

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



The Magazine of the Hare Krishna Movement

January 2010



Real Tricolored  
**INDIAN**

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*Since time immemorial, pilgrims go to the River Ganges for purification and stand half submerged in her waters. In a mood of devotion they take palmfuls of the Ganga's own water and, with supplication and prayers, offer it back to her.*

### 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.

# BACK TO GODHEAD

The Magazine of the  
Hare Krishna Movement



## FOUNDER

(under the direction of His Divine Grace  
Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī  
Prabhupāda) His Divine Grace

A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda

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## GOOFUP WITH GAṆEŚĀ

*Back to Godhead* has indeed set an exemplary standard for all devotees by serving Śrīla Prabhupāda continually. Thus all Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees have deep respect the publication. I have some comments/questions regarding this magazine:

The articles published in *Back to Godhead* should comply with the teachings of Śrīla Prabhupāda. Some caution should have been exercised in selecting articles for the special issue on Lord Gaṇeśa (August 2009) because of the following reasons:

1. Gaṇeśa Caturthī is not displayed in the Vaiṣṇava calendar, and Gaṇeśa worship is not performed in ISKCON. But, here at Parbhani, Maharashtra, during a college preaching program, one of the preachers urged us to recite the story of the Syamantaka jewel on the occasion of Gaṇeśa Caturthī because a reference to the story was published in BTG.

2. Another devotee commented, "If BTG recommends Gaṇeśa worship, then what is wrong with performing it?"

3. Since all the articles published in your magazine are based on Vedic literature, I can't even criticize them. However, Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings are primarily based on *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. In *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Śrīla Nārada Muni has criticized Vyāsadeva for including sections on *karma-kāṇḍa* based on *sakāma karma* (fruitive activities) in the *Vedas* (*jugupsitam dharmakṛte*). He denounced such *karma-kāṇḍa* and glorified pure devotional

service. In the same way, Śrīla Prabhupāda never encouraged such *karma-kāṇḍa* in the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement. But inspired by the articles in your magazine, neophyte devotees will be encouraged to read certain stories on Gaṇeśa Caturthi, like not seeing the moon on certain days, etc.

4. When one account of the appearance of Śrī Gaṇeśa is already prominent, what is the need to present another version?

5. When *Gītā-māhātmya* gives *ekam śāstram* and *eko deva*, how can it be important to explain the glories of Gaṇeśa-puja? Śrīla Prabhupada, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī and Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura have never written such articles, nor have they performed any such worship during their lifetimes. Similarly, we don't find any similar *pujā* in the *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. So, this is a request to the editors that they should first decide whether the articles published are in line with Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings or not. When an author presents his views that are not found in Śrīla Prabhupāda's books, a great confusion is probable on the preaching scene. The existence of different philosophies in Kali-yuga has already created a lot of confusion in the minds of the masses. Therefore, I request the authors of BTG to base their articles on Śrīla Prabhupāda's books to propagate pure unmotivated and uninterrupted devotional service.

I am myself full of faults. If any of my views presented above are

faulty, please let me know.

Dīnānātha Dāsa  
Parbhani, Maharashtra.

OUR REPLY: We appreciate the concern that you have expressed in your well-thought letter. Thank you for writing to us so that we have an opportunity to clarify any unintended confusion that may have resulted among our readers.

1. Gaṇeśa worship is performed by lakhs of Indians. We could have chosen to ask them to stop doing so or ask them to add Kṛṣṇa. We chose the latter. The entire Gaṇeśa issue focused on this theme. We published the Syamantaka jewel story to attract people to read *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Blinded by Kali-yuga, all those who seek light should read *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa give secondary importance to benefits obtained by reading certain sections of the text. These encouragements are to attract people who still harbor material desires. Such recommendations, or *śruti-phala*, are found even in the *Bhāgavatam*, and we have just followed in the footsteps.

We have never explained the glories of Gaṇeśa-pujā. We explained the glories of hearing the Syamantaka jewel story, which are taken straight from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*:

“This narration, rich with descriptions of the prowess of Lord Śrī Viṣṇu, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, removes sinful reactions and bestows all auspiciousness. Anyone who recites, hears or remembers it will drive away his own infamy and sins and attain peace.” (*Bhāg.* 10.57.42)

2. There is no instance of recommending Gaṇeśa worship inde-

pendent of Lord Kṛṣṇa anywhere in this issue. Especially, the kind of public worship going on in Gaṇeśa *paṇḍāls* presently is entirely unacceptable. In an article where there is mention of the proper way of worshipping Gaṇeśa, it was mentioned that we should offer food first to a *śālagrāma* and then to lord Gaṇeśa.

If we find mention in the scriptures of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī worshipping Gaṇeśa, then what is wrong with it? Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī loves Gaṇeśa as Her son, and so there is mention of his praise in the scriptures. Moreover, why ignore Gaṇeśa’s praise and glorification of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in the same article?

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa personally served Sudāmā, seating him on the throne of Dvarakā. He even drank the *carṇāmṛta*! But this has not created any kind of confusion in the Vaiṣṇava community because these devotees never harbor any kind of intention of usurping the position of the Supreme Lord.

3. You are apprehensive that we may be promoting *karma-kāṇḍa* among neophyte devotees. Again, such information is meant to attract the newcomers. For serious students of ISKCON, Śrīla Prabhupāda’s instructions on demigod worship are clear. We respect and worship them wholeheartedly, but do not consider them separate controllers independent from Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is the source of all.

4. While studying the Vedic scriptures, we came across another account of Gaṇeśa’s appearance that had a large section devoted to Kṛṣṇa, so we selected the article. This version mentioned that Mother Pārvatī obtained Gaṇeśa because of worshipping Lord Kṛṣṇa. There is abundant glorification of Lord Kṛṣṇa in this article.

That is why we chose it.

There are different accounts of the appearance of different *avatāras* of Lord too. The devotees of the Lord experience an increase in their faith by reading these different accounts. The conditioned soul understands by reading these different accounts that the Supreme Lord and His servitors are indeed very powerful, and their appearances as well as their activities are beyond human comprehension.

5. You ask us to check if our articles are in line with the teachings of Śrīla Prabhupāda. We do always take care of this, and we feel that we have not deviated from the founder’s instructions on demigod worship. We have only tried to induce new readers to add Kṛṣṇa to their lives. Although the doctrine of *ekam śāstram . . . eko devo* is the highest, we cannot force it suddenly upon those whose faith is at a different level. This special low-priced issue was meant for mass distribution, and for many readers it may be their first contact with Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava philosophy. If they can accept even a part, it will be the beginning of their pure devotional service.

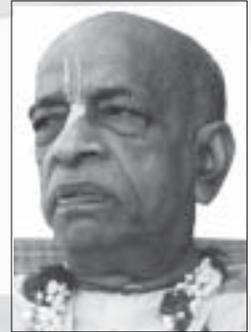
All said and done, your point is well taken. In our future issues, we will surely take extra care to avoid any unintentional ambiguity while presenting topics crucial to the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

*Reply to the letter was written by Śyāmānanda Dāsa.*

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# India



*Bhāratavarṣa is not an ordinary country.  
It is puṇya-bhūmi where Bhagavān comes.*

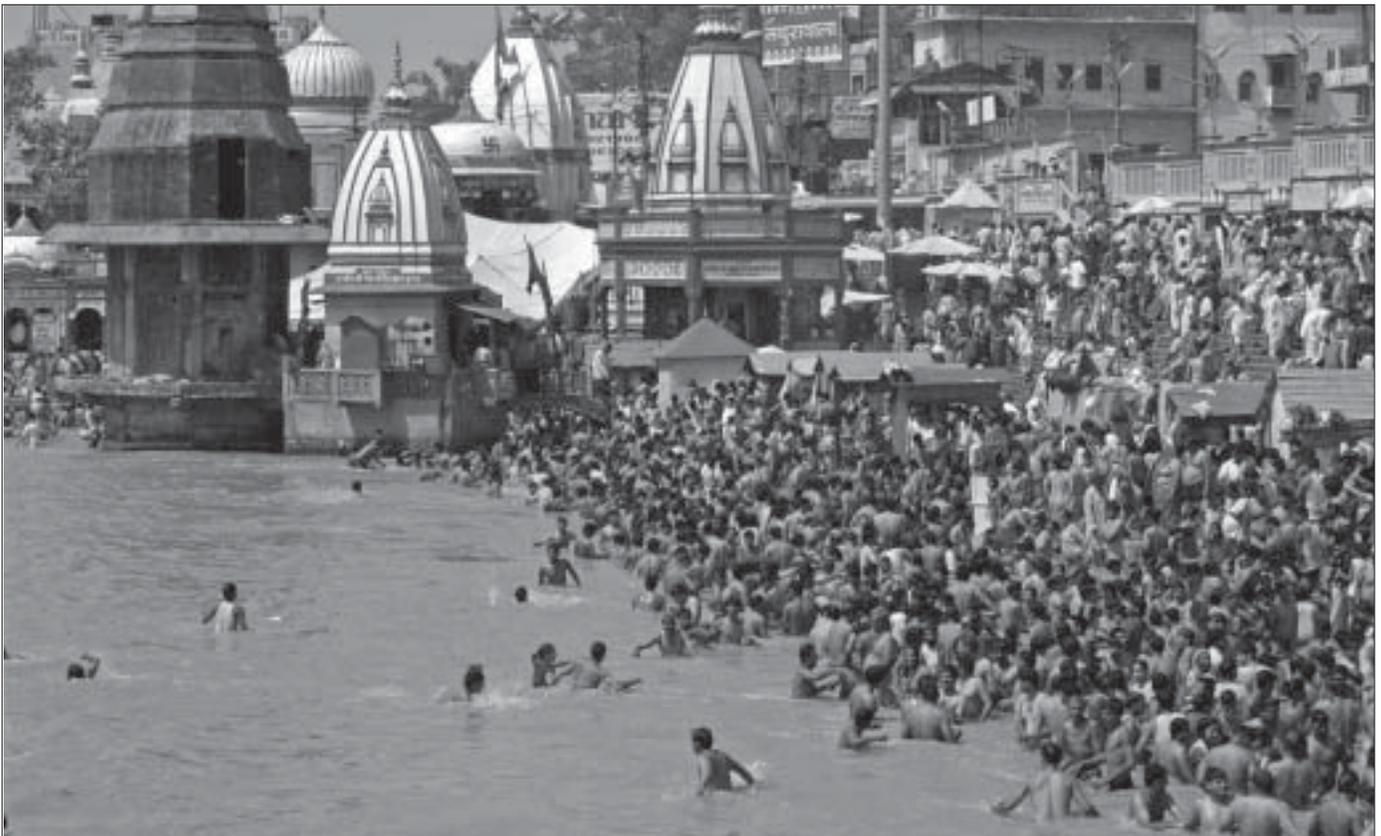
—Śrīla Prabhupāda, *Lecture, Bhuvaneśvara, January 22, 1977*)

## KUMBHA-MELĀ

By culture, by birth, the land of Bhāratavarṣa is *puṇya-bhūmi*. You will still find millions of people coming to take bath in the Kumbha-melā—to take a dip into the Ganges—because they think it

is pious. So the spiritual fluid is flowing through the veins of Indians. Unfortunately the leaders are misguiding them, and they are becoming atheists generally. It is a very regretful situation. (*Lecture in Delhi, November 13, 1973*)

In India the *yogīs*, the transcendentalists or the devotees, all leave home and reside in sacred places such as Prayāga, Mathurā, Vṛndāvana, Hṛṣikeśa and Hardwar (see below). In solitude, they practice yoga where the sacred rivers like the Yamunā and



the Ganges flow. But often this is not possible, especially for Westerners. The so-called yoga societies in big cities may be successful in earning material benefit, but they are not at all suitable for the actual practice of yoga. (*Bhāg.* 6.11-12)

Anyone who has land—in India, at least, any poor man has a certain amount of land—can utilize that for Kṛṣṇa by growing flowers to offer Him.

