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

BACK TO GODHEAD

The Magazine of the Hare Krishna Movement

April 2008

THE POWER OF KṚṢṆA'S NAME

CONTENTS

Founded 1944. Vol. 5 No. 4. April 2008

FOUNDER
(under the direction of
His Divine Grace
Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta
Sarasvatī Prabhupāda)
His Divine Grace
A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

BTG INDIA. EDITOR Śyāmānanda Dāsa • ASSISTANTS Murāri Gupta Dāsa, Nanda Dulāla Dāsa, Mukund Mālā Dāsa • CORRESPONDENT: Gaṅgādhara Paṇḍita Dāsa • PROOFREADERS Nitā Suchak, Rādhā Rasikeśvarī Dāsī • PUBLISHER Yudhiṣṭhira Dāsa (Ujwal Tajoo) • PRODUCTION Sat Cit Ananda Dāsa (Sanjiv Maheshwari), Sundar Rūpa Dāsa (Sudarshan Sapaliga) • GENERAL MANAGER (CIRCULATION) Pāṇḍuraṅga Dāsa (Rajendrakumar Pujari) • ACCOUNTS Sahadeva Dāsa (S.P. Maheshwari) • SUBSCRIBER SERVICES Mañjan Devī Dāsī (Mira Singh)

OFFICE Back to Godhead, 33 Janki Kutir, Next to State Bank of Hyderabad, Juhu, Mumbai 400 049, India.

SUBSCRIPTIONS Back to Godhead is published twelve times a year. Subscriptions charges: - one-year, Rs. 120/-, two-years, Rs. 300/-, five-years, Rs. 700/- You can start subscription from any month. Send the amount to Back to Godhead, 302, Amrut Industrial Estate, 3rd floor, Western express highway, Mira road (E) 401 104. Tel. (022) 32556701.

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PRINTING Magna Graphics Pvt. Ltd., Mumbai.

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3
THE POWER OF KṚṢṆA'S NAME
Chanting the Lord's name purifies our polluted consciousness, the source of all our problems.

8
A LIFE FULL OF SERVICE
A short life sketch of Vibhu Caitanya Dāsa, a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda

12
REAL EMPOWERMENT FOR WOMEN
Extract from a speech given to a group of NGOs in ISKCON New Delhi.

18
BOOK DISTRIBUTION NECTAR
FALL DOWN
Exploits of a young book distributor

20
THE OSCARS? NO–THE NITYAS!
A report on the First Vaiṣṇava Film/ Video Festival

26
SPIRITUAL SCIENCE
HOTEL OR HOSPITAL–TAKE YOUR PICK
Is the world a place for enjoyment or treatment?

Rama Navami celebration: 14 April 2008

Departments

LETTERS 2

VEDIC THOUGHTS 2

ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA SPEAKS OUT 16
You Can Pronounce Kṛṣṇa In Any Way

IN YOUR OWN WORDS 24

EVERY TOWN AND VILLAGE 29

CENTRES IN INDIA 30

VAIṢṆAVA CALENDAR 31

EDITORIAL 32
New Prisons For the Olympic Games How pessimistic can you get?

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 Supreme Personality of Godhead.

LETTERS

BTG–A WONDERFUL EXPERIENCE

One of my friends, who is a devotee gifted me a one year subscription of *Back To Godhead* magazine. I went through the articles published in the last few issues like 'The Vedic Observer', 'Can you drive away the fog?'(November 2007), editorial section, etc. 'No Regrets' by Murari Gupta Dasa was the best article I found in the January 2008 issue.

Back to Godhead is a wonderful experience, especially for young devotees like me. It's refreshing and always new. The articles published in the magazine are amazing. I am especially impressed by articles of Śrila Prabhupada.

You always select good and exotic pictures for the cover page that attract devotees/non-devotees to go for the magazine. Śrila Prabhupada wanted this magazine to be even bigger than the TIME magazine. I wish BTG all the best on its 60th Anniversary and 30th disappearance day of Śrila Prabhupada. Please keep writing such good articles.

Pranjal Joshi,
Jaipur

MOVIE MANIA

A recent BTG article entitled "Om Shanti Om" was based on a Hindi movie and it even contained a dialogue from the movie. Will this not encourage material interest among BTG readers?

Anonymous

Caitanya Caraṇa Dasa, the author of the article, replies: I myself didn't see the movie; I am a *brahmacari* at ISKCON, Pune and have neither the time nor the interest to squander a colossal three hours on a movie. A devotee-friend told me about the movie, mailed me a review of the movie from the net and told me about the dialogue.

Why did I choose this movie as an article topic? Often people think of spirituality as abstract, irrelevant and unrelated to their daily "real" lives. Therefore the resourceful spiritual teacher tries to connect with Kṛṣṇa the mundane things that people are enamored by. By talking about the movie, I could get the attention of people and then guide that attention towards spiritual wisdom. And the strategy worked; my website, thespiritualscientist.com, recorded many more visitors after this article was posted as compared to after the posting of other articles.

This is the principle of *yukta-vairagya* taught by Rupa Gosvami:use material resources in Kṛṣṇa's service, instead of rejecting them as mundane. If somebody rationalizes his own materialistic agenda after seeing the opulence used for Kṛṣṇa, then this misdirected desire is due entirely to his own misuse of free will. If, after seeing the magnificent architecture of a temple, people become greedy to build a similar house for themselves, can the temple-builders be blamed for causing greed among the visitors? If after seeing the gorgeous dress of the Deities, somebody wants to dress himself (or his spouse) similarly, can the *pujaris* be blamed for creating material desires in them? The same logic holds true for my article.

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VEDIC THOUGHTS

O my tongue, since my mouth has become like a lotus by dint of the presence there of these eloquent, ornamental, delightful syllables, you are like the swan that plays there. As your foremost pleasure, always articulate the names Govinda, Damodara, and Madhava.

– *Śrila Bilvamangala Ṭhakura,*
Govinda-damodara-stotram 9

Śrimad-Bhagavatam is the topmost theological science, and therefore it can react on the laymen as medicinal doses. Because it contains the transcendental activities of the Lord, there is no difference between the Lord and the literature. The literature is the factual literary incarnation of the Lord.

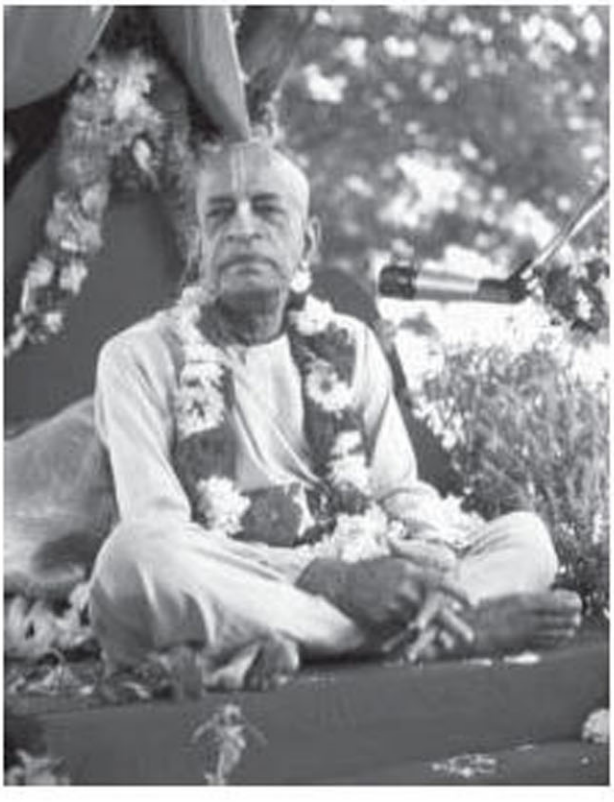
– *His Divine Grace*
A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada,
Śrimad-Bhagavatam 1.5.16, Purport

The Power Of Kṛṣṇa's Name

Chanting the Lord's name purifies our polluted consciousness, the source of all our problems.

by His Divine Grace
A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda
Founder-*Acarya* of The International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

Ladies and gentlemen, this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is meant for reviving our original consciousness. At present, owing to our long association with matter, our consciousness has become contaminated, just as rain water becomes contaminated when it falls from a cloud. Originally the water is pure, distilled, but as soon as it falls onto the earth, it becomes mixed with many dirty things. Similarly, originally, as spirit soul, our consciousness is uncontaminated, but because of our present association with matter, our consciousness is contaminated. Therefore we have so many varieties of consciousness.



Disagreements between one person and another are due to contaminated consciousness. I think some way; you think otherwise. Therefore we do not agree. But originally, your consciousness and my consciousness were one. And what is that "one"? That pure consciousness is to think, "God is great, and I am His eternal servant." That is pure consciousness.

As soon as we want to imitate God or artificially become one with God, the contamination begins. A Bengali verse states,

kṛṣṇa-bahirmukha haña
bhoga-vañcha kare
nikaṭa-stha maya tare
japaṭiya dhare

"When an individual soul forgets his eternal rela-

tionship with God and tries to lord it over the material nature, that forgetful condition is called *maya*, or illusion." So at present, especially in this age, forgetfulness of our eternal relationship with God is very strong. But by chanting the transcendental sound Hare Kṛṣṇa, the first result is that our heart or mind becomes cleansed of all dirty things. This is not a theoretical proposition; it is a fact.

Chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* is not difficult. Although it is in the Sanskrit language, everyone can chant it. In this meeting we began to chant, and you joined with us. All my students are Americans. None of them are Indians, but still they have learned the *mantra* very nicely. That is not difficult. And there is no cost.

So what is Hare Kṛṣṇa? Hare means the energy of the Lord, and Kṛṣṇa means the Supreme Personality of Godhead. So it is a prayer. There are only three words—Hare, Kṛṣṇa, and Rama—arranged as sixteen words: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. We request you to take up these three words: Hare, Kṛṣṇa, Rama. Anyone can learn the *mantra* by heart and chant it. It is universal.

If you think, "Oh, Kṛṣṇa is the name of a Hindu god"—if you have any objection—then you need not chant Kṛṣṇa, but you must have a name for God. The Muslims call God Allah, the Jews call Him Jehovah. That does not matter. Lord Caitanya says that there are millions and billions of names of God. If you think that the name Kṛṣṇa is not very suitable, you can accept any name. That doesn't matter. Our proposal is that you chant God's name.

Is it very difficult? It is not at all difficult. Lord Caitanya said that there are innumerable names of God according to different languages, different countries, different societies. And each of the names has the potency of God Himself. God is Absolute; therefore there is no difference between His name and He Himself. In the material world, the world of duality, there is a difference between the name water and the substance water. The name water is different from the substance water. If you are thirsty and you simply chant, "Water, water, water, water," your thirst will not be quenched. You require the substance water. That is the nature of matter. But spiritually, the name Kṛṣṇa or the name Allah or the name Jehovah is as good as the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

You may ask why we specifically chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. This name was chanted by Lord Caitanya, who introduced this movement five hundred years ago in India. We are following the footprints of Lord Caitanya. Because He chanted Hare Kṛṣṇa, we chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. But Lord Caitanya recommended that any one of God's innumerable names can be chanted.

There are no hard and fast rules for chanting. It is not that for chanting you have to prepare yourself or educate yourself or adjust yourself. No. We began to chant, and you were not prepared, but you joined us—you clapped with us, you danced with us. There are no rules or regulations. You simply chant. It is very easy. While walking you can chant whatever name you like. We like Kṛṣṇa. We chant always Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. While walking on the street, while going on the bus, even while working with your hands, you can chant. There is no loss on your part, there is no expense on your part, but the gain is very great. Why don't you try it? That is our request.

THE BENEFIT OF CHANTING

The benefit will be that gradually you will understand what you are. The whole modern civilization is going on under the wrong impression that "I am this body." In *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* it is said, "One who goes on in the concept of the body as the self is no better than an ass or a cow." Actually we are not the body. If we chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*, we can understand what we are.

