

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



The Magazine of the Hare Krishna Movement

April 2010

Raaz Pichle Janam Ka



C O N T E N T S

Founded 1944. Vol. 7 No. 4 APRIL 2010

Features

3 FOUNDER'S
VIEWS

REGULATIVE PRINCIPLES OF FREEDOM

*Rules are restraining,
aren't they? Take a fresh
look.*

18 SPIRITUAL
SCIENTIST

WHY DO WE NEED A TEMPLE-II

*Peace, love, education, heart
melting experiences, and much
more awaits you in a temple.*

24 HOW I CAME TO
KṚṢṆA
CONSCIOUSNESS

MUSIC IS MY PATH TO GOD-II

*A wandering musician
meets Kṛṣṇa's devotees and
his heart transforms.*

Departments

LETTERS **2**

IN YOUR
OWN WORDS **28**

*What is your greatest
obstacle in Kṛṣṇa
consciousness?*

CENTRES
IN INDIA **31**

VAIṢṆAVA
CALENDAR **31**

EDITORIAL **32**

*Just Once...I Want To
Serve Ajay Devgan*

8

RAAZ
PICHLÉ
JANAM KA

*New developments
shed interesting light
on reincarnation.*

22

DID LORD RĀMA EAT MEAT?

*A reply to anti-Vedic
elements who misquote
scriptures.*

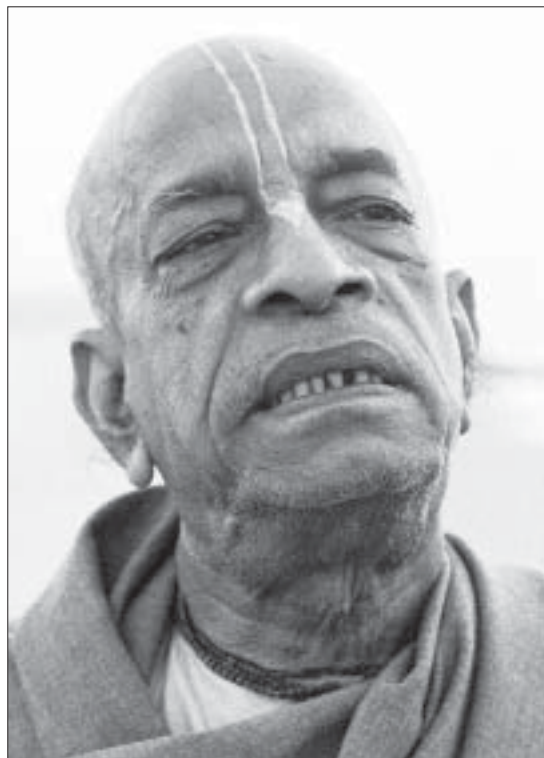
Columns

6 LESSONS FROM THE ROAD
Orkuting with Kṛṣṇa

16 MY EXPERIENCE
No More Coming Back

23 THE VEDIC LENS
True Heroism

30 POETIC EXPRESSIONS
Lord Kṛṣṇa plays His flute



*When one follows
a regulated
hygienic process,
he does not fall
sick. A human
being is meant to
be trained
according to
certain principles
to revive his
original
knowledge. Such a
methodical life is
described as
tapasya. (Nectar
of Instruction 1,
purport) —p3*

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

BTG INDIA: **EDITOR** Śyāmānanda Dāsa
• **ASSISTANTS** Nima Suchak, Murāri Gupta
Dāsa, Nanda Dulāla Dāsa, Mukunda Malā Dāsa
• **EDITORIAL CONSULTANT** Caitanya
Carāṇa Dāsa • **PROOFREADER** Rādhā
Rasikrāja Dāsa, Revatī Vallabha Dāsa
• **PUBLISHER** Yudhiṣṭhira Dāsa (Ujwal Jajoo)
• **PRODUCTION** Sat Cit Ānanda Dāsa (Sanjiv
Maheshwari), Sundar Rūpa Dāsa (Sudarshan
Sapaliga) • **GENERAL MANAGER**
(**CIRCULATION**) Panduraṅga Dāsa
(Rajendra-kumar Pujari) • **ACCOUNTS**
Sahadeva Dāsa (S.P. Maheshwari)
• **SUBSCRIBER SERVICES** Manjarī Devī
Dāsī (Mira Singh)
OFFICE Back to Godhead, 33 Janki Kutir,
Next to State Bank of Hyderabad, Juhu,
Mumbai 400 049, India.

SUBSCRIPTIONS *Back to Godhead* is
published twelve times a year. Subscriptions
charges - one-year: Rs. 150/-, two-years:
Rs. 300/-, five-years: Rs. 700/- You can start
subscription from any month. Send the amount
to **Back to Godhead**, 302, Amrut Industrial
Estate, 3rd floor, Western Express Highway,
Mira Road (E) 401 104. Tel: (022) 28457751
E-mail: BTGINDIA@pamho.net

To change your address or clear up any
questions about your subscription, write to
BTG Service Center & Marketing Office at
above address.

We can answer your questions faster if you
send a recent mailing label or invoice. Allow
eight weeks for changes to show up on your
mailing label.

PRINTING Magna Graphics Pvt. Ltd., Mumbai.



© 2010 The Bhaktivedānta

Book Trust International. All

rights reserved. (Trustee for the

Bhaktivedānta Book Trust: Jayādvaīta Swami.)

ISSN: 0005-3643. Published for The

Bhaktivedānta Book Trust by Ujwal Jajoo, 33,

Janki Kutir, Next to State Bank of Hyderabad,

Juhu, Mumbai and printed by him at Magna

Graphics Pvt. Ltd. 101-C&D, Govt. Industrial

Estate, Kandivli (W), Mumbai-400067, India.

Editor: Śyāmānanda Dāsa, Śrī Śrī Rādhā-

Gopinātha Temple, Chowpatty, Mumbai-400

007, India.

FAMILY DEITY

What is the importance of the
family deities? Do we need to wor-
ship them?

Sāraṅga Ṭhākura Dāsa

OUR REPLY: Śrīmad-
Bhāgavatam (4.31.14) states that
since Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme
Personality of Godhead, worshiping
Him satisfies all other deities just as
watering the root of a tree nourishes
all twigs, branches, leaves, and trunk
etc. Thus, worshiping Lord Kṛṣṇa is
enough for everyone and there is no
need to worship any other deity sepa-
rately. However, a person not en-
gaged in pure devotional service to
Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa may derive temporary
benefit by worshiping the family de-
ity.

DEVOTIONAL ECSTASIES

Often when I hear a song or a lec-
ture about Lord Kṛṣṇa, His incarna-
tions or Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, or take
Their *darśana*, tears just start flowing
from my eyes instantly. Sometimes I
get goose bumps all over my body. Why
does this happen?

Radhika Potdar

OUR REPLY: These symptoms
are indicative of intense spiritual ec-
stasy experienced by devotees of very
high caliber and purity. Sometimes,
they may even manifest just because
of emotional outburst.

Śrīla Prabhupada mentions in
Nectar of Devotion, Chapter 17:

“Ecstasy is the first symptom of pure
love for the Personality of Godhead,
and in that stage one is sometimes
found shedding tears or shivering.
...Elevation to this stage of ecstasy
can be possible in two ways. One way
is by constant association with pure
devotees. The other way is by the spe-
cial mercy of Kṛṣṇa or by the mercy of
a pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa. Elevation to

the ecstatic stage of life is generally
attained through association with
pure devotees, while elevation to that
stage by the special mercy of Kṛṣṇa or
His devotee is very rare. The purport
is that one should execute devotional
service rigidly in the association of
devotees so that there will be certainty
in raising oneself to that ecstatic po-
sition. In special cases, of course, there
is special favor from Kṛṣṇa, and al-
though we should always expect that,
we should not sit idly and simply wait
for Kṛṣṇa’s special mercy; the regular
duties must be performed.”

You may accept your symptoms as
special mercy of Lord, and yet you
should simultaneously try to engage
in regulative principles of *sādhana-
bhakti* to further purify yourself.
Great devotees try to hide their in-
ternal ecstasies and generally don’t
exhibit such symptoms publicly,
which may attract cheap adoration.

GOD FOR ATHEISTS

A thousand *praṇāmas* to Śrīla
Prabhupāda for his exciting sum-up
on Mother India. (BTG December
2009). Although India is a land of
many religions, yet there are Godless
atheists as well, “Why do people be-
come atheists?” (BTG, Jan 2010).
People have lost the much-needed
patience in understanding the Lord.
Losers in life cry and blame destiny
and God for their failure. They do
not understand that God was always
with them. They cannot be blamed
for that though. How will they feel
the glories of God in chaos?

PKV Menon

Replies to the letter were written
by Nanda Dulāl Dāsa
(Nanda.Dulal.RNS@pamho.net)

Write to us at: Back to Godhead,
3rd Floor, 302, Amrut Industrial Es-
tate, Western Express Highway, Mira
Road (E) - 401104. Email:
ed.btgindia@pamho.net

Regulative Principles of Freedom

Rules are restraining, aren't they? Take a fresh look.

"Obedience is first discipline."
Conversation, 12 December 1970, Indore

RULES FOR PURIFICATION

Those who are full of dirty things can take to the line of Kṛṣṇa consciousness for a gradual cleansing process, following the regulative principles of devotional service. (*Bhagavad-gītā* 4.15, purport)

The Vedic rites and rituals are imperative for neophytes: comprehending all kinds of prayer three times a day, taking a bath early in the morning, offering respects to the forefathers, etc. But when one is fully in Kṛṣṇa consciousness and is engaged in Kṛṣṇa transcendental loving service, one becomes indifferent to all these regulative principles because he has already attained perfection. (*Bhagavad-gītā* 2.52, purport)



REGULATIVE PRINCIPLES HELP MENTAL EQUILIBRIUM

Concerning the eightfold yoga system, attempts in the beginning to enter into meditation through regulative principles of life and practice of different sitting postures (which are more or less bodily exercises) are considered fruitive material activities. All such activities lead to achieving perfect mental equilibrium to control the senses. When one is accomplished in the practice of meditation, he ceases all disturbing

mental activities. (*Bhagavad-gītā* 6.3, purport)

When one follows a regulated hygienic process, he does not fall sick. A human being is meant to be trained according to certain principles to revive his original knowledge. Such a methodical life is described as *tapasyā*. (*Nectar of Instruction* 1, purport)

HOW TO OVERCOME...?

Disturbances from various diseases can be avoided by regulated diets. By self-control one can be free from false hopes, and money can be saved by avoiding undesirable association. By practice of yoga one can control hunger, and worldliness can be avoided by culturing the knowledge of impermanence. Dizziness can be conquered by rising up, and false arguments can be conquered by factual ascertainment. Talkativeness can be avoided by gravity and silence, and by prowess one can avoid fearfulness. Perfect knowledge can be obtained by self-cultivation. One must be free from lust, avarice, anger, dreaming, etc., to actually attain the path of salvation. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.9.27, purport)

MARRIAGE

Sex life, intoxication and meat-eating are general tendencies of human society, but a regulated householder does not indulge in unrestricted sex life and other sense gratification. Marriage on the principles of religious life is therefore current in all civilized human society

BALANCE YOUR LIFE

*yuktāhāra-vihārasya yukta-ceṣṭasya karmasu
yukta-svapnāvabodhasya yogo bhavati duḥkha-hā*

“He who is regulated in his habits of eating, sleeping, recreation and work can mitigate all material pains by practicing the yoga system.” (Bg 6.17)

PURPORT

Extravagance in the matter of eating, sleeping, defending and mating—which are demands of the body—can block advancement in the practice of yoga.

As far as eating is concerned, it can be regulated only when one is practiced to take and accept *prasāda*, sanctified food. Lord Kṛṣṇa is offered, according to the *Bhagavad-gītā* (9.26), vegetables, flowers, fruits, grains, milk, etc. In this way, a person in Kṛṣṇa consciousness becomes automatically trained not to accept food not meant for human consumption, or not in the category of goodness.

As far as sleeping is concerned, a Kṛṣṇa conscious person is always alert in the discharge of his duties

in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and therefore any unnecessary time spent sleeping is considered a great loss. *Avyārtha-kālatvam*: [Cc. *Madhya* 23.18-19] a Kṛṣṇa conscious person cannot bear to pass a minute of his life without being engaged in the service of the Lord. Therefore, his sleeping is kept to a minimum. His ideal in this respect is Śrīla Rūpa

Gosvāmī, who was always engaged in the service of Kṛṣṇa and who could not sleep more than two hours a day, and sometimes not even that. Ṭhākura Haridāsa would not even accept *prasāda* nor even sleep for a moment without finishing his daily routine of chanting with his beads three hundred thousand names.

