

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

BACK TO GODHEAD



The Magazine of the Hare Krishna Movement • May / June 2003 • \$4.00 / £2.50

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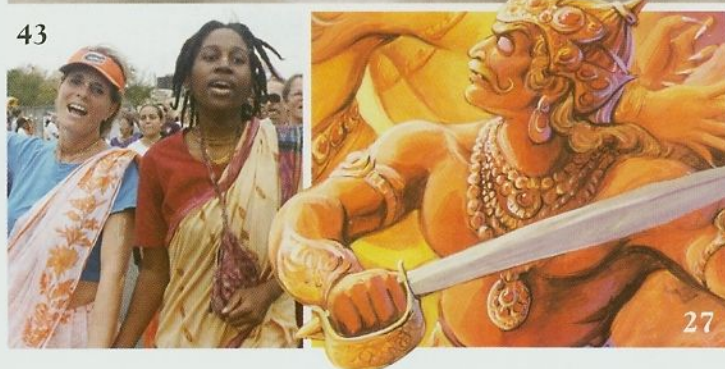
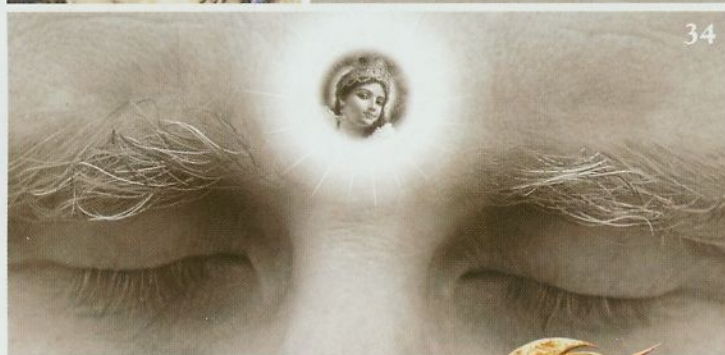
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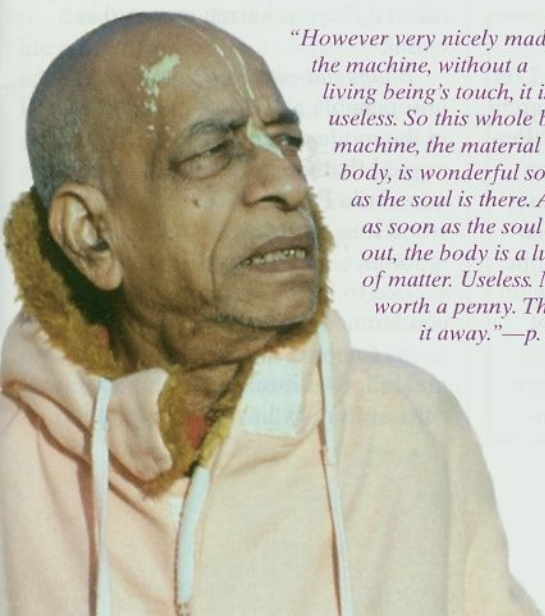
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COVER Bharata Dāsa hugs gentle Bhīma the ox, who pulled the cart bearing deities of Śrīla Prabhupāda and Gaura-Nitāi (Caitanya and Nityānanda) during ISKCON Slovenia's first annual Padayātrā last summer. Please see the story beginning on page 45. (Photo by Martin Kosec.)



"However very nicely made the machine, without a living being's touch, it is useless. So this whole big machine, the material body, is wonderful so long as the soul is there. And as soon as the soul is out, the body is a lump of matter. Useless. Not worth a penny. Throw it away."—p. 17

WELCOME



IN THIS ISSUE we present photo features on two pilgrimages, one in India and the other in Slovenia.

ISKCON's Vraja Maṇḍala Parikramā is an annual trek to sacred sites of Lord

Kṛṣṇa's pastimes in Vṛndāvana, India. It has been taking place for the last sixteen years, drawing Kṛṣṇa's devotees from all over the world. Four thousand miles away from Kṛṣṇa's holy land, in Slovenia, ISKCON members launched their first Padayātrā, or "walking pilgrimage," delivering Kṛṣṇa consciousness to resort areas on the coast and in the mountains.

Whether in India or elsewhere, pilgrimages are meant to increase our faith and devotion. In "Redirected Love," Śrīla Prabhupāda explains why our devotion to things of this world will never fully satisfy us. Our mission in life should be to reawaken our love for Kṛṣṇa, which begins by understanding that He—the eternal person Kṛṣṇa—is the highest aspect of the Absolute Truth. In "A Personal Look at the Nature of God," Satyarāja Dāsa discusses how most commentaries on the *Bhagavad-gītā* miss this essential point.

Dvārakādhīśa Devī Dāsī writes about properly understanding our subordination to Kṛṣṇa in "Becoming the Lord's Servant." And Arcana-siddhī Devī Dāsī, in "Why Do We Criticize Others?" provides insight into a powerful hindrance to our spiritual progress.

Hare Kṛṣṇa.—Nāgarāja Dāsa

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
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Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda)
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• **ARCHIVES** Raṇajit Dāsa • **SUBSCRIBER SER-**
VICES Ānanda Līlā Devī Dāśī, Ijya Dāsa, Lokasākṣīnī
Devī Dāśī • **CIRCULATION DIRECTOR** Rādhikā
Devī Dāśī • **ACCOUNTS** Puṇya Kīrti Dāsa • **WEB**
SITE Balarāma Dāsa, Manu Dāsa, Prāṇadā Devī Dāśī

INDIA: PUBLISHING COORDINATOR Yudhiṣṭhira
Dāsa • **PRODUCTION** Sac-cid-ānanda Dāsa • **AC-**
COUNTS Sahadeva Dāsa • **SUBSCRIBER SERVICES**
Mañjarī Devī Dāśī, Trivikrama Dāsa

EDITORIAL OFFICES Send editorial correspondence
to BTG, P. O. Box 430, Alachua, FL 32616, USA. Phone:
(386) 462-7794. Fax: (386) 462-1761. Or BTG, 33 Janki
Kutir, Next to State Bank of Hyderabad, Juhu, Mumbai
400 049, India. Phone: (022) 2618-1718. Fax: (022) 2618-
4827. E-mail: editors@krishna.com

SUBSCRIPTIONS *Back to Godhead* is published six
times a year. For a one-year subscription (US and Canada)
send \$24 to Back to Godhead, P. O. Box 430, Alachua, FL
32616, USA. Or call toll-free: 1-800-800-3284.

For subscriptions outside the US and Canada add
\$3. Payment in US funds (payable on a US bank) must
accompany your order.

In the UK send £18.99 to BTG UK Ltd., Bhakti-
vedānta Manor, Dharam Marg, Hilfield Lane, Watford,
Herts. WD2 8EZ.

In South Africa send R240 to Back to Godhead, P. O.
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faster if you send a recent mailing label or invoice. Please
allow eight weeks for changes to show on your mailing
label.

PREPRESS & PRINTING Interprint, Clearwater,
Florida, USA

© 2003 The Bhaktivedānta Book Trust Interna-
tional. All rights reserved. (Trustee for The Bhakti-
vedānta Book Trust: Svavāsa Dāsa.) *Back to Godhead*
(ISSN 0005-3643, USPS 604-170) is published bi-monthly
(six times a year) for \$24 per year by Back To Godhead,
18024 NW 112th Blvd., Alachua, FL 32615. Periodicals
postage paid at Alachua, Florida, and additional mailing
offices.

CANADA POST AGREEMENT #: 0571016

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Back to
Godhead, P. O. Box 430, Alachua, FL 32616.

Letters

Public Chanting For Spiritual Growth

I liked the From the Editor article
“Beyond Religion” in the January/
February issue. In answering Mr.
Gupta’s question “Why are you ask-
ing me to do more?” you explained
that Kṛṣṇa consciousness goes be-
yond performing daily rituals and
endeavoring for salvation. The goal of
life is not salvation but pure love of
Kṛṣṇa, which He gives to those who
satisfy His servants.

That made me think about how
Lord Caitanya became dissatisfied
with chanting solely among His asso-
ciates for their benefit and routinely
took His followers out of homes and
temples and into the streets to spread
the *mahā-mantra* through public
chanting. And Śrīla Prabhupāda com-
missioned his students to perform
harināma-sankīrtana (congregational
chanting) regularly. The desire to
spread the benefits of chanting is a
distinguishing feature of Gauḍīya
Vaiṣṇavas, followers of Lord
Caitanya.

Congregational chanting easily
and quickly puts the performer on the
high platform of preacher. If Mr.
Gupta is not performing this sacrifice,
may I suggest he begin? Surely Kṛṣṇa
will see that His servant is pleased
and will bestow the true goal of Kṛṣṇa
consciousness: love of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Rūpacandra Devī Dāśī
Bonnors Ferry, Idaho

Carefree Chanting

I just read your article about the Lon-
don *harināma* chanting party [March/
April]. Ūrmilā Devī Dāśī wrote, “Per-
haps some of us chanters consider
what people will think of our acting
like madmen, but most of us are so
absorbed in the chanting that public
opinion seems like a far-away dream
of no value.” This reminded me of
when I first went on *harināma* in
London in 1999. I would notice peo-
ple looking at me and would won-

der what they thought of me chanting.
But nowadays this self-consciousness is
not an issue. Imperceptibly my attitude
changed. Over the years my interest in
chanting grew to the point that I feel
part of the group and look forward to
moving from spot to spot (Leicester
Square, Piccadilly Circus, and so on) to
chant and dance.

John Sheridan
London

Vedic Evidence Against Meat-Eating

One simple reason that meat-eating
incurs bad karma is that there is no
need for it, as God has provided
humanity a bounty of natural foods
without having to resort to slaughtering
animals. I have been told that there are
specific references in the *Vedas* and
other scriptures to that effect, but I
have not come across any such refer-
ence in the *Vedas*, not even in the *Gītā*.

Another matter that has bothered
me is the cruel practice of animal sacri-
fices, like the *aśvamedha-yajña*, found
in the *Vedas*. This seems contrary to the
otherwise lofty thinking of the *Vedas*.

Yadatore Chandrashekhar
Via the Internet

REPLY BY KṚṣṇA-KṚPĀ DĀSA: Lord
Kṛṣṇa denounces meat-eating indirect-
ly in the *Gītā*. In verse 9.26, He says
that He will accept a leaf, a flower, fruit,
or water if it is offered with devotion.
He does not mention that meat is
acceptable, and because it cannot be
offered there is karma incurred in
eating it.

Bhagavad-gītā 17.10 describes that
untouchable and decomposing food is
in the mode of ignorance, and it can be
argued that meat falls into that cate-
gory. Śrīla Prabhupāda certainly under-
stood it in that way. The mode of
ignorance directly opposes devotional
service to Kṛṣṇa, and is therefore
condemned.

As for your second question, an ani-
mal killed without regard for scriptural
rules suffers by having to repeat its

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term of imprisonment in that body, whereas animals killed in authorized Vedic sacrifices are elevated in their next life. The apparent violence is in fact beneficial to the soul within the body of the sacrificed animal. Animal sacrifices are forbidden in this age, however, because priests lack the purity and expertise required to raise the animal to a higher stage. The recommended sacrifice for this age is the fully nonviolent practice of chanting the holy names of the Lord.

Working for Justice

I have been in contact with ISKCON for one year, but I am still not happy. I believe that I have taken birth to serve India. I want to live and die for India. I don't want to go to the kingdom of God until I feel that I have completed my job on this earth.

My problem with ISKCON is that the lectures teach only the ways to go to God, but I want to know the ways to live in this Kali-yuga. Of course, I will remain a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa. But please give me some tips that will help me live in this Kali-yuga.

Let me tell you my aim in this life: I want to fight for justice. I want to serve the people of India. I want to serve the society. Please help me.

Pradeep N. Rajvanshi
Belgaum, Karnataka, India

REPLY BY KṚṢṆA-KṚPĀ DĀSA:
Lord Kṛṣṇa has appeared in this Kali-yuga as Lord Caitanya, who states that the duty of every Indian is to make his life perfect by becoming Kṛṣṇa-conscious and helping others become Kṛṣṇa-conscious. If you accept that as your service for India, you will make a great contribution. Because Śrīla Prabhupāda took Lord Caitanya's instruction seriously, he was able to greatly benefit the world by giving the perfection of India's spiritual culture, pure devotion to Lord Kṛṣṇa. If you follow in his footsteps, that will be the greatest service you can perform for Kṛṣṇa, for India, for the world, and for yourself.

The best way to live in this world is the same as the way to go to the spiritual world: to fully engage in God's service.

It is said that those who have lost their spiritual vision in this age of Kali can get light from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. So you can study under the guidance of a realized soul and be enlightened and act in an enlightened way. The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* says that those who know the essence of things worship the age of Kali because in this age one can attain all desirable things simply by chanting the holy name of the Lord.

The greatest injustice is that because people lack real knowledge, they are being systematically slaughtered life after life as a result of neglecting their relationship with God. You can teach, by your own example, that life's goal is spiritual realization, and you can also help educate others and end this slaughtering by teaching them *Bhagavad-gītā*. If you want to do good to others, why not work for their eternal benefit? If you do this, you will be forever glorified and your soul be fully satisfied. ☸

CORRECTION: In the last issue, the photographer for the article "Dynamic, Expanding Bliss: The Hare Kṛṣṇa Mantra" was Rājāsana Devī Dāsī, not Rājāsana Dāsa. We apologize for the error.

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Redirected Love

*Lord Kṛṣṇa tells us how to find the fulfillment
of our natural desire to love and be loved.*

by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

*sañjaya uvāca
evam uktvā hr̥ṣīkeśaṁ
guḍākeśaḥ parantapaḥ
na yotsya iti govindam
uktvā tuṣṇīm babhūva ha*

“Sañjaya said: Having spoken thus, Arjuna, chastiser of enemies, told Kṛṣṇa, ‘Govinda, I shall not fight,’ and fell silent.”

—*Bhagavad-gītā* 2.9

IN THE previous verse Arjuna said, “There is no profit in this fighting, because on the other side are my relatives, and by killing them, even if I become victorious, what is the value?” That kind of renunciation sometimes takes place in ignorance. It is not intelligently placed renunciation.

Evam uktvā hr̥ṣīkeśam. Arjuna is speaking to Kṛṣṇa, or Hṛṣīkeśa, “the master of the senses.” In a previous verse Arjuna said, *śiṣyas te 'haṁ . . . prapannam*: “I am Your surrendered disciple.” Kṛṣṇa has become the guru, and Arjuna the disciple. Formerly they were talking as friends. But friendly talking cannot decide any serious question. When there is some serious matter, it must be spoken by authorities.

Hṛṣīka means the senses, and *īśa* means the master. *Hṛṣīka-īśa*. And they join together: *Hṛṣīkeśa*.

Arjuna is called Guḍākeśa. *Guḍāka* means dark-



ness. And, again, *īśa*, means master. Darkness means ignorance. A disciple comes to the guru for enlightenment. Every living being is born foolish, even the human beings. Because they are coming from the animal kingdom by evolution, their birth is, like that of the animals, in ignorance.

Therefore, even though one is a human being, one requires education. An animal cannot take education, but a human being can. Therefore *sāstra*, scripture, says, *nāyaṁ deho deha-bhājāṁ nṛloke kaṣṭān kāmān arhate vid-bhujāṁ ye* [*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 5.5.1]. In conditions of life lower

than those of the human being, we have to work very hard simply for four necessities of life: eating, sleeping, mating, and defending. The main object of concern is sense gratification. Therefore everyone has to work very hard. But in the human form of life, Kṛṣṇa gives us so much facility in the form of intelligence. We can make our standard of living very comfortable, but that should be done with the purpose of attaining perfection in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Live comfortably. That's all right. But don't live like animals, simply increasing sense gratification.

The human effort is going into living comfortably, but people want to live comfortably for sense gratifi-

*Left: Only by reposing our love in the supreme couple Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa
can we find the fulfillment of the love we seek in this world.*

Kṛṣṇa is the origin of everything, so without Kṛṣṇa consciousness, without pleasing Kṛṣṇa, you cannot be happy.

• • •

cation. That is the mistake of the modern civilization. *Yuktāhāra-vihārasya . . . yogo bhavati duḥkha-hā*. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* (6.17) it is said *yuktāhāra*. Yes, you must eat, you must sleep, you must satisfy your senses, you must arrange for defense. But as much as possible do not divert your attention too much to these things.

We have to eat—*yuktāhāra*. That's a fact. But not *atyāhāra*, overeating. Rūpa Gosvāmī has advised in his *Upadeśāmṛta* that if you want to advance in spiritual consciousness—the only worthy objective of life—then you should not eat too much or acquire too much. That is our philosophy.

KṚṢṆA THE ENJOYER

The other day in Paris a reporter from the Socialist Press came to see me. I informed him, "Our philosophy is that everything belongs to God." Kṛṣṇa says *bhoktāram*: "I am the enjoyer." We become happy by working for His enjoyment. For example, the whole body is working to enjoy life, but where does the enjoyment begin? The stomach. You have to give sufficient nice food to the stomach. If there is sufficient energy, you can digest and all the senses become strong and you can enjoy sense gratification. But if you cannot digest, there is no question of sense enjoyment. So sense enjoyment begins from the stomach.

Another example: The luxuriant growth of the tree begins from the root if there is sufficient water. Therefore trees are called *pāda-pa*: They drink water from the legs—the roots—not from the heads. We eat from the head. There are different arrangements, but one must eat.

As for Kṛṣṇa, He can eat from anywhere. He can eat through His hands, His legs, His eyes, His ears—anywhere

—because He is complete spiritual. There is no difference between His head and legs and ears and eyes. That is stated in the *Brahma-saṁhitā*.

So in the body our sense enjoyment should begin from the stomach, and the tree begins developing luxuriantly from the root. Similarly, Kṛṣṇa is the origin of everything, so without Kṛṣṇa consciousness, without pleasing Kṛṣṇa, you cannot be happy. That is the system.

How will Kṛṣṇa be pleased? We are all Kṛṣṇa's sons, God's sons. Everything is Kṛṣṇa's property. These are facts. Because Kṛṣṇa is the proprietor and the enjoyer, everything should be given first to Him, and then we can accept it from Him. That will make us happy.

That principle is stated in *Bhagavad-gītā* (3.13). *Bhuñjate te tv agham pāpā ye pacanty ātma-kāraṇāt*: "Those who cook only for themselves, without offering the food first to the Lord, are simply eating sin." Everything should be done for Kṛṣṇa, even your eating. You can enjoy all sense enjoyment—but after Kṛṣṇa has enjoyed. Then you can eat.

Therefore Kṛṣṇa's name is Hṛṣīkeśa, the master of the senses. You cannot enjoy your senses independently. A servant may cook very, very nice food in the kitchen, but he cannot eat first. He will be dismissed. The master first of all must take, and then the servant can enjoy all the nice food.

The whole world is struggling for sense gratification. Here is the simple philosophy: "First of all let Kṛṣṇa enjoy. He is the master. Then we enjoy."

The *Īsopaniṣad* says, *iśāvāsyam idaṁ sarvaṁ*: "Everything belongs to Kṛṣṇa." Our mistake is that although everything belongs to Kṛṣṇa, we are thinking, "Everything belongs to me." This is illusion. *Janasya moho 'yam aham mameti*. Everyone is thinking, "I

am this body, and everything—whatever we find in this world—is to be enjoyed by me." That is the mistake of modern civilization.

The real knowledge is "Everything belongs to God. I can take only whatever He gives me, whatever He kindly allows for me." *Tena tyaktena bhuñjīthāḥ*.

This is not just Vaiṣṇava philosophy; this is fact. Nobody is the proprietor of anything. *Īśāvāsyam idaṁ sarvaṁ*. Kṛṣṇa says, "I am the enjoyer. I am the proprietor." *Sarva-loka-maheśvaram. Mahā-īśvaram*. *Mahā* means great, and *īśvaram* means controller. We can claim that we are also an *īśvaram*, a controller, but Kṛṣṇa is described as *mahā-īśvaram*, "controller of the controller." That is Kṛṣṇa. Nobody else is an independent controller.

DEFINITION OF BHAKTI

Therefore Kṛṣṇa is called Hṛṣīkeśa, and *bhakti* means to serve Hṛṣīkeśa by the *hṛṣīka*, the senses. Kṛṣṇa is the master of the senses. Therefore whatever senses I have, the master is Kṛṣṇa. When our senses are engaged in the satisfaction of the master of the senses, that is called *bhakti*. That is the definition of *bhakti*, devotional service. And when the senses are engaged for sense gratification, not for the master, that is called *kāma*, lust.

Two words: *kāma* and *prema*. *Prema* means to love Kṛṣṇa and do everything for His satisfaction. That is *prema*, love. And *kāma* means doing everything for the satisfaction of my senses. That is the difference. Either you satisfy your senses, or you satisfy Kṛṣṇa's senses. But when you satisfy Kṛṣṇa's senses you become perfect, and when you satisfy your senses you become imperfect, illusioned. Because you cannot satisfy your senses without Kṛṣṇa.

Therefore one has to purify the

senses. At the present moment everyone is trying to satisfy his senses. There are two kinds of living entities, male and female. The male is trying to satisfy his senses, and the female is trying to satisfy her senses. There is no love. It cannot be love, because neither the man nor the woman is trying to satisfy the other party's senses. Everyone is trying to satisfy his or her senses. A woman loves a man for satisfying her senses, and a man loves a woman for satisfying his senses.

