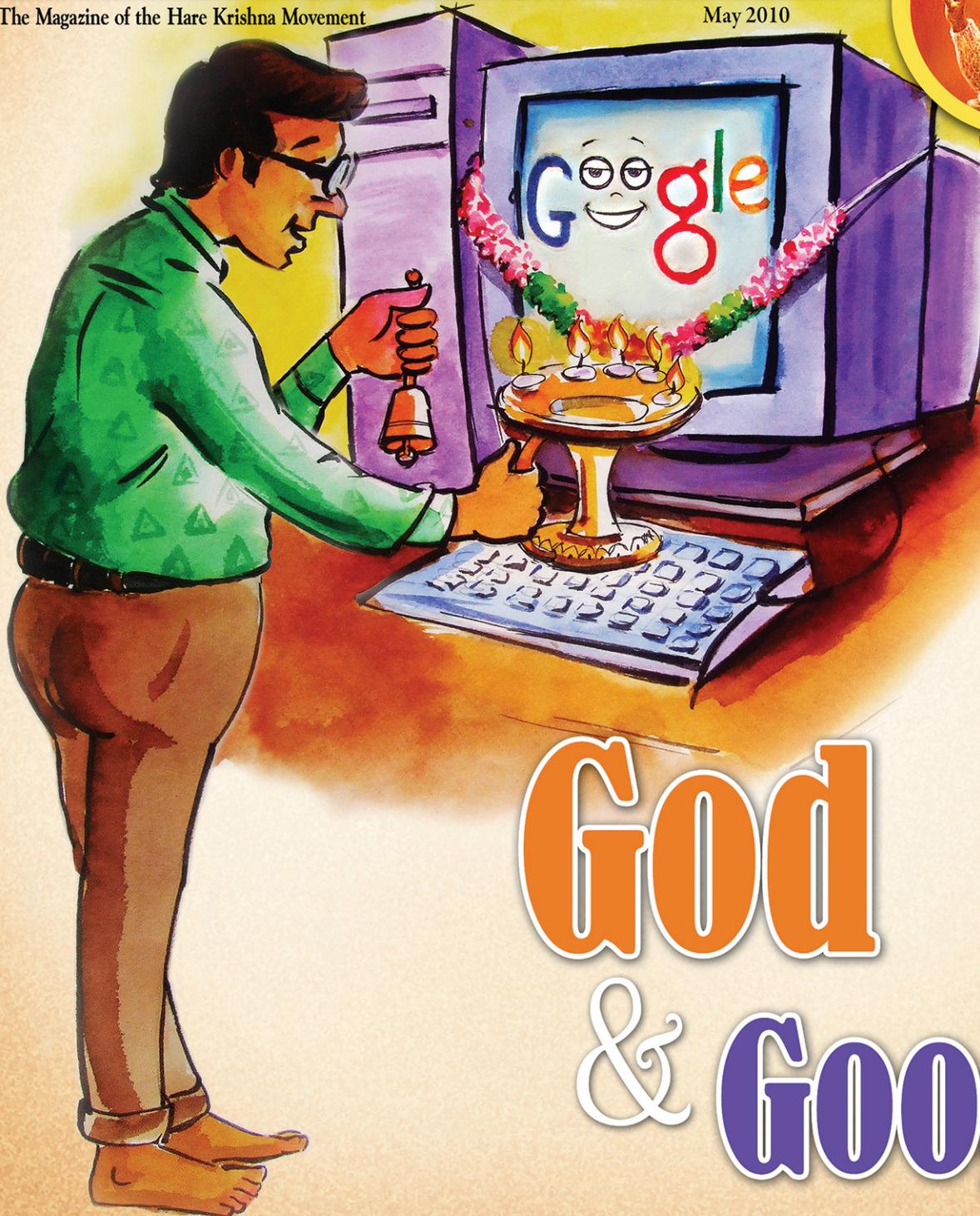


Godhead is light. Nescience is darkness. Where there is Godhead there is no nescience



The Magazine of the Hare Krishna Movement

May 2010



God & Google

C O N T E N T S

Founded 1944. Vol. 7 No. 5 May 2010

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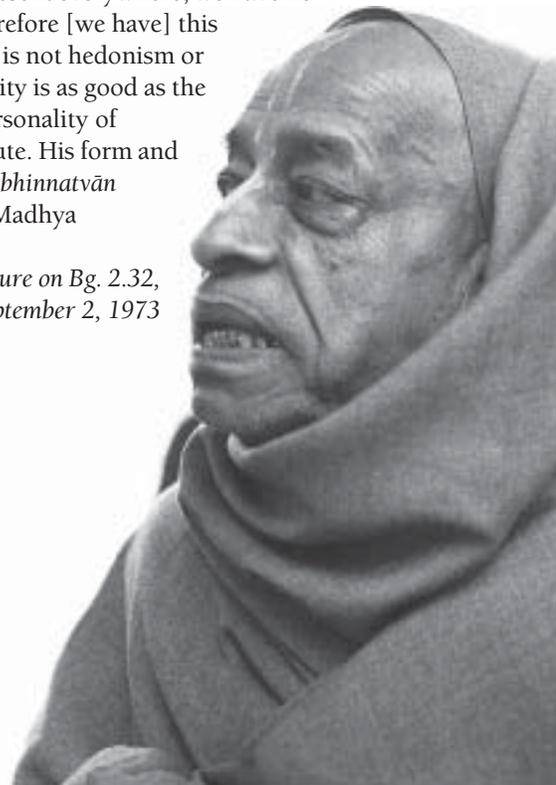
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Cover Painting by
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OUR PURPOSES

• To help all people discern reality from illusion, spirit from matter, the eternal from the temporary. • To expose the faults of materialism. • To offer guidance in the Vedic techniques of spiritual life. • To preserve and spread the Vedic culture. • To celebrate the chanting of the holy names of God as taught by Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu • To help every living being remember and serve Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

BACK TO GODHEAD

The Magazine of the
Hare Krishna Movement



FOUNDER

(under the direction of His Divine Grace Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda) His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda

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The article on “Avatāra” by Śyāmānanda Dāsa was very beautiful. The author has wonderfully compared the illusory world created by James Cameron to the actual spiritual world as explained in Vedic scriptures.

As I was going through the article, I was surprised looking at the list of *daśāvatāras* mentioned. Some spiritual books state that Lord Śrī Mahā Viṣṇu took the incarnation of Kṛṣṇa in *dvāpara-yuga* and Lord Venkaṭeśvara in *kali-yuga*. However, instead of these names, the names of Lord Balarāma and Lord Buddha are mentioned in the list in the article. Can you please clarify?

Few books also mention that Lord Śrī Mahā Viṣṇu is the Supreme Lord and He took the incarnation of Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, Venkaṭeśvara etc. but BTG refers to Lord Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Lord. Can you please provide reasons for this?

Ravi Kanth P M, Hyderabad

Our Reply: Thank you for your appreciation of the article on “Avatāra” by Śyāmānanda Dāsa.

After compiling all the Vedic scriptures, the author Śrīla Vyāsadeva was feeling dissatisfaction in his heart. On the order of his spiritual master Nārada Muni, he compiled the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* which is considered to be the essence of all Vedic literature. This scripture mentions a list of incarnations of the Supreme Lord manifesting throughout the universe. After presenting this list, the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.3.28) states *ete cāṁśa-kalāḥ pūṁśaḥ kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam*, “All of the above-mentioned incarnations are either plenary portions or portions of the plenary portions of the Lord, but Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the original Personality of Godhead.”

Since you have not mentioned the source of your information about Lord Kṛṣṇa and Lord Venkaṭeśvara being the eighth and ninth incarnation of Mahā Viṣṇu, I can’t comment on it. We understand from the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.3.26) that the Supreme Lord has innumerable incarnations just as innumerable rivulets flow constantly from an inexhaustible source of water. Information that Lord Balarāma and Lord Buddha are eighth and ninth incarnations of Lord Kṛṣṇa is from the authoritative work “*Daśāvatāra-stotra*” by the noted *vaiṣṇava ācārya* Jayadeva Gosvāmī. This is a *bhajan* glorifying the ten primary *līlā-avatāras* of the Supreme Lord. In this *bhajan*, the *ācārya* directly mentions Lord Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Person who has assumed the forms of particular incarnations.

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Śrī *Brahma-saṁhitā*, a set of prayers by Lord Brahmā at the dawn of creation also mentions,

yaḥ kāraṇārṇava-jale bhajati sma yoga-nidrām ananta-jagad-aṇḍa-saroma-kūpaḥādhāra-śaktim avalambya parām sva-mūrtim govindam ādi-puruṣam tam ahaṁ bhajāmi

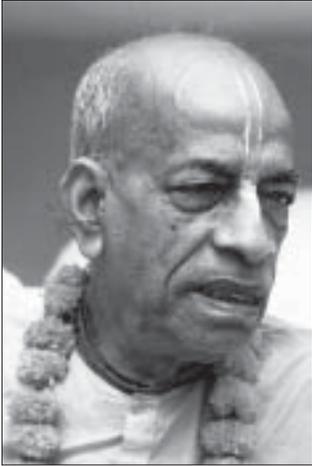
I adore the primeval Lord Govinda who assuming His own great subjective form, who bears the name of Śeṣa, replete with the all-accommodating potency, and reposing in the Causal Ocean with the infinity of the world in the pores of His hair, enjoys creative sleep [*yoga-nidrā*].

Also, from an analytical examination of the personalities of Viṣṇu and Kṛṣṇa we can understand that, whereas Viṣṇu is worshiped with awe and reverence up to the relationship of servitude (*dāsyā*) (out of the five *rasas* viz. *sānta*, *dāsyā*, *sakhya*, *vātsalya* and *mādhurya* in increasing order of intimacy), only in Kṛṣṇa can you worship or adore God as your dearest friend (*sakhya*), or even as your child (*vātsalya*), or ultimately engage with God in a reciprocal relationship of lover and beloved (*mādhurya*). These are found only in Kṛṣṇa.

Thus, we can understand that Lord Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Lord and Lord Mahā Viṣṇu is one of His expansions specifically for the purpose of primary material creation. For more details, you may also check *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (2.6.42) on www.vedabase.net

Replies to the letter were written by Nanda Dulāl Dāsa. Write to us at ed.btgindia@pamho.net

“Blinded by Vision”



YOGA ESSENTIAL TO SEE THE SOUL AND THE SUPERSOUL

The perfect *yogī* knows that the Lord is eternally transcendental and is not materially affected by His presence in either a dog or a *brāhmaṇa*. That is the supreme neutrality of the Lord. The individual soul is also situated in the individual heart, but he is not present in all hearts. That

is the distinction between the individual soul and the Supersoul. One who is not factually in the practice of yoga cannot see so clearly. A Kṛṣṇa conscious person can see Kṛṣṇa in the heart of both the believer and the nonbeliever.

—Bg. 6.29, purport

IMPERSONALISTS CANNOT SEE GOD

The Supreme Personality of Godhead in His transcendental form of bliss and knowledge is covered by the internal potency of the *brahmajyoti*, and the less intelligent impersonalists cannot see the Supreme on this account.

—Bg.7.25, purport

A DEVOTEE SEES EVERYTHING IN THE UNIVERSE

No one can see the entire universe while sitting in one place. Even the most advanced scientist cannot see what is going on in other parts of the universe. But a devotee like Arjuna can see everything that exists in any part of the universe. Kṛṣṇa gives him the power to see anything he wants to see, past, present and future. Thus by the mercy of Kṛṣṇa, Arjuna is able to see everything.

—Bg. 11.7, purport

The followers of a pseudo incarnation may say that they have also seen the transcendental incarnation of God, the universal form, but that is unacceptable because it is clearly stated here that unless one becomes a devotee of Kṛṣṇa one cannot see the universal form of God. So one first of all has to become a pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa; then he can claim that he can show the universal form of what he has seen.

