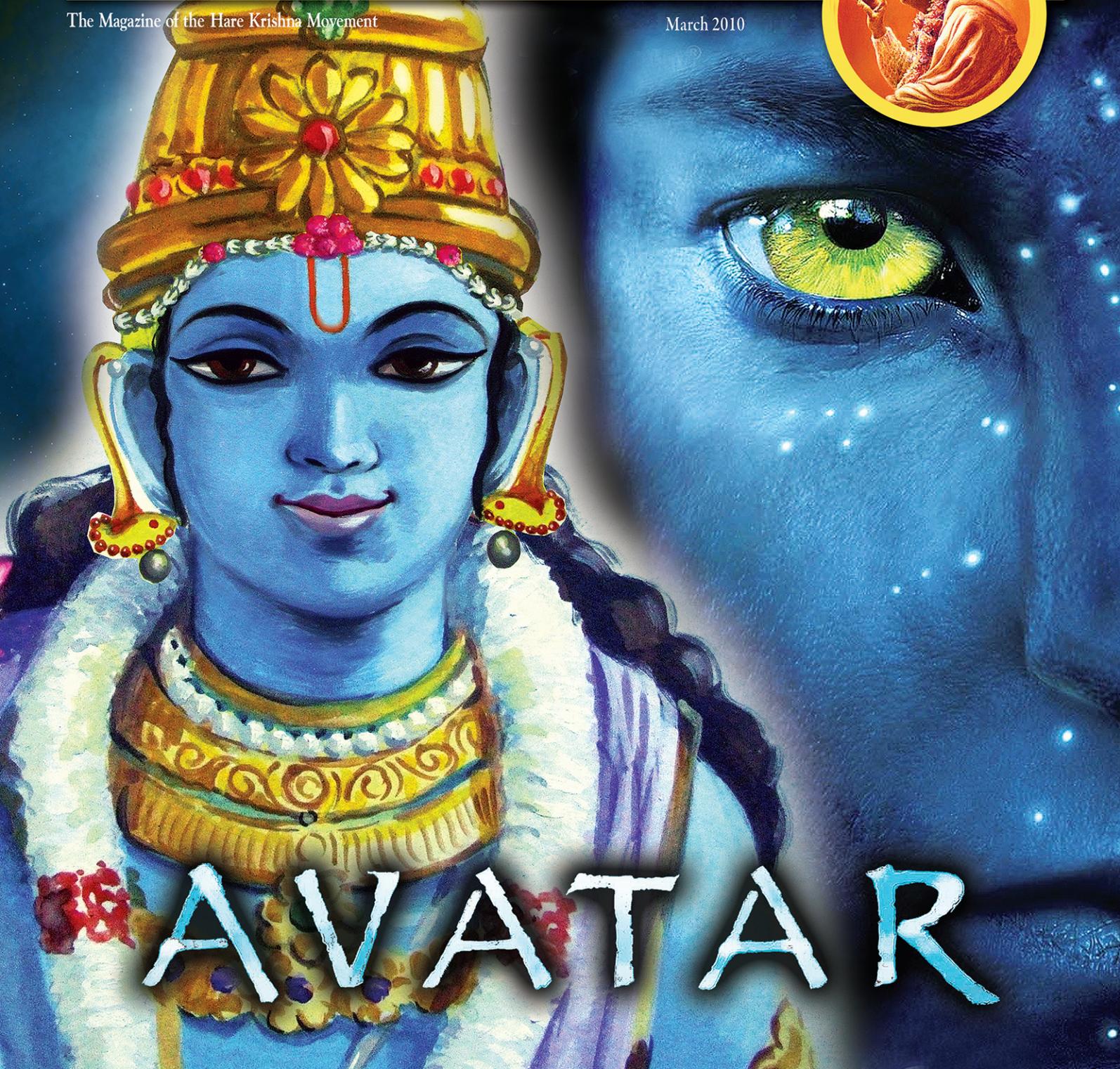


Godhead is light. Nescience is darkness. Where there is Godhead there is no nescience



The Magazine of the Hare Krishna Movement

March 2010



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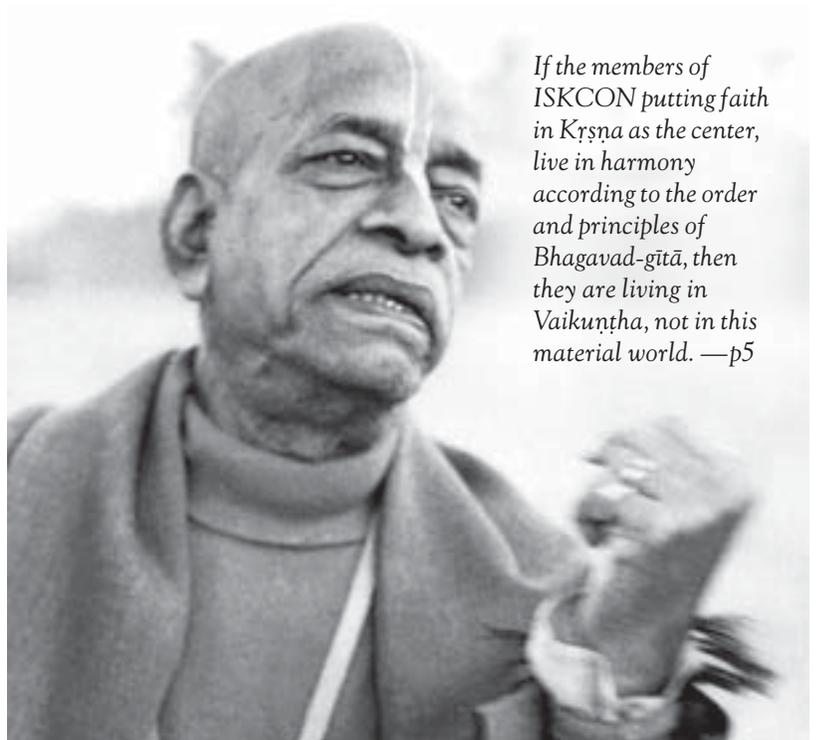
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OUR PURPOSES

• 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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CORRECT CONVERSIONS

Caitanya Carāṇa Dāsa has brilliantly portrayed the pathetic situation prevailing in this country where the Christian missionaries lure and force the Hindus for conversion into Christianity (“Conversion to Intolerance or Transcendence?” December 2009). It is a shame that the government remains a mute spectator to this religious bullying. Indulgence in such conversions is an irreligious act. As the article rightly narrates, those who force conversions and those who are victims of conversions are both in the lower modes of passion and ignorance. We have to pity both of them. The best way, however, to put an end to conversions is that every Hindu shall take to the Kṛṣṇa conscious path by chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* and hearing the glories of the Supreme Lord, and every Christian shall first convert as a true and selfless servant of Jesus.

R.M. Manoharan, Chennai

TRICOLORED INDIAN

Read Yugavatāra Dāsa’s excellent article “Real Tricolored Indian” (Jan 2010). Only Śrīla Prabhupāda truly fulfils the real meaning of the tricolor.

Prema Rasa Dāsa,
Belgaum, Karnataka.

CONFUSING KARMA

1. It is said that we suffer for the karma we did in our last birth and there is no escape, and surrender to Kṛṣṇa removes all bad karma. But I have seen that people engaged in devotion are also suffering. Why is that so?

2. Kṛṣṇa protects His devotees, but many times His pure devotees like Mirābāi and Kanakadāsa are put to test. Why?

3. Why are *pūjās* for demigods recommended in *Purāṇas* when Kṛṣṇa is the cause of all causes?

4. Does our karma change if we perform *pūjās* to demigods or does it change by surrender to Kṛṣṇa?

5. What to do if one does not want his past karma to affect the present life?

Radhika Potdar, by email

OUR REPLY: Karma can be described as the activities one performs for one’s own enjoyment. Consequently, sinful reactions are incurred in the process, which in turn lead to continued acceptance of a material body. The cycle of material existence (and suffering) thus continues.

1. We indeed suffer from our past karma either of this life or our past lives. *Gahanā karmaṇo gatiḥ*: the mechanism of karma is very intricate. (Bg. 4.17) It is very difficult to ascertain the exact cause of a particular reaction that we receive. But pure devotional service removes all karma, good and bad. *Karmāṇi nirdahati kintu ca bhakti-bhājām* (*Brahma-saṁhitā* 5.54).

Still devotees may appear to suffer. Why? Because many devotees are *sādhakas*, who may not be on the perfected stage of pure devotional service. They are aspirants, and depending on the extent to which they are pure in their service to Lord Kṛṣṇa, their karma is destroyed. Since most of us are not on the platform of pure devotional service, all our karma may not be

destroyed. We may still have some vestiges left. If our actions are not completely surrendered to Kṛṣṇa, we may also create new karma.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura says, “Often devotees appear in low-class families, or to ordinary eyes seem like fools or to be afflicted with disease. There is a great purpose behind this: if people were to detect that the Lord’s devotees appear only in high-class families and are always strong, healthy and well-educated according to material calculation, they would become discouraged.”

2. Exalted *ācāryas* may appear to suffer. But the seeming sickness and other apparent adversities undergone by pure devotees must be accepted as *līlā* and not misunderstood as karmic sufferings of conditioned souls. Pure devotees are never forced to experience the fruits of their karma. All their pastimes are enacted simply by Lord’s will. Sometimes, to glorify these pure devotees, the Lord can put them in trying circumstances and difficulties. Their unswerving devotion and allegiance to the Lord’s service even in such situations remind us of their exalted nature. Where ordinary souls like us easily give up, the *ācāryas* continue with determination.

3. Demigods are bona fide and authorized representatives of the Supreme Lord designated to carry out certain administrative functions. Pure and unmotivated devotional service to the Supreme Lord may not be possible for all and so, to prevent them from going astray by rejecting any kind of authorized service, the *Purāṇas* advise such people with fruitive expectations to at least stay connected to the demigods and stay within the jurisdiction of the universal government. Gradually

they are purified and they can take to pure devotion to Lord Kṛṣṇa.

4. Demigods being authorized representatives of the Supreme Lord can temporarily reduce or eliminate suffering in the worshiper’s lives. But they cannot neutralize karma completely. Only Lord Kṛṣṇa can neutralize all karma. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (11.2.6) states:

*bhajanti ye yathā devān
devā api tathaiiva tān
chāyeva karma-sacivāḥ
sādhavo dīna-vatsalāḥ*

“Those who worship the demigods receive reciprocation from the demigods in a way just corresponding to the offering. The demigods are attendants of karma, like a person’s shadow, but *sādhus* are actually merciful to the fallen.”

The demigods are empowered by the Lord to follow precisely the particular karma of a living entity in awarding him happiness and distress. Just as a shadow cannot move independently, the demigods cannot punish or reward a living being independently.

5. The natural conclusion of the above understanding is that an intelligent person who wants to end his material sufferings in this troublesome place will slash the Gordian knot of karma with the sword of surrender to Kṛṣṇa rather than try to disentangle it. ☸

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Vedic Thoughts

FAITH

Of all yogīs, the one with great faith who always abides in Me, thinks of Me within himself, and renders transcendental loving service to Me is the most intimately united with Me in yoga and is the highest of all. That is My opinion.

—*Bhagavad-gītā* 6.47

Those who fix their minds on My personal form and are always engaged in worshiping Me with great and transcendental faith are considered by Me to be most perfect.

—*Bhagavad-gītā* (12.2)

Those who follow this imperishable path of devotional service and who completely engage themselves with faith, making Me the supreme goal, are very, very dear to Me.

—*Bhagavad-gītā* (12.20)

Anyone who once meditates upon Me with faith and affection, who hears and chants about Me, surely goes back home, back to Godhead.

—*Bhāg.* (3.32.43)

I am in everyone’s heart as the Supersoul. As soon as one desires to worship some demigod, I make his faith steady so that he can devote himself to that particular deity. Endowed with such a faith, he endeavors to worship a particular demigod and obtains his desires. But in actuality these benefits are bestowed by Me alone.

—*Bhagavad-gītā* (7.21-22)

To one who has staunch faith in the words of the spiritual master and the words of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the secret of success in Vedic knowledge is revealed.”