Therefore, as soon as there is a little disturbance in the sense gratification, there is divorce. "I don't want this." Because the central point is personal sense gratification. But we can make a show: "Oh, I love you so much. I love you so much." There is no love. It is all *kāma*, lust.

In the material world, there is no possibility of love. The so-called love is only cheating: "I love you. I love you because you are beautiful. You will satisfy my senses. Because you are young, you will satisfy my senses." That is the nature of the material world. The basic principle of the material world is sense gratification. In the material world, so-called society, friendship, and love depend on sense gratification, beginning with sex. *Yan maithunādi grhamedhi-sukham hi tuccham*. When one becomes free from *maithunādi-sukham*, happiness beginning with sex, he is liberated.

As long as one is attached to the sex impulse, he is neither a swami nor a goswami. Swami means master of the senses. As Kṛṣṇa is the master of the senses, when one becomes Kṛṣṇa conscious he becomes master of the senses. It is not that the senses should be stopped. No. They should be controlled. When I require, I shall use them; otherwise not. That is the position of a master of the senses. I shall not act impelled by the senses. The senses should act under my direction. That is the position of a swami.

Therefore Arjuna is called Guḍākeśa. He is a master of the senses. And he is not a coward, but he is compassionate because he is a devotee of Kṛṣṇa. Anyone who becomes a devotee of Kṛṣṇa has all the good qualities manifest in his body.

That is Arjuna's position. Otherwise

how could he become an intimate friend of Kṛṣṇa? They must be of the same position. Friendship becomes very strong when the friends are on an equal level: same age, same education, same prestige, same beauty. The more similar the position, the stronger the friendship. Arjuna is on the same level as Kṛṣṇa. If somebody becomes the friend of the president or the friend of the king or the queen, he is not an ordinary man. He must be of the same position.

GIVING UP RELIGION

In our line, Lord Caitanya's chief disciples Rūpa Gosvāmī and Sanātana Gosvāmī were big leaders, government ministers. They could associate with the governor because they were also important men. But as soon as they became acquainted with Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, they decided, "We shall retire from this ministership and join Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu to help Him." Rather, to *serve* Him, not to help Him. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu does not require anyone's help. But if we try to associate with Him and serve Him, then our life becomes successful.

Kṛṣṇa came to teach *Bhagavad-gītā*. That was His mission: "These rascals have become servants of so many things—society, friendship, love, religion, nationality, community. They should stop all this nonsense." *Sarva-dharmān parityajya*: "Give up all this nonsense. Simply surrender unto Me."

That is religion. Otherwise, why would Kṛṣṇa advise, "Give up all religious systems?" He came to reestablish the principles of religion: *dharma-saṁsthāpanārthāya*. Now He says, *sarva-dharmān parityajya*: "Give up all religion." That means that anything without Kṛṣṇa consciousness, without God consciousness, is a cheating religion. It is not religion.

Religion means the order of the Supreme Lord: *dharmam tu sākṣad bhagavat-praṇītam*. If we do not know who is the Supreme Lord, if we do not know what is the order of the Supreme Lord, then where is religion? That is not religion. That may go on in the name of religion, but that is cheating. So *Bhagavad-gītā* ends *sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇam vraja*,

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 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**, **hedge-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 Dāsī, for women, both of which mean "servant." For instance, the name Kṛṣṇa Dāsa means "servant of Kṛṣṇa."

Real success of life is when you have learned how to love Kṛṣṇa. Then your heart will be satisfied.

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and the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* begins from that point.

Therefore *Bhagavad-gītā* is the preliminary study of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, which begins, *dharmah projjhita-kaitavo 'tra*: “Now, in this *Bhāgavatam*, all cheating types of religion are rejected, *projjhita*.”

Real religion means to love God. Therefore *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.2.6) says, *sa vai puruṣām paro dharmo yato bhaktir adhokṣaje*: “Devotion to the Supreme Lord is first-class religion.” The *Bhāgavatam*’s definition doesn’t say that you must follow this religion or that religion. You may follow any religion. It doesn’t matter. Either Hindu religion or Christian religion or Muslim religion—anything you like. But we have to test. For example, if a student has passed the M.A. examination, nobody inquires, “From which college have you passed your examination?” No. “You have passed the M.A. examination? That’s all right. We are concerned whether you are a graduate. That’s all.” Nobody inquires, “From which college, from which country, from which religion have you passed your M.A. examination?”

Similarly, nobody should inquire, “To which religion do you belong?” One must see whether he has learned this art: how to love God. That’s all. That is religion. Here is the religion: *sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇam vraja*. That is religion. The *Bhāgavatam* says, *dharmah projjhita-kaitavo 'tra*: “All cheating types of religion are kicked out from this *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.”

The *Bhāgavatam* is only for the *nirmatsarāṇām*, those who are not envious of God. The demons ask, “Why shall I love God? Why shall I worship God? Why shall I accept God?” But

the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is only for those who are actually serious about loving God.

REDIRECTING OUR LOVE

Real success of life is when you have learned how to love Kṛṣṇa. Then your heart will be satisfied. Kṛṣṇa means God. If you have another name of God, that is also accepted. But you must love God, the Supreme Lord, the Supreme Person.

We all love somebody. The loving propensity is there in everyone, but it is misdirected. Therefore Kṛṣṇa says, “Kick out all these love objects. Try to love Me.” *Sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ*. Misdirected love will never be able to satisfy you. If you want real satisfaction, you must love Kṛṣṇa, God.

That is the whole Vedic philosophy—or any philosophy you take. Because, after all, you want satisfaction of your self, full satisfaction of your mind. That can be achieved only when you love God. Therefore that religion is first-class which trains the candidate how to love God. And that love is without motive. Here in the material world we say, “I love you; you love me.” But in the background is some motive. Love of God means no motive. All other desires become zero.

The pure nature of *bhakti*, love of God, is taught in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. Somebody is working for knowledge, and somebody is working for sense gratification. That is the material world. Somebody is trying to become a very big scholar: “What is this? What is this? What is this?” He is not trying to understand God but to gain some superfluous knowledge. That is called *jñāna*. And karma means working day and

night for sense gratification. But *bhakti* is transcendental. It is not tainted by all these contaminations, *jñāna* and karma.

Therefore Narottama Dāsa Ṭhākura says, *jñāna-kāṇḍa*, *karma-kāṇḍa*, *kevala viṣera bhāṇḍa*: “Whether you engage in karma or speculative knowledge, both are pots of poison. Whether you drink this one or that one, it doesn’t matter.”

If you follow *karma-kāṇḍa*, the path of karma, you’ll get a body next life according to your karma. *Jñāna-kāṇḍa* also leads to another material body. If you become very advanced in knowledge, you can get a body in a *brāhmaṇa* family, in a very educated family. But you’ll have to go through the transmigration of the soul, the repetition of birth and death. There is that risk. You do not know what body you will get. It is not guaranteed. Even a little mistake can result in your getting a lower body. For example, at the time of death Bharata Mahārāja was thinking of a deer, and next life he got the life of a deer.

Nature is so perfect that you will get a body similar to your mental condition at death. Kṛṣṇa is with you. He will see, “Now he is thinking of becoming a king,” or “Now he is thinking in such a way that he will become a dog.” So Kṛṣṇa immediately gives you the body of a dog or a lion or a king. You must take the body He gives you.

Similarly, if you are thinking of Kṛṣṇa, you will take a body like Kṛṣṇa’s—immediately. That is Kṛṣṇa consciousness: to train the mind to die thinking of Kṛṣṇa. Then your life is successful.

Therefore we have to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and always think of Kṛṣṇa. Then our life is perfect.

Thank you very much. 🌸

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 Kurukṣetra—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.

Gurukula—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.

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.

WHY DO WE CRI

A look at the causes and cures for faultfind

by Arcana-siddhī Devī Dāsī

CONDUCTING A SUMMER therapy group with middle-school boys is always a challenge. Donte calls Michael a retard, and Michael calls Donte's mother a crackhead. I intervene, sitting the boys down to cool off. This age group (11–14) is notorious for saying and doing things to hurt each other. I reflect on my own years in junior high school and recall some painful interactions with peers. While most of us mature and become more sophisticated in our social interactions, our critical nature generally doesn't disappear unless we make spiritual progress toward our original identity.

Our original nature, the pure self uncontaminated by material energy, is free from the propensity to criticize or find fault with others. In fact, the pure soul sees all others as superior to himself. The further we fall from our original pure consciousness and depart from the mode of goodness toward ignorance, the more our tendency to criticize others will show itself.

A story in the *Mahābhārata* illustrates the difference in mentality between a pure soul and a person hostile to God and thereby covered by the mode of darkness. Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Lord, met with both Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira, a pure devotee of the Lord, and Duryodhana, an extremely envious king who had acquired his position through cheating and deceit. Kṛṣṇa asked Mahārāja

Yudhiṣṭhira to go out into the kingdom and return after finding someone less qualified than himself. And He asked Duryodhana to search the kingdom for someone better than himself.

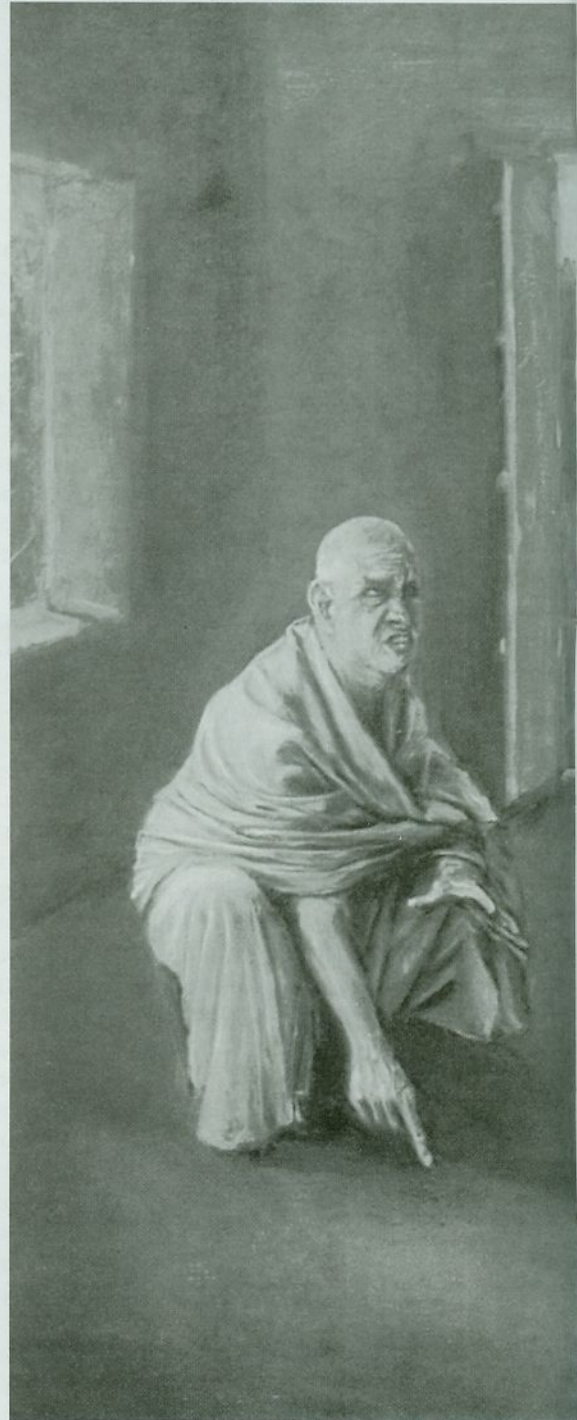
When wicked Duryodhana returned, he told Lord Kṛṣṇa that he couldn't find anyone better than himself. Most of us would describe a person like Duryodhana as narcissistic, bombastic, conceited, and egoistic. Many of today's leaders would fit that portrayal.

The saintly Yudhiṣṭhira, on the other hand, returned unable to find anyone inferior to himself. Such humility is practically gone among today's leaders.

From this exchange, Lord Kṛṣṇa is teaching us something about human psychology. The closer one comes to his original pure identity, the more he shows humility and freedom from seeing the faults in others. And the further one falls from his pure identity, the more he feels superior to others, seeing faults in them and not in himself.

THE ROOT OF SEPARATION

The mentality that originally separates us from God is our desire to take His position. We can't do that, of course. But He's so kind that He lets us try, so we have to think we're great and powerful. Many of us have been criticized at one time or another for trying to "lord it over" others.



CRITICIZE OTHERS?

ing, a major obstacle to spiritual progress.



Painting by Puṣkara Dāsa

But that's what we've all come to the material world to do. We think we're the center of the universe, that everything revolves around us. This delusion sets the stage for our competitive drive to remove any opponent for the coveted position of Lord.

If this portrayal of our mindset sounds exaggerated, consider this: Since God is the creator, everything here is His property, and in our quest to acquire it for our enjoyment, we are indeed playing God. Unlike God, though, we have to compete for that position.

While faultfinding may be an outcome of several mental states, it is often the mind's attempt to gain a superior position over others. Duryodhana was expert at finding faults in others regardless of their purity, and he had a knack for disregarding his own shortcomings. Lacking empathy for the suffering of others, he would use any means to achieve his goals. This is a common personality profile of demonic persons. And the root of their problem is their lack of proclivity for developing their relationship with the Supreme Lord.

OUR MIXED NATURES

Most of us traversing the spiritual path fall somewhere between the pure soul (Yudhiṣṭhira) and the envious demon (Duryodhana). We recognize that we still tend to criticize others, but we want to

become free of such behavior. Often devotees ask, "How can I stop finding fault with other devotees?" But as with any unwanted behavior, it is important to understand what we get out of doing it—the payoff. If we fail to address this step, our mind will undoubtedly sabotage our efforts to give up criticism.

Often the secondary gain will be easy to see. Some common motivations for criticism are (1) gaining a sense of superiority, (2) getting back at someone who has hurt us, (3) asserting our position or belief as the best or only way, and (4) avoiding scrutiny of our own shortcomings.

Identifying our motives takes honesty and courage. We need to have a strong desire to change. But sometimes, despite our good intentions, the reason we do something may not be so evident. I remember working with a devotee in therapy who was addressing her critical nature. She recognized how destructive it was to her spiritual progress, and she wanted to stop but felt impelled to do it. She finally came to understand that she found fault with others so she wouldn't have to get close to them. Once she realized the secondary gain she derived from criticizing others, she could address her fear of intimacy. Dismantling her underlying reason for faultfinding allowed her to give it up.

Another devotee was finding fault with her friend. As she got more in touch with the reasons for

On seeing ants in Lord Caitanya's room, faultfinding Rāmacandra Purī criticizes the Lord for eating too many sweets.

While faultfinding may be an outcome of several mental states, it is often the mind's attempt to gain a superior position over others.

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her feelings, she discovered she was feeling guilty that she hadn't supported her friend during a crisis. Finding fault with her friend was her way to justify her lack of involvement in her friend's life. It also protected her self-image and her belief that she is caring and helpful. In this case the devotee was able to forgive herself for not being sympathetic and apologized to her friend.

SPIRITUAL CURE

Not everyone who has problems with faultfinding needs to go into therapy. Prayer and strong spiritual practices are our methods for overcoming impurities. When I was a new devotee, I had a very critical nature. I was proud of my education, and thought I was more competent and advanced than the other devotees. After chanting for a short while, I became aware that my mentality was hindering my spiritual advancement. I prayed every day to become free of my critical nature. Kṛṣṇa kindly answered my prayers in a way I didn't expect: He took away my ability to do most things. For about two months I felt I was in a fog. I couldn't remember things. I had trouble articulating my thoughts. I wasn't able to complete even simple tasks. The only service I could render was cleaning, and that would take an inordinate amount of time.

Although I struggled through that period, I was grateful for the lesson. In the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī tells us that by the mercy of the Lord a lame man can climb mountains, a blind man can see the stars, and a dumb man can recite beautiful poetry. So in the same way, the Lord can take away any ability that might make us proud and prone to criticizing devotees.

Also in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* is

a story about a man named Gopāla Cakravartī that illustrates this point. Learned and handsome, he came from a prestigious family and was proud of his scholarship and position. One day while taking part in a discussion about the glories of the Lord's holy names, the exalted devotee Haridāsa Ṭhākura expressed his deep realization about the potency of the holy name. Gopāla Cakravartī challenged Haridāsa's statements. He cursed Haridāsa, saying that Haridāsa's nose should fall off if one didn't reap the benefit from chanting that Haridāsa professed. Gopāla's denigrating challenge came from his envious heart, and his motive was to discredit both Haridāsa and the holy name.

Gopāla suffered an instant reaction for his insults and envy of Haridāsa. His beautiful body became disfigured from leprosy, which ate away his nose. Agonized, Gopāla begged Lord Caitanya for redemption. At first Lord Caitanya was unmoved by Gopāla's pitiable plight. But finally, when Lord Caitanya recognized that Gopāla had undergone a sincere change of heart, He released Gopāla from his suffering. Gopāla then took shelter of the Lord and His devotees.

The devotee is blessed when the Lord rectifies his mentality with seeming reverses. In another narration from the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Amogha, the son-in-law of Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya, spied on Lord Caitanya while He ate at Sārvabhauma's house. Aware that Amogha was critical of the Lord's pure behavior, Sārvabhauma chased him away and cursed him for his envious mentality.

The following day Amogha was afflicted by cholera and was dying. Lord Caitanya went to see Amogha and placing his hand on his heart.

"Why have you allowed jealousy to

sit here?" the Lord asked. "Because of this, you have become like a *caṇḍāla*, the lowest of men, and you have also contaminated a most purified place—your heart."

The Lord then told Amogha to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. Amogha jumped up and chanted and danced, his heart purified by the touch of the Lord's lotus hand.

Both Gopāla Cakravartī and Amogha were greatly fortunate. Their faultfinding, critical natures were purified, and they received the greatest goal of life, pure devotion to the Lord. We may not be so lucky, and may instead find ourselves cut off from the Lord's service for many lives.

AN UNREFORMED FAULTFINDER

I have seen devotees who follow the rules strictly and chant their prescribed rounds on their beads every day but have little joy in their spiritual lives. For many, criticism and faultfinding block their spiritual progress. This problem was exemplified by another person described in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Rāmacandra Purī. He criticized his own spiritual master, and from then on he delighted in finding faults in saintly persons. If he couldn't find a fault in a devotee, he would induce the devotee to overeat so he could criticize him. Despite Lord Caitanya's spotless character, Rāmacandra Purī invented a fault in Him. When he saw ants where Lord Caitanya was living, he criticized Him for eating sweets—a sign to Rāmacandra Purī that the Lord was not acting as a proper renunciant.

Because Rāmacandra Purī was the Godbrother of Lord Caitanya's spiritual master, the Lord respectfully abstained from responding to his offense.

(please turn to page 28)



Family Fortune

*When Charles asked his son and daughter-in-law—
a Hare Kṛṣṇa couple—to move in with him, he knew he'd have to
adapt, but his reward was more than he could ever imagine.*

by Sukhadā Devī Dāsī

CHARLES WAS BORN in 1917. He grew into a man of courage and principles, serving his country in the U.S. Navy for twenty years and then the Civil Service for twenty more. Assigned to a submarine fleet during World War II, he saw his share of pain and suffering and, like many veterans, came to value a safe, secure home for his wife and two young children. Charles was proud of his country and its ideals and strove to instill values in his children that would enable them to grow into responsible, God-fearing citizens.

When his son Charlie, at the age of 24, announced his plan to join the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement, Charles was shocked. What! Why? Where had Charles gone wrong? Like many parents, Charles was horrified that his son was choosing a path radi-

cally different from what he had envisioned for him. It seemed the foolish choice of a young man who couldn't know the world as Charles did. He did his best to talk his son out of it, but it was no use. Ultimately, he could only accept Charlie's decision—and hope that someday Charlie would change his mind.

Little did Charles realize what a praiseworthy path his son had chosen. Giving up the usual pursuit of wealth and social status, Charlie instead chose to develop love for God, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Charles had no way of knowing that he himself would someday reap great benefits from his son's actions. In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Lord Kṛṣṇa assures a boy that because of his saintly behavior, his "entire dynasty has been purified." Although to Charles his

*From right: Godruma Dāsa, Godruma's nephew Siddharth,
and Charles, in Jacksonville, Florida.*

Charles appreciated what Śrīla Prabhupāda had done for his son, feeling that Godruma had become a better person.

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son's decision seemed a rejection of his family values, Charlie would bring his family a spiritual opulence more transforming than any material success.

MOVING IN WITH DAD

In 1973 Charlie joined the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement and was initiated by Śrīla Prabhupāda, receiving the spiritual name Godruma Dāsa. At the time, Charles was not in close contact with his son, who was spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the U.S.A., Japan, and India.

In 1983 Godruma married a girl named Viṣṇupriyā. They returned to the U.S.A. in 1985 because his mother was ill. Charles was excited to see his son after so long and couldn't help but notice the changes in him. Godruma had become peaceful, friendly, and tolerant. Charles welcomed Viṣṇupriyā, who was moved by his kindness and wonderful sense of humor.

In 1986 Charles lost his beloved wife to cancer. Heartsick, he asked Godruma and Viṣṇupriyā to come live with him in Jacksonville, Florida. Moved by his loneliness, the young couple agreed. But they all had concerns about their different ways of life. Godruma and his wife wanted to keep up their spiritual practices. There could be no meat, fish, eggs, onions, or garlic in the house. Nothing could be eaten unless the food was blessed by offering it to Kṛṣṇa. They would want to keep worshiping their deities, Śrī Śrī Rādhā Madana-mohana, installing Them in Charles's house. Godruma and Viṣṇupriyā would need to rise early, before 4:00 A.M., to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and perform their morning worship before going to work. Then in the evenings they would cook an offering and once more worship their deities

and read from Śrīla Prabhupāda's books.