As far as work is concerned, a Kṛṣṇa conscious person does not do anything

which is not connected with Kṛṣṇa’s interest, and thus his work is always regulated and is untainted by sense gratification. Since there is no question of sense gratification, there is no material leisure for a person in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. And because he is regulated in all his work, speech, sleep, wakefulness and all other bodily activities, there is no material misery for him. ❁



because that is the way for restricted sex life. This restricted, unattached sex life is also a kind of *yajña* because the restricted householder sacrifices his general

tendency toward sense gratification for higher, transcendental life. (*Bhagavad-gītā* 4.26, purport)

TWO CLASSES OF PEOPLE— REGULATED AND UNREGULATED

Humanity may be divided into two sections, namely, the regulated and the unregulated. Those who are engaged simply in bestial sense gratifications without knowledge of their next life or spiritual salvation belong to the unregulated section. And those who follow the principles of prescribed duties in the scriptures are classified amongst the regulated section. The nonregulated section, both civilized and noncivilized, educated and noneducated, strong and weak, are full of animal propensities. Their activities are never auspicious, because while enjoying the animal propensities of eating, sleeping, defending and mating, they perpetually



remain in material existence, which is always miserable. On the other hand, those who are regulated by scriptural injunctions, and who thus rise gradually to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, certainly progress in life. (*Bhagavad-gītā* 6.40, purport)

Those who are born with divine qualities follow a regulated life; that is to say they abide by the injunctions in scriptures and by the authorities. One should perform duties in the light of authoritative scripture. This mentality is called divine. (*Bhagavad-gītā* 16.6, purport)

STEPS FOR A MORAL SOCIETY

The state which wants to eradicate corruption by majority may introduce the principles of religion in the following manner:

1. **Fasting:** Two compulsory fasting days in a month, if not more (austerity). Even from the economic point of view, such two fasting days in a month in the state will save tons of food, and the system will also act very favorably on the general health of the citizens.

2. **No free mixing of sexes:** There must be compulsory marriage of young boys and girls attaining twenty-four years of age and sixteen years of age respectively. There is no harm in coeducation in the schools and colleges, provided the boys and girls are duly married, and in case there is any intimate connection between a male and female student, they should be married properly without illicit relation.



The divorce act is encouraging prostitution, and this should be abolished.

3. **Charity:** The citizens of the state must give in charity

up to fifty percent of their income for the purpose of creating a spiritual atmosphere in the state or in human society, both individually and collectively. They should preach the principles of *Bhāgavatam* by (a) *karma-yoga*, or doing everything for the satisfaction of the Lord, (b) regular hearing of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* from authorized persons or realized souls, (c) chanting of the glories of the Lord congregationally at home or at places of worship, (d) rendering all kinds of service to *bhāgavatas* engaged in preaching *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and (e) residing in a place where the atmosphere is saturated with God consciousness.

If the state is regulated by the above process, naturally there will be God consciousness everywhere. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.17.38, purport)

PROPAGANDA OF FREEDOM

Apparently propaganda is being made celebrating freedom as opposed to a regulated life, but one who sees things as they are can understand that freedom from all restriction is animal life. (Kṛṣṇa Consciousness—The Matchless Gift, Chapter 4)



DETERMINATION

So our point should be why another chance? Finish this business in this life. That is determination. Why another chance? I may be misled again. That should be our determination. "Finish this business, this life. One life let me be strict in following the discipline and regulative principles." This is called *tapasyā*, that "Although it is inconvenient, I must do it to solve my problems." That is determination, *ḍṛḍha-vrata*, firm determination. (*Morning Walk*, 20 May 1975, Melbourne) 🌀

Orkuting with Kṛṣṇa

Coming in touch with a long lost friend.

by Yugāvatāra Dāsa

Orkut is the latest internet park for social networking. The moment you open an account, your old friends start pouring in with requests for reconnecting. Some friends are in the USA, some in Singapore, but with Orkut, you are always connected with your buddies. Once you are reconnected, the revival of nostalgic moments starts—how we

stayed together, how we enjoyed together, and how we miss each other. Then we update all our friends about our recent past and keep them posted on our present status. It's all fun. You make new friends too—e-friends—whom you may never meet in person but they are still equally close. There are communities and fan clubs. There are many other such sites for social

networking.

ORKUT ADDICTS

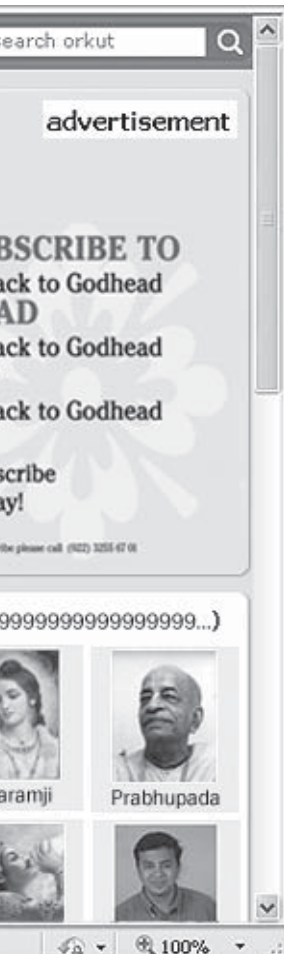
Then there is the other side of the coin. Youngsters who are hooked to this networking create their own space, keep on updating their profiles and photos and just keep on chatting for hours. They probably speak less with their friends than chatting online. They



prefer e-chatting over the use of vocal chords. If they get up in the night for some water, they check their scrapbook (Orkut inbox) for new e-mails. When they are away from the computer, they are still connected to Orkut through their mobiles. They believe in replying in minutes. For them Orkut is an emergency.

SEARCH FRIENDS

As I was learning to reconnect to my friends I saw this small toolbar—Search Friends. Type the name of a friend and his profile comes up. Thinking about the lost friends, I thought of Lord Kṛṣṇa, our eternal friend and well-wisher. We are suffering because of this lost friendship. Our eternal bliss will be revived if we reconnect with Him. Once we add Him as our friend through the chanting of the holy names, we will be reconnected with Him. By chanting we will also become nostalgic about our eternal residence in the spiritual sky. Our spiritual memories will be revived and we will come out of the deluding amnesia caused by materialism. Then we will remember how we stayed together with the Lord and how we enjoyed together with His devotees. We will meet all our lost friends. We will join the commu-



nity of pure devotees and join the fan club of Lord Kṛṣṇa, the master of all mystics.

STAY CONNECTED

Like those connected through Orkut mobile, we can also always remain connected with the Lord through chanting. Just dial the *mahā-mantra* and stay connected. We can chant anytime, anywhere, in any condition. There is no network congestion. Even if the whole world wants to connect with Kṛṣṇa simultaneously, He still can reciprocate with all of us. All we need to do is regularly recharge our devotional mobile batteries by hearing *hari-kathā* and always staying within the “coverage area” in the shelter of the devotees. The moment we move out of this coverage area, we lose the signal and we will be unable to connect with the Lord.

CHATTING AND CHANTING

While chatting on the internet, chat about Kṛṣṇa, His pastimes and His philosophy. Because that is the order of Lord Caitanya: “Whomsoever you meet tell him to chant Kṛṣṇa’s names.” So whomsoever we meet on the internet, tell them, “Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and be happy.” Talk of chanting while chatting, and no chatting while chanting. Lord Caitanya, in His instructions to Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī says, *grāmya-kathā nā śunibe, grāmya-vārtā nā kahibe*: “Do not indulge too much in worldly talks.” That’s what happens while chatting. Typically chatting starts with a note: “So what’s new?” What new thing will happen if we continue with the same old lifestyle? Material chatting will bind us more in the web of illusion, and spiritual chanting will open the doors to our eternal so-

cial life in Goloka Vṛndāvana.

KṚṢṆA IN YOUR INBOX

By abstaining from material chatting and by enhancing our spiritual chanting, which is like sending a friendship request e-mail to Kṛṣṇa, one day the Lord will reply. Here is the reply we are waiting for:

My Dear Devotee,

I want to admit that I am also equally missing you. I am waiting for your return since you left the spiritual world. I still wonder why you left this blissful life. I am worried about you and that is the reason I accompany you as the Supersoul in every species you enter. I was so happy when you received the rare human life. Now I am desperately waiting for you to turn to me. I was always prompting you to take up devotional service. But you never heard my voice as the noise of material cravings was too loud. Finally, you surrendered and I am so thankful to My devotees who took so much pain to introduce you to devotional service. Just stay with them, serve them, follow their instructions and keep on chanting intensely. I assure you that at the end of this life I will personally come to pick you up and take you back home, back to Godhead.

Things are blissful here as they always are. Every one is dancing and singing. We all are waiting for you to join us. 🌸

Your sweet Lord,
Śrī Kṛṣṇa

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

Raaz Pichle Janam Ka

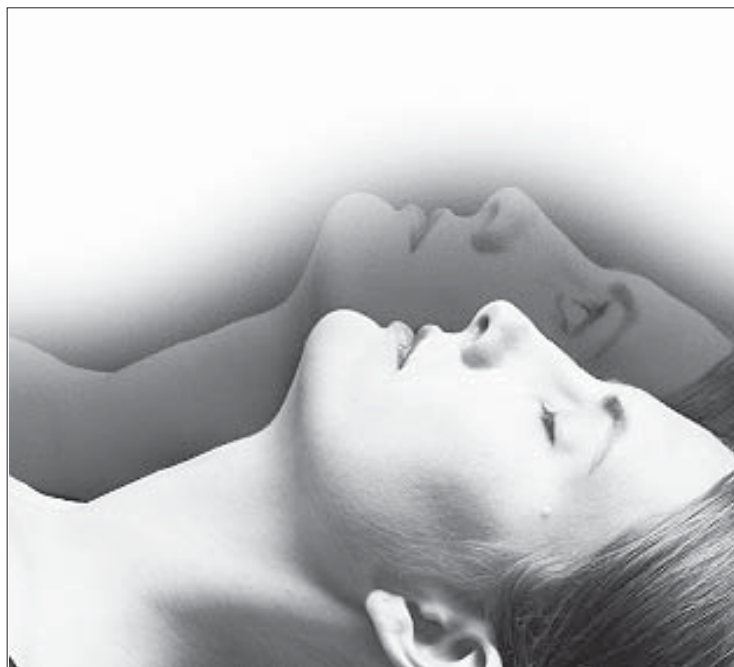
The Mystery of Past Life

New developments shed interesting light on reincarnation

by Murāri Gupta Dāsa

When Bollywood actor Lilliput went under hypnotic regression on the sets of hit TV serial, “Raaz Pichley Janam Ka,” he described how in past lives, his legs were cut either in accidents or trauma. The result—he was born a dwarf in his present life.

With many celebrities lining up for a session with Dr. Jain, the hypnotherapist on the show, the phenomenon of reincarnation is in the news again. Where on one side, rational societies in India have filed court cases to stop the telecast of “Raaz Pichle Janam ka”, calling it superstitious and unscientific, newer researches in various fields offer fresh perspective on the phenomenon. Even *Time* magazine ran a story on Near Death Experiences (NDE), a phenomenon often quoted by believers of reincarnation as scientific proof for reincarnation. Let’s see what is there for us:



IS THERE LIFE AFTER DEATH?

Radiation oncologist Dr. Jeffrey Long argues that if you look at the scientific evidence, the answer is unequivocally ‘yes’. Drawing on a decade’s worth of research on near-death experiences—work that includes cataloguing the stories of some 1,600 people who have gone through them—he makes the case for that controversial conclusion in

a new book, “Evidence of the After-life”. (*TIME*, Jan 22)

Medically speaking, what is a near-death experience?

A near-death experience has two components. The person has to be near death, which means physically compromised so severely that permanent death would occur if they did not improve: they’re unconscious, or often clinically dead, with an absence of heartbeat and breathing. The

second component is that at the time they’re having a close brush with death, they have an experience—a special state of consciousness, including a number of special elements such as pleasant feelings, seeing a tunnel, a light or deceased relatives, or experiencing a life review, or an out-of-body experience.

Medical fraternity is open about NDEs. On 15 December 2001, the highly respected international

medical journal, *The Lancet*, published a 13-year study of NDEs observed in ten different Dutch hospitals. The author, Dr. Van Lommel, first became interested in NDEs after reading the first book about NDEs, *Life After Life* by American doctor Raymond Moody. In 1988, Van Lommel began a study that would encompass 344 survivors of cardiac arrest in 10 Dutch hospitals. 18% of subjects reported some recollection of the time of clinical death, and 7% an experience that qualified as a deep NDE.

NDE offers an important insight into consciousness. The current medical understanding is that consciousness is a function of the brain. However, the implication of NDEs is that consciousness is a function of some other organ or entity; perhaps outside of body. "In my view," says Van Lommel, "the brain is not producing consciousness, but it enables us to experience our consciousness."

He elaborates: "How could a clear consciousness outside one's body be experienced at the moment the brain no longer functions during a period of clinical death with flat EEG? Furthermore, blind people have described veridical perception during out-of-body experiences at the time of NDEs. In our prospective study of patients that were clinically dead (flat EEG, showing no electrical activity in the cortex, and loss of brain stem function evidenced by fixed dilated pupils and absence of the gag reflex), the patients reported a clear consciousness, in which cognitive functioning, emotion, sense of identity, or

memory from early childhood occurred, as well as perceptions from a position out and above their 'dead' body."

Interestingly, another NDE researcher Dr. Kenneth Ring studied cases of NDE in completely blind experiencers and fifteen out of twenty-five cases immovably declared that during their NDE they had "visual experiences." Ring labels this phenomenon of blind people being able to see as "mindsight."