—*Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* (6.23)

Faith

FAITH IN DAILY LIFE

Without faith we cannot make any progress. In any field of activities, we must have faith. For example we go to a barber shop, and we spread our neck. The barber has a sharp razor in his hand. If he likes, he can at once cut my throat. He has got the weapon

put your faith in another blind man like you, then it will cause disaster. Faith is required, but in the right person. You must know where to put the faith. So our Vedic injunction is: "Put your faith to the *brahma-niṣṭham*, one who is God-realized." *Tad-vijñānārthaṁ sa gurum evābhigacchet samit-paniḥ śrotriyaṁ brahma-niṣṭam*: "One who has full knowledge in the Vedas and firmly fixed up in Brahman, God, you put your faith there." (*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* 1.2.12) Otherwise there will be disaster.

*Morning Walk, 26 November 1975,
New Delhi*

FAITH BEGINS FROM THE TONGUE

Faith begins from the tongue. People will be surprised. "Faith must begin from the mind, from the eyes. Then why is it said the tongue?" They do not know. That is also faith, that "Simply by engaging the tongue in the service of the Lord, I shall understand." This is also blind faith. But actually it is happening. Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and take *prasāda*. That's all.

Morning Walk, 21 July 1975, San Francisco

FROM FAITH TO LOVE

Faith is the basic principle of everything. If you have no faith, then you cannot make progress in any line of action. Even in Kṛṣṇa consciousness faith is the basic principle. Just like I came here and started my classes in New York. I was alone chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. Out of inquisitiveness, somebody came and sat down. Some others came. Then some of them took it, "Oh, Swamiji speaks very nice. Let me come again." He comes and then he gets some faith: "Oh, Kṛṣṇa consciousness is very nice." Then next point is that he wants intimate

ready. But I have faith he'll not do it, he'll simply shave my beard or moustache. This faith is required in every activity. Without faith we cannot step forward even in our daily life. So if we have to keep so much faith in ordinary dealings, don't you think that we must have good faith when we are making progress in spiritual line?

*Lecture, Bhagavad-gītā 4.39-5.3,
New York, 24 August 1966*

PUT FAITH IN THE RIGHT PERSON

If you have faith in the person who has eyes to lead you, then he will help you cross the road. And if you



Muruges

relationship with the swami, or me: “Swamiji, I want to be your student.” I accept him as a disciple if I think he is suitable. Then he follows my regulative principles, injunctions. Then gradually he becomes free from all misgivings and naturally he gives up that illicit sex life or gambling or meat-eating and so many other things. In that way he becomes fixed up. Then he develops a taste; he cannot give up the society. Then attraction, attachment. He wants to do everything for the society. In this way he develops love of Kṛṣṇa. And in the final stage he loves only Kṛṣṇa and nobody else. And because Kṛṣṇa includes everyone, that means he loves everyone.

Excerpt from interview, 24 September 1968, Seattle

HOW DOES FAITH DEVELOP?

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: What is that thing which causes faith to develop in someone?

Prabhupāda: Purity. The more you become pure, the more the faith is firm.

That purity is called *ādau śraddhā*: “Beginning is faith.” Therefore it is said, *adau śraddhā tato sādhu-saṅgaḥ*. You accept faith, maybe blindly. Now you make further progress by mixing with advanced devotees. Then it will remain fixed.

Morning Walk, 21 July 1975, San Francisco

PURITY INCREASES KNOWLEDGE AND FAITH

As you become purified, your faith becomes fixed with knowledge. Therefore, that is stated in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, *yeṣāṃ tv anta-gataṃ pāpam*: [Bg. 7.28] “One who has finished his sinful life, he can become a devotee.” Otherwise one cannot. First begin by faith. Then, by following the process, one becomes completely sinless. Then full knowledge. As long as he will be sinful, the things will not be properly manifested. *Teṣāṃ evānukampārtham aham ajñāna-jaṃ tamaḥ nāśayāmy*: [Bg. 10.11] “Because he is faithful, therefore I help him how to get knowledge.”

Morning Walk, 21 July 1975, San Francisco

FAITH IN KṚṢṆA

Only when one knows Lord Kṛṣṇa’s greatness can one firmly put one’s unflinching faith in Him; otherwise, like the common man, even the great



leaders of men will mistake Lord Kṛṣṇa for one of the many demigods, or a historical personality, or a myth only. (*Bhāg. 2.4.6* purport)

The Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, although equal to everyone, is still more inclined to His devotee . . . Having unflinching faith in the Supreme Lord as one’s protector, friend and master is the natural condition of eternal life. A living entity . . . is most happy when placing himself in a condition of absolute dependence. (*Bhāg. 1.9.22*, purport)

If the members of ISKCON putting faith in Kṛṣṇa as the center, live in harmony according to the order and principles of *Bhagavad-gītā*, then they are living in Vaikuṅṭha, not in this material world. (*Bhāg. 3.15.33* purport)

FAITH LIBERATES

There are many philosophers who write comments on the *Bhagavad-gītā* but have no faith in Kṛṣṇa. They will never be liberated from the bondage of fruitive

action. But an ordinary man with firm faith in the eternal injunctions of the Lord, even though unable to execute such orders, becomes liberated from the bondage of the law of karma. (Bg. 3.31, purport)

THREE LEVELS OF FAITH

The **first-class devotee** never deviates from the principles of higher authority, and he attains firm faith in the scriptures by understanding with all reason and arguments.

The **second-class devotee** is not very expert in arguing on the strength of revealed scriptures, but he has firm faith in the objective.

The **neophyte or third-class devotee** is one whose faith is not strong and who, at the same time, does not recognize the decision of the revealed scriptures. The neophyte's faith can be changed by someone else with strong arguments or by an opposite decision. Unlike the second-class devotee, who also cannot put forward arguments and evidence from the scripture, but who still has all faith in the objective, the neophyte has no firm faith in the objective. Thus he is called the neophyte devotee.

(*Nectar of Devotion*, Chapter 3)

RESULT OF NO FAITH

The demoniac person, who has no faith in God or the Supersoul within himself, performs all kinds of

sinful activities simply for sense gratification. He does not know that there is a witness sitting within his heart. The Supersoul is observing the activities of the individual soul. One who is demoniac has no knowledge of Vedic scriptures, nor has he any faith; therefore he feels free to do anything for sense enjoyment, regardless of the consequences. (Bg. 16.11-12, purport)

Persons who are almost like animals have no faith in, or knowledge of, the standard revealed scriptures; and some, even though they have knowledge of, or can cite passages from, the revealed scriptures, have actually no faith in these words. Those who have no faith and are always doubtful make no progress at all. Men without faith in God and His revealed word find no good in this world, nor in the next. For them there is no happiness whatsoever. (Bg. 4.40, purport)

THINGS WITHOUT FAITH FAIL

Any sacrifice performed without regard for the directions of scripture, without distribution of *prasāda* [spiritual food], without chanting of Vedic hymns and remunerations to the priests, and without faith is considered to be in the mode of ignorance. (Bg. 17.13) Anything done as sacrifice, charity or penance without faith in the Supreme, O son of Pṛthā, is impermanent. It is called *asat* and is useless both in this life and the next. (Bg. 17.28)

QUALITIES OF FAITHFUL

One may be very learned in the mundane estimation, but that does not mean that he is free from all low activities of lust and anger. Good qualifications can be expected only from a pure devotee, who is always engaged in the thought of the Lord, or in *samādhi*, with faith. (Bhāg. 3.12.26)

ATTAINING FAITH

One is called a faithful man who thinks that simply by acting in Kṛṣṇa consciousness he can attain the highest perfection. This faith is attained by the discharge of devotional service, and by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare, which cleanses one's heart of all material dirt. (Bg. 4.39, purport) 🌀



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

Hang On!

A message from within and a timely lecture help remove a devotee's doubts about the spiritual value of his job.

by Manish Goel



Every morning I was dragging my body to the office, and every evening I was crawling back home like an ashamed, beaten serpent. My heart was constantly hammering my mind with the thought that I should quit my job.

I analyzed my work through the lens of Kṛṣṇa consciousness and

found it degrading and contrary to the principles of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I work for a retail company where I create propositions that entice people to buy more and more. I started feeling that any kind of work is equivalent to contributing to *māyā's* trap of increasing material desires.

I was disturbed constantly by the realization that I'm on the path of Kṛṣṇa consciousness to escape the influence of *māyā*, but I'm busy creating material allurements for others. I then asked myself if my judgment was right. If I were to start evaluating different occupations, I could find fault with every kind of work. And if I really want to quit my work, I should go to a village, till some land, rear a cow, and live a simple life practicing Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

But I don't kill animals or sell liquor. I don't gamble or do any illegal work. I have a simple job, so what is my problem with this work?

These mixed feelings put my mind in turmoil.

My poor, crooked mind didn't understand that it was my consciousness that needed to change, not my profession. The sun of my

confidence had set into the darkness of weak-heartedness, unaware of the ray of hope approaching.

I decided to go to the Sunday feast at the Hare Kṛṣṇa temple in Chowpatty, Mumbai. Sitting on the *vyāsāsana* was a tall man with a strong built and a dark complexion. His name was Devāmṛta Swami, and he was speaking to the audience. He had a calm smile on his face, and he always seemed ready to break into loud laughter. He did so several times a few minutes later.

He started his lecture with the very question burning in my mind: Can we be Kṛṣṇa conscious in the workplace?

YOGA OF WORK

He started off by saying that we should ask ourselves why we are working. If we work for ourselves, we will never be happy and satisfied. Kṛṣṇa consciousness is about pleasing Kṛṣṇa's senses.

In the *Bhagavad-gītā* (3.1) Arjuna asks Kṛṣṇa, "O Janārdana, O Keśava, why do You want to engage me in this ghastly warfare, if You think that intelligence is better than fruitive work?" Prabhupāda explains: "Arjuna also thought of Kṛṣṇa consciousness or *buddhi-yoga*, or intelligence in spiritual advancement of knowledge, as something like retirement from active life and the practice of penance and austerity at a secluded place." But when Kṛṣṇa explained to Arjuna the importance of *karma-yoga*, Arjuna understood his real dharma, or duty. Kṛṣṇa explained that Arjuna was not fighting for himself but for Kṛṣṇa.

"If Arjuna can give up all his prejudices and fight a big war—which involved killing his loved ones—then each one of us can do our work very peacefully," said Devāmṛta Swami.

WISDOM IN THE WORKPLACE

In this world, exploitation is inevitable. To survive, people are exploiting each other. But from the spiritual perspective, we should have the mood of servitude, and try as far as possible not to go beyond what is necessary. Killing living beings is one sure thing that will bring horrible reaction.

In business, our motivation should not be to destroy others. Our motivation should be to be the best we could be. We may have to try to defeat competition, but not in a malicious way. If we are actually trying to destroy other peoples' lives, we are going to get all the karma of that — 100%. But if we are trying to do better than others, trying to defeat others — our competitors — and we try to do it, as far as possible, in an honest way with integrity, there would be some karma, but that would be minimized. And if we give some of the profits for spiritual, charitable purposes, then that can be removed. If we are doing things

in a malicious way, then even if we give it in a spiritual charitable way, the karma will be on us. And if we are trying to do things with proper integrity, proper honor, and we give results in charitable spirit, for spiritual cause, and at the same time, we are purifying our own heart by chanting God's name and spiritual purifications, then we can rise above those minimal karmic situations. And they will not seriously affect our lives.

If we are using our business profits for a cause that is helpful to others as well, if we have a spirit of compassion rather than a spirit of greed, then the karma is minimized and nullified. When we are motivated by greed, selfishness, and inconsideration of how we hurt others, or hurting people beyond need, then serious karma may come upon us. Great accomplishments are not as satisfying or not as important as great qualities.

Rādhānātha Swami
(excerpts from a lecture)

He then said that people might believe that devotees don't work hard and smart. But if as devotees we discharge our duties well and intelligently, that impresses people, and we become brand ambassadors of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

"If we develop an attitude of offering everything to Kṛṣṇa," he said, "then Kṛṣṇa gives us intelligence and we perform our duties perfectly."