Contemplating all of these changes, Charles decided it was a small price to pay for the closeness of his family.

"I guess I can learn," he told them, adding that the most difficult thing would be to remember to offer his food to Kṛṣṇa.

"But I can give it a shot!"

"We had several discussions about his needs and ours," says Viṣṇupriyā. "We didn't want to impose on him, and he really wanted to see if he could adapt. I had serious doubts but was amazed at how quickly he adapted to the changes. Godruma and I went through culture shock too. This was the first time we were not living at a temple, and the nearest one—in Alachua—was eighty miles away. We wanted to continue to follow Śrīla Prabhupāda's instructions to the best of our ability."

They soon became a close-knit family. Godruma and Viṣṇupriyā shared Prabhupāda's teachings with Charles, and Charles shared his home with them. Charles would listen to tapes of Śrīla Prabhupāda's singing and speaking, often commenting on how convinced Prabhupāda sounded when he spoke. Charles appreciated what Śrīla Prabhupāda had done for his son, feeling that Godruma had become a better person.

The young couple would invite devotee friends over, filling the house with feasting and the holy names. In time, Charles grew to look forward to these gatherings. He developed a special fondness for the food, known as *kṛṣṇa-prasādam*, or "the mercy of Kṛṣṇa." Viṣṇupriyā's sister, Sashi Mukhi, would bring her children Siddhartha and Sujata over. Charles grew to love the children—and Sashi Mukhi's cooking.

DETERIORATING HEALTH

To everyone's great sorrow, Charles developed prostate cancer. He received conventional treatment, but throughout the years 2000 and 2001 his health deteriorated. He was in and out of the hospital. Although Charles had recognized the benefits of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement for Godruma, and had come to love the devotees and their ways, he had not accepted the deep philosophy of the *Vedas* and the teachings of Śrīla Prabhupāda. He saw himself as someone apart from the Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees.

One day, listening to Viṣṇupriyā and her nephew discussing reincarnation and life after death, Charles said, "When I go, it will be the end for me. Nothing exists after death."

Although the prostate cancer went into remission, Charles developed chronic leukemia. He also suffered from shingles, which made it impossible for him to walk. So Charles, all his life the strong and capable provider, was now forced to rely on others.

Charles's doctor prescribed physical therapy for his legs, and the therapist would come to their home. One day the therapist mentioned that he had often seen Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees on the campus of the University of Florida. Godruma offered the therapist a copy of the *Bhagavat-gītā*, but the man hesitated to accept it.

Charles chimed in, "You really should take the book. It will help you."

The therapist took the book.

Charles was in immeasurable pain. He didn't regain his ability to walk. On a return stay in the hospital, he developed a urinary tract infection. There seemed no end to his misery.

He turned to Viṣṇupriyā and said,
(please turn to page 41)

“What Is the Value Of Your Education?”

Continuing a conversation between His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda and Professor John Mize. Los Angeles, June 23, 1975.

Disciple: Śrīla Prabhupāda, the universities nowadays don't teach any courses in the nature of the soul.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Therefore, the young person says, “What is the wrong if I become a dog?” Because there is no education. He does not know the difference between the dog and the human being. Therefore, he says, “What is the wrong if I become a dog? I will get more facility for sex without any criminal charges.” This is the advancement of education.

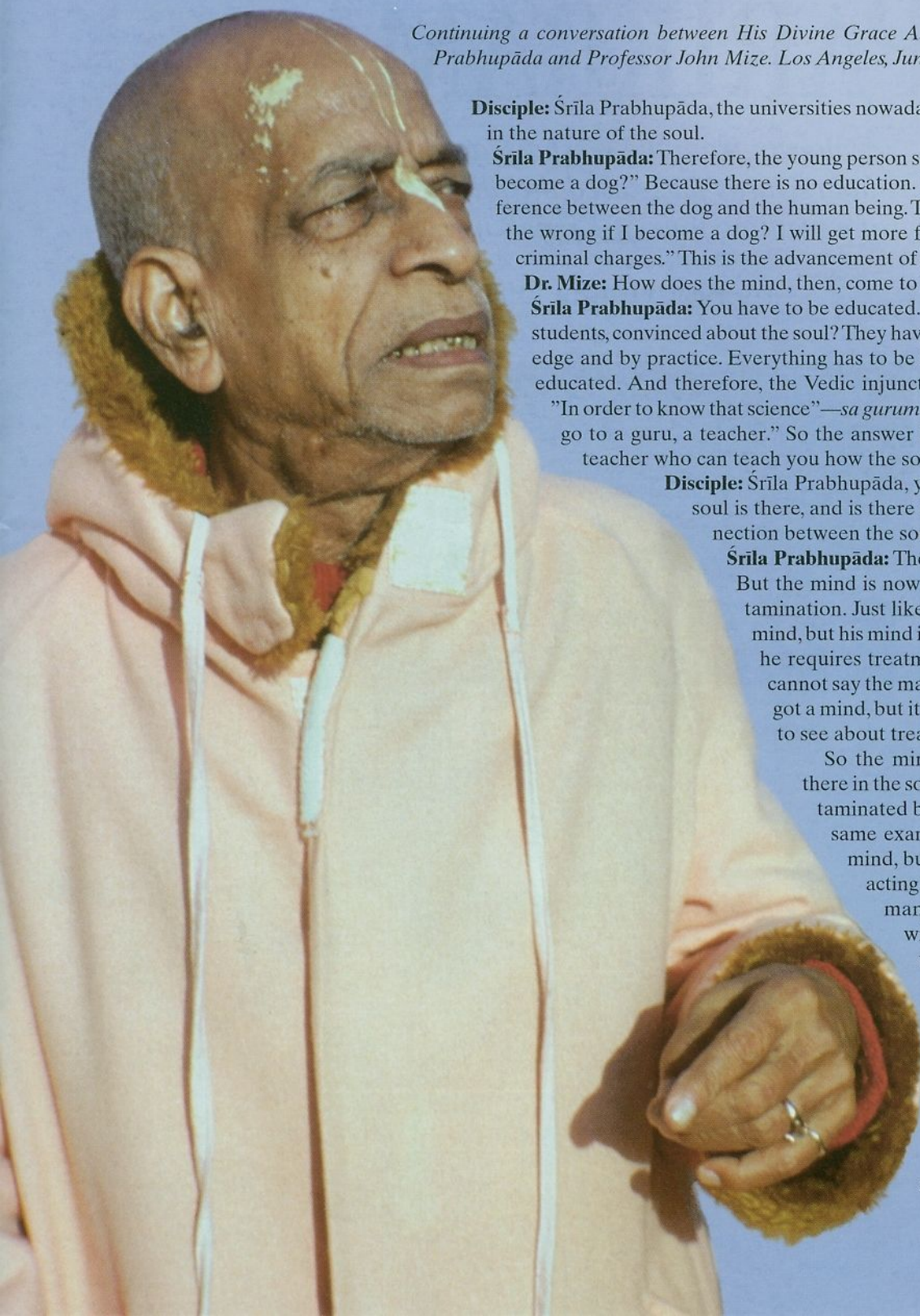
Dr. Mize: How does the mind, then, come to know that there is a soul?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: You have to be educated. How are these people, my students, convinced about the soul? They have been educated by knowledge and by practice. Everything has to be learned by being properly educated. And therefore, the Vedic injunction is *tad-vijnānārtham*—“In order to know that science”—*sa gurum evābhigacchet*—“you must go to a guru, a teacher.” So the answer is that you must go to the teacher who can teach you how the soul is there.

Disciple: Śrīla Prabhupāda, you're teaching us how the soul is there, and is there a way to describe the connection between the soul and the mind?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: The mind is there in the soul. But the mind is now polluted by material contamination. Just like a madman: he has got his mind, but his mind is contaminated. Therefore, he requires treatment by a psychiatrist. You cannot say the madman has no mind. He has got a mind, but it is contaminated. You have to see about treatment.

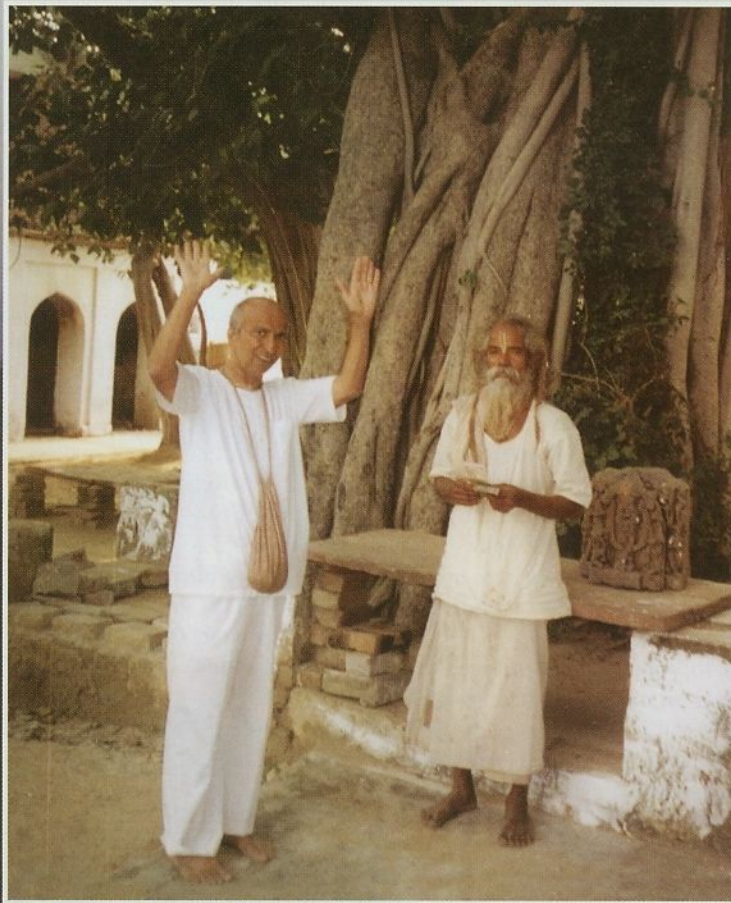
So the mind is there—everything is there in the soul. And now the mind, contaminated by matter, is perverted. The same example: a madman has got a mind, but it is useless. He is simply acting in madness. The same madman, when properly treated, will act like a sane man. So the mind is there always, whether we speak of the pure soul or the soul engaged in the material body. Everything is spiritual. The soul is spiritual; the mind is spiritual; the intelligence is spiritual. But it is now contaminated. So you have to see
(please turn to page 57)



Memories of VRAJA MANDALA PARIKRAMĀ

*A pilgrim from the West discovers that
the spiritual rewards far exceed the physical challenges
of a walking tour of Kṛṣṇa's holy land.*

by Pradyumna Dāsa



*The author meets a local Kṛṣṇa devotee (above) during
the Vṛndāvana walk. Background: Vṛndāvana sunrise from
the roof of ISKCON's Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma temple.*

LAST FALL I HAD the special opportunity to take part in ISKCON's sixteenth annual Vraja Maṇḍala Parikramā. Now the wonderful sights and sounds of this sacred land live in my heart and flash through my mind constantly.

Located eighty-five miles south of New Delhi, India, the villages of Vraja, the place of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa's childhood pastimes, spread over an area about forty miles in diameter. It includes the city of Mathura (the birthplace of Lord Kṛṣṇa) and twelve primary villages and forests, of which Vṛndāvana is the most famous. ISKCON's annual Vraja Maṇḍala ("circle") Parikramā ("circumambulation") is open to all. It lasts the entire Vedic month of Kārtika, which falls in October and November.

Before I departed for India from Baltimore, various doubts ran through my mind. How, where, and when would basic needs of hygiene and food be fulfilled while we walked through the villages of Vraja? Being fifty-seven years old, I feared getting ill and the physical challenge of walking several hours each day. But with encouragement from my family and other devotees in

Baltimore, and after prayers to the most merciful Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, the eternal queen of Vraja, I departed, ready for whatever was to come.

Our group from Baltimore arrived in India on October 17. It was a bright, sunny day, and the scenic drive from New Delhi to Vṛndāvana reminded me of my childhood in India and past trips to Vṛndāvana. Still, this trip felt special. Upon nearing Vṛndāvana and seeing temple domes and complexes from afar, I began to think of the countless pastimes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa and was overjoyed to be in the holy land.

Once we arrived at ISKCON's Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma Mandir, I quickly settled in and then went to offer respects to the deities—Gaura-Nitāi, Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma, and Rādhā-Śyāmasundara—and to Śrīla Prabhupāda in his Samādhī Mandir (memorial temple). I was excited to see the hundreds of devotees who had come from all over the world, and to talk to devotees I had met over the years.

The first day of walking started with the town of Vṛndāvana. The Vrajavasis (residents of Vraja) believe that circumambulating Vṛndāvana can wash

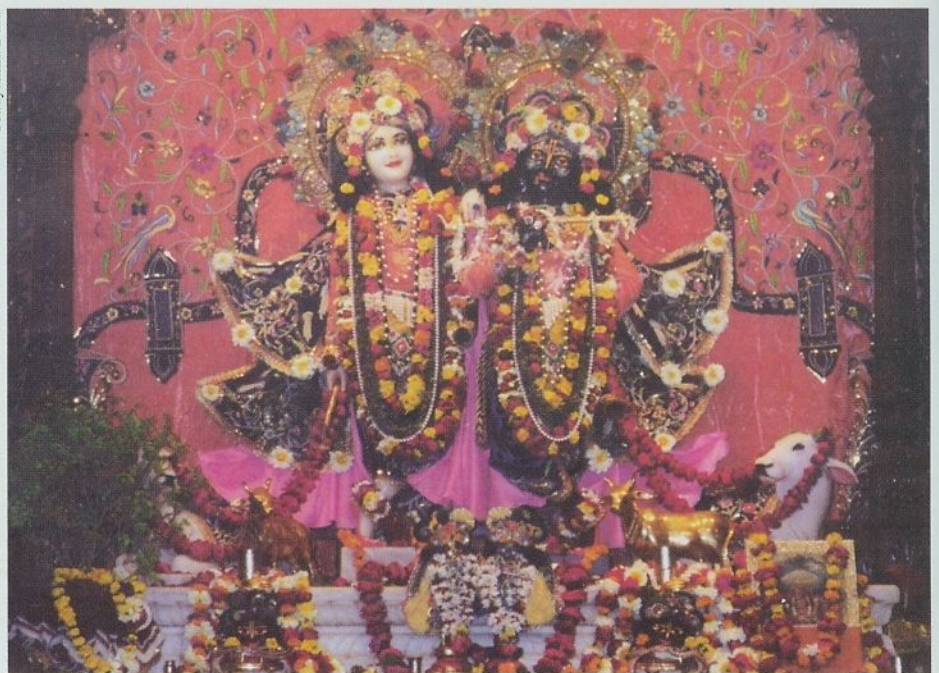
*“From way
atop the hill on
which the main
Rādhārāṇī
temple sits, to
the narrow alleys
of the bazaars
of Varshana, all I
could hear was
glorification of
Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa—
Jaya Jaya Śrī
Rādhē-Śyāma!”*



away any offenses committed in the holy land. Following custom, and out of respect for the holy land, I walked barefoot during the Vṛndāvana Parikramā. I was tired, and my feet were sore and blistered as the day came to an end. I questioned my commitment to last the entire month if every day was going to be like this. But encouragement from Parikramā veterans like Rādhā-Ramaṇa Dāsa, Rādhā Govinda Swamī, and others strengthened my resolve.

The next morning, before departing Vṛndāvana and the Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma Mandir, devotees took personal vows in front of the deities. I prayed to Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Śyāmasundara for the strength to finish the one-month walk. Leaving the temple gates, I looked back at the massive white domes of the Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma Mandir and felt the

Pradyumna Dāsa





Yamarāja Dāsa

presence of the Lord in the form of the hundreds of devotees walking with me. We were now on our way to Mathura.

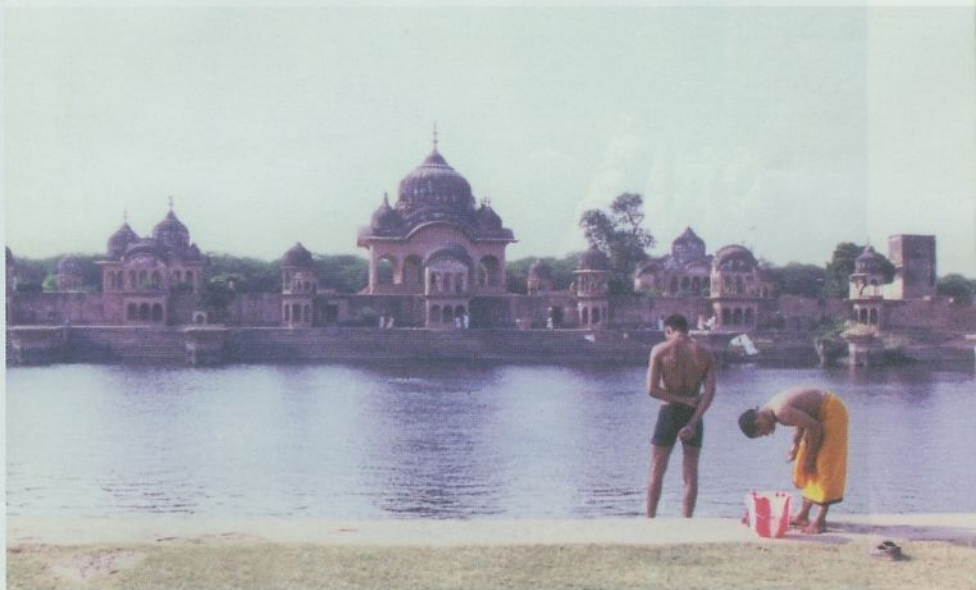
A CHALLENGING FIRST WEEK

After walking about half the day, we arrived at historic Vishram Ghat, where Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma rested after killing the demonic Kāmsa, and where Lord Caitanya bathed upon entering Mathura. After bathing in the cold, murky waters of the holy Yamuna River and setting up camp for the

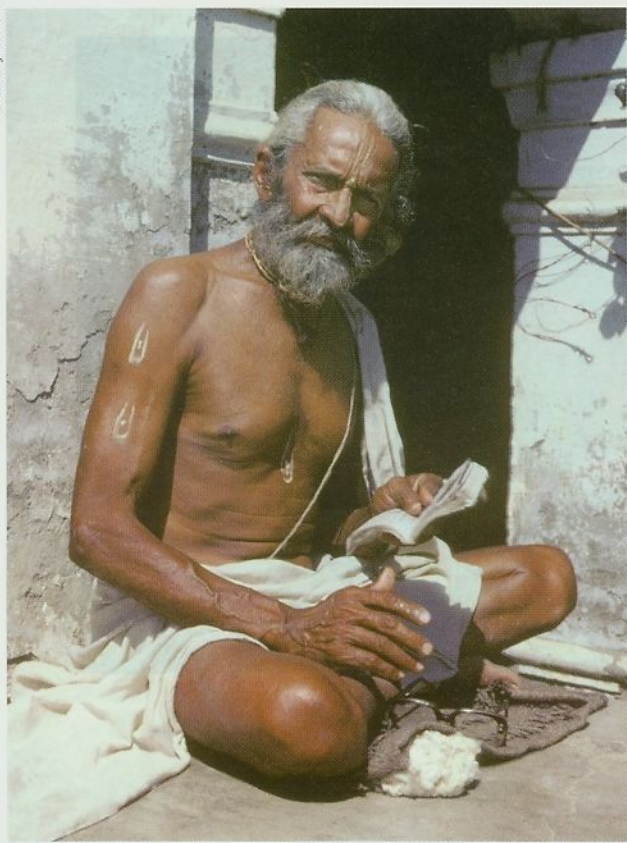
evening, a small group of us visited some nearby temples.

The next day, we performed Mathura Parikramā, stopping at various holy places in the city. Rādhā-Ramaṇa Dāsa, Bhadra Dāsa, and other senior devotees gave short talks and led *kīrtanas* at the holy sites. After another night in Mathura, we departed for Maḍhuvan at six o'clock the next morning, the fourth day of the Parikramā.

The first week of the Parikramā seemed long and hard. I was tired from walking during the cold mornings and hot afternoons. Slowly but surely,



Vidura Dāsa



Yamarāja Dāsa

The pilgrims make their way around Govardhana Hill (above, left). At Kusuma Sarovara (above), two devotees prepare for a sacred dip. A resident devotee (left) chants prayers in glorification of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Śrī Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma (far left) offer Their blessings from the center altar at the ISKCON temple in Vṛndāvana.

though, my fearful thoughts for health, hygiene, and food faded away, and only thoughts of the people and places of Vraja entered my mind. Other devotees, too, lost track of time. We became oblivious of what day it was, and our entire focus was to understand and meditate on the pastimes of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa at each spot we visited. The daily schedule of rising early, bathing in the cold, and living the village life became routine and felt natural. In this way, we walked each day from place to place hearing about the pastimes of the Lord, taking part in ecstatic *kīrtanas* and *āratis*, and associating with many devotees, *sannyāsīs*, and Vrajavasis.