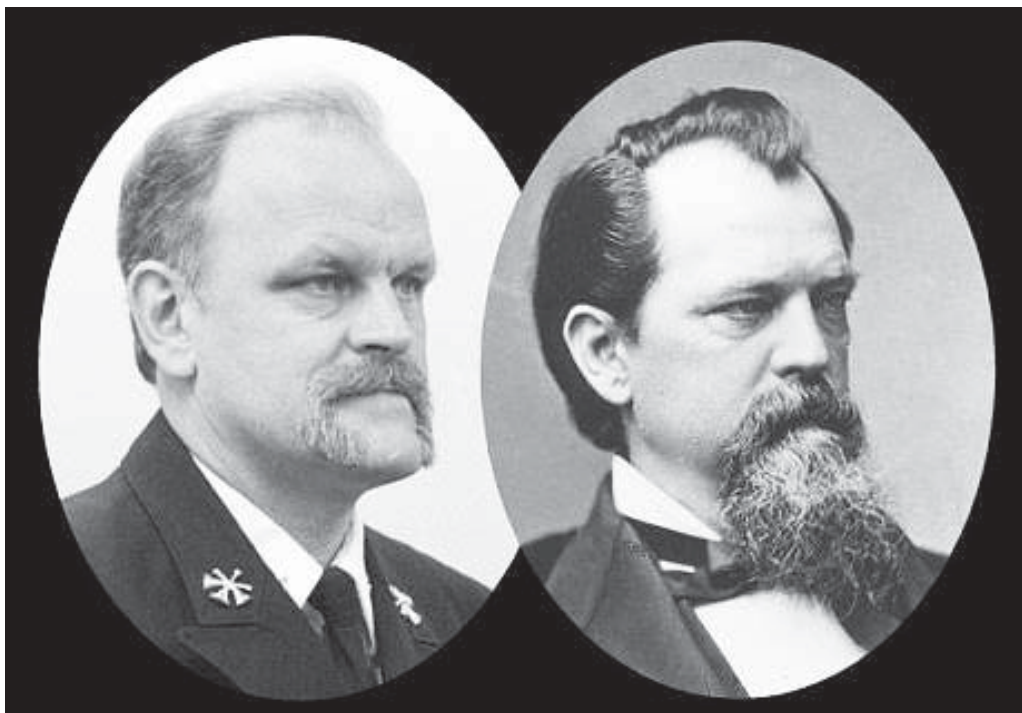
At the end of 2007 Van Lommel published a massive tome (in the Dutch language) called *Endless Consciousness: A Scientific View on the Near-Death Experience*. Currently, it appears high on the best sellers lists, which is remarkable for a book of this level of complexity. But then again, life after death is a subject that speaks to every one of us.

FACIAL FEATURES

Some reincarnation cases dem-

onstrate that facial features remain consistent from one lifetime to another. Take for instance Jeffrey Keene, a retired decorated fire fighter in, Connecticut, USA. In his book *Someone Else's Yesterday*, Jeff describes how he retrieved memories of his lifetime as John B. Gordon, who commanded a regiment in the battle of Antietam in 1862 in American Civil war. In his book, Jeff describes habits and traits he has in common with Gordon, but what is most striking is the similar facial features, including scars on his body and face, that reflect Gordon's battle wounds.

In *Born Again* by Walter Semkiw, the author proposes that people reincarnate in groups based on shared karma, emotional attachments, and joint projects. While investigating Jeff's case, the author suspected that Jeff's fellow firefighters could be likely military acquaintances of John B. Gordon. One of these proposed past life pairing, which demonstrates a strik-



Jeffrey Keene 1947-

John B. Gordon 1832-1904



General Cadmus Wilcox Wayne R. Zaleta

ing similarity in physical resemblance, involves Confederate General Cadmus Wilcox and Firefighter Wayne R. Zaleta.

Another case of reincarnation with similar facial features is Dorothy Dandridge (1922-1965), an actress who was denied an Oscar, in part because she was a black woman in a prejudiced time. She reincar-



Dorothy Dandridge Halle Berry

nated as Halle Berry (born in 1966) and won an Oscar for Best actress in 2002.

CREATIVE WORK

Reincarnation provides a very logical explanation for the phenomenon of child prodigies—a soul that contains knowledge, talent, and artistic style from prior lives can download this talent into the body of a child.

Consider the example of a child prodigy, artist Akaine Kramarik. She spontaneously developed the

ability to paint at the age of four, after having an experience in which she states that she was taken to heaven. Currently her paintings sell for \$50,000-1,000,000. She is only sixteen years old.

Another famous child prodigy is

Alexendra Nechita, who is identified as the reincarnation of Pablo Picasso in *Born Again*. As a toddler, Alexendra was obsessed with creating artwork, though she was not trained so by her family. At the age of four, she started to draw

figures with two faces and four eyes in cubist-like representation of people. Picasso helped invent cubism and by the age of eight, having mastered cubism,

Alexendra was known as the “Petite Picasso.” She works in multiple media, creating Picasso-like paintings and even giant, Picasso-like sculptures.

A case of similar artistic style is in Peter Teekamp and Paul Gauguin; the facial features and personality traits are consistent; and so is the painting style.

As a teenager, Peter Teekamp began to draw. Remarkably, his early drawings replicated sketches Paul Gauguin (1848-1903) had done almost a hundred years be-

fore, though Peter had no knowledge of these Gauguin sketches when he reproduced them. With these pencil drawings, Peter was actually retrieving memories of his artwork from a past



Akaine Kramarik

lifetime, the lifetime of Paul Gauguin. This phenomenon demonstrates how in each lifetime, we build upon accomplishments of a prior life.

CHILDREN’S PAST LIFE MEMORIES

Thousands of cases of children’s past life memories have been documented by various researchers from around the world. Some children are recorded describing their past life residence and recognized family members by name and even successfully passed tests set by the identified family. What is remarkable here is that in most cases, the children appear to have no incentive, financial or otherwise, to make such claims.



Paul Gauguin

Peter Teekamp

Paul Gauguin

Peter Teekamp



Sketch by Gauguin

Sketch by Teekamp



Gauguin
Age 40

Teekamp
Age 26

Late Dr. Ian Stevenson was the head of the Department of Psychiatric Medicine at the University of Virginia School of Medicine. He devoted forty years to the scientific documentation of past life memories (without hypnosis) of children from all over the world and had over 3,000 cases in his files. In India, Dr. Satwant Pasricha, Head of Dept. of Clinical Psychology, now working in Dept. of Psychiatry, NIMHANS, Bangalore, has investigated and participated in about 500 cases of reincarnation involving children since 1973. She collaborated with Ian Stevenson in reincarnation research beginning in the 1970s. Her books include *Can the Mind Survive Beyond Death? In Pursuit of Scientific Evidence (2 Vol.)*, and *Claims of Reincarnation: An Empirical Study of Cases in India*. She has also published papers on NDEs.

HYPNOSIS

Hypnosis, as in “Raaz Pichle Janam Ka”, has been used for de-

cedes as a tool for trying to discover past life memories. In the best selling book on this phenomena *Many Lives, Many Masters*, the author Dr. Brian L. Weiss, a graduate of Yale School of Medicine and chairperson of psychiatry at Mount Sinai Medical center in Miami describes real case studies of his patients.

Although hypnotic regressions claim to offer help in treating childhood phobias and irrational fears, there are skeptics like Dr. Ian Stevenson who urges caution in using them as a proof of past life. Dr. Deepak Gupta, MD, MRCPsych (Member of Royal College of Psychiatrists) and a Consultant Psychiatrist in Bury, UK, is an advanced hypnotherapist. He says, “Like past life regression in hypnosis, we can also ‘progress’ a person in hypnosis and ask what they will be doing in, say, one month or one year’s time. Usually the information they give turns out to be wrong. Secondly, in past life regressions using hypnosis, people al-

ways report human births. Therefore, I tend not to use hypnosis as an evidence for reincarnations. There may be some true cases of past life regressions, but I also practise regressions and all the time, I have been able to link it to this life’s fantasies.”

MAJOR RELIGIONS AND REINCARNATION

Where current scientific understanding about reincarnation is evolving with newer researches in the field, let us turn to mainstream religions and find what insights they have to offer.

CHRISTIANITY

In the New Testament, Jews are depicted as expecting the reincarnation of their great prophets. In fact, followers of Jesus thought that he was a reincarnated prophet.

Jesus asked his disciples, “Who do the people say that I am?” And they answered, “John the Baptist; but others say, Elijah; and others, that one of the old prophets has risen.” (Luke 9.18-19)

Jesus also stated to his followers that prophet Elijah reincarnated as John the Baptist. (Matthew 17.9-13, 11.11-15)

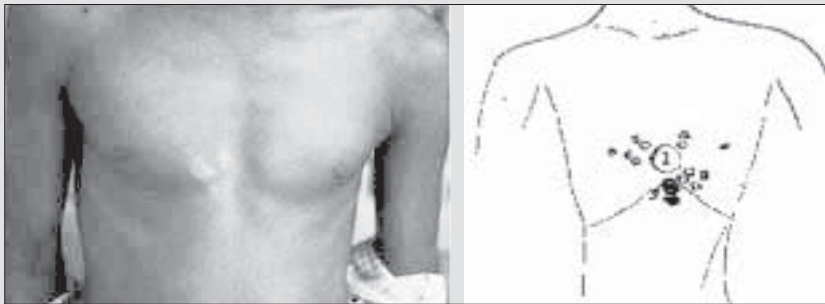
Many early Christian Church fathers believed in and wrote about reincarnations: St. Justin Martyr (100-165 A.D.) stated that the soul inhabits more than one human body. Origen (185-254 A.D.) who was considered by St. Jerome as the “the greatest teacher of the Church after the Apostles”, defended the idea that soul exists before the body, fundamental to the concept of reincarnation.

However, in the second Council of Constantinople (553 AD), the Roman Emperor named Justinian removed reincarnation from official Church doctrine and excom-

REINCARNATION BIRTHMARKS

Dr Ian Stevenson covered birthmarks and birthdefects in his book *Where Biology and Reincarnation Intersect*.

About 35% of children who claim to remember previous lives have birthmarks and/or birth defects that they attribute to wounds on a person whose life the child remembers. 210 such children were investigated. In 43 of 49 cases in which a medical document (usually a postmortem report) was obtained, it confirmed the correspondence between wounds and birthmarks (or birth defects). Stevenson added: "It seems to me that the imprint of wounds on the previous personality must be carried between lives on some kind of an extended body which in turn acts as template for the production on a new physical body of birthmarks and deformities that correspond to the wounds on the body of the previous personality."



Light colored patches on the chest of young Indian who recalled a life of man named Maha Ram, who was shot at a close range from a shotgun. On right is a diagram from the autopsy report of Maha Ram, showing shotgun entry wounds that closely correspond to the light colored patches on left.



Severely malformed ear (microtia) in a Turkish boy who said that he remembered the life of a man who was fatally wounded on the right side of the head by a shotgun discharged at close range.



Congenital absence of lower leg in a girl of Burma who said she remembered the life of a young woman who was accidentally run over by a train, her right leg being severed before her death.

communicated the Church Father Origen who openly supported the idea of reincarnation.

JUDAISM

The Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus (37-100 A.D.), wrote that of the three sects of Jews during that era, the Essenes (of Dead Sea Scroll fame) and the Pharisees both believed in reincarnation.

The mystical school of Judaism is called *Kabbalah* and the teachings are said to have been handed down from teacher to pupil in an unbroken line going all the way back to Abraham. Kabbalists have over the centuries verified reincarnation (or *gilgul* as it is known in Hebrew), and Zohar, a classic Kabbalistic text, mentions reincarnation in details. The Jewish sect called Samaritans believed Adam reincarnated as Noah, then as Abraham, then Moses.

ISLAM

Although mainstream Islam appears to reject reincarnation, there are several references in the *Quran* that point to reincarnation.

"And you were dead, and He brought you back to life. And He shall cause you to die, and shall bring you back to life, and in the end shall gather you unto Himself." (2:28)

"How can you make denial of Allah, who made you live again when you died, will make you dead again, and then alive again, until you finally return to Him? (*Sura 2, the Cow, Verse 28*)

The mystic branch of the religion, the Sufi movement, is very supportive of reincarnation.

DRUZE

The Druze sect of Lebanon, Palestine (including Israel) and Syria widely believes in reincarnation.

THE RED INDIANS

There is a widespread belief in reincarnation among the native American tribes. The Dakota tribe taught that man reincarnates and in between those lives, he lives with the gods and receives instruction in magic and healing. Many of the Indian medicine men claimed to remember past lives.

HINDUISM

Buddhism, Jainism and Hinduism—all accept reincarnation. Reincarnation is also there in Pharaonic Egypt, polytheistic Greece, Rome as well as in Taoism and Zoroastrianism.

The main scripture of Hindus, the *Bhagavad-gītā* discusses reincarnation in great detail (2.13-30). It proposes that the basis of consciousness is not the brain or some other organ in the body, but a spiritual spark called the soul. The soul does not die when the body dies, but moves into another body, human, plant, or animal or one of the 84, 00,000 species of life. The soul moves into the next body along with the mind. The mind carries the impressions from previous bodies and acts as a template around which our bones and tissues and the new physical body develops. When the impressions from the past life are very strong on the mind, it influences the new physical body to grow with characteristic facial features, birth marks or defects as in the case of Lilliput, mentioned at the beginning of the article.