As soon as I understand that I am not the body, my activities become different. At present I am acting on the concept that I am the body. Because this body was born in a particular place in a particular country, I say, "I am American," or Indian, or Chinese, or German. And because this body has a relationship with some woman, I accept that woman as my wife. There are hundreds of thousands of women, but the woman who has a relationship with this body is my wife. There are thousands and millions of children, but one child who has an intimate relation with this body, I call my son. So if we are falsely identifying with the body, our identification with this world is also false.

We are full of anxiety. And as soon as we understand "I am not this body; I am spirit soul," we become cheerful. There will be no anxiety.

We are full of anxiety because of the bodily concept of life. Consider a man with a very costly car. When driving on the street, he is careful to avoid an accident that would damage the car. He is in so much anxiety. But a man walking on the street has no such anxiety. Why is the man in the car so anxious? Because he has identified himself with the car. If the car is damaged in an accident, he thinks, "Oh, my car is gone; I am gone."

Although he is different from the car, he thinks like that because of false identification. Similarly, because we falsely identify with the body, we have so many problems. So if we want to solve the problems of life, we have to understand what we are. And unless this question arises in our mind, then we must consider that whatever we are doing brings defeat, because we are doing everything in false consciousness.

There are thousands and millions of children, but one child who has an intimate relation with this body, I call my son. So if we are falsely identifying with the body, our identification with this world is also false.

Our real identity is, as stated in the Vedic literature, *aham brahmasmi*: "I am Brahman." That means "I am spirit soul; I am not matter."

The misconception that I am the body has to be removed. Of course, it is not possible for everyone to understand this, but if even a percentage of human society can understand, so many problems will be solved. The solution to so many problems is to understand *aham brahmasmi*: "I am spirit soul."

The *Bhagavad-gītā* explains how the solutions take place. As soon as this realization is there—*aham brahmasmi*—then other things follow. *Brahma-bhūtaḥ prasannātmā*: one at once becomes cheerful. As long as we are in the bodily concept of life, we cannot be cheerful.

In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* it is said, *parābhavas tāvad abodha-jātaḥ*. *Abodha-jātaḥ* refers to one born a fool. Every one of us is born a fool. Why? Because from the beginning of life we think, "I am this body," although we are not the body. Therefore, according to Vedic civilization one has to take a second birth. One birth is made possible by

the father and mother. That birth is considered an animal birth. *Janmana jayate śudraḥ.* Everyone by birth is a *śudra,* or the lowest class of person. But *saṁskarad bhaved dvijaḥ:* "By reformation, one becomes twice-born." And what is that reformation? One understands what one is. Then, *veda-pathad bhaved viprah:* "After the second birth, one who tries to understand the spiritual science, the science of God, is called a *vipra.*" *Vipra* means "quite cognizant." Finally, *brahma janatiti brahmaṇaḥ:* "When one understands that he is Brahman, spirit soul, he becomes a *brahmaṇa.*"

Perhaps you have heard that in India the *brahmaṇas* are called the topmost men of the society. Why? Because they know, "I am Brahman; I am not matter."

By understanding Brahman, your position will be *prasannatma,* "joyful." *Na śocati na kaṅkṣati:* you will never lament any loss, nor will you hanker after any so-called gain. *Samaḥ sarveṣu bhuteṣu:* you will see every living entity on the same level. *Mad-bhaktiṁ labhate param:* in that stage of realization, you can understand God and your relationship with God.

UNDERSTANDING OUR IDENTITY

This Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is meant for understanding who we are. The answer, of course, is very simple. The other day I lectured at a Sunday school. I called a small boy forward and, pointing to the different parts of his body, I asked him, "What is this?" He said, "It is my hand, it is my head, it is my leg, it is my body, it is my shirt, it is my ..." Then I asked him, "Where are you? You are saying 'my, my, my,' but where are you?"

Everyone can understand what he is. If you ask yourself, "Am I this hand?" you will say, "No, it is my hand." "Am I this leg?" "No, it is my leg." "Am I this head?" "No, it is my head." Then where are you? You are the person thinking within, "It is my hand, it is my head, it is my leg, it is my shirt, it is my coat." But have you seen that person? You think you have seen your father, your mother, your son. But have you seen the real father within the body of the father? Have you seen the real son within the body of the son? No.

Then your whole conception of life and of the problems of this world is false. Therefore this movement is required at the present moment. *Ceto-darpaṇa-marjanam:* the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa will cleanse your mental condition. *Bhava-maha-davagni-nirvapaṇam:* as soon as you understand yourself, then all problems—social, political, economic, everything—will be solved. *Śreyaḥ-kairava-candrika-vitaraṇam:* and gradually you shall realize your transcendental life.

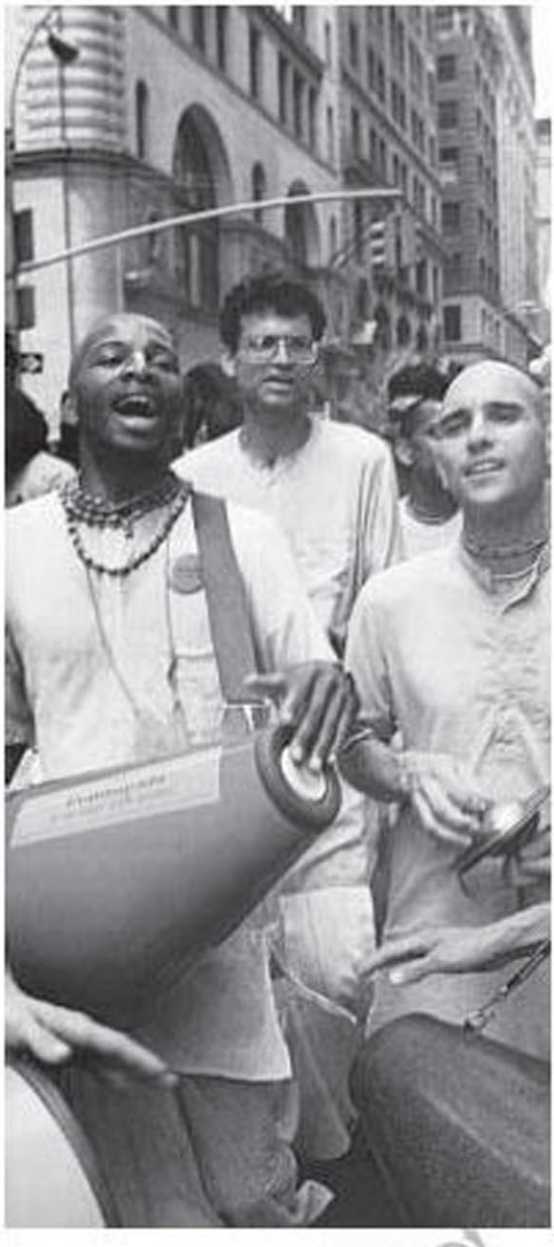
Your transcendental life is joyful. *Ananda-mayo 'bhyasat.* That is our nature. We are hankering after joyful life, but we do not know how to get it. Our joyfulness is covered by our material understanding. We have to remove the material understanding; then again we shall become joyful.

THE NEED FOR AUTHORITY

This movement is very scientific. We have authoritative statements. You cannot defy authority. From the beginning of your life, when you were a child, you asked your parents, "Mother, father, what is this?" You cannot go even a step without authority. You are governed by authority. You are driving your car by authority. "Keep to the right." Why? Why don't you defy it?

We have to obey authority. But the difficulty is, who is the authority? We must learn who is actually the authority. The authority is one who makes no mistakes, has no illusion, does not cheat, and whose senses are perfect. That is the definition of authority. A conditioned soul is sure to commit mistakes. However learned he may be, however advanced he may be, he must commit mistakes. Therefore it is said, "To err is human." And everyone must be illusioned and have the propensity to cheat.

Even a child wants to cheat. The mother asks, "Oh, what is in your hand?" The child says, "No,



mother, nothing," although the mother can see he has something. So the cheating propensity is there.

And above all, your senses are imperfect. You are proud of your eyes: "I want to see." What can you see? If the light is off, your seeing power is immediately gone. If there is no sun, your seeing power is gone. We can see only under certain conditions; therefore our power to see is imperfect.

You cannot get perfect knowledge by imperfect senses, by speculative endeavor. You have to accept authority. When you want to know who your father is, the authority is your mother. The mother says, "Here is your father." You have to accept. You cannot do research. Your mother is the final authority on who your father is.

Similarly, we have to accept an authority to get real knowledge. And if the authority is not a conditioned soul, if he is a liberated soul, if he is not a cheater, if his senses are not imperfect, if he does not make any mistakes, if he is not in illusion—if you receive knowledge from that authority, then your knowledge is perfect. That is the process.

We have authoritative literature: the Vedic literature. You can test it by your reasoning, by your arguments, by your philosophical talks—everything. Religion without a philosophical basis, without a scientific basis, is sentiment. Religion based on philosophy and science is right.

Bhagavad-gita is an authoritative book. It nicely answers any question, any inquiry, any doubt. For example, in one place in the *Bhagavad-gita* Lord Kṛṣṇa says,

sarva-yoniṣu kaunteya
murtayaḥ sambhavanti yaḥ
tasāṁ brahma mahad yonir
ahaṁ bīja-pradaḥ pita

The Vedic literature says that there are 8,400,000 species of life: aquatics, plants, trees, worms, germs, birds, beasts, and at last, the human species. So Kṛṣṇa says, "I am the seed-giving father of all living entities." If you can understand this one verse, then you can have some idea of universal brotherhood. If you want to have universal brotherhood, you must find the center—the universal father.

Such questions and answers are there in *Bhagavad-gita*. And we have the education of the science of God: *Śrīmad-Bhagavatam*. These books are meant for human society. If you take advantage of the knowledge imparted in them and chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*, you will see how your life improves, how you become full of knowledge, full of bliss, and how you advance in your eternal life.

Thank you very much.

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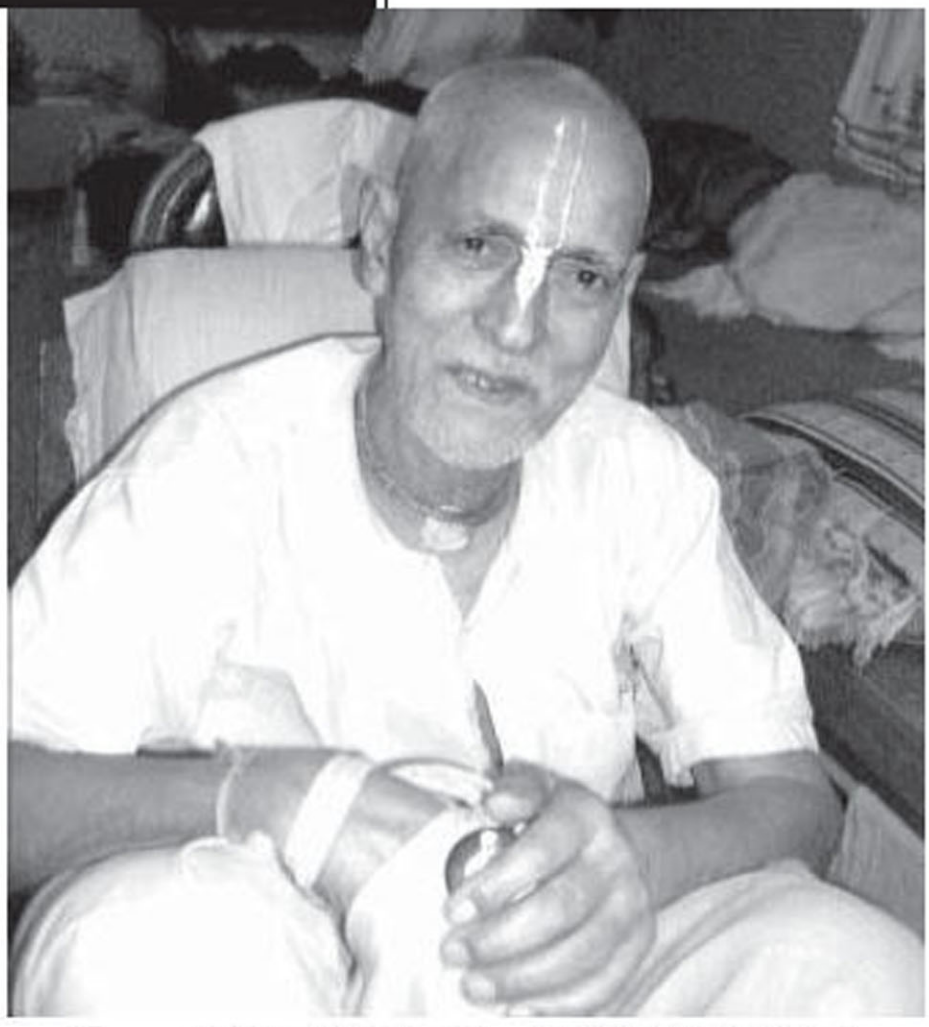

A LIFE FULL OF SERVICE

By his example he showed that one need not be a big devotee; one only needs to be a simple, humble, and serious devotee.

by Vaṁśī Bihārī Dāsa

The sweet "Hare Kṛṣṇa" in his Bengali accent still echoes in my ears. His blossoming face, cheerful smile, loving eyes, and merciful disposition have left an indelible impression on my heart. His frail body, bent almost parallel to the ground, was old yet attractive. And his affectionate touch on my head still sends waves of ecstasy through my body.