QUESTIONS ANSWERED

I hadn't asked him the questions that were tormenting me, but he answered them all. A new sun dawned in my consciousness, and his words were like a ray of hope. I

now knew why I was never happy and content in my work: I was working only for the satisfaction of my own senses and ego.

I had become so attached to my work that it had become my identity, and I had left behind the real quest for my true identity. I had forgotten that I should try to serve the Lord with the work He has provided instead of offering it to the hunger of my own ego.

Now I understand that since I am not doing any work that violates the basic religious principles—no intoxication, no meat-eating, no illicit sex, and no gambling—I should focus on my work and be honest in my duties.

From Devāmṛta Swami’s lecture I understood that every act of a devotee should be an offering to Kṛṣṇa. A devotee should try to work for Kṛṣṇa’s sense gratification, and thus should feel obliged to work. We should understand that just to be identified as a servant of Kṛṣṇa is a wholesome individuality. This point helped me understand that each of my acts is a means to serve Kṛṣṇa.

A MILESTONE

The lecture was an important milestone in my journey in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Since then, my moroseness has gone away, and I am excited to go to work. In fact, I try to perfect my work because now I believe it’s one of the ways to please Kṛṣṇa.

At times I still forget and get carried away with the flight of my ego, so I’ve placed a reminder on my office desk: “Remember, everything is an offering to Kṛṣṇa.”

I don’t want this truth to leave my mind. I want it to stay with me forever to keep reminding me of my true identity: servant of Kṛṣṇa. Like a true

Devāmṛta Swami adds later:

The only thing more I can offer is perhaps that you should ensure that the point of Kṛṣṇa’s actually benefiting from the results (the fruits) is clear. I would stress that as the major priority in working for Kṛṣṇa. It’s the attitude as well as the fruits—that’s where the action is, the bhakti dynamics.

Hence, I always say, “go to work to give, not to get.” Go to work to give a pure and vibrant Kṛṣṇa conscious lifestyle to yourself, your family, and then to as many other persons as you can. Widen the circle of divine care, giving, and sharing, as much as your circumstances allow. And remember, among the circle of other persons we work for, the Deity is the Supreme Other Person.

In this way work becomes a *yajña*—to benefit the world (including the self and the family) with Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Going to work focused on getting—getting money, getting prestige, and getting “fulfillment”—is miserable, miserly, *kṛpaṇa*.”

devotee, I want to be always in the trance of the service attitude. I want to please the object of my service, Lord Kṛṣṇa. Then, as He did through Devāmṛta Swami’s lecture, Kṛṣṇa will answer all my doubts. To keep my faith intact, I need to be patient and listen to the calling of my heart when it says, “Hang on!” 🌀

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AVATĀRA

THE ONE WHO DESCENDS

by Śyāmānanda Dāsa

By the time you get this article, Hollywood's new offering "Avatar" will be showing on screens near you. It's a movie created at the cost of more than \$200 million. Sanskrit pundits might celebrate that the mega-buck spending moguls of Hollywood are appreciating a Sanskrit word *avatāra*, but this movie has nothing to do with the *avatāra* of the Vedic scriptures. The man behind this movie, James Cameron explains his understanding of the word: "Avatar is a word from the Hindu religion which means the fleshly incarnation of a divine being, like Śiva or whatever. And so in this film it's a fleshly incarnation of a human, a living human who can put their consciousness into that body."

We at BTG would like to con-

gratulate him for his attempt to understand this seemingly difficult concept, but would also like to take this opportunity to put the record straight.

It is mainly Kṛṣṇa (Viṣṇu) who descends from the world of spirit into the world of matter. And His appearance here is called *avatāra*. The Sanskrit term *avatāra* ("one who descends") is often rendered into English as "incarnation" (*carnis* means flesh, *incarnation* means "one who accepts a fleshly existence"). It would be a gross error to think that Kṛṣṇa incarnates in a body made of physical elements. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* material elements and God's own spiritual nature are distinguished clearly. The material elements namely, earth, water, fire, air, and ethereal space are temporary in

nature and thus destructible. Kṛṣṇa's own nature called *parā-prakṛiti*, is invisible, eternal, and infallible.

Only when the Lord descends, by His mercy, the invisible becomes visible.

Cameron further states that, "And to me that was an important distinction, because it's not like a virtual avatar the way we have on SECOND LIFE (a website offering virtual existence in cyberspace) or in role playing games and that sort of thing. It's a living, breathing biological body. So you go to sleep in your human body and wake up in the 'avatar' body. When it goes to sleep at the end of the day, you reawaken in your human body. Then you have to go to sleep because you have to rest."

Well, so much for the under-

standing of spiritual concepts presented by the entertainment industry, let us check out the truth from the Vedic texts.

HOW MANY AVATĀRAS?

God has many *avatāras*. God as the personality remains one, but His *avatāras* are innumerable. In India, *avatāras* are popularly listed as ten in number called *Dasāvatāras* and are particularly celebrated. They are:

1. Matsya—the Lord’s form as a gigantic fish
2. Kurma—the turtle
3. Varāha—the boar
4. Śrī Nṛsimha—the half-man-half-lion form
5. Paraśurāma—the hermit who wields an axe
6. Vāmana—the small *brāhmaṇa* boy
7. Śrī Rāmacandra—the Lord of Ayodhyā
8. Śrī Balarāma—Lord Kṛṣṇa’s brother
9. Buddha—the sage who cheated the atheists
10. Kalki—who will depopulate the world of all degraded, sinful men at the end of the present age of Kali

WHY DOES GOD TAKE AVATĀRA?

Śrīla Prabhupāda writes in his purport to *Bhagavad-gītā* (4.7), “The purpose of the *Vedas* is to establish religious principles under the order of the Supreme Lord, and the Lord directly orders, at the end of the *Gītā*, that the highest principle of religion is to surrender unto Him only, and nothing more. The Vedic principles push one towards complete surrender unto Him, and whenever such principles are disturbed by the demoniac, the Lord appears. From the *Bhāgavatam* we

understand that Lord Buddha is the incarnation of Kṛṣṇa who appeared when materialism was rampant and materialists were using the pretext of the authority of the *Vedas*. Although there are certain regulations regarding animal sacrifice in the *Vedas*, people of demonic tendency still took to animal sacrifice without reference to the Vedic principles. Lord Buddha appeared to stop this nonsense and to establish the Vedic principles of nonviolence. Therefore, each and every *avatāra*, or incarnation of the Lord,

When He reveals His *avatāra* form within this material world, that form, being limited to a particular place and time, cannot be the real God; it is only an indication of God. But the fact is that it is not God’s form that is limited. It is only our conception of the form that is limited, because that conception is grossly physical. Being spiritual, God’s form is the most subtle. There is no contradiction between the omnipresence of something subtle and it having form. The most subtle material phenomena we can

No one should be accepted as an *avatāra* unless he is referred to by scriptures.

has a particular mission, and they are all described in the revealed scriptures. No one should be accepted as an *avatāra* unless he is referred to by scriptures. It is not a fact that the Lord appears only on Indian soil. He can manifest Himself anywhere and everywhere, and whenever He desires to appear. In each incarnation, He speaks as much about religion as can be understood by the particular people under their particular circumstances. But the mission is the same: to lead people to God consciousness and obedience to the principles of religion.

“Sometimes He descends personally, and sometimes He sends His bona fide representative in the form of His son, or servant, or Himself in some disguised form.”

OBJECTIONS TO GOD ASSUMING A FORM

Some people think that form necessarily means “limitation.” God is omnipresent, unlimited and therefore formless, they argue.

perceive is sound. Sound may be formless (as noise) or it may have form (as music). Because sound is subtle, it having form does not affect its ability to pervade a huge building. Similarly, God having form does not affect His ability to pervade the entire universe. Since God’s form is finer than the finest material subtlety, it is completely inappropriate for us to compare His form to gross chunks of matter.

CAN ALL OF US BE OR HAVE AVATĀRAS?

Some argue that any and all embodied creatures can be termed ‘*avatāras*’ (as the movie also suggests). Any number of “living gods” are being proclaimed within India and other parts of the world today. Some of these gods are mystics, some are charismatic, and some are politicians. But none of them are authorized by the Vedic scriptures. They represent only the mistaken idea that the one formless unlimited truth appears in endless gross, physical human incarnations, and



that you and me and I and he are therefore all together God. And since each god has a different idea of what dharma (real religion) is, the final truth is that the paths of all gods lead to the same goal.

This idea is as unenlightened as it is impractical. One may claim to be an *avatāra*, but then he or she has to prove it by performing superhuman feats, as God would actually do. This is easier said than done. When ordinary people proclaim themselves as god and their actions as Vedic dharma, that is termed as a disturbance to eternal religious principles. Lord Kṛṣṇa therefore proclaims: “To deliver the pious and to annihilate the miscreants, as well as to reestablish the principles of religion, I Myself appear, millennium after millennium.” (*Bhagavad-gītā* 4.8)

DEPRESSING BEAUTY

Cameron’s 3D science fiction epic “Avatar” and its spectacular

world may have been a little too real for some fans who say they have experienced depression after seeing the film because they long to enjoy the beauty of the alien world shown in the movie.

On the fan forum site “Avatar Forums,” a topic thread entitled “Ways to cope with the depression of the dream of Pandora being intangible” has received more than 1,000 posts from people experiencing depression and fans trying to help them cope, reports the CNN website.

The topic became so popular that the forum administrator had to create a second thread so people could continue to post their confused feelings about the movie.

One user wrote on the fan website “Naviblue” meaning he contemplated suicide after seeing the movie.

“Ever since I saw Avatar, I feel depressed. Watching the wonderful world of Pandora and all the

Na’vi made me want to be one of them. I can’t stop thinking about all the things that happened in the film and all of the tears and shivers I got from it. I even contemplate suicide thinking that if I do it I will be rebirthed in a world similar to Pandora and then everything is the same as in Avatar,” he added.

Other fans have expressed feelings of disgust with the human race and disengagement with reality.

The world of Pandora, which is reminiscent of a prehistoric fantasyland, filled with dinosaur-like creatures mixed with the kinds of fauna found in the deep reaches of the ocean. Compared with life on earth, Pandora is a beautiful, glowing utopia.

Another user wrote “When I woke up this morning after watching Avatar for the first time yesterday, the world seemed . . . gray. It was like my whole life; everything I’ve done and worked for, lost its meaning. It just seems so meaning-



The world of Pandora (opposite page) and the spiritual world (left)

less. I still don't really see any reason to keep doing things at all. I live in a dying world."

Stephan Quentzel, psychiatrist and Medical Director for the Louis Armstrong Center for Music and Medicine at Beth Israel Medical Center in New York said: "Virtual life is not real life and it never will be, but this is the pinnacle of what we can build in a virtual presentation so far. It has taken the best of our technology to create this virtual world and real life will never be as utopian as it seems onscreen. It makes real life seem more imperfect."

THE SPIRITUAL WORLD

The virtual world of the movie is unreal, but there is a real world, which is far better than the utopia—and we can all really go there. That is the spiritual world, the kingdom of God, our original home, which the Vedic scriptures describe in glowing terms.

The inhabitants of the spiritual world planets are described as having a glowing sky-bluish complexion. Their eyes resemble lotus flowers, their dress is of yellowish color, and their bodily features are very attractive. They are just the age of growing youths, they all have four hands, they are all nicely decorated with pearl necklaces with ornamental medallions, and they all appear to be effulgent. Some of them are effulgent like coral and diamonds in complexion and have garlands on their heads, blooming like lotus flowers, and some wear earrings.