In Chapter 15 of *Bhagavad-gītā*, this is described as follows:

Bg 15.8 - The living entity in the material world carries his different conceptions of life from one body to another as the air carries aromas. Thus he takes one kind of body and again quits it to take another.

Bg 15.9 - The living entity, thus taking another gross body, obtains a certain type of ear, eye, tongue, nose and sense of touch, which are grouped about the mind. He thus enjoys a particular set of sense objects.

The Vedic text *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* traces the reincarnation case of King Bharat in three lives—as a king, deer, and again a human. (*Canto 5, Ch. 8*)

USE OF BELIEF IN REINCARNATION AND KARMA

A belief in reincarnation and

WHY DON'T WE REMEMBER PAST LIVES?

Life is tough enough dealing with hurt incurred this time around. Remembering all the trauma and grievances associated with past lives—and deaths—would paralyze us with fear and phobias. Nor would we establish relationships with those with whom we have karmic issues and lessons. Without contributing to enhance the quality of our present life, the haunting past will only complicate our every day choices, actions and create volatile opinions. Mercifully, God spares us the pain.

leading a life based on it offers personal growth and solution to major sociolo-political problems of the world.

Reincarnation means that we can change species, race, religion, gender, and religious affiliation from lifetime to lifetime. Once people realize that religious, ethnic, and national affiliation constitutes a temporary belief system, that one can be a Hindu in one lifetime and a Muslim or Pakistani in another, then conflicts based on these affiliations will be seen as self-defeating. There would be less incentive to fight. If Germans knew that a person could be born Jew in one lifetime and Christian in another, then the Holocaust causing murder of six million Jews could never have happened.

When we know that reincarnation and karma are real, then we will accept responsibility for our actions,



Three lives of King Bharat as mentioned in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam: as a king, deer, and again a human.

avoid violence and practice tolerance and compassion as everything we do, we know, will come back to us. It will give hope to those caught up in unfortunate circumstances making them realize that although their past actions are causing the current misery, still they have the power to change their future. We will be more conscious of environment and not focus on immediate gain, but instead on long-term benefit for the future generations. Relationships will improve, as we understand that our bitterest enemy may simply be giving us the bad karma we had offered him in the past, and the current situation may be an opportunity to understand him and resolve the conflict. We will no longer try to dominate but

than I've ever faced it with before. I can be a better physician for my patients." (TIME, 22 Jan 2010)

WHAT IS THE FUTURE?

Still, the *Vedas* invite us to do more than just create a better world. They ask us to invest for a better tomorrow. The *Gītā* explains that by our desires we lay the foundation of our next body. "Whatever state of being one remembers when he quits his present body, in his next life he will attain to that state without fail." (Bg. 8.6). Although we change our bodies, families, planets, nevertheless, all this cosmic hopping, enjoying and suffering has nothing to do with the real person, the spirit soul.

For the spirit, enjoying this world

is like a fish trying to enjoy in a dry desert. Spirit desires to encounter the essence, it longs to connect and align to a greater energy—the Supreme Spirit, God—its creator and father and. The spirit longs for eternal residence in His abode. In that union it will find the

peace and joy it searches for and tries to substitute by the ephemeral pleasures of this world.

The Vedic scriptures offer elaborate details about God, His abode, and the path to achieve them. As *Gītā* sates: "...but there is a world beyond, the world of God, and one who attains it, never takes birth again." (Bg. 8.16). That is the place where the completely evolved

IF THERE'S ONLY A FIXED NUMBER OF SOULS, HOW HAS THE WORLD POPULATION INCREASED?

There are unlimited souls. Look around. How many microbes and insects live in the air, water, and earth? Even if a fraction of them advance to the human species, the world will overflow with humans. Life also exists on many other places in the universe; the planet earth is only one of many places for souls to inhabit.

spirit, free from the indulgence of this world engages in a relationship of loving service to the Supreme and is fully delighted, enlightened, and eternal.

To go there we have to adopt a life centred around the principles of love and devotion to the Supreme, so that when death comes, it will not be an entry into an incessant loop of species-hopping, but a final leap in to the spiritual world, with a sure opportunity to have a personal relationship with a loving God. 🌐

Ref:

- Kenneth Ring and Sharon Cooper, *MINDSIGHT: Near-Death and out of body experiences in the Blind* (Palo Alto, California: William James Center for Consciousness Studies, 1999).
- Searching for Vedic India, by Devamrita Swami
- Born Again by Walter Simkiw, MD. Ritana books
- Origin of Soul by Walter Simkiw, MD. Ritana books
- Human Devolution by Michael A. Cremo

- www.johnadams.net
- www.confederateyankee.net
- www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1657919,00.html



Conflicts based on religion, race and ethnicity will become self-defeating once people accept reincarnation.

use our energies to build a harmonious planet.

As Dr. Jeffrey Long adds, "I'm a physician who fights cancer. In spite of our best efforts, not everybody is going to be cured. My absolute understanding that there is an afterlife for all of us—and a wonderful afterlife—helps me face cancer, this terribly frightening and threatening disease, with more courage

REINCARNATION CASES INVOLVING POLITICAL LEGENDS AND FILM STARS OF INDIA

These matches were derived through the work of Walter Simkiw, M.D., and Kevin Ryerson and are mentioned in *Born Again*. Kevin is a trance channel, which means that when he works, he goes in to a meditative state or trance and allows spirit beings to speak through him. The spirit guide that Kevin channels is Ahtun Re, who has demonstrated an ability to make what appears to be accurate past life matches. Such paranormal features may appear strange to a scientific mind, but there are many examples of paranormal features being scientifically studied and reported.



Human Devolution by Michael A. Cremo, offers numerous examples of scientists who witnessed and attested to paranormal phenomenon. Some of them are Sir William Crookes, a Noble laureate in physics and a president of the Royal Society, Marie Curie and her husband Pierre Curie, and Dr John G. Taylor, a mathematical physicist at the

University of London, who studied Uri Geller, a medium famous for his ability to bend and move metal in ways that seemed impossible in light of ordinary physics.

BTG does not confirm or refute the following claims, but is only reporting them.

Simkiw proposes the following matches:

APJ Abdul Kalam, former President of India and

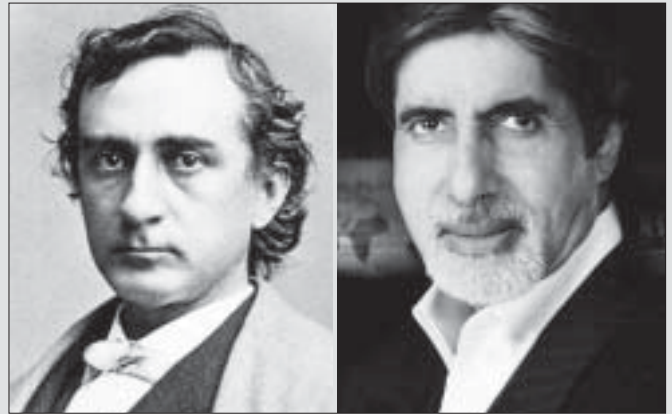


Tipu Sultan

APJ Abdul Kalam

often considered the “Missile Man,” is reincarnation of Tipu Sultan, who had pioneered rocket technology for military use. Vikrama Sarabhai, the mentor of Kalam, was reincarnation of Haider Ali, the father of Tipu Sultan.

Amitabh Bachchan is the reincarnation of Edwin Booth (1833-1893), an American who was considered one of the finest Shakespearian actors of Victorian



Edwin Booth

Amitabh Bachchan

times. Bachchan has been described as a gifted actor in a Shakespearian way.

Edwin Booth met Mary McVickers when he performed in a theatre that her father owned. Edwin and Mary played the leads in “Romeo and Juliet,” fell in love and later married. Mary has reincarnated as Jaya Bachchan.

Edwin Booth’s first wife was Mary Devlin,

an actress who met him, when they were cast in the lead roles of “Romeo and Juliet.” Mary Devlin died two years after they were married. She has reincarnated as Rekha who has played leading lady in many of Amitabh’s movies.



Mary McVickers *Jaya Bachchan*



Mary Devlin

Rekha

No More Coming Back

A wonderful family gives up a strange old practice after learning the teachings of Bhagavad-Gītā.

By Sudhīra Caitanya Dāsa

December 2007. I was distributing Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books near a police *chowky*, outside Kurla railway station, a Mumbai suburb. A lady in her early fifties and her young son waited patiently till I finished my discussion with another customer and then approached me. “We would like to purchase thirty *Bhagavad-gītās*,” the lady said. I asked her where she wanted the books to be delivered. “I need to discuss this with my husband,” she replied. We exchanged phone numbers and they left, assuring me that they will contact me soon.

Many days passed but there was no call from them. Then one day, my office phone rang. I immediately recognized her voice. She told me to deliver thirty Hindi *Gītās* to their house and collect the cash. I just could not wait. I called up one of the devotees staying in Kurla and requested him to deliver the books to their house.

VISITING AN AMAZING FAMILY

On 31 December she called me again and asked me if she could get 20 more *Gītās*. I rushed to their place with the books wondering

what they were going to do with so many of them. When I reached their house, the entire family—father, mother, two sons and their elderly grandmother—were at home. They gave me a warm welcome and thanked me for getting the books.

I asked them my query. “Recently my mother passed away,” said Mrs. Mehta. “In her memory we will distribute these books free of cost to friends and poor people.” I deeply appreciated their family values.

Mrs. Mehta is a housewife, and her husband, Mr. J K Mehta, after taking VRS, is now taking care of their family farm in their native place. Both sons, the elder Sandeep and younger Sachin, are diploma holders in pharmacy. Sandeep then did an MBA and was currently working in a large BPO and Sachin with a big oil company. I asked Sandeep, “Excuse me, but you are so qualified, so why are you working with a BPO?”

His explanation amazed me.

“Our grandmother is 84 years old and completely bed-ridden,” he said. “I purposely took up a job so that when Sachin goes to office in the morning I can stay back to take

care of grandma. Similarly, Sachin stays at home in the evening to take care of her throughout the night.”

I could see how both of them had practically sacrificed all the things they could have enjoyed in youth, just to take care of their elderly grandmother.

I spoke about the activities of our temple and gave them some gifts. Sachin took me to the room where his grandmother was sleeping. She was weak, surviving only on liquid, but seemed to derive her strength from the tremendous love and care given by the family members. “Grandmother is a great devotee of Lord Rāma and Kṛṣṇa,” said Sachin. “When fit, she would daily read from *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Bhagavad-gītā* and sing melodious *bhajanās*.” She smiled at me.

On the way back I thought, “How can I help this wonderful family, especially the grandmother?” I got an idea.

After a few days, I called them. “Can we come and do *kīrtana* for your grandmother?” They were jubilant and eager to receive us. I went with two more devotees and after a short *kīrtana* spoke about the glories of Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*. Then I gave them a Prabhupāda ra-

dio, which non-stop plays Śrīla Prabhupāda's *kīrtanas*. Sachin took us to grandmother. Eager to meet us, she held my hand and with tears in her eyes, blessed me again and again. It was heart-melting.

COMING BACK

While we sat there, Sandeep and Sachin told me an incredible story about their family. There was a tradition in their family that some of the family members have always desired to come back as a son or daughter in the family line. When Sandeep was just two years old, he gave the exact description of their house in Pakistan and told his name in his previous life. At this age, children hardly speak, but Sandeep spoke perfectly in Punjabi. He did not speak or remember

those words again. However, his parents and some of the family members witnessed this incident.

Then Sachin told me the most shocking thing. He said that his grandmother wanted to come back as his daughter, and all of them were happy to receive her due to their affection and love for each other.

I thought for a moment. Our intention to go to their house was to give Kṛṣṇa consciousness and remind the soul, not to come back to

this material world. I immediately opened the *Bhagavad-gītā* and explained how this material world is full of miseries and one should not aspire to come back but desire to go back to the eternal supreme abode of Lord Kṛṣṇa, simply by remembering the Lord at the time of death.

They just latched to the idea. From that day, Śrīla Prabhupāda's *kīrtana* was going on continuously in their house. Sachin started reading *Bhagavad-gītā* loudly for his

Then we decided to visit Sachin. I had the waters of Rādhā-kuṇḍa, Śyāma-kuṇḍa, Yamunā and Ganges at home. The only thing missing was a *maha*-garland. Meanwhile, we waited for our daughter who had gone with a devotee family to Juhu for a picnic. She soon arrived and got into our car. Suddenly, the car was filled with the fragrance of roses. She had received the garland of Śrīla Prabhupāda from Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Giridhārī temple. We

brought the garland to grandmother, a symbol of mercy from Śrīla Prabhupāda to this departed devotee soul.

Sachin told me that as Grandma was about to leave the body, he kept her head on his lap and started chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra loudly and was constantly praying to Kṛṣṇa to take her back to the spiritual world.

Today the entire Mehta

family is grateful to Śrīla Prabhupāda's movement. Sachin now attends weekly *satsaṅga* program and chants 12 rounds of Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* every day. 🕉



Sitting: Mrs Mehta and Mr J.K Mehta Standing (Right) Sachin (Left) Sandip. Photo of grandmother is on the table.

grandmother.

One evening as we were celebrating Govardhana-pūjā at a devotee's house, I got a call from Sachin. He was sobbing uncontrollably. I guessed the situation—just few moments back, his grandmother had left her body.