—Bg. 11.48, purport

MATERIAL CONTAMINATION PREVENTS US FROM SEEING GOD

The Supreme Lord is always transcendental. Although we do not see His head, face, hands or legs, He has them, and when we are elevated to the transcendental situation we can see the Lord's form. Due to materially contaminated senses, we cannot see His form.

—Bg. 13.15, purport

Just like a green bird entering a green tree. When the bird enters the tree, nobody can find out where the bird is because the leaves of the tree are green and the bird is also green. But that does not mean the bird has lost its individuality. The individuality is there. Just like you see one airplane is flying in the air, and when it goes too far, it appears that it has disappeared. It has mixed with the sky. But actually it has not. It is still there, individual existence. It is my ignorance that I see that it is no more separate, it has mixed with the sky. Just like in the daytime we don't find



any star in the sky. Due to the dazzling sunshine, we cannot see any stars. At night, we can see millions of stars. Similarly, that is the impersonalism and personalism. One whose knowledge is not perfect, they think that everything is homogeneous and impersonal.

—Lecture on Bg. 2.13-17, Los Angeles, November 29, 1968

HUNGER FOR SPIRITUAL FOOD

The whole material world is full of hungry living beings. The hunger is not for good food, shelter or sense gratification. The hunger is for the spiritual atmosphere. The foolish leaders cannot see that even the people who are most sumptuously materially satisfied are still hungry. And what is their hunger and poverty? This hunger is actually for spiritual food, spiritual shelter, spiritual defense and spiritual sense gratification. These can be obtained in the association of the Supreme Spirit, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

—Bhāg. 1.12.6, purport

GOODNESS ENLIGHTENS, IGNORANCE COVERS



When one kills an animal, little does one know that the same animal can kill him in his next life.

killing one animal they are taking the chance of being killed by the same animal in the next life.

—Bg. 14.17, purport

CLOUD IS CREATED BY THE SUN

It is sun's energy which creates the cloud. You know.



The sun creates clouds yet is sometimes blocked by them.

By temperature the sea water is evaporated, forms into gas. That is cloud. So cloud is created by the energy of the sun, but when there is cloud you cannot see the sun. Sun is covered. Similarly, material energy is Kṛṣṇa's energy. But when you become covered by this material energy, you do not see Kṛṣṇa. This is the position.

—Lecture on Bg. 1.4-5, London, July 10, 1973

Earth, water, fire, air, sky, these five elements are gross material. Everyone can see them. But there is subtle matter also. Mind, intelligence, ego. We cannot see the mind. We cannot see intelligence. I understand that you have got intelligence, or everyone knows we have got mind, but we cannot see them. This is subtle. They are also matter, subtle matter. So the television is a machine made of gross matter, but there is possibility of making another machine of subtle matter. There is possibility. That subtle matter machine is not yet discovered. But here we can see the subtle matter discovery was there. Otherwise, how Sañjaya could see the activities in the battlefield? This is to be understood. They are very much proud of material advancement of science, but still, they have to make advancement, subtle matter. And above that subtle matter, within that subtle matter, there is spiritual identity. *Indriyāṇi parāṇy āhur indriyebhyaḥ param manaḥ, manasas tu parā buddhiḥ* [Bg. 3.42].

First of all we can see a person. A person we see, what do we see? The senses. But we cannot see the director of the senses. The director of the senses is the mind. And the director of the mind is intelligence. And the owner of the intelligence is the soul. This is understanding. The soul is there. Whose intelligence?

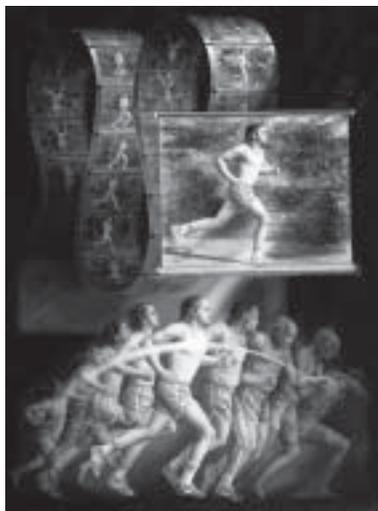
As soon as we shall say intelligence, whose intelligence? That is the soul's intelligence. Wherefrom the intelligence is coming? From Paramātmā, Hṛṣīkeśa.

—Lecture on Bg. 1.24-25, London, July 20, 1973

Unless we have developed our love for Kṛṣṇa, we cannot see the Supreme Personality of Godhead within our heart, not only within our heart, everywhere. *Premāñjana-cchurita-bhakti-vilocanena santah sadaiva hṛdayeṣu vilokayanti [Brahma-saṁhitā 5.38]*

—Lecture on Bg. 2.12, Hyderabad, November 17, 1972

Just like if you have seen a friend's small child, and after five years, you go to that friend's house and see the child: "Oh, you have grown so big?" But the father, mother cannot see because they are seeing the child daily. They do not see, "How my child is growing daily?" but a man who comes all of a sudden after five years, he says, "Oh, the child is grown up." So imperceptibly we are changing our body every moment. That is also medical science, that we are changing our blood corpuscles every moment. You see? Similarly, what is the difficulty to understand that, that the soul transmigrates from one body to another? It is very nicely explained here. "As the owner of the body is there within the body, but the body is changing, one after another, one after another..." *Dehino 'smin yathā dehe, kaumāraṁ yauvanam [Bg. 2.13]*.



Bodies changing every moment imperceptibly

—Lecture on Bg. 2.13, New York, March 11, 1966

So all our senses are imperfect. By imperfect senses, you cannot see the spirit soul. So, how you can see the Supreme Soul, God? That is not possible. You have to purify your senses. Then you can see. *Ataḥ śrī-kṛṣṇa-nāmādi na bhaved grāhyam indriyaiḥ [Cc. Madhya 17.136]*.

—Lecture on Bg. 2.18, Hyderabad, November 23, 1972

Although Kṛṣṇa is present everywhere, we have no eyes to see Him. Therefore this Deity worship. Deity is not hedonism or idol worship. No. Deity is as good as the original Supreme Personality of Godhead. He's absolute. His form and He is not different. *Abhinnatvān nāma-nāminoḥ [Cc. Madhya 17.133]*.

—Lecture on Bg. 2.32, London, September 2, 1973

The taste of water is Kṛṣṇa, so who has not seen Kṛṣṇa? They say, "Can you show me God?" If you don't see God, then who will show you? Here is God. You are drinking water. Here is God, sunshine. Those who cannot see Kṛṣṇa is God... Because to see Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Personality God, it requires many, many thousands of years tapasya. *Bahūnām janmanām ante [Bg. 7.19]*.

—Darśana, San Francisco, June 28, 1971

You cannot understand God by your endeavor. If God reveals. Just like when the sun is out of your sight you cannot see the sun by your torchlight or any light. Any amount of scientific method, you cannot see the sun at night. But in the morning you can see the sun automatically, without any torchlight. Similarly, you have to create a situation, you have to put yourself in a situation wherein God will reveal. Not that by your method you can ask God, "Please come. I will see." No, God is not your order carrier.



Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu cries in separation because He is unable to see Lord Kṛṣṇa

Just like Caitanya Mahāprabhu said, "Oh, I have not a pinch of devotion to Kṛṣṇa. I cry to make a show. If I would have been a devotee of Kṛṣṇa I would have died long ago. I am living; that is the proof that I do not love Kṛṣṇa." That is the vision of the

best devotee. He's so much absorbed in Kṛṣṇa's love that he sees, "Everything is going on; simply I am the lowest, therefore I cannot see God." That is best devotee.

—Talk with Bob Cohen, Māyāpura, February 27-29, 1972

God & Google™

The race for supremacy continues even in the virtual world

by Rādhikā Ramaṇa Dāsa

This is the age of internet. People are spending more and more time online. They are emailing, socializing, chatting, downloading, uploading, sight-seeing, blogging. And of course they are searching. In fact to perform all the previous tasks, one needs the help of a search-engine like Google. Google is so famous today for helping people find something on the internet that it is almost synonymous with a search-engine. Phrases like “google it” meaning “find it” are common. Recently as I was talking to some of my students, I asked them to think of someone who could supply anything and everything. Some indeed mentioned God; most mentioned Google. This got me thinking and I started some research. Indeed, I found The Church of Google on the internet. These people believe that Google is closest to the concept of God and their religion is officially called

Googlism. In fact when you want to search for something and after typing it out, when you want to hit the “search” button, instead you find the “pray” button. The connection is obvious. When you want to approach God you pray and so when you approach Google, you should pray. What’s more? They even have nine proofs that justify how Google is God.

COULD GOOGLE BE GOD?

Those of my students who were in favor of Google being God gave some good reasons. They suggested that he is very approachable—anyone could approach him for one’s needs. Google is all-knowledgeable—information about anything you want is readily available. Using Google Earth, you could check out any place on the planet whenever you want. Google is also impartial—anyone, be he rich or poor, gets the same result when he uses Google to find something. I realized these students were getting sophisticated. They said Google knows al-

most all languages of the world—it could translate any page into any language to suit the user. Google is present everywhere on the planet—wherever you are you could find him and use him. For Google, nothing is out of reach. If it exists, Google will have access to it. I was awestruck at my students’ line of reasoning. Some neutral bystanders began thinking, “Well! Google very well could be God.”

Not to be outwitted, those in opposition launched their arguments. Google is not a person, they said. He is not independent—his existence is dependent on electricity. It can only supply what it is fed with. It cannot independently gather information. Although the button replacing “search” may have “pray” on it, yet Google can’t really listen to our prayers. Google helps us only when asked, not by itself. Google is created; it is not a creator. It doesn’t have any pastimes (pleasurable activities). Google is constantly in a flux—always changing. The information that it supplies always keeps on getting updated; God is someone who is stable.

Googlism

Things didn't quite settle with this debate. Later, in my office this short confrontation got me thinking more.

QUALITIES OF GOOGLE

I thought Google is public in nature. Personal details about some person may be readily divulged to any other person without checking the intentions. Privacy is lost in these cases. It is very frustrating to have all kind of private information about yourself being made available on the internet by someone. This kind of free-for-all information can sometimes even be dangerous. We have seen a spurt in the occurrences of e-crimes in the recent years. But with God, all your information and feelings are perfectly safe and secure. God values one's emotions and doesn't share them with one and all.

Google is impersonal. There is no real person by that name existing.

Today, people can't do anything without the help of the internet or Google. Whatever they want to find information about they search the internet for it. The only catch here is that there is no source attached to all this information. I have seen many students searching on the internet for material that they have been asked to research for their assignments. They search, get a few hits, copy all that is available and present it for their assignments. The writer's name is not mentioned; his credentials are not mentioned. Actually, the internet is glorified for this very reason. Anyone who wants to write about anything is free to do so on the internet—no questions asked! Previously, people would research a particular topic for their whole lifetime and then probably come out with a book or so. It would immediately become a classic. Now this is not the case. The *Vedas* too

stress on authority. In fact, more important than the knowledge presented is considered the source of that knowledge. It is easy to understand why.

Sometimes if the source is reliable even incomplete knowledge is considered to be beneficial while detailed knowledge from a non-trustworthy source is discarded. We trust our mothers and sometimes she doesn't have all information about everything and yet when she advises us we trust her. The right information in the hands of a wrong person has the potential to create unlim-

catytic in producing transformation in our hearts. We could get enamored by all the knowledge that is never out of reach courtesy of Google but we have to ask, what is the value of all this knowledge? Does it help us in discrimination? Does it improve our lives really? *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.1.2) gives an interesting definition of knowledge. It mentions *vedyaṁ vāstavam atra vastu śivadam* meaning "reality distinguished from illusion for the welfare of all." The first part of this understanding viz. "reality distinguished from illusion" is accepted



Today, whenever anyone wants information about any topic, he goes to the internet and searches it on a search-engine.

ited damage. Thus, the *Vedas* explain that a prospective disciple accepts knowledge only from a bona fide spiritual master. To such a trustworthy person, he surrenders and accepts instructions wholeheartedly.