### MOTHER GANGĀ

As cities are constructed in the modern age with great engineering and architectural craftsmanship, so in days gone by there were neighborhoods called *ṛṣi-kulas*, where great saintly persons resided. In India there are still many magnificent places for spiritual understanding; there are many ṛṣis and saintly persons living in nice cottages on the banks of the Ganges and Yamunā for purposes of spiritual cultivation. (*Bhāg.* 3.22.26)

In India, one can actually see that a person who takes a bath in the Ganges waters daily is almost free from all kinds of diseases. A very respectable *brāhmaṇa* in Calcutta never took a doctor's medicine. Even though he sometimes felt sick, he would not accept medicine from the physician but would simply drink Ganges water, and

he was always cured within a very short time. The glories of Ganges water are known to Indians and to ourselves also. The River Ganges flows by Calcutta. Sometimes within the water there are many stools and other dirty things which are washed away from neighboring mills and factories, but still thousands of men take bath in the Ganges water, and they are very healthy as well as spiritually inclined. That is the effect of Ganges water. The Ganges is glorified because it emanates from the toes of the lotus feet of the Lord. Similarly, if one takes to the service of the lotus feet of the Lord, or takes to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, he is immediately cleansed of the many dirty things which have accumulated in his innumerable births.

### CHINA

While preparing this commentary on this particular stanza of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* we have a crisis

before us. Our neighboring friend China has attacked the border of India with a militaristic spirit. We have practically no business in the political field, yet we see that previously there were both China and India, and they both lived peacefully for centuries without ill feeling. The reason is that they lived those days in an atmosphere of God consciousness, and every country, over the surface of the world, was God-fearing, pure-hearted and simple, and there was no question of political diplomacy. There is no cause of quarrel between the two countries China and India over land which is not very suitable for habitation, and certainly there is no cause for fighting on this issue. But due to the age of quarrel, Kali, which we have discussed, there is always a chance of quarrel on slight provocation. This is due not to the issue in question, but to the polluted atmosphere of this age: systematically there is pro-



*Wars are not because of issues but because of polluted atmosphere of this age.*

paganda by a section of people to stop glorification of the name and fame of the Supreme Lord. Therefore, there is a great need for disseminating the message of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* all over the world. It is the duty of every responsible Indian

people in general will follow them.

### DRAMATIC PERFORMANCES

Even one hundred years ago in India, all dramatic performances were centered around the superhu-

the common man. The genealogists would give account completely of the descendants of a particular family. Even at the present moment the guides in the pilgrimage sites of India submit a complete account of genealogical tables before a newcomer. This wonderful act sometimes attracts more customers to receive such important information. (*Bhāg.* 1.11.20)

### RĀMA-RĀJYA

In India the people hanker after *rāma-rājya* because the Personality of Godhead was the ideal king, and all other kings or emperors in India controlled the destiny of the world for the prosperity of every living being who took birth on the earth. (*Bhāg.* 1.12.4)

### DUTY OF THE STATE

... [A]n irresponsible life is

adopted by the people in the age of Kali because of a sinful desire to condemn brahminical culture, God consciousness and cow protection, for which the state is responsible. The state must employ revenue to advance these three items and thus educate the populace to prepare for death. The state which does so is the real welfare state. The state of India should better follow the examples of Mahārāja Parikṣit, the ideal executive head, than to imitate other materialistic states which



*Manipuri dancers depict pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa.*

to broadcast the transcendental message of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* throughout the world to do the supermost good as well as to bring about the desired peace in the world. Because India has failed in her duty by neglecting this responsible work, there is so much quarrel and trouble all over the world. We are confident that if the transcendental message of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is received only by the leading men of the world, certainly there will be a change of heart, and naturally the

man activities of the Supreme Lord. The common people would be verily entertained by the performances of dramas, and *yātrā* parties played wonderfully on the superhuman activities of the Lord. Thus even the illiterate agriculturist would be a participant in the knowledge of Vedic literature, despite a considerable lack of academic qualifications. Therefore, expert players in drama, dancers, singers, speakers, etc., are required for the spiritual enlightenment of

have no idea of the kingdom of Godhead, the ultimate goal of human life. Deterioration of the ideals of Indian civilization has brought about the deterioration of civic life, not only in India but also abroad. (Bhāg. 1.19.4)

In India, *kṣatriya* kings are still called *siṅgh*, which means “lion.” Unless rogues, thieves and other demoniac people in a state are afraid of the executive head, who rules the kingdom with a strong hand, there cannot be peace or prosperity in the state. (Bhāg. 4.16.23)

### SEEING THE LORD

To see the Lord is a great festive occasion undoubtedly, as was considered by the metropolitan ladies of Dvārakā. This is still followed by the devout ladies of India. Especially during the days of the Jhulana



Indian women throng up in large numbers to worship the Lord.

and Janmāṣṭamī ceremonies, the ladies of India still throng up in the greatest number at the temple of the Lord, where His transcendental eternal form is worshiped. (Bhāg. 1.11.24)

### KṚṢṆA DOLLS FOR KIDS

Mahārāja Parikṣit also used to play with Kṛṣṇa dolls in his childhood. In India the children in good families are still given dolls of the Lord like Rāma and Kṛṣṇa, or sometimes the demigods, so that they may develop the aptitude of service to the Lord. By the grace of the Lord we were given the same opportunity by our parents, and the beginning of our life was based on this principle. (Bhāg. 3.2.2)

### MUSIC FOR THE LORD

It is stated here that early in the morning musicians used to sing with musical instruments about the glories of the Lord. The Emperor, with his family, personally used to hear about the pastimes of the Supreme Person. This custom is still prevalent in India in some royal

families and temples. Professional musicians sing with *śahnāis*, and the sleeping members of the house gradually get up from their beds in a pleasing atmosphere. Even at bedtime, the singers sing songs in

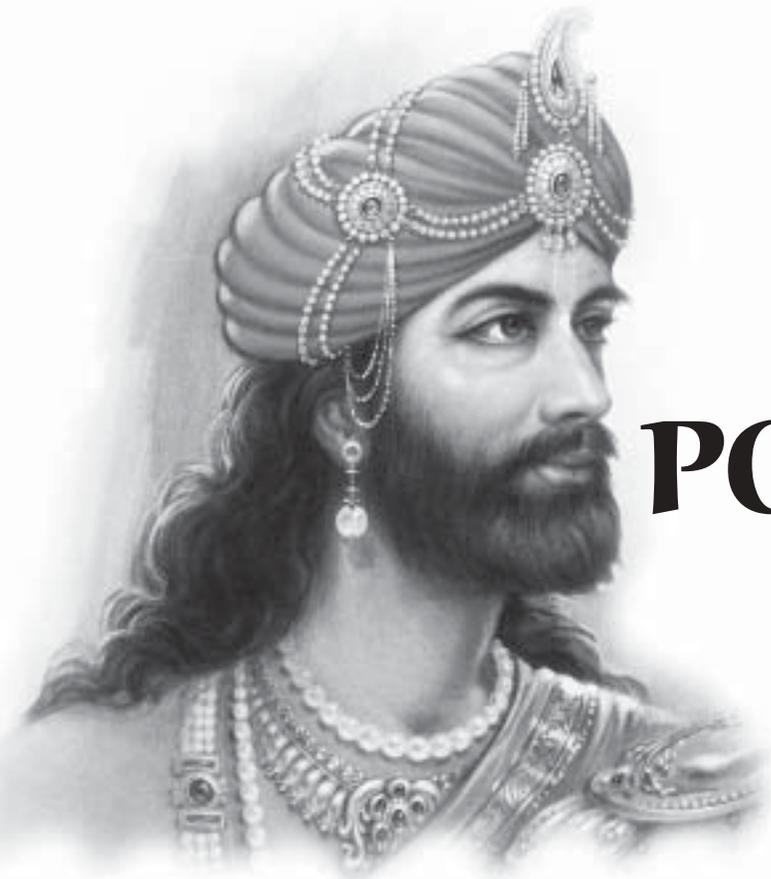
relation to the pastimes of the Lord, with *śahnāi* accompaniment, and the householders gradually fall asleep remembering the glories of the Lord. In every house, in addition to the singing program, there is an arrangement for *Bhāgavatam* lectures in the evening; family members sit down, hold Hare Kṛṣṇa *kīrtana*, hear narrations from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and *Bhagavad-gītā* and enjoy music before going to bed. The atmosphere created by this *saṅkīrtana* movement lives in their hearts, and while sleeping they also dream of the singing and glorification of the Lord. In such a way, perfection of Kṛṣṇa consciousness can be attained.

### CITY PLANNING

Before the reign of King Pṛthu there was no planned arrangement for different cities, villages, pasturing grounds, etc. Everything was scattered, and everyone constructed his residential quarters according to his own convenience. However, since King Pṛthu plans were made for towns and villages. (Bhāg. 4.18.32)

#### Purport

From this statement it appears that town and city planning is not new but has been existing since the time of King Pṛthu. In India we can see regular planning methods evident in very old cities. In *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* there are many descriptions of such ancient cities. Even five thousand years ago, Lord Kṛṣṇa’s capital, Dvārakā, was well planned, and similar other cities—Mathurā and Hastināpura (now New Delhi)—were also well planned. Thus the planning of cities and towns is not a modern innovation but was existing in bygone ages. ❀



# A SAINT among POLITICIANS

*Providing inspiration for the  
world's largest democracy.*

by Vrajavihārī Dāsa

*“We say God’s on our side but the more important question to ask is are we on God’s side...”*

—George Washington

**D**emocracy is supposed to be ‘by the people, of the people, and for the people,’ but I fear it may soon be redefined as ‘buy’ the people, ‘off’ the people, and ‘far’ (from) the people,” exclaimed Suresh, a 25-year-old man I met while returning to the temple from an outstation program. He was disappointed that India, the world’s largest democracy, recorded just 35-50% polling in the recent elections. Suresh also noted that over 150 of the members elected to parliament have criminal cases against them. “The meaning of elections is lost, democracy is in peril, and we have no inspiration to look up to.”