I immediately announced this news to all the devotees and we dedicated the *kīrtana* and one round of *japa* for the departed soul. Our program was over by 9.30 pm.

Share your experiences with the Deities, holy name, sacred books, dhāma, spiritual master, or even those from every day life.

Write to us at:

ed.btgindia@pamho.net

Why do We Need a Temple?

PART
2

by Caitanya Carāṇa Dāsa

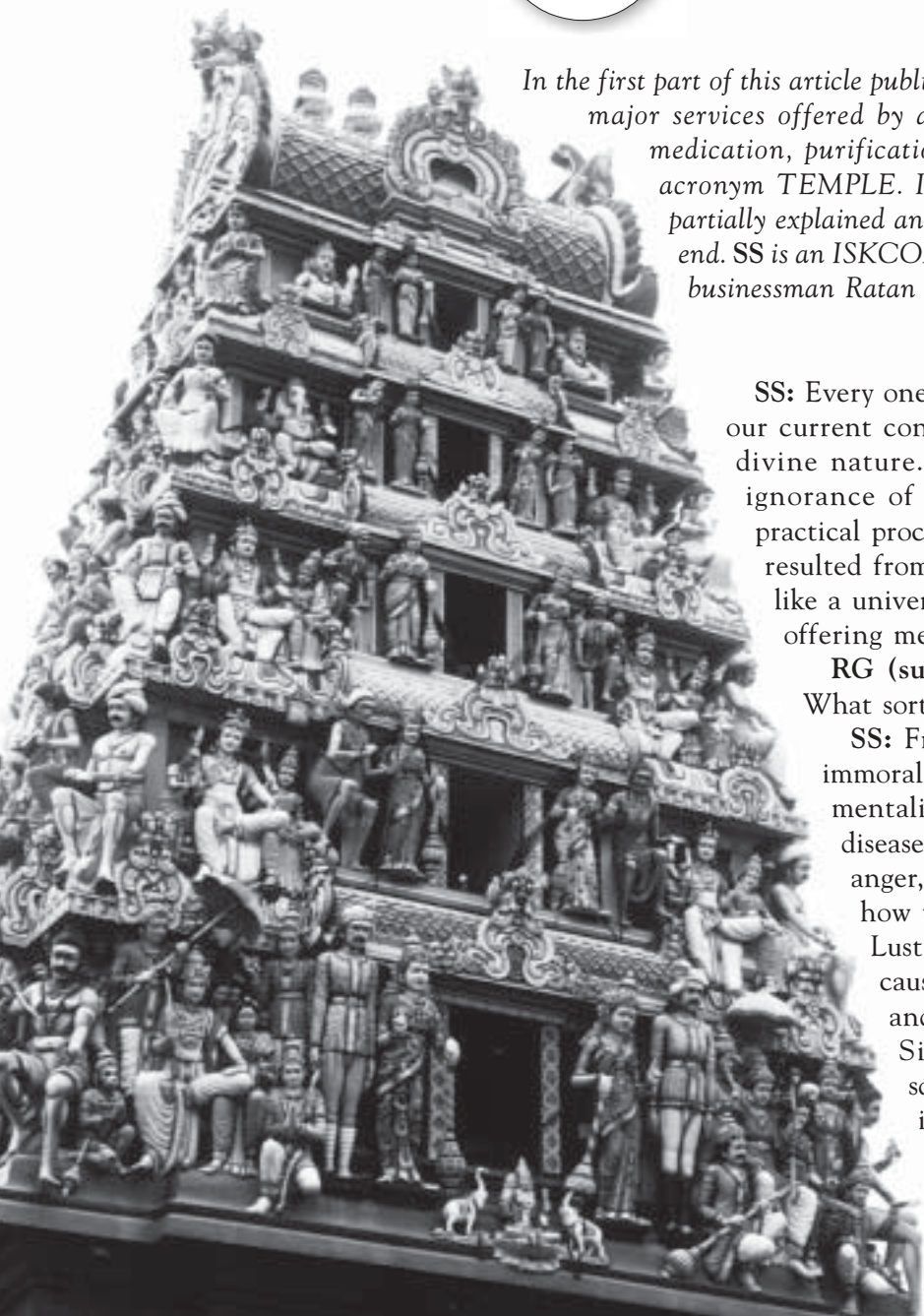
In the first part of this article published in the last issue, the author presented six major services offered by a temple to society: tranquility, education, medication, purification, love, and engagement combined as the acronym TEMPLE. In this concluding part, the third service is partially explained and there is a summary of all the services at the end. SS is an ISKCON teacher Sanatana Swami, RG an inquisitive businessman Ratan Gupta.

MEDICATION

SS: Every one of us is potentially divine, no matter what our current condition is. We just have to reactivate that divine nature. The temple not only helps remove our ignorance of our divine nature, but also teaches the practical process to heal the diseased mentality that has resulted from the ignorance. Thus a temple is not just like a university offering education, but also a hospital offering medication.

RG (surprised): A hospital offering medication? What sort of medication?

SS: From the spiritual viewpoint, all improper, immoral behaviors are the symptoms of a diseased mentality. The Vedic scriptures explain that this diseased mentality is caused by six main germs: lust, anger, greed, envy, pride, and illusion. Let's see how these germs breed most criminal behavior. Lust causes rapes and sex-related crimes; greed causes corruption and financial transgressions; and anger causes terrorism and violent crimes. Similarly, millions of people worldwide squander billions of dollars on self-destructive indulgences like smoking, drinking and drug



addiction. What makes them addicted to substances that poison and kill their own bodies?—the lust for instant pleasure. Thus the infections of the mind cause people to harm others and harm even themselves, thus leading to major global problems.

The Vedic scriptures also explain that remembrance of God is the cure to these infections of the mind. We are basically pleasure-seeking creatures. When we seek pleasure externally, the germs in our mind infect us, for they all promise us external pleasure. But the remembrance of God gives us inner happiness and thus frees us from the infection of these germs. The easiest way to remember God is by chanting His holy names. Hence, this is the medicine to cure this diseased mentality. Let me share how Śrīla Prabhupāda administered the medication of the holy name with astonishing results.

Śrīla Prabhupāda went to America in the 1960s at an advanced age of seventy and found himself amidst the counterculture of the hippies. The hippies were young people who had rebelled against the established values and norms of society and expressed their stance through unconventional clothing and behavior. The hippies had rejected mainstream society as aimless, and mainstream society had rejected the hippies as useless. But Śrīla Prabhupāda taught these hippies the ultimate aim of life, healed them of their drug addiction and other bad habits by training them in chanting the holy names and elevated them from ignorant self-destruction to enlightened self-realization. This transformation of hippies into “happies” was nothing short of a miracle. The US government, despite all its national

resources comprising of hospitals, doctors, social welfare plans and social workers, had come to its wit’s end about how to change or even tackle the hippies. But Śrīla Prabhupāda, a solitary, elderly man with no material resources, transformed them by his spirituality and his compassion. That’s why an eminent US scholar Professor Stillson Judah of Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley University, noted, “A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami has the remarkable ability to turn drug-addicted hippies into devotees of Kṛṣṇa (God) and servants of mankind.”

Just think, if we could cure the lust, anger and greed in the criminals, the crime rate would drop dramatically and significant national resources would become available for purposes more

FREE IN THE PRISON

ISKCON has a prison preaching ministry in India, America and several other countries. I could tell you many stories of incredible, curative transformations that chanting has brought about. Let me share just one story of a person who was both an addict and a criminal.

Chris Matthews, a youth from Atlanta, USA, started taking morphine in 1986 due to the pressures of youth. Gradually it became an addiction. To get money for his compulsive drug needs, he started robbing people and stores in 1992. While robbing a shop in 1993, he took a heavy overdose and fell unconscious. On regaining consciousness, he found himself in a prison hospital. He came to know that the shop owner had called the police, the police had rushed him

Infections of the mind cause people to harm others and harm even themselves, thus leading to major global problems.

constructive than law enforcement. Similarly, if we could cure addicts of their addictions, think of how those billions of dollars could be channelized for the good of the world.

RG (doubtfully): This sounds too good to be true. Firstly, changing the habits of criminals and addicts is no easy task; old habits die hard. Secondly, many of these people don’t even want to change.

SS: Yes, healing the diseased mentality is not easy especially if the disease is in an advanced stage as in criminals and addicts. But we should not underestimate God’s mercy as manifested in His holy name. By God’s grace, what is ordinarily impossible becomes entirely possible.

to a nearby prison hospital and the doctors had battled for hours to get him out of the jaws of death.

In 1994, he was tried and sentenced to eight years imprisonment. Heartbroken at being separated from his recently-wed wife, he resolved he would never have anything to do with God henceforth in his life. Soon, however, he realized that the withdrawal pains and the physical and mental rigors of prison life would be impossible to endure without some spiritual solace. In the USA, the crime rate has been spiraling unabatedly for several decades and the expenditure of the US government on prisons is astronomical. Secular efforts to reform prisoners have met with hardly any success, so the US

government allows its prisoners to attend reformation programs conducted by various spiritual organizations. Chris attended classes on Christianity, Buddhism, Kabbala, Sufism, Islam—whatever was accessible in the prison, but nothing helped. After two years of fruitless groping, from the innermost core of his heart, he offered a fervent prayer to God, begging for help.

No sincere prayer ever goes unheard. Within days after the prayer, he came in touch with an ISKCON prison minister, who mailed him a copy of *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*. His physical hardship, mental agony and spiritual searching combined to make him a ripe candidate for enlightenment. From his very first reading, he felt as if he was being revived by a breath of fresh air. He could perceive the eternal truths within the message of the *Gītā*: I am not the body but soul; I am suffering in material existence due to my forgetfulness of God. This forgetfulness can be easily cured by chanting the holy names of God.

Chris soon started chanting the holy name of God, specifically the *mahā-mantra*: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. Within a short time he became free from his addiction. In fact, though he was physically within the prison walls, he felt himself more free in spirit than he had felt ever before in his life because he was no longer shackled and tormented by self-destructive desires. Within the prison itself he became a vegetarian and started offering his food to the picture of Kṛṣṇa in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. He soon became inspired by his *Gītā* study to start practicing

niṣkāma-karma-yoga in the prison, doing his assignments in a detached dutiful devotional spirit. Not only did he experience complete release from his drug addiction, but he became so composed, integrated and self-satisfied that he emerged as a source of inspiration and solace for his fellow-prisoners. In 2000, he was released from prison. As soon as he returned home, after the initial courtesies, he started teaching his daughters chanting so as to equip them to protect themselves when they would enter

chanting can bring about—from prison to prison ministry, from prisoner to prison minister.

RG (astounded): That's quite a story. Do you think this can happen with everyone?

SS: Why not? There is an old saying: "Every saint has a past; every sinner, a future." No one is incorrigible. If the infection is so deep as to have covered the victim's intelligence and conscience, then healing him will be difficult. But there are a significant number of criminals and addicts who want to



Chanting helps prisoners overcome addiction and criminality.

the turbulent teenage years. In 2001, he had a divine inspiration to share his good fortune with the many other souls who were languishing in the prisons of America and so he joined the ISKCON Atlanta prison ministry. Now the same Chris, who was formerly a hardened criminal, is actively serving as a prison minister for numerous prisons in Atlanta, reforming many, many lives ravaged by crime. This is the kind of dramatic transformation that

become better human beings, but don't know how to change themselves. Even if we could help these people alone, that would make a significant difference in their lives and in our world.

So let me recap the answer to your question about the need for a big temple:

1. The tranquility of the temple offers essential refreshing breaks that empower people to face the stresses of life. To get similar breaks, many people seek entertainment,

which is an industry costing millions. When we don't object to the money spent on arranging for that sort of breaks, then why object to money being spent on arranging for spiritual breaks that offer similar and arguably better refreshment for many religious—and even non-religious—people?

2. The education provided by the temple helps people lead a life of moral and spiritual integrity, which is the basis that enables people to use all their other education for socially beneficial purposes. When we consider establishing new universities for material education as a sign of national progress, then why not similarly celebrate the building of a university for spiritual education?

3. The medication provided by the temple can heal the diseased mentality that impels people to addiction and criminality, both of which cause an enormous drain on the national economy. If we recognize as a social necessity the building of hospitals that heal the body, then why not similarly recognize as a social necessity the erection of hospitals that heal the mind?

4. The purification that the temple offers can train talented people to become pure-hearted, selfless, principle-centered leaders. When leaders with character are acutely needed in every organization, from the family to the government, then why not welcome an institute that can produce high-quality leaders?

5. The love that the temple inspires in people can provide them deep satisfaction and dramatically improve their relationships. When relationship conflicts are causing unprecedented misery in society, they why not support an institution that can provide a solid foundation

for lasting relationships?

6. The engagements offered by the temple help preserve our national culture, and also productively channelize people's talents and energies. When our national culture is being lost at an alarming rate, then why not help a forum that is not only protecting but also reviving it?

