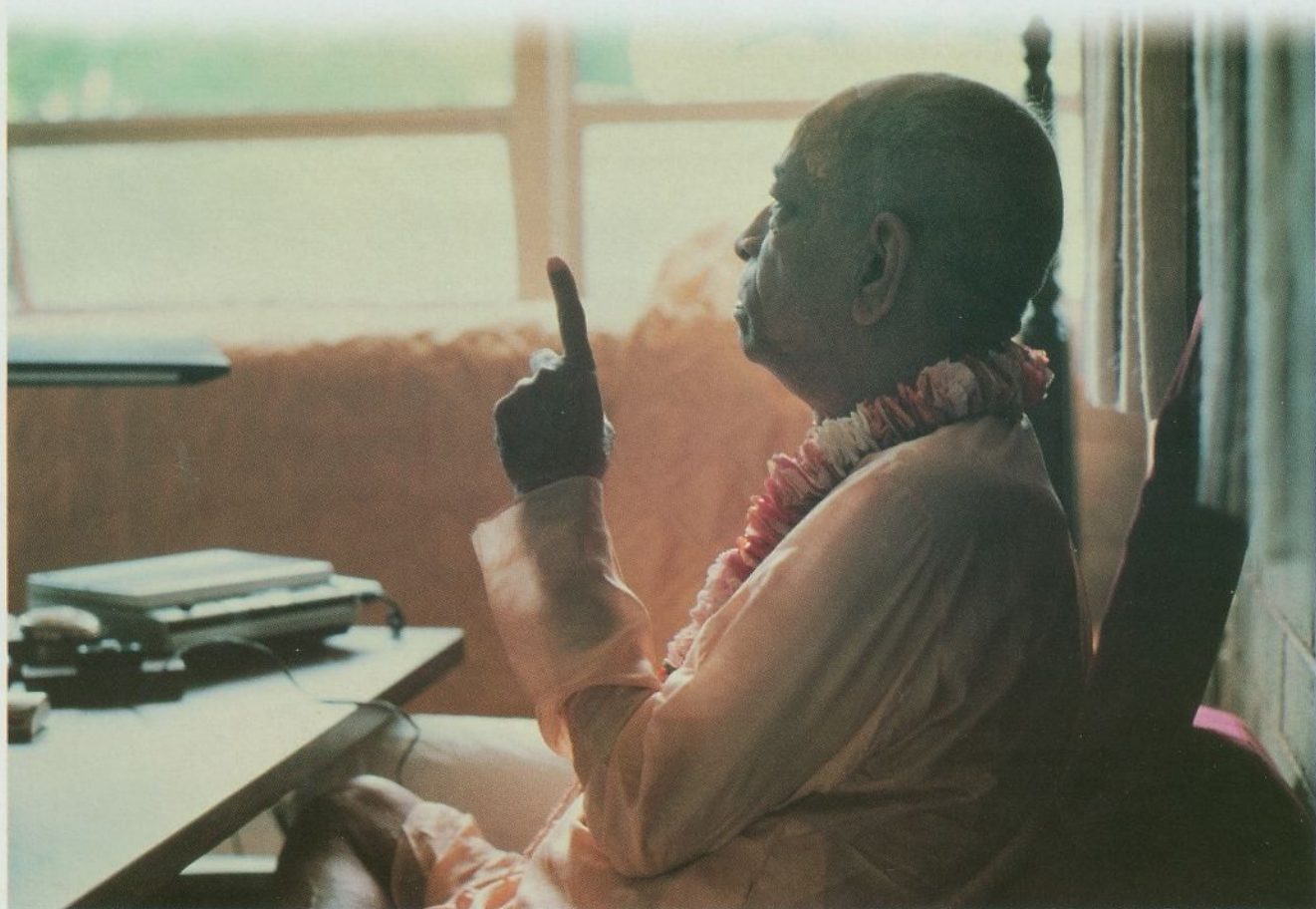
Allen Ginsberg: Many people here have said, “What about ‘God, God, God, God?’” But that doesn't have the right . . .

Disciple: [*Laughs.*] No, that doesn't make it. You couldn't do that for five minutes.

Allen Ginsberg: Well, you could almost do “Amen, Amen.”

Disciple: That's not English.

Allen Ginsberg: Yes. That's not English. [*Laughter.*] But it's
(please turn to page 33)



Names And Forms Of the Absolute Truth

*“Whoever was hearing my prayers
needed to understand that I was looking for
a complete understanding of the truth.”*

by Prāṇadā Devī Dāsī

WHEN I WAS ELEVEN, the seldom-used formal dining room of our home in California was my secret refuge. The sliding-glass doors allowed plenty of sunlight into the room, and the prayers I said near them would come to brighten my life. I discovered the dining room as my place of introspection. Sometimes, while my sister and brother played outside, I was intent on staying inside to ponder the meaning of life. I wanted to know who I was and what I was meant to do.

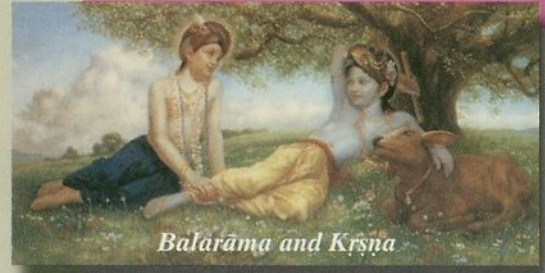
“Dear Lord,” I would pray, “please let me know the absolute truth as soon as possible. When You show it to me, I promise I’ll dedicate

*Right: From Lord Kṛṣṇa, the original cause of everything,
comes Lord Mahā-Viṣṇu, source of unlimited universes.*



The Three Principal Forms Of the Supreme Personality Of Godhead

As described by Lord Caitanya in
Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā,
Chapter Twenty



Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Avatāra—incarnation

Āveśa—empowered (“A living entity who is specifically empowered by the Lord with knowledge or strength is technically called *āveśa-rūpa*.” *Laghu-bhāgavatāmṛta, Purva-khaṇḍa* 18)

Catur—four

Līlā—pastime

Guṇa—material quality

Manvantara—life span of Manu

Puruṣa—controller

Prābhava—superiority

Prakāśa—expansion

Rūpa—form

Śakti (as in *śaktyāveśa*)—power

Svāmśa (*sva-amśa*)—own part (“When a form of Kṛṣṇa is nondifferent from the original form but is less important and exhibits less potency, it is called *svāmśa*.” *Laghu-bhāgavatāmṛta* 1.15)

Svayam—own, personal, original, personal form (“The form of the Supreme Personality of Godhead that does not depend on other forms is called the *svayam-rūpa*, the original form.” *Laghu-bhāgavatāmṛta, Pūrva-khaṇḍa* 12)

Tad-ekātma—having the same nature (“When [Kṛṣṇa’s] body is a little differently manifested and its features are a little different in transcendental emotion and form, it is called *tad-ekātma*.” Cc., *Madhya* 20.183)

Vaibhava—wealth, glory, greatness (“If one form or feature is differently manifested according to different emotional features, it is called *vaibhava-prakāśa*.” Cc., *Madhya* 20.171)

Vibhūti—opulences

Vilāsa—pastime (“When the Lord displays numerous forms with different features by His inconceivable potency, such forms are called *vilāsa-vigrahas*.” *Laghu-bhāgavatāmṛta* 1.17)

Vyūha—guard, arms

Yuga—age

NOTE: Some expansions of Kṛṣṇa appear in more than one category, and such overlapping is hard to show on the chart. For instance, among the *līlā-avatāras*, Kapiladeva and Rṣabhadeva are also considered *āveśa-rūpas*. Lord Balarāma is known as a *vaibhava-prakāśa* manifestation, but He is also said to be a *vilāsa* form because He appears in the original *catur-vyūha*. Trivikrama, Nṛṣimha, and Vāmana are categorized as both *līlā-avatāras* and *vaibhava-vilāsa* forms. While it is difficult to thoroughly understand the difference between the *vilāsa* and *svāmśa* forms of the *tad-ekātma-rūpa* category, we can note that all of the incarnations coming into the material world (*avatāras*) are categorized as *svāmśa* forms. The *vilāsa* category has all expansions residing in the spiritual world carrying out various pleasure pastimes.

Svāmśa

(Personal expansions, expanded from

Puruṣa-avatāras

Kāraṇodakaśāyī Viṣṇu

Garbhodakaśāyī Viṣṇu

Kṣīrodakaśāyī Viṣṇu

Guṇa-avatāras

Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Śiva

Manvantara-avatāras

(1) Yajña, (2) Vibhu, (3) Satyasena,

(4) Hari, (5) Vaikuṅṭha, (6) Ajita,

(7) Vāmana, (8) Sārvabhauma,

(9) Rṣabha, (10) Viṣvaksena,

(11) Dharmasetu, (12) Sudhāmā,

(13) Yogeśvara, and (14) Bṛhadbhānu.

Yuga-avatāras

Satya-yuga (white)

Tretā-yuga (red)

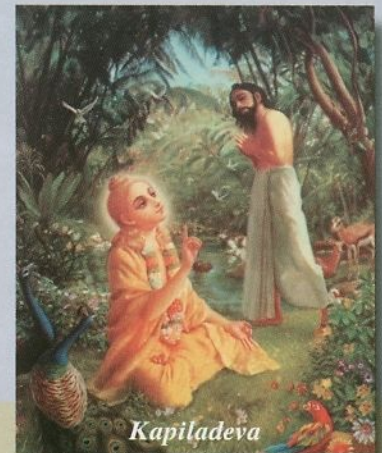
Dvāpara-yuga (dark blue)

Kali-yuga (black or yellow)

Bhagavad-aveśa

(Divine Absorption)

Kapiladeva, Rṣabhadeva



Kapiladeva

1. Svayam-rūpa

Svayam-rūpa

Kṛṣṇa, the original Personality of Godhead, the cowherd boy.

“All the incarnations and expansions exist simultaneously in the body of Kṛṣṇa, who is described as two-handed.”

(*Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Madhya* 1.43, Purport)

Svayam-prakāśa

Prābhava-prakāśa

Expansions of two-armed Kṛṣṇa at Dvārakā and in the Rāsa-līlā. Kṛṣṇa, the son of Devakī, with four-hands.

Vaibhava-prakāśa

Balarāma, and Kṛṣṇa the son of Devakī

2. Tad-ekātma-rūpa

(Catur-vyūha, under “Prābhava-vilāsa”)

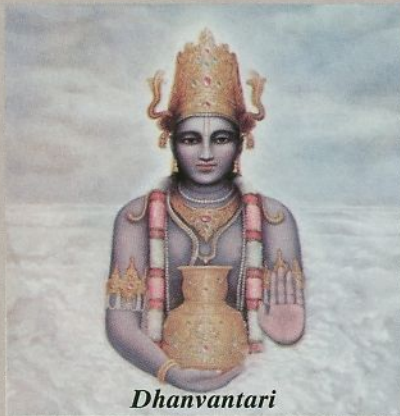
Līlā-avatāras

(Includes the well-known Daśavatāra, or Ten Incarnations)

- (1) The four Kumāras, (2) Nārada,
- (3) Varāha, (4) Matsya, (5) Yajña,
- (6) Nara-Nārāyaṇa, (7) Kārdami Kapila,
- (8) Dattātreyā, (9) Hayagrīva,
- (10) Haṁsa, (11) Dhruvapriya, or Pṛṣṇigarbha, (12) Rṣabha,
- (13) Pṛthu, (14) Nṛsimha, (15) Kūrma,
- (16) Dhanvantari, (17) Mohinī,
- (18) Vāmana, (19) Paraśurāma,
- (20) Rāmacandra, (21) Vyāsa,
- (22) Balarāma, (23) Kṛṣṇa,
- (24) Buddha, and (25) Kalki

Prābhava-vilāsa

The Catur-vyūha: Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna, Aniruddha



Dhanvantari

Vilāsa

(Pastime expansions)

Vaibhava-vilāsa

Twenty-four forms presiding over the Vaikuṅṭha planets. Some of them appear in the material world as temple deities (*arcā-mūrti*).

Vāsudeva (who expands as) Keśava, Nārāyaṇa, Mādhava, Adhokṣaja, Puruṣottama

Saṅkarṣaṇa

Govinda, Viṣṇu, Madhusūdana, Upendra, Acyuta

Pradyumna

Trivikrama, Vāmana, Śrīdhara, Nṛsimha, Janārdana

Aniruddha

Hṛṣīkeśa, Padmanābha, Dāmodara, Hari, Kṛṣṇa

3. Āveśa-rūpa

Saktyāveśa*

(Divinely Empowered)

The seven foremost:

Śeṣa Nāga

Empowered for the personal service of the Supreme Lord (*sva-sevana-śakti*)

Ananta-dēva

Empowered to bear all the planets within the universe (*bhū-dhāraṇa-śakti*)

Lord Brahmā

Empowered with the energy to create the cosmic manifestation (*sṛṣṭi-śakti*)

The Kumāras

Empowered to distribute transcendental knowledge (*jñāna-śakti*)

Nārada Muni

Empowered to distribute devotional service (*bhakti-śakti*)

Mahārāja Pṛthu

Empowered to rule and maintain the living entities (*pālana-śakti*)

Paraśurāma

Empowered to cut down rogues and demons (*duṣṭa-damana-śakti*)

Vibhūtiś

(A small sample taken from *Bhagavad-gītā*, Chapter 10)

Lord Kṛṣṇa says:

- Of the senses I am the mind.
Of mountains I am Meru.
Of Rudras I am Lord Śiva. Of bodies of water I am the ocean.
Of all trees I am the banyan tree.
Of sacrifices I am the chanting of the holy names (*japa*).
Of weapons I am the thunderbolt.
Of demigods I am Indra.

*Anyone empowered to spread the message of God in this world is considered a *saktyāveśa-avatāra*. Thus great preachers like Jesus Christ, Hazrat Mohammed, and His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda can be placed in this category.

myself to pursuing it.”

But God seemed so distant. How could I find Him? How could I possibly know Him? Though immensely important to me, the whole proposition seemed unattainable. I had concluded that God would have to be close to me to answer my pleas, but I doubted He was. That doubt brought urgency and hopelessness to my prayers.

I don't know where I came upon the term “absolute truth”; neither my parents nor the nuns in my school used it. But it was my term for referring to an unknown reality. Whoever was hearing my prayers needed to know that I was looking for a complete understanding of the truth. I had conceived that this absolute truth would be found in books of knowledge, and in my prayers I regularly asked to come in contact with those books. I so strongly desired getting those books that I even envisioned touching and opening them.

Just a few years later, I held the books of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. Here were English translations of books that had guided spiritual seekers for thousands of years. I understood that I had come in contact with the Absolute Truth. As I'd promised in my prayers, I dedicated myself to understanding the truth, taking up *bhakti-yoga* as taught by Śrīla Prabhupāda.

As a new devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa, it seemed that every month a handsome volume of this ancient literature would be published, newly translated by Śrīla Prabhupāda. I had an incessant flow of knowledge about the Absolute Truth, and I soaked it up with more relish than those soothing rays of sunlight in my dining room. My favorite books were the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* series—an amazing blend of rigorous philosophy and theology and a recounting of the life of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the incarnation of God for this age.

In the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* I came upon the sixteenth-century saint Sanātana Gosvāmī submitting himself to Lord Caitanya: “Who am I? What is the goal of life, and how do I attain it?”

Because Sanātana's questions echoed mine, Caitanya Mahāprabhu's answers became very important: God Himself was about to answer me.

Three Forms of One God

KṚṢṆA, GOD, exists in three principal forms (*rūpas*)—*svayam-rūpa*, *tad-ekātma-rūpa*, and *āveśa-rūpa*.

Svayam-rūpa

Svayam means “original.” In this category there is only one person: Kṛṣṇa. Originally God is one; no one is greater than or equal to Him. Kṛṣṇa has no origin. He is the source of everything and the sum of everything. He is the original creator of all living entities and of the material and spiritual worlds. He is the source of all expansions of God. He is the shelter of everything and master of everyone. He is the supreme controller, and His spiritual body is eternal, full of bliss and knowledge. There is no difference between Kṛṣṇa and His body, as there is for living entities in the material world.

Kṛṣṇa is distinguished from all others because He possesses sixty-four qualities in full. Other manifestations of Kṛṣṇa possess varying degrees of these qualities. *The Nectar of Devotion* clarifies: “Kṛṣṇa has four more [qualities], which are not manifest even in the Nārāyaṇa form of Godhead, what to speak of the demigods or living entities. They are as follows: (61) He is the performer of wonderful varieties of pastimes (especially His childhood pastimes). (62) He is surrounded by devotees endowed with wonderful love of Godhead. (63) He can attract all living entities all over the universes by playing on His flute. (64) He has a wonderful excellence of beauty which cannot be rivaled anywhere in the creation.”

All Vedic literature directly or indirectly points to Lord Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is the source of the *Vedas*, the knower of the *Vedas*, and the end of all *veda* (knowledge).

Tad-ekātma-rūpa

This category consists of expansions and *avatāras* (incarnations) of

the Lord. They are extraordinary and unlimited. The chart lists only a few. An expansion is a form of the Lord residing in the spiritual realm; an *avatāra* is a form of the Lord who comes to the material world. (See the side-bar “The Avatāras.”) Vedic literature refers to both expansions and *avatāras* as *aṁśa* (plenary portions) and *kalā* (portions of plenary portions). *Aṁśas* expand directly from the Lord, and *kalās* expand from *aṁśas*.

These expansions and *avatāras* possess some of the qualities Lord Kṛṣṇa possesses in full. They appear with bodily features and emotions different from Kṛṣṇa's, and They carry out specific activities. They are uniquely named according to these qualifying characteristics.

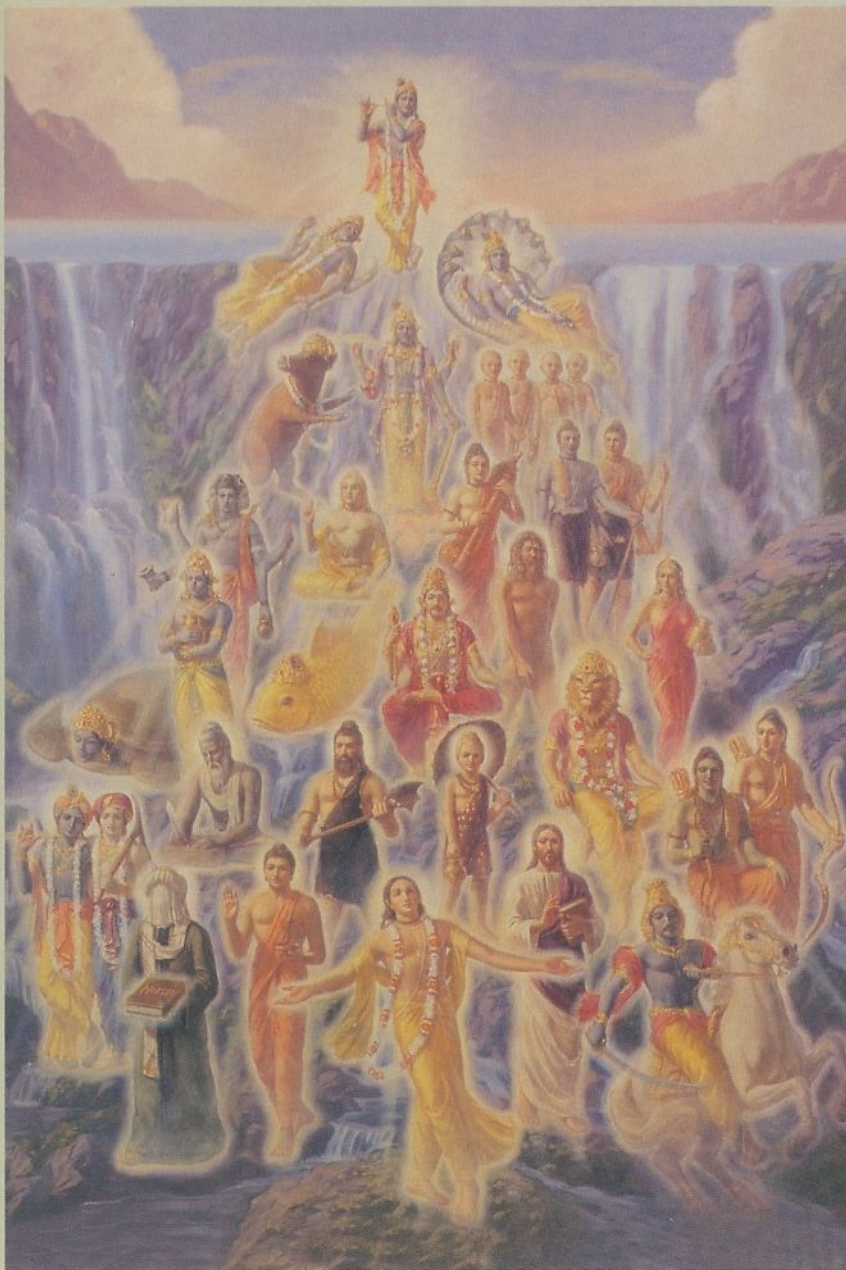
Everything we experience in this world is created, sustained, or destroyed by one of these forms. The purpose of creation is to provide a learning field where we can awaken to our original relationship with Kṛṣṇa and rejoin Him in His spiritual creation. The activities of the expansions and incarnations, like those of Kṛṣṇa Himself, give us transcendental topics to hear and talk about, which clears our path out of the material entanglement.

Āveśa-rūpa

Also known as *śaktyāveśa-avatāra*, this category has three divisions: *bhagavad-āveśa* (divine absorption), *śaktyāveśa* (directly empowered), and *vibhūti* (indirectly empowered).