And this is merely a fraction of all varieties of descriptions found in the *Vedas*. It is significant that none of our transcendentalists experienced depression or suicidal tendencies upon meditating on such descriptions. In fact reading and meditating upon bona fide descriptions of the spiritual world provides us an impetus to discover the

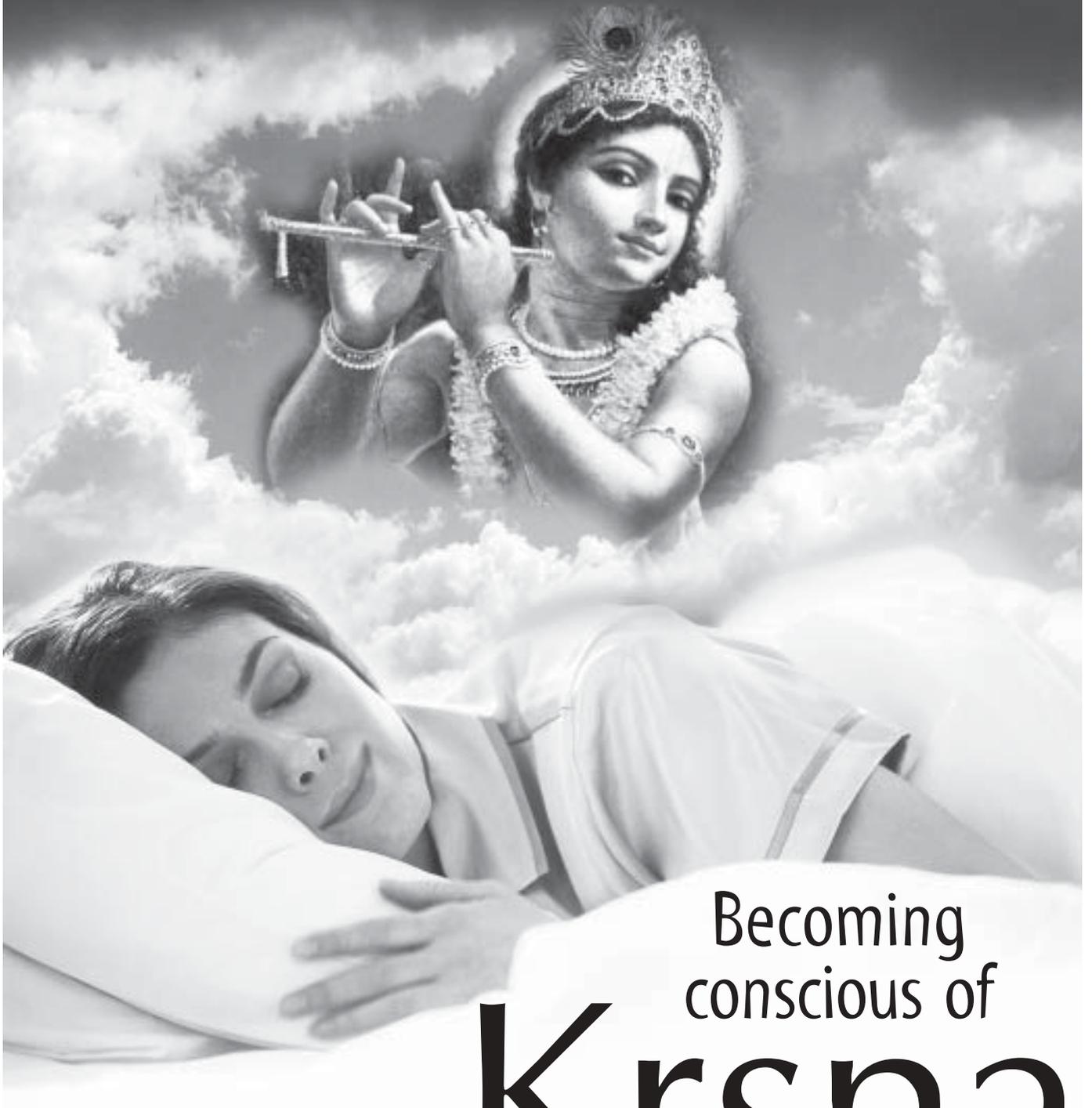
realm of the real *avatāra* and not the one which releases a Pandora of ills. ☉

Śyāmānanda Dāsa is the editor of BTG.

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Becoming
conscious of

Kṛṣṇa

by Yugāvātāra Dāsa

The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement was named the International Society for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness by Śrīla Prabhupāda when he was inspired by one phrase of Śrīla Rupa Gosvāmī, *kṛṣṇa bhāvana bhāvita*—“becoming conscious of Kṛṣṇa.” Remaining conscious of Kṛṣṇa is the most basic principle of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. What does that mean exactly?

A DAY WITH KṚṢṆA

Once I was hearing a discourse by a senior devotee, Dāmodara Paṇḍita Dāsa. In his talk he described a scenario. “Imagine,” he said, “that Kṛṣṇa came in your dream and told you that He is coming for lunch at your home. What will you do? You will get up early in the morning thinking of Kṛṣṇa. While brushing your teeth or taking bath, you will be meditating that you have to cleanse this body properly because you are going to come in contact with Kṛṣṇa. On that day whether you are putting on *tilaka*, wearing your clothes, or cleaning your house, you will be doing it for the pleasure of Kṛṣṇa. As you will go to buy the vegetables, you will be in the mood to get the best for Kṛṣṇa. As you cut those vegetables and cook them, you will be meditating that Lord Kṛṣṇa is going to accept this *bhoga*. What to speak of the moment when Kṛṣṇa will actually come? You will consciously offer him incense, *dhoop*, *cāmara* and *bhoga*. And after Kṛṣṇa leaves, you will accept the remnants with tears as His *mahāprasāda*. At the end of the day as you retire, you will be thinking about the sweet Lord. In this way, your whole day will be Kṛṣṇa conscious.”

A DAY WITHOUT KṚṢṆA

But actually most of us don’t pass

this litmus test of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Actually Kṛṣṇa does reside in our home in the form of the Deity or His picture on our altar. He does visit our home when we call Him through the chanting of the holy name. But we become indifferent. We do bathe daily but that is just a part of our daily routine. We do buy vegetables and cook, but the vegetables we buy are the ones which we like and we cook it for our savoring. Of course, we offer them to Kṛṣṇa and purify that food. But cooking only for Kṛṣṇa’s pleasure is different from cooking for our pleasure and offering it to Lord Kṛṣṇa for its purification. We do make

Cooking only for Kṛṣṇa’s pleasure is different from cooking for our pleasure and offering it to Lord Kṛṣṇa for its purification.

progress even by unconscious acts like accepting *mahāprasāda* or even by less attentive chanting. But then, the progress will be slow with such mechanical devotional service.

ADDING CONSCIOUSNESS TO YOUR ACTIVITIES

By adding consciousness to our activities, we will make progress even by the simple activity of bathing, if we are cleansing the body given by Kṛṣṇa for His pleasure. A simple activity of buying and cutting vegetables can bring us enormous devotional credits if we do it for Kṛṣṇa. This is the beauty of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Even a simple housewife can progress on the devotional path just by cooking for Kṛṣṇa. But a *pūjārī* in the temple may not progress if he is not conscious of Kṛṣṇa.

WORKING FOR KṚṢṆA

This principle is important for householders. Arjuna is the ex-

ample. He was working for Kṛṣṇa under His directions. Similarly a householder devotee must seek guidance from *Bhagavad Gītā* and senior renounced devotees. He should worship the Lord at home. The presence of the Lord converts the home into a temple. Thus a devotee becomes the temple president and has to shoulder the responsibility of running this small temple. He works so that all the expenses of this temple home are taken care of. Simultaneously he also supports the other three *āśramas*: *brahmacāri*, *vānaprastha*, and *sannyāsa*. If he keeps this mood then his activities done for earn-

ing money will also help him advance spiritually.

KṚṢṆA CONSCIOUSNESS FOR EVERYONE

It’s not that only those engaged in menial service have to be in the right frame of mind, but even a stalwart preacher has to remain conscious that he is speaking as a service to the Supreme Lord and that he is able to speak such nice philosophy by Kṛṣṇa’s mercy. So whether one is serving Deities in the temple or serving at the temple shoe stall, the mood is to consciously serve Kṛṣṇa and His dear devotees. So remaining conscious that this article has been possible only by the mercy of Kṛṣṇa, I sign off. 🌐

Yugāvatāra Dāsa is an associate professor in Anatomy in a medical college in Mumbai. He is a regular contributor to BTG.

Why do we need a temple?

PART
1

by Caitanya Caraṇa Dāsa

ISKCON is famous for its magnificent temples. Visitors to ISKCON temples, while appreciating their beauty, still sometimes raise the question: is it necessary to spend so much on building temples? How do temples practically benefit society?

In the article below, the answers to these and several similar questions are provided through the device of a conversation between Ratan Gupta (RG), a visitor to a temple, and a learned ISKCON sannyāsī, Sanatana Swami (SS).

RG: Praṇām, Swamiji.

SS: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Guptaji. Please accept the blessings of Lord Kṛṣṇa. We are happy that you have taken time out of your busy schedule to visit our temple. Did you have *darśana*?

RG: Yes, the Lord is so beautifully dressed and decorated. I heard you are coming up with a new temple.

SS: Yes. Kṛṣṇa willing, the temple will be ready in two years if the funds come regularly.

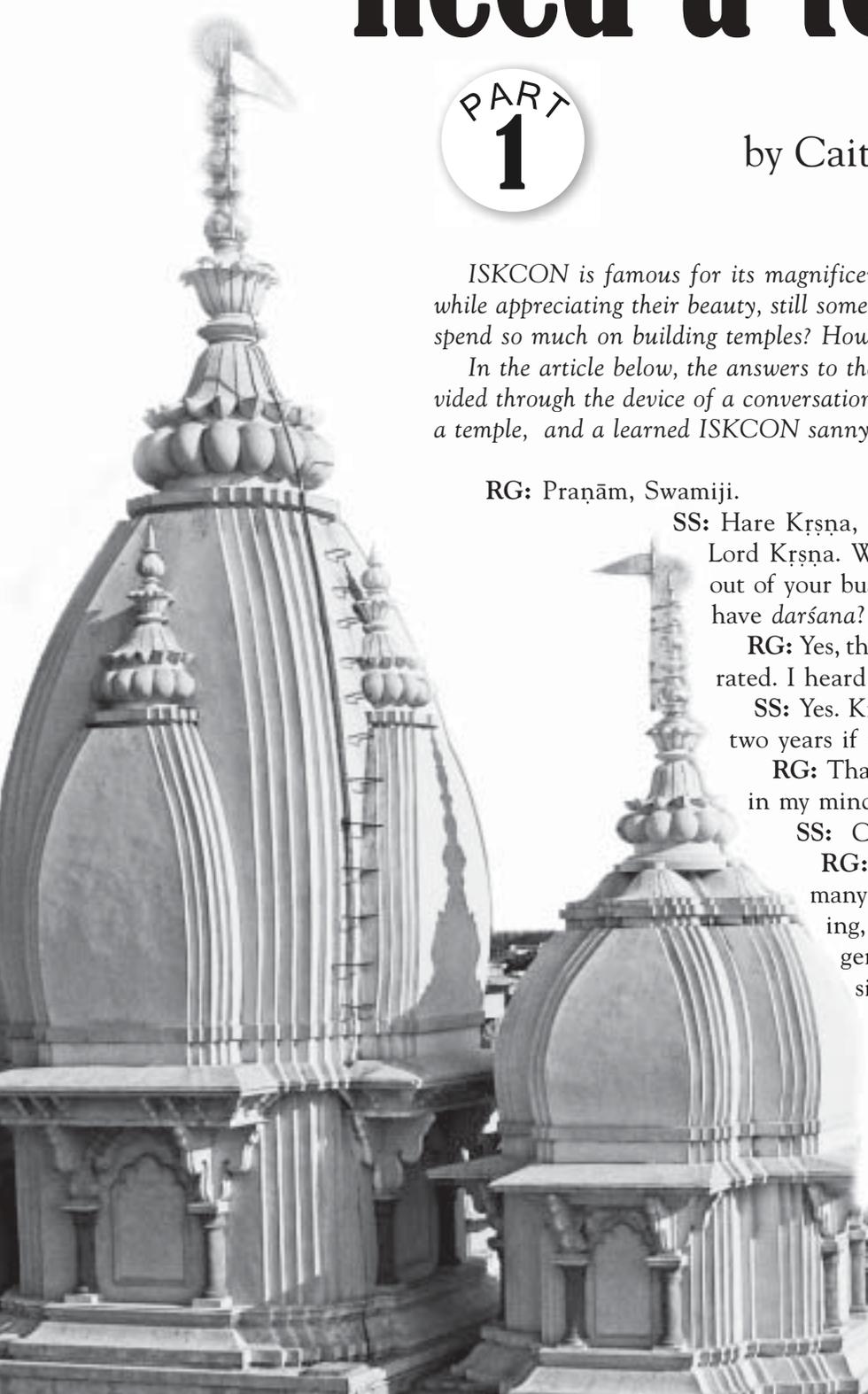
RG: That brings me to a question that has been in my mind for a long time. Can I ask you?