And if one institution can offer all these six benefits simultaneously, why should we not participate and rejoice in its establishment? To serve as an effective university for spiritual education, it needs seminar halls, conference rooms and libraries. To serve as a vibrant cultural center that can properly serve the thousands of people who crowd it

on festivals, it needs a large temple hall, a large *prasāda* hall and a large *pravacana* (discourse) hall. The bigness of the temple is not a gaudy luxury, but a functional necessity; it has big roles to play, big services to offer. 🌐

(Those interested in reading the full book—pocket book size, 96 pages, cost Rs 20—can order it by writing an email to krishnakishoredas@gmail.com)

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

BTG YATRA SEVA
Conducted Spiritual Vacations

Presents

Char Dham Yatra

BADRINATH
KEDARNATH
GANGOTRI
YAMUNOTRI

Yatra Charges 18,900/- per head

**Yatra Starts from
25th May to 6th June 2010**

The Yatra will commence from and end at Delhi

For further details contact : Panduranga Das: 9324581718,
Sunderrupa Das: 9324207533, Manjari Das: 9322005944

Did Lord Rāma Eat Meat?

by Vraja Bihārī Dāsa

Some people feel so. They say, “It is mentioned in *Ayodhyā-kāṇḍa*, Chapter 20, 26 and 94, that when Rāma was sent for *vanavāsa* He told His mother that He would have to sacrifice His tasty meat dishes. If Rāma had to sacrifice His tasty meat dishes, it means that Rāma had meat. If Rāma can have meat, why can’t the Hindus have meat? Sītā asked Rāma to kill the buck (deer). What will Sītā do with a dead pet? The only logical answer is that she wanted to have the meat of the buck. If Rāma and Sītā can have meat, then why can’t the other Hindus have meat?” Let us examine if these allegations have any truth.

THE TRUTH

Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa*, the original narration of *Rāmāyaṇa*, has a total of 537 chapters, and over 24,000 verses, arranged into six *kāṇḍas*, or books. There are only two references to meat, and over a hundred references to a vegetarian diet. The *Ayodhyā kāṇḍa* has 119 chapters. Chapter 20 describes Mother Kausalyā’s grievous lamentation on hearing from her son Rāma that He has been banished to the forest. Rāma tells her in verse 29, “I shall live in a solitary forest like a sage for fourteen years, avoiding meat and living with roots, fruits and honey.” Can we validly infer from this that Lord Rāma ate meat while in

Ayodhyā, and now He promises to avoid it in the forest? The exact words used are *hitva āmiṣam*. *Āmiṣam* refers to “meat” and *hitva* refers to “disregarding” or “with the exception of” (Monnier Williams dictionary).

Traditionally, in Vedic culture, when a son leaves home to go to distant lands, he reassures his parents that he would abide by strict moral codes and never deviate from the religious principles. Imagine a student promising his parents when going to stay in the hostel, “I won’t drink alcohol while in the hostel.” Does this mean that he is drinking it while at home? Obviously not. Similarly it’s in this mood that Lord Rāma assures His mother that He wouldn’t stoop low. In Chapter 26, Lord Rāma tells Mother Sītā of His decision to go to the forest and instructs her to stay in Ayodhyā. There is no reference to any eating—meat or otherwise—in any verse of this chapter. Moreover in almost all the verses of chapter 94, Lord Rāma glorifies the various fruits, trees, and flowers at the forest of Citrakūṭa, with absolutely no reference to any meat-eating whatsoever.

Did Mother Sītā ask Lord Rāma to kill the deer? In the third book, *Aranya-kāṇḍa*, Chapter 43, Mother Sītā spots the golden deer and asks Lord Rāma to fetch it. She asks, “O nobleman’s son, that delightful deer is stealing My heart. O

dextrous one, bring it round; it will be our plaything.” [3-43-10]. In the next eight verses She rejoices at the prospect of taking the deer back to Ayodhyā where the animal will delight all the palace residents. She clarifies that if the deer is to be killed at all (Lakṣmaṇa had earlier warned it to be a demon), then They could use the deerskin as a seat. (3-43-19, 20). The forest dwelling sages used *kuśa* grass and deerskin as seats during the earlier ages when flora and fauna was in abundance. Here again there is not even a hint that Lord Rāma or Sītā wanted to eat the flesh of the golden deer. In the chapter 36 of *Sundara-kāṇḍa*, Hanumān assures Mother Sītā that Lord Rāma would cross over the ocean and defeat Rāvaṇa. He reveals that although Lord Rāma is in great sorrow of separation from Mother Sītā, He hasn’t fallen down to intoxicants or meat eating (verse 41).

Mamsa has another meaning, than meat—the flesh of a fruit. In the South Indian temple town of Śrī Raṅgam, when priests offer mango to Lord Raṅganātha, they chant the prayer, *iti āmra māmsa khaṇḍa samarpayāmi*: “I offer mango-*māmsa* (mango flesh) for the Lord to eat.” Thus even if there are occasional references to *māmsa*, we should know they refer to fruit pulp. 🍌

Write to author at
vbd.rns@pamho.net

True Heroism

by Shweta Shetty

A Hollywood “super-couple” breaks up. Monetary negotiations, the division of property and even the division of children take place. It is a blatant display of intolerance, egoism and unfaithfulness, yet their fan following only increases.

A singer is found dead of drug overdose. He becomes a bigger cult phenomenon. An actor runs over two people while speeding in a drunken stupor. People continue to love him.

Unfortunately, this kind of celebrity worship has become a norm today. Driven by media-generated hype, society tends to idolize men and women belonging to certain professions. These people are steeped in sense gratification and are so covered by the illusory energy of the Lord that from a spiritual perspective, they often represent everything that a human being should not be.

This situation got me thinking about real heroes. The word hero has its origin in ancient Greek. It refers to characters who, in the face of danger and adversity or from a position of weakness, display courage and the will for self-sacrifice. In general, heroes are people with high moral integrity who, literally, teach morality to the general public through their own personal example.

WHAT IS TRUE MORALITY?

Morality is defined as the ability

to distinguish between right and wrong. Śrīla Prabhupāda states that *Bhagavad-gītā* is the supreme instruction in morality. He gives a simple definition: morality means surrender to Kṛṣṇa, or God. (Bg. 18.78) This is because one can gain an understanding of true right and wrong only by following the instructions of the Supreme Lord. God is the all-powerful creator, controller and the cause of all causes. He defines what is right and what is wrong. By completely obeying His will, a person becomes truly moral, and by setting a practical example of morality, he becomes a true hero. Such a person understands that he is not the controller, but is simply an instrument of the Divine. His dealings with everyone are free of false ego and false identification with matter. All his duties are done as an offering to Kṛṣṇa. He offers the results of his actions to God and attains real perfection. All virtues manifest automatically in such a person. He is adorned with the qualities of determination and equanimity.

Scriptures talk about Dhruva Mahārāja, who pleased Lord Nārāyaṇa, at the tender age of five, by these very qualities. We have queen Draupadī, who was so compassionate, she forgave the murderer of her own sons. We know of Prahlāda Mahārāja, the epitome of tolerance, and

Ambarīṣa Mahārāja who achieved true sense control by engaging all his senses in service of the Lord. More recently, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura was famous throughout Bengal as an honest, righteous, and a fair judge.

FALLIBLE HEROES OF TODAY

Innumerable such real heroes have walked planet earth. Society needs them so that the general public can learn how to lead a meaningful life. Innocent people look up to leaders and strive to become like them. Real heroes would inspire people to practice the science of God Consciousness, develop positive qualities, and achieve perfection.

Sadly, the influence of Kali-yuga corrupts all things of quality. Contrast Yudhiṣṭhira Mahārāja, who could find no man worse than him, with today’s “heroes” who blatantly engage in public self-glorification. When a pigeon was being chased by an eagle, it sought shelter of King Śibi, who agreed to cut off his own flesh to feed the eagle and protect it. Contrast him with today’s “heroes” who are not content even after taking the flesh of the weak and the helpless. Contrast Arjun, who saw even the heavenly damsel Urvaśī as his own mother, with today’s “heroes” who engage in numerous illicit affairs
(please turn to page 27)

MUSIC IS MY PATH TO GOD

Scriptures, nature, and Kṛṣṇa's devotees transform a wandering musician.

By Ekalavya Dāsa

In the last issue...

Born in an opulent family, the author grew up to be an accomplished musician. He had all that the world could offer, yet he was dissatisfied. To seek fulfillment he began travelling around the world.

RAINBOW KṚṢṆAS

Many people come to Rainbow Gatherings to experience communal living in a natural environment. Usually the gatherings are conducted in a National Forest and people bring their tents, or even sleep under trees. No money is exchanged. People volunteer to take up different services for the community. There are kitchens, educational workshops, trading marketplace, and lots of music around the different campfires at night. Rules: no alcoholic drinks, no buying and selling, and no usage of electronic sound systems.

My last Rainbow Gathering was in Ithaca, New York, home of Cornell University. There I welcomed people, helped them park their cars, which was tough due to all the rain, mud and cold. I picked

wild flowers and herbs and made hot tea and played music for them. This was also *ajñāta-sukṛti*. Because of my helping to give people a good first impression at the front gate, they were more receptive to meeting the devotees down in the main part of the Rainbow Gathering. I served *prasāda* to all the guests at the Kṛṣṇa Camp.

THE SAINT AT JFK

In 1990, while in transit from New York to Ireland, I met Revatinandana Dāsa, disciple of His Holiness Bhakti Caru Swami, at the airport. He was distributing Śrīla Prabhupāda's books.

Tall and charismatic, smartly dressed in suit and tie, Revatīnandana was a young African-American. Later, I found out that he had been a professional dancer before coming to Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

I was travelling with my guitar, trumpet, and long hair. He approached me and asked, "Do you play with a band?"

I said, "Yeah! I play with the OM band."

"Do you know what OM means?"

"No," I replied.

He opened the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, part 1. We spent around ten minutes together seeking references and quotes and unpacking the definition of the word. I was impressed. He was very nice, polite, gentlemanly and also scholarly. Somehow, I was inspired to give him a donation.

As I was taking out the money, I accidentally dropped twenty dollars on the floor. While I was walking away with the book in my hand, Revatīnandana called out to me. "Hey! You dropped this!" He picked up the twenty-dollar bill and gave it back to me. His display of honesty, his character, and his qualities made a powerful impact on my heart. I was even more inclined to read the book.

MY RESOLUTION

I thought to myself: "I like these devotees, I like their music, I like their food, but I don't know what they're talking about. Let me read this book from cover to cover and

try to understand everything.”

My plane was late, so I sat down in a restaurant in the airport and began to read. I was impressed by the introduction, which is the biography of Lord Caitanya. The climax of the biography was the text of eight prayers written personally by Lord Caitanya, called the *Śikṣāṣṭaka* (Eight Instructions).

Of all the prayers, the one that struck a chord in my heart the most was the fourth prayer,

*na dhanam na janam na sundarim
kavitam va jagad-isa kamaye
mama janmani janmaniśvare
bhavatad bhaktir ahaituki tvayi*

“O almighty Lord, I have no desire to accumulate wealth, nor do I desire beautiful women, nor do I want any number of followers. I only want Your causeless devotional service, birth after birth.”

I thought, “This is amazing. This personality does not want money, wealth, fame, followers, and he does not want to go to the heavenly planets. He just wants unmotivated devotional service.” As a teenager, I would desire these things. I had so much money, musical talent, fame, and now I was travelling the world. When you have these things, then naturally you are attracted to beautiful women.

I experienced all these things but did not get any satisfaction, nor any taste. I knew there must be something more to life than this. Lord Caitanya explains, *mama janmani janmaniśvare*: “I only want Your unmotivated devotional service birth after birth.” It suddenly dawned on me that this is what I needed to understand. What is this unmotivated devotional service? This is what I should try to understand.

IN A FARM IN IRELAND

I moved to a farm in southern Ireland in the province of Dungarvan. On the farm there were cows and horses. Ireland is a very green and luscious country.

I had a job and worked one day in a week for only two hours—I would perform music in a pub, two kilometres from the farmhouse. They would feed me, praise me, glorify my talent and give me enough

money to last for a week. The rest of the week, I would sing, read, compose music, and take long walks in the countryside. I also learned to paint.

Who could ask for a better situation than that? I had attained what I thought would be the highest experience: most beautiful place, easiest lifestyle, do whatever I want, no boss. In spite of this seemingly ideal situation, I was still frus-



The author in numerous avatāras

trated and unsatisfied, and I felt like I was going mad. I kept on thinking that there has got to be something more.

I then left the farmhouse. I took the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, my tent and camping stove and decided to live in the forest. I went into a river valley and lived in the woods for one month. I picked plants growing in the forest like nettles. I cooked them along with the oats and clover.

I read the *Bhāgavatam* and chanted OM and Hare Kṛṣṇa. I understood that I was at a cross-

He came up to me, and introduced himself as Nitāi Candra Dāsa. He gave me a magazine and offered me an invitation. “We are having a Sunday Feast program. Please come.” I said, “No, no, it is very far, three hours from my woods.” He said, “Anyway please try to come.”

I hitchhiked back to the woods and started reading the magazine immediately. Śrīla Prabhupāda explained in his article that eating, sleeping, mating, and defending are four animal propensities that humans engage in. However, the human being has an additional abil-

able. I just kept chanting with them until I had completed sixteen rounds. This became my daily spiritual practice.