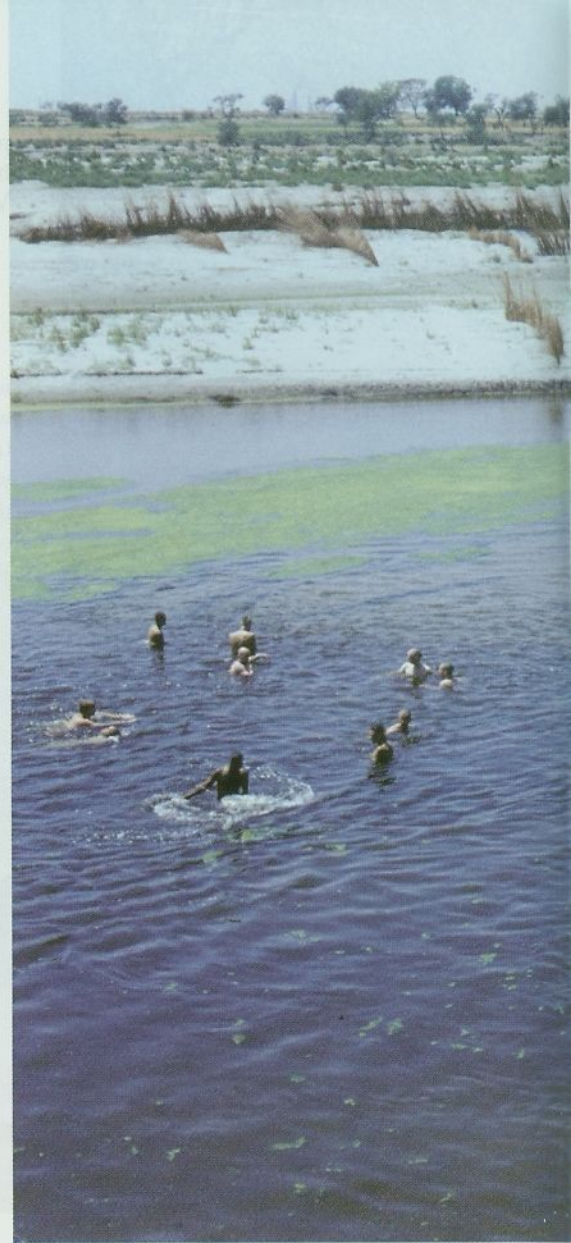
A MIDNIGHT DIP

In the afternoon of the seventh day we reached the famed Radha Kund,

Vraja residents (below) look out at the ISKCON pilgrims from around the world. A bath in the Yamuna River (right) refreshes the body and the soul. A villager (bottom) cooks chapattis on a traditional earthen stove.



Yamarāja Dāsa



our base for the next three days. I was especially excited about visiting Radha Kund, home to so many temples and holy sites. We set up camp and then visited the banks of Radha Kund and Shyama Kund, which are adjacent to each other. Telling the history of the two ponds, Rādhā-Ramaṇa Dāsa explained how and why Kṛṣṇa had called on all of the sacred rivers of the world to come fill them. [See BTG, September/October 2002].

After paying our obeisances and performing a short worship ceremony at Radha Kund, we visited several surrounding places, including the memorial tombs of Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī, and Kṛṣṇa Dāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī, prominent followers and contemporaries of Lord Caitanya.



Yamarāja Dāsa



Yamajā Dāsa

and “Rādhe! Rādhe!” with their arms raised. Many adults would greet us with offerings of hot milk or sweets. And if we happened to be staying overnight in their village, they would often invite a group of us into their small homes to stay for the night or eat *prasādam* in the evening. Their love and kindness for us, total strangers, amazed me. I feel as though I got a glimpse of why the Vrajavasis are so dear to Lord Kṛṣṇa.

On the sixteenth day we reached Varshana, home of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. Realizing that Varshana was the midpoint of our pilgrimage, I was saddened that there would eventually be an end to the bliss I had been feeling the past two weeks. I wanted to take in all I could in the time remaining. We spent two days in Varshana exploring the glorious homeland of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. From way atop the hill on which the main Rādhārāṇī temple sits, to the narrow alleys of the bazaars of Varshana, all I could hear was glorification of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. Jaya Jaya

Śrī Rādhe-Śyāma!

Also at this halfway mark, I began to realize the magnitude of effort put forth by the organizers and devotees assisting the Parikramā. Twice a day a group of devotees from Māyāpur cooked delicious food for Lord Kṛṣṇa and the more than four hundred Parikramā participants. Another group brought gallons upon gallons of filtered water to the campsite for the devotees to drink, and yet another group of devotees assisted in setting up and taking down the camp. This task included erecting several huge tents under which devotees slept (when better facilities such as schools or hostels were unavailable). The tents provided modest cover from the chilly autumn evenings and mornings. A hired crew kept the campground safe, and cleaned up

The next day we walked around Govardhana Hill, stopping occasionally to hear of the numerous pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa at locations such as Manasi Ganga and Kusuma Sarovara. Our final full day at Radha Kund consisted of doing Parikramā of Radha Kund and Shyama Kund during the day and bathing in the holy waters at midnight. Because it is the anniversary of the appearance of Shyama Kund and Radha Kund, a midnight bath on this day is an annual ritual for all the Vrajavasis who live in the area.

As we left Radha Kund the morning of the tenth day, I felt new appreciation for our disciplic lineage. Hearing lectures by Lokanāth Swami, Rādhā-Govinda Swami, and Gopāl Kṛṣṇa Swami on the pastimes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, and visiting temples and places

of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and past *ācāryas* like the six Gosvāmīs, gave me a strong feeling for the Gauḍiṣya Vaiṣṇava tradition carried on by Śrīla Prabhupāda.

As we walked farther along the Parikramā path, the days and nights went quickly. From Deeg to Badrinath to Kedarnath—with each stop I was learning more and trying to absorb as much as I could of the holy land.

VRAJAVASI RECEPTIONS

Each day as we walked through forests and villages filled with a plethora of vibrant colors and sounds, local residents would come out of their homes, fields, and shops to greet us. The children of the villages would follow us to the edge of town, shouting “Haribol!”



the next morning. Each evening a mobile shop arrived at the campsite, selling basic items such as soap, candles, and batteries. Laundry service was also available daily, as was a shuttle bus to and from the ISKCON center in Vṛndāvana.

SPIRITUAL HEALTH FOR A DOCTOR

As in past years, a doctor accompanied the Parikramā. This year it was Dr. Mahesh Bhatt, from Baroda, Gujarat. He told me he had met ISKCON devotees before but had never really considered himself religious. He de-

cided to help the devotees as a humanitarian service. He had never before worn a dhoti or *tilaka*, or even risen before sunrise. After he'd received Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa's blessings and the association of devotees, everything changed for him. He told me that by taking part in the Parikramā, chanting the holy names of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and coming in touch with Vraja's atmosphere of simple living and high thinking, he had been changed for life. He said he would assist the Parikramā organizers with his services every year from now on.

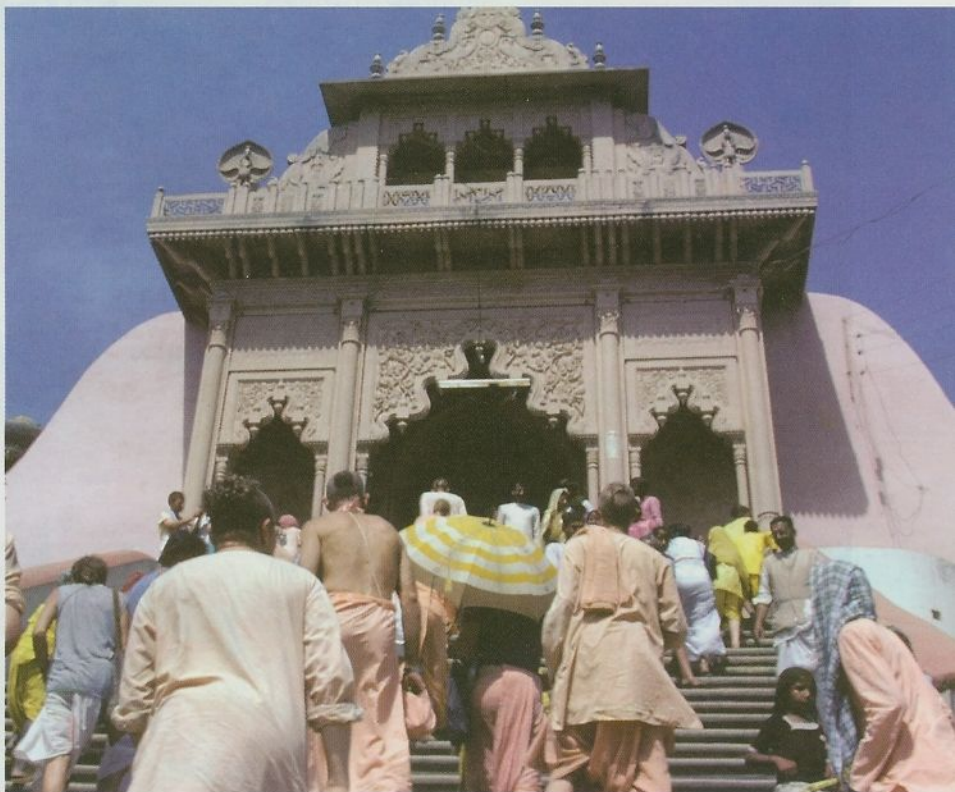
We left Varshana on the morning of the eighteenth day and traveled to

Nandagram and then, the next day, to Kokilavan. The second half of the Parikramā flew by just as fast as the first half. In the waning days, we traveled from Brahmanda Ghat, where Mother Yaśodā saw the entire cosmos within Kṛṣṇa's mouth, to Raval, the birthplace of Rādhārāṇī. Finally, on the thirtieth day of our pilgrimage, we returned to Mathura for a concluding bath at Vishram Ghat.

Upon ending the Parikramā, I could feel my faith in Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa and the message of Śrīla Prabhupāda increase tenfold. I encourage all devotees to take part in the Vraja Maṇḍala Parikramā, be it for one week, two weeks,



Devotees walk along a ridge (left) to the main temple of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī at Varshana. Below, pilgrims approach the front entrance to the temple, after climbing many stairs from the village. Purified by pilgrimage, devotees enjoy on the sacred sand of Raman Reti (bottom), near ISKCON's Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma temple.



Yamarāja Dāsa

or the entire month, at least once in their lifetime. I have the greatest respect for all of the organizers and participants of the Parikramā. I will never forget the wonderful sights and sounds of Vraja. They will live forever in my heart. I hanker to go back there again and again. ☸

Pradyumna Dāsa, a disciple of His Holiness Satsvarūpa Dāsa Goswami, lives outside Baltimore, Maryland, with his wife, Dāmodara Devī Dāsī. Together they teach Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the Indian community through home programs and other events. He can be reached at pvanodia@hotmail.com.



Pradyumna Dāsa



May 15 marks the appearance day of Lord Nṛsiṁha, the half-man, half-lion incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Nṛsiṁhadeva descended to protect His devotee Prahlāda from the torment of his atheistic father, Hiranyakaśipu, who had performed great penance and gained boons he felt would secure his immortality. But Lord Nṛsiṁha killed the murderous demon while simultaneously honoring the boons he had received from Lord Brahmā. The story is narrated in Canto Seven of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Devotees pray to Lord Nṛsiṁha for protection from both bodily harm and their own materialistic desires. [To see more paintings by Mādhava Priyā Devī Dāsī, go to www.glimpseofkrishna.com.]

Nṛsimhadeva

by Laksmi LaCuesta

half-man, half-lion
sitting on the threshold
at dusk

tearing into Hiraṇyakaśipu's chest
with Your elegant nails
as he is slain over Your lap

this great demon's reign of terror
has ended

blood paints the floor
decorating Your golden silken garments
as it shimmers in Your effulgent glow

a garland of intestines
draped around Your neck
Your prize necklace
from Your fresh kill

Anantaśeṣa,
the multi-headed serpent
and Your faithful servant,
watches with his many eyes
each hood smiling at Your glorious deed

Hiraṇyakaśipu
thought he was immortal
because of five boons
in return for thousands of years
of penance

he has been outsmarted by You
who are supreme
his helmet and club abandoned on the
ground
lost in that final moment of suspense
and death

just as a cat plays with a mouse
so You played with the demon
Hiraṇyakaśipu
before You pulled apart his ribs
and decorated Your chest
with his insides

Your anger is so intense
it has frightened everyone away
even the demigods
are afraid to offer their prayers

yet Prahlāda Mahārāja
a five-year-old boy

Your pure devotee
offers a garland of flowers
and his obeisances

You have saved him from his father's
wrath
once again

O Nṛsimhadeva
the supreme controller
just as You protected Prahlāda
so You also protect us
from deviating off the path
of devotional service

All glories to You! ❁

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—Śeṣa Dāsa, GBC Minister of Education

*The list may change slightly by the time the Program begins.

**Vaiṣṇava Training and Education, an initiative that promotes systematic education within ISKCON. The Bhaktivedanta College is a combined effort of the VTE and the VIHE (Vaiṣṇava Institute for Higher Education).

WHY DO WE CRITICIZE?

(continued from page 14)

This was unfortunate for Rāmacandra Purī, because he continued to offend Vaiṣṇavas wherever he went. Unlike Gopāla Cakravartī and Amogha, he didn't suffer some extreme material condition. But also unlike them, he didn't have a change of heart or receive love of God.

DILIGENT WORK

Suffering is not the only way to change our attitudes and behaviors. Ideally, we will gain insight into the problem and then work diligently to correct it. Recognizing and accepting our difficulty is half the battle. Finding a trusted devotee to confide in and seek guidance from is helpful. Attentive, focused, and prayerful chanting will help us see things differently and inspire to change behaviors contrary to devotional life. Incorporating daily Prabhupāda's powerful teachings and instructions from his books, tapes, and videos will help us remember what things are favorable and unfavorable to our spiritual lives.

As we become happier and more spiritually fulfilled, our desire to find fault in others will proportionately diminish. And as we practice seeing the good in others and serving them, the Lord will reciprocate with our efforts and we'll make steady spiritual progress.

The next time we feel the urge to say something negative about someone, we should stop and ask ourselves, "What is my motive for saying this? What will Prabhupāda think when he hears me say this? Will this help me develop my loving sentiments and make spiritual progress?"

Often our answers to these questions will convince us to be silent. If we commit ourselves to practicing abstinence from faultfinding, we'll reap the abundance of spiritual rewards that will follow. ❀

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

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.

AN ARENA OF CURSES

As a great sacrifice was about to begin, Dakṣa, a forefather of mankind, criticized the great Lord Śiva, his son-in-law. Now Nandīśvara, a follower of Lord Śiva, retaliates by cursing Dakṣa's followers because they ignored Dakṣa's offense.

CANTO 4: CHAPTER 2

21 य एतन्मर्त्यमुद्दिश्य भगवत्यप्रतिद्रुहि
द्रुह्यत्यज्ञः पृथग्दृष्टिस्तत्त्वतो विमुखो भवेत्

*ya etan martyam uddiśya
bhagavaty apratidruhi
druhyaty ajñah pṛthag-dṛṣṭis
tattvato vimukho bhavet*

yaḥ—who (Dakṣa); *etat martyam*—this body; *uddiśya*—with reference to; *bhagavati*—to Śiva; *apratidruhi*—who is not envious; *druhyati*—bears envy; *ajñah*—less intelligent persons; *pṛthag-dṛṣṭiḥ*—the vision of duality; *tattvataḥ*—from transcendental knowledge; *vimukhaḥ*—bereft; *bhavet*—may become.

Anyone who has accepted Dakṣa as the most important personality and neglected Lord Śiva because of envy is less intelligent and, because of visualizing in duality, will be bereft of transcendental knowledge.

PURPORT: The first curse by Nandīśvara was that anyone supporting Dakṣa was foolishly identifying himself with the body, and therefore, because Dakṣa had no transcendental knowledge, supporting him would deprive one of transcendental knowledge. Dakṣa, Nandīśvara said, identified himself with the body like other materialistic persons and was trying to derive all kinds of facilities in relationship with the body. He had excessive attachment for the body and, in relation to the body, for wife, children, home, and other such things, which are different from the soul. ❶ Therefore Nandīśvara's curse was that anyone who supported Dakṣa would be bereft of transcendental knowledge of the soul and thus also be deprived of knowledge of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

22 गृहेषु कूटधर्मेषु सक्तो ग्राम्यसुखेच्छया
कर्मतन्त्रं वितनुते वेदवादविपन्नधीः

(1) What was Nandīśvara's first curse?

grheṣu kūṭa-dharmeṣu
sakto grāmya-sukhecchayā
karma-tantram vitanute
veda-vāda-vipanna-dhīḥ

grheṣu—in householder life; *kūṭa-dharmeṣu*—of pretentious religiosity; *saktaḥ*—being attracted; *grāmya-sukha-icchayā*—by desire for material happiness; *karma-tantram*—fruitive activities; *vitante*—he performs; *veda-vāda*—by the explanations of the *Vedas*; *vipanna-dhīḥ*—intelligence being lost.

Pretentiously religious householder life, in which one is attracted to material happiness and thus also attracted to the superficial explanation of the Vedas, robs one of all intelligence and attaches one to fruitive activities as all in all.

PURPORT: Persons who identify with bodily existence are attached to the fruitive activities described in the Vedic literature. For example, in the *Vedas* it is said that one who observes the *cāturmāsya* vow will attain eternal happiness in the heavenly kingdom. ❷ In *Bhagavad-gītā*, it is said that this flowery language of the *Vedas* mostly attracts persons who identify with the body. To them such happiness as that of the heavenly kingdom is everything; they do not know that beyond that is the spiritual kingdom, or kingdom of God, and they have no knowledge that one can go there. Thus they are bereft of transcendental knowledge. Such persons are very careful in observing the rules and regulations of household life in order to be promoted in the next life to the moon or other heavenly planets. It is stated here that such persons are attached to *grāmya-sukha*, which means “material happiness,” without knowledge of eternal, blissful spiritual life.

23 बुद्ध्या पराभिध्यायिन्या विस्मृतात्मगतिः पशुः
 स्त्रीकामः सोऽस्त्वतितरां दक्षो बस्तमुखोऽचिरात्

buddhyā parābhidhyāyinyā
vismṛtātma-gatiḥ paśuḥ
strī-kāmaḥ so 'stv atitarām
dakṣo basta-mukho 'cīrāt

buddhyā—by intelligence; *para-abhidhyāyinyā*—by accepting the body as the self; *vismṛta-ātma-gatiḥ*—having forgotten the knowledge of Viṣṇu; *paśuḥ*—an animal; *strī-kāmaḥ*—attached to sex life; *saḥ*—he (Dakṣa); *astu*—let; *atitarām*—excessive; *dakṣaḥ*—Dakṣa; *basta-mukhaḥ*—the face of a goat; *acīrāt*—in a very short time.

(2) What type of persons are attached to “the flowery language of the Vedas”?

Dakṣa has accepted the body as all in all. Therefore, since he has forgotten the *viṣṇu-pāda*, or *viṣṇu-gati*, and is attached to sex life only, within a short time he will have the face of a goat.

24 विद्याबुद्धिरविद्यायां कर्ममय्यामसौ जडः
 संसरन्विवह ये चामुमु शर्वावमानिनम्

vidyā-buddhir avidyāyām
karmamayyām asau jaḍaḥ
saṁsaranv iha ye cāmum
anu śarvāvamāninam

vidyā-buddhiḥ—materialistic education and intelligence; *avidyāyām*—in nescience; *karma-mayyām*—formed of fruitive activities; *asau*—he (Dakṣa); *jaḍaḥ*—dull; *saṁsaranv*—let them take birth again and again; *iha*—here in this world; *ye*—who; *ca*—and; *amum*—Dakṣa; *anu*—following; *śarva*—Śiva; *avamāninam*—insulting.

Those who have become as dull as matter by cultivating materialistic education and intelligence are nesciently involved in fruitive activities. Such men have purposely insulted Lord Śiva. May they continue in the cycle of repeated birth and death.

PURPORT: The three curses mentioned above are sufficient to make one as dull as stone, void of spiritual knowledge, and preoccupied with materialistic education, which is nescience. After uttering these curses, Nandīśvara then cursed the *brāhmaṇas* to continue in the cycle of birth and death because of their supporting Dakṣa in blaspheming Lord Śiva.

25 गिरः श्रुतायाः पुष्पिण्या मधुगन्धेन भूरिणा
 मथ्ना चोन्मथितात्मानः सम्मुह्यन्तु हरद्विषः

giraḥ śrutāyāḥ puṣpiṇyā
madhu-gandhena bhūriṇā
mathnā conmathitātmānaḥ
sammuhyantu hara-dviṣaḥ

giraḥ—words; *śrutāyāḥ*—of the *Vedas*; *puṣpiṇyā*—flowery; *madhu-gandhena*—with the scent of honey; *bhūriṇā*—profuse; *mathnā*—enchanted; *ca*—and; *unmathita-ātmānaḥ*—whose minds have become dull; *sammuhyantu*—let them remain attached; *hara-dviṣaḥ*—envious of Lord Śiva.

May those who are envious of Lord Śiva, being attracted by the flowery language of the enchanting Vedic promises, and who have thus become dull, always remain attached to fruitive activities.

PURPORT: ③ The Vedic promises of elevation to higher planets for a better standard of materialistic life are compared to flowery language because in a flower there is certainly an aroma but that aroma does not last for a very long time. In a flower there is honey, but that honey is not eternal.