Google provides us with a lot of information. But is all that we get from it always useful to us? Is there any change in us post-receipt of that information. Real knowledge is explained by the *Vedas* to be

universally. If something is real knowledge, it has to be true yesterday, today and tomorrow. The second part of the phrase is very interesting. "For the welfare of all" would require real knowledge to be

1. Stable,
2. Factual, and
3. Beneficial.

This is an authentic definition of knowledge.

More and more people are real-

izing it today that it's not just sufficient to possess knowledge. What matters is—what effect it has on the world? Previously when scientists were asked questions about moral responsibilities, they used to shirk it off and point to the religionists for such discussions. They would be concerned only with their research and their inventions. However, today the situation has changed. With nuclear research, genetic engineering etc, more and more people are asking questions about ethics. Modern science in its quest for search of knowledge has forgotten to ask the question of value. Einstein put it very nicely in a line: "Science can tell us how things are but not how things should be."

As times are changing, we find many books on topics related to the union of science and religion. Many prominent universities are offering courses where these two seemingly diverse fields are unified for research. People from both parties are realizing that a synthesis is very much in need—they would have to sit together on the same table and talk. For Google too then, just spewing out information is not enough, it would have to become responsible in presentation of its content.

NOT EVEN INFORMATION

Even if people were really searching for knowledge, one could consider it alright. Instead the top five searches on Google for the year 2009 are as under: (1) Michael Jackson, (2) Facebook—a social networking site, (3) Tuenti—a Spanish social networking site, (4) Twitter—a website that helps you stay in touch with your friends, and (5) Sanalika—a Turkish social networking site.

Thus, people aren't even looking for knowledge on the internet. They are looking for relationships.

Everywhere you go, people want to connect—not to information but to their family members, their relatives, their friends etc. There is already an overload of information. Google can't provide a relationship though. Even these social networking websites can connect you to people but cannot provide meaningful relationships. Friends spending time with each other sometimes end up spending more time on their cell-phones talking to someone else

REAL RELATIONSHIP

We are all looking for a relationship. But the most stable one will be found when we establish our *sambandha* (relationship) with God. The *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* (1.2.6) mentions *sa vai puṁsām paro dharmo yato bhaktir adhokṣaje/ ahaituky apratihātā yayātmā suprasīdati*, hinting that we will be truly satisfied when we try to serve God unmotivated by a personal selfish desire and without an interruption. This is



Everyone is looking for relationships but the highest fulfilment is found only when one meets Kṛṣṇa.

instead of focusing on the relationship at hand. In society today, we see less people actually talking to one another; most of the time they are punching on the keypad of their cell-phones trying to connect to faraway people in hopes of a relationship rather than to people with whom they already have an existing one.

what we all desire—real satisfaction.

But to have a relationship with someone, I need to see him or feel him and I am unable to feel God currently? So, how do we relate to Him? For that we need to understand who God is really. Someone in knowledge might mention that God is the creator; some would say He is the omnipotent, omniscient,

omnibenevolent controller of all that exists. A layman would probably say that God is nature or all-pervading energy around us. A person with some more understanding would say that he is the supreme father or the supreme judge giving the understanding facet of a personality.

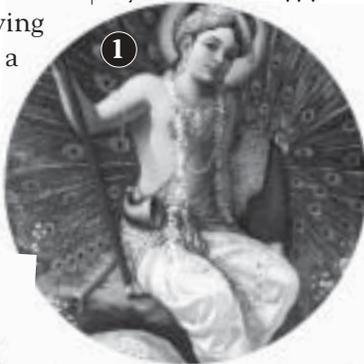
But the *Vedas* ask—what does God do when separate from any connection with this world?



He is the supreme creator but how long would God go on just creating? Is there something that He does beyond just creation and destruction? The answer to this ques-

tion is that God engages in *līlās* or divine pastimes with His dearest devotees. If one looks around the world, this conception of God is so difficult to find. Beyond all the managerial work that He does, He likes to have relationships with people who love Him and whom He loves. The *Vedas* therefore define God as *līlā-puruṣottama*—the Personality of Godhead, who is by His own nature always engaged in transcendental pastimes. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, one of the prominent

ācāryas defines God as *akhilarasāmṛta-mūrtiḥ*—the reservoir of pleasure for devotees in all devotional *rasas*. He mentions that this definition in its fullest degree is met by Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa.



**WE ARE
LOOKING
FOR KṚṢṆA**
You can

Relationships with
Kṛṣṇa are possible in
five *rasas*—
1. *sānta*, 2. *dāsyā*,
3. *sakhya*, 4. *vātsalya*
and 5. *mādhurya*



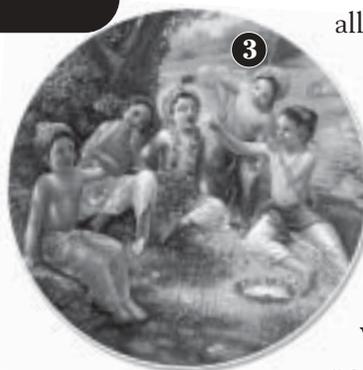
Sometimes, we can't get along with everyone.

People are of different natures and we tend to go along only with those of similar natures. Even if we meet people of our nature, with how many would we really be in a position to have a relationship with?

Our real friends whom we can really depend upon are a few handful. But Kṛṣṇa is not like that.

He can get along with any person. Sometimes He can be the funniest person and sometimes He is very grave. Sometimes He is an exuberant youth and sometimes He is a responsible householder.

Whatever different traits are possible, one will find them in Kṛṣṇa. The *Īsopaniṣad* (invocation) also explains that God is *om pūrṇam adaḥ pūrṇam idam pūrṇāt pūrṇam udacyate/ pūrṇasya pūrṇam ādāya pūrṇam evāvaśiṣyate* hinting that even though He has a deep relationship with someone, because He is unlimited He can have unlimited deep relationships with unlimited number of people. When Kṛṣṇa would meet His cowherd boy-friends, all of them would think that they are the luckiest that Kṛṣṇa considers them the best of
(please turn to page 30)



establish any type of relationship you want with Kṛṣṇa. You will find in His life that He is all-powerful and yet He used to establish relationships with different types of devotees. He had relationships in the mood of a servant, in the mood of a friend, in the mood of a child, in the mood of a lover. He Himself acted as a parent to some too. Whichever relationship one is looking for one is sure to find it in Kṛṣṇa. In fact, in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (9.17), He claims that He is the father, the mother and even the grandfather of all—

Perceiving the Omnipresent

Some can see God. Why can't we?

by Nanda Dulāl Dāsa

Few figures so strikingly stand out as does Lord Nṛsimha. The golden flowing mane, angry eyes, sharp nails do make a strong impact on the beholder's heart. Indeed, just the mention of Lord Nṛsimha immediately makes one visualize the giant form of half-man, half-lion divinity deftly evading blows by the mighty Hiraṇyakaśipu. The Lord made His appearance just to protect His dear devotee Prahlāda from his father's wrath. Even as a deadly sword in the hands of his agnostic father awaited him as his fate, young Prahlāda was unshaken from his beliefs. He continued to mercifully advise his ignorant father about the existence of God and the futility of possessiveness. Just when the cruel father acted to sever his little son's head from his body, the supreme Lord made an extraordinary appearance to save him. What happened next is history. The king was vanquished and the glories of Prahlāda were established for all time to come.

Irked by Prahlāda's conviction in God's omnipresence, Hiraṇyakaśipu, just before striking him, asked Prahlāda if God was omnipresent. Did He also exist in a nearby pillar? Without twitching an eyelid, Prahlāda nodded yes. This



Hiraṇyakaśipu tries his hand at fighting with Lord Nṛsimha

was the last straw that broke the camel's back. Hiraṇyakaśipu immediately raised his sword to finish his task. Just then, the Lord appeared from within the very same pillar to prove Prahlāda's statement true.

Interestingly, in this incident, two people have exhibited completely diverse behavior—one was completely convinced about the Lord's omnipresence while the other couldn't be more convinced of His absence. What makes this difference? Raised in an atheistic environment, how could Prahlāda develop the vision of seeing the Lord everywhere even in a critical time of impending death? Having the company of the devoted Prahlāda, how could Hiraṇyakaśipu not appreciate God's presence around him?

Men have searched for God in places of worship, in forests, on mountain-tops and similar such remote places in hopes of encountering Him. The general conception is that God is supernatural & so exists in far-away, remote places. People are also seen praying in the upward direction assuming that God is somewhere up there in the sky. Yuri Gagarin, the famous Russian astronaut to make a debut in space was asked upon his return to earth whether he saw God in space. His reply was an emphatic "No."

So, where does God really exist?

FLAME AND ITS LIGHT

Modern civilization lays a lot of emphasis on the act of seeing. "Seeing is believing" is the new mantra. Never before, even in western thought has there been such an emphasis on empiricist thought. The current peak was started originally during The Age of Renais-

sance in the 16th century.

We can understand that air is everywhere and yet we can't see it. Yes, we can feel it by its effects. We can sense it by its symptoms. And yet it's not possible to see it. So, how much emphasis should we lay on "seeing?"

The Vedic scriptures (*Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 1.22.53) mention that the supreme Lord spreads His energies all throughout although situated at



Just as light and heat spread in all directions from a single flame, the Supreme Lord although situated in one place spreads His energies all around.

a distinct spot, just like a localized flame spreads heat and light in surrounding areas. Sometimes this verse is also taken to refer to the all-powerful sun. In either case, God is taken to be all-pervasive through His energies while He is personally present in His spiritual abode. Indeed, the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*(3.14.1) declares *sarvaṁ khalv idam brahma*—that there is no existence beyond God.

People who don't believe in God are awe-struck by the complex workings of nature and although they come up with atheistic hypotheses of mechanistic evolution of life, it takes them a lot of effort to promote these, even if in vain. (For more details please refer to

Sep '09 and Nov '09 issues of this magazine). They become more concerned with His magnificent and efficient energies rather than Him, the source of energies. In reciprocation, the Lord too doesn't allow His personal feature to become discernible to such non-believers. With the genuine aspirant though, God wants to strike a personal relationship. In this case, He manifests Himself directly instead of being present in the form of His energies. Thus, for Prahlāda, the savior comes personally.

Is this characteristic of the Lord personally taking care of His sincere devotees biased behavior? Is this attitude deceitful? This is an important question concerning the nature of God. To understand this, we have to revert back to the same example we started off from. We saw that He is localized as an all-powerful person. A reasonable person never reveals intimate details about himself to someone whom he does not trust. Although one may converse freely with strangers, one doesn't share intimate

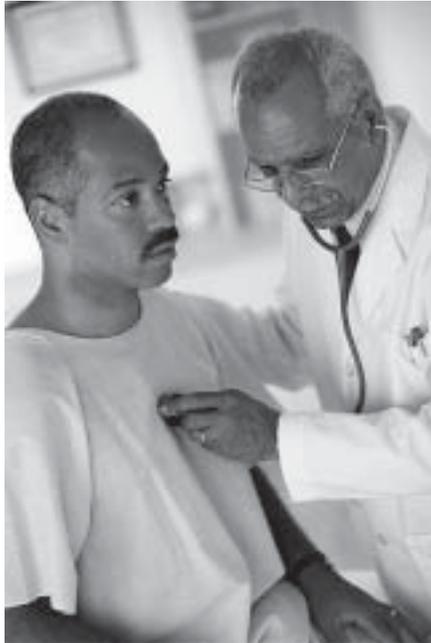
moments with them. There is always a chance that the other person may use such details against the person revealing those. This is not self-righteousness but simple reciprocation. Because the Lord trusts His devotees, He reveals more about Himself to them, while simultaneously restricting access to other persons whom He does not trust. A computer programmer restricts access to certain parts of websites to strangers but provides wholeheartedly easy admission to trusted users.