SS: Certainly.

RG: Do we need such costly temples? So many people are suffering without food, clothing, and shelter. Isn't that a much more urgent necessity for society than an expensive temple?

SS: Certainly it saddens our heart to see people suffering without the basic necessities of life. Many humanitarian organizations are working to help them and much more can be done. At the same time, a temple plays a vital role in the integration and the development of the entire community, a role

The domes of ISKCON temple in Vṛndāvana.



that is not being played at all in our modern society.

RG (surprised): Really? What is that role?

SS: I will briefly explain the social services provided by a temple through an acronym T-E-M-P-L-E: T—Tranquility, E—Education, M—Medication, P—Purification, L—Love, E—Engagement.

RG: Sounds interesting.

TRANQUILITY

SS: Just as food, clothing, and shelter are the basic needs of the body, peace is a basic need of the mind. Today, there is practically no system to provide for this basic mental need. Worse still, our fast paced, stress filled lifestyle agitates our mind a lot. No wonder the World Health Organization (WHO) has declared that the greatest medical challenge of the current century will not be AIDS or cancer, but mental health problems. The temple is one of the few places where you can immediately experience a deep peace just by going into the premises.

RG (looking thoughtful): When I entered the temple I was wondering how it is such a haven of serenity despite geographically being amidst the hustle bustle of the city. Where does this tranquility come from?

SS: The tranquility is a natural result of the divine vibrations that constantly pervade a temple. Those vibrations result from both the presence of the Lord in His Deity form, as well the constant chanting of His holy names. Many, many people come to the temple in the evening to de-stress themselves before returning home. They take *darśana* of the Deities, attend the *ārati*, or sit in the temple hall taking in the divine atmosphere. Thus

they become mentally recharged to cope with the challenges of life. Śrīla Prabhupāda, the founder-*ācāryā* of ISKCON wanted to have temples right in the hearts of the cities so that the maximum number of people would have easy, quick access to the tranquility that the temple offers.

RG: Sometimes I wonder whether peace of mind is a luxury that we can ill afford when we have so many duties to perform for our family, office, and society.

SS: Peace of mind is not a luxury, but is a necessity that enables us to perform our duties sustainably. To lift a 5-kg weight for a few minutes is not difficult. But if we were to lift it continuously for the rest of our lives, it would soon become a burden, an unbearable burden. We would need to relieve ourselves of the weight by short breaks that would allow the muscles of our arm to rest and regain strength. Similarly, our duties—and the anxieties that inevitably come with them—are like burdens on our minds. If we let these burdens weigh on our minds constantly, they exhaust us mentally. We need short breaks that allow our minds to rest and regain strength.

People try to get these breaks through entertainment—by watching television and movies. Entertainment may sometimes refresh us, but often it leaves us with more agitating thoughts, desires, and memories.

On the other hand, when we come to the temple, we take those mental burdens off and sooth our minds with the healing serenity that pervades the temple. Then when we are mentally rested and refreshed, we restart our duties with greater effectiveness.

In fact, because people don't take such nourishing breaks, they

become ineffective in their personal functioning and irritable in their interpersonal dealings, leading to so many avoidable problems.

RG: I had never thought of the temple contributing to society by providing mental rest.

SS: You are not alone in that. I too had hardly any idea of the value of our culture until I came in contact with ISKCON, and I would surmise the same holds true for most Indians, including even those who are proud of their culture. That's what makes the next contribution of the temple to society—education—so vitally important. Many temples offer a tranquil atmosphere, but ISKCON temples in particular offer spiritual education too.

EDUCATION

RG (somewhat skeptically): Spiritual education? Do we really need that, especially in this age of science?

SS: Science tells us how to do things, but spirituality alone teaches us why to do things. For example, the medical colleges teach how to cure a patient, but they don't teach why to cure him. Consequently, many doctors see their patients as money-minting machines and often subject them to needless tests and treatments to earn more out of them. Similarly, in every profession, when the motive of earning takes primacy, professionals end up exploiting their clients.

RG (protesting): But that is a human defect. Why blame education for that?

SS: The purpose of real education is not just to train students in technical skills, but also to rectify the lower human tendencies. Sadly, modern education fails to do that. Learning is not just for earning, but

also for service.

RG (thoughtfully): Service?

SS: Yes, the doctor's real duty should be to serve the patients—to free them from their pains and to heal them. Think of how much better our world would be if everyone were working to serve each other, not to exploit each other. Spiritual education can create that culture of service.

RG: Why do we need spiritual education for that? We just need to help people understand the need to be good and to do good to others.

SS: Without spiritual education, most people will not be able to stay good or do good for a long time; they would soon succumb to an immoral, exploitative mentality.

RG: Why?

SS: Being good and doing good or living by moral principles is like following traffic laws for smooth and safe travel. The purpose of travel, however, is not merely to follow the laws, but to reach the destination. If a traveler feels that the traffic laws delay or obstruct his reaching the destination or that there's no policeman to catch him, he will soon become tempted to break the laws.

Like traffic laws, moral principles promote order, specifically orderly social interactions. But modern education doesn't teach us about the goal of social transactions or the goal of life itself. So, most people choose by default the incessantly glamorized goals of modern consumerist society—wealth, enjoyment, prestige, power, possession, position. The *Bhagavad-gītā*, which has been acknowledged as a philosophical

masterpiece by Emerson, Einstein, Gandhi and many other thinkers worldwide, explains graphically how such a materialistic worldview leads to corruption and degradation. When the social culture aggressively propagates materialistic goals and education does nothing to counter this propaganda, then morality appears unnecessary and even undesirable, resulting in the mentality: "If the goal of life is to earn money and enjoy life, then why be honest, when honesty will severely limit my earning and enjoyment? By hook or crook, earn and enjoy. There's no



God in front of whom I have to account for my deeds; there's only this one life for me to enjoy. I just have to make sure that whatever I do, I do it cleverly enough to not get caught."

RG (thoughtfully): Yes, the resolve for morality doesn't last. In my 30 years of business experience, I have seen many moralists glide down to immorality.

SS: The Vedic texts explain that as souls, we all have an eternal loving relationship with the all attractive Supreme Lord. In loving and serving God, we can relish supreme and everlasting happiness; the more we love God, the happier we become. The scriptures of other great

religions like Christianity and Islam also describe love of God as the ultimate goal of life. Hence, love of God is the non-sectarian, universal, spiritual goal of life.

RG: Love for God as the ultimate goal of life? Isn't that too other-worldly and impractical? And how does that lead to morality?

SS: Love for God certainly directs our vision to the other world, the eternal spiritual world beyond the temporary material world. But this other-worldly goal does not make us impractical; rather, it builds the most solid foundation for living

practically in this world. Just as when we switch on the master switch in a house, all the lights in the house automatically turn on, love for God similarly results in love for all living beings. We realize that all of us are brothers and sisters in the one universal family of God. When we love all living beings, we no longer desire

to exploit or manipulate others for our selfish interests. Instead, our love for God inspires us to love and serve each other. This creates a culture of warmth, trust, and service, which encourages moral behavior. This contrasts sharply with the modern culture of alienation, suspicion, and exploitation, which fosters immorality.

When we follow a genuine spiritual path, even in its early stages, it triggers our inborn value system. We intuitively realize that God is our greatest well-wisher and that the rules He has made for us are in our ultimate interest. So we voluntarily and lovingly choose to lead a life of moral and spiritual integrity,

as ordained by God. As we find inner happiness by loving God, we become freed from selfish, lusty, greedy, and egoistic drives. No longer do we feel we are missing something because of our morality. Morality ceases to be the “right but difficult” choice. Rather we choose morality as the natural path to our spiritual growth.

This is how spiritual education leads to the culture of service, by

which people can constructively use all other education for doing good to others. Without spiritual education, they often abuse their material education to exploit others.

RG (after a thoughtful pause): My grandparents used to tell me that in their times, they would leave the doors of their houses open and still no one would steal anything. Now I get some idea of how that was possible. 🌐

To be continued . . .

(Extracted from the author’s book “Why do we need a temple?”)

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

SATIRE



BT BRINJAL

Tenali: Gopal, do you know that for the first time a Genetically Modified (GM) variety of brinjal, Bt Brinjal, is going to be introduced in India.

Gopal: What is that, Tenali?

Tenali: GM means the deliberate, controlled manipulation of the genes in an organism with the intent of making it better in some way. This is usually done independent of natural process. The result is a so-called genetically modified organism (GMO).

Gopal: But for what gain?

Tenali: Proponents of genetic engineering claim that it has numerous benefits, including the production of food-bearing plants that are resistant to extreme weather and adverse climates, insect infestations, disease, molds, and fungi. In addition, it may be possible to

reduce the amount of plowing thereby saving energy and minimizing soil erosion. A major motivation is the hope of producing abundant food at low cost to reduce world hunger, both directly (by feeding GMOs to human beings) and indirectly (by feeding GMOs to livestock and fish, which can in turn be fed to humans). One Indian politician said that the most urgent task is to feed hungry stomachs, (no matter what the cost).

Gopal: What could be the adverse reactions?

Tenali: Genetic engineering carries potential dangers, such as the creation of new allergens and toxins, the evolution of new weeds and other noxious vegetation, harm to wildlife, and the creation of environments favorable to the proliferation of molds and fungi (ironically, in light of the purported advantage in that respect). Some scientists have expressed concern that new disease organisms and increased antibiotic resistance could result from the use of GMOs in the food chain. The darkest aspect of genetic engineering is the possibility that a government or institution might undertake it to enhance human beings by means of genetic

engineering or use this technology to create biological weapons.

Gopal: I have a funny story to tell. One king liked a brinjal dish served by his cook so much that he told him to cook brinjal every day. Then he asked his minister as to why brinjal tasted so good. The minister replied that brinjal is the “king” of vegetables and is also called *bahugūṇa* (*bahu* = “many” and *gūṇa* = “good qualities”). After a week of eating brinjals every day the bored king stopped his cook from cooking brinjal anymore. Again he called his minister and complained that eating brinjals continuously for a week has made him sick. The minister replied that this was the reason the brinjal was called *be gūṇa* (*be* = “without” and *gūṇa* = “good qualities”). The astonished king asked how he could make such contradictory statements about brinjal. The minister said, “Your Majesty, I am your servant. You pay my salary, not the brinjal.”

Tenali: Now I get it. Whether the Bt brinjal is good or bad doesn’t really matter to the scientists and politicians. All that matters is their pay. Whatever is the opinion of the party that pays, those words they will say. 🌐

In your own words ...



What would you like to thank God for?

I WOULD LIKE TO THANK GOD for sending Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees into my life. By their mercy I am learning how to thank God. I thank God that He sent *kṛṣṇa-prasāda* to my college campus where I was studying. *Prasāda* changed my life. I thank God that He spoke *Bhagavad-gītā*. The wisdom given in it has changed the lives of millions of people. I thank God that He sent Śrīla Prabhupāda to this world, who personally preached the path of *bhakti* throughout the world.

I thank God that He appeared as Lord Caitanya to reveal love of Śrī Śrī Rādhā Kṛṣṇa. I thank Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu that He accepted *sannyāsa* to liberate fallen souls like me. I am grateful to the Lord that He has created association of pure devotees, with whom I can hear *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, go to places of pilgrimage, and with whom I can chant Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Dinānātha Dāsa
Parbhani, Maharashtra

MY NATIVE PLACE IS MATHURA, but for the last 60 years my family has been living in Baroda, Gujarat.