## MAHĀTMĀ VIDURA, A SPIRITUAL LEADER

Back at the temple, I reflected on the comments of Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, the honorable former President of India, who revealed his inspiration to be an unsung hero of ancient India—Mahatma Vidura, a minister at the kingdom of Hastināpura. Dr. Kalam even composed a poem extolling Vidura’s glories.

Vidura was born of a maidservant at the royal palace of Hastināpura (now Delhi), the hot-seat of intriguing politics. His astute wisdom and genuine concern for the Kuru family—the rulers of Hastināpura—earned him the position of a minister. Dhṛtarāṣṭra, although older of the two brothers who inherited the kingdom, was blind from birth and thus disqualified to be the emperor himself. However, he ruled the

kingdom on behalf of his brother Pāṇḍu who went to the forest to perform penances. After the untimely death of Pāṇḍu while in the forest, Dhṛtarāṣṭra eyed the throne, wanting to deprive the sons of Pāṇḍu (Pāṇḍavas)—the legitimate heirs—from inheriting the kingdom. He wished that his evil son, Duryodhana, takes over the kingdom. Meanwhile Duryodhana devised one sinister plan after another to kill the virtuous Pāṇḍavas, and Dhṛtarāṣṭra silently approved the plans.

Vidura was a pure devotee of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Kṛṣṇa, and he carried out the Lord’s will by serving His devotees, the Pāṇḍavas. Vidura was pained to see terrible injustices repeatedly inflicted upon the Pāṇḍavas. He used his political acumen to help the Pāṇḍavas secretly escape from a house that Duryodhana had

planned to set fire to, with an intention to burn them to death. While he revealed his love for the Lord by serving the Pāṇḍavas, Vidura also revealed his fearlessness in confronting Duryodhana and his 99 brothers. Amid the cruel ministers and crafty friends of Duryodhana, Vidura stood tall in character and integrity. He strongly voiced his disapproval of Duryodhana's nefarious plans and repeatedly implored Dhṛtarāṣṭra to abandon his wicked son. Vidura warned of the destruction of the whole family due to Duryodhana's atrocities against Kṛṣṇa's pure devotees, the Pāṇḍavas.

Through a cheating gambling match, Duryodhana banished the Pāṇḍavas to a thirteen-year exile. Later, when the Pāṇḍavas returned and demanded their rightful share, Duryodhana openly refused. A war seemed imminent. As Vidura's desperate appeals fell on deaf ears, Kṛṣṇa, in a last attempt to avert bloodshed, came as a peace messenger on behalf of the Pāṇḍavas. Duryodhana foolishly and unsuccessfully tried to arrest Kṛṣṇa, and while leaving, Kṛṣṇa declared that the destruction of Kauravas was now certain. Vidura again urged Dhṛtarāṣṭra to heed to good counsel. Dhṛtarāṣṭra always consulted Vidura, knowing him to be a genuine well-wisher of the family. However due to weak heartedness, coupled with his spiritual blindness, he did not accept Vidura's counsel but tacitly supported his wicked son.

Vidura's untiring efforts to serve the kingdom were misunderstood by Duryodhana. In the royal assembly, Vidura was humiliated, condemned for disloyalty to the throne, and accused of being a

traitor in the guise of a friend. He was ordered to leave the kingdom at once. Vidura's decades of faithful service, far from being acknowledged, leave alone being appreciated, was rewarded with ungratefulness and insult.

### VIDURA'S RESPONSE TO A CRISIS

Vidura was hurt, yet with his devotional intelligence he saw the Lord's plan at work. He saw Duryodhana as a victim of lust for power, and a puppet in the hands of the Lord's illusory energy, *māyā*. He saw himself as a fortunate recipient of the Lord's mercy, and thus silently thanked Duryodhana for this act. The banishment was a blessing; it gave him a chance to

enthusiastic even as the political weather gets turbulent by the day. The inner strength and wisdom that naturally develop by sincere practice of Kṛṣṇa consciousness keep the devotee serene and happy at all times. In stark contrast, the recent elections saw the ousted ministers cry foul and openly hurl accusations at each other.

While modern politicians' careers are tainted with corrupt and immoral practices, and their characters shrouded in suspicion, Vidura's example sets the standard for all leaders to be God conscious. Śrīla Prabhupāda, the founder of ISKCON, repeatedly expressed the need for political administrators to be spiritual practitioners. He even suggested to Indira Gandhi, the

**The attraction to Kṛṣṇa gave Vidura not only the strength to stand for truth, but also the ability to tolerate personal injustices.**

practise exclusive devotional service to Kṛṣṇa, without any hindrance. He soon left on a pilgrimage to holy places to worship Kṛṣṇa.

The attraction to Kṛṣṇa gave Vidura not only the strength to stand for truth but also the ability to tolerate personal injustices. During his travels he met Uddhava, a close associate of Kṛṣṇa. Rather than lament at his personal tragedy, Vidura expressed eagerness to hear from Uddhava the activities of Lord Kṛṣṇa. This excitement to know about Kṛṣṇa kept him happy during the terrible crisis of his life.

Vidura's example shows that cultivating an intimate connection with Kṛṣṇa helps us hold on to sacred principles, and remain

former Prime Minister of India, to hold *kīrtanas*, chanting of the holy names of the Lord, in Parliament, and help ministers develop God consciousness.

### RENUNCIATION V/S SERVICE TO SOCIETY

Is Vidura, by his renunciation, indicating that a leader should give up his service to his people and go to the forest instead? No! Vidura, even in his travels, constantly thought of the welfare of the general populace that has become averse to devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa. His heart burned in compassion for the suffering people. During his travels he also met Maitreya Ṛṣi, another great sage, and discussed with him the

methods for spiritual awakening of the misguided masses. Thus a spiritual leader, whether living in the forest or at a palace, carries the spirit of service in his heart, and offers the best he can, to bring people closer to God.

A sincere devotee's practice of

returned to the palace, not to stake any claim on his share of the property, but to educate his blind brother Dhṛtarāṣṭra. Despite suffering the pains of old-age, and the death of his hundred sons, Dhṛtarāṣṭra continued to seek material comforts, living at the

attachments and practice devotional service. Vidura's words, though apparently harsh and sarcastic, came from his compassionate heart. His speech acted like a surgeon's scalpel that cuts only to heal. Vidura's words cut Dhṛtarāṣṭra's material attachments, and restored his spiritual vision and determination. That very night the blind Dhṛtarāṣṭra secretly left the palace to pursue God consciousness and eventually achieved a spiritually exalted destination.

Earlier when humiliated and banished, it appeared Vidura didn't get much success in his political career, yet now by being compassionate even to one who passively watched his humiliation, he reveals the real understanding of success—to offer the best you can as a servant of all. Vidura's loyalty and faith in God should humble us, especially

those who abandon ideological loyalties and switch parties for better career and monetary prospects.



*Vidura instructs Dhṛtarāṣṭra and his wife Gāndhārī on moral and spiritual values and (below) leads them into the forest to pursue self-realization.*

Kṛṣṇa consciousness softens his heart with emotions of love and compassion towards all living entities. This is because a devotee sees all beings as parts and parcels of his dear Lord, Kṛṣṇa. Vidura's selfless service and unparalleled compassion reached its perfection when he returned to Hastināpura after the war at Kurukṣetra.

In the fratricidal war, the Kauravas were annihilated and Pāṇḍavas, directed by Kṛṣṇa, got back their rightful share. The Pāṇḍavas, however, continued to care for Dhṛtarāṣṭra. Vidura

house of the very men whom he plotted to kill his entire life. Vidura chastised Dhṛtarāṣṭra and ordered him to renounce worldly



## BLENDING COURAGE WITH HUMILITY

Vidura's exemplary renunciation and forthrightness was perfectly blended with humility. Despite being an intimate associate of Kṛṣṇa, he considered himself lowly and unqualified to be a recipient of the Lord's mercy. When ostracized by Duryodhana, he could have immediately gone to Dvārakā, Lord Kṛṣṇa's headquarters. Instead he visited other holy places to associate with saintly devotees and hear about Kṛṣṇa from them. He felt contaminated by the sins of murky politics at Hastināpura and sought to purify himself first before seeking a direct audience with Kṛṣṇa.

A devotee's humility is most endearing to Kṛṣṇa's heart. Kṛṣṇa is not the property of the rich, educated or beautiful people. He

reserves the right of not being exposed to those devoid of humility and devotion. However if a devotee is simple and surrendered to the Lord's will, Kṛṣṇa is purchased. Earlier, whenever Kṛṣṇa came to Hastināpura, He regularly visited Vidura's residence, even as the cunning Duryodhana offered royal hospitality to woo Kṛṣṇa on his side. Kṛṣṇa ignored all of Duryodhana's reception and happily accepted Vidura's simple offering of love.

Humility is the hallmark of a true leader. A humble person always takes the position of a servant of the Lord and all living entities, and in this consciousness, executes his spiritual and worldly responsibilities. Vidura's tireless efforts in the mood of a servant eventually bore fruit as he successfully redeemed his wayward brother.

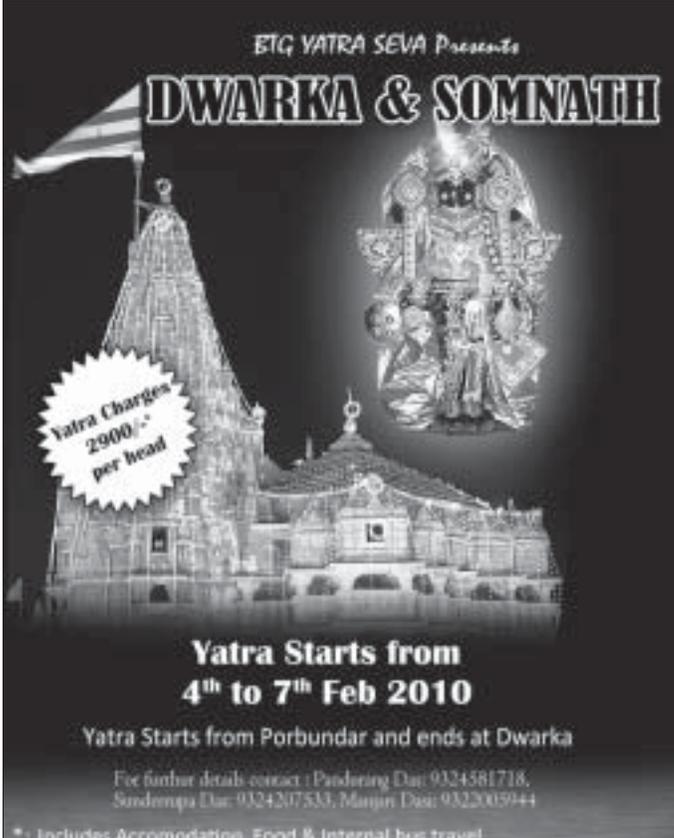
Our "noble" modern politician also claims to be a servant of the masses and begs for votes before elections. On rising to power, however, he furthers his own political ambitions and ignores the common man—only to remember him again before the next elections. No wonder, Indians love to hate politicians.