Servants of the Lord empowered with knowledge and strength make up this category. They can act almost like God in carrying out specific functions. There are unlimited numbers of empowered devotees; the chart lists some of them. Most are *jīvas*, or minute souls, and not God Himself (*viṣṇu-tattva*). Exceptions: Śeṣa Nāga, Ananta, Kapila, and Rṣabhadeva.

Painting by Parikṣit Dāsa



The Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (1.3.26) states: "O brāhmaṇas, the incarnations of the Lord are innumerable, like rivulets flowing from inexhaustible sources of water."

Vibhūtis, or opulent things of this world, are also categorized as *āveśarūpas* of the Lord. They are indirectly empowered by God. Kṛṣṇa explains that everything beautiful, opulent, and glorious in this world comes from Him. He gives an extensive list of *vibhūtis* in the tenth chapter of *Bhagavad-gītā*. Śrīla Prabhupāda

comments: "Any glorious or beautiful existence should be understood to be but a fragmental manifestation of Kṛṣṇa's opulence, whether it be in the spiritual or material world. Anything extraordinarily opulent should be considered to represent Kṛṣṇa's opulence." (Bg. 10.41, Purport)

Everything comes from the energy of Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Caitanya told Sanātana Gosvāmī. All living entities are created by the Lord and are His eternal servants. They sometimes forget this fact, but by again awakening to the truth of their spiritual identity they come to serve the Lord in love. To come to the point of serving God, the living entity must become attracted to Him, and that starts with hearing about Him.

God is great, and I am small, a servant of a great master. And just how great of a master, Lord Caitanya began to lay out for me. Though there's no limit to Kṛṣṇa's manifestations, Lord Caitanya said that He would briefly mention some.

The "brief" mention was not short. I had a hard time understanding the multitude of Kṛṣṇa's manifestations. In fact, the description confounded me, and so some years later I decided to make a chart to organize Lord Caitanya's descriptions. It was important to me to understand this information. Prabhupāda explains, "Simply knowing factually the mysterious way of the Lord's incarnation in this material world can liberate one from material bondage. . . . They [Kṛṣṇa's activities and birth] are mysterious, and only by those who carefully try to go deep into the matter by spiritual devotion is the mystery discovered. Thus one gets liberation from material bondage." (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.3.29, Purport)

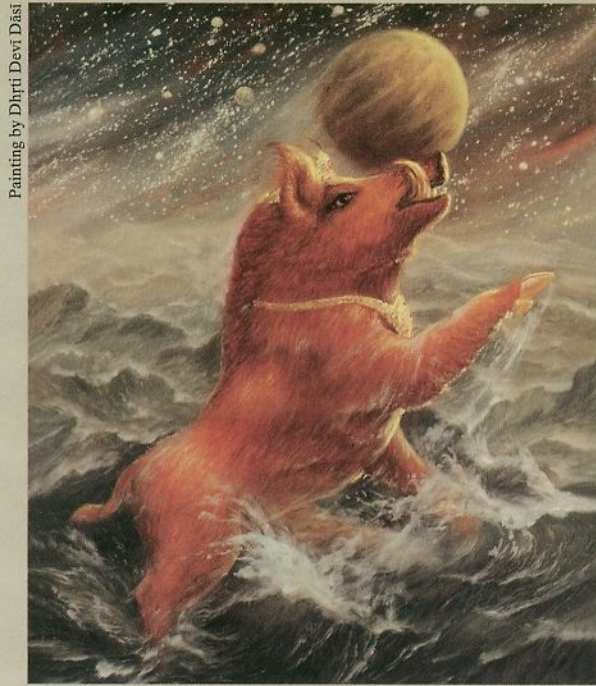
Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's description of Kṛṣṇa dissolved my childish conclusion that God was distant and inaccessible and brought me an exciting new reality. The sheer amount of information was overwhelming. And so was the message: God is very close to me. He sits with me in my heart. He is in every atom. He is so full of love for us that He repeatedly manifests different forms in the material sphere to teach us lessons, draw our attention, and call us back to Him. He is always attentive to reclaiming us. As I watched the chart take shape, I began to feel the expansive nature of Kṛṣṇa's presence and His love for me.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's statement in the

The Avatāras

Puruṣa-avatāras

Puruṣa means “controller.” The *puruṣa-avatāras* are the three supreme controllers of the material manifestations: Kāraṇodakaśāyī Viṣṇu, Garbhodakaśāyī Viṣṇu, and Kṣīrodakaśāyī Viṣṇu. Kāraṇodakaśāyī Viṣṇu creates unlimited universes. From Him comes a Garbhodakaśāyī Viṣṇu for each universe. From Garbhodakaśāyī Viṣṇu comes Brahmā, the secondary material creator, as well as Kṣīrodakaśāyī Viṣṇu, who enters every atom of each universe and is also known as the Supersoul, or Paramātmā (below). Paramātmā sits in the hearts of all living entities, giving direction to them in their material sojourn.



Painting by Dhriti Devi Dāsi

Lord Varāha is the līlā-avatāra who rescues the earth from the watery half of the universe.

most often filled by a highly qualified devotee of Kṛṣṇa (*jīva-tattva*), but if no one is available, then Viṣṇu will perform Brahmā’s duties. Śiva is also a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa. He possesses more of Kṛṣṇa’s qualities than ordinary souls, but less than Kṛṣṇa or His expansions and incarnations. Śiva is in a category of his own, called *śiva-tattva*.

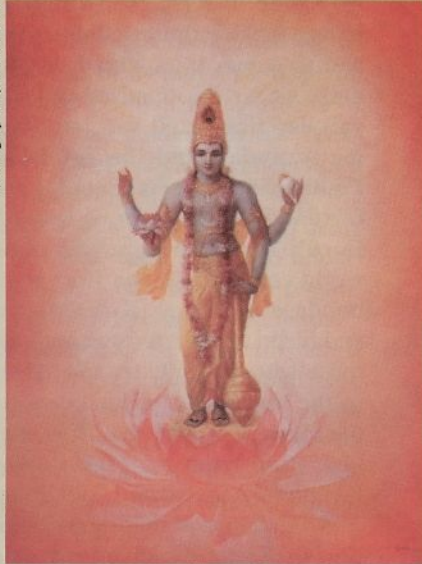
Manvantara-avatāras

Manvantara means “the life span of Manu.” Manus are rulers in the higher planetary systems, and they give direction to human society through scriptures. They live for

forms a variety of activities without making any special endeavor. He always has one pastime after another, all full of transcendental pleasure, and these pastimes are fully controlled by the Supreme Person. The Supreme Person is totally independent of all others in these pastimes.”

seventy-one *divya-yugas*. A *divya-yuga* is the four *yugas* taken together. These *manvantara* incarnations appear simultaneously with the

Painting by Dhriti Devi Dāsi



Kṣīrodakaśāyī Viṣṇu as Paramātmā.

Līlā-avatāras

Līlā-avatāras are also known as *kalpa-avatāras*. *Līlā* means “pastimes,” and a *kalpa* is a day of Brahmā. These *avatāras* appear in each day of Brahmā (every 4.32 billion years). They respond to the desires of devotees and protect the universe. In *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (*Madhya* 6.99), Śrīla Prabhupāda elaborates: “A *līlā-avatāra* is an incarnation of the Lord who per-

Guṇa-avatāras

Guṇa means “material qualities,” of which there are three categories: passion, which generates the creation of the material manifestation; goodness, which maintains the material manifestation; and ignorance, which destroys the creation. Brahmā (right) is in charge of creation, Viṣṇu maintenance, and Śiva destruction.

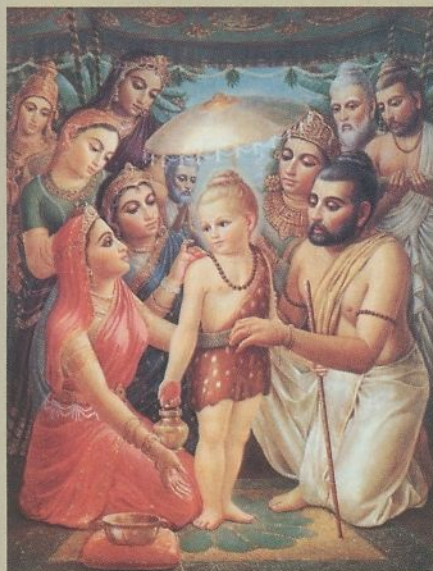
Lord Viṣṇu is a direct expansion of Kṛṣṇa and is therefore in the *viṣṇu-tattva* category. Brahmā is a post for managing the secondary material creation. The post is



Painting by Ramanatha Dasu

Brahmā offers prayers to Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Manus and change as the Manus change. In *Śrīmad-Bhagavatam* (2.7.20), Śrīla Prabhupāda explains, “The *manvantara* incarnation chastises all the miscreant rulers of different planets with as much power as that of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who punishes the miscreants with His wheel weapon. The *manvantara* incarnations disseminate the transcendental glories of the Lord.” The current *manvantara-avatāra* is Lord Vāmana (below). (*Laghu-bhāgavatāmṛta* 4.16).



Painting by Parikṣit Dāsa

Vāmana, the Lord's dwarf incarnation, is the current manvantara-avatāra.

Yuga-avatāras

Yuga means “age,” and sometimes it is translated as “millennium.” The term is used to refer to the calculation of cyclical time of the material creation. Satya-yuga is 1,728,000 years and is characterized by virtue, religion, and wisdom. Tretā-yuga is 1,296,000 years, and vice is introduced. Dvāpara-yuga is 864,000 years, and virtue and religion further decline. Kali-yuga (the current age) lasts 432,000 years and is full of vice and irreligion.

The *yuga-avatāra* gives the *yuga-dharma*, or the religion for the specific age. (See the sidebar “The Incarnations for this Age.”)

The Incarnations for this Age

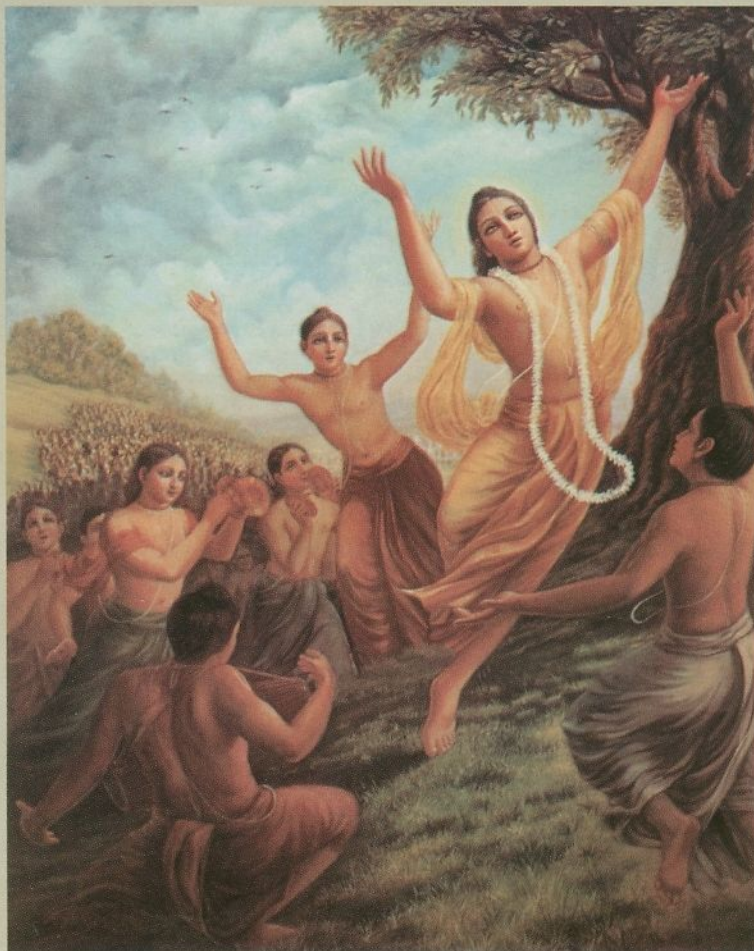
ALTHOUGH Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu is the *yuga-avatāra*, or the incarnation for this age, He is in fact neither an incarnation nor an expansion of Kṛṣṇa. Rather, He is identical with *svayam-rūpa* Kṛṣṇa.

Giving special mercy to the people of this age, Kṛṣṇa Himself has come in two forms: as Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu and as His holy name, as in the *mahā-mantra*—Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

Lord Caitanya is known as the most magnanimous incarnation because He freely delivers

love of Kṛṣṇa, the highest goal of life. To understand Kṛṣṇa is difficult, but it has been made easy by the mercy of Lord Caitanya. He is also known as magnanimous because His mercy surpasses the bounds of mundane distinction of sex, race, caste, and so on. He made equally available to everyone the sublime process of attaining Kṛṣṇa.

That process, the religion of this age, is chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*. As the *yuga-avatāra*, Lord Caitanya appeared in this world five hundred years ago to teach us how to develop love of Kṛṣṇa by chanting His names.



Painting by Rāmadāsa Abhirāma Dāsa

Lord Caitanya and His followers chant Hare Kṛṣṇa.

God as the Temple Deity

KṚṢṆA IS ACCESSIBLE to us at all times through His deity manifestation. The deity, also known as the *arcā-mūrti* (“form for worship”), comes to the world to bestow mercy on the devotees by allowing them to see Him face to face and serve Him directly. By seeing and serving the deity, devotees fix their minds on the form of the Lord. Vedic literature describes in detail how to worship the Lord in this world in His deity form.

Though the *arcā-mūrtis* seem to be made of material elements such as clay, wood, metal, or stone, They are identical with the forms of the Lord in the spiritual world. These forms are in the *vaibhava-vilāsa* category.

In *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (*Madhya* 20.217) Śrīla Prabhū-

pāda comments: “The deity in the temple, however, is visible to the material eyes of the devotee. It is not possible for one in material, conditioned life to see the spiritual form of the Lord. To bestow causeless mercy upon us, the Lord appears as the *arcā-mūrti* so that we can see Him. . . . No one should consider the deity in the temple to be made of stone or wood. . . . Nor should anyone consider the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* to be a material vibration. All these expansions of Kṛṣṇa in the material world are simply demonstrations of the Lord’s mercy and willingness to give facility to His devotees who are engaged in His devotional service within the material world.”



Yogeshvara Dāsa

Rādhā-Paris-īśvara, the deities at the ISKCON temple in Paris.

Third Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (3.15.31) came alive: “As Lord Kṛṣṇa states in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, He is the best friend of all living entities. *Suḥṛ-dam̐ sarva-bhūtānām*. No one can be a greater well-wishing friend to any living entity than the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He is so kindly disposed toward everyone that in spite of our completely forgetting our relationship with the Supreme Lord, He comes Himself—sometimes personally, as Lord Kṛṣṇa appeared on this earth, and sometimes as His devotee, as did Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu—and sometimes He sends His bona fide devotees to reclaim all the fallen souls. Therefore, He is the greatest well-wishing friend of everyone.”

The information Lord Caitanya gave Sanātana Gosvāmī is essential knowledge for all of us. The material world is full of darkness and unlimited miseries. The only way we can become happy is to serve Kṛṣṇa, the original soul of all living entities. Each soul is part of Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personal-

The Identity Of Nārāyaṇa

ALTHOUGH Lord Nārāyaṇa does not appear in the chart, He’s there. Śrīla Prabhupāda uses the name *Nārāyaṇa* to refer to any four-handed Viṣṇu form, but he also uses the name to refer to a specific expansion of Kṛṣṇa, with His own spiritual planet. Prabhupāda calls Nārāyaṇa the Lord of Vaikuṅṭha. He says that Nārāyaṇa is at the center of the *catur-vyūha* (They surround Him). He also explains that Nārāyaṇa expands from Saṅkarṣaṇa of the *catur-vyūha*. Finally, Prabhupāda refers to the *puruṣa-avatāras* (the three Viṣṇus involved in the creation) as the Nārāyaṇa *puruṣa-avatāras*. So the name *Nārāyaṇa* can refer to many forms of the Lord.

ity of Godhead. Therefore Kṛṣṇa is very dear to every living being. Kṛṣṇa Himself explains in the *Bhagavad-gītā* that the only way to satisfy Him (and, as a result, ourselves) is through devotional service, *bhakti-yoga*.

As I absorbed this information, I

was filled with gratitude. Lord Caitanya had answered in explicit detail all my questions about who I was, what I was to do, and the goal of my life. In the process, He had given name and form to the intangible “absolute truth” I was seeking. ☸

Prāṇadā Devī Dāsi was initiated by Śrīla Prabhupāda in 1976 and is married to BTG editor Nāgarāja Dāsa. She recently retired from her own printing business and has embarked on an intensive study of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books.

Vilāsa Expansions

THE FIRST FOUR expansions in the *vilāsa* category (*prābhava-vilāsa*) originate from Lord Balarāma (*vaibhava-prakāśa*). *Prābhava* manifestations are fully potent; *vaibhava* manifestations are partially potent. The four expansions Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna, and Aniruddha are known as the *catur-vyūha*. *Catur* means “four,” and *vyūha* means “guard” or “arms.” These forms have four arms, and They guard the four directions of the material world. They reside in the spiritual world. Śrīla Prabhupāda refers to Them as the aides-de-camp of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

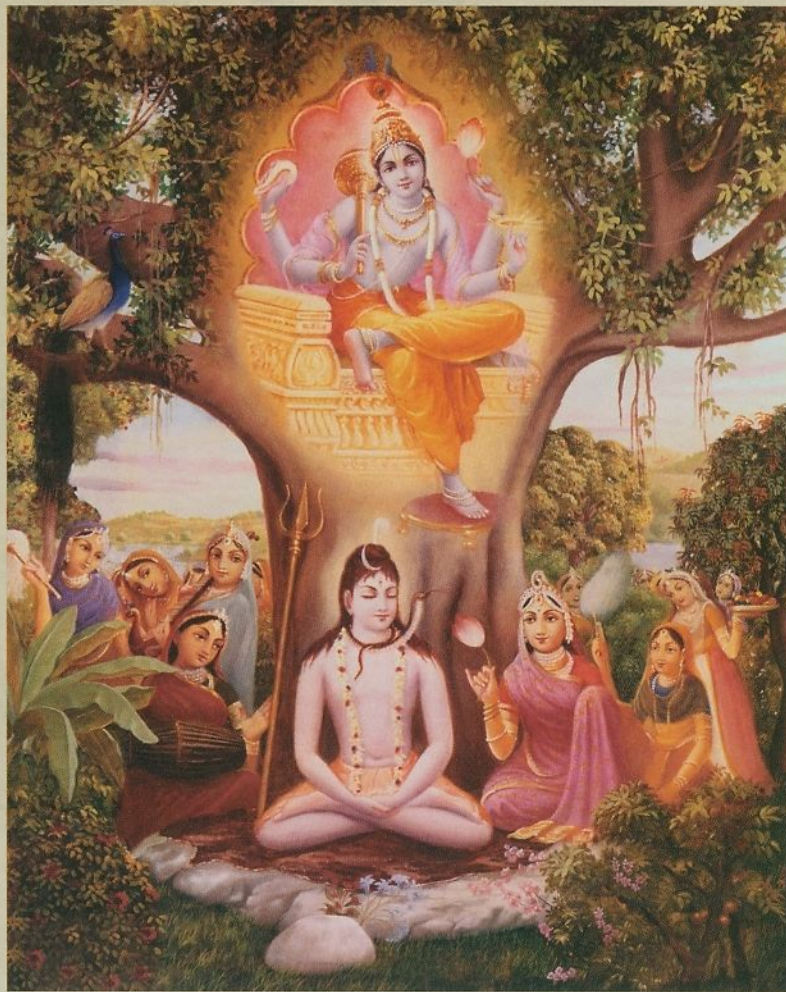
(1) Vāsudeva, the first expansion, is the presiding deity of consciousness and the cause of the *brahmajyoti* effulgence.

(2) Saṅkarṣaṇa comes from Vāsudeva and is the presiding deity of false ego. He is the source of Kāraṇodakaśāyī Viṣṇu. Saṅkarṣaṇa is known as the integrating and disintegrating power of God. In other words, He maintains the law of gravity and oversees the destruction of the universe.

(3) Pradyumna comes from Saṅkarṣaṇa and is the presiding deity of intelligence. He is responsible for universal growth and maintenance. From Pradyumna comes Garbhodakaśāyī Viṣṇu.

(4) Aniruddha, who comes from Pradyumna, is the presiding deity of the mind and the source of Kṣīrodakaśāyī Viṣṇu.

Śrīla Prabhupāda explains: “The Lord in His different features (Vāsudeva, Aniruddha, Pradyumna, and Saṅkarṣaṇa) main-



Painting by Muralidhara Dasa

Lord Śiva, a guṇa-avatāra, constantly meditates on Lord Saṅkarṣaṇa of the catur-vyūha, the quadruple expansions of the Lord.

tains both the gross and subtle material elements of this world. As mentioned in *Bhagavad-gītā*, the gross material elements are earth, water, fire, air, and ether, and the subtle material elements are mind, intelligence, and ego. All of them are controlled by the Supreme Personality of Godhead as Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna, and Aniruddha. . . . Lord Kṛṣṇa, by His quadruple expan-

sion (Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha), is the Lord of psychic action—namely thinking, feeling, willing, and acting.” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.24.35–36, Purport)

From these first four expansions come other *catur-vyūhas*, known as *vaibhava-vilāsa*. The months of the year and the markings of *tilaka* are named for these *vaibhava-vilāsa* manifestations.

Wonderf



Painting by Parkasi Dasa

ul Kṛṣṇa

*If God is inconceivable,
as the scriptures state, can we really
know anything about Him?*

by Satsvarūpa Dāsa Goswami

Śrī *Īsopaniṣad* states that Kṛṣṇa is simultaneously very far away and very close. The Vedic scriptures encourage us: The best way to know Kṛṣṇa and bring Him closer is to hear about Him.