How do we instil trust for ourselves in the Lord's heart?

SOWING TRUST

Many talk about developing

trust in existence of God. Likewise, there is also a great need to facilitate development of trust in God's heart for us. This will be assisted if our actions are based on knowledge instead of ignorance. The more we have authentic knowledge about God, the more He becomes a factual reality; the more we realize His presence around us, the more we enhance our understanding of His nature, and more is our impetus to please Him. Thus knowledge plays a crucial role in advancing in God



A knowledgeable doctor can detect a disease based on his knowledge. Similarly, a knowledgeable geologist can detect water below land.

realization.

Advanced knowledge enables a doctor to perceive symptoms of an impending disease in a patient. While the patient is blissfully unaware, the doctor can detect and pinpoint the exact disease. A knowledgeable geologist detects a waterbed below arid land. Everyone else sees the dryness of the soil but the geologist can sense the moisture. Similarly, a sincere spiritualist perceives the presence of the Lord where others can't. Endowed with knowledge about the Lord, such spiritualists develop vision capable of letting them witness the Lord always. This vision of God is not sentimentalism or a fool's paradise. This is based on factual understanding of the Lord's glories.

The *Bhagavad-gītā* (15.9) too explains this concept. Lord Kṛṣṇa mentions *vimūḍhā nānupaśyanti paśyanti jñāna-cakṣuṣaḥ*—the foolish cannot understand... but one whose eyes are trained in knowledge can see all this.

Modern civilization prides itself on being advanced on several counts, especially in terms of information. All over the world, there are more universities than ever before. More educational facilities are existent than ever before. The present age is called very unhesitatingly, "The Information Age." With gigabytes of data at your disposal, search engines on the internet can

give whatever you want whenever you want it. And yet "God" is definitely not amongst the most frequently searched words on the internet. Submerged under this deluge of information about the world surrounding us, man has not been successful in trying to find a way to see God, much less to develop a relation with Him.

On the other hand, a spiritualist armed with spiritual knowledge sees the world as connected to the Lord—as an expansion of the Lord's energy and sees everyone and everything in relation to the Lord. Just as a shrewd businessman sees everything as an opportunity to generate money, all that happens around a devotee is seen as God's working.

Prahlāda, while in the womb, had received spiritual teachings from none other than the venerable sage Nārada. Nārada has proven expertise in the matter of elevating unsuspecting individuals to high standards of God realization. He is famous for delivering spiritual wisdom effortlessly. This significant, though brief stint with Nārada had impregnated Prahlāda's eyes with sufficient knowledge and ability to see the Lord everywhere.

In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (11.29.12), Lord Kṛṣṇa in fact desires this quality in us. He says,

*mām eva sarva-bhūteṣu
bahir antar apāvṛtam
ikṣetātmani cātmānaṁ
yathā kham amalāśayaḥ*

With a pure heart one should see Me, the Supreme Soul within all beings and also within oneself, to be both unblemished by anything material and also present everywhere, both externally and internally, just like the omnipresent sky.

Interestingly, the comparison of a flame and God mentioned in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* can again help us. We can understand how God may sometimes even expand into unlimited forms and yet retain His original *svarūpa*, spiritual existence. By lighting other flames, an original flame does not lessen its intensity. Similarly God can manifest unlimited forms and yet retain His original nature. Followers of some prominent faiths deny any manifestation of the Lord in this material

ence of the omnipresent around us. All we need is the Lord's blessings in the form of His bona fide representative like Nārada to teach us.

THE ACT OF SEEING GOD

One of the greatest *ācāryas* of contemporary times, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura would make an interesting statement steeped in practicality, "Don't try to see God. Act in such a way that God wants to see you." In today's do-it-yourself age of help-



A single lit candle can light many other candles of equal strength.

world thinking that this would color Him with a material tinge. Rather, this will be imposition of one's limited experience on the supremely endowed Lord. The all-powerful Lord can manifest in unlimited forms, all untinged by any material qualities and yet maintain His original position and form.

Thus, there are unlimited ways to see the Lord. One may see Him through His all-pervading energies or one may see Him in His many incarnations. The determining condition is whether we have the required knowledge. Even today, with the required knowledge and training, we can perceive the pres-

ence of the omnipresent around us. All we need is the Lord's blessings in the form of His bona fide representative like Nārada to teach us.

yourself books, a statement like this is sure to unnerve us. Yet, it is a most practical assertion of truth. How many men have submitted themselves to searching for God and have returned empty-handed! God, being supremely independent cannot be forced to reveal Himself. He reveals Himself to a person who shows eagerness to understand Him. Eagerness can be expressed when one is ready to serve someone. In readiness for practical service, eagerness can't be feigned.

It all starts with one's eagerness to understand God. When Yuri Gagarin replied in the negative about seeing God in space, a local priest had remarked, "If he couldn't see God while he was here on earth, how could he see God up in space?" It is clear thus that it does not take a geographical change to see God but rather a change in our mental frame.

This was the difference between Hiraṇyakaśipu and Prahlāda. Possibly then, this is the change that could make a difference for us too. ☸

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VEDIC THOUGHTS

What good is lust when youth has fled? What good is a lake that has no water? Where are the relatives when wealth is gone? Where is *samsāra* [repeated birth and death] when the Truth is known?

—Ādi Śankarācārya
Bhaja Govindam 10

The highest devotion is attained by slow degrees by the method of constant endeavor for self-realization, with the help of scriptural evidence, theistic conduct, and perseverance in practice.

—Lord Brahmā,
Śrī Brahma-saṁhitā 5.59

Those who understand the principles of social interaction say that . . . friendship with a good man may be established simply by exchanging seven words with him or walking seven steps with him. Friendship with a very good man may be established in merely three words or steps. But saintly persons establish friendships at every step.

—Sanaka Kumāra,
Nārada Purāṇa 1.36.32-33

Evidence for Existence of God

In believing our senses, how far do we go?

by Śyāmānanda Dāsa

“Not enough evidence, God! Not enough evidence!”

The atheist philosopher Bertrand Russell was once asked what he would say if he found himself standing before God on judgment day and God asked him, “Why didn’t you believe in Me?” Russell replied, “I would say ‘Not enough evidence, God! Not enough evidence!’”

When philosophers or scientists complain about lack of evidence, they mean empirical evidence or evidence that can be interpreted by their senses. They would like to subject God to various tests exactly as they put their objects on a slide under a microscope. The Russian leader Nikita Khrushchev had remarked that their space hero Yuri Gagarin had been in outer space and did not see any God there.

The inference is very clear. God has to subject Himself to the tests of science or else He risks being found guilty of not providing enough evidence about His existence. However, as we begin to explore what “science” means and what science *cannot* do, things become clearer.

Here are two statements from a body of scientists— the first defines the scope of science and the second

its limitations.

“Science presumes that the things and events in the universe occur in consistent patterns that are comprehensible through careful, systematic study. Scientists believe that through the use of the intellect, and with the aid of instruments that extend the senses, people can discover patterns in all of nature.”*

Pretty clear, isn’t it? Science today is built on the foundation of a ‘presumption’ – and a very simple one too. Events in our universe occur in a series of consistent patterns. And with the use of human intellect (aided by instruments manufactured by it) all of nature’s secrets could be discovered.

Alright, what about events beyond the scope of nature’s patterns?

They candidly admit that science cannot provide complete answers to all questions. Secondly they state, “There are many matters that cannot usefully be examined in a scientific way. There are, for instance, beliefs that—by their very nature—cannot be proved or disproved (such as the existence of supernatural powers and beings, or the true purposes of life).”*

If God, by definition, is a

supernatural being then how can science even begin to gather evidence to test His existence? The very word *evidence* brings with it a baggage of terms like *proof, facts, data, demonstration, verification* etc. No wonder that scientists today feel utterly frustrated in their attempts to decode the secrets of God. At this juncture it would be worthwhile to listen to the advice of Nobel-prize-winning physicist, Erwin Schrodinger, who said, “Western thought needs a blood transfusion from Eastern wisdom in order to save it from moral anemia.”

How exactly does Eastern wisdom, or more specifically, Vedic literature deal with the issue of lack of evidence? The *Vedas* state that there are three main types of evidences:

1. Direct perception
2. Logic or intelligent guesswork
3. Hearing from bona fide authorities

Of the above three modern science mostly depends upon direct perception and guesswork. This lopsided dependence makes it very difficult to make any kind of headway in understanding God. The reasons are simple. Direct perception depends on five knowledge-gathering senses – eyes,

* - from the website of American Association for the Advancement of Science



ears, nose, tongue and skin; and five working senses – voice, legs, hands, anus and genitals. These ten senses combined with the mind and intellect are the only tools available for the scientist. Thus a scientist has to painstakingly gather evidence and then evaluate it. But the main problem with the senses is that they are imperfect and the mind is subject to illusion, commits mistakes due to that illusion, and ultimately cheats by pretending to know when we really are in ignorance. Additionally, every so called expert on philosophical matters tends to arrive at a diametrically opposite conclusion on fundamental issues. In fact, the *Vedas* warn that among mundane wranglers one cannot be successful unless one disagrees with others.

HEARING FROM THE RIGHT AUTHORITIES

This is an all-important philosophical point. In order to receive information about God, who is beyond that range of the imperfect senses and mind we have to hear submissively from authorities. Atheists and agnostics

may try to argue that such hearing is dogmatic but truth be told, all learning requires one to hear from authority. As for *Vedas*, the authority is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and the student hears from the direct representatives of Lord Kṛṣṇa coming in disciplic succession.

Śrīla Prabhupāda summarized the process in one discourse, “Of all forms of learning, the first class perception is to receive knowledge from direct authorities. According to Vedic literature, hearing from authority is perfect knowledge. Direct sensory perception is imperfect. For example, if a motorman sees a car, he knows what it is, but if a child sees it, he can’t know. Simply by use of the senses, we can’t know anything certainly. The child is not an expert, as the motorman is. In medicine, if you wish to be a doctor, you must study with a doctor. So, if in material things authority is necessary, how can we learn of God on our own? The Vedic recommendation is that, if you wish to have transcendental knowledge, you must go to a

spiritual master.”

But whom shall I accept for my spiritual master? There are two qualifications to look for: first, he must be one who has heard perfectly from his master. And, secondly he lives fully in that knowledge which he has received. *Bhagavad-gītā* is the science of God. In other scriptures, there is a concept of God. But, take this example: We can see that the flower is red, and the leaf is green. But a botanist will give you far more perfect and subtle knowledge.

Scientists today are searching for evidence but are not *looking* for it. You can see a particular event but if you are not exactly trained in the science of investigation you may never find it. Arthur Conan Doyle, the creator of the fictional detective Sherlock Holmes, understood this well. In one of his adventures Holmes and a police inspector are both investigating the death of a man. His critically wounded wife was found lying next to his dead body. This is how Doyle describes the event: “The study proved to be a small chamber, lined on three sides with books, and with a writing-table facing an ordinary window, which looked out upon the garden. Our first attention was given to the body of the unfortunate squire, whose huge frame lay stretched across the room. His disordered dress showed that he had been hastily aroused from sleep.

“The bullet had been fired at him from the front, and had remained in his body, after
(please turn to page 30)

Perks Without Liabilities

*Comments of Supreme court, as reported in media,
betrays the judges' scanty spiritual knowledge.*

by Murāri Gupta Dāsa

Last week I went to a friend's house. Looking at the beautiful Chowpatty beach from the window of his third story apartment, we were reminiscing our old days when he gave me mild jolt.

"The bed you are sitting on," he said, "for two years my girl friend lived on it."

I shuffled a little. "She left?" I asked.

"Yeah," he said. "She wanted to get married, but I told her 'I am not ready yet,' so she moved on."

"After two years of staying together?" I asked.

"Yeah, then she married someone... I am still single," he said and popped a handful of roasted almonds in his mouth.