Vidura's example is thus a sobering reminder that life will present many challenges. At such times, remembrance of Kṛṣṇa, living by sacred principles, and a humble service attitude can keep us happy and lend meaningful purpose to our lives. ☺

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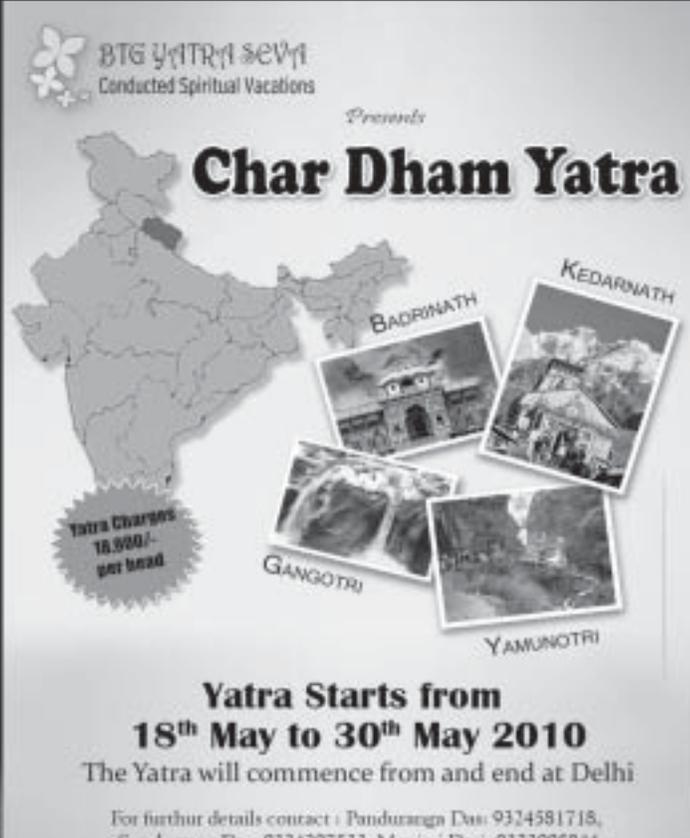
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# Real Tricolored INDIAN

*Śrīla Prabhupāda and his movement have fulfilled  
the real import of the Indian tricolor.*

by Yugāvatāra Dāsa

**A**s India approaches 26 January, the sale of the Indian flag in the market reaches its peak. The tricolored flag, for which many freedom fighters and soldiers gave their lives, many non-resident Indians drape it over their overseas homes—we salute it two times a year, on 15 August and 26 January. But do we really ponder over what these colors represent?

## WHAT THE COLORS REPRESENT?

The saffron color on the Indian flag represents renunciation and spiritual culture, considered to be the highest quality in India by many. It is part of the real culture of India. Even the kings used to stand up when a renunciant would visit them. It is said that if one's son takes up the *sannyāsa* order, even his father must offer him obeisances. Today India has lost this culture. Son does not respect his father and parents don't take efforts to instill this rich culture in the minds of their children. Few people respect the renunciants and the principle of

renunciation. Materialistic culture has taken over India and has tainted the saffron on the tricolor.

The next color on the tricolor is white which represents peace. Where is the peace? Everyday we hear of riots, murders, and curfews. There are fights between states, fights between communities, and fights within families. The whole year we hear of terrorist attacks: bomb blasts, massacres, and shoot-outs. The epitome of terror was the attack on Mumbai. Forget social peace, even mental peace is missing.

The green color on the flag signifies the green revolution in India. With the concrete jungle prevalent in the cities, it's very difficult to find the "green." Previously, farmers would work all day in the farm, and in the evening, they would gather to hear stories from the *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa*. When they would hear the love between Rāma and Bharata, who were offering each other the kingdom of the world, it would create selflessness in their hearts. In this way, they would re-

main in harmony and help each other.

But nowadays murders related to property issues are rife. Many farmers commit suicide as the rains don't come on time or the rains come anytime. Irregular rains are a cumulative reaction of the sins society commits, such as abortions, killing cows and other innocent animals for meat, etc. The farmer and the farming occupation suffer in this whole process. During the reign of Yudhiṣṭhira Mahārāja, it would rain on time and just enough for the needs of the entire society.

The *aśoka* wheel on the flag indicates progress. I really don't know what progress they are talking about. The population, unemployment, and inflation are progressively increasing. If this is progress, then, yes, we are "progressing." Therefore, many Indians are progressively leaving this country and going overseas. When we visit foreign countries, we find the Indians there embracing the materialistic culture leaving behind the rich Indian heritage.



(From top to bottom) Śrīla Prabhupāda promoted spiritual culture, universal brotherhood, and eco-farming, thus fulfilling all imports of the tricolor.

Śrīla Prabhupāda was one of those few Indians who carried the rich holy Indian culture and heritage with him. When I think of the colors of the Indian flag, I can only think of Śrīla Prabhupāda as the real representative of tricolored India. In regard to the saffron color, Śrīla Prabhupāda taught all of us to renounce the dirty sense gratification and live like cultured human beings. For the white color, representing peace, Śrīla Prabhupāda gave us the supreme peace formula: to accept Kṛṣṇa as our eternal father and all living beings as our brothers and sisters. Where then is the question of terrorism? He also promoted the green revolution through the farm communities he established all over the world. He taught us that real progress and advancement is to show all the wandering living beings the way back home, back to Godhead. Which other Indian is preaching these principles represented on our Indian tricolored flag? So next time you salute the Indian flag, remember the divine principles it signifies and also Śrīla Prabhupāda who took these principles all over the world. He is a real Indian who lived by the instructions of Lord Caitanya:

*bhārata-bhūmite haila manuṣya-jaṅma yāra  
jaṅma sārthaka kari' kara para-upakāra*

“One who has taken his birth as a human being in the land of India [Bhārata-varṣa] should make his life successful and work for the benefit of all other people.” (Cc. Ādi 9.41)

Śrīla Prabhupāda used to say, “I am just one Indian and see how much I have done. If all of you join me we can make the whole world Kṛṣṇa conscious.”

So come on Indians, you have seen many die to keep the tricolor afloat. Now let us live by the three colors. 🌀

*Yugāvatāra Dāsa is a lecturer in Anatomy in a medical college in Mumbai. He is a regular contributor to BTG.*

# IS DESTINY IN YOUR HAND?

*Are we the makers of our destiny or is life pre-destined? Find out here . . . .*

by Caitanya Carāṇa Dāsa



In the *Mahābhārata*, Vidura explained to Dhṛtarāṣṭra, “Destiny determines the consequences of our actions, not our actions themselves.” This means that we are not like programmed robots that have no free will, or no choice. Our past karma does determine what will happen in our life, but it does not determine how we will react to it.

Destiny is something like a weather forecast on a journey. A weather forecast can tell us whether our journey from one place to another is going to be snowy or sunny. But it does not determine what we do during the journey.

With respect to destiny, there are two schools of thought—*karmavāda* and *daivavāda*. *Karmavāda* means to think, “By my karma I will be successful. If I work hard enough and smart enough, then I will become the next Bill Gates. By my sweat and muscles, I will succeed.” But if you look at the reality of life, so many people work hard and not all of them are successful. Therefore *karmavāda*, the idea that everything depends on my actions, brings frustration and the people who follow this doctrine tend to develop an inferiority complex because in reality it is not our action alone that determines results.

Many times, we feel sorry when we study hard but don’t get good marks. But if we are honest, we will admit that there are times in our life when we don’t study very much other than the few hours before exam and still get good marks. So the law of karma works both ways. Sometimes due to our past good karma we get good reactions even when we don’t do proper action.

On the other hand, *daivavāda*

means to think “everything is determined by destiny, what can I do?” Dhṛtarāṣṭra was trying to use *daivavāda* to justify his inaction when Duryodhana was doing atrocities on the Pāṇḍavas. Vidura told him, “Stop your son Duryodhana from waging war against the Pāṇḍavas. Let him accept Kṛṣṇa’s peace proposal.” Dhṛtarāṣṭra replied, “No, if it is a will of destiny, then who am I, a tiny mortal, to stop the will of almighty destiny?” Vidura reminded him, “You have your duty; you have the freedom to choose to do your duty or not. So you should try to stop your son to the best of your capacity.”

Many western thinkers and westernized Indians misunderstand the Vedic philosophy. They think that

actions of past life. For example, the sowing of seeds and the ploughing of fields is the karma of the farmer. But whether it will rain sufficiently or not is the *daiva*. Simply by sowing the seeds and ploughing the fields there will be no harvest unless there is sufficient rain. Similarly, simply by sufficient rains, without sowing the seeds and ploughing the fields, there will be no harvest. Therefore, the Vedic scriptures explain that you must just do your duty, the right karma, and not bother about the *daiva* part. Not bothering about *daiva* means not letting our destiny discourage us from doing our duty, whatever it is. This is so because if we do our karma now, it will give fruits if *daiva* is favorable now. But even if *daiva*

## Destiny determines the consequences of our actions, not our actions themselves.

the Vedic philosophy is fatalistic because everything is predestined, and thus this notion preempts any purposeful activity. But actually, Indians were never lazy. The world’s biggest poem is the epic *Mahābhārata*, which has 110,000 verses. This is seven times bigger than the world’s next two biggest poems—the *Illiad* and *Odyssey* combined together. Could lazy people have composed such a massive masterpiece? Literature, architecture, art, and even science and mathematics had reached great heights in Vedic times. All this cannot be the products of lazy people. Thus, Vedic philosophy is not *daivavādi*.

The real Vedic understanding is that the results of our actions are determined both by our actions of this life and the reactions of the

is unfavorable now, then this right karma is still creating the favorable *daiva* for the future. Therefore there is no reason to get discouraged or disheartened while performing one’s prescribed duty.

It is important to note that even if a person does good karma, that good karma will bring good reactions and this means he has to still stay in the material world to enjoy those good reactions. For example, if somebody offers free water taps in charity, that is certainly good karma, but the reaction for it is that he has to take another birth in which he will never suffer from shortage of water. He might take birth near a lake or a river. Similarly, if somebody gives school textbooks in charity, then in his next life he might become the owner of

a printing factory. But birth in the material world means he has to grow old, get diseased, has to die, and has to suffer the three-fold miseries of material existence.

Thus, even by good karma we don't get out of the material world, because good karma is not necessarily godly karma or *akarma*. As long as we are forgetful of God, we stay on in the material world. The real way to come out of this material world, which is the place of suffering, is by developing our *bhakti*, which is actually *akarma*.

### EMPOWERMENT BY KNOWLEDGE

**Social:** The understanding of karma has a lot of bearing on the present state of society. Only when we understand karma will the call to morality have any meaning.

Imagine you come to a city where it reads, "Welcome to our city. There is no police force in this city; please follow the laws." Do you think anybody will follow the laws? Nobody will. Today's society has become like that. The legal system is known to be weak and corrupt. People think, "If I am clever enough, influential enough or cunning enough, then I can do whatever I want, and I can get away with it." So if we want morality in society, we need to educate people to understand the law of karma. Then and then alone will the call to morality, or the call to ethics, have any meaning.