As we open any book about Kṛṣṇa, we'll immediately feel the richness of the clear and scientific knowledge it contains. We'll also come to understand that Kṛṣṇa is by nature inconceivable to finite beings. Although some world religions extend that to mean that Kṛṣṇa is by essence *completely* inconceivable (not only far away), we cannot agree. Yes, He is ultimately inconceivable, but His name, fame, and form can be known just as we know any person face-to-face. Anyone who wants to be God conscious has to understand this point.

Here's an example of a statement that ties these two concepts together. It's from the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.12.38), in connection with Lord Kṛṣṇa's killing and liberating the demon Aghāsura, who in the form of a gigantic snake had swallowed Kṛṣṇa and His friends.

Kṛṣṇa is the cause of all causes. The causes and effects of the material world, both higher and lower, are all created by the Supreme Lord, the original controller. When Kṛṣṇa appeared as the son of Nanda Mahārāja and Yaśodā, He did so by His causeless mercy. Consequently, for Him to exhibit His unlimited opulence was not at all wonderful. Indeed, he showed such great mercy that even Aghāsura, the most sinful miscreant, was elevated to being one of His associates and achieving *sārūpya-mukti* [having the same form as the Lord], which is actually impossible for materially contaminated persons to attain.

Śrīla Prabhupāda comments:

Kṛṣṇa is the cause of all causes. He is the creator of cause and effect, and He is the supreme controller. Nothing is impossible for Him. Therefore that He enabled even a

living being like Aghāsura to attain the salvation of *sārūpya-mukti* is not at all wonderful for Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa took pleasure in entering the mouth of Aghāsura in a sporting spirit, along with His associates. Therefore, when Aghāsura, by that sporting association, as maintained in the spiritual world, was purified of all contamination, he attained *sārūpya-mukti* and *vimukti* by the grace of Kṛṣṇa. For Kṛṣṇa this was not at all wonderful.

“Not at all wonderful” is Śrīla Prabhupāda's way of saying we shouldn't be surprised or doubtful when we hear of Kṛṣṇa's power and opulence. Kṛṣṇa killed demons. Kṛṣṇa lifted Govardhana Hill. Kṛṣṇa married 16,108 wives. None of these acts is at all wonderful, because Kṛṣṇa did them effortlessly. Kṛṣṇa is the source of cause and effect, yet He appears as a child. Does that sound incredible, unbelievable? Well, Kṛṣṇa has infinite greatness. Nothing is impossible for Him.

But we are wonderstruck. Śrīla Prabhupāda named one chapter of his book *Kṛṣṇa* “Wonderful Kṛṣṇa.” *Wonderful* is a tasty word if it's not used superficially; it refers to something filled with joy, a superlative experience.

In the scriptures the devotees express their appreciation of “wonderful Kṛṣṇa” according to their relationship with Him. Queen Kuntī prays that although Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Truth, in His childhood form He becomes subordinate to mother Yaśodā. Although fear personified is afraid of Kṛṣṇa, He runs in fear from His mother, who threatens Him with a stick. Kuntī says that when she thinks of Kṛṣṇa running fearfully, His black mascara smeared by His tears, she becomes amazed. What fortune Yaśodā has to be Kṛṣṇa's mother and to subordinate the supreme controller!

The *ācāryas*, the great spiritual masters of the past, have pointed out another aspect of Kṛṣṇa's inconceivable power, beyond even that of His expansions and *avatāras*: He performed amazing feats as a small child. When Kṛṣṇa killed Pūtānā, He was only a few months old. He was seven when He lifted Govardhana Hill with the pinkie of His left hand. In other incarnations, He assumed large forms to do a large task. To kill Hiranyakaśipu He appeared in a huge form as a half man, half lion. Although He begged three steps of land from Bali Mahārāja in the form of a dwarf *brāhmaṇa*, He assumed a huge form to reclaim the universe with those steps. Kṛṣṇa

Kṛṣṇa's inclination to love all living beings is His most attractive feature.



performed equally difficult tasks, yet He performed them in His beautiful Vṛndāvana form as a cowherd boy. That in itself is wonderful.

When we think of Kṛṣṇa's opulence, we see the paradoxes. He is the master, yet He's subordinate to His devotees. He's inconceivable, yet He allows us to know Him. In the Third Canto of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the great devotee Uddhava expresses bewilderment at Kṛṣṇa's being unborn yet apparently being born, at Kṛṣṇa's being fearless yet leaving Vṛndāvana out of fear of Kāṁsa. The contradictions are bewildering, and Uddhava's separation from such a wonderful Kṛṣṇa also bewilders him. And of course, the nondevotees are bewildered because they cannot accept Kṛṣṇa with His apparent paradoxes. Their mundane morality can never accommodate the inconceivable opulence of Kṛṣṇa.

KṚṢṆA'S MOST ATTRACTIVE FEATURE

Kṛṣṇa is wonderful, amazing—inconceivably so—but we have not touched on the most mysterious and inconceivable of all His qualities: His ability to express love. He is powerful, He is wise, He is strong and famous, but His inclination to love all living beings, and His expression of that love in a variety of ways, is His most attractive feature. And even more attractive than that is His special love for His devotees. Therefore, a devotee, while recognizing Kṛṣṇa's mastership over his or her life, does not ever forget this greatest glory of Kṛṣṇa's love.

I recently heard Śrīla Prabhupāda on tape speaking about suffering. A devotee asked Prabhupāda how we should understand that even though we are devotees, we still have to suffer. Prabhupāda took a strong position. He said it was not our right to question that we have to suffer. And we should never think that we would love

Kṛṣṇa more if we didn't suffer. Nor does Kṛṣṇa have to explain to us why we are suffering. A devotee sees Kṛṣṇa unquestionably as master. In the mood of a devotee, Lord Caitanya prays, "Whether You make me broken-hearted or You handle me roughly in Your embrace, You are always my worshipful Lord, birth after birth." A devotee never doubts Kṛṣṇa's loving intention toward him.

I was raised in a nominally Catholic family. We never discussed faith or the reality of God, never broached doubts. As soon as I entered the larger world of college and was exposed to doubts, I had no answers. I remember one teacher saying, "How can there be God if there is so much suffering in the world?" This is a classic theological puzzle: If God is all-good and all-powerful, why are we suffering? How can He be all-loving if His creatures are feeling pain?

A devotee is not bewildered by these apparent contradictions. We may not understand His purposes, but we are never bewildered by them. A devotee has ultimate trust in Kṛṣṇa's most wonderful quality.

Therefore, don't ask Kṛṣṇa for sense gratification, and don't bargain with Kṛṣṇa for something less than love of God. While we acknowledge that Kṛṣṇa is far away from us, we also feel His closeness and our ability to address Him, just as a child will go to the father to have his desires fulfilled. On the higher stages of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, devotees may very well express their own desires, but their desires are always for Kṛṣṇa's pleasure. Devotees also express a variety of moods, some submissive and some contrary. Kṛṣṇa enjoys them all.

We can't imitate those types of expressions, and if we try, we may end up asking for something not in our ultimate interest. Kṛṣṇa, as the kind father, will provide the "toy." In the end we may find ourselves telling Kṛṣṇa

we didn't want what we received, and Kṛṣṇa saying, "Well, you asked for it, so now you play with it until it breaks." How sad when we go to Kṛṣṇa for such things. And how sad that it may take thousands of years of action and reaction to live out the gift He gave us.

THE GOPIS' EXAMPLE

How pleased Kṛṣṇa must be when He sees a pure devotee who cares only for Him. Śrīla Prabhupāda was ecstatic to hear that the *gopīs*, Kṛṣṇa's cowherd girlfriends, never asked Kṛṣṇa for anything. Prabhupāda offered their behavior as an example of real *bhakti*. Usually, in a conjugal relationship men and women want something from each other. Women usually want security, and even Kṛṣṇa's queens in Dvārakā had that. But the *gopīs* had nothing. They never asked for anything. They went to the forest in the middle of the night at the risk of losing their families and reputations, and Kṛṣṇa did not provide them with any guarantee or indemnity. Therefore, they are considered the highest devotees; they wanted only to give Kṛṣṇa happiness, to please wonderful Kṛṣṇa.

After Kṛṣṇa lifted Govardhana Hill, the cowherd men were bewildered. Who is this wonderful boy? Nanda Mahārāja repeated what the priest Gargamuni had told him at Kṛṣṇa's name-giving ceremony. Kṛṣṇa is *nārāyaṇa-sama*, "equal to Nārāyaṇa, or God," Gargamuni had said. Although the cowherd men understood, they didn't abandon their parental affection for Kṛṣṇa. Rather, they said, "Just let us always live in the protection of wonderful Kṛṣṇa." 🌸

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Referred to as “the ripe fruit of the tree of Vedic literature,” *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the most complete and authoritative exposition of Vedic knowledge. Five thousand years ago the great sage Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa composed this *purāṇa*, or history, to explain the essence of spiritual knowledge. Here we present *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in serialized form, with the original Sanskrit text, transliteration, word meanings, translation, and purports by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

REALIZATIONS OF EXALTED SOULS

Lord Kapila, an incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa, describes to His mother, Devahūti, the consciousness of the most elevated transcendentalists—the pure devotees of the Lord.

CANTO 3: CHAPTER 32

25 स तदैवात्मनात्मानं निःसङ्गं समदर्शनम्
हेयोपादेयरहितमारूढं पदमीक्षते

*sa tadaivātmanātmānaṁ
niḥsaṅgaṁ sama-darśanam
heyopādeya-rahitam
ārūḍhaṁ padam iḅṣate*

saḥ—the pure devotee; *tadā*—then; *eva*—certainly; *ātmanā*—by his transcendental intelligence; *ātmanam*—himself; *niḥsaṅgam*—without material attachment; *sama-darśanam*—equipoised in vision; *heya*—to be rejected; *upādeya*—acceptable; *rahitam*—devoid of; *ārūḍham*—elevated; *padam*—to the transcendental position; *iḅṣate*—he sees.

Because of his transcendental intelligence, the pure devotee is equipoised in his vision and sees himself to be uncontaminated by matter. He does not see anything as superior or inferior, and he feels himself elevated to the transcendental platform of being equal in qualities with the Supreme Person.

PURPORT: Perception of the disagreeable arises from attachment. A devotee has no personal attachment to any-

thing; therefore for him there is no question of agreeable or disagreeable. For the service of the Lord he can accept anything, even though it may be disagreeable to his personal interest. In fact, he is completely free from personal interest, and thus anything agreeable to the Lord is agreeable to him. For example, for Arjuna at first fighting was not agreeable, but when he understood that the fighting was agreeable to the Lord, he accepted the fighting as agreeable. That is the position of a pure devotee. For his personal interest there is nothing which is agreeable or disagreeable; ❶ everything is done for the Lord, and therefore he is free from attachment and detachment. That is the transcendental stage of neutrality. A pure devotee enjoys life in the pleasure of the Supreme Lord.

26 ज्ञानमात्रं परं ब्रह्म परमात्मेश्वरः पुमान्
दृश्यादिभिः पृथग्भावैर्भगवानेक ईयते

*jñāna-mātram paraṁ brahma
paramātmēśvaraḥ pumān
dṛśya-ādibhiḥ pṛthag bhāvair
bhagavān eka iyate*

(1) How is a devotee free from attachment and detachment?

jñāna—knowledge; *mātram*—only; *param*—transcendental; *brahma*—Brahman; *parama-ātmā*—Paramātmā; *īśvaraḥ*—the controller; *pumān*—Supersoul; *dr̥ṣī-ādibhiḥ*—by philosophical research and other processes; *pr̥thak bhāvaiḥ*—according to different processes of understanding; *bhagavān*—the Supreme Personality of Godhead; *ekaḥ*—alone; *iyate*—is perceived.

The Supreme Personality of Godhead alone is complete transcendental knowledge, but according to the different processes of understanding He appears differently, either as impersonal Brahman, as Paramātmā, as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, or as the puruṣa-avatāra.

PURPORT: The word *dr̥ṣī-ādibhiḥ* is significant. According to Jīva Gosvāmī, *dr̥ṣī* means *jñāna*, philosophical research. ❷ By different processes of philosophical research under different concepts, such as the process of *jñāna-yoga*, the same Bhagavān, or Supreme Personality of Godhead, is understood as impersonal Brahman. ❸ Similarly, by the eightfold yoga system He appears as the Paramātmā.

❹ But in pure Kṛṣṇa consciousness, or knowledge in purity, when one tries to understand the Absolute Truth, one realizes Him as the Supreme Person.

The Transcendence is realized simply on the basis of knowledge. The words used here, *paramātmēśvaraḥ pumān*, are all transcendental, and they refer to Supersoul. Supersoul is also described as *puruṣa*, but the word Bhagavān directly refers to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is full of six opulences: wealth, fame, strength, beauty, knowledge, and renunciation. He is the Personality of Godhead in different spiritual skies. The various descriptions of *paramātmā*, *īśvara*, and *pumān* indicate that the expansions of the Supreme Godhead are unlimited.

Ultimately, to understand the Supreme Personality of Godhead one has to accept bhakti-yoga. By executing *jñāna-yoga* or *dhyāna-yoga* one has to eventually approach the bhakti-yoga platform, and then Paramātmā, *īśvara*, *pumān*, etc., are all clearly understood. It is recommended in the Second Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* that whether one is a devotee or fruitive actor or liberationist, if he is intelligent

enough he should engage himself with all seriousness in the process of devotional service. It is also explained that whatever one desires which is obtainable by fruitive activities, even if one wants to be elevated to higher planets, can be achieved simply by execution of devotional service. Since the Supreme Lord is full in six opulences, He can bestow any one of them upon the worshiper.

The one Supreme Personality of Godhead reveals Himself to different thinkers as the Supreme Person or impersonal Brahman or Paramātmā. ❺ Impersonalists merge into the impersonal Brahman, but that is not achieved by worshiping the impersonal Brahman. If one takes to devotional service and at the same time desires to merge into the existence of the Supreme Lord, he can achieve that. If someone desires at all to merge into the existence of the Supreme, he has to execute devotional service.

The devotee can see the Supreme Lord face to face, but the *jñānī*, the empiric philosopher, or yogi cannot. They cannot be elevated to the positions of associates of the Lord. There is no evidence in the scriptures stating that by cultivating knowledge or worshiping the impersonal Brahman one can become a personal associate of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Nor by executing the yogic principles can one become an associate of the Supreme Godhead.

Impersonal Brahman, being formless, is described as *adr̥ṣya* because the impersonal effulgence of *brahmajyoti* covers the face of the Supreme Lord. Some yogis see the four-handed Viṣṇu sitting within the heart, and therefore in their case also the Supreme Lord is invisible. Only for the devotees is the Lord visible.

Here the statement *dr̥ṣī-ādibhiḥ* is significant. Since the Supreme Personality of Godhead is both invisible and visible, there are different features of the Lord. The Paramātmā feature and Brahman feature are invisible, but the Bhagavān feature is visible. In the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* this fact is very nicely explained. The universal form of the Lord and the formless Brahman effulgence of the Lord, being invisible, are inferior features. The concept of the universal form is material, and the concept of impersonal Brahman is spiritual, but the highest spiritual understanding is the Personality of Godhead.

The *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* states, *viṣṇur brahma-svarūpeṇa svayam eva vyavasthitaḥ*: Brahman's real feature is Viṣṇu, or the Supreme Brahman is Viṣṇu. *Svayam eva*: that is His personal feature. The supreme spiritual conception is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. It is also confirmed in *Bhagavad-gītā*: *yad gatvā na nivartante tad dhāma paramam mama*. That specific abode called *paramam mama* is the place from which, once one attains it, one does not return to this miserable, conditional life. Every place, every space, and every thing belongs to Viṣṇu, but where He personally lives is *tad dhāma paramam*, His supreme abode. ❻ One has to make one's destination the supreme abode of the Lord.

- (2) What aspect of the Supreme is realized by *jñāna-yoga*?
- (3) What aspect of the Supreme is realized by the eightfold yoga system?
- (4) What aspect of the Supreme is realized in pure Kṛṣṇa consciousness?
- (5) What must impersonalists ultimately do to merge into the existence of the Supreme?
- (6) What should one make one's destination?

27 एतावानेव योगेन समग्रेणेह योगिनः
युज्यतेऽभिमतो ह्यर्थो यदसङ्गस्तु कृत्स्नशः

*etāvān eva yogena
samagreṇeha yoginaḥ
yujiyate 'bhimato hy artho
yad asaṅgas tu kṛtsnaśaḥ*

etāvān—of such a measure; *eva*—just; *yogena*—by yoga practice; *samagreṇa*—all; *iha*—in this world; *yoginaḥ*—of the yogi; *yujiyate*—is achieved; *abhimataḥ*—desired; *hi*—certainly; *arthaḥ*—purpose; *yat*—which; *asaṅgaḥ*—detachment; *tu*—indeed; *kṛtsnaśaḥ*—completely.

The greatest common understanding for all yogis is complete detachment from matter, which can be achieved by different kinds of yoga.

PURPORT: There are three kinds of yoga, namely *bhakti-yoga*, *jñāna-yoga*, and *aṣṭāṅga-yoga*. 7 Devotees, *jñānis*, and yogis all try to get out of the material entanglement. The *jñānis* try to detach their sensual activities from material engagement. The *jñāna-yogi* thinks that matter is false and that Brahman is truth; he tries, therefore, by cultivation of knowledge, to detach the senses from material enjoyment. The *aṣṭāṅga-yogis* also try to control the senses. The devotees, however, try to engage the senses in the service of the Lord. Therefore it appears that the activities of the *bhaktas*, devotees, are better than those of the *jñānis* and yogis. The mystic yogis simply try to control the senses by practicing the eight divisions of yoga—*yama*, *niyama*, *āsana*, *prāṇāyāma*, *pratyāhāra*, etc.—and the *jñānis* try by mental reasoning to understand that sense enjoyment is false. 8 But the easiest and most direct process is to engage the senses in the service of the Lord.

The purpose of all yoga is to detach one's sense activities from this material world. The final aims, however, are different. *Jñānis* want to become one with the Brahman effulgence, yogis want to realize Paramātmā, and devotees want to develop Kṛṣṇa consciousness and transcendental loving service to the Lord. 9 That loving service is the perfect stage of sense control. The senses are actually active symptoms of life, and they cannot be stopped. They can be detached only if there is superior engagement. As it is confirmed in *Bhagavad-gītā*, *paraṁ dr̥ṣṭvā nivartate*: the activities of the senses can be stopped if they are given superior engagements. 10 The supreme engagement is engagement of the senses in the service of the Lord. That is the purpose of all yoga.

28 ज्ञानमेकं पराचीनेरिन्द्रियैर्ब्रह्म निर्गुणम्
अवभात्यर्थरूपेण भ्रान्त्या शब्दादिधर्मिणा

*jñānam ekam parācīnair
indriyair brahma nirguṇam
avabhāty artha-rūpeṇa
bhrāntyā śabdādi-dharminā*

jñānam—knowledge; *ekam*—one; *parācīnair*—averse; *indriyaiḥ*—by the senses; *brahma*—the Supreme Absolute Truth; *nirguṇam*—beyond the material modes; *avabhāti*—appears; *artha-rūpeṇa*—in the form of various objects; *bhrāntyā*—mistakenly; *śabda-ādi*—sound and so on; *dharminā*—endowed with.

Those who are averse to the Transcendence realize the Supreme Absolute Truth differently through speculative sense perception, and therefore, because of mistaken speculation, everything appears to them to be relative.

PURPORT: The Supreme Absolute Truth, the Personality of Godhead, is one, and He is spread everywhere by His impersonal feature. This is clearly expressed in *Bhagavad-gītā*. Lord Kṛṣṇa says, "Everything that is experienced is but an expansion of My energy." Everything is sustained by Him, but that does not mean that He is in everything. Sense perceptions, such as aural perception of the sound of a drum, visual perception of a beautiful woman, or perception of the delicious taste of a milk preparation by the tongue, all come through different senses and are therefore differently understood. Therefore sensory knowledge is divided in different categories, although actually everything is one as a manifestation of the energy of the Supreme Lord. Similarly, the energies of fire are heat and illumination, and by these two energies fire can display itself in many varieties, or in diversified sense perception. Māyāvādī philosophers declare this diversity to be false. But Vaiṣṇava philosophers do not accept the different manifestations as false; they accept them as nondifferent from the Supreme Personality of Godhead because they are a display of His diverse energies.

The philosophy that the Absolute is true and this creation is false (*brahma satyaṁ jagan mithyā*) is not accepted by Vaiṣṇava philosophers. The example is given that although all that glitters is not gold, this does not mean that a glittering object is false. For example, an oyster shell appears to be golden. This appearance of golden hue is due only to the perception of the eyes, but that does not mean that the oyster shell is false. Similarly, by seeing the form of Lord Kṛṣṇa one cannot understand what He actually is,

(7) What do devotees, *jñānis*, and yogis have in common?

(8) What is the best way to control the senses?

(9) What is the perfect stage of sense control?

(10) What is the purpose of all yoga?

but this does not mean that He is false.

11 The form of Kṛṣṇa has to be understood as it is described in the books of knowledge such as *Brahma-saṁhitā*. *Īśvaraḥ paramaḥ kṛṣṇaḥ sac-cid-ānanda-vigrahaḥ*: Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, has an eternal, blissful, spiritual body. By our imperfect sense perception we cannot understand the form of the Lord. We have to acquire knowledge about Him. Therefore it is said here, *jñānam ekam*. *Bhagavad-gītā* confirms that they are fools who, simply upon seeing Kṛṣṇa, consider Him a common man. They do not know the unlimited knowledge, power, and opulence of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

12 Material sense speculation leads to the conclusion that the Supreme is formless. It is because of such mental speculation that the conditioned soul remains in ignorance under the spell of illusory energy. The Supreme Person has to be understood by the transcendental sound vibrated by Him in *Bhagavad-gītā*, wherein He says that there is nothing superior to Himself; the impersonal Brahman effulgence is resting on His personality. The purified, absolute vision of *Bhagavad-gītā* is compared to the River Ganges. Ganges water is so pure that it can purify even the asses and cows. But anyone who, disregarding the pure Ganges, wishes to be purified instead by the filthy water flowing in a drain, cannot be successful. Similarly, one can successfully attain pure knowledge of the Absolute only by hearing from the pure Absolute Himself.