26 सर्वभक्षा द्विजा वृत्त्यै धृतविद्यातपोव्रताः वित्तदेहेन्द्रियारामा याचका विचरन्त्विहा

*sarva-bhakṣā dvijā vṛttyai
dhṛta-vidyā-tapo-vratāḥ
vitta-dehendriyārāmā
yācakā vicarantv iha*

sarva-bhakṣāḥ—eating everything; *dvijāḥ*—the *brāhmaṇas*; *vṛttyai*—for maintaining the body; *dhṛta-vidyā*—having taken to education; *tapāḥ*—austerity; *vrataḥ*—and vows; *vitta*—money; *deha*—the body; *indriya*—the senses; *ārāmāḥ*—the satisfaction; *yācakāḥ*—as beggars; *vicarantu*—let them wander; *iha*—here.

These *brāhmaṇas* take to education, austerity, and vows only for the purpose of maintaining the body. They shall be devoid of discrimination between what to eat and what not to eat. They will acquire money, begging from door to door, simply for the satisfaction of the body.

PURPORT: The third curse inflicted by Nandīśvara on the *brāhmaṇas* who supported Dakṣa is completely functioning in the age of Kali. The so-called *brāhmaṇas* are no longer interested in understanding the nature of the Supreme Brahman, although ④ a *brāhmaṇa* means one who has attained knowledge about Brahman. In the *Vedānta-sūtra* also it is stated, *athāto brahma jijñāsā*: this human form of life is meant for realization of the Supreme Brahman, the Absolute Truth, or, in other words, human life is meant for one's elevation to the post of a *brāhmaṇa*.

Unfortunately the modern *brāhmaṇas*, or so-called *brāhmaṇas* who come in originally brahminical families, have left their own occupational duties, but they do not allow others to occupy the posts of *brāhmaṇas*. The qualifications for *brāhmaṇas* are described in the scriptures, in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, *Bhagavad-gītā*, and all other Vedic literatures. *Brāhmaṇa* is not a hereditary title or position. If someone from a non-*brāhmaṇa* family (for example, one born in a family of *sūdras*) tries to become a *brāhmaṇa* by being properly qualified under the instruction of a bona fide spiritual master, these so-called *brāhmaṇas* will object. Such *brāhmaṇas*, having been cursed by Nandīśvara, are actually in a position where they have no discrimination between eatables and noneatables and simply live to maintain the perishable material body and its family. Such fallen conditioned souls are not worthy to be called *brāhmaṇas*, but in Kali-yuga they claim to be *brāhmaṇas*, and if a person actu-

ally tries to attain the brahminical qualifications, they try to hinder his progress.

This is the situation in the present age. Caitanya Mahāprabhu condemned this principle very strongly. During His conversation with Rāmānanda Rāya, ⑤ He said that regardless of whether a person is born in a *brāhmaṇa* family or *sūdra* family, regardless of whether he is a householder or a *sannyāsī*, if he knows the science of Kṛṣṇa he must be a spiritual master. Caitanya Mahāprabhu had many so-called *sūdra* disciples like Haridāsa Ṭhākura and Rāmānanda Rāya. Even the Gosvāmīs, who were principal students of Lord Caitanya, were also ostracized from *brāhmaṇa* society, but Caitanya Mahāprabhu, by His grace, made them first-class Vaiṣṇavas.

27 तस्यैवं वदतः शापं श्रुत्वा द्विजकुलाय वै भृगुः प्रत्यसृजच्छापं ब्रह्मदण्डं दुरत्ययम्

*tasyaivaṁ vadataḥ śāpaṁ
śrutvā dvija-kulāya vai
bhṛguḥ pratyasṛjac chāpaṁ
brahma-daṇḍaṁ duratyayam*

tasya—his (Nandīśvara's); *evam*—thus; *vadataḥ*—words; *śāpaṁ*—the curse; *śrutvā*—hearing; *dvija-kulāya*—unto the *brāhmaṇas*; *vai*—indeed; *bhṛguḥ*—Bhṛgu; *pratyasṛjat*—made; *śāpaṁ*—a curse; *brahma-daṇḍam*—the punishment of a *brāhmaṇa*; *duratyayam*—insurmountable.

When all the hereditary *brāhmaṇas* were thus cursed by Nandīśvara, the sage Bhṛgu, as a reaction, condemned the followers of Lord Śiva with this very strong brahminical curse.

PURPORT: The word *duratyaya* is particularly used in reference to a *brahmadanda*, or curse by a *brāhmaṇa*. A curse by a *brāhmaṇa* is very strong; therefore it is called *duratyaya*, or insurmountable. As the Lord states in *Bhagavad-gītā*, the stringent laws of nature are insurmountable; similarly, if a curse is uttered by a *brāhmaṇa*, that curse is also insurmountable. But *Bhagavad-gītā* also says that the curses or benedictions of the material world are, after all, material

(3) Why are Vedic promises of elevation to heavenly planets compared to flowery language?

(4) What is the meaning of the word “*brāhmaṇa*”?

(5) What did Lord Caitanya say is the qualification for being a spiritual master?

creations. ❹ The *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* confirms that that which is accepted in this material world to be a benediction and that which is taken to be a curse are both on the same platform because they are material.

To get out of this material contamination, one should take shelter of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, as recommended in *Bhagavad-gītā* (7.14): *mām eva ye prapadyante māyām etān taranti te*. The best path is to transcend all material curses and benedictions and take shelter of the Supreme Lord, Kṛṣṇa, and remain in a transcendental position. Persons who have taken shelter of Kṛṣṇa are always peaceful; they are never cursed by anyone, nor do they attempt to curse anyone. That is a transcendental position.

28 भवव्रतधरा ये च ये च तान् समनुव्रताः
पाषण्डिनस्ते भवन्तु सच्छास्त्रपरिपन्थिनः

*bhava-vrata-dharā ye ca
ye ca tāt samanuvratāḥ
pāṣaṇḍīnas te bhavantu
sat-chāstra-paripanthīnaḥ*

bhava-vrata-dharāḥ—taking a vow to satisfy Lord Śiva; *ye*—who; *ca*—and; *ye*—who; *ca*—and; *tāt*—such principles; *samanuvratāḥ*—following; *pāṣaṇḍīnaḥ*—atheists; *te*—they; *bhavantu*—let them become; *sat-chāstra-paripanthīnaḥ*—diverted from transcendental scriptural injunctions.

One who takes a vow to satisfy Lord Śiva or who follows such principles will certainly become an atheist and be diverted from transcendental scriptural injunctions.

PURPORT: It is sometimes seen that devotees of Lord Śiva imitate the characteristics of Lord Śiva. ❺ For example, Lord Śiva drank an ocean of poison, so some of the followers of Lord Śiva imitate him and try to take intoxicants like *gāñjā* (marijuana). Here the curse is that if someone follows such principles he must become an infidel and turn against the principles of Vedic regulation. It is said that such devotees of Lord Śiva will be *sacchāstra-paripanthīnaḥ*, which means “opposed to the conclusion of *śāstra*, or scripture.” This is confirmed in the *Padma Purāṇa* also. Lord Śiva was ordered by the Supreme Personality of Godhead to preach the impersonal, or Māyāvāda, philosophy for a par-

ticular purpose, just as Lord Buddha preached the philosophy of voidness for particular purposes mentioned in the *śāstras*.

Sometimes it is necessary to preach a philosophical doctrine which is against the Vedic conclusion. ❻ In the *Śiva Purāṇa* it is stated that Lord Śiva said to Pārvatī that in the Kali-yuga, in the body of a *brāhmaṇa*, he would preach the Māyāvāda philosophy. Thus it is generally found that the worshipers of Lord Śiva are Māyāvādī followers. Lord Śiva himself says, *māyāvādam asat-chāstram*. *Asat-śāstra*, as explained here, means the doctrine of Māyāvāda impersonalism, or becoming one with the Supreme. Bhṛgu Muni cursed that persons who worshiped Lord Śiva would become followers of this Māyāvāda *asat-śāstra*, which attempts to establish that the Supreme Personality of Godhead is impersonal. Besides that, among the worshipers of Lord Śiva there is a section who live a devilish life. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and *Nārada-pañcarātra* are authorized scriptures that are considered *sat-śāstra*, or scriptures which lead one to the path of God realization. *Asat-śāstras* are just the opposite.

29 नष्टशौचा मूढधियो जटाभस्मास्थधारिणः
विशन्तु शिवदीक्षायां यत्र दैवं सुरासवम्

*naṣṭa-śaucā mūḍha-dhiyo
jaṭā-bhasmāsthī-dhārīṇaḥ
viśantu śiva-dikṣāyām
yatra daivam surāsavam*

naṣṭa-śaucāḥ—cleanliness being abandoned; *mūḍha-dhiyaḥ*—foolish; *jaṭā-bhasma-asthi-dhārīṇaḥ*—wearing long hair, ashes, and bones; *viśantu*—may enter; *śiva-dikṣāyām*—into initiation of worship of Śiva; *yatra*—where; *daivam*—are spiritual; *sura-āsavam*—wine and liquor.

Those who vow to worship Lord Śiva are so foolish that they imitate him by keeping long hair on their heads. When initiated into worship of Lord Śiva, they prefer to live on wine, flesh, and other such things.

PURPORT: Indulging in wine and meat, keeping long hair on one's head, not bathing daily, and smoking *gāñjā* (marijuana) are some of the habits which are accepted by foolish creatures who do not have regulated lives. By such behavior one becomes devoid of transcendental knowledge. In the initiation into the Śiva mantra there are *mudrikāṣṭaka*, in which it is sometimes recommended that one make his sitting place on the vagina and thus desire *nirvāṇa*, or dissolution of existence. In that process of worship, wine is needed, or sometimes, in place of wine, palm tree juice which is converted into an intoxicant. This is also offered according to *Śiva-āgama*, a scripture on the method of worshiping Lord Śiva.

(continued in the next issue)

- (6) Why does the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* say that curses and benedictions are equal?
(7) How do followers of Lord Śiva imitate his drinking an ocean of poison?
(8) What philosophy does Lord Śiva preach in Kali-yuga?

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A Personal Look At the Nature of God

*Why impersonalist philosophers
don't see the whole picture.*

by Satyarāja Dāsa



The impersonal Brahman effulgence, upon which yogis meditate

*God exists, and God is light
For those poor souls who dwell in night.
But doth a human form display
To those who dwell in realms of day.*

—William Blake (1757–1827)

A MAJOR PUBLISHER recently approached me to write a book that would compare the more than one thousand existing English translations of the *Bhagavad-gītā*. I replied to say I would consider their offer, and within a week I received, by special delivery, a box full of the decade's most prominent *Gītā* translations. Looking through each one carefully, I noticed that most translators misunderstood the basic teaching: that God is a person, Kṛṣṇa, and that the goal of life is to develop love for Him. Instead, these “*Gītās*” claimed that

Montage by Yamarāja Dāsa

...on which yogis meditate, emanates from the eternal form of Kṛṣṇa.

Vaiṣṇavas, worshipers of Kṛṣṇa, shun this idea of becoming “one with God,” saying it is almost as repulsive as gross materialism.

• • •

God is an abstract force, an impersonal entity that lies beyond the purview of the senses. The commentators squeezed this out of the Sanskrit itself and often made it the focus of their analyses.

The impersonal or monistic conception of the Supreme—wherein one envisions God as an inconceivable force, without form—is clearly a legitimate part of what the *Bhagavad-gītā* teaches. But that part is eclipsed by the idea of God as the Supreme Person. As Kṛṣṇa Himself says in the *Gītā* (7.24), “Unintelligent people, who do not know Me perfectly, think that I, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, was impersonal before and have now assumed this personality. Due to their small knowledge, they do not know My higher nature, which is imperishable and supreme.”

And yet, despite the *Gītā*’s emphasis on God’s personhood, the impersonalistic dimension of the *Gītā* has become more popular. Teachers in the Kṛṣṇa conscious tradition suggest that the desire to depersonalize God comes, on a subliminal level, from the desire to avoid surrender. After all, if God is a person, then questions of submission and subservience come into play. If God is a formless abstraction, we can philosophize about it without a sense of commitment, without the fear of having to acknowledge our duty to a higher being. Then again, maybe the popularity of the impersonal conception, at least in relation to the *Gītā*, can be traced, plain and simple, to inadequate knowledge of Sanskrit.

Impersonalism really doesn’t even make sense. Form is everywhere, from mountain to snowflake. Everything has form. Even invisible things have shape. Consider the atom: Though we don’t see it, we know it occupies definite space, and with the proper equipment we can perceive it. Deep down we

know that in this world a thing and its form are inseparable.

And this, of course, is where the theory of impersonalism comes in. Impersonalists reason that if everything in this world has form, everything in “that” world must be formless, for matter and spirit are seen as diametrically opposed. While the premise here may be true, the conclusion is illogical. The reasoning is like the thinking of a cow that has once run from a burning barn: whenever it sees red, it runs. Similarly, everyone in this world knows that material forms are temporary and limited. This truth is embedded in our consciousness, and we naturally (if sometimes subliminally) apply it to all form, never imagining that spiritual form may have different characteristics altogether. So we foist formlessness on God and on all spiritual phenomena, inadvertently following a tradition of impersonalism with the enthusiasm of a fire-fearing cow running from red.

If one studies the *Gītā* in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, however, one sees clearly that the person Kṛṣṇa, also known as Bhagavān (the Lord), reigns Supreme. Nearly every verse stresses service to Him. There is much evidence that the *Gītā* supports the personalistic doctrine. Kṛṣṇa says, “I am at the basis of the impersonal Brahman [the formless Absolute].” (14.27) And when discussing the comparative value of the impersonal and the personal, He says, “Those who focus their minds on My personal form, always engaged in worshiping Me with intense spiritual faith, are considered by Me to be most perfect.” (12.2) In other words, according to the *Gītā* the conception of God as a person, to whom one may become devoted, is prior to and superior to the conception of God as an impersonal force, into which one may merge.

And what exactly is meant by “mer-

ging”? Vaiṣṇavas, worshipers of Kṛṣṇa, shun this idea of becoming “one with God,” saying it is almost as repulsive as gross materialism. Śrīla Prabhupāda says the idea is motivated by fear. In his purport to *Bhagavad-gītā* 4.10 he writes:

It is difficult for a person who is too materially affected to understand the personal nature of the Supreme Absolute Truth. . . . Consequently, they consider the Supreme to be impersonal. And because they are too materially absorbed, the conception of retaining their personality after liberation from matter frightens them. When they are informed that spiritual life is also individual and personal, they become afraid of becoming persons again, and so they naturally prefer a kind of merging into the impersonal void.

So just as impersonalism stems from the fear that one will have to submit to a higher entity, as stated earlier, we now see that its concomitant “merging” is also a product of fear—the fear that one’s individual existence, with all its imperfections, will continue into eternity. But Vaiṣṇavas promote a philosophy of fearlessness, for they know that spiritual personality is not beleaguered by the limitations of matter. Some scholars are wise to this too. Professor Huston Smith, a prominent author and teacher in the field of comparative religion, eloquently expresses the Vaiṣṇavas’ distaste for merging with the Supreme. He does this with the help of a traditional *bhakti* poem written in sixteenth-century India:

As healthy love is out-going, the bhakta [devotee] will reject all suggestions that the God one loves is oneself, even one’s deepest Self, and insist on God’s otherness. As a . . . devotional classic puts the point, “I



want to taste sugar; I don't want to be sugar."

Can water quaff itself?

Can trees taste of the fruit they bear?

He who worships God must stand distinct from Him,

So only shall he know the joyful love of God;

For if he say that God and he are one,

That joy, that love, shall vanish instantly away.

Pray no more for utter oneness with God:

Where were the beauty if jewel and setting were one?

The heat and the shade are two,

If not, where were the comfort of shade?

Mother and child are two,

If not, where were the love?

When after being sundered, they meet,

What joy do they feel, the mother and child!

Where were joy, if the two were one?

Pray, then, no more for utter oneness with God.

—poem by Tukaram

IS GOD REALLY A PERSON?

Seeing the many impersonal translations and commentaries got my ire. God is, first and foremost, a person. Prabhupāda is clear on this in his *Gītā* commentary, incredulous that anyone

could accept the impersonal idea of the Absolute:

We cannot understand how the Supreme Personality of Godhead could be impersonal; the imposition theory* of the impersonalist monist is false as far as the statements of the *Gītā* are concerned. It is clear herein that the Supreme Absolute Truth, Lord Kṛṣṇa, has both form and personality. (Bg. 7.24, Purport)

Even the findings of modern scientists support this personalistic view. Here is a particularly powerful statement by Dr. John C. Cotran, who before he retired was Professor of Chemistry and the Chairman of the Science and Mathematics Department at the University of Minnesota:

Chemistry discloses that matter is ceasing to exist, some varieties exceedingly slowly, others exceedingly swiftly. Therefore, the existence of matter is not eternal. Consequently, matter must have had a beginning. Evidence from Chemistry and other sciences indicates that this beginning was not slow and gradual; on the con-

*One class of impersonalists claims that God's impersonal feature is superior to His form, which, they say, is an artificial imposition created by the illusory energy. They do not explain why or how God's energy, which is subservient to Him, can obscure His form, nor can they reconcile their position with scriptural statements.

trary, it was sudden, and the evidence even indicates the approximate time when it occurred. Thus at some rather definite time the material world was created and ever since has been obeying law, not the dictates of chance. Now, the material realm not being able to create itself and its governing laws, the act of creation must have been performed by some non-material agent. The stupendous marvels accomplished in that act show that this agent must possess superlative intelligence, an attribute of mind. But to bring mind into action in the material realm as, for example, in the practice of medicine and the field of parapsychology, the exercise of will is required, and this can be exerted only by a person. Hence our logical and inescapable conclusion is not only that creation occurred but that it was brought about according to the plan and will of a person endowed with supreme intelligence and knowledge (omniscience), and the power to bring it about and keep it running according to plan (omnipotence) always and everywhere throughout the universe (omnipresence). That is to say, we accept unhesitatingly the fact of the existence of "the supreme spiritual being, God, the creator and director of the universe."

IT GETS PERSONAL

Vaiṣṇava devotees feel offended when their beautiful Lord is described as having no eyes, no mouth, no hair, no form, and as a result, no love. To deny God these distinct personal characteristics is the height of arrogance. Do humans have something that God does not? Would this not make us greater than He is—especially when it comes to loving exchanges? We can love, but God cannot?

To say that God is unlimited and then to say that He cannot have a form is contradictory. If He is unlimited, He can do whatever He likes. And if loving exchange is the highest thing in creation, as most will admit, then God would most definitely deign to be a person, for loving exchange loses meaning without personhood; it can exist only between people.

Ultimately, Vaiṣṇava philosophy says that all conceptions of God are included in the personal form of Śrī

Coming up in the next issue:

- The Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Bhaktivedanta Archives
 - A Journey from Prison to the Prison Ministry
- Social Dharma in Plato, Gandhi, Bhaktivinoda, and Prabhupada
 - Seeing by Kṛṣṇa's Light
 - Chanting with Regard for the Lord's Devotees
 - Friendship with God

Once we recognize the absolute, complete, and perfect nature of the Divine Being, we move beyond the philosophy of impersonalism.

• • •

Kṛṣṇa. The impersonal Brahman, according to the tenets of Vaiṣṇavism, is but an aspect of the Absolute, which by its very nature is endlessly qualified and perfect in unlimited ways. Vaiṣṇavas dismiss as absurd and meaningless the concept of the Absolute as merely impersonal, beyond all thought and speech. Such an Absolute cannot stand, for it would cancel itself out. Our very language disallows it: Even to say that Brahman is inexpressible or unthinkable is to say or think something about it.

Śaṅkarācārya, an eighth-century Indian philosopher, was among the first to emphasize the impersonal Absolute. While he accepted the undifferentiated Brahman as the sole category of existence, he failed to give a satisfactory explanation of the world of appearance, which implies distinct qualities (*viśeṣa*) in Brahman. In other words, how can a variegated world, with such diverse attributes, come from an undifferentiated Absolute? Impersonalist philosophers say that all variety in the material world is false and only the Supreme Brahman, or Spirit, is real. Vaiṣṇavas counter that because the world emanates from Brahman, if Brahman is real how can the world and its varieties be false? For example, if a tree bears fruits, can anyone realistically claim that the tree is real but its fruits are not?

THE LOGIC OF PERSONALISM

The notion of personality is not only consistent with the infinite Godhead but essential to it. The whole impersonalistic enterprise leaves some very basic questions unanswered. Consider this: I'm a person. If my source is impersonal, then where do I come from and what am I in an ultimate sense? If

my source is impersonal, how can I, a person, relate to it? Moreover, even if some kind of mystical, impersonal experience exists, such an experience always occurs to a person. It's you and I—people—who have the “impersonal” exchange with God. In other words, even if you call the exchange impersonal, it must be considered a variety of personal experience because it happens to a person.

When all else fails, impersonalistic philosophers generally grasp at one well-worn argument: A qualified and personal Absolute must be limited, they say, because to attribute certain qualities to it is to deny their opposites. But impersonalists must understand that it is not personification or the attribution of character or qualities to the infinite that limits it, but it's these things not carried to their fullest extent. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (7.14.4) says that Brahman is not only endowed with characteristics but displays such characteristics in endless ways. For example, Kṛṣṇa's form may seem limited in size, but it is described as inconceivably “all-pervading” as well. He has innumerable expansions and incarnations, and He is endlessly beautiful. His wisdom knows no bounds, and He experiences unending bliss. In short, His form is not like ours—it is entirely spiritual. Countless scriptural verses support this view, showing how He is, in fact, unlimited.

Lord Caitanya argued that the impersonalistic view of unqualified Brahman derives mainly from the indirect meaning of Sanskrit words. He says that the indirect meaning of words (*lakṣaṇa vṛtti*) is justified only where the direct meaning (*mukhya vṛtti*) doesn't make sense. Śaṅkarācārya's exclusive emphasis on unqualified Brahman conceals the direct and real meaning of the scriptures, which more

often than not describes Brahman as qualified.