That's why it is said that fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, just like for a child, fear of his father is gen-

erally the main impetus for him to study. How many of us have been chastised by our parents and forced to study? Almost everyone, sometime or the other. At that time, we didn't find it pleasant, but later on we appreciated our parents for it. If at that time we wouldn't have studied, we would have been in trouble. So here it is seen that fear is very often an impetus for doing our duty. Similarly, if there is no proper understanding of the law of karma and the fear of the karmic reactions, most people will have no impetus to do good karma.

**Individual:** Perhaps even more important is that the understanding of the law of karma helps us to make sense of our present condition and gives us the strength to face suffering. Actually, a person

front and back without knowing from where the next blow is coming and why. At any moment, one can be put into such situations for which one is left groping for answers for questions like "Why me, why now or why this?"

When we become well versed with the science of karma, it's like the blindfold is removed. It's a big relief.

When I was in a hospital for several months due to sickness, I was looking at other patients and talking to them. One of the things they couldn't understand and was emotionally crushing them was, "All my relatives and friends are happy; they are in their homes, they are in their parties and enjoying life (nobody is really enjoying life actually, but that is the illusion). Why am I suffering alone here?" This



*A person without spiritual knowledge is like a person who is blindfolded and is beaten from all sides.*

without spiritual knowledge is like a person who is blindfolded and is beaten from top, bottom, left, right,

thought crushes people completely when they face tough situations in life. But for me as a devotee, I knew

that it was just my karma, “Just let me endure it and it will be over.”

In this way, the knowledge of the law of karma helps us to make sense out of our suffering and face it with calmness.

Secondly, it helps us prepare for the future with confidence. It is not that just by knowing about karma, we will become free from suffering. But we become like a sick patient who has understood what the disease is and how to cure it. The pain is still there, but it is going to decrease. But for the person who doesn't know the cure, his pain is going to increase and, on top of that, he will feel helpless and dejected. But a knowledgeable person knows sooner or later all the sufferings will come to an end.

Thus, the science of karma is not a science of condemnation; it is science of redemption. Its message is not “You are sinful, so suffer.” But its message is, “Whatever be your past karma for which you are suffering now, just surrender to God and His grace will come upon you, and you will be saved.”

## FREEDOM BY BHAKTI

Beyond good karma, there is *akarma*, devotional service, which brings the ultimate freedom from karmic entanglement. Let's see how. Devotional service provides us with four great gifts:

### 1. Discrimination of right and wrong

When we practice devotional service, the Lord as the Paramātmā in our heart grants us the knowledge to make the right choices. All of us can, at some time or the other, hear the voice of conscience (*viveka-buddhi* in Sanskrit). When we start doing something wrong, then the voice from inside warns, “Don't do this.” If you want to do

something right, this voice says, “Yes, do this now.” So, when we chant the holy name of Kṛṣṇa, when we practice devotional service, this inner voice becomes stronger and it guides us to make the right choices in life. Thus devotional service can grant us the knowledge to gradually become disentangled from all karma.

### 2. Determination to follow right and avoid wrong

Devotional service saves us from doing further bad karma and the craving to do bad karma.

Chanting of the holy names gives us the inner satisfaction that enables us to say no to all the sinful pleasures of this world. Thus, we not only know the right choices, but we also get the willpower to make those right choices.

### 3. Minimization of sinful reactions

Certain reactions are going to come to us from the past. But devotional service helps us minimize those reactions. For devotees, the Lord gives just a token reaction instead of the complete one. That token is given so that the devotee does not forget the miserable nature of this world.

### 4. Inner strength to face suffering

Whatever the residual karma that comes upon us, devotional service grants us the strength to tolerate that suffering. One of the names of Kṛṣṇa is *Karuṇā-nidhi*, reservoir of compassion. Our *ācaryas* give an example of how

Kṛṣṇa gives us strength to endure our sufferings. When a child is going to school, the mother knows, “Today my child has not done his homework properly and the teacher is going to beat him on his hand with the stick.” The mother doesn't want the child to be beaten and at the same time wants the child to be disciplined. So she sends the child to school, but gives him thick gloves to wear. When the teacher beats him, he feels the impact but he doesn't feel the pain. Similarly, when a devotee is supposed to get suffering because of his

**The knowledge of the law of karma helps us to make sense out of our suffering and face it with calmness.**

misdeeds from material nature (who is like the teacher), Kṛṣṇa (who is like the mother) gives His devotees His holy name, chanting which gives them the strength to tolerate and transcend their pain. So externally a devotee may seem to be in pain, but internally because of his remembrance of the holy name, he doesn't feel the suffering. And the more advanced a devotee is, the more he can experience the reality of this protection from Kṛṣṇa.

In conclusion, irrespective of our past karma, the spiritually scientific process of devotional service is the best path to the highest happiness in this life and the next. 🌐

*Caitanya Carāṇa Dāsa 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](http://thespiritualscientist.com)*

# The God Logic

*An engineer brings out the science behind the culture of devotion.*

by Abhijit Tolley

I was sitting in my lab in the basement of the Computer Science Department in IIT Mumbai. Aditya walked in, as if in a trance, and sat down in front of his computer without even noticing me. After half an hour or so, he was still in his reverie.

“Aditya!” I called out from across the lab.

“Oh! Hi! You are here. I have been looking for you.”

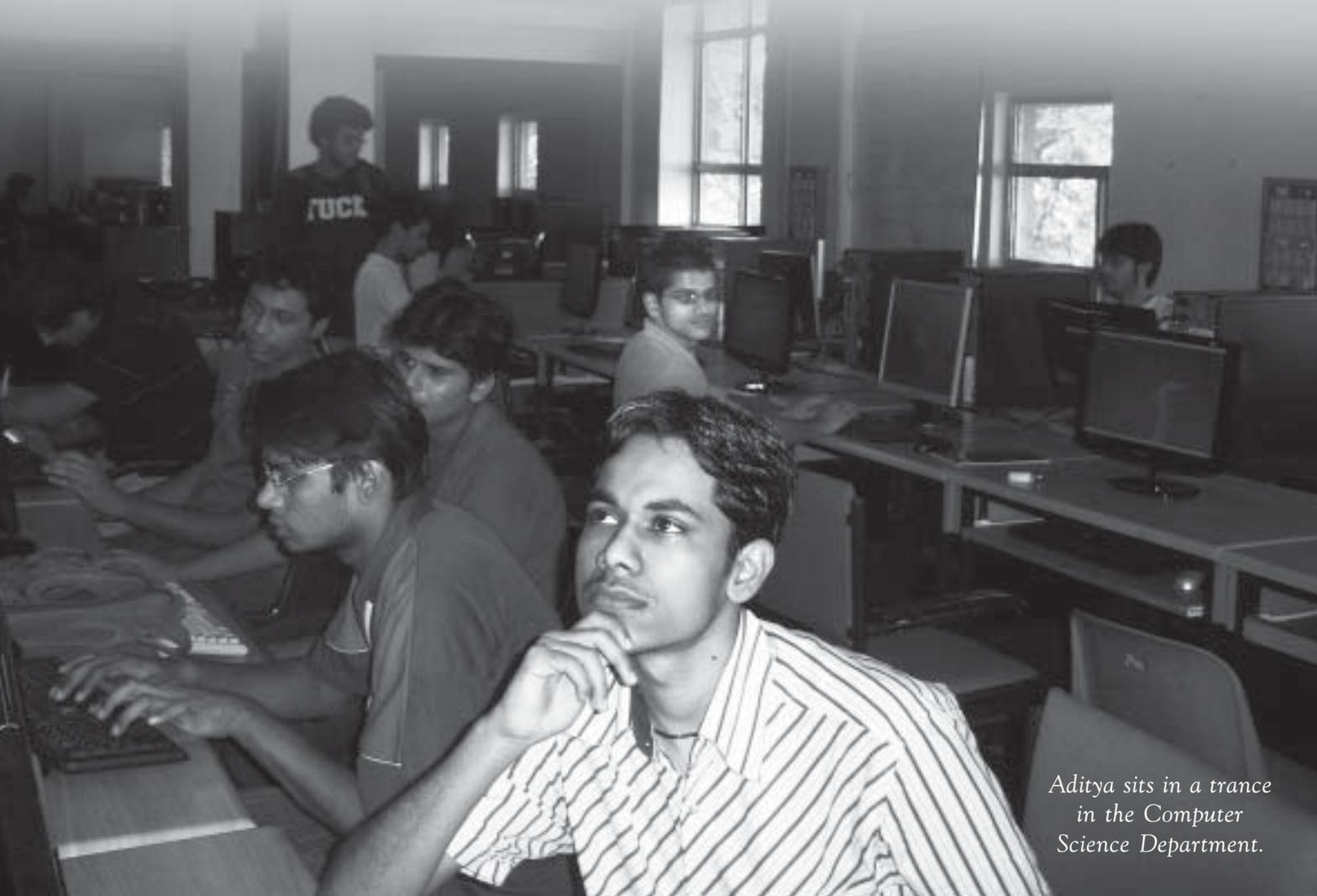
I didn't tell him that I was here for the last half an hour.

“Let's go for a walk,” I suggested. It was mid-morning of a gorgeous winter day. Streams of water came in bursts from the rotating sprinklers and sparkled brilliantly under the morning sun and then splashed over the beautifully manicured lush green lawns inside the IIT campus.

Aditya is a brilliant B.Tech. Computer Science student in IIT.

He is fun-loving and jolly, but at the same time he is looking for answers to the deepest questions of life.

“I went to the ISKCON temple yesterday,” Aditya opened up, “and the speaker said that spirituality was as scientific and logical as any other branch of science. In what ways is spirituality scientific? Can you please explain? The answer to this question is very important to me.”



*Aditya sits in a trance in the Computer Science Department.*

I have been associated with ISKCON for a few years now, and I am also Aditya's fellow IITian. This combination led him to me.

### IS SPIRITUALITY SCIENTIFIC?

While walking past the lawns I collected my thoughts. I replied, "To understand this, we need to first understand what the general definition of the scientific method is. In principle, the scientific method consists of the collection of data through observation and experimentation, and the formulation and testing of hypotheses. The hypotheses act as a guiding light for the subsequent experiments. The results of those experiments give the hypotheses various degrees of truth. If the results of the experiments match with the predictions of the hypotheses, the hypotheses are declared as truths. Otherwise, the hypotheses are discarded."

Aditya nodded. "So then, can we apply the scientific method in our quest for spiritual truths?" he asked.

"Yes, we can. Based on what we see around us in nature—the symmetry, the design, the laws, the beauty, the majesty, the intricacy, etc.—we can surely hypothesize the existence of a supremely intelligent being who is the source of all that exists. Since hypotheses are part of the scientific method, we are still within the realms of science. This assertion has been confirmed by many of the most celebrated scientists and thinkers that we know of. For example: Newton said, 'The wonderful arrangement and harmony of the cosmos would only originate in the plan of an almighty omniscient being. This is by far the greatest comprehension.'"

"But what about the experi-

ments? And what about the results of those experiments? Until we get those results, God will just remain a hypothesis." Aditya was quick to point out.