Many people don't know about Vibhu Caitanya Dasa, even if they might be living in Vṛndavana. He was a disciple of Śrila Prabhupada's

and lived in ISKCON Vṛndavana for the past 32 years. Had it not been for an opportunity three years ago, when I was assigned service in ISKCON Vṛndavana, even I wouldn't have got a chance to know this humble devotee. Even though I got very little of his personal association, his every action and every move impressed me.

Born in Bengal, Vibhu Caitanya Dasa lived as a householder. But it was in 1975, at the ripe age of 55, that he arrived in Vṛndavana and dedicated the rest of his life to the lotus feet of Śrīla Prabhupada as a *vanaprastha*. Not much is known of his life prior to this but his life after 1975 has been extraordinarily inspiring.

After receiving Śrīla Prabhupada's blessings to stay in Vṛndavana, Vibhu Caitanya Dasa left behind his wife, two sons and a daughter. Upon leaving his home, he requested his wife not to disturb his *bhajana* by coming to Vṛndavana. She obeyed—and for the rest of her life she never went to see him. Though his children would visit him sometimes, he wasn't overly attached to them.

Hari Śauri Dasa, one of Śrīla Prabhupada's personal servants remembers: "I was the temple commander then and we would scrutinize every Indian who came to join ISKCON, because their motive for becoming a devotee mostly would be to steal. Therefore we were very careful before allowing any one to stay in the temple. But when Vibhu Caitanya arrived, every one could clearly see that he was serious. Vibhu was different. He was about 20-30 years older than the rest of us, a middle-aged, gentle, soft spoken man who had decided to renounce his family life and take shelter in ISKCON. Right from the beginning he proved himself to be of an entirely different caliber. He was the most humble, sweetest soul I had yet encountered (and maybe ever will). Totally compliant. All he wanted to do was serve, and it didn't matter what he was asked to do; he did it with diligence and no complaints."

According to some devotees, Vibhu Caitanya Dasa received both the first and second initiation at the same time. And soon after, he took up his service—to prepare *bhoga* for the Deities.

He then accepted a new service—to serve *caraṇāmṛta* to devotees visiting the temple for *darśana*.

IN THE KITCHEN

In the early days, there weren't many devotees to serve in the kitchen, and most didn't know how to cook. Since he was very particular about the quality of offerings, Vibhu Caitanya decided to take charge of the whole kitchen. He would prepare the morning offering, then the *raja-bhoga* offering, and even the *sandhya-bhoga* offering. In this way, he would be serving in the kitchen for almost the whole day.

He served like this day after day, week after week, month after month for the next 15 years. Gradually, however, time took its toll. Strenuous work and lifting heavy vessels weakened his back so much that slowly his back completely bent from waist. Seeing his advancing age and failing health the temple management requested him to hand over his service to someone else. But he did so only after thoroughly training two devotees for six months.

I still remember whenever I came to Vṛndavana, I would notice him sitting close to the Deities serving *caraṇāmṛta* with a sweet smile on his face.

Devotees lovingly called Vibhu Caitanya, 'Dadu.' Despite ill health, he would loudly greet visitors by loudly reciting the prayers *vāñcā-kalpa-tarubhyaś ca*. I remember, many times after offering respects, he caressed our heads with his loving hands. The experience of that touch and the love radiating from it is unforgettable and other worldly.

MY EARLY LIFE

I was born in West Bengal, South 24 Pargana, Nodakhali, in the village named Mohanpur. We are four brothers and one Sister—Sasibhusan, Amarendra, Visnupada and my name was Vibhuti (sister's name is not known). I heard from my grandmother that when I was in my mother's womb, an astrologer came and said: "The soul that is going to take birth will be a great saintly person and will become very famous one day. But listen carefully, on birth he will appear as if dead, don't worry, simply keep pouring water on his head until he cries and then stop watering."

In my childhood I was not much interested in playing. I was vegetarian from birth. In our village many families were vegetarian. Though I passed SSC (School Secondary certificate), I never wore pant-shirt, only *dhoti-kurta*. That time pant-shirt was hated in society. Our social customs were so high that no one could dare to smoke at that time. Only few old men used *hookah*. I never smoked or drank wine. After that I entered into *grhastha* life and started business. I was having a wholesale shop. Whatever profit I obtained I used it in welfare activities. Everyday I used to distribute *batasa* (a popular Bengali sweet) and other items. I used to give very little money to my family. I did many welfare activities—things like repairing broken bamboo bridges, making roads, planting trees etc., so much so that I didn't even care for repairing my own house. In the market at Mohanpur I used to organise Durga *puja* every year and I also started with yearly *Astha Prahar Harinam Sankirtan Yajña* (*mahamantra kirtan* for one full day-night) which used to be at the end of Caitra (May) month and distribute large quantity of *khicari prasada*.

After my father's departure we separated into two families. I was staying with my younger brother Vishnupada. All my relatives who were vegetarian started eating fish; it even started in our family. I could not stop them, so I was forced to live separately in my shop and cook for myself. It happened 10 years before I joined ISKCON Vrndavana. I thought, "Those who never eat meat they also live. Then why should I eat meat?"

That time I established a Tulasi *mandapa* in the middle of the market. I used to get up early in the morning and go outside in the field to answer nature's call with the help of a lantern because in those days there was no electricity in our village. After my morning duties I offered *puja* to Tulasi Devi.

I used to worship all the demigods but I was attached to Krsna and chant His holy names, especially Hare Krsna *mahamantra*. I was having one *kirtaniya* party and I was *darkidar kirtaniya* (second main *kirtaniya*).

One day I went to ISKCON Mayapur and met with Srila Prabhupada. He gave me with his transcendental hands puffed rice mixed with jaggery. I said to Prabhupada, "Maharaja, I want to go to Vrndavana." He replied, "Yes you can go."

That was the blessing I got from Prabhupada to come to Vrndavana.

(As told to Rupa Sanatana Dasa, his personal servant)

NO NEED TO CHANT

One day Srila Prabhupada was on a morning walk. When near the Deity kitchen, he could hear a sweet melodious voice singing a Bengali *bhajana*. Srila Prabhupada stopped and asked, "Who is that?" "It's Vibhu Caitanya, Srila Prabhupada. He sings all day long as he is cooking the offerings."

"Ah, this is Krsna consciousness," Srila Prabhupada said with a bright smile on his face, "very nice."

One of the devotees mentioned that Vibhu Caitanya was not chanting his rounds. He was so busy in the kitchen from early morning till late at night that he had no time to do them. Srila Prabhupada didn't mind. "That's alright," he told the devotees, "he doesn't need to chant them. He is singing all day and doing his service."

Vibhu Caitanya Dasa however, didn't use this comment as an excuse. Even when he was 80 years old, he used to get up at 2 am to chant his rounds; he would be chanting the whole day.

THE ORDER OF THE SPIRITUAL MASTER

When Vibhu Caitanya came to Vrndavana for the first time, he met Subhaga Swami and expressed his desire to meet Srila Prabhupada. "As I took him to Srila Prabhupada," remembers Subhaga Swami, "Vibhu Caitanya took out a one rupee coin from his pocket and handed it to Srila Prabhupada. In Bengal, giving someone a rupee means that you dedicate your whole life to him."

"Srila Prabhupada told him, 'Stay here and don't go outside. All your desires will be fulfilled here.' Even though this was a general instruction, Vibhu Caitanya took it to heart. Had he desired he could have gone on pilgrimage to Varsana, Govardhana etc., but he had complete faith that following

the instructions of the spiritual master is the perfection of life." The *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* (6.23) states: 'Only unto those great souls who have implicit faith in both the Lord and the spiritual master are all the imports of Vedic knowledge automatically revealed.'

If you asked Vibhu Caitanya where Keśighaṭa, Vaṁśivaṭa, Mathura, Varsana, Nandagram were, he could not answer. He only knew Kṛṣṇa-Balarama, Radha Śyamasundar, Gaura Nitai and Śrila Prabhupada. From 1975 to December 2007, he never stepped outside the temple premises in Vṛndavana. It is not that he checked himself, but he never felt the need to go outside. Even within the temple, he could not be seen in a lot of places; most of his time was spent either in the kitchen or in the temple courtyard. Once, when he was very ill, devotees forcibly took him to a nearby hospital for a few hours.

HUMBLE PRIDE

Vibhu Caitanya was, by his very nature, humble and simple. Bhakti Caru Swami informs, "He had simple faith that Radharani had been very merciful to him, that She allowed him to serve. And he used to always think that Kṛṣṇa is there to take care. He didn't want to take any medicine. He said: 'What is the use of medicine? Whatever Kṛṣṇa does is fine.' He wouldn't take any service from anybody. He was very proud that he was Prabhupada's disciple and had received Prabhupada's mercy. He considered that was his greatest good fortune.

"Often when Srila Prabhupada would go out on morning walks, devotees would just try to get this opportunity to go out with him. There used to be a competition. Vibhu Caitanya never tried to do that. He never tried to have any recognition, or any big position, he didn't want to be a big devotee in any way. All he wanted to do is chant the holy name and serve with implicit faith."

He would even tell his personal servant Rupa Sanatana Dasa, *asat sanga theke dure thakte, sat mana sat mana niye bhagavaner seva karle kona asuvidha havena:* "If you always keep yourself away from bad association and serve the Lord with honest mind and honest thinking, then there will be no problem."

Bhakti Caru Swami sums up Vibhu Caitanya's life: "By his example, he showed that we don't have to become a big devotee. All we have to become is a simple devotee, a humble devotee, a sincere devotee. And Vibhu Caitanya Prabhu is the perfect example of that."

If you asked Vibhu Caitanya where Keśighāṭa, Vaṁśīvaṭa, Mathurā, Varsanā, Nandagrām were, he could not answer. He only knew Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma, Rādhā Śyāmasundar, Gaura Nitāi and Śrīla Prabhupāda.