SĀDHANĀ IN THE WOODS

The next day, the devotees encouraged me to return the following week for a program at a local college. I went back to my woods and continued chanting sixteen rounds a day. Mystically, I began waking up early morning, before the rising of the sun, without an alarm clock.

One morning, I went for a long walk to the cliffs overlooking the ocean and just as I finished chanting my sixteenth round, the sun rose over the ocean. It was gorgeous. I felt that Lord Kṛṣṇa was reciprocating with me, as the experience was beautiful and profound.

I decided to travel again to Cork to participate in the college program, and planned to move in with the devotees. I took all my extra possessions and I went to a nearby city, Dungarvan, where I posted all my unnecessary possessions, as well as some gifts for my family back to America.

I waited for a ride. It usually takes from ten to fifteen minutes to get a ride, but on this occasion, three hours had passed and all I had received from the passing cars were looks of suspicion. Darkness was falling, and I was starting to get uneasy.

All of a sudden an old Volkswagen Beetle stopped. The driver was a hippy with long hair.

He said, “Get in.”

The first thing that he said to me was, “Do you know anything about yoga?” I immediately started telling him everything I knew from reading the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Amazingly, I learned that he was

In spite of this ideal situation, I was still frustrated and unsatisfied, and I felt like I was going mad. I kept on thinking that there has got to be something more.

roads, a powerful transitional period in my life. Not knowing what to expect next, I sought clarity of mind and a healthy body. I ran long distances during the day with the aim to improve my health. I was seeking to acquire a very clear mind to best equip myself to understand what would be the next step in my life.

MEETING DEVOTEES AGAIN

One day, my supply of oats ran out. I left the woods for the first time in a month and hitchhiked three hours to Cork. When I reached the main city square, I took out my trumpet, and prepared to play to get some donations for oats.

I was surprised to see devotees distributing books. I went up to one of them and said, “I want to play my trumpet here. Will it disturb your book distribution?” He said, “No no, go ahead.” I played for some time, and collected some donations. I was getting ready to go.

ity and that is to inquire about the Absolute Truth (*athāto brahma jijñāsā*). I said, “Yes, this fully makes sense. This is correct.”

Another article explained how to offer your food to Kṛṣṇa so that it becomes karma-free, or spiritual. I started offering everything I made in the woods to Kṛṣṇa. I also got a special plate to offer the food on.

I read my *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* more and my chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa increased. I decided to hitchhike to Cork again to attend the Sunday Feast program. The normal way to travel is for one to be dropped and picked up several times with long gaps between successive rides. But on that Sunday rides came so easily and before I knew it I was in Cork. The Sunday program was wonderful. The *prasāda* was fantastic. I stayed overnight with the devotees and bought some chanting beads. The next morning I chanted with the devotees. They told me to chant one or two rounds— whatever is comfort-

also going to Cork. He was kind enough to take a detour and he drove me back to my woods, helped me pack my tent and my luggage into his car. He drove me all the way to Cork, dropped me right at the devotees' front doorstep, assisted me with all my baggage and put my stuff in the devotees' *aśrama*. He then left and I never saw him again. I reflected on the situation and knew that this was obviously Lord Kṛṣṇa's arrangement.

ing to hear attentively. Immediately, I could sense a difference in my chanting. My experience was deepening and intensifying.

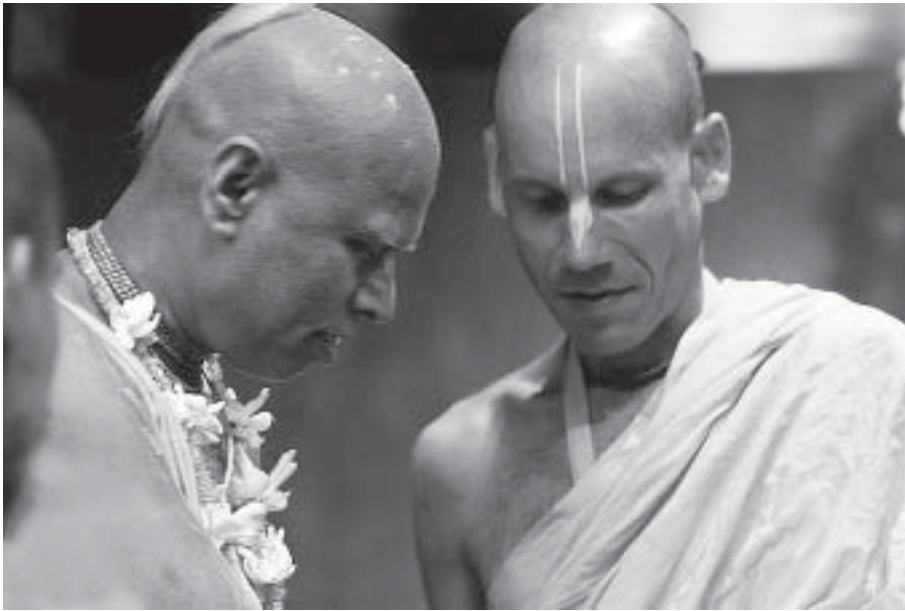
Mahārāja stayed with us for three weeks. During this time, there were many lessons learned, and new experiences had. I felt as if my consciousness was being cleansed and a new phase of my life was beginning.

At the end of the three weeks, Mahārāja was preparing to travel to

I was reluctant to relinquish my long curly locks of hair. I gave many arguments. It was a battle. Finally, I agreed to have a hair buzzer take off everything but a short stubble of hair.

I boarded a plane to London and journeyed to Bhaktivedanta Manor. I handed a letter of recommendation that Trivikrama Swami had given me to the temple authorities. My new life had begun. ❀

(Concluded)



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

ekalavya@pamho.net

www.IE-music.com

www.worldholynameweb.com

Facebook: Ekalavya Dasa

True....

(Continued from page 23)

even with their maids. King Bharat ruled the entire planet earth in Satya-yuga but gave up all his opulences for self-realization. Contrast him with today's "heroes" who cling on to their power and fame long after their prime.

In this situation, one turns with a grateful heart to Śrīla Prabhupāda, a real hero of Kali-yuga. Not only did he give us the knowledge and understanding of spiritual wisdom, but also showed us the path to become heroes ourselves. Because of his mercy, the Kṛṣṇa conscious movement now has numerous heroes who are guiding lights to society in this dark age. By following these right heroes one can eventually attain the ultimate hero—Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. ❀

Ekalavya with his spiritual master His Holiness Lokanātha Swami Mahārāja

A SWAMI ARRIVES

The next day I attended the college program. On the third day that I had moved into the apartment with the devotees, His Holiness Trivikrama Swami, a senior disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda, arrived. Mahārāja took the time to explain to me, and the Chemistry student in whose flat we were staying, all about the *Bhagavad-gītā* and the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*. "The important thing is to hear the chanting carefully," he said. "Focus on the sound vibrations."

Being a musician, I took this instruction to heart and began try-

ing to start a new ISKCON center there. The devotees I had moved in with were also getting ready to get back into their van, and continue driving through Ireland, distributing books. *What would I do now?*

Mahārāja and the devotees suggested that I travel to Bhaktivedanta Manor, in UK.

I decided to think overnight about the prospects of travelling there. In the morning, I was convinced that this was the right decision. I shared the news with Mahārāja and the devotees.

"Shave him up boys!" was Mahārāja's gleeful cry.

In your own words ...



What is your greatest obstacle in Kṛṣṇa consciousness?

EVER SEEN A PUPPET SHOW—how a puppet dances with the threads tied to it? Similarly, I am tied to my past habits and conditionings. These remnants of the past are my biggest hurdle in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The aroma of coffee still triggers a desire, which I compensate with a cup of Complian. I don't turn my head away every time I come across a hoarding. When alone, I often find myself singing my favorite old Hindi movie song. Sometimes I stop by shops to see new shoes, watches or jackets. I can go on. Habits die hard. His Holiness Romapāda Swami Mahārāja describes this phenomenon as “residual tendency.” He explains if we are trying to remove a rotten object from a room, still it lives by its odor for quite some time. The same happens with our past habits. But if we desire to become fixed in the devotional service of Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa promises that He will take care of this residual tendency.

Manish Goel

THE GREATEST OBSTACLE to one's self interest is to think other things to be more pleasing than one's self realization. Although we have given up material attachments and worldly pleasures to become Kṛṣṇa conscious, still there seem to be many obstacles on the path. The greatest, I feel, is the tendency of the mind to seek shelter in those same material supports: old relationships, family ties, material abilities, conditionings etc. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Mahārāja

said that we may be rowing the boat of our Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but it won't move an inch unless the anchor of worldly attachments is cut off. Similarly, our tendency to find shelter in our own material resources can seriously impede our progress. That's what the tenth offense to the holy name says: to maintain material attachments even after understanding so many instructions on this matter. Kṛṣṇa and His name reveal only to those who take complete shelter in Him as Draupadī did.

Dr. Sagar Tupe

“THERE IS NO STRONGER obstacle to one's self interest than thinking other subject matters to be more pleasing than one's self-realization.” (Bhāg. 4.22.32) When I read this line, it touched my heart because I felt this is the reason why I am unable to get taste in chanting and service. I realized that in some corner of my heart there is still the desire to be happy from material objects. Although theoretically I accept that the material world is a place of suffering, my mind is still inclined to enjoy it. I feel that my path of Kṛṣṇa consciousness will be free from all obstacles when I am firmly convinced that nothing in this world can give me any happiness, except Kṛṣṇa and His dearest devotees.

Mohana Kṛṣṇa Dāsa

MY BIGGEST OBSTACLE IN Kṛṣṇa consciousness is that I have still not overcome the tendency to think too much about myself. Be-

cause I think that I will get unmatched internal happiness by going to the temple every day, I have devoted myself to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Is that really pursuing Kṛṣṇa consciousness—taking shelter of the Supreme Personality Godhead for personal happiness and to get the strength to fight this materialistic world? This is the obstacle in my Kṛṣṇa consciousness journey. I have heard from devotees that the real reason behind Kṛṣṇa consciousness is to serve the Lord and do all possible services for Kṛṣṇa, which in turn help to attain the purest and never-ending happiness. It is also to think constantly about what more I can do to please Kṛṣṇa and receive his mercy. True happiness will come when Lord Kṛṣṇa feels I deserve it.

Trishant Zaveri

THE GREATEST OBSTACLE I face on my path of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is my own mind. The mind is very powerful and it can make hell out of heaven and heaven out of hell. I joined Kṛṣṇa consciousness by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*. But the mind is so intelligent that it distracts my attention while chanting.

I had difficulty in following the four regulative principles, and when I failed, my mind made me depressed. However, when I succeed in following them the mind makes me proud.

The association of devotees always inspired me to take Kṛṣṇa consciousness seriously. But my mind always found faults with them and



I committed offences against them, which caused grave consequences.

I have no or minimal trouble from the external world. I can avoid associating with non-devotees by staying alone. But my mind watches me twenty-four hours—even during sleep. It is very active, creates confusion, depression, anxiety, and bad dreams. The only hope is the holy name, the swift deliverer of the mind.

Dīnānātha Dāsa,

THE GREATEST OBSTACLE in my spiritual life is the tendency to drift—drift like a boat without an anchor, lost in the waves, with no concept of space or time . . . just drifting on this great ocean of material existence with no goal, no direction. Yes that’s what I am—a drifter—if at all there is a word like that. A drifter is one who has no definite plan for the future, no goals to achieve, no improvements to make—basically nothing to do. Of course I have no one to blame but myself. It is just the way I am—not a plan-maker nor a focused

person with clear-cut goals of self-improvement. Believe me, it’s not that I haven’t tried over the years. I have made new-year resolutions to become more focused and planned in my spiritual practices but all my efforts have fallen flat mainly due to this complacent attitude and drifting nature, and complete lack of focus to achieve the targets I have set.

Sītā Devi Dāsi

BEING ON THE INTELLECTUAL plane, I find the act of surrender the greatest obstacle.

Despite the process of Kṛṣṇa consciousness being sweet and sublime, the act of surrender is so difficult to observe. You just need to follow your spiritual authorities who are your well-wishers and are eager for your advancement but when instructions are given to you, you have a defiant mind, which stops you from following the instructions loyally. You may surrender yourself physically, but complete mental surrender becomes a great challenge and over the long-term the process of Kṛṣṇa consciousness seems to be a burden. Despite knowing the consequences after reading so much spiritual literature, going through so many spiritual discourses, being in the association of very nice and gentle devotees, still, surrender seems to be difficult; it appears like a massive jump over Mount Everest.

Shikhar Maheshwari

“SAD BUT TRUE” IS ONE OF the most famous songs by Metallica. Time is slipping out of our hands like sand. Every day I hear stories of someone meeting sudden death due to natural or unnatural reasons. We have our own plans to pursue devotional service, but Kṛṣṇa has His own plans.

I feel the greatest obstacle on the path of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is procrastination. Career goals, family responsibility, business duties . . . the list is endless. Most of the dead I know were engrossed in either of these duties, ignorant about the next destination. Death arrives in a state of mind that further procrastinates our surrender to the Lord, not just for another day but for another birth. This again reminds me of a famous song “So far so good” by the band Megadeth. So what? Let us have the sonic apparatus to hear the whisper of death and become dead serious today, not tomorrow.