I was ready. "The holy scriptures of all major religions have asserted the existence of God. Along with the assertions are given the processes by following which one can perceive God in lesser or greater degrees. Therefore, all that is needed in perceiving God is sincere effort along a well-documented path as revealed in the holy scriptures. **The effects of following the scriptures, including the effect of being able to perceive God directly, depend a lot on the sincerity of the**

Aditya's bright face. Meanwhile we had turned right on the main road towards the IIT guesthouses. "But how can we be sure that what we experience is not some hallucination?"

We were going deeper into the subject matter now. I replied simply, "A sincere seeker's realizations are in line with the principles of the scriptures. As one progresses along the spiritual journey, God reciprocally empowers the senses of the seeker to perceive Him. Hallucinations are illusory perceptions characteristic of mentally deranged people, whereas realization of spiritual truths helps the practitioner, even in day-to-day affairs, to lead

**As one progresses along the spiritual journey,  
God reciprocally empowers the senses  
of the seeker to perceive Him.**

**seeker.** God knows everything, including the seeker's sincerity, his motivations for approaching God, his past deeds, and many other factors. Based on all these, God reciprocates with the seeker. Based on the degree of reciprocation by God, the internal world (essentially the desires) of the seeker surely gets transformed, whether the seeker's external circumstances do so or not. And the perception of God no longer remains mere theory. Although direct audience with God is very difficult to achieve quickly, many other tangible results are experienced in a short span of time, and this builds one's confidence in the scriptural instructions."

### ARE SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCES MERE HALLUCINATIONS?

A cloud of doubt covered

better and more meaningful lives. A spiritualist is in much better control of his life than many others, and certainly more so than one gripped by hallucinations. Many sane and highly intelligent people have experiences of God. Powerful yogis and other transcendentalists in all traditions of the world, past and present, have spoken or written about their experiences with God. Would you call all their experiences hallucinations?"

### SCIENTIFIC FAITH

Aditya was starting to enjoy this discussion. He was getting answers to the questions that had disturbed him. And he liked a light-hearted verbal fight. "Why should I follow the holy scriptures and the holy men blindly? Is that scientific?" As soon as he asked the question, the answer also struck him. Even before I re-

plied, he exclaimed, "Let me answer that myself! Having reasonable faith in the words of the holy scriptures and of the sincere devotees of God is like accepting the existence of God as a sound hypothesis. Following the processes they recommend is like the experiments."

I was impressed. I elaborated a bit more on it. "Yes, that's correct. Initially a little bit of reasonable faith is required to start on a path suggested by the scriptures and the devotees of God. But that faith is quite a reasonable one. Along with that is also needed a systematic un-

ance. Quite naturally, such a teacher is himself a devotee of God, otherwise how can he guide his students towards a practical direct perception of God?"

Sharp that he was, Aditya asked me, "What tangible effects can be seen by following the processes? How can we know that they work? We can verify other processes by the results they produce. What about spiritual processes?"

We had entered into the area of the guesthouses, which overlooked the Powai lake. As we walked along the bank of the lake, I replied, "Spiri-

fort, these bad habits disappear from the life of the practitioner. Along with that relief comes the lasting joy of spiritual happiness; he thoroughly enjoys the process itself. This is because spiritual activities are natural to the soul and therefore most joyful. The practitioner experiences a positive energy by coming in touch with his real spiritual nature and eternal relationship with the Supreme Lord. And based on these tangible results, the practitioner is inspired to continue following the process. In fact, what used to be abstract and theoretical yesterday becomes practical and tangible today."

To drive the point home, I challenged him, "If the scientific method of gaining knowledge is considered scientific, how then is following a spiritual process as described above not scientific?"

Aditya's face became grave. He thought for a while. The sunlight was dancing on the ripples of the lake. Aditya replied, "What you say sounds very logical to me. I am convinced. In fact, I wonder why so many people oppose the idea of God and spirituality. It's a verifiable science, and it is genuinely helpful to everyone who follows it." As we reached towards the end of the road, Aditya's mood was once again happy and bubbling. "Hey, you know what? Today I have learnt the oldest system of logic that exists!"

"What's it called?" I played up to his mood.

"The God Logic," he roared. 🗨️

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*Discussing God against the backdrop of Powai lake.*

derstanding of the science of God. This understanding, along with the sincere practice, will fortify our faith when we see that the results of following the process match with what the process states. And the fortified faith, in turn, will inspire us to follow the process even more sincerely, leading us to even deeper experiences of God. This science is presented in the holy scriptures.

As with any other form of learning, a teacher advanced in the practice of the science is a must. From him one can take practical instructions, ask questions, and study the scriptures under his guid-

ance. Quite naturally, such a teacher is himself a devotee of God, otherwise how can he guide his students towards a practical direct perception of God?"

tual processes also produce tangible results. While results of other processes can be verified in a laboratory in a university campus, the results of spiritual processes can be verified in the laboratory of one's own heart. **By practicing spiritual processes, the dirty things in the heart like lust, greed, anger, etc., reduce drastically.** These are very tangible transformations and can be verified by the practitioner. Before taking up spiritual practices, a person may have many bad habits like smoking, drinking, etc., which he may find almost impossible to give up. But as if by magic, without too much ef-

# “Help us, Śrīla Prabhupāda!”

*Gaura-kīrtana Dāsa of ISKCON Mumbai’s traveling sankīrtana bus party narrates his experience:*

**R**ecently we went to distribute books in an industrial area. Our first company was big, but we faced a very uncooperative HR manager. “Visitors’ time is between 10-5 pm only,” he said, and thus did not allow us to cover the evening or the night shift. We left disappointed. The next company was mediocre. All our hopes were pinned on the final company which had around 900 employees.

When we reached the office the next day, the HR manager came to meet us. He was a quirky guy with

would walk out of the company building, cross the road, and come to the shop where we were stationed? I knew the answer . . . no one!

I tried to talk to the man, but before I could open my mouth he was gone. I gave up. “Try for some time,” advised Haladhara. “You do so,” I shot back at him, “I am finished. I will make sets of books in the bus, and you distribute them. I am not coming down.”

It was a hot and sunny afternoon when we opened our stall under our big umbrella and set up the books for the imminent customers, who showed no sign of turning up.

We waited for an hour or more in vain. Suddenly, our driver, Sunil, who was chanting before the bus looking at the photo of Śrīla Prabhupāda hung above the driver’s seat, shouted, “Help us Śrīla Prabhupāda! Please help us!” I nearly dropped from my seat and so did Haladhara, startled by the intensity of the scream.

Half an hour later, the HR manager returned, accompanied by his deputy, a Maharashtrian man. The second man looked for some time at Haladhara and Sunil who were sweating in blistering heat next to the table. Then he whispered something to the manager, who nodded.

“I think it is very hot here,” he said to Haladhara. “We will arrange a shed for you.” We packed everything and were in the bus in two minutes flat. The bus jerked and followed him right into the company campus, under a nice shed next to the time-office where the workers punched their cards. It was a prime spot and many people came during lunch break. We distributed more than 160 sets that day.

Later, the deputy told us that his manager belonged to some organization that is against *sādhus*, and the chief manager was a Christian. It did not matter as I felt that a simple prayer to Śrīla Prabhupāda could help us in all odds. 🙏



*Sankīrtana devotees after a blissful day of book distribution.*

quick phrases and even quicker actions. Before we could speak, he would mumble something, gesture nervously and try to escape us.

“Come,” he said, “See the spot.” We followed him as he led us out of the gate, across the main road, walking around 100 meters left to the front of a shop.

“Put your table here,” he said. “Okay, I am going.”

“What?!” my head spun 360 degrees and did not rest. “Who is going to come here?” I managed to exclaim while being hit by waves of anger, dejection, and frustration that rocked my entire body. It was an automobile company with a fleet of ten buses that carried the employees from the company to the town. Who

# An Encounter in Mid-Air

by Rādhikā Kṛpā Devī Dāsī

Is it Sai Baba?" A bold voice questioned me over my shoulder aboard the Cathay Pacific flight from Sydney to Hong Kong. I lifted my head from the book I was reading and turned towards the speaker—a tall lady with a pleasing personality dressed in official attire. She was indicating at the ring in my second finger. Instantly I replied, "No, he is my spiritual master." I could read her blank expressions: "Who?"

As a preacher, I often look forward to indulging in such conversations. To make things easier for her, I quoted the phrase "Hare Kṛṣṇa." That sounded familiar to her. Although she had no more clues, she seemed interested.

The book in my hand was the best thing, I thought, that could make her aware of the message I wanted to give. The book I had grabbed to read on the flight, was *Your Ever Well-wisher*, with Śrīla Prabhupāda's picture on the cover. Although I had read the book many times, it always inspires

me. The lady took the book from my hand and stared at the inner cover as if reading through the gist of the novel. She introduced herself as Wendy Lease, the flight manager for Cathay Pacific. She

Wendy said that she had passed me many times during her inspection on the nine-hour flight and was attracted by my appearance, so she stopped to talk to me. To her I looked serene and calm unlike the other passengers.

She now sat on her knees in the slim passage in-between the two rows of the seats. The plane was all packed.

I gave all the credit of my calmness to the person on the cover of the book—the founder-*ācārya* of the International Society for Kṛṣṇa consciousness. She was now fascinated with Śrīla Prabhupāda. Her interest overtook the discomfort of sitting on her knees in the passage and frequently ris-



Author (on left) with her friend Wendy.

resided in Hong Kong and often traveled far and wide to inspect Cathay flights.

I appreciated her intelligence both on the material sphere as well as the spiritual (seeing her interest in philosophy). I also introduced myself and briefed her about the *tilaka* on my forehead and my neck beads. This intrigued her.

ing up to give way to other passengers and the moving food and drink trolleys.

She patiently listened as I spoke about the *Bhagavad-gītā*, watched a Powerpoint presentation on my laptop, oblivious to the people from various nationalities including Australians, Irish, French and even Indians, who were wondering

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what was going on. We discussed for nearly two hours.

Wendy disclosed that she had no children and was glad when I gave her the *darśana* of Bāla-gopāla on my computer; it simply stole her heart. She now longed to have the picture, which I promised to e-mail her soon.

The landing announcement broke the spell as she had to bid goodbye to attend to her duties. With a promise to be in touch, we exchanged e-mail addresses and she hugged me lovingly.

The plane landed in Hong Kong and I had to rush to the exit door as the connecting flight to New Delhi, my destination, was about to leave in half an hour. At the exit door was standing my dear friend Wendy Lease with other air hostesses giving farewell smiles. As she saw me approaching, she said "Hare Kṛṣṇa" with a big grin on her face. I asked to have a picture with her to which she nodded, and one of her juniors jumped ahead and took the camera from my hand and clicked that memorable picture with a friend made in mid-air.