In this verse it is clearly said that those who are averse to the Supreme Personality of Godhead speculate with their imperfect senses about the nature of the Absolute Truth. The formless Brahman conception, however, can be received only by aural reception and not by personal experience. Knowledge is therefore acquired by aural reception. It is confirmed in the *Vedānta-sūtra*, *śāstra-yonitvāt*: one has to acquire pure knowledge from the authorized scriptures. So-called speculative arguments about the Absolute Truth are therefore useless.

The actual identity of the living entity is his consciousness, which is always present while the living entity is awake, dreaming, or in deep sleep. Even in deep sleep, he can perceive by consciousness whether he is happy or distressed.

- (11) How should one understand the form of Kṛṣṇa?
 (12) To what conclusion does material speculation lead?
 (13) How must one get out of the entanglement of the spell of nescience?
 (14) Why is the Supreme Lord described as *mahat-pada*?
 (15) Why is the Lord said to be not different from the cosmos?

Thus when consciousness is displayed through the medium of the subtle and gross material bodies, it is covered, but when the consciousness is purified, in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, one becomes free from the entanglement of repeated birth and death.

When uncontaminated pure knowledge is uncovered from the modes of material nature, the actual identity of the living entity is discovered: he is eternally a servitor of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The process of uncovering is like this: the rays of sunshine are luminous, and the sun itself is also luminous. In the presence of the sun, the rays illuminate just like the sun, but when the sunshine is covered by the spell of a cloud, or by *māyā*, then darkness, the imperfection of perception, begins. 13 Therefore, to get out of the entanglement of the spell of nescience, one has to awaken his spiritual consciousness, or Kṛṣṇa consciousness, in terms of the authorized scriptures.

29 यथा महानहंरूपस्त्रिवृत्पञ्चविधः स्वराट् एकादशविधस्तस्य वपुरण्डं जगघतः

*yathā mahān ahaṁ-rūpas
 tri-vṛt pañca-vidhaḥ svarāt
 ekādaśa-vidhas tasya
 vapur aṇḍam jagat yataḥ*

yathā—as; *mahān*—the *mahat-tattva*; *ahaṁ-rūpaḥ*—the false ego; *tri-vṛt*—the three modes of material nature; *pañca-vidhaḥ*—the five material elements; *sva-rāt*—the individual consciousness; *ekādaśa-vidhaḥ*—the eleven senses; *tasya*—of the living entity; *vapuh*—the material body; *aṇḍam*—the *brahmāṇḍa*; *jagat*—the universe; *yataḥ*—from which or from whom.

From the total energy, the mahat-tattva, I have manifested the false ego, the three modes of material nature, the five material elements, the individual consciousness, the eleven senses, and the material body. Similarly, the entire universe has come from the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

PURPORT: 14 The Supreme Lord is described as *mahat-pada*, which means that the total material energy, known as the *mahat-tattva*, is lying at His lotus feet. The origin or the total energy of the cosmic manifestation is the *mahat-tattva*. From the *mahat-tattva* the other twenty-four divisions have sprung, namely the eleven senses (including the mind), the five sense objects, the five material elements, and then consciousness, intelligence, and false ego. 15 The Supreme Personality of Godhead is the cause of the *mahat-tattva*, and therefore, in one sense, because everything is an emanation from the Supreme Lord, there is no difference between the Lord and the cosmic manifestation. But at the same time the cosmic manifestation is different from the Lord.

(continued in the next issue)

OUR KRṢṢṆA IS LOVE

(continued from page 15)

known in English. And maybe Kṛṣṇa could become as well known as God and Amen, or something like that.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Kṛṣṇa is already in the English dictionary.

Allen Ginsberg: Now in the dictionary?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes.

Allen Ginsberg: He's infiltrated the dictionary.

Disciple: Although they improperly describe Him as an incarnation of Viṣṇu. Really, you know, Kṛṣṇa is the source of Viṣṇu.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Here is an English dictionary.

Allen Ginsberg: Let's see how Kṛṣṇa is described in the English dictionary.

Disciple: Sure enough. "Eighth incarnation of Vishnu."

Woman from India: [Makes a comment in Bengali.]

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Just see. Here is an intelligent statement. [To the woman:] Yes. You can explain in English.

Woman: I was saying that when it comes to the question of ultimate knowledge and when Western civilization fails to embrace the oldest known name of God, that is their limitation. They may just not want to know.

Allen Ginsberg: O.K. Partly there may be the fear that the study of Kṛṣṇa consciousness will become as bureaucratized in America as the examination system has made the study of higher Western knowledge.

Woman: Yes. But everyone knows that this modern technological culture is limited, while the Vedic culture is unlimited. It centers on the Lord's glories—which makes it unlimited. You see? And the *Vedas* explain that the original name of the Lord is Kṛṣṇa. So what is the trouble?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: For gaining a technological education, everyone takes so much trouble. And yet simply for uttering one simple name, Kṛṣṇa, they are not prepared to take a little trouble?

Woman: Human life is meant for this ultimate spiritual liberation, going back to Kṛṣṇa. But some people won't take this golden opportunity. "Kṛṣṇa is a word in the Indian language." Kṛṣṇa is not a word in the Indian language. Kṛṣṇa is the ultimate name of God.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Nor does Kṛṣṇa

say that He is Indian.

Woman: Kṛṣṇa doesn't say, "I am Indian." His name is not Indian. It's universal. See?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: So you have to accept a little "trouble" and utter Kṛṣṇa. That's all.

Allen Ginsberg: I'm willing.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: We have all taken so much trouble so that we can understand the English language. And now, for our transcendental understanding, we simply have to utter . . .

Allen Ginsberg: Kṛṣṇa is next to Kris Kringle—Santa Claus—in the dictionary.

Woman: Yes, Kṛṣṇa is Santa Claus—He gives everything.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Very good. What is the definition they give for Kṛṣṇa? What do they say?

Disciple: "Eighth avatar of Vishnu." This is the usual thing. It's in all the dictionaries.

Woman: The people in India are lucky that they are holding tight to the world's original culture. Kṛṣṇa is not an "avatar of Vishnu." He's the source of Viṣṇu—He's the Supreme Lord. With the passing of so many millennia, other parts of the world have forgotten. But this knowledge is universal.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: In *Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa says, *sarva-yoniṣu kaunteya*: "I am the father of everyone." Not only human beings. All animals, plants—everyone. So Kṛṣṇa is universal.

Allen Ginsberg: Now, for instance, in America many of the black people are tending toward Allah and toward Mohammedanism.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: That is another thing. Somebody is inclined to something; somebody else is inclined to

some other thing. That is going on, and it will go on till the end of the creation. But our proposal is, "You are searching after the center—here is the center." That is our proposal.

Allen Ginsberg: But what do you do when different religious groups claim to be the center?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: No. We welcome every religion. We don't decry any religion. Our point is the love of Godhead. Our Kṛṣṇa is love. All-attractive. So we want to be attracted by Kṛṣṇa.

Take the example of magnetic force and a piece of iron. Unless the iron is rusty, it is automatically attracted by magnetic force. Similarly, although we are now contaminated by material coverings, we have to make ourselves "rustless," so that immediately we shall be attracted by Kṛṣṇa. This is the program. Kṛṣṇa is all-attractive. And we are naturally attracted. But because we are covered with this rust, instead of being attracted by Kṛṣṇa we are being attracted by *māyā*. So our central program is how to love Kṛṣṇa, how to love God.

Therefore, when people come to us for spiritual knowledge, to begin with we want to see, as *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* advises, "How much have you enhanced your love of God?" You can call Him Kṛṣṇa or something else; that doesn't matter. But *phalena paricīyate*: We want to see the result. Your religious principle—what is the result? Are you enhancing your love for God or dog? That we want to see. If you are enhancing your love for God, it is all right; we don't say anything. But people should learn how to love God. That is the perfection of life. And that we are teaching. 🌸

You're Invited! The Sunday Feast

Most Hare Kṛṣṇa centers around the world put on a special festival every Sunday—for regulars as well as newcomers. You're invited to join in the festival of music, dance, and spiritual discourse and then share hearty plates of savories, sweets, and vegetable extravaganzas. Come by and relish the taste of the world's oldest cultural tradition. Call your nearest center to find out the schedule for the Sunday Feast. (See "Centers," page 59.)

Kierkegaard and



Painting by Yadurani Devi Dasī, plaster relief by Carl Aarsleff

the Three Modes

*A philosopher's conjecture leads him to a universal law
discussed in the Bhagavad-gītā.*

by Satyarāja Dāsa



*Anyone familiar with
the Bhagavad-gītā will notice
how Kierkegaard's
three stages correspond to
the three modes
of material nature. Had he
read the Gītā, he might
have added a fourth stage:
the transcendental stage,
where Lord Kṛṣṇa resides above
the modes as their ultimate
controller.*

DANISH philosopher Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855) is perhaps best known for his theory of the three stages of human existence: the aesthetic stage, the ethical stage, and the religious stage.

The aesthetic stage is not about being an aesthete, as one might suspect. Rather, a person in the aesthetic stage pursues pleasure and avoids commitment. This stage, says Kierkegaard, begins and ends with despair.

A person in the ethical stage is committed. He or she has a sense of duty, labors for family and society, and pursues universal goals. In this stage the feverish worker usually loses his individuality, becoming a cog in the work-a-day machine of life.

The religious stage, according to Kierkegaard, generally comes after repeated frustration with working hard for society, the rewards seeming limited and meager. At this point, says our Danish philosopher, a person moves beyond the universal to the specific and starts to worship God.

Not all people go through all three stages. Kierkegaard says that in a person's life, one stage will predominate and usually engulf a person until the day he dies.

Anyone who is familiar with the

Bhagavad-gītā and the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness will notice how Kierkegaard's three stages correspond to the three modes of material nature. These three modes—*sattva* (goodness, virtue), *rajas* (energy, passion, turbulence), and *tamas* (inertia, ignorance)—are an integral part of the Hare Kṛṣṇa world view.

Mode is a translation of the Sanskrit word *guṇa*, which literally means “thread” or “rope,” implying that goodness, passion, and ignorance are the ropes that bind one to the material world. According to the *Gītā*, these three modes, or qualities, underlie everything we see, hear, taste, touch, and smell. Permutations of these qualities make up the world, mixing like the primary colors to produce countless variations.

Sattva controls virtues and qualities such as joy, wisdom, and altruism; *rajas* controls greed, anger, ambition, and frustration; *tamas* controls sloth, delusion, and idleness. *Sattva* clarifies and pacifies; *rajas* confuses and impels; *tamas* obscures and impedes.

Lord Viṣṇu, the supreme Godhead who maintains the cosmic manifestation, is naturally the master of the mode of goodness; Brahmā, the creator, controls passion; and Śiva, the destroyer, presides over ignorance.

As in Kierkegaard's system, the *Gītā* explains that a particular mode will predominate in a person's life, influencing the way he or she behaves. And while we might achieve relative happiness by understanding how the modes condition us and interact with our consciousness, we should aspire to become detached from all three modes, even goodness, which embodies finer

The Gītā, with its in-depth study of the three modes of material nature, offers us indispensable clues about the true nature of the world around us.



material qualities. Such qualities are still material and can serve as “the last infirmity of a noble mind,” as Indologist A. L. Basham has articulated it, “causing the soul to cling to wisdom and joy as opposed to God consciousness proper.”

The *Gītā* devotes one hundred of its seven hundred verses to a systematic analysis of the modes of nature. According to the *Gītā*, God, as the creator of the modes, is naturally above them (7.13); but the modes bind the ordinary soul to the body through conditioning (14.5); once we understand how the modes work and discover what lies beyond them, we can become free of conditioning and devote our pure mind to the service of God (14.19).

The fourteenth chapter of the *Gītā* outlines the general characteristics of the modes, and the seventeenth chapter teaches how to perceive the modes in types of worship, food, sacrifice, austerities, and even charity. By analyzing how the modes affect people, *Bhagavad-gītā* helps us understand distinct personality types.

The *Gītā* mainly discusses how the modes influence a person’s character, behavior, and approach to life. For example, if goodness predominates, one will aspire for (and generally achieve) long-term happiness, even if one must accept temporary inconveniences. The person overtaken by passion is usually satisfied by short-term happiness and doesn’t expect much more out of life. And the person dominated by ignorance rarely achieves happiness at all.

In applying the three modes to food, the *Gītā* says that a person in the mode of goodness leans toward healthy and nutritious food, which increases strength and longevity. Persons in passion like overly spiced foods with powerful flavors, temporarily enjoying tasty cuisine that brings on sickness and disease. A person in ignorance

has little taste left and tends to eat rotten food that quickly causes ill health.

The *Gītā* summarizes: Goodness leads to lasting happiness that begins by tasting like poison but ends by tasting like nectar. Passion leads to short-term happiness that begins like nectar but ends like poison. And ignorance (at best) leads to happiness that is illusory in both the long and the short term, being the result of sleep, idleness, and negligence. In this way the *Gītā* analyzes various aspects of life and shows how the modes influence all living beings and the world.

OTHER TRADITIONS

Other traditions have elaborated on three-part processes that correspond to personality types. Plato, for example, discusses the rational soul, the spirited soul, and the appetitive soul. These refer respectively to the intellectual, contemplative person, the pugnacious, overly active person, and the self-centered braggadocio. Plato acknowledges that all three personality types can be found in everyone but inevitably (as with the three modes of nature) one personality type will predominate.

Modern psychology acknowledges three somatypes, or body types, namely ectomorphy (thin), mesomorphy (muscular), and endomorphy (fat). These are said correspond to certain mental dispositions: cerebrotonia (brain-oriented), somatotonia (muscle-oriented), and viscerotonia (stomach-heart-oriented). Scholars of Indian religion, such as A. L. Herman, professor of philosophy at the University of Wisconsin–Stevens Point, have noted that while this classification does not directly correspond to the three modes of material nature, the similarity warrants further research. Nonetheless, as Herman acknowledges, the *Gītā* provides one of the most consistent and

far-reaching psychological analyses of people and their conditioned responses to the material world. Therefore the *Gītā*, with its in-depth study of the three modes of material nature, offers us indispensable clues about the true nature of the world around us. Taking these clues to heart may enable us to become happy in this life and in the next one as well.

A STEP FURTHER

Kierkegaard would probably have appreciated the analysis of the modes set down in the *Gītā*. In fact, after reading the *Gītā* he could conceivably have added a fourth stage to his three stages of life: the transcendental stage. The *Gītā* explains goodness, the highest mode, in about the same way that Kierkegaard explains his religious stage. But what exists beyond the religious stage? What does one do after going through the despair associated with the mode of ignorance (the aesthetic stage), the work ethic associated with the mode of passion (the ethical stage), and the abandonment of all prior conceptions to come to the mode of goodness (the religious stage), where one lives happily and begins to serve God?

When one meets a pure devotee, one moves beyond religious generality and becomes absorbed in true transcendence. Śrīla Prabhupāda spoke about this often: ordinary religiosity versus transcendental religiosity. The science of how to transcend the three modes, and thus to transcend Kierkegaard’s three stages of life, is found within the sacred pages of *Bhagavad-gītā*. ☸

Satyarāja Dāsa is a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda and a regular contributor to BTG. He has written many books on Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He and his wife live in New York State.

Glossary

- Ācārya**—a spiritual master who teaches by example.
- Balarāma**—Lord Kṛṣṇa's first expansion, who acts in the role of Lord Kṛṣṇa's elder brother.
- Battle of Kurukshetra**—an epic battle for rule of the world, fought five thousand years ago.
- Bhagavad-gītā**—the sacred book in which Lord Kṛṣṇa gives the essence of knowledge to His friend and disciple Arjuna.
- Bhakti**—devotional service to the Supreme Lord.
- Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura**—the spiritual master of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda.
- Bhakti-yoga**—linking with the Supreme Lord through devotional service.
- Caitanya Mahāprabhu**—the incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa who appeared five hundred years ago to teach the chanting of the names of God as the religion for the present age.
- Dharma**—(1) ordained duties or religious principles; (2) one's eternal, natural occupation (i.e., devotional service to the Lord).
- Godhead**—the Absolute Truth, the Supreme Reality, progressively realized first as the impersonal all-pervasive oneness, more fully as the Supersoul within the heart of every living being, and ultimately as the all-opulent Supreme Person.
- Govardhana**—a school where children learn the philosophy and practices of Kṛṣṇa consciousness along with regular academic subjects (literally "the place of the guru").
- Hare Kṛṣṇa**—the great mantra Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.
- ISKCON**—the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.
- Japa**—individual chanting of names of God, usually while counting on beads.
- Kali-yuga**—in the endlessly repeated cycle of four cosmic ages, the present and worst age, the Age of Quarrel, of which 5,000 of 432,000 years have passed.
- Karma**—material action; its inevitable reaction; or the law by which such action and reaction are governed.
- Kīrtana**—congregational singing of names of God, usually accompanied by cymbals (*karatālas*) and drums (*mṛdaṅgas*).
- Kṛṣṇa**—the Supreme Personality of Godhead in His original transcendental form (see "Godhead").
- Mahābhārata**—the epic history of ancient India, a history in which the *Bhagavad-gītā* appears as the most important and well-known text.
- Māyā**—illusion; the energy of the Supreme Lord that deludes living entities into forgetting their spiritual nature and forgetting God.
- Māyāvādī**—one who regards the Absolute Truth as ultimately impersonal or void.
- Modes of nature**—the three qualities (goodness, passion, and ignorance) that hold sway over all action in the material world.
- Nityānanda**—the incarnation of Lord Balarāma who appeared with Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu.
- Prasādam**—vegetarian food that has been prepared for the Lord and offered to Him with devotion (literally "mercy").
- Purāṇas**—Vedic histories.
- Rādhārāṇī**—Lord Kṛṣṇa's consort and pleasure potency.
- Rathayātrā**—"chariot festival": a festival in which the form of Kṛṣṇa is borne in procession on a large canopy-topped chariot or float, especially the festival originating in Puri, India, for Jagannātha (Lord Kṛṣṇa, "the Lord of the universe").
- Sannyāsa**—the renounced life of a man who relinquishes home to dedicate himself fully to the Supreme.
- Śrī**—an honorific meaning "opulent" (similarly: Śrīla, Śrīmad, Śrīmān, Śrīmatī).
- Śrīla Prabhupāda**—His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda, the founder-*ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.
- Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam**—the most important of the eighteen *Purāṇas*, which tells of the nature and pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa and His devotees.
- Supersoul**—the form of the Lord who resides in every heart along with the individual soul.
- Upaniṣads**—the 108 essential philosophical treatises that appear within the *Vedas*.
- Varṇāśrama**—the Vedic social system. It organizes society into four occupational and four spiritual divisions (*varṇas* and *āśramas*). The members of the four *varṇas* are the *brāhmaṇas* (intellectuals and priests), the *kṣatriyas* (administrators and soldiers), the *vaiśyas* (farmers and businessmen), and the *śūdras* (laborers and artisans). The members of the four *āśramas* are the *brahmacārīs* (celibate students), *gṛhasthas* (married people), *vānaprasthas* (retired people), and *sannyāsīs* (renunciants).
- Vṛndāvana**—the transcendental abode of Lord Kṛṣṇa, mirrored on earth as the town in India where Kṛṣṇa appeared five thousand years ago.
- Vaiṣṇava**—a devotee of the Supreme Lord (from the word *Viṣṇu*).
- Vedas**—the hymns of knowledge revealed by the Lord Himself at the beginning of creation.
- Vedic**—pertaining to the culture in which the *Vedas* and related scriptures guide all aspects of human life.
- Viṣṇu**—any form of the Personality of Godhead (see "Godhead"); the forms the Lord manifests to create and sustain the material world.

YOU BET YOUR LIFE

*For anyone interested in
spiritual progress, gambling is more
than just a harmless amusement.*

by Arcana-siddhī Devī Dāśī

HIGH'S CONVENIENCE store is bustling with last-minute shoppers picking up odds and ends for a holiday dinner. Having run out of milk, I find myself in the crowded store, standing in a line that wraps around the food aisle. I resign myself to the waiting, and chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra softly to myself.

An elderly shabbily dressed woman at the counter draws my attention. She's frantically scratching away at a lottery card—Instant Win Bingo. She crumples the card and stuffs it into her coat pocket, then pulls a five dollar bill from her other pocket, demand-

ing another card. Again she feverishly scratches the card with her cracked thumbnail. Sighing in disappointment, she produces another five dollars. She keeps buying cards until she's out of money, and dejectedly shuffles out of the store.

I imagine that the woman has just spent her Social Security check, hoping for a large return. Yet now she may be left with nothing. Would she have food for the month? Would her rent be paid? I feel sympathy for this small gray-haired woman who has disappeared out into the dreary fog.

By the time I decided to become a

devotee of Kṛṣṇa and aspire for spiritual initiation, I'd already learned from devotees that I'd have to give up certain activities that impede spiritual growth. Those activities, considered the pillars of sinful life, include intoxication, meat-eating, illicit sexual activity, and gambling. Each pollutes our consciousness and is addictive.

Watching the frenzied woman in the convenience store today sparks my desire to understand more about gambling, so I turn to Śrīla Prabhupāda's books.

The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* tells of a bull, representing religion, and the bull's four legs, representing mercy, truthfulness, cleanliness, and austerity. The *Bhāgavatam* says that meat-eating, illicit sex, intoxication, and gambling erode the integrity of the legs of religion. Meat-eating covers our feelings of mercy. Illicit sexual connections consume our quality of cleanliness. Intoxication impedes our ability to perform austerities and forgo immediate gratification to obtain long-term goals. Gambling destroys truthfulness.