THE FINAL DAYS

I met him last in December 2006. I always had a desire to write about him and so I decided to interview him. I went to his room accompanied by his personal servant, Rupa Sanatana Dasa, and like always, when I offered obeisances, he too offered his obeisances to me. Although physically not well, spiritually he was effulgent. When Rupa Sanatana Dasa disclosed his daily schedule, I was struck with wonder. He hardly slept at that time; he would be engrossed in chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa all day. Around his bed, on the right, left, above—everywhere were photographs of Deities and Śrila Prabhupada. Unable to walk properly, he visited the temple perhaps once in many months, but now he had converted his room into a beautiful temple. For most part of the night, he would string flower garlands to decorate this temple.

I tried hard to inquire about his life, but all in vain. Smilingly he closed his eyes, and gesturing with his right hand, much to my disappointment, he waved me off. Though he did not want to speak anything, his demeanor spoke volumes about his humility and sweetness. Valuing these emotions as more precious than his words, I treasured them in my heart and left his room.

On 22 December 2007, when he was departing from this world, Aindra Dasa, the famous *kirtana* singer from Vṛndavana, was singing Vibhu Caitanya's favorite melody that he often sang while serving in the kitchen. As the news spread around Vṛndavana, devotees from all over began gathering to offer their last respects to 'Dadu.' At 9.30 pm, Śrī Śrī Radha Śyamasundar, Kṛṣṇa-Balarama and Gaura Nitai sent Their garlands to Their dear devotee. As the pace of the *kirtana* began rising, sur-

(please turn to page 14)

Real Empowerment For Women

Extract from a speech given to a group of NGOs in ISKCON New Delhi.

by Rādhikā Kṛpā Devī Dāsī

This was the topic I had to speak on at a seminar held by one of the top NGOs. Representing ISKCON, I was expected to give a spiritual touch to the so-called weak position of women. I, on the other hand, totally disagreed with this statement!

I started my speech facing a crowd that unabashedly glorified top women political leaders, sport stars, bureaucrats, historical figures, and the modern representatives of womanhood—the winners of beauty pageants. Forgotten was our Vedic culture in the speeches made by the honourable minister and renowned personalities, who advocated solutions bereft of any knowledge of the spirit soul. I started my speech reminding the crowd of

Great women characters from Vedic Scripture: From left to right,

our long forgotten culture:

Among the many civilizations in the world the most venerating regard for women has been found in the Vedic culture. The level of civility along with moral and spiritual standards in a society can be perceived by the respect it gives to its women. Not that it glorifies them for the role of a 'progeny giver' and provides them all the freedom that men want, so that they can be exploited and taken advantage of. But it regards and allows them to live in society with respect, honor, and protection, while providing them an opportunity to reach their real potential in life.

The Vedic society, being the ideal society, is based on the principles given directly by the Supreme Power, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. It believes in giving protection to women. To save the degenerating society, safety for women should be the main concern. Father protects the girl child before marriage, after marriage she becomes the responsibility of the husband and later the son is liable to take care of her. This is the real Vedic society.

Vedic society emphasises the role of women in all spheres. The Vedas designate an ideal woman as:-

Aditi - as she is not dependant
Bṛhati - for she is large hearted
Candra - for she is happy
Devakama - since she is pious
Kṣama - for she is tolerant
Sarasvati - for she is scholarly
Sumangali - for she is auspicious
Viśruta - for she is glorious
Yoga - for she is intermingled with man, she is not separate; she is the *ardhangini*.

There are many more qualities imbibed in women men-

Śrīmati Radharaṇi, Durga Devi, Draupadi, and Queen Kunti.

tioned in the Vedic scriptures.

She is the core of the society; the pivot around whom the whole family revolves. Families form society, which form the nation and the nations join to form the world. She is the caretaker of the new generation. The coming generation lies completely in her hands, under her guidance. She is the first *guru*, a spiritual guide to her children. The Vedic scriptures inform about Dhruva Maharaja and Prahlada Maharaja, who followed the words of their mothers and became the most fortunate ones to have *'darśana'* of the Supreme Lord, Śrī Krsna, just at the tender age of five and seven respectively.

Many women characters embedded in the scriptures exhibit various qualities found rarely. Like Queen Kuntī, the mother of five illustrious sons, the Pāṇḍavas. Her spontaneous glorification of the Supreme Lord Śrī Krsna and her description of the spiritual path are immortalised in the *Bhagavata Purāṇa*. Her prayers, as His Divine Grace A.C Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada said, are simple and illuminating outpourings of a great saintly woman devotee. They reveal both transcendental emotions of the heart and the most profound theological penetrations of the intellect. Her words have been chanted, recited, and sung by sages, devotees and philosophers for thousands of years.

She is the epitome of tolerance and devotion. She had the courage to pray for distress and shortcomings so as to remain in the shelter of the Lord always.

Draupadī is yet another strong character imbibed with deep conviction, whose faith never wavered in the Supreme Power even though she went through very difficult times. Her deep faith and strong love made even the Lord of the universe reciprocate. Her compassion and strength made her forgive the killer of her five sons. Only a woman so perfect could do this.

Nevertheless, the Creator of the spiritual and material worlds, the source of everything, the Supreme Personality of Godhead Śrī Krsna who governs all is governed by His consort Śrīmatī Radharāṇī—His internal potency. A devotee has to invoke Her compassion, who in turn recommends the devotee to Śrī Krsna. He controls all, but She controls Him. He is the Supreme Power, but She is the Most Supreme.

Even the material world of the Supreme Lord Śrī Krsna is put under the control of His external energy *Mahamaya* who maintains this *Mṛtyuloka* and provides sense gratification for all.

Ironically, this concludes that women are already empowered without any scope of empowering them further. She just has to recognise her potential and derive inspiration from the ideal women of Vedic times. By imbibing those qualities she empowers not only herself but the whole family, the whole society, the whole nation, and the whole world.

Radhika Kṛpa Devi Dasi, disciple of His Holiness Gopal Kṛṣṇa Goswami Maharaja, is the author of 'Vaiṣṇava teachings in Sikhism' and a collection of devotional poems.

A life ....

(Continued from page 11)

rounded by loving tearful devotees on all sides, Vibhu Caitanya breathed his last.

The next day, his body was taken on a *parikrama* thrice around the temple in a *śobha-yatra*. After the *parikrama*, devotees performed an *arati* ceremony of his body and then it was taken to the Yamuna. This was probably the only time he went to the holy river. After the final rites were performed, his ashes were brought to the ISKCON *gośala* where his *samadhi* has been erected.

When I think of Vibhu Caitanya, I remember a pastime of Lord Caitanya.

Once, when all the devotees were performing an *abhiṣeka* of Lord Caitanya with the pure, holy water of the Ganges and other substances, He asked Śrivasa Ṭhakura, "Who is getting all this water from the Ganges?"

"It is Dukhi," replied Śrivasa naming one of the maidservants that worked at his home.

Śrī Caitanya Mahaprabhu became immensely pleased. While all the devotees blissfully performed the *abhiṣeka* of Lord, here was Dukhi content and satisfied in bringing the water from the Ganges to facilitate the service of other devotees. Although she was in the background, her service attitude was glorious and so, Lord Caitanya showered His mercy on her first. "From today," the Lord proclaimed, "her name will not be Dukhi (the distressed) but it will be Sukhi (the blissful)."

Vibhu Caitanya was also like that. He exemplified this rare quality of being completely satisfied in simplicity and one's allotted service. The example of such great souls serves as a shining principle for all of us to guide us on our path back home, back to Godhead.

Vamśi Bihari Dasa serves full-time at ISKCON Mumbai and is the editor of Bhagavad Darśan, *the Hindi edition of* Back To Godhead.

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Gangotri : The district is mentioned in Skand Puran as Kedar Kshetra (sacred region) and contains the origins of the most sacred rivers of India, the Ganga and the Yamuna.The Ganga is believed to have first descended to earth at Gangotri 99 km from Uttrarkashi.
A shrine dedicated to the Goddess was built some 250 years ago by Amar Bahadur Thapa, the Gorkha Commander.

Yamunotri : The Garhwal Himalayas have been blessed with some of the holiest Hindu pilgrimage sites and Yamunotri is one such. One of the Char Dhams according to Hindu mythology, Yamunotri is the origin of the sacred river Yamuna. Famous for its thermal springs and glaciers, it is one of the most important stopovers on the itinerary of the Hindu pilgrim.

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"You Can Pronounce Kṛṣṇa In Any Way"

Below are excerpts from a conversation that took place between His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda and the poet Allen Ginsberg on May 12, 1969, in Columbus, Ohio.

Allen Ginsberg: Your Divine Grace, my original question was, Is the complicated ritual and the Sanskrit language—are they going to keep people from accepting what you're giving.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: No, no. We are translating, presenting everything in the English language. All our books are being published in English. Our magazine is in English.

Allen Ginsberg: But the question is—is the mode of life that you are proposing adaptable to many, many, many people?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: To that I say that this Kṛṣṇa culture is not something that many, many people can immediately accept.

Allen Ginsberg: Yeah. But there is a thirst felt by many, many people for an alternative answer, for a better alternative system.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes. So if people are actually thirsty—if they are actually thirsty—then they can adopt this system given by the Supreme Lord. What is the difficulty there? There is no difficulty. So many American boys and girls have already adopted it, and they are not feeling any difficulty. They are feeling relief. In what respect is chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa difficult? You are chanting.

Allen Ginsberg: Yes.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: It is all in Sanskrit. What difficulty are you feeling?

Allen Ginsberg: I don't feel too much difficulty, except aesthetically I do feel a difficulty. Yes, there is. The difficulty I feel is that there should be some flavour of the American language to communicate in.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Therefore, we are seeking your help.

Allen Ginsberg: Hm. Well, I haven't found another way. I still just stay chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: That is also my view. I have come to America with this view: that America is at the summit of material civilization—they are not poverty-stricken, you see?—and yet they are seeking after something. Therefore, I have come to offer, "You take this. You'll be happy." That is my mission.

And if the Americans take this Kṛṣṇa consciousness seriously, then all other countries will take it, because America is leading at the present moment. So exalted persons like you should try to understand. What is the difficulty? There is no difficulty. Chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa—anyone can chant. Even the little child is chanting. So, you were asking, How can this mode of living attract many people?

Allen Ginsberg: Well, mere chanting without the practice of a philosophy ...

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Philosophy is here. We are teaching *Bhagavad-gītā*. We are talking on *Bhāgavata* philosophy. We are talking on Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya's philosophy.

Allen Ginsberg: And you have a daily ritual. So my question is this: Is the Caitanya-Kṛṣṇa ritual, as you have it here in this house and in the other *āśramas*—is this something that a large mass of people can enter into?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: In time, yes. Why not?

Allen Ginsberg: In America?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes. This we have already seen. Virtually all my students are Americans. And Kṛṣṇa consciousness is spreading.

Allen Ginsberg: Yes, but what it requires is an adaptation to Indian dress and ...

Śrīla Prabhupāda: That is not very important.

Allen Ginsberg: And an adaptation to Indian food.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: No, no. Indian food—it is not Indian food. Are you not eating fruits?

Allen Ginsberg: Yes, yes.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Then that is Indian food? Do you mean to say it is Indian food?

Allen Ginsberg: Well, the curried vegetable dishes.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Vegetables you may simply steam, if you like. That doesn't matter. It doesn't matter whether you take our specific taste. No. That is not the program, that to become Kṛṣṇa conscious you have to change your taste. No. We say what Kṛṣṇa says in *Bhagavad-gītā*. *Patraṁ puṣpaṁ phalaṁ toyaṁ yo me bhaktyā prayacchati:* "Anyone who offers Me with devotion these vegetables, fruits, flowers, milk—I accept that." So we are determined to satisfy Kṛṣṇa, and therefore we are selecting foodstuffs from these groups.

And these foodstuffs you are already accepting. Don't you take vegetables? Don't you take fruits? Don't you take grains? So where is the new item? Now, insofar as cooking is concerned, you can cook according to your own taste. But the food groups must be these. Not flesh. Because Kṛṣṇa does not say, "Offer Me flesh."