From the very beginning, my family had been worshipping Lord Kṛṣṇa—eating *prasāda*, decorating Bāl Kṛṣṇa. My brother Mohan came in touch with ISKCON devotees while studying in Bangalore. When he

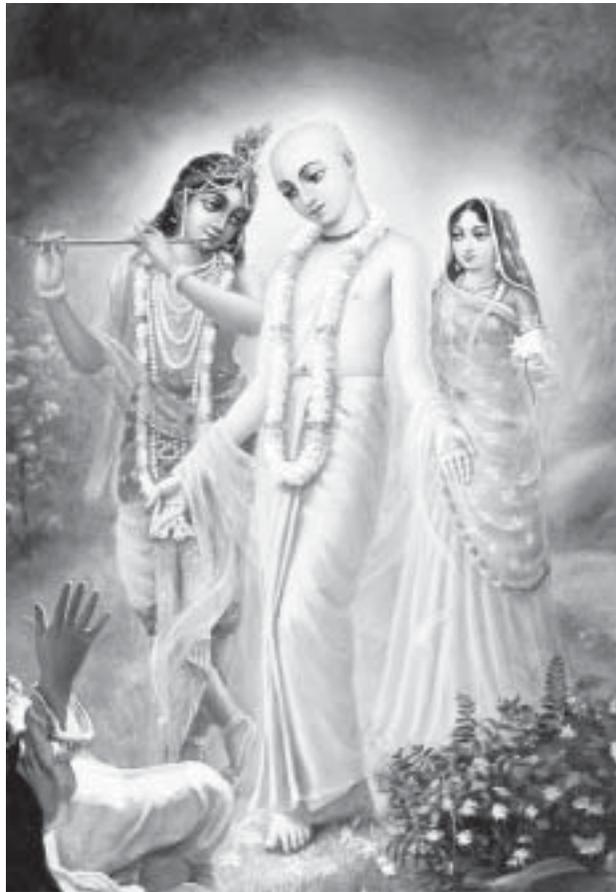
returned home, he inspired me to become Kṛṣṇa conscious and chant 16 rounds. I immediately accepted and started chanting. But, now after two years of preaching, I observe that it is not as easy for others to accept Kṛṣṇa consciousness as it was for my brother and me. Due to the devotional environment of my family, it was easy for me to become

family.

Mala Sharma, Baroda

I THANK GOD FOR PROTECTING me, not just on the physical platform, but also for protecting me from falling into the pits of *māyā*. Looking back, I can proudly say that God did have a very personal relationship with me. The way He handled things in my life is amazing. No management guru can beat that. My last few years in Kṛṣṇa consciousness were a heart-throbbing adventure. Then suddenly from nowhere, I slipped and got into bad association. Then Kṛṣṇa actually held my hand and protected me from dangers. He gave me protection when I did not even ask for it. That is real compassion. We do not help people even when they ask. However, here is someone, who proved Himself (although He need not) that He is the most merciful of all. I hardly had anything to do with Him, still He stayed by my side in a most dramatic way.

Rahul Danait



Kṛṣṇa conscious and understand Śrīla Prabhupāda's philosophy nicely.

I was very fortunate to get such an upbringing. So, I want to thank God for giving me birth in this

FROM A MAJOR ACCIDENT that I escaped, to that car lift I got from college to home, from my loving parents and my sweet brothers to my favorite *pāv bhājī* and delicious *rabdī*, I am thankful to God for everything. But I am most indebted to Him for His

manifestation as friendship in all the relationships I savor. The only thing that has kept me surviving in this world is this feeling of friendship, be it with the unknown author of my favorite book, my design professor, or my college friends. Since my childhood I have always treated Lord Kṛṣṇa as a friend among all the gods I believed in. I was scared of all of them but not of Kṛṣṇa. If this would not have been my relationship with the Lord I would have never been introduced to ISKCON and my life would have never changed. Thank you friend!

Manish Goel, Delhi

A LOT OF MY FRIENDS COME from an atheistic background. Some believe in God, but only when they have a desire that they cannot fulfil. I want to thank God for giving me birth in a family that always believed in praying to God for strength and thanking Him even for the bad times. My family and I share different ideals when it comes to God and religion. I want to thank God for giving me birth in a family where different faiths coexist. It has made me more tolerant and respectful towards the belief of others, however different they may be from mine. I have observed people who chant the names of God with bitter feelings towards others. I want to thank God for giving me birth in a family that believes that love for God starts with kindness and compassion towards others. Thank you, God.

Rashi Parikh,
Mumbai

1+5 THINGS I THANK GOD FOR:

1. For each moment He has given me. Each moment I can either make

or break. Each moment I can build my memories, experiences, and activities. In this one present moment I can build my destiny.

+

Five more things I thank God for:

1. For appearing in a Deity form with whom I can develop a relationship.

2. For giving His holy name which is non-different from Him and also easily accessible.

3. For giving me the association of devotees from whom I get guidance and inspiration in my spiritual life.

4. For giving me Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, which is the torchlight of knowledge for this dark age of Kali.

5. For the holy dhāmas which

remind me of His transcendental activities.

I thank God for these five gifts that enhance His first gift—each moment of opportunity given to me.

Brajaswāmini Devī Dāsī

IN YOUR OWN WORDS

QUESTION FOR THE
FORTHCOMING ISSUES

What is the most unbelievable, but true thing in Kṛṣṇa consciousness?

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MUSIC IS MY PATH TO GOD

*A musician chants and plays music for Kṛṣṇa
and gets slowly enchanted by the melodies*

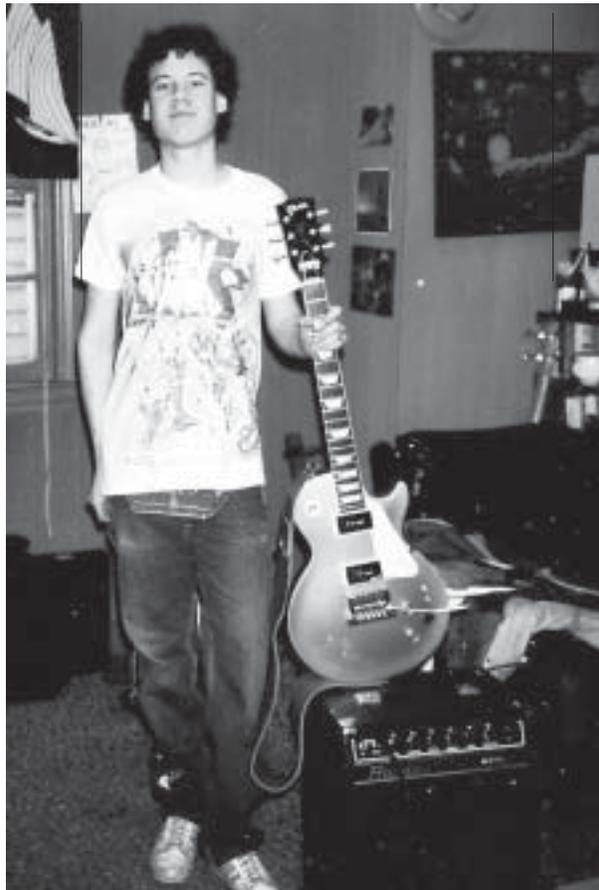
PART
1

By Ekalavya Dāsa

Many devotees come to Kṛṣṇa consciousness by having a profound revelation upon their first contact with Kṛṣṇa consciousness. My experience was more gradual. Many encounters in different parts of the world were pieces of the jigsaw puzzle that gradually formed the shape of a life of commitment to Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

In 1965 I was born in New York, only a few blocks from Dr. Misra's Yoga Studio, the first place where Śrīla Prabhupāda stayed in New York.

I was born in an affluent Jewish family. My family members were deeply interested in the arts. We would often travel for concerts and culture shows, go to art museums, and see Broadway shows.



*The author in his music room. (Right)
With his sister (sucking thumb).*

All of my family members are musical. When I was five, my parents sent me for music lessons. I went to Abe Mandleblat, my future guitar teacher, who taught us to make our own instruments from common household objects like frozen orange juice cans with beans inside for shaking, and guitars made from cigar boxes and rubber bands.

I started listening to the music of the Beatles, which became my favorite music group. I was very much attracted to their guitar player, George Harrison, and I especially liked his song, "My Sweet Lord" in which he chanted the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra. So my initial introduction to Kṛṣṇa consciousness was through the Beatles and George Harrison.

My family had a large bungalow. One room of the bun-

galow was a music room with over one hundred musical instruments. This room became my favorite playground.

I always had my own room in our bungalow, with my own phone. At sixteen, I had my own car. Money was plenty. I had my own recording studio, many instruments, and a stereo system loud enough for the police to hear half a kilometer away when I would blast out my rock and roll music. My family purchased one of the first personal computers.

When I was 13 years old, my father gave me a paper bag containing \$500 dollars in one-dollar notes. I poured it out on my bed and rolled around in it for some time.

LOOKING FOR MORE OUT OF LIFE

Although my life was filled with music and my family was materially comfortable, I was unsatisfied. I was looking for more out of life.

I was going through a lot of stress. I was experiencing depression. I was having difficulty adjusting to the new environment in my new school and making new friends. I even began developing suicidal tendencies and pyromania (I began lighting fires). Like so many American children, I began to visit a child psychiatrist, and my family entered into family therapy, but it didn't help much.

At that time Transcendental Meditation was becoming very popular, and my mother

and father took the course and began to practice it. They also enlisted me in learning the practices to learn to cope with life and I began a daily mantra meditation practice. It helped me to find some peace, but ultimately, I found the Transcendental Meditation experience to be unsatisfying. The philosophy was too vague, and the meditation was too impersonal.

A SPIRITUAL CONTACT

My first experience chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* was at the age of 12. I was attending a special camp for children and young adults. We participated in a children's production of the Broadway show called *Hair*. In this production, the actors

on the stage sing: Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare / Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare

I was playing the guitar as part of the pit orchestra. I sung Hare Kṛṣṇa along with the actors. I had no idea of the spiritual repercussions that were to unfold in the future as a result.

My sister, Alice, purchased a copy of *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* and gave it to me as a gift on my 15th birthday.

I kept the *Bhagavad-gītā* on my bookshelf next to my bed. Sometimes, I would open it and look at the text, but I never understood the contents because, as the *Bhagavad-gītā* (2.44) explains:

*bhogaīśvarya
prasaktānām
tayāpahṛta cetasām
vyavasāyātmikā
buddhiḥ
samādhau na vidhīyate*

“In the minds of those who are too attached to sense enjoyment and material opulence, and who are bewildered by such things, the resolute determination for devotional service to the Supreme Lord does not take place.”

I was a hedonist. I was trying to enjoy my senses to the maximum extent. That was the goal of my life, and I thought by doing that I would get happiness. But I still was not getting happiness and satisfaction.

I passed out of high school a year early. I



never attended twelfth standard. When I was in earlier standards, I would get high marks, and was the president of the student honors society. But as I reached 10th and 11th standard, my grades plummeted. I was bored with school. I felt that all the so-called knowledge I was studying was useless. I decided to take one course in the summer to complete my requirements to graduate from high school and get out as soon as possible.

By 17, I left home and enrolled in the College. My calculus tutor introduced me to the idea of attending Berklee College of Music in Boston, one of the most prestigious music schools in the world.

I entered that college, when I was eighteen. Besides studying there, I also took a course in electronic engineering from the world famous Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

In the summer of 1984, I met Koshal Anand, an Australian who had studied *tablā* in Benaras. He made me an offer that if I let him stay with me in my flat, he would teach me Indian music. I immediately agreed.

One warm Sunday, he said, “Hari Om Brother! Let’s go to the Hare Kṛṣṇa Temple for the Sunday program, for a free Vegetarian feast.” I was reluctant to accept the invitation. However, with his insistence, eventually, I agreed.

MEETING ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA

As we arrived and entered in-



Graduation ceremony

side the Hare Kṛṣṇa Temple, I was struck by the atmosphere. I remember the smell of the incense that wafted through the air—it was so fragrant and clean. As we entered inside, I saw a crowd of people sitting on the floor and listening to a devotee giving the Sunday lecture.

I looked around and saw Śrīla Prabhupāda’s *murti*, and I thought that he was a real person sitting on a throne. I sat down with the other people in the temple and kept looking back at Śrīla Prabhupāda who was sitting near the back of the room. I was expecting him to move. But he never moved. I was thinking, “Oh! He must be a great yogi. He’s not even moving. He’s sitting perfectly still.”