How, then, can impersonalists who accept the Vedic texts make any case at all for a formless Absolute? To be fair, we must admit that many texts describe Brahman as unqualified. *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (1.3.15), for example, describes Brahman as being without sound, touch, or form. This idea is echoed in the *Bṛhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (1.4.10), where Brahman is said to be without eyes, ears, speech, mouth, or mind. But what does this really mean?

The celebrated philosopher Jīva Gosvāmī, in the line of Lord Caitanya, partly resolves the question by showing that the word *nirviśeṣa* (“without distinction or qualities”), for example, is often used by the scriptures to deny all *prākṛta* (material) qualities of Brahman and not to deny qualities as such. If *nirviśeṣa* were used to deny qualities as such, it would not be possible to attribute to Brahman the qualities of *nityatva* (eternity) and *vibhūtvā* (all-pervasiveness), which even the followers of Śaṅkarācārya accept as undeniable qualities of the Absolute. Jīva Gosvāmī also quotes from the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* to prove that although Brahman does not have any ordinary, or material, qualities, it has infinite transcendental qualities.

Thus, Brahman, or God, cannot be described as merely impersonal or unqualified. Jīva Gosvāmī writes that such a “Brahman” is like a subject apart from its predicates or a substance apart from its attributes. Since the complete (*samyak*) form of an object includes both its substance and its attributes, the unqualified Brahman is only an incomplete (*asamyak*) manifestation of the Absolute. Jīva Gosvāmī insists that the personal Brahman includes the impersonal Brahman as the
(please turn to page 58)

CALENDAR

This calendar is calculated for Māyāpur, 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 Madhusūdana

(April 17–May 16)

MAY

1—Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Gadādhara Paṇḍita, one of Lord Caitanya's principal associates.

4—Beginning of Candana Yātrā, the festival of anointing Lord Jagannātha with sandalwood pulp for twenty-one days.

10—Appearance anniversary of Śrīmatī Sītā Devī, the consort of Lord Rāmacandra. Appearance anniversary of Śrīmatī Jāhnavā Devī, the consort of Lord Nityānanda Prabhu. Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Madhu Paṇḍita, a great devotee of Lord Caitanya.

12—Mohinī Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans.

13—Rukmiṇī Dvādaśī, the appearance anniversary of Śrīmatī Rukmiṇī Devī, the consort of Lord Kṛṣṇa as Dvārakādhīśa, the Lord of Dvārakā.

14—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Jayānanda Prabhu, a

dedicated disciple of Śrīla Prabhu-pāda who helped him bring the Rathayātrā festival to the Western world.

15—Nṛsiṃha Caturdaśī, appearance anniversary of Lord Nṛsiṃha, Lord Kṛṣṇa's half-man, half-lion incarnation. Fasting till dusk, followed by feasting.

Month of Trivikrama

(May 17–June 14)

20—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Rāmānanda Rāya, an intimate associate of Lord Caitanya.

26—Aparā Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans.

27—Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Vṇḍāvana Dāsa Ṭhākura, the author of *Śrī Caitanya Bhāgavata*, a biography on Lord Caitanya.

JUNE

10—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa, a prominent spiritual master in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *saṁpradāya* (disciplic succession), and the author of *Govinda-bhāṣya*, an important commentary on *Vedānta-sūtra*. Appearance anniversary of Śrīmatī Gaṅgāmātā Gosvāmī, a prominent woman spiritual master in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *saṁpradāya*.

11—Pāṇḍava Nirjalā Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans.

12—Śrīla Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī's chipped-rice-and-yogurt festival at Panihati.

Month of Vāmana

(June 15–July 13)

15—Disappearance of Śyāmānanda Paṇḍita, one of the principal

followers of the six Gosvāmīs of Vṇḍāvana.

24—Disappearance anniversary of Śrī Śrīvāsa Paṇḍita, one of the principal associates of Lord Caitanya.

25—Yoginī Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans.

29—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Gadādhara Paṇḍita, one of the principal associates of Lord Caitanya. Also, disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. Fasting till noon, then feasting.

30—Guṇḍicā-mārjana. Festival of cleansing the Gundicha temple in Jagannātha Puri, India.

JULY

1—Lord Jagannātha's Rathayātrā in Jagannātha Puri. Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Svarūpa Dāmōdara and Śrīla Śivānanda Sena, intimate associates of Lord Caitanya.

10—Śayanā Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans.

13—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī, one of the six Gosvāmīs of Vṇḍāvana. First month of Cāturmasya begins (fasting from green leafy vegetables).

Month of Śrīdhara

(July 14–August 12)

18—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, one of the six Gosvāmīs of Vṇḍāvana.

21—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Lokanātha Gosvāmī, a great devotee of Lord Caitanya.

FAMILY FORTUNE

(continued from page 16)

“You’ve got to help me.”

Reaching for the only solace she could offer, Viṣṇupriyā told him that if he prayed to Kṛṣṇa, he would feel a lot better.

Helplessly, Charles replied, “Really?”

The three of them decided to end all of Charles’s treatment and bring him back home. Godruma and Viṣṇupriyā would care for him and surround him with their love—and with the sound of the holy name. They told their beloved father that they would play a tape of Śrīla Prabhupāda chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* twenty-four hours a day. Charles would only need to listen. And to relieve his distress, he could learn to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

“I’m too old to learn that,” Charles protested. “Can I just chant ‘Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa’?”

“Absolutely,” they replied.

Difficult situations can often reveal our dependence on God. There are, it is said, no atheists in the foxhole. And the old fighter, in the depths of his helplessness and pain, was opening to the possibilities of God’s love. He began to love the sacred chanting that was his constant companion.

When hospice workers visited the house and asked about the unusual music, Charles happily told them, “This is our family music. Why don’t you sing along?”

When faced with unbearable pain or depression, Charles would call out, “Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa!”

SACRED PROTECTION

During the summer of 2001, he started having terrible apparitions. He would see ghosts, skeletons, terrorists, wild animals, and dead bodies.

In fright he would cry out, “They’re coming to get me!”

Viṣṇupriyā and Godruma increased the spiritual protection. They placed sacred *tulasī* beads around his neck. (He had been eating *tulasī* leaves offered to Kṛṣṇa since 1986 and was very fond of them.) And every morning

Godruma started giving him *caraṇ-āmṛta* (water that has bathed deities). In his line of vision they placed large pictures of Śrīla Prabhupāda, Gaura Nitāi (Caitanya Mahāprabhu and Nityānanda), Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma, and Rādhā-Syāmsundara.

Watching this, Charles quietly noted, “You are preparing for my departure.”

Viṣṇupriyā could only admit to the truth.

“But,” she comforted him, “we want you to be surrounded by auspiciousness.”

As the terrible days of his increasing illness passed, Charles began to find more and more solace in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Viṣṇupriyā and Godruma would bring him special gifts from the temple, such as *prasādam*, flower garlands, and sanctified water. He rejoiced in the smallest signs of Kṛṣṇa’s mercy on him.

One day Charles suffered a great deal and was afraid. Viṣṇupriyā gave him a *Back to Godhead* magazine, and he was pleased to recognize the picture of Nāgarāja Dāsa, whom he had met.

“Oh, I know him!” Charles said, “I think I’ll read this magazine.”

Reading *Back to Godhead* helped calm him down.

Godruma and Viṣṇupriyā read to him as much as they could from the *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead*. Charles listened to the reading intensely.

“I don’t understand everything you read,” he told them, “but please continue. I love to listen.”

In September the nurses said they saw a difference in Charles. He seemed peaceful, even though his physical deterioration continued unabated. One evening Viṣṇupriyā was sitting at his side when she noticed he was smiling.

“There’s someone standing at the foot of my bed,” he told her.

“Who is it, Dad?” she asked.

Charles pointed to the picture of Śrīla Prabhupāda near his bed.

“It’s him.”

Incredulous, Viṣṇupriyā grabbed Charles’s hand.

“Are you sure?”

“Yes.”

Charles smiled.

“Dad, you’re going to be O.K.,” Viṣṇupriyā said in wonder. “You have the shelter of Śrīla Prabhupāda.”

When this happened several more



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times, Viṣṇupriyā let go of her own fear and worry. Obviously, her father-in-law was under much greater care than her own.

A BLESSED END

In the final weeks of September, as the level of pain greatly increased, Charles became peaceful. He loved

looking at his picture of Śrīla Prabhupāda. Then, on October 2, Charles found it difficult to breathe. Godruma had been giving him sacred Ganges water every morning and evening for the past two weeks, and he was eating *tulasī* from a garland from Rādhā-Śyāmsundara in Vṛndāvana, India. The nurse told Godruma and Viṣṇupriyā that their father had just a few

hours to live.

They were filled with a jumble of feelings. They loved him dearly and didn't want to say good-bye, but there was no chance of recovery. They had hoped and prayed that he would find his own way to Kṛṣṇa, and he had. Death would not end the real Charles, the spiritual being who had come to love the sound of Kṛṣṇa's name. It would only end his body. Whatever lay ahead for Charles was surely wonderful and auspicious.

Godruma and Viṣṇupriyā sat chanting as Charles gradually dimmed from consciousness. They urged him to chant Kṛṣṇa's name.

With great difficulty, Charles said, "Ah, K . . . ṛ . . . ṣ . . . ṇa, K . . . ṛ . . . ṣ . . . ṇa."

Those were his last words before he lost awareness. His son and daughter-in-law continued to chant. They anointed his body with sacred water and marked him with *tilaka* (sacred clay). Sashi Mukhi arrived and joined in the chanting. The room was tranquil and charged with spiritual energy. At 11:00 P.M., he stopped breathing.

Viṣṇupriyā and Sashi Mukhi, filled with the peace of the room, went outside. They gazed up at the moon. It seemed so bright, and the sky was beautifully clear. They considered that according to the *Vedas* that particular full moon—occurring during the month of Puruṣottama—was an auspicious time, and they marveled at the way Charles had transformed his life into something so pleasing to the Lord. They rejoined Godruma and spent the night chanting and reading the *Bhagavad-gītā*.

Kṛṣṇa Svarūpa Dāsa from the Alachua temple community performed the last rites for Charles before cremation. Following Vedic custom, on the thirteenth day after his departure the family sponsored feasts in his memory at ISKCON temples in Alachua, Atlanta, and Hyderabad. ☸

Sukhadā Devī Dāsī, a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda, lives in Alachua, Florida, with her husband, Puṣkara Dāsa (the artist), and their twelve-year-old daughter, Prthā. Sukhadā teaches at the Alachua Learning Center, a state-sponsored school run by devotees.

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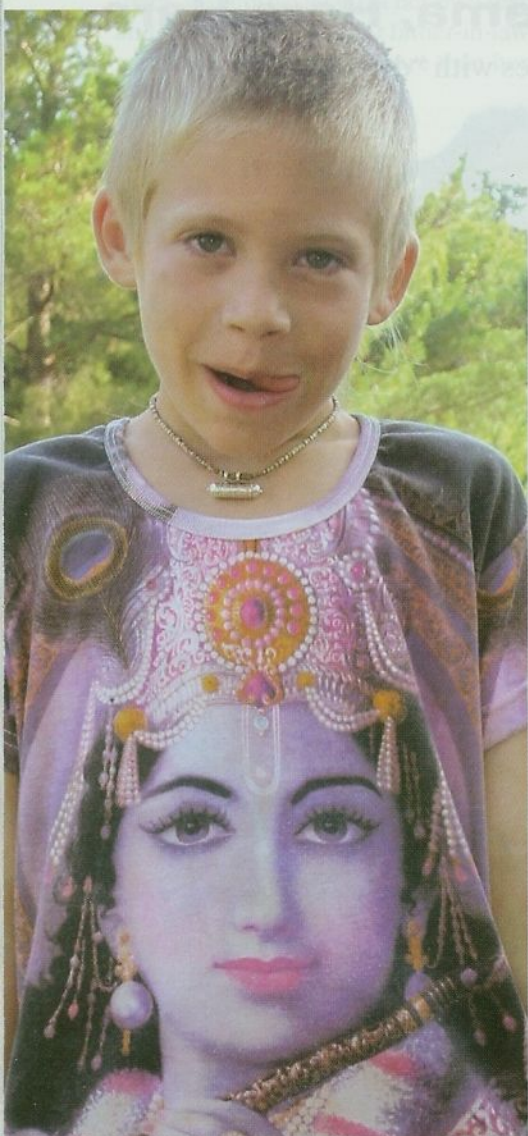
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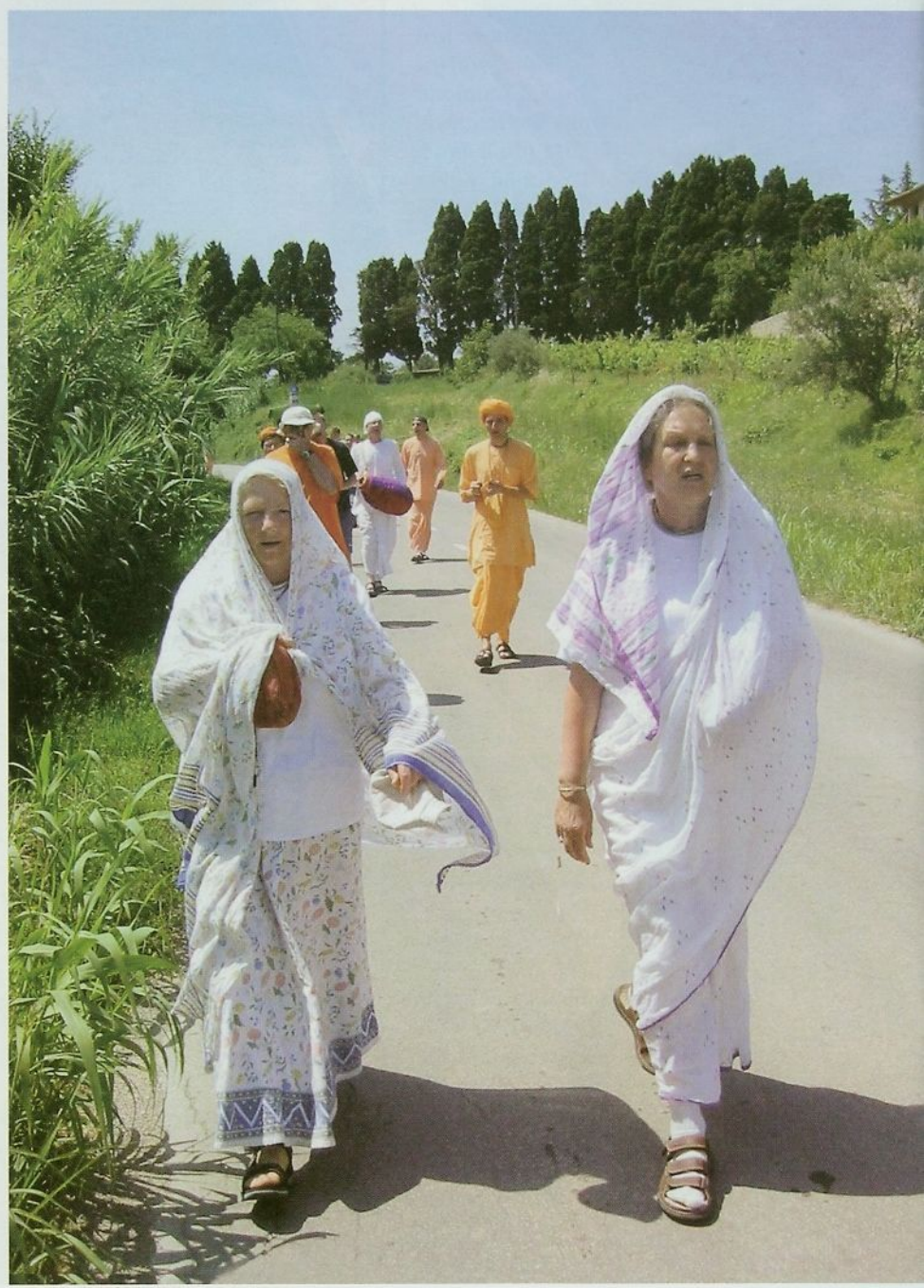
**Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare
Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare**

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





The Padayātrā cart rolls past an alpine panorama around Lake Bohinj (opposite page). Nirmala-premā Devī Dāsī and Bhaktin Marina (right) stayed on Padayātrā full time to care for the deities Nitya-Gauranāṭhārāja and the Tulasi plant (above, right). Six-year-old Śyāmānanda (above) wears a Śyāmānanda T-shirt.



ECO-CARAVAN

Slovenia Padayātrā 2002

Kṛṣṇa devotees launch an annual Padayātrā, or “walking festival,” in part of former Yugoslavia.



WE'LL ORGANIZE a Padayātrā this summer,” said Ljubljana temple board member Lalitā-Govinda Dāsa at the start of 2002.

It was the middle of winter, and we were skeptical but willing to help. We were due for a change. In the last sev-

eral years, we hadn't embarked on any major projects to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness in Slovenia.

The Padayātrā project seemed improbable at first, but things began to work out well. Lalitā-Govinda's enthusiasm generated a spiritual mood, and

the devotees cooperated. Thanks to financial and practical help from our congregation, Padayātrā started taking shape. The state authorities granted us permission to drive an ox-cart on the roads, and we borrowed an ox, built and painted an ox-cart, and put together a

sound system. Unity and harmony prevailed as we got ready to give Slovenians the gift of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. We titled our excursion “Eco-Caravan—Slovenia Padayātrā 2002.”

“The eco-caravan is a great chance for devotees to spend time together and live simply in nature, without the unnecessary comforts that materialistic society is based on,” says Īśāna Dāsa, who works in Ljubljana and conducts a correspondence course on Kṛṣṇa consciousness. “It can help devotees strengthen their character and gain valuable realizations for their spiritual progress.”

We produced Padayātrā T-shirts and posters, as well as a music-and-chanting CD called “Padayātrā 2002.”

THREE-WEEK WALK

The Padayātrā ran from July 1 to July 21 and covered 170 kilometers. Because we started on the Adriatic coast, a tourist haven, we published an introductory brochure about Padayātrā and Kṛṣṇa consciousness in four languages: Slovene, English, Italian, and German.

The Padayātrā was divided into two

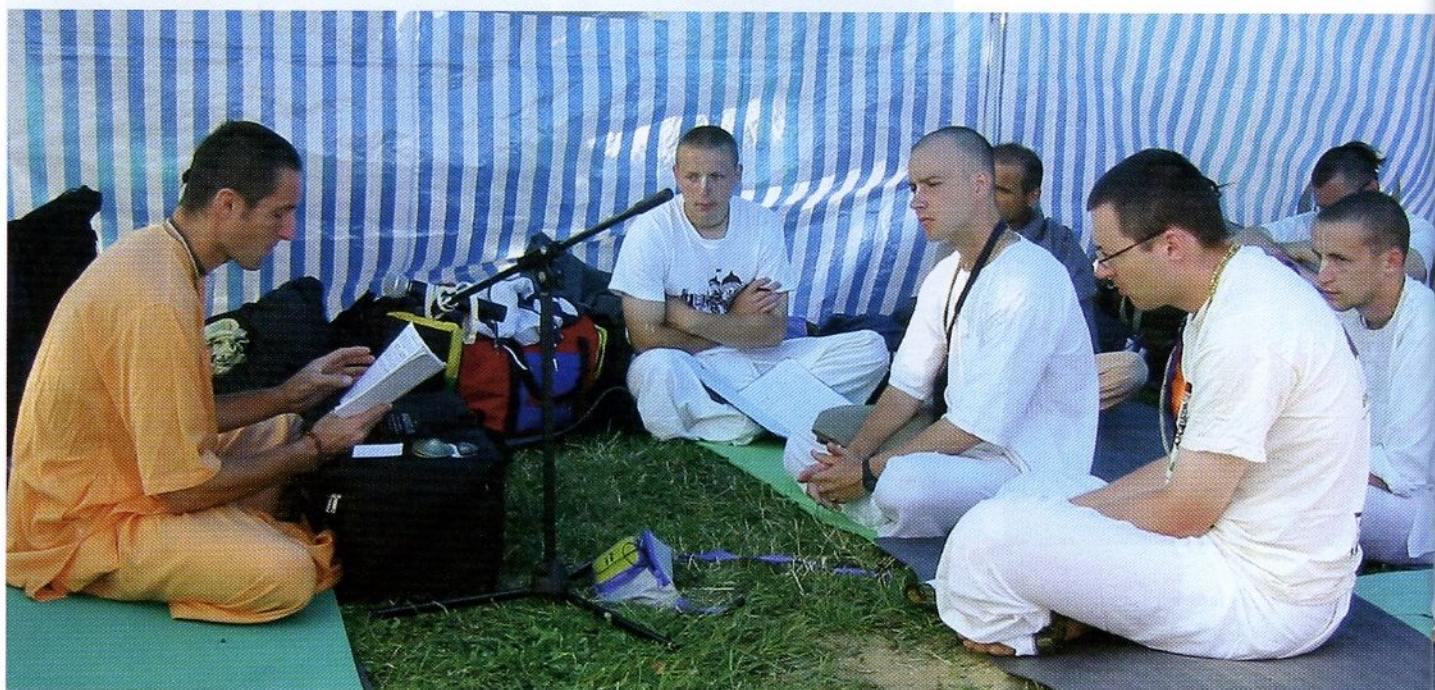
Bhakta Matej (right) raises his arms in enthusiasm the first day, just after the cart-assembly is finished and Śrīla Prabhupāda has taken his place. Bhīma (below) greets students and their teacher during the last day on the coast; Bhakta Rok and Lalitā-Govinda Dāsa are the drivers at the rear. Romapati Govinda Dāsa (opposite page, left) performed many services. The group begins its walk (opposite page, right) on a weekend, with more than seventy devotees taking part.