I looked out. A young couple holding hands were walking on the over-bridge to the beach. I rolled the almonds in my hands, my mind turning over a recent issue rocked up by the Indian Supreme Court.

"Live-in relationships between the adult couples," the court ruled, "cannot be treated as an offence." Drawing an analogy from the Hindu mythology, the media reported that the court said, "Even Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā lived together."

Living in or cohabitation, a popular concept in the west, is fast being accepted in India. More and more youngsters, like my friend, seem to find it a better option than getting married.



What is there in living-in, I ask myself, that a marriage cannot offer? Couples live together, mate, share finances, emotions, and life in both. Living-in, it seems, offers all the perks of marriage without the asso-

ciated commitment and responsibilities. This is a vital difference.

WHY HAVE MARRIAGE AMONG HUMANS?

When we look to the history of the civilization, we find that societies all over the world honored the institution of marriage. The world religions, although having vast differences in practices, nevertheless always emphasized a culturally and legally sanctioned union between a male and a female that traditionally cannot be easily dissolved.

Does this universal practice indicate that marriage offers some social or biological advantage?

A loud chirping draws my attention to a nearby tree. Three baby birds, their pink skin glistening in sunlight, hungrily greet their mother and father crow, who have just returned to their nest with supply of baby food. As the parents feed their young ones and cuddle them, it is a picture of a happy family. When the young babies will grow up they will fly away, but until then, the family will be one.

In animal kingdom, we find that parents stay together until the

offspring grows up enough to fend for itself. Nature, recognizing the need for parental care, support, and training instills these basic instincts in the animal species. Same instincts are also present in humans, especially in the female gender. But, humans have power to overrule these basic instincts under socio-cultural pressure or trends. For example, animals have a natural sense of identifying favorable and unfavorable food available in wild and it helps in their survival. Humans, however, can suppress their physiological signals and indulge in harmful behavior. Every smoker gets severe bouts of cough on the first puff, signaling body's violent effort to get rid of poisonous fumes; yet under cultural influence humans overpower these natural warning systems and begin to indulge in excesses. This overriding the natural instincts may lead to an occasional overeating at one end to sever intoxications at another. Humans, therefore, cannot be expected to follow responsible behavior if left alone, unless they are equipped with a suitable social training. After all, its only humans, among all animals, who commit suicide.

Seeing these human frailties, wise men and women since the early days of civilization ensured the system of marriage—an institution that makes sure that precious children get all the support they need from both the parents, even when the initial “honeymoon” period has ended.

Live-in relationships, on the other hand, offer no solid commitment. Anyone can leave any time without any social and legal binding and hence the legal, emotional and physical future of both the partners and the offspring is inse-

cure. Living-in seems to demand less but also offers less, both to the individual and the society.

The cost of raising kids in a single parent family is high. Studies have shown increased mental stress, disease, and criminal behavior in such kids. The entire society has to pay for the actions of few individuals. The seemingly free, flashy and sensational lifestyle creates a cyclic effect influencing the choices of more gullible individuals who get carried away by promises of immediate pleasures and fail to work for enduring gains.

RĀDHĀ-KṚṢṆA'S LOVE

By passing such comments, the judges betray their scanty knowledge of the immense spiritual literature available about the pastimes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Lord Kṛṣṇa, when in Dvārakā, lived in with His married queens and when in Vṛndāvana, lived with His parents; while Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, who is younger to Him, lived with Her parents in Barsānā.

Kṛṣṇa was only eleven years old when He killed Kaṁsa, according to Uddhava's words: *ekādaśa-samās tatra gūḍhārciḥ sa-balo 'vasat*. 'Like a covered flame, Lord Kṛṣṇa remained there incognito with Balarāma for eleven years' (*Bhāg.* 3.2.26). At the age of seven years Kṛṣṇa lifted Govardhana Hill, and the *rāsa* dance took place during His eighth year. Before this pastime, Lord Kṛṣṇa's cowherd boy friends were kidnapped by Lord Brahmā and then Lord Kṛṣṇa expanded Himself to take the form of all the boys and in the subsequent year, these boys, who were Kṛṣṇa Himself, married the *gopīs*. So when *gopīs* came to dance in *rāsa-līlā*, they were actually dancing with their

own beloved husband, Kṛṣṇa. Moreover, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa were married by Brahmā according to *Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa* (*Kṛṣṇa janma khaṇḍa*).

Although Rādhā Kṛṣṇa's conjugal pastimes may induce modern men and Supreme Court judges to derive inferences that suit their personal agendas, we have better judges with deeper insights. For thousands of years, pastimes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa have been discussed, meditated upon and relished by spiritualists of the caliber of Rāmānujācārya, Śankarācārya, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and many more. None of them ever induced their followers to indulge in licentious activities citing pastimes of the Divine Couple.

Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are one Absolute Truth manifesting in two forms to taste the mellows of love. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the potent factor, and Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī is the internal potency. According to *Vedānta* philosophy, there is no difference between the potent and the potency; They are identical. We cannot differentiate between one and the other, any more than we can separate fire from heat. To bring Their transcendental love to the level of mundane lusty affairs of ordinary man and woman is sheer ignorance. One needs great spiritual insight to understand the mystery of These two personalities.

Kṛṣṇa left Vṛndāvana at the age of eleven and did not return until the end of His pastimes. Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī waited for Him for rest of Her life setting the topmost example of pure love and surrender. Alas! What example to justify living-in when the quoted lovers did not even live together! ❀

Saved by a Song

Lyrics of a film song help the author endure hardship and later lead him to Kṛṣṇa.

by Upendra Dāsa

I was always attracted to Mumbai. When I finally reached my dream destination in August, 1970, I thought life would never be the same. Although a cousin was eager to help me, very soon I was on my own.

Staying away from home wasn't new. Yet Mumbai was different. Life was fast-paced. No one had time to even talk to one another. I would often eat in restaurants alone. People fighting over trivial matters was common. Somehow it was difficult for me to gel in. I yearned for my home. Nothing in the big city seemed to work for me. One day, I was even blamed for some mishaps in my workplace which was no fault of mine. The pressure was rising.

As I was returning from work one evening, my elderly neighbor confronted me, "Why are you spoiling our children here? This is a colony of respectable people. Why don't you go somewhere else?" I was completely puzzled. Only later, I came to know that one of my roommates had shown some objec-

tionable material to a young boy.

The next day was my birthday I concluded, "Enough is enough. I can't take it any more. I will end my life tomorrow." A train would pass by my home everyday at 4 pm and I decided to jump before it to bring an end to my misery.

The next day, as I waited for my final moment all alone, I started

taking stock of the last 23 years of my life. There had been nothing worthwhile. The more I thought about it, the more I was convinced about the decision I had taken. I had nothing to live for.

Suddenly I heard a Hindi film song playing nearby:

*aa chal ke tujhe, main le ke chaluṅ
eka aise gagan ke tale
jahan gam bhi na ho,
aansoo bhi na ho,
bus pyaar hi pyaar pale*

"Come with me. I will take you to another sky—where there are no miseries and pains. There, only love prevails."

I had heard this famous film song earlier and had appreciated it. But today was different. In my critical state it was like a thunderbolt. I immediately sat up. The song spoke of a place where there were no miseries and no tears; where there would only be love. Did such a place really exist? Could someone offer me this place? Should I end my life before checking out such a place?

CHANGE OF HEART
The sound of door bell



ringing interrupted my thought process. A ten-year-old girl was inviting me to her home. She said it was a surprise. After the recent accusations, how could I go to her home? But she was persistent. Just then, I heard the 4 pm train passing by. My plan was already foiled. Her two elder sisters also joined in. Now what? I was ready for anything. I agreed reluctantly. When I stepped in their home, I was overwhelmed with a mix of surprise and joy. I was facing a board that said, "HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU." I was dumbstruck. The whole family had arranged for a surprise celebration for me. They even distributed some sweets. I asked the girl her name. She replied smilingly, "Kirtana".

It was strange. How did these people know? I was convinced that someone unknown wanted me to live on. I decided to really find out the place mentioned in the song—where there are no miseries, no tears, but only love.

One of my friends, Mahesh's father worked in the film industry. I disclosed to Mahesh my desire to meet the lyricist of that particular song, but it was difficult. I then requested him to find out from the poet where this place—*jahan gam bhi na ho, aansoo bhi na ho, bus pyaar hi pyaar pale*—existed. Mahesh somehow met the lyricist and came back with an answer. The song writer had replied that I was a crazy person. Films were make-believe and there was no place where there were no miseries and tears. I was shattered. But deep in my heart, I believed that there must be such a place somewhere.

Years passed and I turned to spirituality. I wandered through many missions. I read the teachings of many famous saints of the country. Though I appreciated their

philosophy and learnt a few things from them, I did not quite feel that I belonged there. My important question remained unanswered.

CHANGE OF DIRECTION

In April 1991, I attended an eight-lecture course titled, *The Journey Of Self Discovery* based on teachings of *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā*. It was conducted by Govinda Dāsa from the Mumbai branch of ISKCON. This course was a culture shock for me. It shattered all my earlier perceptions about religion and spirituality. At the end, when the speaker gave me a commitment form to sign, I couldn't take it. He wanted me to commit to 16 rounds of chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* daily, and to lead an exceptionally pure life by following four regulative principles. He also mentioned giving up on-

whole life-time this was too much. His charismatic personality eventually won me over. I gave in, "Alright, what should I do?" He was simple. "Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* in those 10 minutes. No rules, no regulations. You don't have to change your present life style," he advised.

CHANGE IN LIFESTYLE

I started chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*. It started with 10 minutes but soon it took over. Within a couple of months I didn't feel like eating non-vegetarian dishes. Alcohol and smoking went away without any conscious effort on my part. One Sunday in May 1993, I found myself at Śrī Śrī Rādhā Gopīnātha temple.

A few people were chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa in the temple hall. Noticing a library, I asked to the per-

I was convinced that someone unknown wanted me to live on. I decided to really find out the place mentioned in the song—where there are no miseries, no tears, but only love.

ion and garlic in my food. There were several other exclusions. It was disheartening. I couldn't follow this philosophy even though it made sense.

Two more years passed by. I met Devāmṛta Dāsa and I confided to him about my inability to meet the prescribed standards. Devāmṛta replied, "Forget all philosophy and whatever you have heard about regulative principles." I was immediately interested, "Alright. What next?" "Can you give me 10 minutes of your day?," he asked. Ten minutes of the day was not a big thing for me. He quickly added, "For your life time."

I was shocked. Ten minutes of the day was no big deal, but for the

son attending, "What are the membership fees here?" He gazed at me, saying "I have seen you couple of times in the temple." "Yes, I have come before. This is my second visit." He beamed a smile at me, "Then you are already a member." I was humbled. I had asked him a question posing as an outsider, but this devotee already considered me an insider. He continued, "Today we have a *Sunday Feast program* in the afternoon. Please attend and do not leave without taking lunch *prasāda* after the program." I changed my plan for the day instantly.

The program started and a speaker arrived after some *kīrtana*. His Holiness Rādhānātha Swami

spoke on a verse from *Bhagavad-gītā* (15.6) that day. He began by describing how miserable this material world is. I fully agreed with him. Then he said that there is another world where there are no miseries, no dualities; there is only transcendental love.

*na tad bhāsayate sūryo
na śaśāṅkona pāvakaḥ
yad gatvā na nivartante
tad dhāma paramam mama*

“That supreme abode of Mine is not illumined by the sun or moon, nor by fire or electricity. Those who reach it never return to this material world.”

My heart leapt with joy. I began crying, “He knows! He knows that place where there are no miseries, no tears; only love.” At last, I had found an answer to my question.

CHANGE IN CONSCIOUSNESS

The next line brought me back. He said, “Unlike Māyāvādīs who want to merge in Brahman, Vaiṣṇavas aspire to go back to Godhead and serve the Lord with love and devotion.”