I thought I should also sit up

straight like he’s sitting. This was the message that I took from Śrīla Prabhupāda when I first went to the temple. “Sit properly.” Throughout the course of the lecture, I kept looking back at Śrīla Prabhupāda and Śrīla Prabhupāda did not move.

Then it started to dawn on me that perhaps he wasn’t real. So at the end of the lecture, very slowly, I crept up to Śrīla Prabhupāda and I realized that he was a *murti*.

There was a session of chanting and dancing. Koshal played his *tablā* and I played my trumpet. It was a big hit. One of the devotees said to me, that the next time I would come there, they would ask me to sing. Before my next visit, I made a point to memorize the Hare

Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*: Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare / Hare Rāma Hare Rama Rāma Rāma Hare Hare.

To get through the queue for the feast, we had to pass the altar of the Deities Śrī Śrī Rādhā Gopījanavallabha, and I remember thinking that I had never seen anything like this before! It appeared to me like one big light. I could not differentiate the forms on the altar, but only saw one big light.

But then, the next experience—that I could understand. It was the wonderful *prasāda*: lemon rice with cardamom and cheese, spicy *dāl*, flat bread, yellow and orange nectar drinks made from sweet yogurt, *halavā*, all kinds of nice *laddūs*, sweet rice, and *samosās*.

STAYING WITH ŚAIVITES

We met some Śaivites (worshippers of Lord Śiva) who had come to the temple, and they invited us back to their *āśrama*. They said, “Our guru is coming next week, come to our *āśrama*.” I started going there regularly and they taught me to chant the mantra *Om Namah Śivāya* on red *rudrākṣa* beads. The lifestyle appeared attractive to me. Previously, my goal in life was to become a famous rock star on MTV. Now I was thinking of becoming a yogi. I concluded that perhaps it would be better to become a famous rock star now, and when I got old, then I could become a yogi.

Worship of Lord Śiva was good because at that time I was not following the four regulative principles. Śiva is very tolerant of his devotees. I consider this to be a form of preliminary purification before my taking to the path of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I feel that Lord Śiva helped me come to Lord Kṛṣṇa.

One day their guru, Swami P, came to their *āśrama* from India. He was traveling around different colleges and *āśrama* in Boston giving lectures. Koshal and I were his band of musicians. Koshal would sing and play the *tablā*, and I would play the *tamburā*. The Swami told me that I should follow certain principles:

1. I should become a vegetarian
2. I should chant the mantra *Om Namah Śivāya* two hours daily—one hour in the morning and one hour in evening.
3. I should get a special white cloth that should be worn only during meditation.
4. I should pass stool five times a day and take bath after passing stool.

I managed to become a vegetarian. I was chanting “*Om Namah*

Śivāya” two hours a day wearing white sweatpants and a hooded top. But somehow, I could not manage to pass stool five times a day, no matter how hard I tried!

After some time, this Swami P had an affair with his female secretary and I became a little disenchanted with the Śaivites. However, in retrospect, I feel that it was a beneficial experience for me.

PRASĀDA ADDICT

During this period, up until the time I passed out of Berklee in 1987, I regularly went to the Hare Kṛṣṇa

crazy! I’ve a body, I’m a body!” It never made sense to me.

I received a number of Hare Kṛṣṇa books as well. I remember looking through *Chant and Be Happy* with George Harrison. I used to keep the book in the bathroom, as is the practice of Americans, which I later found out was a totally inappropriate place to keep spiritual books. They also gave me many issues of *Back to Godhead* magazine. The devotees always gave me their literature for free, and thus I didn’t place sufficient value on it to give it a careful read.



The author with his parents and sister.

Temple, especially for *prasāda*. Sometimes the devotees would try to explain the philosophy to me but I could never understand what the devotees were talking about. They would tell me, “You are not this body.” I would protest, “What do you mean I’m not this body? Look, I’ve fingers, I’ve hands, I’ve arms, and I’ve a head. These people are

However, I kept going for *prasāda*—which was always fantastic, and I also liked the clean and peaceful atmosphere of the temple. Gradually after the *prasāda*, I would stay for the chanting and dancing. Then later I would stay for the *Bhagavad-gītā* class. They had a great program in this Boston Temple. Anyone could come on

any night at six pm and sit with the devotees and take *prasāda*. It was called the Dinner Program. Just give one or two dollars as a donation, which was a very small amount, and you could come and sit with the devotees for *prasāda*. My favourite preparation was *samosās*. It was a very good arrangement, and I enjoyed it immensely.

During one visit, I saw a devotee trying to teach another devotee to play a simple beat on the *mṛdanga* drum. I asked if I could try, and was able to pick up the beat in a matter of seconds. I then started chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa along with the drum. It was my first *kīrtana*.

One time the devotees were distributing books across the street from Harvard University, in Harvard Square. This is the place where all the students and young people would congregate. It was a festive atmosphere with outdoor cafes and street musicians and performers. I was performing there myself as well. The devotees were distributing invitations for the Sunday program, but no one was taking the invitation. I said, "Here, let me try." I took the invitations from the devotees and I started distributing the invitations and people were taking the invitations from me. This was one of my first engagements in outreach activities. I got a real kick out of it.

I remember a Hare Kṛṣṇa Festival, The Festival of India, in the Boston Commons. I visited briefly, sat before the main stage, and enthusiastically chanted Hare Kṛṣṇa with the musicians on the stage.

TRAVELS AFTER GRADUATION

After college, I traveled around the world for three years as a pro-

fessional musician and seeker of both thrills and spirituality. I visited more than 25 countries and it seemed that everywhere I went, I would meet Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees.

During the summers, I became a staff member at The Arron Copeland Music and Arts Program, and the Director of Electronic Music. One of my colleagues, Ira Sakolsky, explained that we should have a list of thirteen choices in our life and that we should meditate regularly on those choices. I saw that on his list was the choice, "Heaven". I was struck with wonder at seeing this. After some thought, I added to my list, "A personal relationship with God." After some time, this made it to the top of my list.

I bought a book from a devotee on the Copacabana Beach in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and he said, "You don't even speak Portuguese. How will you read the book?"

I said, "I don't know, but I like the picture of Kṛṣṇa on the cover."

While living as a jazz musician in New Orleans, Louisiana, I used to regularly go to Jackson Square to receive the Food For Life *prasāda* distributed several times a week. I also visited the temple once to receive the Sunday Feast.

There was one devotee I met in New York. His name was His Grace Ariha Prabhu, a merciful Prabhupāda disciple, who would go for book distribution every day in the streets of New York City. He would give me *prasāda* whenever he saw me.

SUBWAY TRAIN SANKĪRTAN

At one point in my travels, around 1989, I was in New York City, staying overnight in students' hostels in New York University and

other places. My finances were at an all time low. Sometimes I would see devotees distributing *prasāda* in Tompkins Square Park, the first place where Śrīla Prabhupāda conducted public kīrtan, and I would always get some.

I was on the New York City Subway, and a person came into our subway car and made an announcement. He was asking for funds to feed the poor and hungry. I only had a little more than twenty dollars. But I gave him five dollars, about one quarter of my capital at the time! He gave me a Jagannātha sticker. He was a devotee in disguise!

In this way, I performed some devotional service without even knowing it! This is called *ajnata sukṛiti*, and by performing *ajnata sukṛiti* one builds up a spiritual bank balance. When the balance comes to a certain level, one has enough credit to become a devotee of Kṛṣṇa. 🌍

To be continued . . .

Ekalavya Dāsa is a GBC deputy, and co-coordinator of the World Holy Name Week. His devotional music group, "Inspiration Explosion," performs at festivals throughout the world.

*ekalavya@pamho.net
www.IE-music.com*

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**ISKCON REPRESENTS HINDUS
IN BELGIAN RELIGIOUS COUNCIL**

Radhadesh, Belgium: Hṛdaya-caitanya Dāsa, temple president of ISKCON Radhadesh was elected to represent the Hindus of Belgium at the formal inauguration of the Belgian Council of Religious



Leaders (BCRL). ISKCON also catered for the event, which was held at the Belgian Parliament in Brussels and attended by

about 120 guests including some major leaders of Belgian society.

**ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA
IN KUMBHA-MELĀ**

Vṛndāvana, UP: The *mūrti* of Śrīla Prabhupāda was carried in a grand procession by devotees in the



Vṛndāvana Kumbha-melā.

ISKCON's procession was preceded by 21 flag bearers and many devotees engaging in *kīrtana*. As they moved through the streets of Vṛndāvana, locals threw flower petals on the devotees, offered them garlands, and danced along with the chanting.

**WORLDWIDE RATHA-YĀTRĀ
CELEBRATIONS**

Miami, Florida: A four-day festival including Ratha-

yātrā celebrations was held in Coconut Grove. Separate carts for Lord Jagannātha, Subhadrā and Baladeva, adorned with swans and lotus flowers, came down the street carrying Their Lordships.

Mumbai: On January 29, ISKCON Juhu celebrated its 30th annual Jagannath Ratha-yātrā festival. The Ratha-yātrā festival was inaugurated by Ashokbhau Jadhav, the local state legislator, and Sri Dilip Patel, the chairman of the Mumbai transit authority.

**SIX CONTINENTS JOIN IN GLOBAL
PRAYER FOR THE YAMUNĀ RIVER**

January 30:

As urban developers threaten to destroy the rich culture and heritage of Vṛndāvana, devotees around the world united in a globe-encompassing *kīrtana* to pray for the future of



Keśi-ghāta in Vṛndāvana, which is being threatened by indiscriminate modernization.

Vṛndāvana and the sacred Yamunā River.

By Kāñcana-vali Dāsī, Madhava Smullen, Dīna Bandhu Dāsa, Paradise Afshar, and Basu Ghoṣa Dāsa.

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Flop Show at Copenhagen

by Kṛṣṇanāma Dāsa

December 2009 was the reason for the largest gathering of all the nations (well...almost all) in the city of Copenhagen the capital of Denmark. 192 nations from the USA to the tiny Tuvalu (an island nation somewhere in the Pacific ocean) all gathered together for twelve days to deliberate upon one of the most controversial subjects of all times—climate change.

In the last hundred years, man has experienced such a major improvement in the quality of life that the nineteenth century is now considered to be part of the dark ages. The advent of the television, air conditioning, automobiles, aircraft, etc. have created so much comfort for the average human being that all these are now accepted as the minimum required for a basic standard of living.

However, at what cost? Global warming, climate change, massive pollution of earth, water and ether has altered the natural course of events so dramatically that nature has started protesting vehemently in the form of hurricanes, cyclones, typhoons, tsunamis and earthquakes. More is expected to come in the near future and in the search for an answer, the whole world gathered in Copenhagen to find a solution.

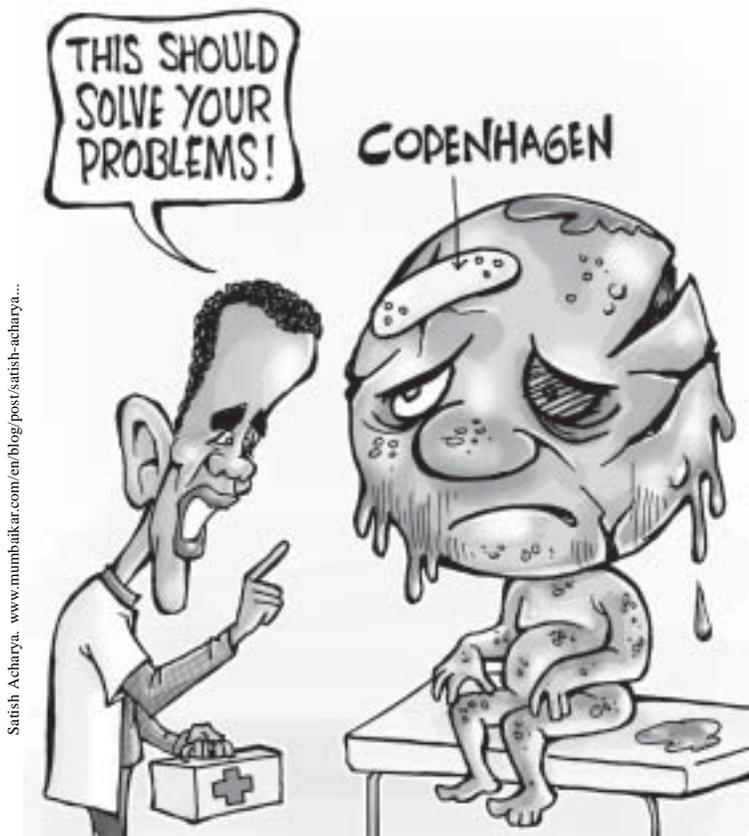
The only solution that was clear for all to see and which did not require much deliberation was for the world to agree to reduce the progress of industrialization to a manageable degree. However this is unac-

ceptable because this would bring down the standard of living of everybody, particularly the wealthy nations. So, for twelve days the nations fought bitterly as to who would be the ones to reduce the carbon spewing out into the atmosphere. The wealthy nations led by the US, who incidentally is also the largest polluter in the world by far, were demanding that the developing nations led by China and India should take commitments for reducing their carbon effluents and not only that should get their actual achievements verified by an independent agency. This was unacceptable to the developing countries who were clamoring that the developed countries should take large commitment and so the stalemate continued for eleven days.