I boarded the next plane smiling to myself with my day being made. 🌟

*Rādhika Kṛpā Devī Dāsī is a disciple of His Holiness Gopāla Kṛṣṇa Goswamī Mahārāja. She is an author of a book of devotional poetry and Vaiṣṇavism in Sikhism.*

## VEDIC THOUGHTS

### LĪLĀ—THE RELATIONSHIPS OF LOVE

*Līlā* is the highest revelation of the Absolute Truth. Because beyond even liberation is the intimate, ecstatic relationships of love between the Lord and His devotees. And this love is completely transcendental to material conceptions. How is God crying for a mother's milk? How when there is lightning He is running to mother Yaśodā crying, "Please protect Me."

Our great *ācāryas* explain how it's only by the mercy of Lord one can actually understand these spiritual subjects. Till some extent rationally, intellectually, philosophically we can try to comprehend it. But really it is only by grace that we can really connect to this truth. Because one gets the grace of someone like Śrīla Prabhupāda, it's so easy to understand it. Others think it's mythology because its not possible by our material calculation. Or others may think that it's not mythology, but the all-pervading impersonal absolute temporarily takes these little roles where He is within material conditioning and is crying for mother's milk. Ultimately He is Brahman. But we learn from *ācāryas* that Kṛṣṇa is eternally like this with mother Yaśodā, and He is the source of Brahman. This is very beautiful. 🌟

**GIVE YOUNGSTERS VALUES, NOT CONDOMS**

“We were conducting seminars on HIV/AIDS in schools between Borivali and Bhayandar (suburbs of Mumbai) and found that the majority of students didn’t know about

UNICEF-sponsored teaching module simply taught the hazards of unprotected sex. During the lunch break he asked the participants whether they agreed wholeheartedly with the recommendations. Surprisingly they responded that

tal. More than just catering to the needs of the body, a true doctor also needs to cater to the needs of the undernourished spirit soul that inhabits the body. The participants agreed that this was a much better alternative than the prevalent approach.

The hospital then sent out letters asking school and college principals to depute mature students to become HIV/AIDS resource persons for the hospital. “The response has been overwhelming. Over 100 students have shown interest, and we expect more to join soon,” says Dr. Sandhya Subramnian (Sitā Devī Dāsī), chief coordinator for the training



venereal diseases,” said Dr. Ajay Sankhe, director of the Bhaktivedanta Hospital situated at Mira Road, Mumbai. Pointing out that youngsters between the age group of 14 and 24 were falling prey to HIV/AIDS, Dr Sankhe decided to do something about it.

At a seminar he was attending, Dr.Sankhe found that the

they did not have anything that inculcated traditional higher values.

Dr. Sankhe took the lack of awareness of the seminar participants about spiritual solutions as an opportunity to spread his message. He explained to them the vision behind the Spiritual Care department of the Bhaktivedanta hospi-

program. Surprisingly, even parents, who would have otherwise avoided discussing the issue with their wards, have supported their wards in this endeavor. One enthusiastic participant is Pankaj Upadhyaya, a Std. IX student. He puts his eagerness for the training program in the following words, “Being a resource person will not

only broaden my horizon, but will also help me reach out to my friends. My mother was also happy that I was gaining more knowledge.”

Doctors teaching the students are not shying away from using the word *sex* while discussing HIV/AIDS with students. “Right at the start of our program, we made it clear to the students that sex is not taboo,” said Dr. Dhaval Dalal, chief physician at the hospital. “While we tell students that sex is a basic element of human existence, we also tell them that indulging in sex at a young age is not a part of our culture,” said Dalal.

“So while the World Health Organization propagates the use of condoms to prevent HIV/AIDS, we are educating the students about the dangers of this disease and telling them that the best way of preventing it is to go back to our Indian culture and tradition of abstinence rather than indulgence,” said Dr. Subramanian.

Education has always been an important tool in the hands of those who are mature. In the midst of ever-increasing problems, it is rather tempting to dish out stop-gap solutions. Instead of following the herd, however, the spiritual doctors at Bhaktivedanta hospital are trend-setters in their own right. If only the rest of the world would pay heed.

### MEET MAHIṢĀSURA’S DESCENDANTS

Seven-year-old Anand hates lions. “It’s a nasty animal,” he says playing with a bunch of plastic animals—a camel, a

horse, a cow, and a headless lion. “I wrenched its head off the moment I laid my hands on it,” says the child, eyes blazing in anger. “I am an Asur. I can’t stand lions. This animal killed the buffalo during the war between Mahiṣāsura and Durgā. This is why we hate it and don’t want to see its face.”

Anand Asur is a member of the

8000-strong Asur tribe which believes that it is in the bloodline of Mahiṣāsura, who conquered heaven and earth and drove the demigods out of heaven until he was vanquished by Durgā-devi. The rest of the world celebrates this occasion as the triumph of good over evil, but for the Asurs it is the darkest period in their collective



*Goddess Durgā slaying the demon Mahiṣāsura.*

consciousness.

While the rest of the country celebrates, Anand Asur, his family and about 8000 others like them in scattered communities in North Bengal and the Chota Nagpur region prepare for mourning. All of them bear the surname Asur and do not worship any god. With anger and anguish that has not diluted in generations, these people will lock themselves in from dawn to dusk for the five days of Durgā-pūja. The elders stay away from every sliver of daylight. Windows are barred and pasted over to keep away the sun. Everything that needs to be done is done after sunset.

What makes someone a demon or *asura* like Mahiṣāsura and an-

temporary posts and after their tenure may again find themselves to be ordinary living entities. Not bothering itself in defining an *asura*, the *Padma Purāna* merely states that anyone who is not a *deva* is an *asura*. *Asuras* too are interested in material boons and the urge to dominate, control and enjoy, but there is a small glitch: they want it without the authority of the Supreme Lord. While the *devas* want to satisfy the laws of Viṣṇu, the *asuras* will have none of that. Superficially both classes may appear to work in the same way, but their purposes are completely opposite because of a difference in consciousness. *Asuras* work for personal sense gratification, whereas

be more chivalrous. As a result they fight for the front part and ultimately when the snake starts emitting poisonous fumes regret their decision. Therefore *asuras* must always do the opposite of the demigods. That is their nature.

For example: Vedic culture advocates cow protection and encourages people to drink more milk and eat palatable preparations made of milk. The demons, however, just to protest such proposals, claim that they are advanced in scientific knowledge. They say that according to their scientific way, they have discovered that milk is dangerous and that the beef obtained by killing cows is very nutritious.

This difference of opinion will always continue. Indeed, it has existed since days of yore. ❁

**Asuras work for personal sense gratification, whereas devas work for the satisfaction of the Supreme Lord.**

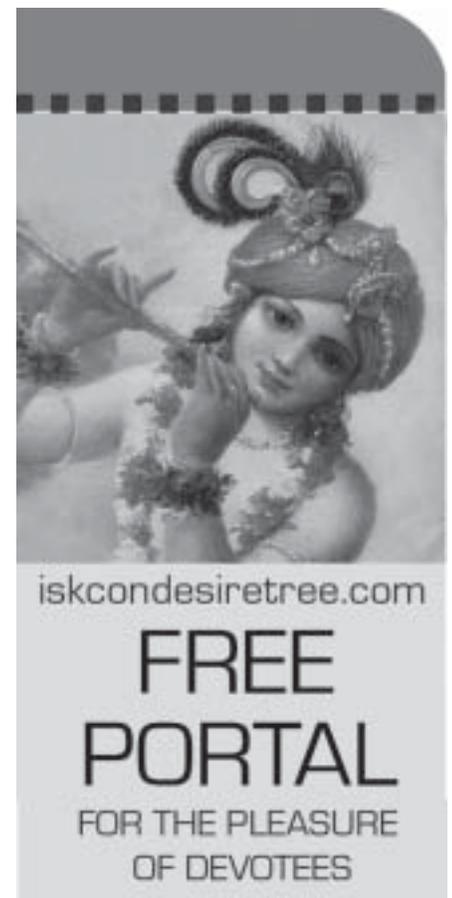
other into a *deva* or demigod? Are we hardwired to forcibly choose one of the two options? The *Vedas* say yes. In the *Padma Purāna* it is mentioned:

“There are two classes of men in the created world. One consists of the demonic and the other of the godly. The devotees of Lord Viṣṇu are the godly, whereas those who are just the opposite are called demons.”

Interestingly, this verse clearly defines a *deva*: He who accepts the rulings given by the Supreme Lord is a *deva*. Personalities like Indra, Candra, Varuṇa etc. respect the authority of Lord Viṣṇu and carry His orders in this material world. In return they are awarded a fantastic array of material boons in lieu of their work. These *devas* enjoy

*devas* work for the satisfaction of the Supreme Lord. Both work conscientiously, but their motives are different.

Quite predictably both parties come to opposite conclusions on almost every issue under the sun. Vedic history relates the story of the churning of the milk ocean, a sort of joint undertaking project of the *devas* and the *asuras*. Since the *asuras* had won the previous battle they dictated the terms of churning. As the *devas* caught hold of the front portion of Vāsuki (the celestial snake, who was assisting as the churning rope) the *asuras* thought they ought to get the front portion as they were the victors. The demons thought that the front of the snake was auspicious and that catching hold of that portion would



Sketch by Janardhan Salkar



# Tenali and Gopal

**Tenali:** Hey Gopal, this is indeed very exciting. One futurist says that by the year 2019 one can expect humans to be immortal.

**Gopal:** And how exactly is that supposed to happen?

**Tenali:** (reads) “Ray Kurzweil, an inventor and a futurist says that, “I and many other scientists now believe that in around twenty years we will have the means to re-programme our bodies’ stone-age software so we can halt, then reverse, ageing. Then nanotechnology will let us live forever. Nanotechnology will extend our mental capacities so much that we will be able to write books within minutes. So we can look forward to a world where humans become

cyborgs, with artificial organs.”

**Gopal:** Hahaha. . . you just reminded me about a funny Bengali story - A person thought, “I have committed so many sinful acts that Yamaraja will come and punish me. How can I avoid him?” Thinking about this for some time, he decided, “Let me smear my body with stool. Then Yamaraja will not touch me.” Still he died one day.

**Tenali:** This is serious stuff, Gopal. This man is famous for his predictions. Bill Gates calls him the ‘smartest futurist’. Many of his predictions like the demise of the Soviet Union, spread of cell-phones etc. have come true.

**Gopal:** But what age should someone choose immortality? To

have a 90 year old skin when your heart is only 25 might be a horrific prospect to live with forever. This man is promising immortality, not relief from old age and disease.

Would you like to live forever in a heavily polluted city, drink polluted water, inhale automobile exhaust, eat preservative-laden food and drink pesticide-laced soft drinks ?

What about the population congestion, since no one is going to die?

Oh and before I forget—the most important thing—will the government give me a pension forever?

Still interested in becoming immortal, eh, Tenali?

**Tenali:** I don’t know Gopal!?!🙄

**ŚRĪ ŚRĪ RUKMINĪ DVĀRKĀDHĪŚA  
COME TO MAURITIUS**

Nov. 29, Triolet, Mauritius: Thousands of devotees attended the opening of the new ISKCON temple here. Among the guests were senior ISKCON leaders



and Mauritius Government Minister Shri Anil Kumar Bachoo, who addressed the assembled devotees in the packed temple room. The President of the Republic of Mauritius, His Excellency Sir Anirudh Jagannath was happy to hear about the opening and agreed to visit the temple in the future.