The mention of the word Vaiṣṇavas brought back some hateful memories. Since my childhood days, I had hated Vaiṣṇavas. When I was young, my aunt used to take me to a *Bhāgavatam* discourses in a nearby Vaiṣṇava temple. The speaker there, while narrating the pastime of churning of the milk ocean, had mentioned that Lord Śiva could not consume the *halāhala* poison. With difficulty one drop went into his throat and got stuck there. Seeing Śiva’s plight, Lord Viṣṇu drank all the poison. That is why Viṣṇu is blue all over while Śiva is only *nīlakaṇṭha*. I was furious at this explanation. I got up

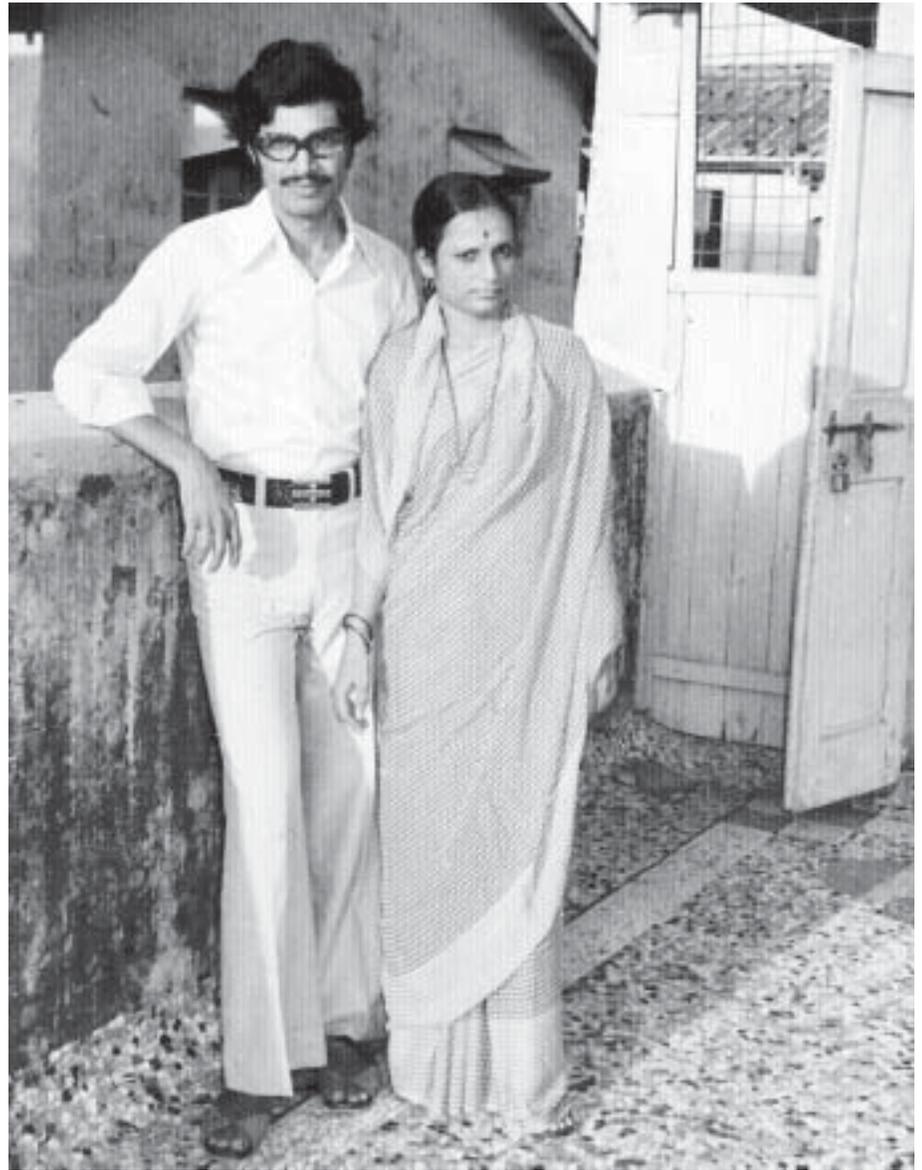
and told him that he was lying. They had thrown me out of the temple. Later, we also had Vaiṣṇava neighbours. The lady would always trouble my mother over flimsy reasons. These incidents had made me hate Vaiṣṇavas.

To my surprise, Mahārāja went on to narrate the pastime of the churning of the milk ocean and even narrated how Lord Śiva drank the poison. He glorified Lord Śiva very eloquently. My spirits lit again. I realized—these Vaiṣṇavas are different. They re-

spect and glorify Lord Śiva.

After the class, there was *kīrtana* again. It was weird to see devotees dancing. But it didn’t stop there. Now, they tried to pull me in. Dancing was not new to me. College festivals, office parties etc. had given me ample opportunity. But I was done with that. I was sick of it. I headed for the door.

In between the singing, Mahārāja began narrating the incident of Duḥśāsana attempting to disrobe Draupadī. He started, “...Duḥśāsana was pulling



Upendra Dāsa with his wife

Draupadī's *sārī* and Draupadī was frantically trying to hold on to it..." I was slowly approaching the exit door. "...What was Draupadī's strength compared to that of Duṣṣāsana who had strength of thousand elephants?... " I was almost near the door. "...But Draupadī realized the futility of her attempts to save herself and in the mood of helplessness and surrender raised her both hands and called out..." As I was about to take my last step out of the temple, I heard Mahārāja call out loudly, "... Hey Kṛṣṇa! Hey Govinda!!" I froze. Before I realized I was participating in the *kīrtana*, swaying back and forth holding devotees' hands. I was not fully aware of what was happening, I looked around and my eyes fell on Rādhā Gopīnātha. There was a mischievous smile on His face. I was hooked.

But, it wasn't going to be easy. I had one more hurdle to cross. I went home very much excited by the experiences I had in the temple. I could not find words to express my feelings to my wife. I told her that I had gone to a temple and I liked it very much and I want to go there every Sunday.

When I had left home, I had not told her that I was going to the temple that day. She had been waiting for me for hours to return for lunch. I had returned only in the evening after having sumptuous lunch prasād at the temple myself. And, I was telling her that I would go there every Sunday. She was furious, "Every day you go to office at 7 am when your daughter is still sleeping and come back from office after 10 pm when your daughter has already gone to bed. It is only on Sunday that she gets to see you and we all have lunch together." She paused.

"What about our family?" I was insistent that I would go. Ultimately, she spoke up, "If you do that, I am afraid, that may be the end of our marriage."

We both fell silent—for the next two days. I could only pray, "O Lord! Please help me. I want to come to you but I don't know how." One day when I returned from my office my wife asked me, "Are you still planning to visit the temple on Sunday?" "Yes," I replied softly. "I too," was her reply. Curiosity had gotten the better of her. The following Sunday we both went to Śrī Śrī Rādhā Gopīnātha temple together.

On our way back, we were both

silent. After what seemed to be a thousand millenniums, I heard something. "You know what? " she asked with a broad smile, "even if you don't, I will go to this temple every Sunday." I was speechless. But my eyes said it all. I just sank in my seat with a thankful heart.

Very soon, by the mercy of Lord Kṛṣṇa, I took shelter of His Holiness Rādhānātha Swami Mahārāja and today aspire to serve the devotees of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa for the rest of my life. ☪

Upendra Dāsa is currently a senior spiritual counselor guiding many devotees on the path of Kṛṣṇa consciousness at ISKCON Mumbai.

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Delete History

Surfing on the internet—is it really for free?

By Yugāvatāra Dāsa

As I was attending my computer training class, I saw a junior teacher unrestrictedly surfing restricted sites on the internet. He was addicted to pornography. Whenever he was alone or when the supervisor was out of sight he would start visiting these websites. Although junior he was still a teacher. For me it was difficult to accept him as my guru. One day I enquired from him, “Are you aware of the consequences if some senior teachers come across your surfing history?” He coolly replied, “I know the technique for erasing my browsing history. After pressing these buttons no one can trace the websites I visit.”

LONG LASTING IMPRESSIONS

After the class I was walking back, and I began reflecting on his words. It’s so easy to delete the browsing history from the computer but it is so difficult to erase it from the mind. Coming to Kṛṣṇa consciousness I am struggling to delete the unwanted things from my heart, but all those Bollywood impressions are so firmly glued to the heart that they seem to be inseparable. Śrīla Prabhupāda had taught us that these impressions are not only of this life but of millions

of lifetimes. This is one of the reasons we get bad dreams. We see and indulge in horrible unimaginable acts in our dreams. We get up and convince ourselves, “No! no! I am not that bad person... I can never act in such a heinous way.” These experiences are a result of our actions in a past life. If it is so difficult to shrug off the burden of previous impressions, what could be the point in adding new ones to the existing load?

THE HISTORY RECORDER

One thinks that he or she can get away with the visual crimes by deleting the browsing history. If one is alone in the room he thinks no one has witnessed his polluted acts. In the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* 6.1.42, in the episode of Ajāmīla the Yamadūtas describe the various witnesses that are constantly keeping a watch on all of us. The sun, fire, air, demigods, moon, evening, day, night, directions, water, land and Supersoul Himself—all witness the activities of the living entity. There is no place in this world which is devoid of these witnesses. These listed witnesses are more vigilant than CCTVs which are used to monitor mishaps in shops etc. Kṛṣṇa says in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (18.61), *iśvaraḥ sarva-bhūtānāṃ hṛd-deśe ’rjuna*

tiṣṭhati: “The Supreme Lord is seated in everyone’s heart.” Again, He says in Bg. 9.18, *gatir bhartā prabhuḥ sākṣī*: “I am the goal, the sustainer, the master, the witness.” When Kṛṣṇa is monitoring our activities sitting in the heart how can we act sinfully in our imagined solitude?

DELETE THE SINFUL HISTORY

Actually all of us have a long standing history of sinful activities. We are suffering due to the reactions of past sins. Rather we are struggling to delete this sinful history. This permanent deletion of the sinful history is possible by chanting the holy names. This is the only condition Kṛṣṇa puts before He presses the ‘Delete’ button to erase our sinful past. Lord Caitanya told Jagāi and Mādhāi, “I am ready to forgive all your sins. But promise Me that you will never indulge in sinful activity again.” The moment Lord Caitanya accepted the sins of these two sinners, His golden body turned black. Then Lord Caitanya told all the devotees to chant so that all the sins He had accepted could be transferred to those who are offending the Vaiṣṇavas. Thus Lord Caitanya taught us that chanting destroys all the sins.



FORMATTING THE MIND

Coming to Kṛṣṇa consciousness is like formatting the mind. It destroys all the viruses of material desires we are harboring for lifetimes. Reading Śrīla Prabhupāda's books and hearing to Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is like a strong anti-virus program which prevents our mental PC from getting infected. Chanting of the holy names create a filter which prevents us from contaminations and Kṛṣṇa prasāda boosts our system to fight against material desires. If we

THE RISK OF THE VIRUS

Every time one visits objectionable sites on the web, there is a chance of a virus entering the computer. I can compare this with someone visiting a prostitute and thus increasing his chance of getting infected with the HIV virus. Just like HIV virus destroys the whole body, the virus from these websites destroys the computer. The computer then has to be formatted and a lot of valuable data is lost. More dangerous than this computer virus is the virus of illicit desires which enters and infects the mind when one visits these sites. The HIV virus kills the body, a computer virus destroys the computer but the

virus of illicit desire continues to infect the soul even after the body is destroyed because it infects the subtle body of mind, intelligence and false ego. It infects it with an insatiable desire for sense enjoyment. We should not be illusioned that by deleting our browsing history we are freed from a sinful record.

religiously follow this process the WINDOWS to Goloka will open up and very soon we will be browsing the eternal pastimes of the Lord. ☺

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



Developing the Habit of Reading

By Rādhikā Vallabha Dāsa

A devotee presented a copy of *Śrīla Prabhupāda lilāṁṛta* to his cousin brother. Noting the size of the book, his brother declined to read. Later this devotee was surprised to find the same brother reading a book of similar size on improving English grammar. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “People in general have a taste for literatures by instinct. They want to hear and read from the authorities something about the unknown, but their taste is exploited by unfortunate literatures which are full of subject matter for satisfaction of the material senses.” The perfection of this propensity to read books is to develop an attraction for reading spiritual literature. One of the most important contributions of Śrīla Prabhupāda is his books. Let us see some reasons which can inspire us to read his books.