This, very simply, is our program. And you are already eating grains, vegetables, and fruits, and you are drinking milk. So where is the difference? I don't find any difference.

Allen Ginsberg: Well, I suppose not. You could say there is no difference, because the food is basically the same materially. It's just a question of the style.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes. My style and your style may be different. That's all right. In any event, to maintain health and keep body and soul together, you require eating, you require sleeping, you require mating, you require defending. We don't say that you don't do this.

Arjuna wanted to be nonviolent and not engage in defending: "Oh, what is the use of fighting?"

Kṛṣṇa said, "No. It is required. You should." Defending is part of this Kṛṣṇa culture. So where is the difference? There is no difference. Simply we are adjusting things so that you may become truly happy. Any intelligent man will accept this cultural idea. We are not prohibiting things, but rather, we are adjusting things. So there is no difficulty. Intelligent persons like you should try to understand and take this idea and distribute it, because your country is in want of this.

Allen Ginsberg: But there is a limit to how much the pronunciation of Kṛṣṇa will spread, I think. There's a limit.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Hmm. No limit. You can pronounce Kṛṣṇa in any way. For instance, K-r-i-s-h-n-a. You can pronounce Kṛṣṇa in any way.

(please turn to page 19)

If the Americans take this Kṛṣṇa consciousness seriously, then all other countries will take it, because America is leading at the present moment.

Fall Down

Exploits of a young book distributor

by Murāri Gupta Dāsa

No, we are not talking about someone's falling from the path of devotion.

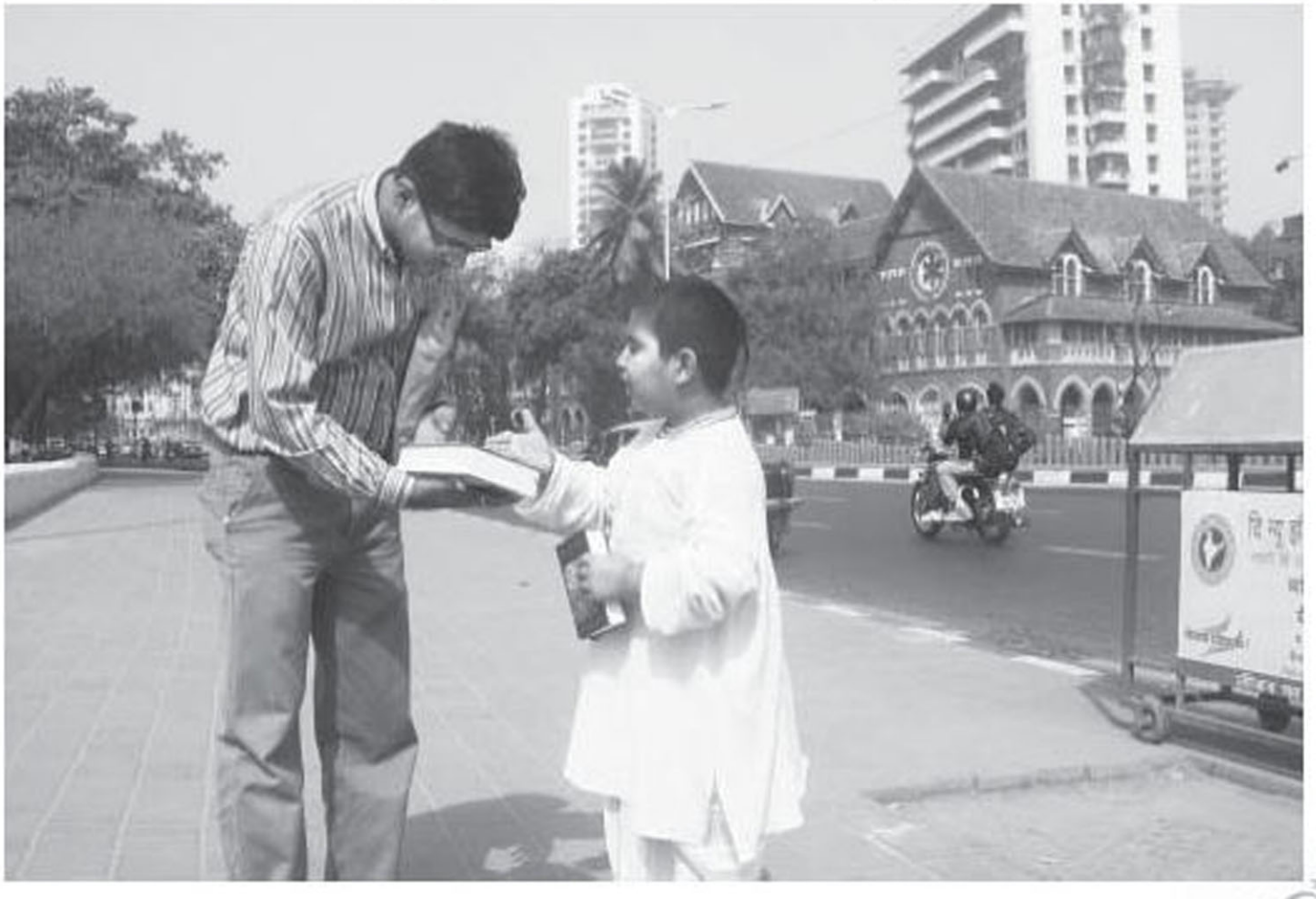
We are speaking about the *modus operandi* of one of the youngest book distributors in last December's marathon: Vanamali, the son of Rajesh Dodeja and Gita Mataji. He is seven years old, but the devotional mood he displays clearly points to wisdom beyond his years. His technique?

Just grab a book, go to anyone nearby, fall down prostrated at the person's feet and beg that person to take the book. And if the person does take the book, do full *daṇḍavats* again.

His mother Gita recalls:

Vanamali went with me and other ladies to Dadar Railway station and police stations in and around Byculla. In the first two days he distributed 16 *Bhagavad-gītās*, but nobody kept the exact count after that.

In the police stations, he would go to the policeman and innocently ask, "Uncle, why do you carry a gun? What do you do with it?"



Hearing these cute questions from a chubby little kid with *Vaiṣṇava tilaka, kaṇṭhi mala,* and *śikha* was enough to disarm these tough Mumbai cops. They would smile and joke with him.

After the pleasantries Vanamali would come to the main business: "Uncle, please take this book."

Even if you already have a Gita at home, it is not enough reason to put him off. He will touch your feet, touch your hands to his head, beg, cajole, make heartfelt pleas and not leave till you agree.

One policeman said to me, "I already have a Gita, but you have trained your son so nicely that I am forced to buy."

Some appreciated but some complained to me, "It's his time to play and enjoy. Why do you force him to do these things?"

Who can stop him? I think to myself. So much is his dedication to distribute books that—what to speak of the cops—even the elders feel carried away by his enthusiasm. Many times we would be dejected because people were just not interested in taking these books. But nothing could stop Vanamali. If one man refused, he would go to the next, without taking the rejection to heart.

On the day of *Mokṣada Ekadaśi,* we were at the Dadar station distributing books. We took some Hindi and Marathi books and went to nearby hotels and stalls. Then we reached Pritam Hotel, a famous restaurant with a bar inside.

The security stopped us ladies, but could not check little Vanamali. He walked inside and showed books to the bewildered customers, who never expected in their wildest dreams to receive *Bhagavad-gita* in a liquor shop.

Then a man came. "Do you have an English *Bhagavad-gita?*" he asked.

"I don't have it now," Vanamali replied, "But I can get it for you. Please wait."

Then, without saying a word to anyone, he ran all the way to the bookstall on the Dadar station and returned with two English *Bhagavad-gitas*, only to find there was no one waiting for him.

Dejected he came to me. "Look ma...that man left."

"Why don't you check with the watchman?" I encouraged him.

Vanamali went to the watchman. "I got this English *Bhagavad-gita* for a person who was standing here. Do you know where he has gone?"

"*Bhagavad-gita*? Here?" the watchman frowned. "Oh yes," he suddenly remembered. "That man went inside to drink, but he gave money for you. Give me the book."

Hearing about Vanamali's preaching spirit, many congregation ladies have told me that they would also encourage their little kids to distribute books. Many ask me what Vanamali's modus operandi is. What can I say?

You can pronounce...

(Continued from page 16)

Niyamitaḥ smaraṇe na kalaḥ. No hard and fast rules, no limits.

Allen Ginsberg: The limit is people's prejudice.

Śrila Prabhupada: We don't say, "Why are you chanting Kṛṣṇa like this?" We never say that. We simply say, "Please try to chant Kṛṣṇa."

Allen Ginsberg: Or let us say there would be a limit until the word Kṛṣṇa became as common in English as any other English word.

Śrila Prabhupada: It is already in the dictionary. In all dictionaries you will find Kṛṣṇa. What more do you want?

Allen Ginsberg: Something that will not disturb truck drivers.

Disciple: They can say Christ. They can say Kṛṣṇa. It is the same.

Allen Ginsberg: True. But they don't say Christ. [Laughs.]

Śrila Prabhupada: I have read one book, the Aquarian Gospel, wherein it is explained that Krist means love. Christ means love. And Kṛṣṇa also means love. So from Kṛṣṇa this word Krist has come. And in India sometimes people say Kristha. Instead of Kṛṣṇa, they say Kristha. And in various regions has come the word Kestha. Generally, instead of pronouncing very precisely Kṛṣṇa, if somebody's name is Kṛṣṇacandra, they say, "Hey, Kesthara."

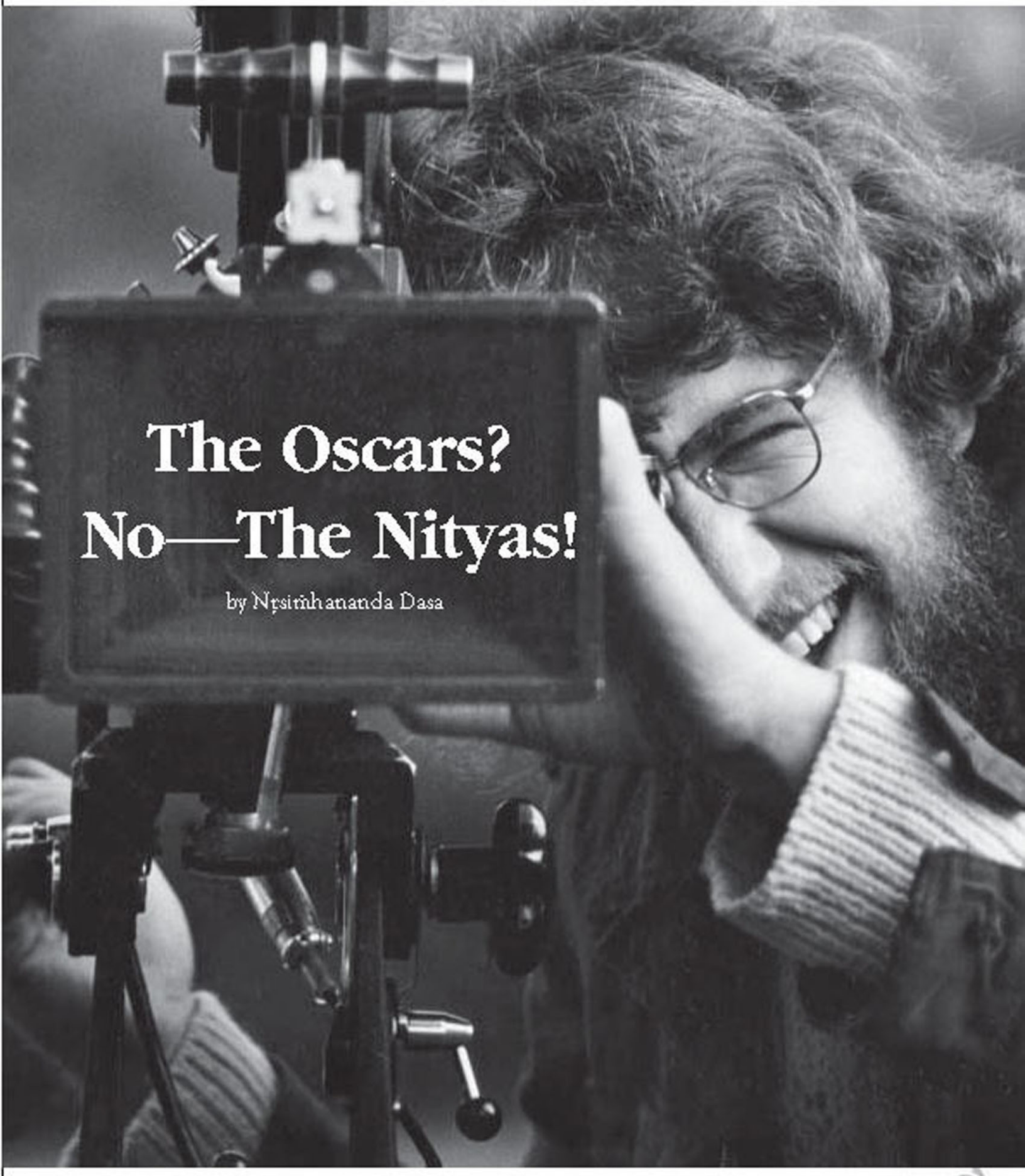
Allen Ginsberg: Where is this?