**ISKCON LONDON CELEBRATES  
40TH ANNIVERSARY**

November 16–22, London: ISKCON devotees celebrated the Society's 40th anniversary in UK with a week long festival. Attended by the devotee congregation and members of the public, the week also drew



over 1,300 prominent VIP guests from the faith community and the worlds of politics, business, and entertainment.

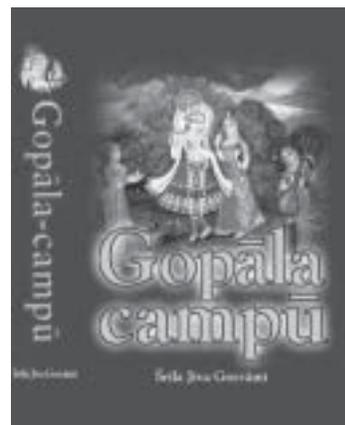
**RATHA-YĀTRĀ CELEBRATED**

Los Angeles, USA: ISKCON conducted its Annual Festival of the Chariots Parade on August 2. Many of the local TV stations were also on hand to take in and pass on the sight to their viewers.

**GOPĀLA-CAMPŪ GETS  
A NEW TRANSLATION**

Chennai, TN: A new edition of Srila Jīva Gosvāmī's *Gopāla-campū*, translated from the original Sanskrit by ISKCON guru and GBC Bhānu Swami, has just been published by ISKCON Chennai.

"A *campū* is a literary composition mixing poetry and prose," Bhānu Swami explains in his preface to *Gopāla-campū*, "Displaying literary ornaments and various verse forms, it often uses words with double meaning."



**NEW FILM ON SAFARI**

Māyāpur, WB: A new documentary film series by Vāsudeva Dāsa, entitled *No Suffering on Safari: The Bangladesh Experience* was premiered this October in ISKCON's Māyāpur complex. The film follows a 2008 ISKCON preaching tour and pilgrimage to various towns and Vaiṣṇava holy places in Bangladesh.

**ISKCON–FFL WINS INDIAN  
NATIONAL CHILD HEALTH AWARD**

The ISKCON Food Relief Foundation of Mumbai was presented this month with a National Child Health Award from the first ever Lifebuoy National Child Health Symposium. Midday-Meal program has been serving over 100,000 nutritious vegetarian meals per day to underprivileged children since 2004.

*Contributed by Gītā-nagarī Dāsa, K. B. Nair,  
Basu Ghosh and Madhava Smullen.*

# Śrī Kālāṣṭakam

*Eight verses in glorification of the  
devastating benedictions of TIME*  
By Dāmodara Paṇḍita Dāsa

TIME needs just a little time,  
To dye my black hair grey;  
And honor me with spectacles,  
And steal my teeth away.

TIME needs just a little time,  
To anoint my brow with lines;  
And bless me with deep hollow cheeks,  
And feel I'm young and fine.

TIME needs just a little time,  
To hunchback my straight nose;  
And gift me some nice hearing aid,  
To save me from life's woes.

TIME needs just a little time,  
To make my joints just ache;  
And soothe me with harsh breathlessness,  
All night, while I'm awake.

TIME needs just a little time,  
To wrinkle up my skin;  
And paint my pink nails black or grey,  
And age with kith and kin.

TIME needs just a little time,  
To take me by the hand;  
And dig a home beneath the earth,  
In Death's safe peaceful land.

Kṛṣṇa gave me all the time,  
His name to sing and say;  
But I deferred; so TIME just came  
And took that time away.

So now, TIME in that little time  
Has granted me the boon;  
To die and live and die again,  
To live and die so soon.



# In your own words ...



How has Kṛṣṇa consciousness made you a better person?

This process certainly freed me from stress, frustration with the materialistic way of life, and speculation on mysteries of life. Kṛṣṇa consciousness helped me to see things in the correct perspective. Priorities in life changed to utilizing time and energy in serving Kṛṣṇa and the Vaiṣṇavas. The bite of hankering and lamentation subdued in due course of time, which made me realize there is no question of insecurity in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The day-to-day life, which appeared normal, was resting on the platform of sin before coming to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. By the mercy of Śrīla Prabhupāda, I understood the purpose and importance of the human form of life. The quality of compassion now is to distribute Kṛṣṇa consciousness to others. This is very urgent.

Jivana Gaurahari Dāsa  
Chennai, TN

I am a consultant cardiac surgeon working in Cochin. I accidentally came in contact with ISKCON two years ago. This was the best thing that has happened in my life.

I was a highly egoistic and short tempered person, often proud of my qualifications. The dirt covering my heart was rinsed away after listening to *Bhagavad-gītā* and reading Śrīla Prabhupāda books. I gradually began chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra. This process has shattered my false ego and made me realize what an insignificant fool I was all these years!

Now I have become a vegetarian. I make it a point to chant my

rounds regularly. I constantly listen to Śrīla Prabhupāda's lectures during travel. I am experiencing bliss everyday and I want everyone to feel the same bliss by taking part in this sublime Kṛṣṇa conscious movement. My only regret is that I have wasted 32 years of my life before coming in touch with Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Dr. J. Ramkumar,  
Cochin, Kerala

I used to hiss, and tut, and pull faces at people who got in my way in the street, at the bus stop, and especially when getting on and off the train. I'd scowl and make rude remarks, and I was always in a hurry, even when I wasn't. I gave a new meaning to the word *impatient*, and it was always someone else's fault.

Seven months ago, I walked into Kṛṣṇa's temple, and my life changed forever.

Now I see my faults as things to be corrected so I can be a better devotee of Kṛṣṇa. I want my every word and thought and action to be pleasing to Kṛṣṇa, and although I slip up daily, I can at least say I'm trying to correct my faults.

I want to be a nice devotee, in and out of the temple. So I try to curb my tongue—and my face! I try to be humble and to remember that Kṛṣṇa sits in the heart of all living things and that I should be as respectful to strangers on the street as I would be to Kṛṣṇa or His devotees. Before, my life had no direction, no real purpose, and there was no reason to correct my faults or mistakes. Now everything I do is for

Kṛṣṇa, and with His mercy I am on the path to becoming a better devotee and a nicer human being.

Kimimela Channah  
Maidenhead, England

Kṛṣṇa consciousness makes me a better person mainly because I follow the four principles of no meat-eating, no gambling, no illicit sex, and no intoxication. This in itself makes me a friend of Mother Nature.

Chanting sixteen rounds on my beads helps me overcome the influence of the mode of ignorance, which causes anger and egotism. Every day when I participate in *maṅgala-ārati* and the noon and evening *aratis*, my soul becomes more and more purified by the mercy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead Kṛṣṇa. Now I realize that Kṛṣṇa is everywhere, so I love every soul.

Rampapu Prabhu  
Skudai, Malaysia

## IN YOUR OWN WORDS

QUESTION FOR THE  
FORTHCOMING ISSUES

**What are the things you  
would like to thank God for?**

*Deadline for submission is Jan 15*

Answers will be  
published in March  
Word limit: 150 words

E-mail:  
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30 Nov  
2009

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## Vaiṣṇava Calendar 1 Jan - 15 Feb 2009

- 05 Jan:** Śrī Rāmacandra Kavirāja Disappearance, Śrī Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmi Appearance, Śrī Jayadeva Gosvāmi Disappearance  
**06 Jan:** Śrī Locana Dāsa Ṭhākura Disappearance  
**10 Jan:** Śuddha Ekādaśī, Fasting for Ṣaṭ-tilā Ekādaśī  
**11 Jan:** Pāraṇa timings (Mumbai) 07:14 am–10:55 am  
**14 Jan:** Makara-saṅkrānti (Sun enters Capricorn)  
**15 Jan:** Gaṅgā-sāgara-melā  
**20 Jan:** Vasanta Pañcamī, Śrīmatī Viṣṇupriyā Devī Appearance, Śrī Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura Disappearance, Śrīla Puṇḍarīka Vidyānidhi Appearance, Śrīla Raghunandana Ṭhākura Appearance, Śrīla Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmi Appearance  
**22 Jan:** Śrī Advaita Ācārya–Appearance (Fasting till noon)  
**23 Jan:** Bhīsmāṣṭamī  
**24 Jan:** Śrī Madhvācārya–Disappearance  
**25 Jan:** Śrī Rāmānujācārya–Disappearance  
**26 Jan:** Fasting for Bhaimī Ekādaśī  
**27 Jan:** Break fast (Mumbai) 07:14 am–10:59 am, Varāha Dvādaśī: Appearance of Lord Varāhadeva (Fasting till noon on the Ekādaśī, feasting today.)  
**28 Jan:** Nityānanda Trayodaśī: Appearance of Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu (Fasting till noon)  
**30 Jan:** Śrī Kṛṣṇa Madhura utsava, Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura–Appearance  
**3 Feb:** Śrī Puruṣottama dāsa Ṭhākura– Disappearance, Śrīla Gaur Govinda Swami–Disappearance, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura–Appearance (Fasting till noon)  
**10 Feb:** Fasting for Vijayā Ekādaśī, Śrī Iśvara Puri–Disappearance  
**11 Feb:** Break fast (Mumbai) 07:09 am–10:58 am  
**12 Feb:** Śiva Rātri  
**15 Feb:** Śrīla Jagannātha Dāsa Bābāji–Disappearance, Śrī Rasikānanda–Disappearance

# Greetings from the BTG India Team!

**W**e wish all our readers a very happy and spiritually enlightening new year.

A lot of exciting changes are happening in the magazine. To begin: Instead of the lecture by Śrīla Prabhupāda, we will present his views on one particular theme. This issue has “India” as its theme. In the following months we shall explore themes like “The Insurmountable Material Energy,” “No Time—A Chronic Disease,” “Income Tax, Sales Tax, Wealth Tax—Simply Tax, Tax, Tax,” etc.

A common complaint of people in this age is that religion involves a lot of rituals. Many find these rituals empty and meaningless. For example, how do you explain the breaking of coconuts before a ceremony, lighting a row of lamps during Diwali, wearing a particular cloth for worship, etc.? These and other rituals will be scanned and examined in our new feature, The Empty Envelope. An envelope is supposed to carry your letter and is the main vehicle of your emotions and feelings. Imagine your anger at receiving an empty envelope. Similarly rituals performed without the vital ingredient of love of God may fail to bestow the proper reciprocation on the performer. Readers are also welcome to either send their requests for particular rituals to be scanned for their explanations.

## WHY DO PEOPLE BECOME ATHEISTS ?

BTG will examine one non-intellectual and ten intellectual reasons for people choosing atheism. This will be a multi-part article series spread over many issues.

We also have a newly revamped commentary on the issues of the day called VEDIC OBSERVER. We shall be giving our views on events from the point of view of *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Readers are welcome to select and send any particular news item for our comment.

Do let us know how far these changes help you to get a better grip on your life to progress on the path of spiritual life. ☉

—Śyāmānanda Dāsa