QUALIFICATION FOR DEVOTIONAL SERVICE

In the *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, Śrīla Rupa Gosvāmī says that the qualification for devotional service is to have a taste (*ruci*) or attraction for it. Śrīla Jīva Goswami comments that *ruci* mentioned here particularly refers to reading scriptures like *Bhagavad-gītā*, *Śrīmad-*

Bhāgavatam etc. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes in his *Nectar of Devotion*, “... for persons who have a natural taste for understanding books like *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, devotional service is easier than for those who are simply accustomed to mental speculation and argumentative processes.” Thus, whereas the act of preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness is to make people interested, the activity of reading books is to elevate people who are already interested.

To come to Kṛṣṇa consciousness in this Kali-yuga is rare and difficult. But it is even more difficult to stay in Kṛṣṇa consciousness and it is even rarer to stay happy in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. In order to stay happy in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, it is very important that one studies Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books very scrutinizingly.

FOR SELF-PURIFICATION

We should read scriptures with a desire to purify our own tongue and for the glorification of Supreme Lord. In this regard the attitude of Maitreya Ṛṣi in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is

worth noting. Maitreya Ṛṣi comments (SB 3.6.36), “In spite of my inability, whatever I have been able to hear [from the spiritual master] and whatever I could assimilate I am now describing in glorification of the Lord by pure speech, for otherwise my power of speaking would remain unchaste.” Thus, by reading scripture and explaining it to others, we maintain our chastity to the Lord and prevent ourselves from going astray.

Suta Goswami informs in the



Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (1.18.18) that simply by conversing with a great soul, one can cleanse oneself of all disqualifications resulting from lower births. Śrīla Prabhupāda comments in the purport that reading a book full of words of great devotees is equivalent to conversing with them.

Even if one may not have a chance to associate directly with Śrīla Prabhupāda, even a person of lower birth can cleanse himself of all disqualifications by associating with him by reading his books.

SURVIVING EVEN WITH SCANTY RESOURCES

Sometimes, a devotee may find himself in a situation where there is very little or no association of his spiritual master (*guru*) or some senior devotees (*sādhu*) from whom he seeks inspiration. If he is used to seeking inspiration from scriptures (*śāstra*), then he will not be disturbed. He will continue to remain nourished.

His Holiness Bhakti Tīrtha Swami writes, “We should seek a healthy interdependence between *guru*, *sādhu* and *śāstra*. It is healthy to avoid both an attitude of extreme dependence on any of these three as well as one of extreme independence.” Usually, we are attached too much to *guru* and *sādhu* and not much to *śāstra*. But *śāstra* is available to us all the time and it will benefit us to take its shelter.

FULL OF SUBSTANCE

People today want to have good relationships. They are reading many self-help books thinking that the books will give them the required formula. Most of the time, such books are just old wine in a new bottle. On the other hand, Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books can enlighten a person to such an extent that he

finds new light every time he reads the same book.

Arjuna mentions in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.15.27), “Now I am attracted to those instructions imparted to me by the Personality of Godhead [Govinda] because they are impregnated with instructions for relieving the burning heart in all circumstances of time and space.” This verse was spoken by Arjuna when he experienced the most difficult time of his life—when he was defeated by some infidel cowherd men. For a honorable *kṣatriya*, dishonor is worse than



death. In this verse Arjuna addresses Kṛṣṇa by the word Govinda. Śrīla Prabhupāda translates the word Govinda as “The Supreme Personality of Pleasure”. This means that Arjuna experienced great pleasure and relief by remembering the instructions of *Bhagavad-gītā* when he had passed through the most difficult situation. That is why he remembered Kṛṣṇa specifically as Govinda, *OSupreme Personality of Pleasure*. This reflects Arjuna’s mood nicely. If a word-to-word translation can give such deep meaning, then what to speak of the purports? This is why

Śrīla Prabhupāda encourages us to read every word of his books. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (4.12.44), “A sincere devotee should read every chapter and every word of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, for the beginning verses describe that it is the ripened fruit of all Vedic literature. Devotees should not try to avoid even a word of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.”

TOO REPETITIVE AND BORING

For a criminal being interrogated by police officers, asking him critical questions repeatedly are disturbing and annoying. The officers are doing so to check consistency of his answers at different times. Similarly, for a conditioned spirit soul temporarily identifying himself with matter, Śrīla Prabhupāda’s words informing us about our original spiritual nature seem disturbing. But this repetition is compassion to expose our rebellious attitude. These same statements will become a source of pleasure when we are purified just as ointment applied over a wound hurts, but when the

wound heals, the same ointment has a cooling effect. Śrīla Prabhupāda states, “Repetition of something is necessary in order that we understand the matter thoroughly, without error” (Bg. 2.25, purport).

In the second chapter of *Bhagavad-gītā*, difference between soul and body is discussed in a repetitive way by the Lord Himself from different angles of vision. Similarly, in his books, Śrīla Prabhupāda often repeats the same concept over and over again in different ways to make us realize the importance of those concepts.

READING—LEADING TO JÑĀNI PLATFORM?

Someone may think that one who reads books is a *jñāni* and not a *bhakta*. But Lord Kṛṣṇa says in *Bhagavad-gītā* (18.70), “I declare that he who studies this sacred conversation of ours worships Me by his intelligence.” Thus, we can please Lord Kṛṣṇa by studying His words. If our reading effort is just to become expert in becoming scholarly at quoting different *śloka*s when required, then we may be considered to be on *jñāna-mārga*. However, if we are trying to study scripture to become well-versed with the concepts and deepen our understanding to represent the *paramparā* properly, then such efforts may be considered to be rightly situated on *bhakti-mārga*. Such reading in a proper mood will not contaminate us. Instead, due to greater knowledge we will experience more purification.

FOR PERSONAL CONVICTION

Sometimes one may think that people are more convinced about sense enjoyment than one is about Kṛṣṇa consciousness. We are surrounded by atheistic propaganda all around. We are bound to meet people who might confront us for belief in God. By not being well-versed in Kṛṣṇa conscious philosophy we may end up being outwitted in a conversation. Even if we become successful in defeating such a person in argument, if we ourselves are not well read, we may be shaken from within. Thus, we should read Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books regularly for our own nourishment. When there is a fire accident, a common man will panic seeing the fire but a trained fire-fighter will not panic. Similarly when we train our eyes to see

through the scriptures, even in adverse situations, we will not panic.

FOR PREACHING

Lord Kṛṣṇa mentions in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (18.69) that there is no one more dear to Him than he who preaches devotional service. Inspired by this, if someone wants to give Kṛṣṇa consciousness to someone, one is bound to meet opposition. We can’t spend time studying books at such a crucial time. In a hunting excursion, after seeing an animal, one cannot say, “Let me search for a gun.” A hunter should go well prepared with all his arms in place. Similarly one’s intelligence must be sharpened to face the arguments of opponents by reading *śāstra*. Śrīla Prabhupāda comments in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (6.1.38), “One who represents someone else must fully know that person’s mission. The devotees in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement must therefore be fully aware of the mission of Kṛṣṇa and Lord Caitanya; otherwise they will be considered foolish. All devotees, especially preachers, must know the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness so as not to be embarrassed and insulted when they preach.”

It is said in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (4.22.62) that Pṛthu Mahārāja, a great devotee of the Lord, was like Brhaspati in spiritual knowledge. Śrīla Prabhupāda elaborates in his purport, “Mahārāja Pṛthu, although a great devotee constantly engaged in the loving service of the Lord, could defeat all kinds of impersonalists and Māyāvādīs by his profound knowledge of Vedic scriptures. We should learn from Mahārāja Pṛthu that a Vaiṣṇava, or devotee, must not only be fixed in the service of the Lord, but, if required, must be prepared to ar-

gue with the impersonalist Māyāvādīs with all logic and philosophy and defeat their contention that the Absolute Truth is impersonal.” So we need to read Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books thoroughly in order to defeat all misconceptions against devotional service. This is not a diversion from devotional service but this in fact preserves the sanctity of devotional service.

REMEMBRANCE OF KṚṢṆA

Śrīla Rupa Goswami says in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* that the purpose of following all rules and regulations is to always remember Kṛṣṇa and to never forget Him. Similarly the purpose of reading Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books is to always remember Kṛṣṇa and to never forget Him. Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura mentions in one of his *bhajan*s, *Vidyāra Vilāse*, “All the so-called knowledge of this world is born of the flickering potency of Your illusory energy (*māyā*). It is an impediment to the execution of devotional service to You. Indulgence in mundane knowledge verily makes an ass of the eternal soul by encouraging his infatuation with this temporary world.” King Kulaśekhara also mentions in *Mukunda-māla-stotra*(21), “Without remembrance of His (Lord’s) lotus feet, recitation of scripture is merely crying in the wilderness.” By reading Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books, one is always reminded of Lord Kṛṣṇa in the right mood.

Thus, we can understand that regular reading of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books is absolutely essential for our survival and flourishing in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. ❁

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LIVE-IN RELATIONSHIPS

AND RĀDHĀ KṚṢṆA

by Śyāmānanda Dāsa

Citing Vedic mythology as one of their references, a three-member bench of the Supreme Court of India has approved couples to continue as live-in partners. The Honorable justices have taken support of *Vedas* but have still called them mythology. We feel that grave errors have been committed in coming to this conclusion.

Firstly, why call the *Vedas* ‘mythology’?

The *Vedas* themselves claim to be history rather than mythology, and through several lineages of teachers and disciples, we can know the character and motives of the writers and compilers. Stalwart Vedic authorities like Adi Śankarācārya, Rāmānujācārya, Madhvācārya, Nimbārkācārya, Viṣṇuswami, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Tukārāma and a host of others have guided India’s spiritual life. None of these authorities have ever called the *Vedas* as “mythology” nor have they twisted meanings out of them. These personalities actually practiced what they later preached.

The fundamental principle involved in understanding the *Vedas* is to approach this subject

with the help of *sādhu* (saintly persons), *śāstra* (Vedic literature and literature written in pursuance of them) and *guru* (one’s spiritual teacher). It must be noted that not a single scholar worth his salt, who has followed the prescribed model of gaining knowledge has ever denigrated the *Vedas* as mythology. It is only seen in those individuals who have tried to gain mastery over the *Vedas* with their own efforts and without surrendering to a bona fide guru. Even in the mundane, temporary sphere of law and medicine one cannot be qualified if he does not agree to be educated by a lawyer or a doctor. That people can claim to understand spiritual topics without a guru or acharya is absurd to the highest degree.

Now we shall deal with the subject of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa living together without marriage. Who is Kṛṣṇa? And who is Rādhā? In the *Bhagavad-gītā* Arjuna said: You are the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the ultimate abode, the purest, the Absolute Truth. You are the eternal, transcendental, original person, the unborn, the greatest. All the great sages such as Nārada, Asita, Devala, and Vyāsa confirm this truth about You, and

now You Yourself are declaring it to me. O Kṛṣṇa, I totally accept as truth all that You have told me. Neither the demigods nor the demons, O Lord, can understand Your personality.” In order to understand Kṛṣṇa properly one has to thoroughly study the *Bhagavad-gītā* under the guidance of a bona fide spiritual master. This is also stressed in the *Gītā* by Kṛṣṇa - “Just try to learn the truth by approaching a spiritual master. Inquire from him submissively and render service unto him. The self-realized souls can impart knowledge unto you because they have seen the truth.”