Śrila Prabhupada: In India everywhere. Kestha. So Kestha, Christ, Krist, Kristha, or Kṛṣṇa—they're in the same group. Pronouncing Kṛṣṇa is not difficult.

SANSKRIT PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

It is commonly seen that राम and कृष्ण in Sanskrit become Rama and Krishna in English with an extra trailing accent on 'a'. To eliminate such confusion we use a system of transliteration that lets us know how to pronounce 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 c like the ch in chair. Pronounce consonants like ch, jh, and dh as in staunch-heart, hedgehog, and red-hot. Pronounce ṣ and ś like sh. So for *Kṛṣṇa* say KRISHNA, for *Caitanya* say CHAITANYA.



The Oscars? No—The Nityas!

by Nṛsiṁhananda Dasa

The author stands behind the camera in the early 1970s (opposite page). At left, the logo for the First Vaiṣṇavas Film/Video Festival in Mayapur shows the Nityananda Award.

EXTERIOR. STREET.
LONDON, LEISTER SQUARE
DAY
"London, April 1971"
[super-imposed]
DAVID [voice-over]

GEORGE Harrison's "My Sweet Lord," with its Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* refrain, saturates radio airwaves as the 1970 album "All Things Must Pass" skyrockets to number one worldwide. Rolls Royce declares bankruptcy. Two hundred thousand Vietnam War protestors march determinedly on Washington.

In a world of his own, consciously oblivious of the chaos around him, a young man walks briskly through the fog on his way to the London Film School.

That's me in the picture: David Shapiro.

From 1969 to 1971, I had been attending classes at the London Film School, adjacent to Leister Square, where Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees chanted nearly every day. Diligently immersed in fulfilling my career dreams, I hadn't taken any notice of what I thought of as yet another "freak show" of my flower-power generation. This particular afternoon, however, a woman dressed in a *sari* handed me a magazine with a picture of Kṛṣṇa on the cover. Although in a starving-student state of mind, I inexplicably decided to give her some loose change. Perhaps I was intrigued by the cover painting of a flower-garlanded blue boy playing a flute while His captivating eyes glanced mischievously at me. My eyes riveted to the cover, I continued to hurry across busy streets, .

"Back to Godhead," the magazine's title proclaimed.

"What is that supposed to mean?" I wondered.

"Godhead is light. Nescience is darkness. Where there is Godhead there is no nescience," I read at the top of the page. A thought crossed my mind: "That sounds right."

A whooshing sound abruptly caught my attention. I looked up from the magazine just in time to narrowly avoid being hit by a double-decker bus. A large advertisement with the catchy phrase "In your head, you know it's right" scrolled inches from my nose. I don't know exactly what they were trying to sell, but the message to me was vividly clear: the words on the magazine cover were somehow very important to my life. I wanted to read more, but I had arrived at the school. I had a more immediate errand. Having opted to miss the official graduation ceremony, I was there to collect my diploma.

INTERIOR.
LONDON FILM SCHOOL—DAY

The school principal surprised me in the corridor with my certificate. Somehow he had anticipated my arrival.

"Here's your diploma from the school of illusion," he said.

I'd done it! I'd graduated with a master's degree in film. I was twenty-four, and my Hollywood-bound future was awaiting me. I'd already rehearsed my Oscar acceptance speech.

But the principal's words reverberated in my head. *The school of illusion.* What did that mean?

A flower child of the 60s, I had been always trying to avoid the real life of politics, war, economics, disease, and death. "Make love, not war" was our *mantra*. And it was through film that I had learned how to create the illusion of life, one that could help me escape a brutal and unsavory reality. I had spent most Saturday mornings of my childhood at the local movie theater digesting cartoons, Westerns, and, later, love stories. I would laugh, cheer, cry, even cover my eyes during the scary parts. I adored going to the movies, and now I was going to create those illusions myself.

I left the building with a diploma in one hand and, though not conscious of it, a *Back to Godhead* in the other, still mulling over the principal's statement. "Why did he say that?" I was puzzled. Then I noticed the magazine in my hand. I thought perhaps it would give me some clue. I sat down in a small park off Oxford St. and began to peruse it. All the distractions in the park—the kids playing, the lovers kissing, the drunks grumbling at no one in particular—disappeared as the words digested. I had never read anything with such a power of truth. I was stunned at the simplicity and profundity of such concepts as "the real problems of life are birth, death, old age, and disease, not economic development and sense

His Holiness Jayapatāka Swami presents the Lifetime Achievement Award to pioneer ISKCON filmmakers Yadunāra Dāsa and Viśākhā Devī Dāsī.

gratification." My material ambitions began to dissolve in the fire of that knowledge. I felt compelled to know more about the science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I wanted to go to that spiritual world where "all words are a song, every step a dance." I had found the real Woodstock, where "all you need is love." Three days later, I was living in a Hare Kṛṣṇa temple in Chicago.

DISSOLVE TO:
INT. ADVERTISING AGENCY—DAY

Determined to gain experience as a professional filmmaker, I got a job at a nearby promotion company while living at the temple. I was juggling getting up at 4:00 A.M., attending the morning program at the temple, and working all day during the week. Saturday I went door-to-door distributing books, and Sunday I was involved in preparing the "love feast." Though the devotees told me to just give up my career ambitions and "surrender to Kṛṣṇa ," I was defiant. Somehow, I was going to have it all. But one day my boss told me to work on an ad for a liquor company, and I refused. He gave me an ultimatum: produce this commercial or you're fired. That's how Kṛṣṇa arranged for me to be a full-time devotee.

EXT. DOWNTOWN CHICAGO
—DAY

Instead of composing jingles and storyboards, I was chanting eight hours a day on the "busiest street corner in the world," State and Madison. Still, I had film ambitions, and letters from Śrīla Prabhupāda fanned my desire to dovetail my interests: "Just make films about Kṛṣṇa . Then your life will be successful."

INT. BROOKLYN TEMPLE
—MORNING

A few months later, I was at Śrīla Prabhupāda's feet in New York City, and I was making an animated film of the *Bhagavad-gītā* with a cinema student interested in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

INT. NEW DWARKA TEMPLE
—MORNING

I followed Śrīla Prabhupāda to Los Angeles, where I was included in an effort to film him giving lectures on every verse in *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. We filmed two before Śrīla Prabhupāda stopped the project. He didn't like lecturing to a camera without the presence of a temple full of devotees. But Śrīla Prabhupāda initiated me around that time, so I was happy.

EXT. FILM SET—DAY

Determined to be in the film industry, I got a local job with a newly formed television film production company. Devotees considered me somewhat of a heretic at that time, since devotees didn't work "on the outside." Nevertheless, for five years I paid my dues at that job and went from being a production assistant to producing multi-million-dollar movies for television.

INT. NEW DWARKA TEMPLE
—NIGHT, NOVEMBER 1977

That year brought another life-changing event: Śrīla Prabhupāda left this mortal world. At that time, my materialistic ambitions paled in comparison to the profound sadness I felt. I resolved to serve him better, so I began to formulate a plan for spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness through the new technology of videotapes. Thus, the idea of ISKCON Television (ITV) was born. The plan was to produce Kṛṣṇa conscious television pro-

grams and distribute them to temples equipped with videotape players all over the world.

INT. ITV OFFICE—DAY

I left my job and worked night and day on formulating the new plan. In 1979, after two years and a lot of lobbying of ISKCON managers, ITV was born as an international ISKCON project. By Kṛṣṇa's grace, Siddhartha Dasa signed on as an editor and, eventually, co-manager. His dedication and talents were of incalculable value. ITV continues to operate as a nonprofit, charitable organization with a library of over seventy-five titles (www.itvproductions.net).

INT. NEW DWARKA TEMPLE, DEITIES—DAY

But what about that desire for an Oscar?

DISSOLVE TO: EXTERIOR. MAYAPUR DHAMA—NIGHT

"Mayapur, India, 35 years later" [super-imposed]

Twelve hundred onlookers sit under a gigantic marquee before a lighted stage. A high-end video projector illuminates a five-meter-wide screen. I'm introducing this premiere awards ceremony, handing out over five thousand dollars in prize money to winners selected from thirty-seven entries. Films were submitted from countries as diverse as South Africa, U.K., U.S.A., Croatia, India, Czech Republic, Russia, Australia, Canada, and Denmark. Clips from each production play on the huge screen. VIP presenters introduce each category, and then open the envelope as the montage ends. Winners emerge from the audience, their arrival accompanied by music, to accept the shiny golden award and the cash. A glamorous hostess steers them to microphones at either side of the stage. The winners speak of their deep gratitude in being recognized and rewarded. I relish the scene.

Maybe it's not the Oscars. But it is the very first Vaiṣṇava Film/Video Festival ever held. And I'm elated.

Most of the devotees in the audience have never seen chanting parties in Croatia, Food for Life volunteers feeding the victims left homeless in Tsunami-wrecked Sri Lanka, families being reconciled in South Africa, the strength of C.I.S. devotees who had languished in prisons and mental hospitals, the remote Nṛsiṁha temples hidden deep in the jungles of South India, the excitement and challenges of being on the Hare Kṛṣṇa summer Baltic Sea tour, or the exuberance of the Hare Kṛṣṇa youth as they travel with the Festival of India throughout North America. These productions inform, enthuse, and inspire. They unite the Vaiṣṇava family worldwide.

When I started publicizing the promise of the First Vaiṣṇava Film/Video Festival, I expected ten or fifteen entries. When the thirty-seventh arrived just before the deadline, I nearly panicked. I felt the weight of the responsibility of launching a new tradition of awards. I had to recruit judges from my Hollywood contacts to ensure impartiality, select clips for each of the categories, and script the entire show so that it could run seamlessly from

(please turn to page 25)

The author (and master of ceremonies) introduces the next winner, while presenter Jagajivana dasa holds the Nityananda Award.

In your own words . .

What is the best Kṛṣṇa conscious lesson you have learned from someone?

THE EPIC OF HOMERIC TROY has fed me with a lot of insight. The Achaeans invaded the mighty walls of Troy after a prolonged battle. The Greeks declared withdrawal from the war and gifted a wooden hollow horse to thank Athena, the goddess of heroic endeavor. The horse was inducted inside the kingdom. Hidden inside were numerous soldiers who came out at night, and defeated the Trojans leading to the famous fall of Troy.