In the current age, Kali-yuga, the bull of religion is wobbling on one leg—truthfulness—the other three having practically been destroyed. Truthfulness is suffering, too, and even the president of the United States gets caught lying under oath.

GAMBLING WITH THE TRUTH

How does gambling erode truthfulness? I think back to one of my first psychotherapy clients. Joe, in his late thirties, had recently married for the first time and desperately wanted the marriage to work. But every time he got his paycheck, he'd secretly go to the Atlantic City casinos. Using an elaborate web of lies, he'd explain his absence to his wife. If he lost all his money,

AN OLD VICE

Gambling addictions are much more common than most people think. With gambling legal and easy to find, every day more and more people fall prey to its devastation, their lives becoming ruined.

The gambling vice is nothing new. We can find accounts of it five thousand years ago with the advent of Kali-yuga. From historical Vedic books such as *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and *Mahābhārata*, we can read stories of how gambling consumes truthfulness. In one narrative, Lord Balarāma is playing chess with Kṛṣṇa's brother-in-law, Prince Rukmī. Being from the royal order, Rukmī was expected to exemplify all good qualities, including truthfulness.

Rukmī and Balarāma were playing for larger and larger wagers of gold coins. At first Balarāma was losing, but at the end he won a large wager, making up for his losses. Unable to bear the defeat, Rukmī lied, saying that he had actually won. Even when a voice from the heavens declared Balārama the winner, Rukmī refused to yield. Although gambling was sanctioned for

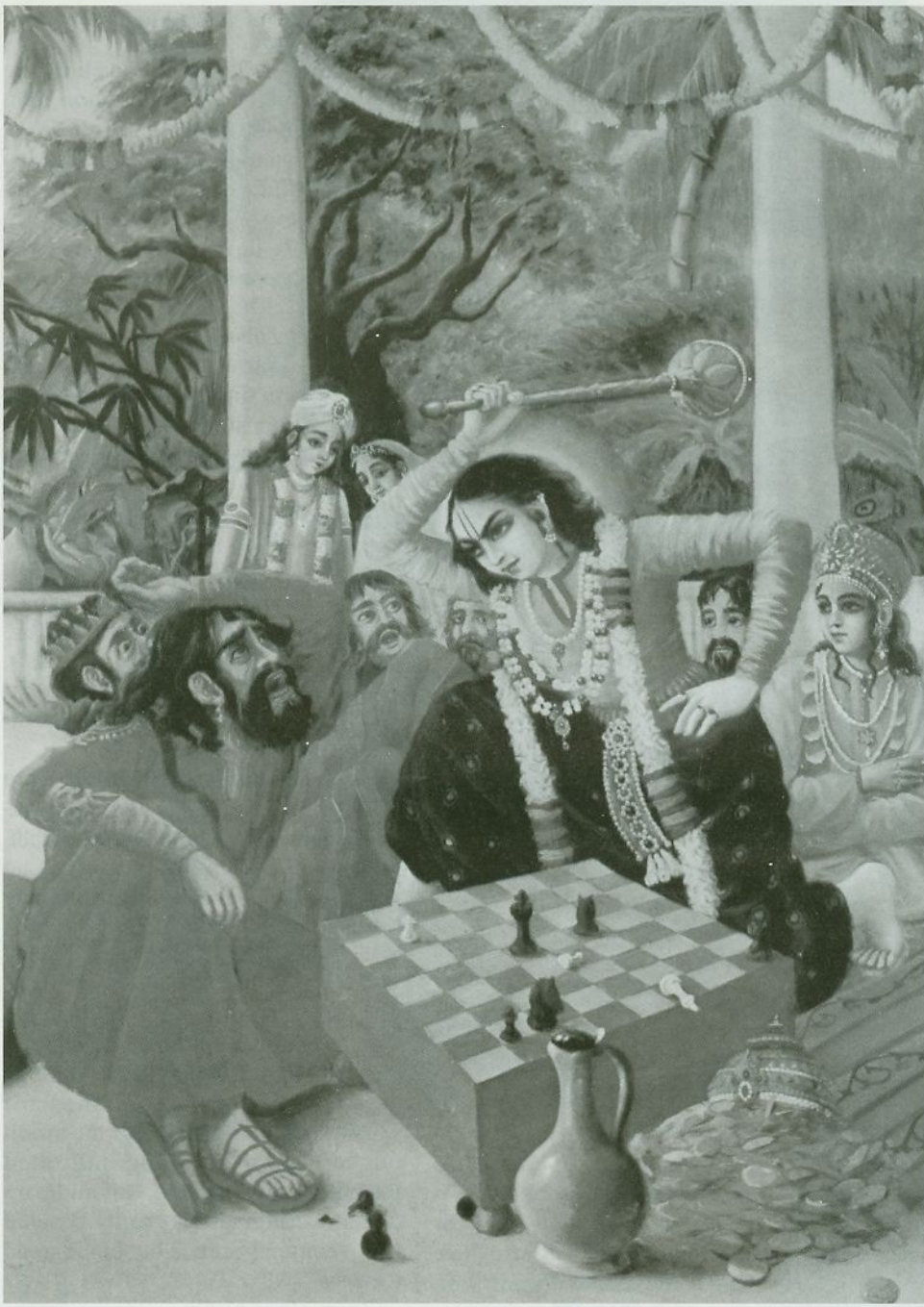
warriors and the ruling class, the insidious affects of gambling infiltrated Rukmī's consciousness. Rukmī abandoned truthfulness, a quality coveted by his contemporaries, out of his greed for gold.

In another historical event extensively narrated in *Mahābhārata*, a great gambling match was arranged between the pious, exemplary king Yudhiṣṭhira and the wicked Śakuni. Being a king, Yudhiṣṭhira Mahārāja was obliged to accept any challenge from another person of the royal order. The match was masterminded by his envious cousin King Duryodhana. Through deception and lies, Yudhiṣṭhira Mahārāja temporarily lost his kingdom. The gambling match was a catalyst for the great Kurukshetra war, wherein millions of warriors died.

Gambling aims at gaining much with little effort or expense, the payoff highly unpredictable. Spiritual practices, however, require honest, persistent effort, and Lord Kṛṣṇa guarantees the results.

often the case, he'd have to lie about the money as well. He'd make up stories: Aunt Berla is dying and needs the money for a respirator; Uncle Martin borrowed the money for his rent. On and on it would go, until his wife no longer could or would believe him and was ready to leave the marriage.

Finally, Joe confessed to the blatant truth: He was a compulsive gambler, an addict swallowed up by an insatiable desire to turn his quarters into dollars with a flick of his wrist. His eyes filled with desperate tears. He begged his wife to stay and promised to get help for his addiction.



Lord Balarāma prepares to strike Prince Rukmi, whose behavior showed how gambling can destroy truthfulness.

derstand the Absolute Truth through this faulty process. I had surmised that I wasn't the body and that the soul was waiting to be liberated from my body. While this was an accurate assessment, I concluded that suicide would free the soul from the encasement of the body. Had I acted on my speculation, I would have committed a grave error that would have cost me my opportunity to advance in Kṛṣṇa consciousness in this human form of life.

Śrīla Prabhupāda also mentions speculative business ventures as gambling. Many devotees have grappled with understanding this point. Some years ago, a friend tried to persuade my husband and me to "invest" \$12,000 in a money pyramid. As more and more people put money into the scheme, we would be pushed to the top of the pyramid and make \$60,000. The tempting offer was very risky. It was clearly a form of gambling, and we didn't take part.

All business involves some risk. A majority of new businesses fail after the first two years. Yet Śrīla Prabhupāda encouraged devotees to start businesses to support temples, and he himself had a business to support his family. After consulting senior devotees, I've concluded that by speculative business ventures Prabhupāda meant high-risk investments where one hopes to reap a big return for a relatively small

investment.

Finally, in his definition of gambling Prabhupāda sometimes includes cinemas, mundane novels, frivolous sports—anything that wastes time. How is wasting time gambling? Gambling means to risk something, and wasting time means risking time—the most valuable commodity. We can't buy back a single moment of time, even for millions of dollars. Our time on earth is

SUBTLE GAMBLING

Like any vice, gambling has gross and subtle aspects. Betting in a casino and playing the lottery are gross displays of gambling. One subtle form of gambling is mental speculation, the attempt to understand the Absolute Truth through our own experience—in other words, by guessing. Before becoming a devotee, I had tried to un-

These events involving gambling ushered in Kali-yuga, the current age of quarrel and hypocrisy. Over the past few decades, the proliferation of gambling has continued to destroy truthfulness throughout the world. People no longer trust their leaders. Friends lie to each other, as do husbands and wives, students and teachers. The sanctity of truthfulness is wearing thin in all relationships.

limited and precious. We invest our time in an activity with the hope of some return. By nature we seek pleasure. But material adjustments don't produce lasting solutions. Spiritual activity is the investment that brings permanent results.

BAD INVESTMENT

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam gives the historical account of Hiraṇyakaśipu, a powerful king inimical to spiritual culture. Hiraṇyakaśipu used his time to perform great austerities. For one hundred years he stood on one leg. In return he hoped to receive immortality. He received great opulence that made him think he was immortal, but in the end he was killed by the Lord. Hiraṇyakaśipu took the gamble that his investment of a hundred years of austerities would bring him immortality. But he lost his wager to the Lord, who appeared in His half-man, half-lion incarnation to take Hiraṇyakaśipu's life.

On the other hand, Hiraṇyakaśipu's son Prahlāda invested his time in glorifying the Lord. He taught his friends about the valuable nature of time and encouraged them to give up frivolous activities and join him in chanting the Lord's holy names. Prahlāda wasn't

looking for anything in return. He was completely happy to act for the Lord's pleasure. Prahlāda's investment of time brought him eternal happiness in pure love of God.

In our early stages of devotional life, to come to Prahlāda's high level of consciousness and never engage in frivolous activities or waste our time may seem impossible. But these are benchmarks of our advancement. As we advance, we will value our time and use it carefully to progress in spiritual life.

Advancement occurs naturally as we engage in devotional practices, but as with anything, the more conscientious our practices, the quicker we will realize our goals. The more we apply the simple formula of accepting things favorable for our spiritual life and rejecting things unfavorable, the faster we will become free of unwanted desires and activities.

While I have no desire to play the slot machines or bet at the races, I'm easily pulled into gossip and allured by images on supermarket tabloids. But I've come a long way in Kṛṣṇa consciousness over the past twenty-four years, and I know if I continue to follow the process, in another twenty-four years I may be free of the more

subtle aspects of gambling.

Śrīla Prabhupāda gave us the highest, most sublime goals, and sometimes those can intimidate beginners. Our position may be like that of someone learning to play the piano and feeling discouraged watching the nimble fingers of an advanced student. But with practice, the beginner will see progress. What seems impossible in the beginning will appear more and more attainable.

I won't become discouraged, therefore, that I haven't completely conquered the propensity to gamble. Rather, I can be thankful for all the progress I have made, and I can pray that the gray-haired woman in the convenience store can become free of her gambling addiction and find the real source of her happiness and fulfillment: devotional service to the Lord. And although Śrīla Prabhupāda instructs us not to gamble, by his inspiration I'll continue to bet my life on chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, hoping the result will one day be love of God. ☀

Arcana-siddhī Devī Dāsī was initiated by Śrīla Prabhupāda in 1976. She lives with her husband and son in Baltimore, Maryland, where she works as a family therapist.

A Kṛṣṇa Meditation

by Draviḍa Dāsa

Vṛndāvana's rivers, lakes, and hills
Rang out with lovely hums and trills
As flocks of birds and maddened bees
Rejoiced among the flow'ring trees.

To those idyllic woods and glens
Repaired Govinda with His friends,
Śrī Rāma and the cowherd boys,
To taste the most exquisite joys.

And as they walked along the way,
Absorbed in herding and in play,
Śrī Kṛṣṇa, beauty absolute,
Began to blow His mystic flute.

With peacock plume upon His head,
And small blue blossom on each ear,
He entered Vraja's woods with tread
Sublime—a dancer without peer.

His golden-yellow garments glowed,
His garland reached down to His knees,
And from His lips the nectar flowed
And filled His flute with melodies.

As Kṛṣṇa thus began His day
With friends who sang His glories sweet,
He beautified the forest way
With fine impressions of His feet.

(Inspired by *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.21.2, 5)

CALENDAR

This calendar is calculated for Mayapur, West Bengal, India. The dates, derived from a lunar calendar, may vary by one day for other locations. Consult your local Hare Kṛṣṇa temple for the exact dates for your area.

Because the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement comes in disciplic line from Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the calendar includes not only dates relevant to all followers of the Vedic tradition but also dates relating to Lord Caitanya's associates and prominent spiritual masters in His disciplic succession.

Month of Hṛṣīkeśa

(August 16–September 13)

SEPTEMBER

3—Appearance anniversary of Śrīmatī Sitā Devī, the consort of Śrīla Advaita Ācārya.

6—Śrī Rādhāṣṭamī, appearance anniversary of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, Kṛṣṇa's eternal consort. Fasting till noon, followed by feasting.

10—Parśvā Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans. Śrī Vāmana-dvādaśī, appearance anniversary of Lord Vāmanadeva, Kṛṣṇa's incarnation as a dwarf *brāhmaṇa*. Fasting till noon. Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, one of the six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana.

11—Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Bhaktinoda Ṭhākura, father of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura (Śrīla Prabhupāda's spiritual master), and a pioneer in spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness in English. Fasting till noon, followed by feasting.

12—Disappearance anniversary

of Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura, foremost teacher of chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa.

13—Anniversary of Śrīla Prabhupāda's accepting *sannyāsa*, the renounced order of life. Third month of Cāturmāsya begins (fasting from milk).

Month of Padmanābha

(September 14–October 13)

20—Anniversary of Śrīla Prabhupāda's arrival in the United States.

24—Indirā Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans.

OCTOBER

8—Rāmacandra Vijayotsava, the anniversary of Lord Rāmacandra's victory over the demon Rāvaṇa. Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Madhvācārya, a Vaiṣṇava philosopher and spiritual master who appeared in the thirteenth century.

9—Pāśāṅkuṣā Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans.

10—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī, Śrīla Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, and Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī, great associates and followers of Lord Caitanya.

13—Śrī Kṛṣṇa Śaradiyā Rāsa-yātrā. Disappearance anniversary of Śrī Murāri Gupta, an associate of Lord Caitanya. Beginning of Dāmodara-vrata. Offering lamps for one month. Also, the fourth month of Cāturmāsya begins (fasting from *ūrad dāl*).

Month of Dāmodara

(October 14–November 8)

18—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Narottama Dāsa Ṭhākura, a great devotee of Kṛṣṇa known for his Bengali devotional songs.

23—Ramā Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans.

27—Diwali, the festival of illuminating Kṛṣṇa's temples with lamps. Call your local Hare Kṛṣṇa temple for details.

28—Govardhana Pūjā, the festival commemorating the worship of Govardhana Hill by the residents of Vṛndāvana and Kṛṣṇa's lifting the hill. Call your local Hare Kṛṣṇa temple for details.

31—Disappearance anniversary of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, Founder-*Ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. Devotees observe this day with personal remembrances of Śrīla Prabhupāda, readings from his biography, and fasting till noon, followed by feasting.

NOVEMBER

4—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Śrīnivāsa Ācārya, a great follower of the six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana.

8—Utthānā Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans. Also, the disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Gaurakiśora Dāsa Bābājī, the spiritual master of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, who was Śrīla Prabhupāda's spiritual master. Fasting till noon.

11—Śrī Kṛṣṇa Rāsa-yātrā. Last day of Dāmodara-vrata and Cāturmāsya.



Yamrajī Dāsa

Māyāpur, West Bengal, India

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

PRONUNCIATION: *ha-ray, krish-na, ra-ma* (rhymes with “drama”)

Introducing My Children to

VRNDĀVANA

Palindri Devi Dāsi



A family takes a pilgrimage to the land where Kṛṣṇa appeared.

by Kālakanṭha Dāsa

COMpletely out of season for Vṛndāvana, a storm announces itself with crackling lightning and booming thunder. Chilly north winds hurl bluish-black clouds across the afternoon sky. Suddenly rain pours and sends everyone running for cover. Caught far from our quarters, my wife (Jitāmṛta Dāsi) and I duck into the secretary's

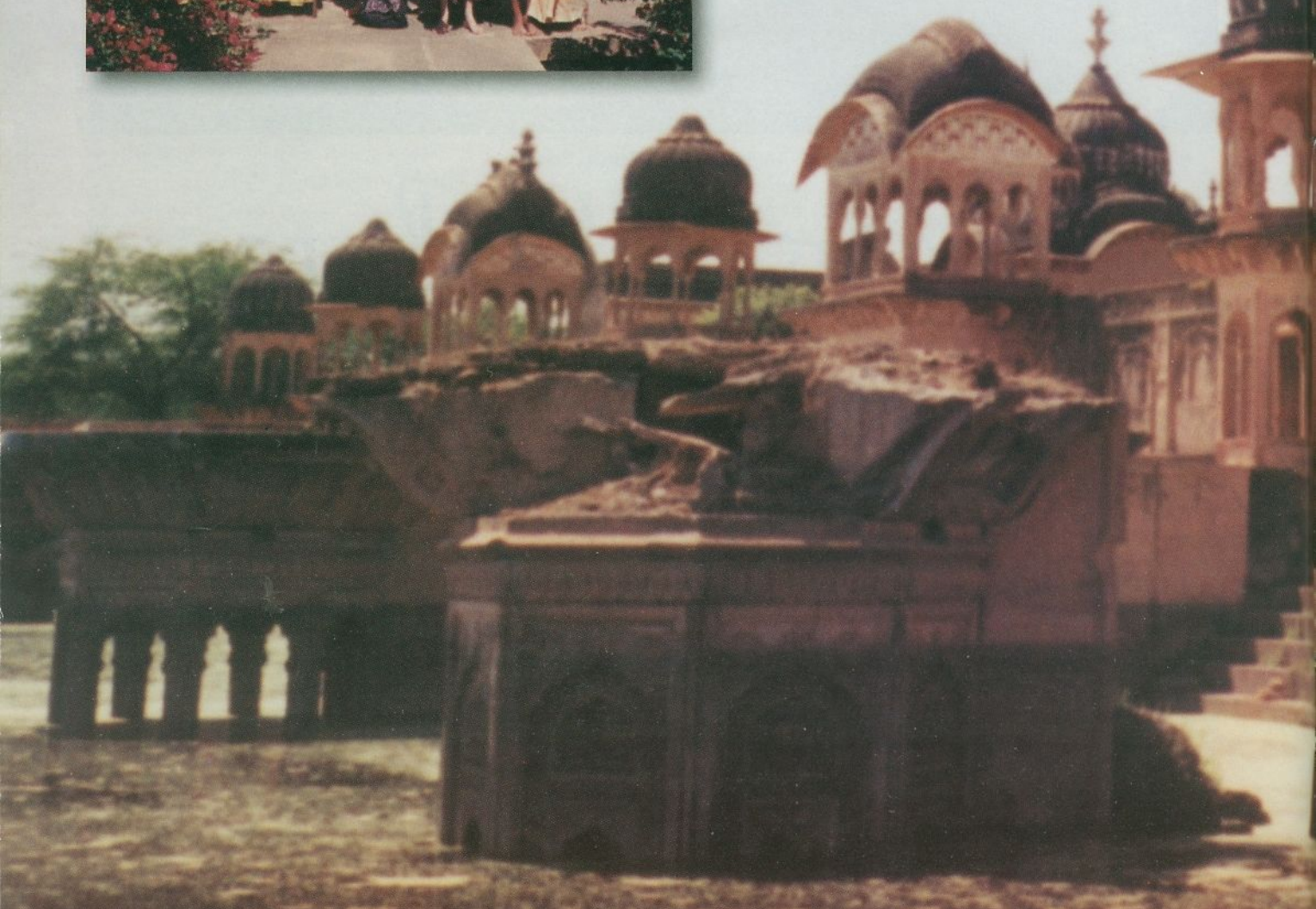
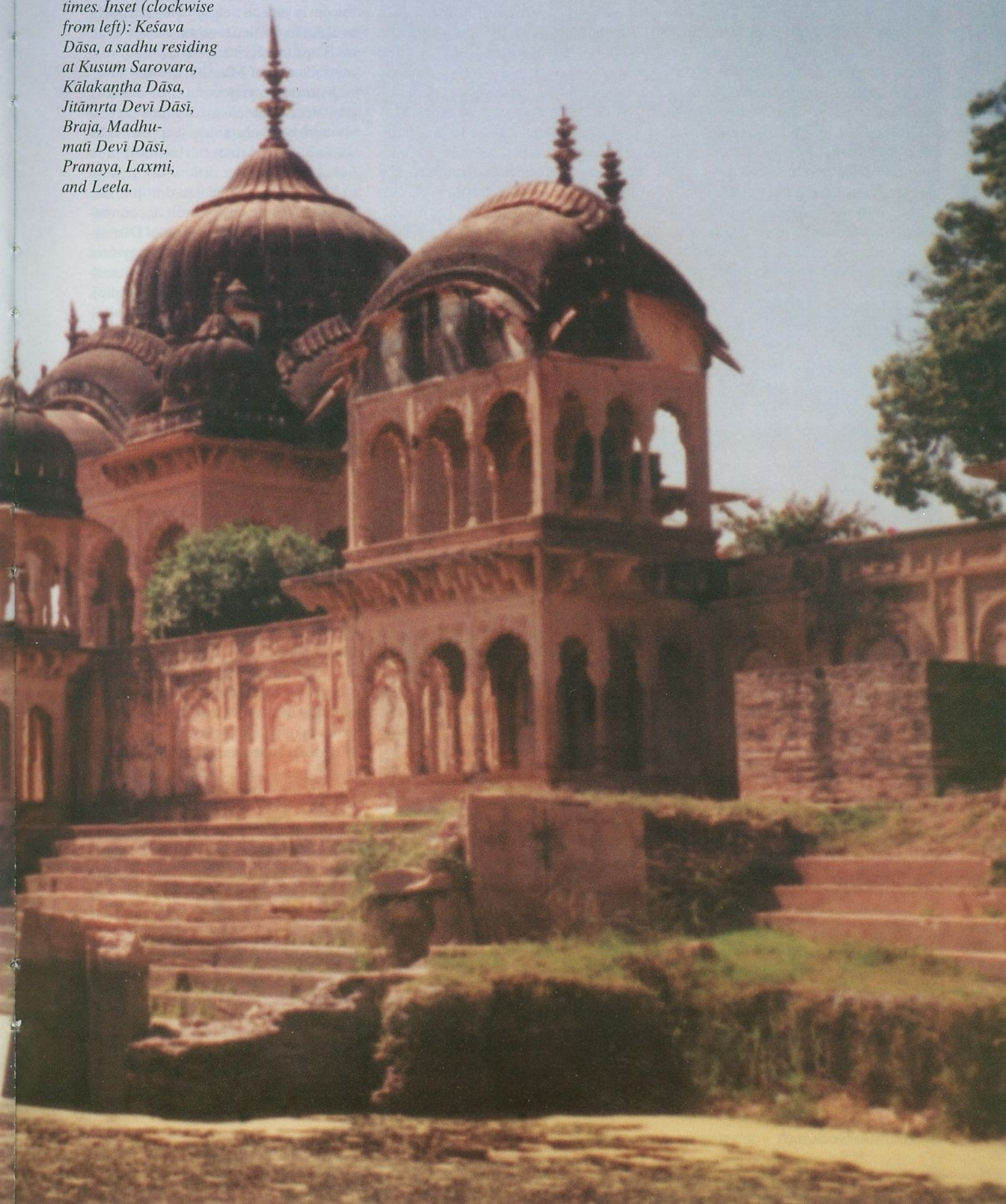


Photo: Kālakanṭha Dāsa

Main photo: Kusum Sarovara, built by a king to honor a site of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. Inset (clockwise from left): Keśava Dāsa, a sadhu residing at Kusum Sarovara, Kālakaṇṭha Dāsa, Jitāmṛta Devī Dāsī, Braja, Madhumatī Devī Dāsī, Pranaya, Laxmi, and Leela.



office at ISKCON's Krishna-Balaram Temple. The secretary smiles and invites us to pass the time by looking at her picture book containing photos of the temple opening in 1975. The many photos of Śrīla Prabhupāda include one of His Divine Grace leading an elephant procession from the temple the night of the opening. Among the dozens of beatific faces following him is a thin Westerner looking younger than his twenty years. It was me, on my first trip to India.