CAPITAL: Ljubljana (pronounced "Lubyana")
 GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary democratic republic
 PRESIDENT: Janez Drnovsek (since December 2002)
 FORMER PRESIDENT: Milan Kucan (He and his wife met Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees.)
 HISTORY: Gained independence from Yugoslavia in 1991

POPULATION: 2,000,000
 SIZE: Slightly smaller than New Jersey, USA
 LANGUAGES: Slovene, Hungarian, Italian
 RELIGION: 70% Roman Catholic
 TERRAIN: Half forested, with mountains, valleys, rivers, and a short coastal strip



While Mārgātita Dāsa (right), the cook, prepares breakfast, devotees attend a talk by Tapta Kāñcanādi Dāsa (top), who organized slide shows and street chanting in the cities. Vrajendrakumāra (above), a special deity of Kṛṣṇa belonging to Rādhāramaṇa Dāsa, visited the Padayātrā at various spots along the route.





Tents (below) reserved for a group of Boy Scouts ended up sheltering devotees when the Scouts canceled their reservation. Left: Firewood courtesy of the team of Bhārata Dāsa (left) and Nṛsinha Sevā Dāsa.

“People in villages happily greeted us,” said Īśāna Dāsa. “On village roads, people passing by in cars stopped for cookies. When we chanted amid tourists, they gathered and asked us about the chant and—what to them—were other extraordinary things.”

Our base shifted every few days. We stayed in tents at tourist camps and at schools in villages. We had six bases on the coast and three in the mountains.

“The first night,” said Bhakta Matej, a college student, “we drove to a school with all of our equipment, and I was surprised that the woman in charge was waiting up for us till a late hour. That was a good sign. She was very nice.”

CAMPSITE PROGRAMS

One radio station faithfully ran two broadcasts about Padayātrā every day, and we received other radio and newspaper coverage. Each evening, we held



parts. After walking along the Adriatic coast, we went to the mountains and circled Lake Bohinj (Slovenia’s largest lake) and Lake Bled (famous for its seventeenth-century island church).

Twenty-two devotees walked full time, and others came along on their free days. The high point was a weekend day when seventy-four devotees showed up.

“When people saw the happy and enthusiastic devotees on the road,” said Lalitā-Govinda, “the devotees’ mood was transferred to them.”

During the walking days, the ox-cart rolled while devotees sang the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra and distributed Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books and free brochures and cookies. The colorful caravan attracted many tourists’ cameras.

two programs. For the benefit of people in nearby towns, we went out and chanted the holy names. For guests visiting our base, we offered *prasādam*, a puppet show, melodious *bhajan*s, Bharat Natyam dancing, and a slide show about India.

“In one camp we had the whole program,” said Matej, “and the best part was Śrī Rādhikā Devī Dāśī’s dancing

Renewing the Unity in “Community”

This history was compiled by Alesh Chrnich, who wrote the first Ph.D. thesis on the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement in Slovenia. He is now doing further research in India.

THE PADAYĀTRĀ was organized largely for devotees as a way to renew their unity, because in the past six or seven years many devotees' lives had changed, sometimes in disappointing ways. After the “Hare Kṛṣṇa Centre” opened in Ljubljana in 1993, thirty to forty devotees lived there together for a few years. Ten began distributing two thousand books a week throughout the country. In 1994, Transcendence—a devotee band—emerged as part of the community's activities and for several summers played successful concerts across Slovenia. The boundaries began to diminish between initiated devotees living in the temple and uninitiated ones from the congregation, who lived on their own and worked or studied.

For six weeks—also during the summer of 1994—Padayātrā Europe entered Slovenia with a bullock cart on a historic walk from London to Moscow. This was part of the centennial celebration of Śrīla Prabhupāda's birth—Padayātrās in a hundred countries. The Ljubljana devotees successfully advertised the caravan and

joined in its travels. Some even walked to Moscow.

By the end of 1996 (the Centennial year), sixty devotees lived at the temple. Only two couples had gotten married and moved out. In 1996 a summer camp was organized in Croatia, and for the first time initiations were conferred upon congregational members from Slovenia. Toward the end of 1997 and in 1998, many devotees moved out of the temple and joined the growing congregation. Some were getting married, and some were dissatisfied with the leadership or the strictness of temple life. Saṅghas, or weekly group meetings of congregational members, became a regular activity. Some gurus who preached in Slovenia left ISKCON at this time, and in 1999 practically all the

senior devotees left the temple. A large number of other gurus visited during this period, however, and many devotees received initiation from them.

Today, a hundred devotees form the core of the community, and twice as many are less active. Most of the active members are about thirty years old and are well-educated by Slovene standards. Half of them are married and have full-time jobs, and a third of them are students.

Twenty devotees now live in the temple, some of whom have jobs. Ananta Dāsa, the temple president, initiated in 2002, is earning a Ph.D. in engineering. This year ISKCON Slovenia celebrates the twentieth anniversary of its registration as a religion in the Republic of Slovenia.

Śrī Pañca-tattva (Lord Caitanya and His four main associates) on their new altar at the Ljubljana Hare Kṛṣṇa temple.

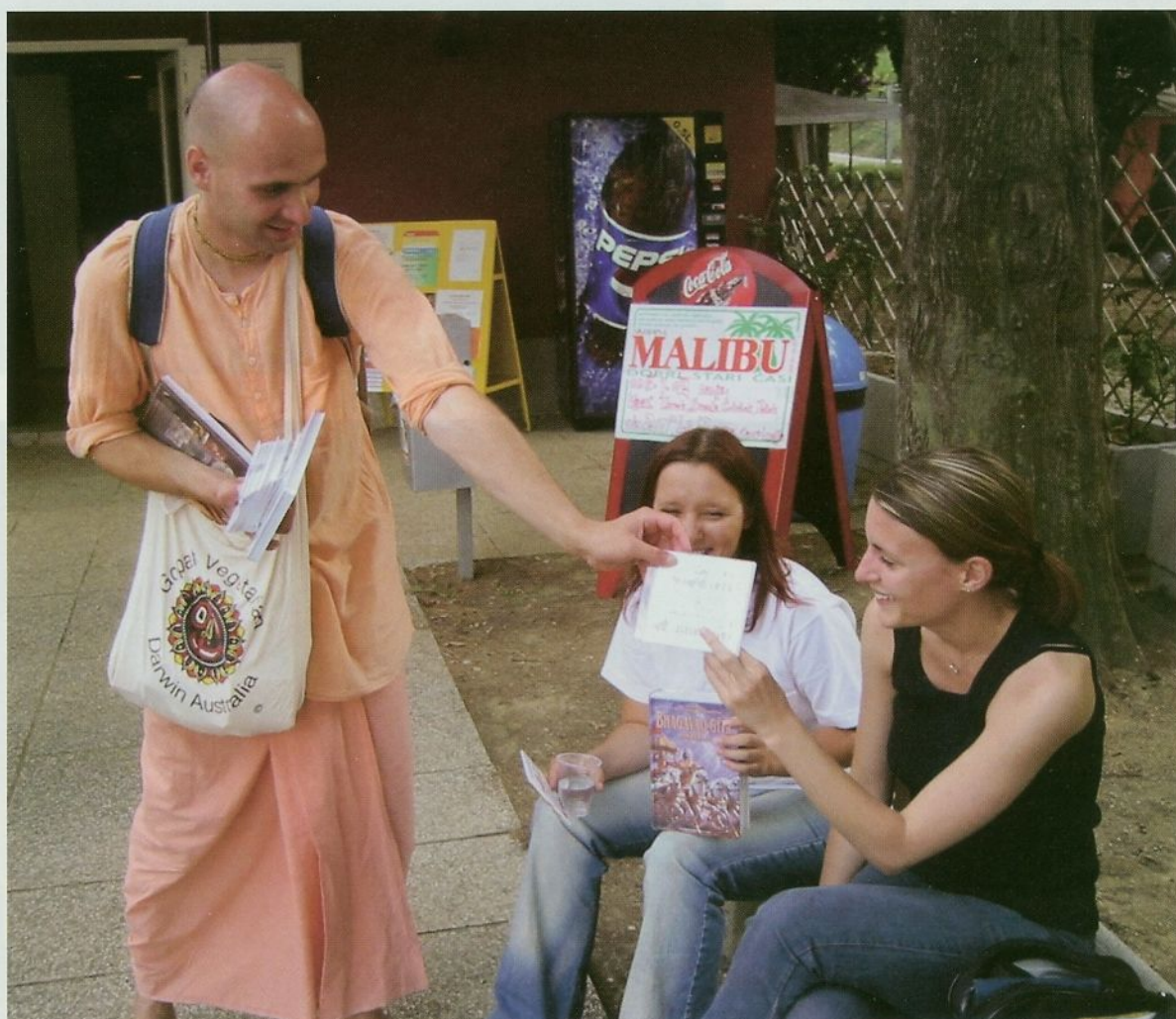


ISKCON owns two former school buildings near the centrally located Tivoli Park. Sixty years ago these buildings were used as a Nazi prison. The male prisoners made a famous escape by removing their clothes to squeeze through the bars on the windows. Years later, in front of the buildings, the city of Ljubljana commemorated the event by erecting a concrete plaque with the names of the escapees, and a metal statue of a naked man leaving the prison. Today the statue reminds the Hare Kṛṣṇa people more of Śukadeva Gosvāmī, the young transcendental narrator of the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, who left home naked because he was completely detached from bodily conceptions.





Mahāprabhu Gaura Dāsa (above), a full-time book distributor during Padayātrā, gives a brochure and cookie to a driver. At right, he hands the Bhagavad-gītā and a Padayātrā CD to girls at a camp.



with the children. They really enjoyed it. She showed them the steps, and they all danced together.”

“For two nights,” said Bharata Dāsa, a temple devotee, “we stayed in a tourist camp that sponsored various evening programs for children. On the first night, the leader of the program encouraged children to repeatedly shout the Fred Flintstone line ‘Yaba-daba-doo!’ All the kids were shouting for ten minutes. The devotees joked about how nice it would be if these children were shouting the names of the Lord. The next evening it was our turn to perform, and we had a puppet show about Kṛṣṇa lifting Govardhana Hill. As I introduced each character in the puppet show, I asked the children to welcome the puppets by raising their hands and shouting ‘Haribol!’ The response was amazing: Kṛṣṇa, Nanda, and the cowherds were enthusiastically welcomed with cries of ‘Haribol!’ And

during the show, whenever a new character appeared the children greeted him with more shouts of ‘Haribol!’”

PEACEFUL BHĪMA THE OX

The main attraction of Padayātrā was Bhīma, a brown seven-year-old ox with a sweetly innocent demeanor, named after the strongest Pāṇḍava brother. It was impossible not to notice this gentle ox weighing more than a thousand kilos.

“I remember many people, especially parents with children, coming to pet Bhīma or feed him grass as they talked with us,” said Matej. “Some children were put on Bhīma’s back, and their parents proudly took photos.”

Our original plan was to borrow the ox for Padayātrā only, but later we realized that sending Bhīma back to his owner was sending him to certain death. He was scheduled to be sold and slaughtered. So we bought him. Now he has a new home—a small cowshed built just for him on a devotee’s farmland. It was a happy ending for fortunate Bhīma, or, really, just a beginning, because the Slovenia Padayātrā will be an annual event. We intend to find him a companion. Some devotees are inheriting farmland from their parents and are eager to take up farming and cow protection. Two-thirds of the people of Slovenia still live in a rural environment.

The experience we gained on our first Padayātrā strengthened our faith in Lord Kṛṣṇa. We’re confident that Padayātrā 2003—this July—cannot be anything but successful. We are even hoping to make it international by inviting devotees from neighboring countries. 🌸

Kiśora Dāsa, a lawyer in Ljubljana, will soon spend a year in India.

Tattvavit Dāsa, a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda who has visited Slovenia four times, helped BTG produce this article.

ONLINE EXTRA

See an expanded photo gallery for this article at www.krishna.com/373





At a city festival (left), the magic of the chanting draws part of the crowd of fifteen thousand. The small stage is lit by torches set on decorative strips on the sidewalk. In the alpine region (opposite page, bottom), devotees chant rain or shine. A reporter (below) gets the story from Gargamuni Dāsa, who took care of communications. Śrī Rādhikā-caraṇa-reṇu Devī Dāsī (bottom), adorned for traditional Indian dance, teaches children a few steps for dancing to Hare Kṛṣṇa music.





7: Dāsyam

Becoming The Lord's Servant

*Service to the Lord is so intimate
that He offers it to only the most trustworthy souls.*

by Dvārakādhīśa Devī Dāśī

In Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, the devotee Prahlāda 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.

PICTURE this classified ad: "SERVANT NEEDED. Must be qualified to anticipate and fulfill the master's every desire without direct instruction. Must be available 24/7, with no time off for sick leave, vacations, or holidays. Should be willing to sacrifice life if needed. No salary. Modest meals and humble dwelling provided, along with much good will if the master is satisfied."

Would there be many takers? The position of servant is the lowest in the socio-economic hierarchy. Servants collect garbage tossed aside by the rest. Always under orders from others, servants have the least liberty to pursue their own dreams and goals. Servants are overworked, unnoticed, underpaid, unappreciated.

As modern-day materialism deteriorates higher spiritual values, repugnance for servitude follows like a virus. The once noble, beloved, trusted servant has become a paid lackey, coldly measured by productivity, subject to impersonal obligations and

betrayals. Though savvy bosses train employees to superficially delight the "always-right" customer, service jobs carry limited respect and value.

In such an atmosphere we approach the next process of devotional service: *dāsyam*, the rendering of personal service to God. Here we step beyond materialistic views of servitude. Ideally, service leads the servant to become a confidante of the served. Service to God is so intimate that He offers it only to the most trustworthy souls.

Dāsyam refers to a heartfelt yearning to be of personal service to the Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. It is the ultimate expression of humility, yet it is bold in its aspiration to such a lofty position.

To attain *dāsyam* one must completely understand that God is a person. He is not our creation. Rather, Kṛṣṇa is a person of such wonder and magnitude that this vast, imponderable world is just a tiny spark of His creative ability. To serve Kṛṣṇa we must come to know this magnificent person and

*Because of his pure submission to Lord Rāmacandra, the devotee
Hanumān is considered the emblem of service to God.*

understand His desires.

Just as famous or wealthy people don't allow just anyone into their personal employ, Lord Kṛṣṇa accepts personal service only from the pure-hearted. He sees when service is tainted by selfish motives. And while He kindly recognizes all attempts at service, the self-centered cannot attain intimate, truly personal service.

TWO NOTED SERVANTS

The *Rāmāyaṇa* offers an extraordinary example of personal service. Lord Rāma, the celebrated incarnation of Kṛṣṇa, loses his wife, Sītā, to a kidnapper. Traveling to her rescue, Rāma meets the monkey warrior Hanumān, who scours the earth and leaps the ocean to find Sītā. Lord Rāma did not have to instruct Hanumān or offer endless encouragement; because of Hanumān's pure love for the Lord, the opportunity to serve enthralled him.

During his search, Hanumān was captured and tortured by the kidnapper Rāvaṇa. Yet Hanumān's desire to serve remained unchanged. "An apparently pitiable condition in devotional service may appear distressing to the inexperienced student," writes Śrīla Prabhupāda in *The Nectar of Devotion*, "but the feelings of the devotee in this pitiable condition are considered to be ecstatic by expert devotees."

Service to Kṛṣṇa is described as both the means and the end. It is not simply a step to bigger things. In this

world, who aspires to remain a servant for life? We expect some kind of payback—money or prestige. But spiritual servitude completely satisfies the servant. Hanumān prayed to Lord Rāma: "My dear Lord, if You like You can give me salvation from this material existence, or the privilege of merging into Your existence, but I do not wish any of those things. I do not wish anything which diminishes my relationship with You as servant to master, even after liberation." (*The Nectar of Devotion*)

Dāruka, Kṛṣṇa's chariot driver, once prayed to the Lord to remove the ecstasy he felt as he fanned the Lord to cool Him. Dāruka's powerful spiritual bliss interfered with his concentration on his simple service, and he begged the Lord to help him control his overwhelming spiritual pleasure.

Dāruka and Hanumān knew clearly the wishes of their masters, and the venerated Vedic scriptures herald them as great servants of God. Today, however, you may rightly ask who could be more presumptuous than one who claims to know God's will. Although Lord Kṛṣṇa reveals His will in general through scripture, His immediate will is veiled by layers of illusion wrapped about our hearts. While we are under the spell of this world, we cannot presume that we're qualified to be Kṛṣṇa's servant. That would be prideful and offensive to the Lord and to the pure souls who offer selfless, unblemished service.

SERVANT OF THE SERVANT

So for us, *dāsyam* means not to serve the Lord directly, but to serve those who serve Him. Indeed, if we are honest within ourselves, we'll admit that even that position is perhaps too exalted for us. Our aspiration should rather be to serve the servants of the servants of the servants of the Lord, stretching our humility as far as our realizations will allow. It is said that the servants of the Lord are even kinder than the Lord Himself. So even if we're impure, they can accept on His behalf our clumsy attempts to serve Him without offense.

That's one reason we need a guru to attain *dāsyam*. But who is a guru? In spiritual life, external appearance is irrelevant. People claiming a direct link to God may be simply advertising themselves as fools, captivated by a desire to be God's best servant, basking in the praise of others. A true servant of God finds joy in serving the servants of God. So great is the pleasure found in the effort and sacrifice of such service that misery arises when pride obstructs it. True humility thus naturally appears in a true guru, whose heart is ever-satisfied as the servant of Kṛṣṇa's servants. ☸

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

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"WHAT IS THE VALUE?"

(continued from page 17)

about treatment. When it is purified, by Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then the mind is controlled, the intelligence is properly acting, and the soul is in his proper position. Therefore, those who are under treatment must observe it strictly. They must not do something wrong, such that the treatment may be hampered.

Disciple: Śrīla Prabhupāda, philosophers generally try to use their minds to speculate about the nature of the soul. But with the mind alone, they can never understand.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Just like the madman is speculating. He is thinking, "I am president." He is lying down on the street. "Oh, I am completely independent. Why shall I go on the foot path?"

Dr. Mize: When the soul was in the spiritual sky, he also had a mind and an intelligence like he has here?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Oh, yes. Yes. Unless he has got a mind, how does he misuse his intelligence?

Dr. Mize: But he misused that intelligence in his freedom, his independence.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes. Yes. In the spiritual world, the mind is there also. Spiritual mind. Everything is spiritual. There is nothing material. The body is spiritual; the mind, spiritual; the intelligence, spiritual; each person, spiritual; the land, spiritual; the water, spiritual. Everything is spiritual. That is the spiritual world.

Here in the material world, except the spirit soul everything is material. And he is encumbered with this material atmosphere, by twenty-seven strata, layers. For instance, the five gross elements, then ten senses, and then three *guṇas*, or modes of nature.

In this way, there are twenty-seven layers. The soul is within, and he has to be taken out. That is called liberation. For instance, if you are covered with twenty-seven layers of dirty things, it is a very difficult position. But there is a process to clear the garbage and take the soul out. That is this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement—to take the soul out of the covering of twenty-seven layers of material atmosphere. That *śloka* we read before says *naṣṭa-prāyeṣu abhadreṣu*: "almost cleansed"—*prāyeṣu abhadra*. *Abhadra* means

dirty things. So this clearing process is going on. When the soul is almost cleansed, he feels, "Oh . . ."

And that process: *nityam bhāgavata-sevayā*—constantly being engaged in the service of the Bhāgavata: the *grantha*, or book, *Bhāgavata* and the person Bhāgavata. Then the covering will be cleansed away.

And then, when the soul comes out, that is *brahma-bhūtaḥ prasannātmā*: "Oh, I am now free." *Na śocati na kaṅkṣati*—no more lamentation, no more greediness. Everything finished. Then he begins his real business, as part and parcel of God. That is perfection.

Disciple: Śrīla Prabhupāda, in the thirteenth chapter of *Bhagavad-gītā*, "Nature, the Enjoyer, and Consciousness," in texts six and seven, Lord Kṛṣṇa mentions those twenty-seven coverings: "The five great elements, false ego, intelligence, the unmanifest, the ten senses, the mind, the five sense objects, desire, hate, happiness, and distress, the aggregate, the life symptoms, and convictions—all these are considered, in summary, to be the field of activities and their interaction."

Śrīla Prabhupāda: In material life, these are our field of activities. The body is a combination of all these things, like a huge computer. The body is made of these material things, but the mechanical parts are very minute, different. All these are matter. But within this matter, because the soul is there, this finest machine is working. Just like our composition machine for publishing my books—*kut-kut-kut-kut-kut*. But one has to push the button; otherwise, it is useless. However very nicely made the machine, without a living being's touch, it is useless. So this whole big machine, the material body, is wonderful so long as the soul is there. And as soon as the soul is out, the body is a lump of matter. Useless. Not worth a penny. Throw it away.