In our own battle in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, *māyā* tries all means to defeat us. The deadliest danger is when the enemy comes in the form of a friend, like the Trojan horse. We resist gross temptations knowing them to be deadly enemies, but allow subtle propensities such as vanity, thinking them to be sweet friends. And soon, all the *anarthas* come out and overcome our mind, like the Greek soldiers. Hence we have to be on constant vigil to detect our own Trojan horses.

Ranjan Ghosh,
Bhagalpur

THE BEST LESSON I learnt was in ISKCON Vṛndāvana. I was at the *prasādam* stall, impatiently shouting at the elderly devotee to quickly give me *prasādam*. She became angry and yelled and then refused to give *prasādam* altogether. I left that place and felt bad.

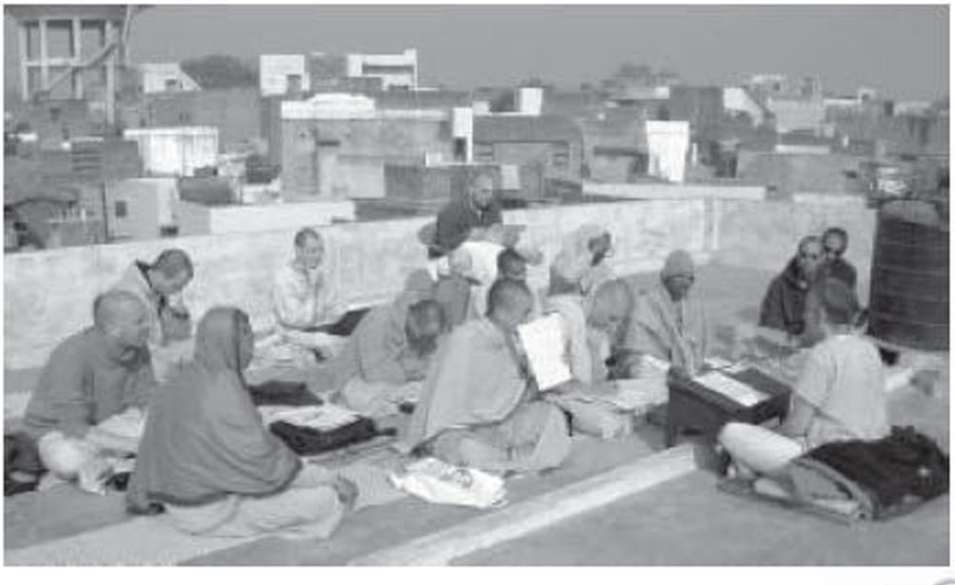
Prasādam means mercy of Kṛṣṇa. I realised that I will receive the mercy of Kṛṣṇa only if I practice patience and tolerance in my life. When I returned to that temple on Bahulāṣṭamī last year, I saw the same *mātāji* and smiled at her. She reciprocated with a smile and, gave me *prasādam* first. When I gave her the money for *prasādam*, she gave me too much change by mistake. I returned that extra money to her and she told me that I was an honest devotee and the others standing nearby agreed with her.

I still remember her lessons of honesty, patience, perseverance, and good behavior.

Pranjal Joshi,
Jaipur

DURING MY SCHOOL DAYS I would always get scared upon hearing that learning never ends. My (mis) conception of learning was limited to academic studies, which was really troublesome for me. What to learn? Why to learn till death? What is the use of such studies? These questions always puzzled my mind.

Then I heard from Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees that we are spirit souls and the nature of the soul is to serve the Lord in the spiritual world. And



here in the material world we learn how to serve the Lord under the expert guidance of the spiritual master. *Learning to serve?* What is this? Generally, we learn to be a master.

But gradually I realized that to remain as a master we need to learn and upgrade continuously, and this eventually brings anxiety, hatred and competition. But learning to be a servant of Lord brings bliss, purity, and satisfaction at the heart. When the entrapped soul goes back home, back to Godhead, it is the perfection of learning. This one important lesson changed my vision to look at the world and life altogether. The world is a place of learning and human form of life is a steppingstone to reunite with the Lord.

Satyananda Dasa.
Aurangabad

I LEARNT THE GREATEST Kṛṣṇa conscious lesson of my life from Śrila Prabhupada. When I watched movies on his life and read *Śrila Prabhupada Lilamṛta*, I realized how much struggle and hardship he underwent to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I learnt that we should readily accept difficulties that the Lord sends our way. His punishments are a reward for us. For example, Krsna took away Śrila Prabhupada's successful business, which helped Śrila Prabhupada to dedicate himself fully to the propagation of Krsna consciousness. We should pray to the Lord, "Oh Lord! If I am a sinner then kindly punish me and purify me so that I can worship and serve You with a pure heart. I don't want to be a sinner; I want to be your unalloyed devotee."

Then whatever purification comes in our way we should accept it as blessings of the Lord.

Kamlesh Mulchandani,
Ulhasnagar

IN YOUR OWN WORDS

Questions for the forthcomming issues

What is the best Kṛṣṇa conscious lesson you've learned from someone else?
Answers will be published in May.

What is your favourite type of devotional service?
Answers will be published in June, July, & August.

Word limit: 150 words
E-mail: ed.btgindia@pamho.net

The oscars...
(Continued from page 23)

one segment to the next. Then there were the tasks of organizing the projector, screen, stage, lighting cues, hosts, presenters, garlands, and script in an Indian rural locale three hours via a precarious and bumpy road from Kolkata. I had to test the plaster mold of Lord Nityananda and bring it to India so that the statuettes could be cast and painted by skilled artisans.

Nothing is ever as easy as it seems, and this was no exception. But Kṛṣṇa sent an army of devotees to my aid.

His Holiness Bhakti Puruṣottama Swami is one of the leaders in Mayapur and organizes the annual ISKCON Mayapur festival, at which the awards ceremony would take place. He grasped the relevance of recognizing media and gave the green light from the first mention of the idea.

Uddhava Gita Dasa, a Brazilian devotee and budding film student, showed up at my house months before the festival to volunteer to help me. Natasha, an enthusiastic Ukranian congregation member, volunteered to come to Mayapur and be one of the onstage hostesses. I had met her the previous year during a festival in Odessa. Giri-Govardhana Dasa, a vigorous Polish transplant already in Mayapur , took charge of getting the "Nityas" cast and finished. For the gala event, Gaṅga Dasa (Italy) coordinated all the contacts and supervised the sound and lighting. Advaita Candra Dasa (New Zealand), Pañcaratna dasa (U.S.A.), and Ṣaḍbhuja Dasa(Australia) all offered their offices, phones, participation, and good will. Most involved was eighteen-year-old Kṛṣṇa Dasa (Russia), who labored numerous late nights re-authoring the show on his laptop. The awards ceremony was the result of the cooperation of devotees from all over the world.

I may not have gotten the Oscar for which I had dreamed, but now I was producing a transcendental version for the pleasure of the Vaiṣṇavas. Instead of working for profit, adoration, and fame in the material world, producers, directors, and editors were being acknowledged for their labors of loving devotion to guru and Kṛṣṇa .

The first Hare Kṛṣṇa Film/Video Festival was on its way to making history.

Who needs an Oscar? In my mind, that mundane statue paled in comparison to the Nityananda award.

FADE OUT

Nṛsiṁhananda Dasa, a disciple of Śrila Prabhupada's, produces, promotes and distributes Kṛṣṇa conscious videos through his company ITV..

HOTEL OR HOSPITAL

TAKE YOUR PICK

by Caitanya Caraṇa Dāsa

"East is east and West is west, and the twain shall never meet," sang English poet, Rudyard Kipling. What is it that is so different between the East and the West? Stated analogically, the modern Western worldview sees this world as a hotel, whereas the ancient Vedic worldview sees it as a hospital. In a hotel, we command; in a hospital, we cooperate. In a hotel, we expect enjoyment; in a hospital, we expect treatment.

HOTEL WORLDVIEW

Most modern people presume this world to be the arena for their planning, executing, and enjoying. Even if such people are nominally religious, they treat God like a cosmic waiter to be ordered by ringing the bell of religious rituals. But even a little experience of life can show that things don't always happen as we want them to. When faced with repeated obstacles or reversals, people become disheartened—all the more so when they expect to command and enjoy as in a hotel. This disappointment may aggravate into chronic depression and even suicidal thought, both of which are rampant in our society. Moreover the hotel worldview is quite dehumanizing. How many hotel-goers love and care for the waiters who are serving them? Similarly when people imagine that others exist only for "waiting" on them—facilitating their enjoyment, they become impersonal, insensitive, impatient and intolerant towards others. This selfish, enjoyment-centred worldview is at the root of deteriorating relationships and rupturing families. Worse still, the frustration resulting from such a worldview may escalate into anger and violence. Also in the hotel worldview, the final truth and end of life—death—defies explanation: if the world is a hotel, then why does death always spoil the party?

HOSPITAL WORLDVIEW

Let's understand the hospital worldview through a story.

Imagine a millionaire's son traveling in a car through a hill. Sud-

denly his car skids and falls hundreds of feet down. Somehow he jumps out of the car before it explodes. Fortunately he falls on a sand dune in the valley. He survives but gets amnesia due to a blow on the head. The tribals residing in the valley rescue him and give him a name and a role in their community. Though a prince, he now slaves as a woodcutter. His millionaire father comes searching for him, but he fails to even identify his own father, what to speak of returning back. His father has to employ a doctor who gives shock treatment to him. Though initially upset by the shock, he eventually recovers from the amnesia. And then he returns back with his father to live happily ever after.

We are all the beloved children of God, who is the king of all kings, the supremely wealthy person. Kṛṣṇa is not just a *lakhpati* (millionaire) or *karodpati* (billionaire); He is *Lakṣmīpati*, the Lord of the Goddess of Fortune. Unfortunately we have fallen from our original home, the spiritual world, down to this material world and are afflicted by spiritual amnesia.

From our birth, society gives us an identity and a function—you are so-and-so and your goal is to become a so-and-so professional. And we operate like programmed robots, struggling for paltry sensual pleasures, breaking the trees of exams and projects and carrying the logs of anxieties and obligations. Kṛṣṇa comes to this world or sends His sons, prophets or devotees to invite us back to our eternal joyful life with Him. But we fail to even recognize our own eternal father, leave alone consider returning back to Him. Kṛṣṇa, being our unconditionally benevalent father loves us too much to take offence at our neglecting or rejecting Him. But our non-cooperation compels Him to take on the role of an expert doctor and treat us through a prudent blend of congenial stimuli and jolting shocks—all ultimately meant to awaken our spiritual memory and reinstate us in our divine glory. The shocks comprise of the threefold material miseries: *adhyatmika kleśa* (mental stress, bodily disorders etc.), *adhidaivika kleśa* (natural disasters, climatic inconveniences etc.), and *adhibhautika kleśa* (quarrels, divorces etc.), and the fourfold material problems—old age, disease, death, and rebirth. Kṛṣṇa doesn't want us to suffer, but if suffering is what is necessary to cure us, like any responsible father, He allows temporary material suffering for our eternal spiritual redemption.

SHOCK TREATMENT

Śrīla Prabhupada, the founder-acarya of the International Society for Kṛṣṇa Conciousness (ISKCON), succinctly states: "The miseries of material existence indirectly serve to remind us of our incompatibility with matter." How? These miseries, though disturbing, impel intelligent people to go to the representatives of God—the sacred scriptures and the saintly teachers. The enlightenment they offer commences the cure for our spiritual amnesia and paves the way for our ultimate spiritual reinstatement as divine princes."

Shock treatment may appear undesirable to the uninformed patient, but the well-informed patient understands that it is not just desirable, but essential, for his ultimate well being. Similarly when we

Shock Treatment

are spiritually well-informed, that is, when we see the Supreme as a doctor and not as a waiter, then we understand that reversal are a part of the divine shock treatment. Even if things are going 'wrong' as per our short-term perception, they are still going 'right' as per the long-term therapeutic plan. Thus the hospital worldview helps us make sense out of reversals and gives us hope, confidence, and strength.