On the last day of the summit when everyone thought that the last eleven days had been a waste of time and energy, the US President threw a bombshell. He announced to a stunned gathering of heads of states “I commit 100 billion (note billion and not million) dollars to be paid to the developing countries to facilitate them to reduce their carbon footprint”. Please note that he did not say that he would reduce his country’s carbon effluent. The USA has on an average 750 automobiles for every 1000 Americans compared to 50 for Asia and 10 for India. So, who is the largest pol-

luter?

For the US president to take on any reduction in his carbon commitments would mean that he could not even consider standing for re-elections in the coming elections. The biggest beneficiaries of the oil consumption, the oil producers and oil refiners, would see to it that even before his term ended the Presi-



Satish Acharya. www.mumbaikar.com/en/blog/post/satish-acharya...

dent would be sacked. However, to pay a small “bribe” to facilitate the continuance of sense gratification by the Americans is quite alright. And rightly so, this gesture on the part of the President was widely acclaimed by the US Congress as well as the US Press as a landmark gesture by an American President to help the cause of the developing countries.

As Gandhi ji said, “There is sufficient for everyone’s need but to satisfy one man’s greed...the whole world would be inadequate.” Man’s quest for sense gratification has led him to exploit Mother Nature to extract from her the maximum without any commensurate returns. Global warming is one price that we are paying for it. Unless and until we slowly and steadily move into reverse gear and return back to our roots of “Simple living and high thinking” the future will be filled with only suffering

We have to understand that the goal of life is not progress in our standard of living, but quality of living. A life that is enriched by fresh air, pure water, healthy food, and a stable ecology is the gift that we have to offer to our future generations. As devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa, we understand that everything is His energy. Using the resources optimally, avoiding wastage, minimising plastic, promoting and facilitating organic farming are some of the steps that we can take at an individual level to save the ecology. Charity begins at home.

Kṛṣṇanāma Dāsa is a Chartered Accountant. He retired as CFO of a MNC and currently serves full time in ISKCON Mumbai.

DEBT AND DEATH—THE POLICIES OF ERRORS

by Murāri Gupta Dāsa

A recent news report highlighted a government sponsored study that 96% of farmers in Punjab are under the burden of heavy loans. It comes as a great surprise because farmers in Punjab were considered to be among the richest in the country. Not anymore.

The study revealed that many small-time farmers were lured to buy heavy-duty expensive farming equipment which they did not need.

Add to it the increasing expenditure of chemical fertilizers and pesticides and you have the picture of a

farmer who can see no escape from the loan trap.

Other news items suggest that water levels of underground water have fallen more than 1-3 meters in many areas in Haryana and Punjab—forecasting a severe water crisis in the summer and a possibility of damage to crops in the next season.

Another news is about the entry of genetically engineered brinjal and other vegetables in the market. The introducing agency said that the current need was to feed the increasing masses in face of climate changes that were rendering traditional farming practices as failures.

A LACK OF KNOWLEDGE

An overall view of the situation points to certain drawbacks of modern agricultural practices. The increasing cost of tractors, petrol, chemical fertilizers, pesticides etc. are driving the farmer to borrow loans. And lack of proper water management practices lead to heavy and indiscriminate use of tube-wells that day and night pump out water leading to depletion of underground water. Now we have genetically engineered crops that are being pushed upon the hapless Indian consumer who is blissfully unaware of the proposed dangers. The authorities in power seem to be in undue haste to promote the very crops that have been either put to hold or totally boycotted in the West. (Check: www.poisononplatter.com)

TURN TO NATURE

The current government’s fascination for industrial growth is obvious. Even to the extent of using thousands of acres of prime agricultural land for developing SEZs and promising the independent farmer a menial job in the proposed industry. No comments on the relief and rehabilitation package for the displaced farmers. Where it exists apart from the files, only the government knows.

In this current craze for technology, our offer is to turn to tradition. Organic farming, dependence on the cow for manure and fuel, the bull for ploughing and transportation, and using traditional time-tested seeds that are resistant to local pests and diseases and have proven nutritional benefits. Organic farming has evolved to great extent now and its practitioners claim high yields with modern practices with lower requirements for water and natural fertilizers and pesticides.

Although the production may in the beginning years be less than machine dependent modern day

chemical and biotech farming, in the long run, we have a farmer who is free from the trap of debt as most of his requirements can be met from his own farm. Add to it the use of renewable energy resources that lead to little or no dependence on petrol, diesel, and electricity. When we compare using the bull for ploughing or operating a pump to draw water or produce electricity, it may appear to be less cost effective than using tractor or electricity from the state, but then we are ignoring the massive subsidies that are given for diesel, electricity, and other farming equipments by various governmental agencies.

The need is to look at the future and not just think short term. With farmers being driven to commit suicide we may not have many in the long term to till the land. And even if there are enough, we may not have the petrol to fuel the farm-machines. ☸



Bulls beat the heat of global warming.

IN MEMORIUM

His Holiness Mahā-Viṣṇu Goswami, a senior ISKCON *sannyāsī*, peacefully passed away at the society's Bhaktivedanta Hospital in Mumbai at 3 pm on January 25. He was 91.

Born into a family of Vaiṣṇavas and highly educated with M.A degrees in both English and Sanskrit, he was also fluent in Marathi, Hindi, Gujarati, and Urdu. He established a beautiful ISKCON temple in Dvārakā, and a community in Rajkot, Gujarat, where a grand new temple is currently being built.

Mahā-Viṣṇu Goswami was famous for his discourses on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* on which he would often lecture non-stop for hours. His Holiness was known for his sense of humor and for his deep love for Śrīla Prabhupāda's books. Despite being rendered dazed by prescribed painkillers, his spiritual consciousness continued to be astounding. He was undisturbed by his imminent passing. He said, "Those who are afraid to die, they die. . . those who are unafraid to die, they never die—they live through the platform of devotional service. "

He passed away surrounded by devotees who were constantly chanting and praying for him. ☸



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VAIṢṆAVA CALENDAR

1 March - 15 April, 2010

- 1 Mar: Festival of Jagannātha Mīśra
- 8 Mar: Śrī Śrīvāsa Paṇḍita – Appearance
- 11 Mar: Fasting for Pāpamocanī Ekādaśī
- 12 Mar: Break fast (Mumbai) 06:50 am - 10:49 am, Śrī Govinda Ghoṣa – Disappearance
- 20 Mar: Śrī Rāmānujācārya – Appearance
- 24 Mar: Rāma Navamī: Appearance of Lord Śrī Rāmacandra (Fasting till sunset)
- 26 Mar: Fasting for Kamadā Ekādaśī
- 27 Mar: Break fast (Mumbai) 06:37 am - 10:42 am, Damaṇaka-ropaṇa Dvādaśī
- 30 Mar: Śrī Balarāma Rāsayātrā, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Vasanta Rāsa, Śrī Vamśivadana Ṭhākura – Appearance, Śrī Śyāmānanda Prabhu – Appearance
- 5 Apr: Śrī Abhirāma Ṭhākura – Disappearance
- 9 Apr: Śrīla Vṛndāvana Dāsa Ṭhākura – Disappearance
- 10 Apr: Fasting for Varūthinī Ekādaśī
- 11 Apr: Break fast (Mumbai) 06:25 am - 10:35 am
- 14 Apr: Śrī Gadādhara Paṇḍita – Appearance, Beginning of Śālagrāma and Tūlasī Jala Dāna Madhusūdāna Māsa continues after Puruṣottama Adhika Māsa

THE 500th ANNIVERSARY OF LORD CAITANYA ACCEPTING SANNYĀSA

Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu is the great teacher of devotional service who appeared in Māyāpura, India, in the year 1486 and propagated *saṅkīrtana*, or the congregational chanting of the holy name. He accepted the *sannyāsa* order in order to preach God consciousness throughout the world on the basis of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* or the science of God. This year is the 500th anniversary of His *sannyāsa*.

Lord Caitanya taught by His own example that the easiest process in this age, to understand transcendental religion, is to chant the holy names of God. The true test of a bonafide religion is to see whether it helps people develop their dormant love of God. This love is not artificially invoked, but it is aroused by association with the devotees of the Lord and by hearing from the authorized scriptures.

The human form of life is especially meant for this purpose of reviving our God consciousness because the better development of consciousness is found only in the human body. Animal propensities are found both in animal life and human life, and unfortunately, people are nowadays more concerned with the principles of sense gratification, or the animalistic part of life. Thus, the world is gradually declining in God consciousness.

Of course, not everybody accepted Lord Caitanya as God. In fact a great scholar like Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya (the greatest logician of his times) along with his disciples asked his brother-in-law Gopīnātha Ācārya, as to why did he accept a mortal being as God.

The disciples of Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya, being very learned scholars, were certainly right in asking Gopīnātha Ācārya for evidence. If a person proposes that he himself is God or that someone else is an incarnation of God or God Himself, he must cite evidence from the Vedas to prove his claim. Thus the request of the Bhaṭṭācārya's disciples was quite bona fide.

Unfortunately, at the present moment it has become fashionable to present someone as an incarnation of God without referring to the Vedas.

Before an intelligent person accepts someone as an incarnation of God, however, he must ask about the evidence. When the disciples of Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya challenged Gopinātha Acharya, he immediately replied correctly: "We must hear the statements of great personalities in order to understand the Supreme Personality of Godhead." Lord Kṛṣṇa is established as the Supreme Personality of Godhead by statements from many authorized persons, such as Brahmā, Nārada, Vyāsadeva, Asita and Arjuna. Similarly, Lord Caitanya's enlightened biographers have cited numerous authoritative references from Vedic literatures such as the *Mahābhārata*, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, *Purāṇas*, and *Upaniṣads* directly indicating that Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, far from being a mundane personality, is the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself, playing the role of His own devotee. The *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (3.3) also relates the prophecy of Śrī Caitanya. It states, *yadā paśyaḥ paśyate rukma-varṇam kartāram īsam puruṣam brahma-yonim*: "When one realizes the golden form of Lord Gauranga, who is the ultimate actor and the source of the Supreme Brahman, he attains the highest knowledge. He transcends both pious and impious activities, becomes free from worldly bondage, and enters the divine abode of the Lord." *Rukma-varṇam kartāram īsam* refer to the Supreme Personality of Godhead as having a complexion the color of molten gold, which is the color of Lord Caitanya.

The great classic *Mahābhārata* (*Dāna-dharma, Viṣṇu-sahasra-nāma-stotra*, 127.92.75) confirms that Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is not different from Lord Kṛṣṇa: "The Supreme Lord has a golden complexion [when He appears as Lord Caitanya]. Indeed, His entire body, which is very nicely constituted, is like molten gold. Sandalwood pulp is smeared all over His body. He will take the fourth order of life [*sannyāsa*] and will be very self-controlled. He will be distinguished from Māyāvādī *sannyāsīs* in that He will be fixed in devotional service and will propagate the *saṅkīrtana* movement." ❀

—Śyāmānanda Dāsa