Now, twenty-five years later, on a four-month assignment elsewhere in India, my wife and I have resolved to bring our girls, Laxmi (11) and Leela (9), here to Vṛndāvana. Since we want

to raise them as devotees of Kṛṣṇa, we must do our best to introduce them to Vṛndāvana, the sacred village of Lord Kṛṣṇa's youth. Thousands of Kṛṣṇa temples grace Vṛndāvana. Their bells ring night and day, blending with the sounds of chanting and of catcalling peacocks to create a Kṛṣṇa conscious atmosphere found nowhere else.

It's hard to believe how much Vṛndāvana has changed since 1975. Vṛndāvana then had few amenities for visitors and devotees. Śrīla Prabhupāda's newly constructed Krishna-Balaram Temple rose high above the quiet, surrounding ashrams on their spacious lots with bird-laden trees. A rural atmosphere prevailed. Not so now.

After the phenomenal international response to the Krishna-Balaram Temple, dozens of new temples and ashrams have sprung up all around this formerly serene neighborhood known as Raman Reti. Standing on the road in front of Krishna-Balaram now reminds one of Mumbai at rush hour.

Mundane vision cannot see the true Vṛndāvana, Lord Kṛṣṇa's eternal abode. My lovely children appear to be something less than perfect and pure devotees. I wonder if their impression of Vṛndāvana will be caught up in the comfort of our newly built accommodations or the recently arrived Disneyesque attractions (such as thirty-foot Hanumān and Gaṇeśa statues standing in front of one newly built temple). Or maybe they'll just remember playing with their friends Braja (10) and Pranaya (7), daughters of Śeṣa Dāsa and Madhumatī Dāsī, our good friends who are graciously hosting us here.

I remember my first impressions of Vṛndāvana. The historic temples, the many pilgrims, and the ubiquitous calls of "Jaya Rādhe!" ("All glories to Kṛṣṇa's most beloved Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī") deeply impressed me with the veracity of my newly adopted Vaiṣṇava practices. Will Vṛndāvana affect my very independent-minded daughters in the same way? I have three days to show them the Vṛndāvana I love.

DAY ONE

Their mother feels ill today, so I take the girls to see some of the old historic temples of Vṛndāvana. Five hundred years ago, Vṛndāvana was a tiny rural village. At that time Lord Kṛṣṇa, reappearing as Lord Caitanya, dispatched the six Gosvāmīs, His principal disciples, to Vṛndāvana. They were to uncover the ancient places of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes and commemorate them with magnificent temples. Just after sunrise we climb aboard a bicycle ricksha and head off to visit some of these temples.

We stop first at Madana-Mohana, a beautiful temple built by Sanātana Gosvāmī. The intricately carved red sandstone spire stands atop a high hill, speaking the very essence of holy Vṛndāvana. I tell the girls how Sanātana blessed a troubled salt merchant who reciprocated by building this temple. They listen, but they are more inter-



"We chant Kṛṣṇa's names as we return to the Krishna-Balaram Temple in Vṛndāvana."

ested in about fifty frolicking monkeys, dashing and rolling on the temple courtyard, apparently warming up for a hard day of mischief and petty thievery.

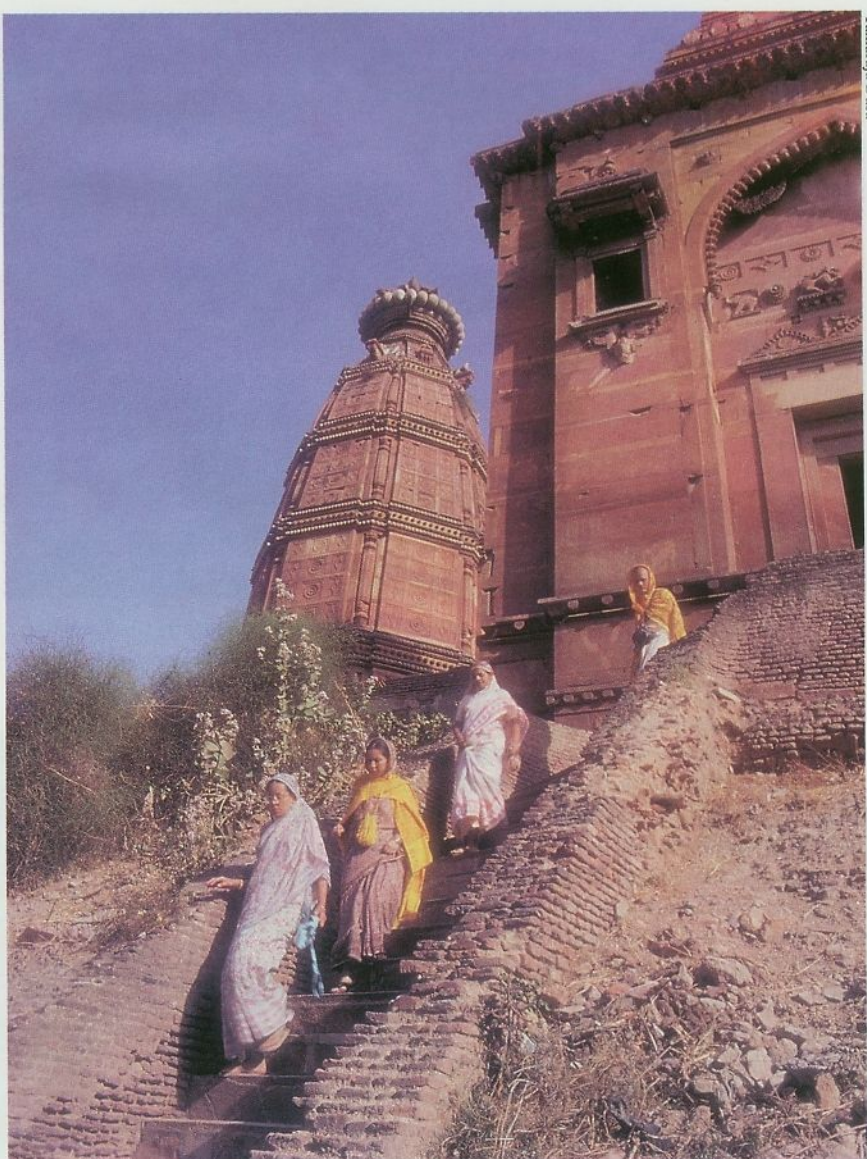
It dawns on me that it will be hard to compete with the animals for the girl's interest. Besides the monkeys—famous for stealing eyeglasses from unsuspecting pilgrims and then bartering them back for food—Vṛndāvana is full of cows, dogs, and an occasional camel. Countless pigs (Vṛndāvana's sanitation specialists) look plump and proud as they parade their offspring, nozzles down in Vṛndāvana's narrow concrete open sewers. Darting green parrots seem to merge into leafy trees. Wild peacocks strut their stuff, calling loudly and unexpectedly from trees and rooftops. The girls love it all.

"Monkey alert!" cries Leela, spotting a small pink face watching us intently from a nearby rooftop as we ricksha to the next temple. I remove my glasses and squint.

Rādhā-Govinda

Madana-Mohana was quiet and almost deserted, just as I remember it. But Rūpa Gosvāmī's Rādhā-Govinda Temple bustles with tourists, even at this relatively early hour. About two hundred of them crowd around the altar of this large historic red sandstone temple. A *pūjārī* shows the deity and distributes *caraṇāmṛta*, sacred water.

I remember coming here in 1975 and exploring nooks and crannies on the second and third floors. At that time it seemed only monkeys and bats had been there for decades. To-



"The intricately carved red sandstone spire of the Madana-Mohana temple stands atop a high hill, speaking the very essence of holy Vṛndāvana."

day there are *pūjārīs* and tourists and appreciation for the temple's wonderful architecture—or what the Mogul tyrant Aurangzeb left of it after his seventeenth-century rampage here.

Looking up at the huge lotus-shaped carved center stone suspended thirty feet about the central gallery, the girls share my wonder about how the builders managed to raise it. It's enough to distract them from the hundreds of bats that hang all over it.

Now we head to the quiet and well-maintained Imli-tala Temple, site of a historic tamarind tree under which Lord Caitanya chanted on beads. The sacred Yamuna flows by here, not far from the temple gate. About a hundred

meters across a wide sandbar we see a herd of cows and some pilgrims at the water's edge. We decide to go there for a picnic breakfast.

Breakfast with Bulls

As we cross the sandbar and find a sandy riverfront spot, I remember wonderfully purifying swims in the sacred Yamuna in 1975. But I don't mention them to the girls. Sadly, the Yamuna is now so polluted that most parents think twice about putting their offspring in her. A ritual bath of three drops on the head is equivalent to a full immersion, so we settle for that. The herd of cows, about a hundred feet upstream from us, have no such reser-



"Monkey alert!" cries Leela.



"We head to the quiet and well-maintained Imlī-tala Temple, site of a historic tamarind tree under which Lord Caitanya chanted on beads."

ventions. They've come from some adjacent grassy fields to drink and wade in the Yamuna's waters. The girls watch them, listening as I read from scriptures glorifying the Yamuna.

Now it's breakfast time. Before the main course—a loaf of banana-nut bread—I pull from my backpack a single large *laddu* from the Krishna-Balaram Temple. The moment I break the grainy sweet, a large white brahma bull catches wind of it. Immediately he turns his head from the water and begins walking quickly toward us, followed by many others.

It's hard to feel too much fear of gentle cows, but this fifteen-hundred-pound horned specimen does get my attention. By the time he reaches us, we have consumed our sweet, but this fellow is interested in the rest of the contents of our backpack. I put it and the girls behind me and step toward him with a loud "Hut! Hut!" This doesn't deter him in the slightest. He and a dozen of his multi-colored friends close in, aggressively assessing us with their black, wet noses. Standing behind me, the girls stare and hold each other.

Suddenly we hear a sharp, high-pitched "Hey!" Instantly the intruders dash off, followed quickly by another fifty or so cows, oxen, and calves in the herd. As they pass we see following them a wispy-thin boy, no more

than six, carrying a stick and looking very much in charge. My charming daughters giggle at the sight of their powerful father rescued by such a lad. I smile and remember Kṛṣṇa, another Vṛndāvana cowherd boy who has also rescued me.

Rādhā-Dāmodara

Last stop this morning is Rādhā-Damodara Temple. Here we find lots of action. At the front entrance pilgrims line up for free *kitri* (a nourishing rice, bean, and vegetable stew).

Others crowd the altar for a special *darśana*. Workmen pound away, installing a new temple office next to the rooms where Śrīla Prabhupāda once lived. In Prabhupāda's kitchen we find a devotee distributing *prasādam*. In Prabhupāda's bedroom two devotees chant *japa*. We then join other pilgrims reverentially circling many historic *samādhis* (shrines), including those of Rūpa and Jīva Gosvāmī, two of the six Gosvāmī.

On the ricksha ride back to our ashram, I explain that the invading Muslims forced many of the original deities of Vṛndāvana to be moved to Jaipur. The Deities we've just seen are *pratibhū mūrtis*, or replacement deities with the same potency as the originals. But all this is lost on the girls, who are enamored by the sight of a camel pulling a heavy wheat-laden cart. Close up, the camel seems huge.

"He's taller than Śeṣa Prabhu!" declares Laxmi, citing our six-foot-tall host for comparison.

DAY TWO

Their mother is not yet well, so the girls and I set off with five friends for a four-hour boat journey on the Yamuna. Our boatman, Mohan Lal, is a resident of Vṛndāvana, an auspicious birth. I mention this to the girls. As he starts rowing, Mohan pops into his mouth some *pan*—a mixture of betel nuts and spices wrapped in a betel leaf. The



"The girls and I set off with five friends for a four-hour boat journey on the Yamuna."



“We leave from Keshi Ghat. Here the Yamuna flows deep and bends gracefully to the long sandstone staircase of the historic bathing ghat.”

girls watch him skeptically as his lips grow red and he occasionally spits the mildly intoxicating crimson juice into the sacred river.

Mohan’s simple wooden boat is spacious enough for the eight of us, and he sets up a cover to shield us from the burning sun. We leave from Keshi Ghat. Here the Yamuna flows deep and bends gracefully to the long sandstone staircase of the historic bathing ghat where Kṛṣṇa killed the demon Keśī. Pilgrims stand out on the beautifully carved and domed dark-pink sandstone piers that project from the stairs into the river. Floating by, we see the spire of Madana-Mohana Temple appearing in the background. The village

bustle behind us, we now hear little more than the calls of some water birds and the gentle splash of Mohan’s oars. Having heard Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes since their days in the womb, the girls now seem caught up in the atmosphere where they took place.

Graphic Lessons

The tranquil scene is broken by the gradually increasing sound of heart-wracking wails. We see on the opposite shore a circle of women of various ages clad in bright multicolored saris. They are indeed crying. One young girl’s voice penetrates the general din. “Lala, Lala,” she howls, meaning “little brother.” Mohan confirms that a nine-

year-old village boy has died of disease and has just been cremated here. Madhumatī, who is from an Indian family, explains things a little further:

“When a loved one dies,” she says, “by tradition friends and family simply spend some days together crying. Everyone expresses grief, and when another friend or relative arrives, a whole new round of crying begins. During this time no one expects anything else of the family. After a few days, the tears dry up. The grief is purged and life goes on.”

Shortly after seeing this, Laxmi is shaken by the sight of a human infant’s corpse floating past just under the river’s surface. Madhumatī explains that when very young children die their bodies are not cremated but simply interred in the sacred river. I watch the girls’ faces become sober. Such sights, unimaginable in the sterilized West, seem to help bring home to them practical application of the *Bhagavad-gītā*’s teachings: the body and the soul are different. The eternal soul is the real person, and once it leaves, the body is fit only for destruction.

Chapati Warrior

Now the river scene becomes idyllic, with little more to see than exotic waterfowl and fields of wheat growing right up to the river’s edge. The girls relax and play with Braja and Pranaya as my friend Yaduvara reads a beautiful description of Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes. Another companion, Nārāyaṇī Dāsī, a U.S. born veteran of nearly thirty years in and around India, enralls the girls with a tale from her early days here.

“I had come with one of the first groups of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s disciples to visit Vṛndāvana,” she says. “We stayed in a big old palace near Keshi Ghat. One day, one of the young *brahmacārīs* [celibate male students] in our party saw a cowherd beating a cow with a stick. It seemed too harsh to the young devotee, so he tried to stop the man, and they scuffled. Soon our quarters were surrounded by a mob of outraged villagers. My roommate Mālātī, expecting to die, adorned her body with large *tilaka* marks and marched out to confront the crowd armed only with *chapatis* [flatbread]. Somehow the mob accepted her gesture and dispersed.”



Nārāyaṇī goes on to say that in the Vṛndāvana of those days one rarely saw a car, what to speak of foreigners. Śrīla Prabhupāda's efforts to convince the locals to accept his disciples eventually bore fruit, in spite of their mistakes. Today, the Vṛndāvana residents generally accept the international members of ISKCON as sincere devotees of Kṛṣṇa.

The rest of the day passes pleasantly. We stop and wade in the shallow Yamuna, then enjoy a picnic lunch on the boat as we follow the river to Mathura. Mohan lets us off at Vishram Ghat, where Kṛṣṇa rested after disposing of the evil Kaṁsa. We hire a taxi and return to Vṛndāvana. The girls are tired but report excitedly to their mother about the day's adventures.

DAY THREE

My wife has recovered and joins us today. We decide to hire a comfortable jeeplike Tata Sumo for our last day's pilgrimage. The cost—\$20 for four hours, driver included—is quite low by Western standards, but equivalent to a month's income for many local people. Our time is short, so, traveling like princesses, today the girls will see Govardhana Hill.



"As the herd passes we see following it a wispy-thin boy, carrying a stick and looking very much in charge."

To protect the simple villagers from King Indra's wrath, five thousand years ago Kṛṣṇa lifted sacred Govardhana Hill, which lies about twenty kilometers from Vṛndāvana. Today it's a major place of pilgrimage for Lord Kṛṣṇa's devotees. Thousands come every full-moon day to circle the hill. Many pilgrims traverse the twenty

kilometers around the hill by offering their fully prostrated obeisances, standing where their hands have reached, and again prostrating fully in devotion. Ascetics sometimes move piles of 108 stones in this manner, placing one stone at the end of each outstretched prostration, and not stepping forward until the entire pile has been thus moved.

Following such processes requires many weeks or months to complete a circumambulation. I point out some such devoted pilgrims to the girls as we whiz past.

Radha Kunda and Syama Kunda

We begin at Radha Kunda and Syama Kunda, two historic and extremely sacred lakes that form the “eyes” of the peacock-shaped Govardhana area. Our sixteen-year-old guide, Keśava, a bright young South African-born graduate of the ISKCON Vṛndāvana gurukula, directs the driver. As we negotiate the narrow streets near the kundas, a man sitting on a motorcycle spots us in his rear-view mirror as he combs his well-lubricated hair. He sports a mustache, fancy cloth, and betel-red lips. As we stop the car and step down, the large man strides up to the slight Keśava.

“Radha Kunda? Syama Kunda? Gosvāmī *samādhis* and *bhajan kutirs*? I will show you. Come.”

“Don’t talk to him!” warns Madhumatī. “He just wants money.”

As I step out of the Sumo and gather the girls, he approaches me with the same offer. “No, thank you,” I say firmly. We follow Keśava down to the nearby edge of the *kunḍa* and take

three drops of the sacred water on our heads. I explain to the girls how these two lakes were dug by Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa for each other, and how their waters contain all holy rivers. I also relate to them how Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī, one of Lord Caitanya’s principal followers, excavated the *kunḍas* to their present size and then lived here chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa in profound love for nearly fifty years. The girls are interested. We proceed to Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī’s nearby *bhajan kutir*, or place of chanting. Our would-be guide follows closely behind.

Tightly packed ashrams surround both *kunḍas*, but this one is particularly sweet. Here wise and mellow-looking devotees continuously sing melodious *bhajans* (hymns). We circle a modest shrine to Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī and see the beautiful Deities worshiped by Jāhnava Devī, the divine associate of Lord Nityānanda and Lord Caitanya.

I ask Keśava to take Laxmi and me the short distance to the place where Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī chronicled Lord Caitanya’s life in *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. Keśava is a bit uncertain about which way to go. Before he can ask someone, our would-be guide, who has been lurking within

earshot, grabs him by the arm and says, “Come,” dragging him out the door. Laxmi and I have no choice but to follow.

The nearby shrine is closed.

“Come, I will show you other places,” says our eager guide.