Importantly, shock treatment is not the only way to cure amnesia. If the patient cooperates with the doctor, his dormant memory can be revived by suitable stimuli. Similarly we don't have to be shocked out of our bodily misidentification. If we cooperate with Kṛṣṇa by submissively receiving the spiritual stimulus of His holy name, we awaken to our spiritual identity and glory. The more we accept the memory treatment, the less the doctor needs to use the shock treatment. Similarly, the more we seek shelter and pleasure in the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahamantra, the less will be our material miseries and less will be our disturbance due to whatever miseries are inevitable. Lord Kṛṣṇa proclaims this in the *Bhagavad-gita* (18.58): "If you become conscious of Me, you will pass over all the obstacles of conditioned life by My grace. If, however, you do not work in such consciousness but act through false ego, not hearing Me, you will be lost."

Indeed when we have the right worldview, even death cannot cause us fear, for it becomes another phase in a multi-life treatment plan. If our amnesia is cured, then death becomes a discharge from the hospital so that we can return to our original home in the spiritual world, the kingdom of God. If our treatment is not yet complete, death is like the transfer of the patient to another unit for faster and better treatment.

People all over the world have been misled by the hotel worldview into having unrealistic expectations—and enduring the consequent unbearable frustrations. The balm of the hospital worldview is the vital compass needed to equip people to steadily navigate through the journey of life. Lest we have second thoughts about this fundament and indispensable paradigm shift, the exhortation of eminent British historian Dr Arnold Toynbee can prod us on: "It is already becoming clear that a chapter which had a Western beginning will have to have an Indian ending if it is not to end in the self-destruction of the human race. At this supremely dangerous moment in history, the only way of salvation for mankind is the Indian way."

Caitanya Caraṇa Dasa holds a degree in electronics and telecommunications engineering and serves full-time at ISKCON Pune. To subscribe to his free cyber magazine, visit thespiritualscientist.com

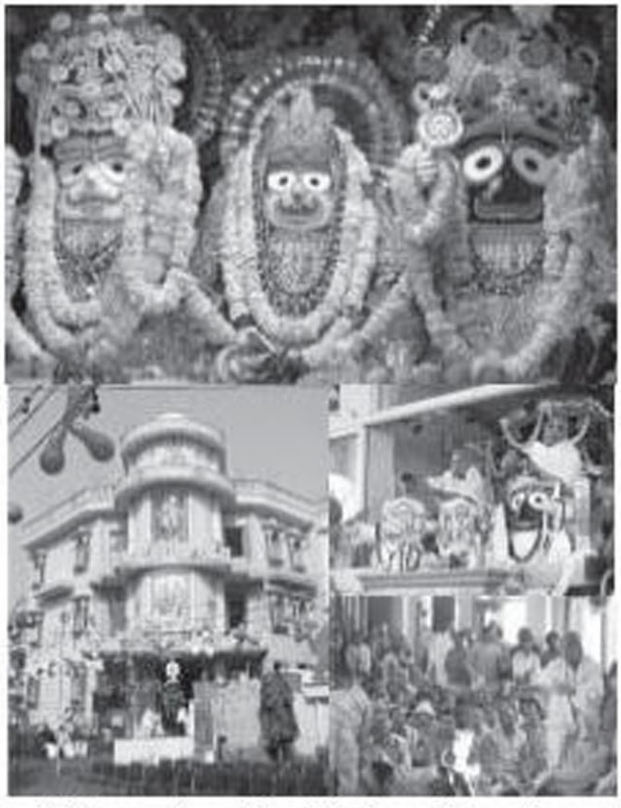
EVERY TOWN AND VILLAGE

A LOOK AT THE WORLDWIDE ACTIVITIES OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS (ISKCON)

TEMPLE OPENINGS

Ghaziabad, Feb 19

As the seventh ISKCON center housing Śrī Śrī Jagannatha, Baladeva, and Subhadra Devi opened at Ghaziabad, a satellite city near Delhi, devotees came closer to fulfilling Śrila Prabhupada's vision for 12 temples in this region.



Glimpses from Ghaziabad temple opening

The installation and inauguration ceremonies took place over three days concluding on Lord Nityananda's appearance day on 19 Feb. A *maha-abhiśeka* of the Deities was performed by His Holiness Gopala Kṛṣṇa Goswami (GBC) and Mahaman Dasa (GBC Zonal Secretary). Over 8000 devotees attended.

Anantapur, Feb 16

A grand temple of Śrī Śrī Radha Parthasarathi was inaugurated at Somaladoddi village near Chennai on NH 7, at a cost of Rs 5 crore. Describing the temple as a boon to the people here, governor of state, Mr. N. D. Tiwari, hoped it would inculcate bhakti among people. He lauded the services of ISKCON in propagating harmony, brotherhood and spirituality. The Minister for Agriculture appreciated the public services of ISKCON like the supply of nutritious food to students of government schools in about 200 villages in and around Tirupati, and agreed to extend the services to Anantapur district.

The function was graced by His Holiness Jayapataka Swami, His Holiness Bhanu Swami, and Satya Gopinatha Dasa.

2ND BTG SNEHA SAMMELAN ORGANISED

On the 17th of February, Pune witnessed a gathering of BTG enthusiasts from all over Maharashtra in the form of the "2nd Jau Devachiya Gava Sneha Sammelan." Like last year, the "affectionate meet"—as it literally means in Marathi—drew around 35 participants who serve in different ways in the distribution and promotion of the magazine. The day being an *Ekadaśi*, the program was inaugurated by melodious *kirtanas* by different devotees. The publishing team then updated the assembly about different important events from the bygone year eg. the BTG Marathon at Kolhapur etc. The hallmark of the program was a visit by His Holiness Jayadvaita Swami Maharaja. Deftly answering different questions posed by devotees, Maharaja very soon created an atmosphere of comfort amongst the gathering. In his address, he admired everyone present for their efforts in furthering the cause of the magazine and urged them to continue with full steam ahead. He assured them that of all the possible rewards, the surest were the blessings of Śrila Prabhupada and this would guarantee them rapid advancement in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The success of the day was clear when, as the meet came to an end, all the devotees seemed inspired and poised to execute their responsibilities with renewed vigour.

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness

CENTRES IN INDIA

Correct as of 31 March 2008

Founder-Acarya: His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

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Imphal, Manipur — Airport Rd., ?95 001/ Tel. (0385) 2215?.

Indore, Madhya Pradesh — 101 Chetak Arch, ? M.G. Road. Tel (0?31) 497?665

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Vaiṣṇava Calendar
1 April - 15 May 2008

2 Apr 2008 Wednesday : Fasting for Papamocani Ekadasi

3 Apr 2008 Thursday : Break fast (Mumbai) 06:31 am - 10:38 am, Śrī Govinda Ghosh – Disappearance

10 Apr 2008 Thursday : Śrī Ramanujacarya – Appearance

13 Apr 2008 Sunday : Beginning of Śalagrama and Tulasi Jala Dana

14 Apr 2008 Monday : Rama Navami: Appearance of Lord Śrī Ramacandra (Fasting till sunset)

16 Apr 2008 Wednesday : Fasting for Kamada Ekadasi

17 Apr 2008 Thursday : Break fast (Mumbai) 06:20 am - 10:32 am, Damanaka-ropana Dvadasi

20 Apr 2008 Sunday : Śrī Balarama Rasayatra, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Vasanta Rasa, Śrī Vamśivadana Ṭhakura – Appearance, Śrī Śyamananda Prabhu – Appearance

27 Apr 2008 Sunday : Śrī Abhirama Ṭhakura – Disappearance

1 May 2008 Thursday : Śrila Vṛndavana Dasa Ṭhakura – Disappearance

2 May 2008 Friday : Fasting for Varuthini Ekadasi

3 May 2008 Saturday : Break fast (Mumbai) 06:10 am - 10:27 am

5 May 2008 Monday : Śrī Gadadhara Paṇḍita — Appearance

8 May 2008 Thursday : Candana Yatra starts (Continues for 21 days)

11 May 2008 Sunday : Jahnu Saptami

13 May 2008 Tuesday : Śrimati Sita Devi (consort of Lord Śrī Rama) – Appearance, Śrī Madhu Paṇḍita – Disappearance, Śrimati Jahnava Devi – Appearance, End of Jala Dana

New Prisons For the Olympic Games—How pessimistic can you get?

I was very surprised—and a moment later not so surprised—to learn that organisers are planning to erect more prison-houses in London, to meet the challenges of a peaceful Olympic games in the year 2012.

As I am writing this piece I learn that the budget for the London Olympics has crossed the 92 billion pound limit and a full one billion pounds are to be spent for security purposes, including the construction of new prisons.

Prisons?

Certainly THAT could be an avoidable expenditure. One can just consider the number of other things like feeding people, constructing houses, schools, hospitals etc that could be done with so much money. But if you ask the organisers they will tell you that in order to ensure that the games proceed safely—without any Munich Olympics type terrorist activity—they need to spend money...and that too on new prisons. These prison facilities would be necessary to put behind bars a minute percentage (hopefully) of those trying to disrupt the games. The organisers are neither "overly pessimistic" or for that matter "cruel" or even "idiots".

The Vedic scriptures declare that the world we live in is actually a prison for the soul. In Sanskrit, the material world is also known as a *durga* or a fort. This fort has a superintendent—Durga Devi. She is the warden of this prison, and it is her job to see that not a single mischief-monger escapes this prison in order to wreak havoc in the free spiritual world. The spiritual world is aptly termed as *Vaikuṇṭha* or a place free from all anxieties.

As prison inmates are a condemned lot, we too are forced to accept three kinds of painful situations: miseries given by other living entities, miseries given by our own body and mind, and miseries given by supernatural forces in the form of earthquakes, floods, fires etc.

The Olympic Games have a definite purpose: to foster the spirit of unity among the participating nations. Similarly God has a definite purpose in constructing this material world. Those living entities who do not want to follow God's laws, but would rather be a law unto themselves have to be put into a location where they would stop being a menace to the law-abiding free citizens. Similarly the games' organisers are interested in curbing the so-called freedom of terrorists and other anti-socials by putting them into prison-houses.

The state considers its citizens to be its parts and parcels, and when a citizen misuses his relative independence, the state puts him under police authority. The life of a citizen outside the prison and the life of a citizen within the prison are not the same. Similarly, the sufferings of the living entities within the prison of material nature cannot be equated with the pastimes of the Supreme Lord which exist in the absolute freedom of *sac cid ananda* or an eternal life full of bliss and knowledge.

No government wants its citizens to act in such a way that they must go to prison and suffer tribulations. Indirectly, the disobedient citizens force the government to construct the prison house. It is not done for the pleasure of the government, which has to spend a great deal of money in constructing and maintaining it. On the contrary, the government would be very glad to demolish prisons altogether, provided there are no disobedient citizens in the state.

In the same way, this material world is created by the Supreme Lord, but the Supreme Lord does not will that living entities be put in it. The living entities themselves make that decision. The residents of this material world are therefore different from those who are eternally engaged in the transcendental pastimes of the Supreme Lord.

The impersonal monists have no information of full-fledged independent life in the eternal spiritual realm. According to them, the spiritual realm is simply void. This is like prisoners thinking that there is no life outside the prison. Life outside of a prison is certainly free from prison activities, but is not devoid of activity.

The soul is by nature eternally active, but the impersonalists try to negate the activities of the soul in the spiritual realm. Thus they misunderstand the miseries of prison life to be the pastimes of the Supreme Lord. This is due to their poor fund of knowledge.

Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahaprabhu has therefore advised that the easiest path to freedom is attained by chanting—

Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare
Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare

- Śyamananda Dasa