But in modern civilization, we are giving importance to the machine—not to the person who is dealing with the machine. This is the folly of modern civilization. We are thinking like a child: "The machine is working independently." But that is not the fact. The big airship, the 747, is flying because the pilot is there. And the pilot is a soul,

covered by another bodily machine. And that is the missing point in modern civilization: who is working with the machine. That they do not know. That is ignorance. It is said . . . [*glancing at a disciple:*] you see *Bhagavad-gītā* . . . *īśvaraḥ sarva-bhūtānāṁ hṛd-deśe 'rjuna tiṣṭhati/ bhrāmayan sarva-bhūtāni yantrārūḍhāni māyayā*. *Yantra* means “machine.” So the modern education is missing the pilot. They are simply wandering with the machine. [*Glancing again at the disciple:*] Read it.

Disciple: “The Supreme Lord is situated in everyone’s heart, O Arjuna, and is directing the wanderings of all living entities, who are seated as on a machine, made of the material energy.” **Śrīla Prabhupāda:** That’s it. They do not consider this body a machine. In spite of all education, they are thinking there is no other element than this machine.

And yet actually, they are finding that such a big, nice machine as a computer—without an operator, it does not work. And this huge machine, the material nature, is working without any spiritual touch? Just see how much foolishness. They think, “Automatically working. Nature is working automatically.” Do they not think this?

Dr. Mize: They think there’s a mind, but not a soul.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: No, that’s all right. Something is there which is working. Now, that may be debatable—you call it soul or mind. That is the next understanding. But the machine is not working independently. That should be understood first. Then how the machine is working—that will be the next chapter.

So they have no understanding, even, of how the machine is working. *Mūḍho 'yam nābhijānāti loko mām*

ajam avyayam. . . . Mayādhyaṁśeṇa prakṛtiḥ sūyate sa-carācaram: God is directing everything—that fact these *mūḍhas*, asses, do not know.

So if you do not know how the machine is working, then what is the value of your education? Education means enlightenment. But you do not know what is the final cause. That huge body is working as nature: so many planets—big planets like the sun and moon—they are floating in the air. Who has made this arrangement? We see it every day. And yet these great professors will never accept that God is the original cause. That thing does not come to their brain. They are putting forward different theories, and those are being accepted. One theory is accepted today, and tomorrow, “No, this is not accepted any longer. Here is another—an advanced theory.” That “advanced” means he does not know. 🌸

THE NATURE OF GOD

(continued from page 39)

formless luster of His divine form (*aṅga-kānti*). In Prabhupāda’s words, the impersonal Brahman is merely Kṛṣṇa’s effulgence.

Implicit in these arguments is the understanding that God is inconceivable and, ultimately, both personal and impersonal. His impersonal aspect depends upon His personal form, which is prior. The arguments are logical enough, and yet our minds revolt against the idea of an Absolute being at once personal and impersonal. We want to choose one or the other, because we are inclined to think of the Absolute in human terms. Therefore, I should reiterate that the form of the Absolute is different from our own. We have to be careful not to limit the infinite with our human thoughts and terms—the fallacy that impersonalists attribute to the doctrine of a personal God. When dealing with any problem relating to the infinite, we have to use the laws of our understanding with reservation and caution, not allowing them to impair the perfection of the infinite or impoverish our notion of divinity.

Henry L. Mansel, a nineteenth-century English philosopher, who was Professor of Moral and Metaphysical

Philosophy at Oxford, expressed the same idea in this way:

It is our duty, then, to think of God as personal; and it is our duty to believe that He is infinite. It is true that we cannot reconcile these two representations with each other, as our conception of personality involves attributes apparently contradictory to the notion of infinity. But it does not follow that this contradiction exists anywhere but in our own minds; it does not follow that it implies any impossibility in the absolute nature of God. The apparent contradiction, in this case, as in those previously noticed, is the necessary consequence of an attempt on the part of the human thinker to transcend the boundaries of his own consciousness. It proves that there are limits to man’s power of thought, and it proves no more.

CONCLUSION

To describe the Absolute as merely *nirviśeṣa*, or without distinct qualities and attributes, is to make Him imperfect by “amputating” His divine limbs. Once we recognize the absolute, complete, and perfect nature of the Divine Being, we move beyond the philosophy of impersonalism. We can reconcile conflicting statements of the *Vedas*

and the *Purāṇas* when we understand the Absolute as both personal and impersonal, or rather, as possessing infinite attributes and forms, including an impersonal dimension. But according to the primary and general sense of the scriptures, the Absolute is essentially personal, because only in a personal Absolute, possessing infinite and inconceivable potencies, can the infinite forms of Godhead, including the impersonal Brahman, have their place.

Will I write the requested book about the many editions of the *Gītā*? Probably not. Śrīla Prabhupāda’s *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* is clear enough about what the *Gītā* teaches and includes the best of all the versions I looked through. In terms of design, clarity, scholarship, and accessibility, no other *Gītā* comes close. So I may just have to send all those books back to that publisher. But if they would like me to do a book on personalism versus impersonalism . . . 🌸

Satyarāja Dāsa is a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda and a regular contributor to Back to Godhead. He has written twenty books on Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and is the editor of the recently published Holy War: Violence and the Bhagavad Gita. He lives with his wife and daughter near New York City.

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Fierce Lord of Love

OF THE AVATARS of Lord Kṛṣṇa described in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Lord Nṛsimha, whose appearance coincides with this issue of BTG, is especially intriguing to many of us. Half man, half lion—and all God.

People encountering a picture of Nṛsimhadeva ferociously ripping apart Hiraṇyakaśipu are often taken aback. “You believe this is God?”

Why not? God is the ultimate in everything. He can fight like no one else. He can tear up the mighty terrorist Hiraṇyakaśipu with little effort.

But if you find the fierce aspect of God unappealing, know that His supreme anger is a display of His intense love for His devotee Prahlāda, Hiraṇyakaśipu’s son, who was being tortured by his atheistic father.

But Nṛsimha’s actions were also motivated by love for Hiraṇyakaśipu, His apparent victim. Hiraṇyakaśipu is one of the Lord’s eternal servants, a gatekeeper in the spiritual world. Lord Viṣṇu yearned for good fight, so He arranged an incident in the spiritual world that ended with His servant’s fall to the material world to spend three lives as the Lord’s greatest enemy. What to our eyes seems like the attack of a bloodthirsty creature is in fact a dance of love between the Lord and His servant.

We must always be careful to understand God’s activities under proper guidance. God’s devotees know that He can do no wrong. Everything He does springs from His love for us and His infinite desire to exchange love with each of us in a deep, personal, unique relationship. We may look at Hiraṇyakaśipu and feel sorry for him, but that’s the

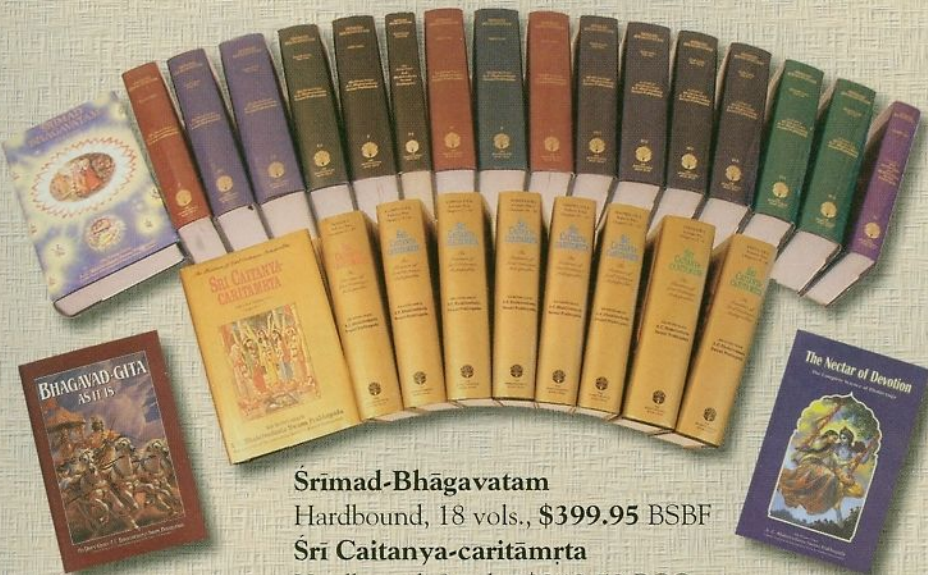
wrong reaction. We should praise him for his great fortune at having been chosen to assist the Lord in His quest for a knock-down, drag-out fight. If only we could be so privileged!

We learn from the *Bhagavad-gītā* and other Vedic books that we have a unique relationship with God and should use our human life to revive it. When Kṛṣṇa comes to this world in His countless forms, He shows some of the endless variety of ways we can exchange love with Him. In Lord Nṛsimha’s appearance, for example, we see extreme contrast in His displays of love for Prahlāda and Hiraṇyakaśipu.

Another example of Lord Nṛsimha’s unique love is His relationship with Lord Brahmā, His empowered servant who creates the universe. Brahmā had given Hiraṇyakaśipu several boons—up to Brahmā’s limit of power to bestow—through which Hiraṇyakaśipu believed he had become immortal. He could not be killed by any known being in the universe, by any weapon, during the day or night, inside or outside, in the sky, in the sea, or on the land. Lord Nṛsimha showed respect and love for His devotee Brahmā by honoring his benedictions. Outsmarting Hiraṇyakaśipu, He assumed a form as half man, half lion to kill Hiraṇyakaśipu with His fingernails, at dusk, on His lap, in the doorway of the palace. The Lord could have disregarded Brahmā’s benedictions, but He chose to show his affection for his servant by honoring them. When we carefully study the activities of the Lord’s incarnations, we’ll find them to be the highest expressions of love, no matter how violent they may seem at first glance.—*Nāgarāja Dāsa*

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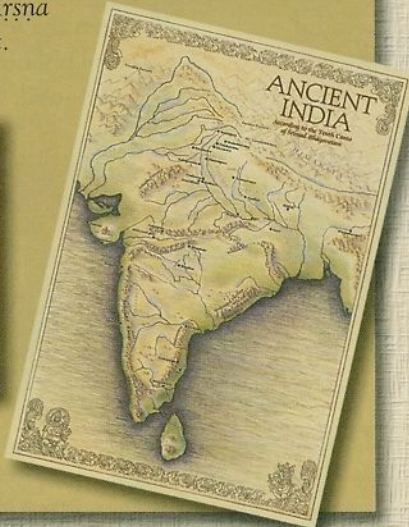
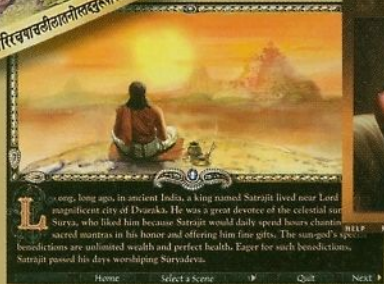
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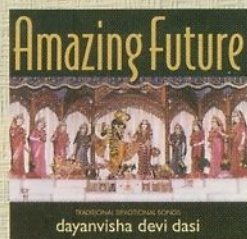
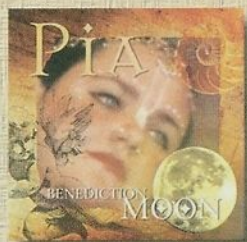
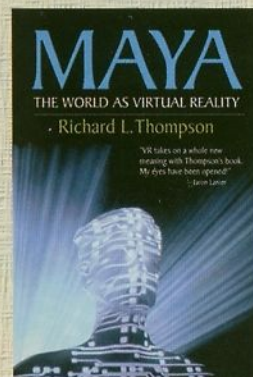
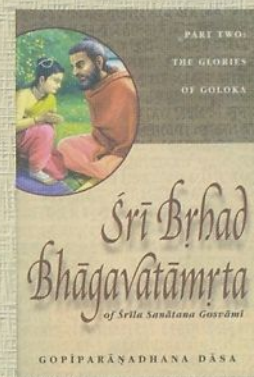
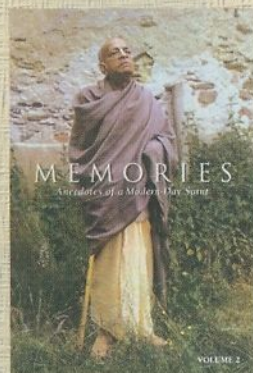
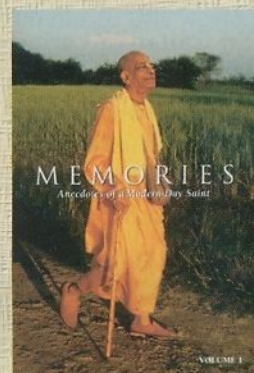
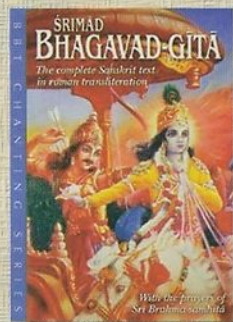
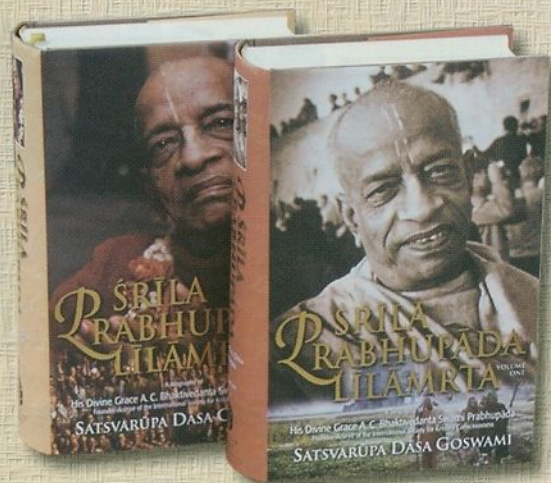
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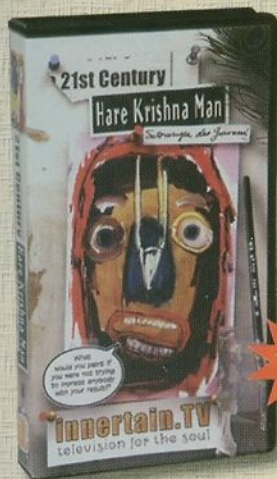
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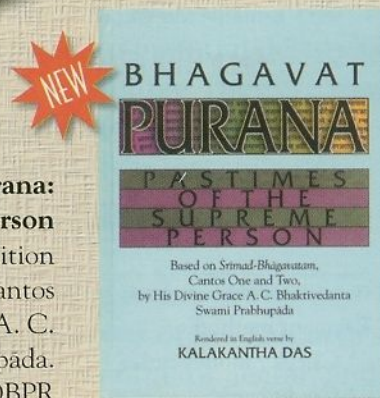
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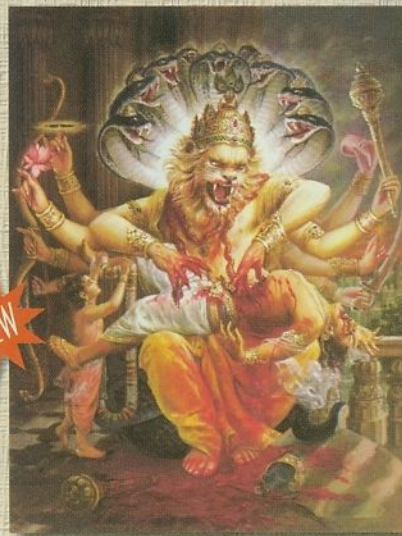
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Vedic Thoughts

The leaders of society, despite all their materialistic plans, are misleaders, for they have no plan to revive our lost relationship with the Lord.

His Divine Grace
A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda
Mukunda-mālā-stotra, Text 1, Purport

It is directly seen, realized, and applicable to all times, places, and persons that by offenselessly remembering the holy names of Śrī Caitanya, all material desires of the conditioned souls are diminished; in other words, the conditioned souls attain freedom from the conceptions of being entangled in other desires, like material enjoyment and mental speculations.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura
Śrī Caitanya Bhāgavata, Ādi-khaṇḍa, 14.89–90,
Commentary

O descendant of King Bharata, one who desires to be free from all miseries must hear about, glorify, and also remember the Personality of Godhead, who is the Supersoul, the controller, and the savior from all miseries.

Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.1.5

All the demigods and all the transcendental philosophers who desire liberation bow down to the Supreme Lord.

Nṛsiṃha-tāpanī Upaniṣad
(*Pūrva-khaṇḍa* 2.4)

If one chants the holy name of the Lord, even in a helpless condition or without desiring to do so, all the reactions of his sinful life depart, just as when a lion roars, all the small animals flee in fear.

Garuḍa Purāṇa (Quoted in
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.2.7, Purport)

Anyone, even a person in an impure state, who absorbs his mind in Him [the Supreme Lord] for just a moment at the time of death burns up all traces of sinful reactions and immediately attains the supreme transcendental destination in a pure, spiritual form as effulgent as the sun.

Śrī Uddhava, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.46.32

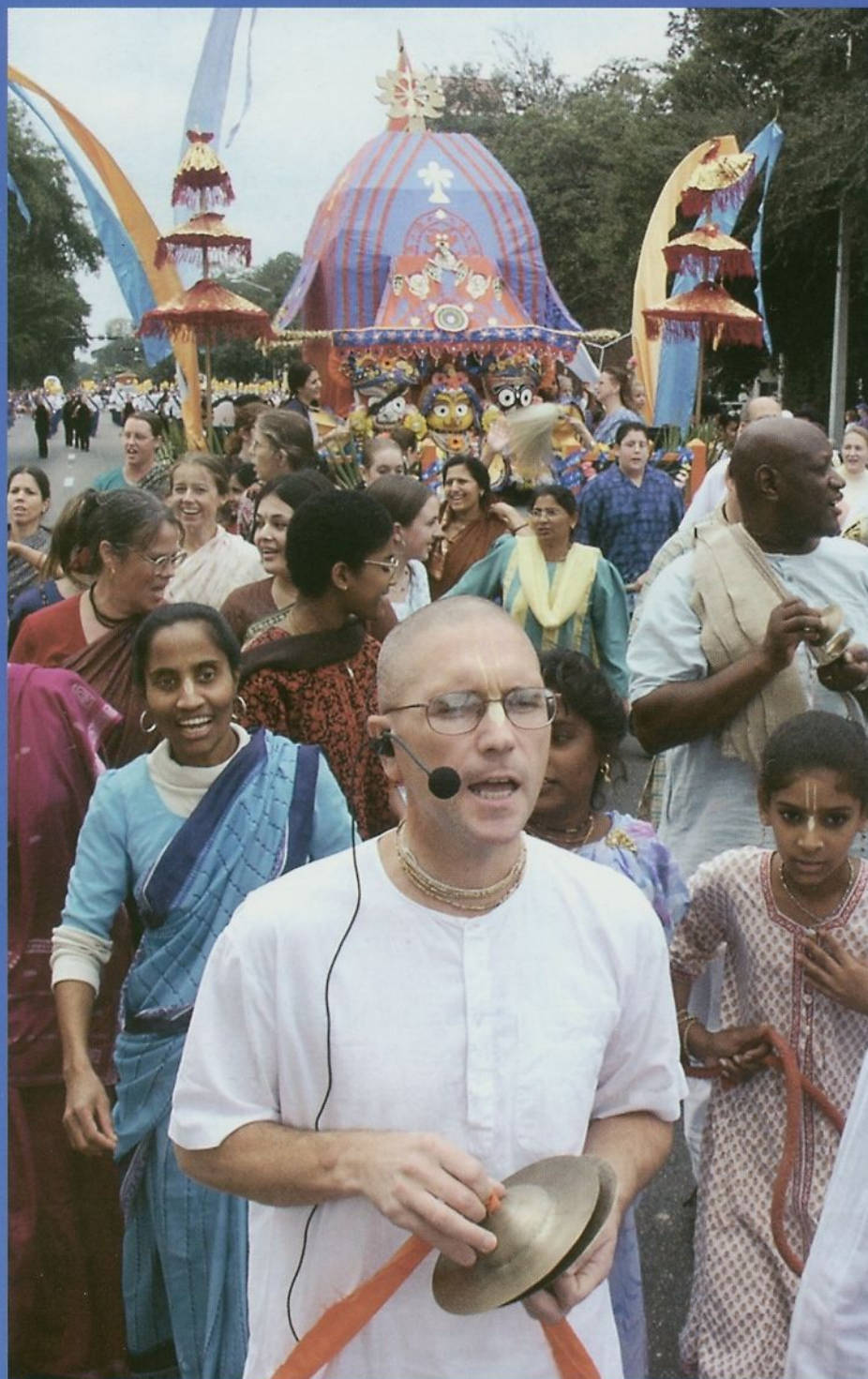
All the bodies of the Supreme Lord are eternal and everlasting. They are never subject to material destruction or born of matter. They are the embodiment of supreme bliss and are completely transcendental.

Mahā-Varāha Purāṇa

The pastimes of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu are full of nectar, and the pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa are like camphor. When one mixes these, they taste very sweet. By the mercy of the pure devotees, whoever tastes them can understand the depths of that sweetness.

Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī
Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 25.277

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June 21: Liberty State Park, N. J.,
Rathayātrā
June 28: Chicago Rathayātrā
July 4–5: Washington D.C., Rathayātrā
July 12–13: Montreal Rathayātrā
July 19–20: Toronto Rathayātrā
July 27: Detroit Rathayātrā
August 3: Los Angeles Rathayātrā
August 10: San Francisco Rathayātrā
August 16–17: Vancouver Rathayātrā
August 20: Vancouver Janmāṣṭamī
(Śrī Kṛṣṇa's Appearance Day)
September 1: Seattle Rathayātrā
October 4: Washington, D. C.,
Rāmacandra Vijayotsava

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