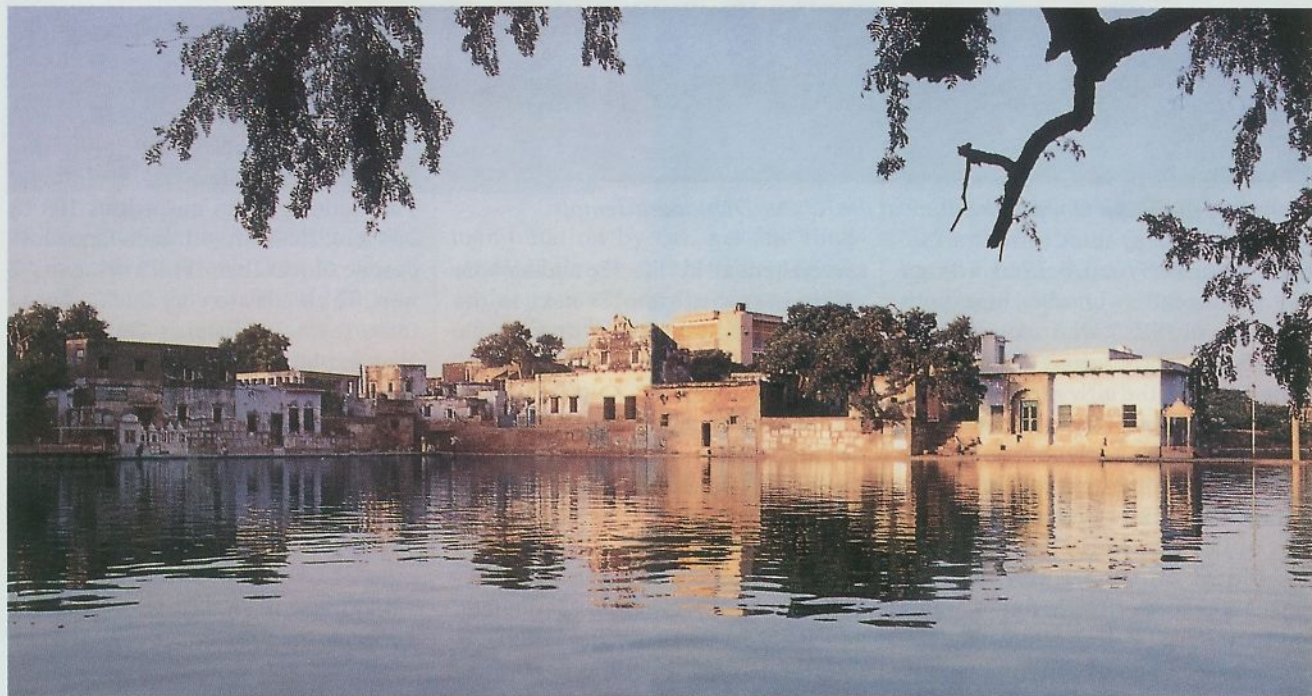
We decline and return to the rest of our group. Together we step out onto Jāhnava Devī’s beautiful sitting place, a twenty-foot-square stone platform raised above the *kunḍa*. It’s a perfect spot to see all of Radha Kunda, yet removed from the many pilgrims on the opposite bank.

Wide-eyed, the girls take in the surroundings. Madhumatī and her two daughters show them Jāhnava Devī’s private bathing place, steps hewed through the platform where she could descend to the *kunḍa* without being seen by anyone. The girls go carefully down the steps and touch the sacred water to their heads. Keśava describes various pastimes associated with Radha Kunda. I happily sense that the girls are now drinking in the Vṛndāvana atmosphere.

“Come, come! I will show you more places, better places!”

Our aspiring guide has followed us here and managed to break the spell.

“Sir,” I tell him, “we know where to



“I explain to the girls how these two lakes (Radha Kunda and Syama Kunda) were dug by Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa for each other, and how their waters contain all holy rivers.”

go. How much will you charge to just leave us alone?"

He's offended.

"You go back to Vṛndāvana!" he says, and stalks off.

I've been cursed in worse ways. The risk of the offense seems worth a few more minutes of commercial-free tranquillity.

We return to our car via Syama Kunda, but many other locals vie for our attention for one thing or another. It disturbs the girls, and they're eager to go. I sigh as we climb back into the Sumo, leaving behind this holiest of holy places.

Kusum Sarovara

We stop next at Kusum Sarovara, a breathtaking, picture-perfect shrine set

for Kṛṣṇa, hence the name Kusum (flower) Sarovara (lake). A Vaiṣṇava king built the three beautiful edifices we are now seeing as memorials for himself and his queens. They are nonetheless dedicated to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, whose footprints appear in the center of each shrine, surrounded by fresh flowers, a sign of daily worship.

An elderly sadhu approaches us, accompanied by a younger Indian woman in a sari. She is Palindrī Devī Dāsī, a South African-born ISKCON devotee residing in Scotland who is now on assignment here. She cares for the elderly sadhu and his wife. The girls listen closely as she explains their story.

The sadhu, now eighty-three, became the resident priest here when he was thirteen. He has faithfully

Kṛṣṇa is braiding Rādhā's hair. Rādhā holds a mirror, but rather than looking at her hair she is looking at Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa looks back at Rādhā's eyes in the mirror instead of paying attention to braiding. We are all pleased and charmed.

ISKCON Govardhana

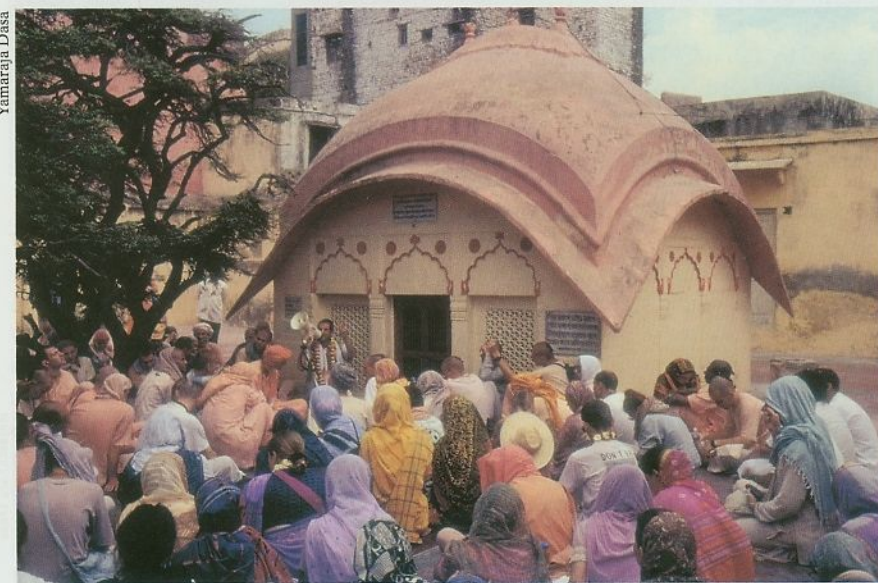
Feeling rejuvenated, we proceed to our next stop, ISKCON's new center at Govardhana. I've heard bits and pieces about it, but I don't know what to expect. We are all in for a pleasant surprise. The center is beautiful and the devotees gracious. The president, Gaura Nārāyaṇa Dāsa, tells us the building's history.

"A king in Madhya Pradesh, central India, was a great devotee of Govardhana and built this as a palace for spiritual retreats. Later his son, Maharaja Bhavani Singh, also came here occasionally but was unable to maintain it. He decided to sell the property to a spiritual organization that would use it for its original purpose. He sold it to ISKCON for a modest price, over the objections of many other prospective buyers who offered much more money but had commercial purposes in mind."

Since ISKCON acquired the property six years ago, many devotees have contributed time and money to renovate the historic structure. The entire compound, which rests on about 1.5 acres immediately adjacent to the highest point of Govardhana Hill, reflects construction and design guidelines from India's ancient *Vastu* scriptures. The building is an auspicious 108 by 108 feet. Its front entrance faces east, despite Govardhana Hill's being to the west. The walls are very thick—two to three feet—because, as Gaura Nārāyaṇa explains, "Govardhana is one of the hottest inhabited places on earth."

The thick walls seem to work, for the rooms are surprisingly cool on this hot spring day. We tour the Maharaja's room, expecting something quite plush, but instead find only a small, simple suite of bedroom, sitting room, and bath. The queen's quarters are the same. On the roof we see guard rooms, now guest rooms, on each corner.

Climbing another set of stairs we reach a special *bhajan kutir* built for the king. Here one can sit and chant



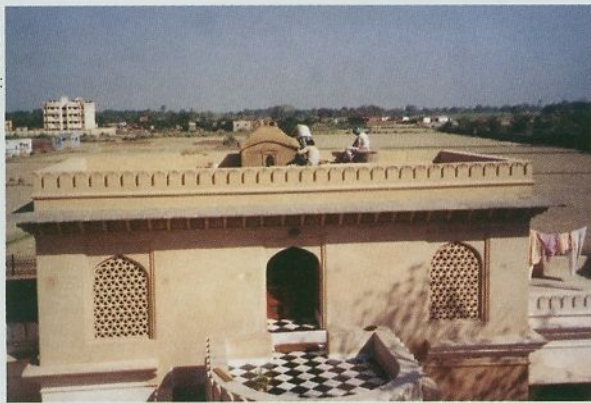
Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī's shrine at the Rādhā-Dāmodara Temple.

back from the road behind a large *kuṇḍa*. I recall swimming here with hundreds of ISKCON *brahmacāris* in 1975. It's nearly deserted. Followed by their mothers, the girls run over to the inviting steps going down to the *kuṇḍa* and begin to play in the water. Keśava and I go to another side of the *kuṇḍa* to swim. Soon the ladies are calling us. Part of Leela's favorite Punjabi outfit has blown into the water. Keśava makes a valiant effort to find it, but it has sunk into the deep, murky waters. Leela is despondent.

To cheer her we walk upstairs to the shrines. On this spot the cowherd maidens of Vṛndāvana once picked flowers

served here all his life. He and his wife reside in a small temple next to the lake. The large deities in that temple were stolen by British as "souvenirs." Today, with Palindrī's help, he and his wife worship simple Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa deities and *śīlās* (small sacred stones) in the temple and greet visitors to Kusum Sarovara.

The sadhu is a wonderful gentleman and tells us many of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes associated with the area. Madhumatī and Palindrī translate his Hindi descriptions. The walls and ceilings of each shrine sport faded but beautiful paintings of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. He takes us to his favorite painting, in which



“The ISKCON temple at Govardhana, which rests on about 1.5 acres immediately adjacent to the highest point of Govardhana Hill, reflects construction and design guidelines from India’s ancient Vastu scriptures.”

down instead of up as do all the other trees in the yard.

Gaura Nārāyaṇa serves us a delicious lunch, and we take his leave. Being tender-footed pilgrims, we conclude our circum-

mambulation by car, passing thousands of simple and humble pilgrims walking and offering prostrated prayers to Govardhana. We chant Kṛṣṇa’s names as we return to the Krishna-Balaram Temple in Vṛndāvana.

Moving On

It’s time to return to the West. Later, back in school, the girls write about their trip.

Leela writes, “Vṛndāvana is a beautiful village full of cows, monkeys, peacocks, parrots, hogs, people, and dogs. There are beautiful temples and lakes like Syama Kunda and Radha Kunda and Kusum Sarovara (a temple with a lake in front). It was nice in India,

but it is nice to be home.”

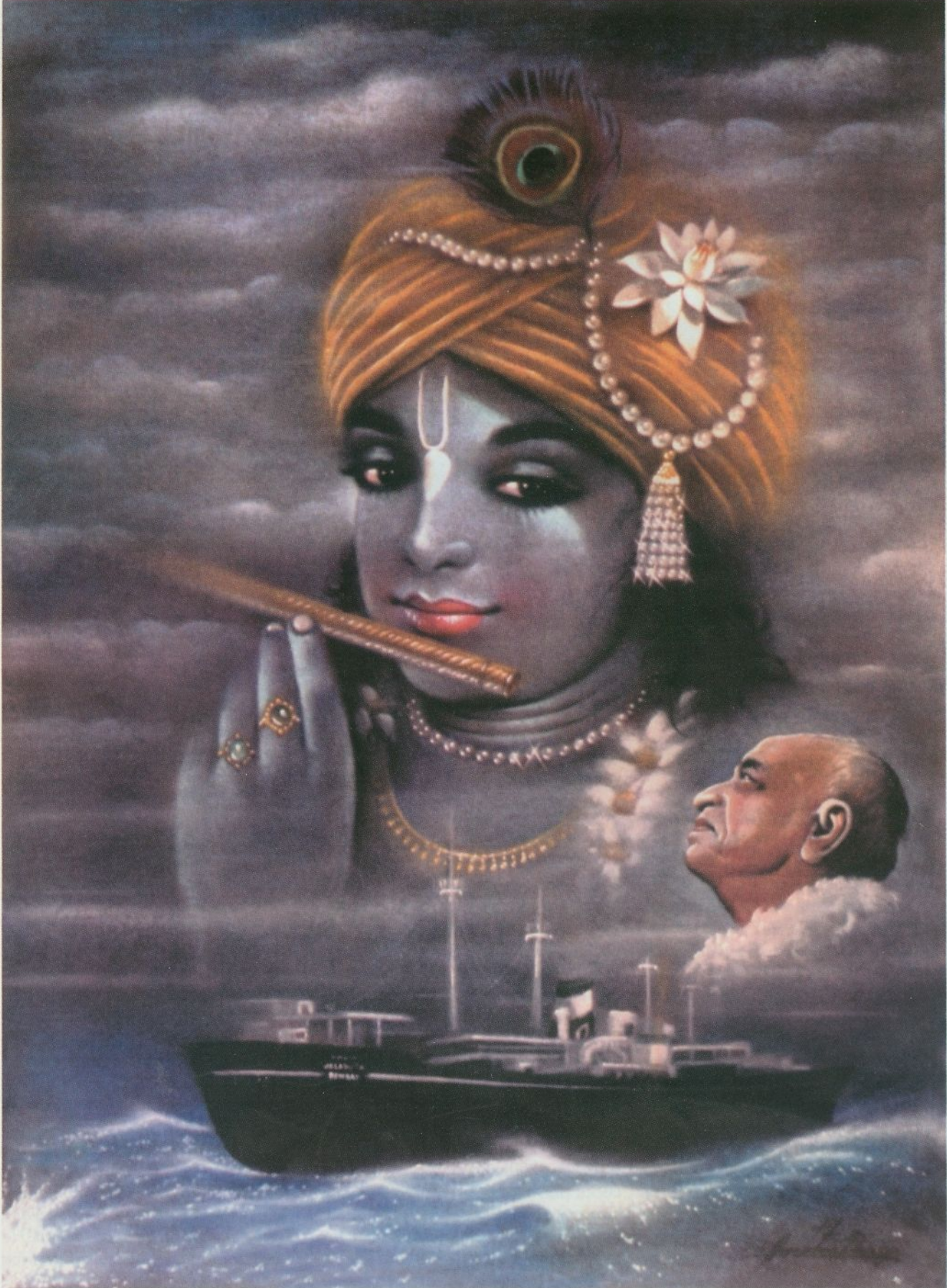
Laxmi writes, “Vṛndāvana is special because Kṛṣṇa grew up there. I wish we could have stayed longer than just three days.”

It is said that one who circumambulates Govardhana escapes the cycle of birth and death and goes back to Godhead. Similar blessings are there for those who bathe in the Yamuna or spend one night in Vṛndāvana. Who can predict how my children will live their lives or how deeply Vṛndāvana has touched them? I know only that I have done my fatherly duty by introducing them to Vṛndāvana. By doing so I feel I have fulfilled a duty to my spiritual father, Śrīla Prabhupāda, who kindly introduced Vṛndāvana to me. ☸

Kālakaṇṭha Dāsa, author of The Song Divine (a lyrical rendition of the Bhagavad-gītā), lives in Gainesville, Florida, with his wife and children. He is the resource development director for the Māyāpur Project.

while contemplating Govardhana and the nearby Harideva Temple, where Lord Caitanya danced. Clearly the king was quite religious. The new owners are indeed using the building for its intended purpose.

The girls are impressed as Gaura Nārāyaṇa shows us a collection of *śilās*—sacred stones from Govardhana—in the front yard. When the devotees occupied the property, they selected one of the many *śilās* there to worship on the main temple altar and set the rest on an outdoor altar beneath a tree. In the ensuing years, this particular tree has grown into an umbrella for the *śilās*. It is quite unusual, because the branches have grown out and



3: REMEMBRANCE

Keeping Our Thoughts on Kṛṣṇa

Here's a powerful method of yoga—or connecting with God—that anyone can do anywhere, anytime, in any condition.

by Dvārakādhiśa Devī Dāsī

In the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, the devotee Prahāda Mahārāja, a great spiritual authority, says, “Hearing and chanting about the transcendental holy name, form, qualities, paraphernalia, and pastimes of Lord Viṣṇu [Kṛṣṇa], remembering them, serving the lotus feet of the Lord, offering the Lord respectful worship . . . , offering prayers to the Lord, becoming His servant, considering the Lord one’s best friend, and surrendering everything unto Him (in other words, serving Him with the body, mind, and words)—these nine processes are accepted as pure devotional service. One who has dedicated his life to the service of Kṛṣṇa through these nine methods should be understood to be the most learned person, for he has acquired complete knowledge.” Here we continue our series on the nine processes of bhakti-yoga, or devotional service to the Lord.

THERE'S NOTHING special about the girl to show that she might be religious. No veil, no long skirt, no crucifix dangling from a chain. In a mall she would blend in easily, with droopy jeans and clumpy shoes. And yet as she lifts her hand to push back a strand of bleached hair, I see the bracelet around her wrist: a simple cord with beads spelling WWJD, followed by a question mark. “What Would Jesus Do?” In that movement, her religious faith is revealed.

What would Jesus do? How many times a day does she glance at her wrist and pause in her activities? How often does the bracelet remind her to be compassionate, tolerant, strong

in her beliefs? By continually refocusing herself in this way, the girl is practicing one of the items of devotional service: remembrance. Called *smaraṇam* in Sanskrit, it is the third of the nine items of devotional service.

On the most basic level, remembrance may be the easiest way to worship the Lord. No need for elaborate rituals and paraphernalia, no need for a congregation or even a companion. Remembrance can be a simple, unadorned journey of the heart, back to the most beloved friend we all have. Or it might be a flash of warning, an awareness that our actions will pain our Lord in some way. Or it can be the bittersweet realization that

During his voyage to America aboard the Jaladuta, Śrīla Prabhupāda always remembered Lord Kṛṣṇa, whose message he was carrying to a new land.

If we begin our day with sacred rituals, each day gives us the opportunity to remember Kṛṣṇa.



all in this world is temporary, and that that is the mercy of God. In countless ways we can remember.

Implicit in the concept of remembrance is forgetfulness. If remembering means coming back to our personal experience of God, then there must have been some departure. This departure, this forgetting, is the main attribute of living beings in this world and the cause of our pain. Forgetfulness may begin as neglect of spiritual practices, a wandering mind, a careless attitude. Then other things seem to rise in importance: wealth, prestige, family, education. We compromise spiritual principles as our heart hardens and turns away from the comfort of our natural servitude.

We might reach a point where remembering God brings pain. A child may dress in the robes of a king and play at ruling others. But when the real king shows up, the fun is over. We may play at manipulating our world, at squeezing out pleasure for ourselves, and do our best to avoid contact with the real ruler. We come to believe that if we acknowledge the supremacy of the Lord, He will ruin our fun.

Yet at times we may notice a stirring, a sense of some truth forgotten. We may despair that life seems hurried and empty. Forgetting God is so truly unnatural for the soul that it creates varying degrees of agony. And the more we have banished the Lord from our consciousness, the less able we are to find a remedy for the pain. A new car doesn't help. A new romance doesn't help. Exotic vacations don't help.

The classic example is that of a bird living in a golden cage. The cage can be polished, shined, and admired, but if the bird within is not fed, it will die. The soul is encaged within the body and embellished with all the desires relating to the body. Polishing the body and its desires brings no nourishment to the soul. And while the soul

itself does not die, it suffers terribly in separation from the Lord.

We can help prevent such a situation by structuring our lives to provide us with constant reminders. Ritual and congregation play an important role. If our days begin with sacred rituals—chanting mantras and prayers, reading and discussing scripture—each day gives us the opportunity to remember. If we set up a ritual of offering all we eat to the Lord, and offering prayers of gratitude before we eat, we are again reminded of Him. If we surround ourselves with like-minded people who share our passion for serving Kṛṣṇa, their energy and devotion replenish and inspire us.

In the same way that athletes grow strong through training, our ability to remember God can strengthen through daily training. Eventually, remembrance becomes our normal condition. The state of constant remembrance is described in many religious traditions, and in Sanskrit it is called *samādhi*. *Samādhi* need not be passive, a physical withdrawal from the world as one becomes immersed in thoughts of God. Rather, *samādhi* is the awakened realization that all in this world is but a reflection of Him. Everything belongs to Him and can be used to serve and praise Him.

Śrīla Prabhupāda compared remembrance of Kṛṣṇa to a mother's feelings of love when she sees her small child's shoe. A self-realized soul sees all things intimately connected with the Lord. The mother doesn't try to wear the shoe, and the self-realized soul doesn't try to exploit the world for temporal gain. The love and joy come only from the connection with the beloved.

THE EXAMPLE OF PRAHLĀDA

Śrīla Prabhupāda points to Prahlāda Mahārāja as one who reached perfection by remembering the Lord. As a

child, Prahlāda showed pure trust amid extreme danger. His father, Hiranyakaśipu, was an exceedingly horrible parent. His terrifying austerities altered the balance of the universe. Frightened *devas* (demigods) begged him to stop, which he did only when Lord Brahmā offered him protections that would render him virtually immortal.

With such power and determination, Hiranyakaśipu became a tyrant who ruled the world. Everyone lived in fear of him. He reserved special wrath for Lord Viṣṇu, who had killed his brother. Enter son Prahlāda. Prahlāda had developed devotion to Lord Viṣṇu while still in his mother's womb. Despite the efforts of his teachers to crush his devotion and interest him in his father's vulgar politics, Prahlāda continually sang praises of the Lord. It was Prahlāda who at the age of five described the nine processes of devotional service. Eventually Prahlāda's devotion infected his schoolmates, and landed him in big trouble with his father.