Jagannātha Vallabha Dāsa

LORD KṚṢṆA WOULD RISE from bed early in the morning, three hours before sunrise. This time, known as *brāhma-muhūrta*, is a very auspicious time of the day. It is in pure goodness (*śuddha-sattva*) and is the best time to chant the holy names of the Lord and read sacred scriptures like *Bhagavad-gītā*, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*.

My main obstacle is that I cannot wake at this early hour and therefore the quality of my chanting remains poor.

Gayatri Gaitonde

IN YOUR OWN WORDS

QUESTION FOR THE
FORTHCOMING ISSUES

**Who is your favorite
character in Rāmāyaṇa,
and why?**

Deadline for submission is April 20

**Answers will be
published in June**

Word limit: 150 words

E-mail:

ed.btgindia@pamho.net

Lord Kṛṣṇa Plays His Flute

Lord Kṛṣṇa plays His transcendental flute
The music is timeless, the melody is absolute
Time stands still, moments stop ticking
The cows and lively calves stop frolicking

The blowing winds stop still
The flowing waters stand still
The trees pause in their lazy undulations
The birds and beasts are stunned into silence

The *gopīs* run distraught, hither and thither
Knowing not which winds bear the music hither
They lose sense of themselves
The time, their clothing, and everything else

Some stop breastfeeding their babies
Some stop serving their families
Some stop looking after their children
They cease all activities, of a sudden

Why are the *gopīs* so agitated?
Why are their bodies so dissipated?
Why are their dresses in disarray?
In the midst of their working day

Are the melodies coming in from the east?
From the green vales of Govardhana, sun-kissed
Or are they wafting in from the west?
The lush meadows on the Yamunā's crest

In everyone's breast there is excitement
A vague uneasiness, an undefined ferment
The birds stop chirping, with heads cocked
The cows and the deer listen, jaws locked

His tunes waft through the entire creation
Filling the air with a divine vibration
They capture our minds and our hearts in full
How else can one explain this intense pull?

What transcendental pleasure does the Lord receive?
What ecstatic love does He wish to give?
The wonder of creation, the universe's magnificence
The infinite variety of life, the goodness of providence

Are all hidden inside the Lord's flute
In no small measure, in total absolute
The Lord sends forth His love to each and every creature
Without bias or favor, that is His special feature

He is the musician unequalled, par excellence
The greatest composer, unequalled in eminence
The Lord is the Pied Piper of the entire creation
The master of divine pleasure and recreation!

—Gautam Saha



The International Society for Krishna Consciousness
CENTRES IN INDIA

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



Agartala, Tripura— Tel. (0381) 22-7053/ Fax: (0381) 22-4780/ premadata@rediffmail.com; **Ahmedabad, Gujarat**— Tel. (079) 2686-1945, 1645, or 2350/ jasomatinandan.acbsp@pamho.net; **Allahabad, UP**— Tel. (0532) 2416718. iskcon.allahabad@pamho.net, Website:www.iskconallahabad.com; **Amritsar, Punjab**— Tel. (0183) 2540177.; **Bangalore, Karnataka**— Tel. (080) 23471956/ Fax: (080) 3578625/ ard@iskconbangalore.org; **Bangalore, Karnataka**— Tel: (080) 2356-5708/ Mobile 9844-234-108/ vibhav.krishna.jps@pamho.net; **Baroda, Gujarat**— Tel. (0265) 231-0630, 233-1012 or 235-0885/ basu.ghosh.acbsp@pamho.net; **Belgaum, Karnataka**— Tel. (0831) 243-6267 or 240-0108; **Bharatpur, Rajasthan**— Tel. (05644) 22044.; **Bhubaneswar, Orissa**— Tel. (0674) 255-3517, 253-3475, or 255-4283/ iskconbhubaneswar@rediffmail.com ; **Brahmapur, Orissa**— Tel. (0680) 2485720; **Brahmapur, Orissa**— Tel. (0680) 2350100, 09437179400/ panchratna.gkg@pamho.net; **Cachar, Assam**— Tel. (03842) 34615 **Chandigarh**— Tel. (0172) 260-1590 or 260-3232/ bhaktivinod.gkg@pamho.net; **Chennai, TN**— Tel. (044) 24530921/23, 32911472; **Coimbatore, TN**— Tel. (0422) 2626508 or 2917509/ info@iskcon-coimbatore.org; **Dwarka, Gujarat**— Tel. (02892) 34606/ Fax: (02892) 34319; **Guwahati, Assam**— Tel. (0361) 254-5963/iskcon.guwahati@pamho.net; **Hanumkonda, AP**— Tel. (08712) 77399; **Haridaspur, West Bengal**— Tel. (03215) 57856.; **Haridwar, Uttaranchal**— Tel. (01334) 260818/ Mobile: 9411371870.; **Hyderabad, AP**— Tel. (040) 2474-4969 or 2460-7089 vedantacaitanya@pamho.net.; **Imphal, Manipur**— Tel. (0385) 221587.; **Indore, Madhya Pradesh**— Tel. (0731) 4972665; **Jagatsinghpur, Orissa**— Tel. (06724) 238112, E-mail: srigopalccd@yahoo.co.in; **Jaipur, Rajasthan**— Tel. (0414) 2782765 or 2781860/ jaipur@pamho.net; **Jammu, J&K**— Tel. (0191) 2582306 **Jhansi, U.P.**— Tel. (0510)2443602.; **Kanpur, U.P.**— Tel. 09307188117, E-mail: iskcon.kanpur@pamho.net; **Katra, J&K**— Tel. (01991) 233047; **Kolkata**— Tel. (033) 2287 3757/6075/8242/ Fax: (033) 247-8515 iskcon.calcutta@pamho.net; **Kuruksheetra, Haryana**— Tel. (01744) 234806.; **Lucknow, UP**— Tel. (0522) 223556 or 271551; **Ludhiana, Punjab**— Tel. (161) 2770600 or (161) 3118897 or 98159-40005/ iskcon.ludhiana@pamho.net; **Madurai, TN**— Tel. (0452) 274-6472.; **Mangalore, Karnataka**— Tel. (0824) 2423326 or 2442756, 9844325616; **Mayapur, WB**— Tel. (03472) 245239, 245240 or 245233/ Fax: (03472) 245238/ mayapur.chandrodaya@pamho.net; **Moirang, Manipur**— Tel. 795133; **Mumbai, Maharashtra**— Tel. (022) 2620-6860/ Fax: (022) 2620-5214/ iskcon.juhu@pamho.net; **Chowpatty, Maharashtra**— Tel. (022) 2366-5500/ Fax: (022) 2366-5555/ radha-krishna.rns@pamho.net; **Nadia, West Bengal**— Tel. (03473) 281150 or 281226/ shyamrup.jps@pamho.net; **Nagpur, Maharashtra**— Tel. (0712) 6994730, 937015638/9371064102/ 9423635311/ iskcon.nagpur@pamho.net; **Nasik, Maharastra**— Tel. (0253) 6450005/ 9850071227/

siksastakam.rns@pamho.net; **New Delhi**— Tel. (011)26235133,34,35,36,37/ Fax: (011) 2621-5421 or 2628-0067/ neel.sunder@pamho.net; **Nellore, AP**— Tel. 0861-2314577/ Mobile: 9215536589/ sukadevaswami@gmail.com, **New Delhi**— Tel. 25222851, 25227478, 55136200.; **Noida, UP**— Tel. (095120) 245-4912 or 245-5015/ vraja.bhakti.vilas.lok@pamho.net; **Pandharpur, Maharashtra**— Tel. (02186) 267242 or 267266/ Mobile: 9423335991/ iskcon.pandharpur@pamho.net; **Patna, Bihar**— Tel. (0612) 687637 or 685081/ Fax: (0612) 687635/ krishna.kripa.jps@pamho.net; **Pune, Maharashtra**— Tel. (020) 41033222, 41033223/ iyfpune@vsnl.com; **Puri, Orissa**— Tel. (06752) 231440; **Raipur, Chhatisgarh**— Tel. (0771) 5037555, 9893276985/ iskconraipur@yahoo.com; **Salem, TN**— Tel. (0427) 2001686, 9442153427 iskcon.salem@pamho.net; **Secunderabad, AP**— Tel. (040) 780-5232/ Fax: (040) 814021; **Siliguri, WB**— Tel. (0353) 426619, 539046 or 539082/ Fax: (0353) 526130; **Solapur, Maharashtra**— Tel. 09371178393; **Sri Rangam, TN**— Tel. (0431) 433945; **Surat, Gujarat**— Tel. (0261) 2765891 or 2765516/ surat@pamho.net; **Thane, Maharashtra**— Tel. (022) 2811-7795 or -7796/ Fax: (022) 2811-8875/ jagjivan.gkd@pamho.net; **Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala**— Tel. (0471) 2328197. jsdasa@yahoo.co.in; **Tirupati, AP**— Tel. (0877) 2231760, 2230009 Guest House Booking: guesthouse.tirupati@pamho.net; **Udhampur, J&K**— Tel. (01992) 270298 or 276146; **Ujjain, MP**— Tel. 0734-235000/ Fax: 0734-2536000/ iskcon.ujjain@pamho.net; **Vellore**— Tel.0416-2241654,9790392143 akinchan_bvks97@rediffmail.com; **Vallabh Vidyanagar, Gujarat**— Tel. (02692) 230796 or 233012; **Varanasi, UP**— Tel. (0542) 276422 or 222617; **Vijayawada, AP**— Tel. (08645) 272513/ mmdasiskconvijayawada@gmail.com; **Vishakapatnam, AP**— Tel. (0891) 5537625/ samba.jps@pamho.net; **Vrindavan, UP**— Tel. (0565) 254-0021 (Guesthouse:) 254-0022/ Fax: (0565) 254-0053/ vrindavan@pamho.net; (Guesthouse:); **Warangal, AP**— Tel. (08712) 426182

VAIṢṆAVA CALENDAR

1 April - 15 May, 2010

- 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 Madhusūdana Māsa continues after Puruṣottama Adhika Māsa
- 25 APR:** Fasting for Padminī Ekādaśī
- 26 APR:** Break fast (Mumbai) 06:14 am - 10:29 am
- 10 MAY:** Fasting for Parama Ekādaśī
- 11 MAY:** Break fast (Mumbai) 06:06 am - 06:40 am
- 14 MAY:** End of Jala Dāna

Just Once . . . I Want To Serve Ajay Devgan

The other day as I was chatting with a friend, he mentioned one Ramsahai Tiwari (name changed) who works as an assistant in a kitchen. Ramsahai is from Uttar Pradesh and came to Mumbai for only one reason—to meet and, if possible, work as a domestic servant in the house of Ajay Devgan.

Many of you know Ajay as a Bollywood celebrity. He has acted in some films filled with the usual Bollywood fare: impossible stunts, love songs filmed at exotic locations, crying parents, and what have you. But somehow, out of all the Hindi film heroes (who practically do the same thing as each other and even the same thing in all their films) Ramsahai became smitten by Ajay Devgan. The feeling did not stop there. He developed an intense urge to somehow come to Mumbai and, if his “devotion” would bear fruit, try to get employed as a domestic assistant. No, he would not even press for a salary. Serving his hero was reward itself.

Seeing his hero’s films again and again made Ramsahai leave his hometown. He boarded a train and arrived in Mumbai. Having no acquaintance in Mumbai and no immediate means to survive, Ramsahai did a few odd jobs, here and there. Although he was working, he never lost sight of his ultimate objective. He always used to enquire from his co-workers whether they knew how to go to Ajay’s residence. Knowing this, many promised him help and in return extracted favors from him. Even when he knew that someone was cheating him, he continued to spend his hard-earned money. But his faith still guiding him. He feels deep inside that one day he will land up serving his life’s hero. I couldn’t help but see some parallels between his situation and mine or, for that matter, anyone trying to become a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

I found three noticeable things in Ramsahai’s narration:

1. His service attitude appeared of his own will
2. He does not expect any reward—the chance to serve is reward itself, and
3. He is willing to sacrifice other prospects in order to achieve his objective.

Very familiar pattern, I thought. The *Bhagavad-gītā* and the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* expect me to serve Lord Kṛṣṇa in the same way. In the beginning, I am expected to simply hear about the glories of Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes of killing demons, childhood mischief, installing the Pāṇḍavas as the rulers of the world or any other—they all have the potency to make my mind attracted to Him. This is exactly what happened to Ramsahai. He saw Ajay perform “heroic” deeds (that a stunt double was used for the fights and a playback singer was used for his songs is another matter) and that attracted him towards Ajay’s personality.

Ramsahai was not satisfied with watching his movies just once; he repeatedly saw them. And with every viewing the urge to come closer to his hero got stronger and stronger. Kṛṣṇa urges the same in the *Gītā* (9.14): “Always chanting My glories, endeavoring with great determination, bowing down before Me, these great souls perpetually worship Me with devotion.”

Thus great personalities in the past perfected their lives by surrendering to the perfect personality, Lord Kṛṣṇa. By the way, if Ramsahai ever gets too close to Ajay and realize that there is a huge difference between real life and reel life, his disappointment will break his heart. After a few years, his hero will no longer look “dashing” or be able to perform. What then? Too many people have realized that their “worshipable deities” in this mundane world have clay feet. It is reassuring that devotees are not irrational—they have just chosen the correct hero. ●

—Śyāmānanda Dāsa