Now, an ordinary Dad might withhold supper or send his son to his room. But Hiranyakaśipu was given to extreme behavior. He tried to kill Prahlāda. He had his servants pierce Prahlāda's body with tridents, poison his food, boil him in oil, and hurl him under the feet of an elephant. Prahlāda just sat silently and remembered the Lord—a powerful form of resistance. All attempts on his life failed.

A true lover of God, Prahlāda did not beseech the Lord to save him from his dangers. He simply remembered and appreciated the Lord's greatness and thus found complete peace. His love for Kṛṣṇa was unconditional.

REMEMBERING AT DEATH

To remember the Lord at death is a great fortune. In *Bhagavad-gītā*, Lord Kṛṣṇa says, "Whoever at the end of his life quits his body remembering Me

alone at once attains My nature. Of this there is no doubt." The opportunity to meditate on the Lord at the end of life does not come to everyone. In commenting on this verse, Prabhupāda cautions, "Remembrance of Kṛṣṇa is not possible for the impure soul who has not practiced Kṛṣṇa consciousness in devotional service." We can't predict what the last moments of our lives will be like. Death can be an extremely painful and difficult moment, and the likelihood of remembering Kṛṣṇa at such a time depends on His grace and our practice. ❁

Dvārakādiṣa Devī Dāsī is a frequent contributor to Back to Godhead. She lives with her husband and daughter in Alachua, Florida.

LIBERATION

(continued from page 9)

If you try to understand Kṛṣṇa as directed by Kṛṣṇa, then Kṛṣṇa will also cooperate with you. When a teacher sees that a student is very intelligent, that he is following directions, the teacher takes more interest in that student. That is natural. If the teacher says, "My dear child, write in this way," and the child tries, then the teacher takes more interest. Similarly, as soon as you try to understand Kṛṣṇa according to His direction, Kṛṣṇa, who is within you, will help you more and more. *Dadāmi buddhi-yogaṁ tam.* Lord Kṛṣṇa says, "I give him special intelligence to understand."

Our duty is to follow the instruction of Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa says, *praṇavaḥ sarva-vedeṣu. Omkāra, or praṇava, is Kṛṣṇa.* When anyone chants Vedic hymns and vibrates this transcendental sound, *om*, Kṛṣṇa is there.

PURIFY THE SENSES

So how you can avoid Kṛṣṇa? You simply have to know how to see Him. You have to purify your eyes. You have to purify your ears. You have to purify your hands. You have to purify your legs. When your senses are purified, you will see Kṛṣṇa—nothing but Kṛṣṇa—at every moment.

You can purify your eyes by seeing the deity of Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is present

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before you as the deity, known as *arcā-mūrti* or *arcā-avatāra*. He has been nicely dressed by the devotees. It is the duty of the devotee to decorate the transcendental form of Kṛṣṇa very nicely so that thousands of people may come into the temple and see Kṛṣṇa. And as you go on seeing Kṛṣṇa and your eyes become purified, then you will see how nice Kṛṣṇa is. When Caitanya Mahāprabhu entered the Jagannātha temple, as soon as He saw Kṛṣṇa He fainted, because His eyes were prepared to see Kṛṣṇa.

We have to prepare our eyes to see. We have to prepare our ears to hear about Kṛṣṇa. In these ways we can see Kṛṣṇa. We can also use our tongue to see Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa says, *raso 'ham apsu kaunteya*: "I am the taste in water." Everyone drinks water. So as soon as

you relish the taste of the water, by following the directions of the *Bhagavad-gītā* you can see Kṛṣṇa. Similarly, with the tongue you can eat *bhagavat-prasādam*, food offered to Kṛṣṇa. And as soon as you taste the food offered to Kṛṣṇa, you can remember Kṛṣṇa. You can think how Kṛṣṇa has kindly eaten the food.

So you can begin your purification with the tongue. Without reading any Vedic literature, without reading even the *Bhagavad-gītā*, simply by eating *kṛṣṇa-prasādam* you become Kṛṣṇa conscious if you think, "How nicely Kṛṣṇa has tasted this food."

To become Kṛṣṇa conscious is not very difficult. You just have to follow the directions. That's all. But if you manufacture your own meaning, your own commentary on *Bhagavad-gītā*,

Everyone must attain perfection, but people are not interested in understanding or pursuing the perfection of life.

• • •

then you have deviated. You are lost. Such reading of the *Bhagavad-gītā* is simply a waste of time and energy.

Therefore those who are not Kṛṣṇa conscious, who are not hearing from Kṛṣṇa conscious persons, are simply wasting time. The so-called reading of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, the lecture on the *Bhagavad-gītā*—without Kṛṣṇa they are a waste of time. It is like trying to have the kingdom of God without God. We want the kingdom of God—peace and prosperity—but without God. That is the position of our secular governments. But this is not possible. If you give up God or the relationship with God, there is no question of having the kingdom of God or peace and prosperity.

KṚṢṆA'S MERCY

Kṛṣṇa says, *pauruṣam nṛṣu*: “I am the ability in man.” Anything extraordinary comes from Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is the most extraordinary person, but even within this world, if you find some great leader, a great politician, a great scientist, a great businessman, you should know that that person's name and fame are due to Kṛṣṇa's mercy. No one can be greater than others unless Kṛṣṇa has specially bestowed His mercy on him. A little portion of Kṛṣṇa's mercy must be there. Kṛṣṇa is most opulent. You can claim, “I am the proprietor of ten million rupees,” someone can claim, “I am proprietor of fifty million rupees,” and someone else can claim, “I am the proprietor of a hundred million rupees.” But no one can claim, “I am the proprietor of all the money in the material world.” No one can say that. Even Brahmā, the greatest created being, cannot say that. But of Kṛṣṇa it is said, *aiśvaryaśya samagrasya*: “He is the proprietor of all conceivable wealth.”

You should understand that any wealthy person you see within the ma-

terial world he has taken a portion of Kṛṣṇa's money. That's all. No one can claim, “I am the proprietor of all the money in the material world.” That is not possible.

We should think, “Whatever money I have is Kṛṣṇa's money, or Kṛṣṇa's mercy. Kṛṣṇa has mercifully given me this money.” Then what is our duty? We should spend it for Kṛṣṇa. That is the proper use of money. Similarly, if one is famous he should use his fame for Kṛṣṇa's service. I am trying to spread this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, but if a very famous man tries, it will spread very quickly. That is the proper use of his fame. Similarly, if a scientist proves Kṛṣṇa's supremacy by scientific laws, his scientific knowledge is perfect.

If we know that anything we possess is a gift from Kṛṣṇa and should be used for Kṛṣṇa, then our life is successful. *Samsiddhir hari-toṣaṇam*. It doesn't matter what you are. You may be an engineer, you may be a lawyer, you may be a businessman. Whatever you are, it doesn't matter. But try to satisfy Kṛṣṇa by your profession, by your occupation. Then you are successful. *Samsiddhi*. It doesn't matter what you are doing. You don't have to give up your profession as a lawyer and join us as a *sannyāsī* and dance. If you cannot do that . . . Everyone can do that, but if you think that you cannot, use your profession for Kṛṣṇa's service. Then you become perfect.

Kṛṣṇa consciousness is not a necessity for the members of this Kṛṣṇa consciousness society only; it is the necessity of everyone throughout the whole world, without any discrimination. One has to take this opportunity to become Kṛṣṇa conscious, to understand Kṛṣṇa in these ways. Then the result will be sublime.

Understand that the taste of water is Kṛṣṇa's energy, the sunshine is His

energy, the moonshine is His energy. The Vedic mantras are meant to please Kṛṣṇa. Sound is Kṛṣṇa. The energy—or the name, fame, and opulence—of big persons of this world is also Kṛṣṇa. If we study Kṛṣṇa in these ways, we will gradually know Him. And Kṛṣṇa says,

*janma karma ca me divyaṁ
evaṁ yo vetti tattvataḥ
tyaktvā dehaṁ punar janma
naiti mām eti so 'rjuna*

“One who understands Me in truth becomes liberated. After quitting this body, he comes to Me.”

So what is the difficulty? Even in your ordinary life you can study Kṛṣṇa, you can understand Kṛṣṇa. And Kṛṣṇa will help you. As soon as you begin studying Kṛṣṇa, trying to understand Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa will help you from within. Kṛṣṇa is with you. Kṛṣṇa is not far away. He is so kind that He is sitting in your heart as your friend just to help you become liberated from material contamination. Why not take advantage? Every sane man should take advantage of the instructions of the *Bhagavad-gītā*. Then anywhere he may be, he is a liberated person.

*ihā yasya harer dāsya
karmaṇā manasā girā
nikhilāsv apy avasthāsu
jīvan-muktaḥ sa ucyate*

Anyone who is trying to become Kṛṣṇa conscious and trying to serve Kṛṣṇa sincerely is liberated. He may be situated anywhere. It does not matter whether he is Indian or Hindu or Muslim or Christian or this or that. If he simply thinks of Kṛṣṇa always, in the process as described here, he becomes liberated. You can become liberated at home. You simply have to think of Kṛṣṇa.

Thank you very much. ❁

Spirituality Without Spirit

JILL, A STUDENT at a local college where I sometimes lecture, is typical of many people I meet: She considers herself spiritual but not religious. Her spirituality doesn't include God, she says, at least not God defined as "the Supreme Being."

"I don't want to be told what to believe," says Jill, who doesn't identify with any religion. "I want to discover the truth myself."

And she wants more than just faith.

"I want a spiritual experience," she says. "Then I'll know."

I asked her what a spiritual experience would feel like. Would the joy she feels on a beautiful day count? The delight of seeing a friend's smile? The satisfaction of saving the rainforests?

Keith, another student, says it all depends on how you see these things. Your attitude determines whether you're living spiritually or not.

"You know—just feel spiritual."

But is that it? Attitude? Does thinking you're spiritual make it so?

I prefer one of the *Bhagavad-gītā's* insights: "Seers of the truth have concluded that . . . of the existent there is no cessation." Spiritual means existing eternally. A spiritual experience connects you with the eternal.

We're eternal, so it shouldn't be too hard to have a spiritual experience. But it is hard, because our consciousness drowns in these temporary bodies in a temporary world. Absorbed in temporary concerns, we rarely think about the eternal.

I suggested to Jill and Keith that they try chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. Śrīla Prabhupāda traveled to the West to teach spiritual truth and give out spiritual experiences. "Just chant Hare Kṛṣṇa," Prabhupāda

told us, "and you will realize your eternal self."

The sound *Hare Kṛṣṇa* is not part of this world; it's a direct, personal appeal to the all-spiritual Absolute Truth, the source of everything. Kṛṣṇa is eternal, we're eternal, and our exchanges of love with Him are eternal. Those exchanges, known as *bhakti*, are the highest spiritual experience.

Śrīla Prabhupāda decried vague definitions of spirituality. The Truth is one, he would point out; you can't whimsically claim that your good thoughts, your golf game, and your romances are spiritual.

Kṛṣṇa tells us that even in the present body the eternal soul can realize spirit in one of the three aspects of God: His unlimited spiritual energy, His form in our heart, and His original, personal form. To see God in any of these aspects takes many years of purification, of curing our consciousness of its addiction to matter. We have to follow an authorized process under a spiritual teacher's guidance. All aspects of Kṛṣṇa are pure spirit, so to touch them—to have a spiritual experience—we must also become pure.

For spiritual seekers like Jill and Keith, to be honest with themselves is important. After speaking with them for some time, I felt comfortable suggesting they consider whether they're really looking for the truth, or only for what appeals to them.

Many seekers stop short of the full picture of the truth and end up with a conception of spirit without personality. To think we're getting spirituality without having to submit to God may be temporarily satisfying. But if we want a full spiritual experience, we'll have to fill in the picture with the Supreme Spirit, the Personality of Godhead.

—Nāgarāja Dāsa

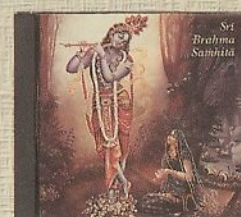
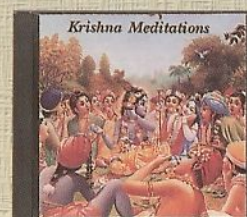
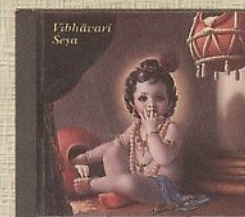
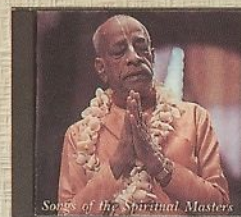
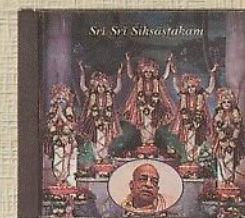
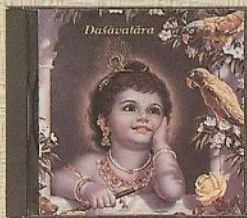
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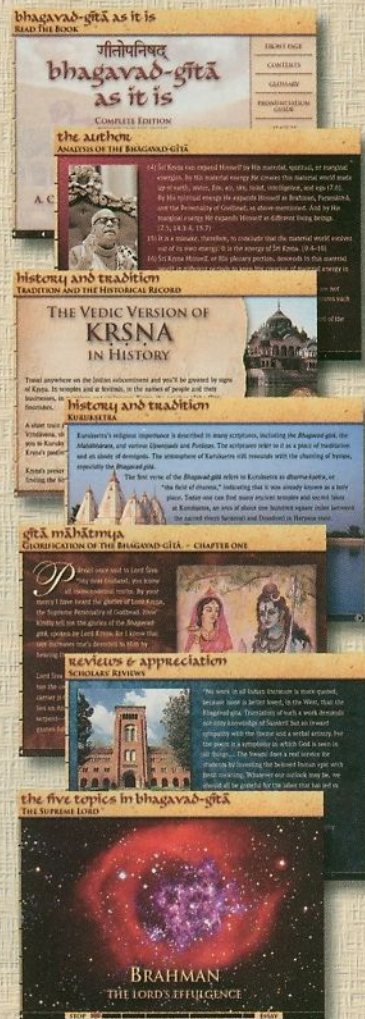
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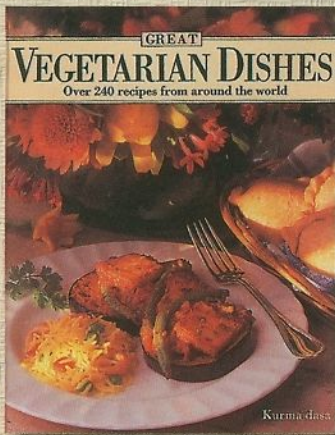
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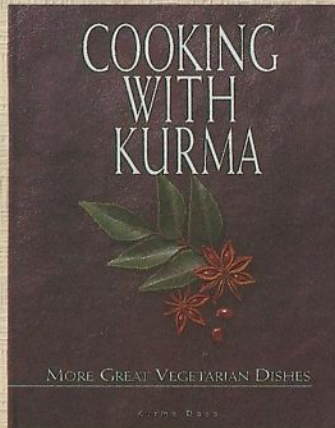
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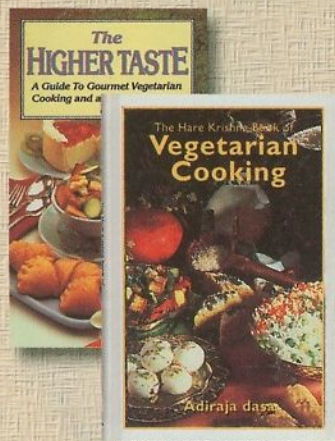


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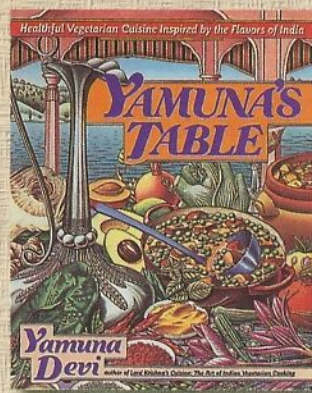
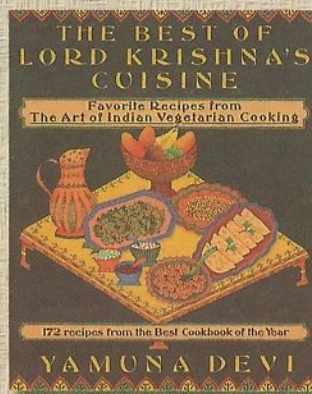
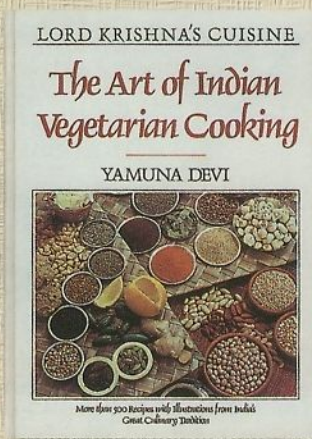
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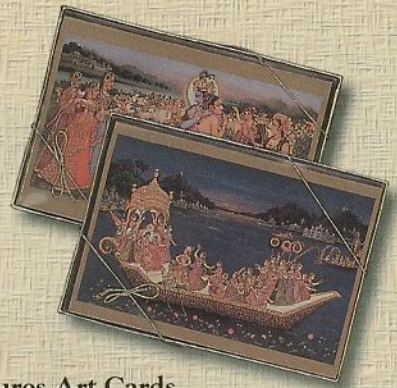
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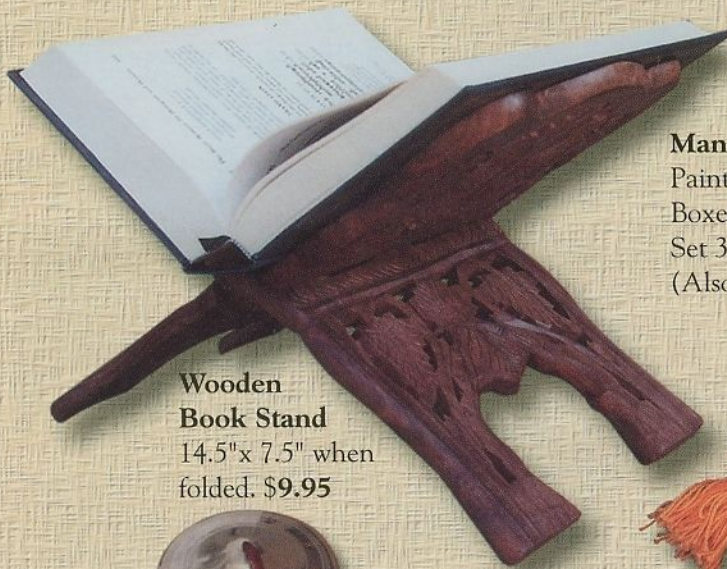
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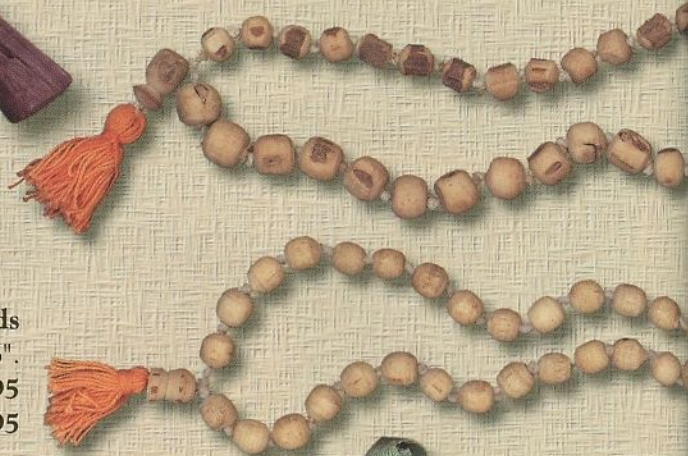


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The Lord is not like a shopkeeper trying to please all sorts of customers in the mental speculator exchange.

The Lord is what He is, the Absolute Personality of Godhead, and He demands absolute surrender unto Him only.

His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta
Swami Prabhupāda
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.4.21, Purport

Always be intoxicated by singing the Lord's holy names and glorifying the Lord's pastimes. Then you will attain the treasure that is the Lord's feet. You will attain the goal of life.

Śrī Rādhāmohana Dāsa
(Follower of Caitanya Mahāprabhu)
Untitled Song

I continually glorified the Lord and meditated upon Him for millions of years, and at last I was able to understand the transcendental form of the Lord as Śrī Kṛṣṇa, in the dress of a cowherd boy.

Lord Brahmā
Gopāla-tāpanī Upaniṣad 1.29

The process of chanting the holy name of the Lord is so powerful that by this chanting even householders can very easily gain the ultimate result achieved by persons in the renounced order.

Śrī Nārada Muni
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.15.74

Persons intoxicated by worldly affairs of sense gratification and persons who subscribe to impersonal philosophy both maintain their lives uselessly, because they are devoid of devotion to the Lord.

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura
Śaraṅgati

The Ganges, Yamuna, Godavari, and Sarasvati rivers, as well as all holy places of pilgrimage, reside where the transcendental topics of the infallible Supreme Personality of Godhead are narrated.

Author Unknown
Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī's *Padyāvalī* 2.14

The greatest wonder in human society is this: People are so incorrigible that they reject the life-giving nectar of Lord Nārāyaṇa's names and instead drink poison by speaking everything else.

King Kulaśekhara
Mukunda-mālā-stotra 37

The towns and cities on this earth that were dear to Lord Kṛṣṇa, and where He stayed and enjoyed pastimes, eternally exist in the spiritual world. In those places in the spiritual world, Lord Kṛṣṇa eternally enjoys pastimes.

Skanda Purāṇa
Quoted in Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī's
Śrī Kṛṣṇa-sandarbhā 106.26

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