Rādhā’s personality is not even mentioned in the *Gītā* because understanding Kṛṣṇa’s loving dealings is a subject for the advanced student of *Vedas*. It is not a strange coincidence that highly renounced sages, who have completely rejected mundane sex-life are the fit candidates to relish Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa *līlā*. ❀

Śyāmānanda Dāsa serves as the editor for English and Marathi editions of *Back to Godhead* magazine.

In your own words ...



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

THE HAPPINESS OF a devotee is the most unbelievable but true thing in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Even after becoming a devotee, the inflow of miseries doesn't stop. Unlike materialistic people, a devotee realizes at every step in life that the material world is a place of suffering. Still he is the happiest person in the creation. Isn't that unbelievable? This is possible only by Kṛṣṇa's grace, association of devotees and the incredible philosophy. A devotee understands the basic facts about life, and their connection with Kṛṣṇa. This helps him to remain stable even in testing circumstances. In fact, material miseries increase the happiness of devotees, making them ecstatic looking at the way Kṛṣṇa handles their respective situations. This is the magic of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, which should actually serve as the best preaching tool for devotees worldwide.

Rahul Danait, Mira Road

THE MOST UNBELIEVABLE but true thing in Kṛṣṇa consciousness is mercy.

Mercy in the form of association—*lava-mātra sādhu-saṅge sarva-siddhi haya*: “Even with a moment's association of a pure devotee, one can attain all success.” The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* glorifies the power of association. By the association of Nārada Muni, many personalities like Vyāsadeva, Dhruva, Prahlāda, and Mṛgāri attained success.

Mercy in the form of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books which are con-

sidered as law books for another 10,000 years. Just by reading his books, the stone-hearted can become soft-hearted and easily accept Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Mercy in the form of *mahā-mantra* has changed thousands of hippies into happies. Just by chanting the *mahā-mantra* offenselessly anyone can go back to godhead.

Mercy in the form of *prasāda* brings several thousands—not only human beings, but even animals into Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Mercy in the form of *arcā-vigraha* of Kṛṣṇa who descended in this world and has been accepting our offerings.

Rasārṇava Govinda Dāsa,
Chennai

JOY IS NOT IN THINGS; it's in us. I experienced this joy inside me like never before after I came in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. This quality of giving unlimited joy is the most amazing thing about Kṛṣṇa consciousness. When I look back I don't see anything thing in my life which was getting older and better. But in Kṛṣṇa consciousness from the first day up until now the pleasure is increasing. The same *kīrtana* makes me feel much more ecstatic every time I listen to it. The same lectures have a different and new meaning upon hearing them again. Kṛṣṇa's pastimes never appear boring or stale. The craze for *prasāda* is still maddening. I don't have the capacity to understand what is it

that makes Kṛṣṇa consciousness ever fresh and joyful but I love this very fact about it. This joy is my hope to stay in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Manish Goel, Mumbai

THE MOST UNBELIEVABLE thing to me is that we can get purified just by a simple act of eating *prasāda*. Kṛṣṇa is so clever that he has made the most basic thing in life into a purifying process.

Parag Baxi, by e-mail

THE MOST UNBELIEVABLE but true thing in Kṛṣṇa consciousness is that the Lord is always present with us during chanting, praying, or remembering. We can immediately feel 'connected'—such an experience is very rare in material relationships. Kṛṣṇa consciousness gives a whole new dimension for communication. If we're in the proper consciousness we can feel that our prayers have been heard, that some form of interaction has taken place. When Śrīla Prabhupāda was leaving the US for the first time after establishing ISKCON, he told his American disciples that when they are chanting and Prabhupāda is chanting, they are both situated at the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa, and are therefore together.

Ankit Verma, Mumbai

For me, it is the concept of 'love in separation.' This concept makes *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism* stand out as the most sublime of all philosophical

ASSAM GOVERNOR LAYS THE FOUNDATION OF ISKCON TEMPLE



Guwahati, Assam: On March 11, 2010, the auspicious day of *Pāpamocanī* (“freedom from sins”) *Ekādaśī*, the Governor of Assam, Shri Janakivallabh Patnaik, laid the foundation of ISKCON’s Jagannatha temple at Jaynagar Charali Beltola. The land was donated to ISKCON by Shantidevi Kamikya Prasad Sharma.

ISKCON SCHOLAR INSPIRES CHANGE IN INDIAN EDUCATION

A recent lecture tour of India by ISKCON scholar Rādhikā Ramaṇa Dāsa (Dr. Ravi Gupta) could have sparked the impetus to introduce religious studies in Indian university level education—something the country has always shied away from—while at the same

time inspiring Indian students to take a deeper look at their ancient spiritual culture.

During the three-week lecture tour—from December 20 through January 14—Rādhikā Ramaṇa visited forty-two educational institutions, governmental organizations and private corporations in nine cities, speaking to over 5,000 people.

But Rādhikā Ramaṇa says that once the tour, organized by ISKCON Chowpatty devotees, was underway, he realized that such inspiration could go as far as sparking a change in the Indian educational system.

“The debate about introducing religious education in schools is going on at all levels, including the University level, in India,” he explains. “Although historically it’s one of the most religiously diverse countries in the world, the fear is that such academic study might compromise India’s secularism.”

RATHA-YĀTRĀS AT ISKCON AHMEDABAD

On March 19 and 20, 2010, ISKCON Ahmedabad organized Ratha-yātrās in different parts of Ahmedabad on both days. Shri Lavleshbhai, a trustee of the Raṅchoḍji temple, along with other temple trustees inaugurated the Ratha procession by sweeping the road in-front of the Ratha, following the ancient tradition at Jagannātha Puri.

ISKCON devotees from Russia, Ukraine and the USA joined with ISKCON devotees from various cities of Gujarat.

Contributed by Bāsu Ghoṣa Dāsa and Madhava Smullen.

truths. The whole material world revolves around the concept of union in a loving relation. Movies are made, songs are composed, dramas are enacted, and novels are written just to portray this union. Perhaps this is one of the main sources of income for the entire film industry. In contrast to this, in *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism* we find that the *gopīs* lived with their beloved Kṛṣṇa for only eleven years and then were

separated from Him for whole lifetime. In this separation their love intensified manifold and they experienced the highest bliss of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. This is called *vipralambha bhāva* i.e. love in separation, the highest and most sublime truth that Lord Caitanya revealed as the ultimate perfection of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Unbelievable.

Sagar Tupe,
Mumbai

IN YOUR OWN WORDS

QUESTION FOR THE FORTHCOMING ISSUES

How do you introduce others to Kṛṣṇa consciousness?

Deadline for submission is May 20

Answers will be published in July

Word limit: 150 words

E-mail: ed.btgindia@pamho.net

Google

(Continued from page 9)

His friends. During the *rāsa-līlā*, every *gopī* thought that Kṛṣṇa has chosen only her exclusively for being His dance-partner. Thus, Kṛṣṇa has this amazing quality of reciprocating with everyone who seeks His shelter. Just to prove this point, He even expands as the Paramātmā in everyone's heart just to give company to the soul. Thus, Kṛṣṇa can be my best friend and your best friend and everyone's best friend at the same time.

Therefore, it's very urgent that we practice spiritual life. It offers us a chance to establish a relationship with God—Kṛṣṇa. Yet, no relationship comes on a plate; it requires hard work. We will have to prioritize things in our lives. We will have to adjust our activities so that everything is arranged to facilitate establishment of our relationship with Kṛṣṇa. We need not fear anything in this quest. One vaiṣṇava poet, King Kulaśekhara mentions, *mābhīr manda-mano vicintya bahudhā yāmīś ciraṁ yātanā/ naivāmī prabhavanti pāpa-ripavaḥ svāmī nanu śrīdharah/ ālasyaṁ vyapanīya bhakti-sulabhaṁ dhyāyasva nārāyaṇaṁ/ lokasya vyasanāpanodana-karo dāsasya kiṁ na kṣamaḥ*. “O foolish mind, stop your fearful fretting about the extensive torments imposed by Yamarāja. How can your enemies, the sinful reactions you have accrued, even touch you? After all, is your master not the Supreme Lord, the husband of Goddess Śrī? Cast aside all hesitation and concentrate your thoughts on Lord Nārāyaṇa, whom one very easily attains through devotional service. What can that dispeller of the whole world's troubles not do for His own servant?”

This verse is addressed to our mind—“why are you so worried?”

Maybe because you have committed sins and are now thinking about the reactions due. But they won't affect you because your master is Śrīdhara. Have you forgotten? Give up your lethargy now and try to serve Him.” We are so active in all activities but lethargic only in spiritual matters. We are looking for a relationship and He is also looking for it. The Lord is described as *bhakta-vatsala* meaning “one who wants to please His devotees.” He will definitely reciprocate and then we will be engaged in a meaningful, ever-lasting, blissful relationship with Him.

Thus, the choice is for us to make. We could vote for Google or

we could vote for Kṛṣṇa. Of course an intelligent person will even utilize Google in Kṛṣṇa's service. Many people in faraway countries sometimes are in dearth of association of Kṛṣṇa's devotees. They may engage Google in serving Kṛṣṇa. In that case, we could even accept praying to Google. 🌐

(Adapted from a class given at ISKCON Chowpatty, Mumbai.)

Rādhikā Ramaṇa Dāsa holds a doctorate from Oxford University and is currently Assistant Professor of Religious Studies in Williamsburg, USA. He serves in the Ministry of Educational Development in ISKCON.

Lack of evidence

(Continued from page 15)

penetrating the heart. His death had certainly been instantaneous and painless. There was no powder marking either upon his dressing gown or on his hands. According to the country surgeon, the lady



had stains upon her face, but none upon her hand.”

“The absence of the latter means nothing, though its presence

may mean everything,” said Holmes. “Unless the powder from a badly fitting cartridge happens to spurt backward, one may fire many shots without leaving a sign. I would suggest that Mr. Cubitt's body may now be removed. I suppose, Doctor, you have not recovered the bullet that wounded the lady?”

“A serious operation will be necessary before that can be done. But there are still four cartridges in the revolver. Two have been fired and two wounds inflicted, so that each bullet can be accounted for.”

“So it would seem,” said Holmes. “Perhaps you can account also for the bullet which has so obviously struck the edge of the window?”

He had turned suddenly, and his long, thin finger was pointing to a hole which had been drilled right through the lower window-sash, about an inch above the bottom.

“By George!” cried the inspector. “How ever did you see that?”

“Because I looked for it.” (From Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Adventure of the Dancing Men*). 🌐

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness
CENTRES IN INDIA

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

Correct
as of
31 March
2010

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VAIṢṆAVA CALENDAR
1 May - 15 June, 2010

10 May: Fasting for Parama Ekādaśī
11 May: Break fast (Mumbai) 06:06 am - 06:40 am
14 May: End of Jala Dāna
16 May: Akṣaya Tṛtiyā. Candana Yātrā starts. (for 21 days)
20 May: Jāhnu Saptami
22 May: Śrīmatī Sitā Devī (consort of Lord Śrī Rama) appearance, Śrī Madhu Paṇḍita disappearance, Śrīmatī Jahnava Devī appearance
24 May: Fasting for Mohinī Ekādaśī
25 May: Break fast (Mumbai) 6:02-8:02 am, Rukmiṇī Dvādaśī
26 May: Śrī Jayānanda Prabhu Disappearance, Nṛsiṃha Caturdaśī: Appearance of Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva (Fasting till dusk)
27 May: Kṛṣṇa Phula Ḍola, Salila Vihāra, Śrī Parameśvarī Dāsa Ṭhākura disappearance, Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Ramaṇa Devajāī appearance, Śrī Mādhavendra Purī appearance, Śrī Śrīnivāsa Ācārya appearance
2 Jun: Śrī Rāmānanda Rāya disappearance
8 Jun: Fasting for Aparā Ekādaśī
9 Jun: Break fast (Mumbai) 06:00 am - 10:25 am, Śrīla Vṛndāvana Dāsa Ṭhākura appearance

MORALITY SACRIFICED AT THE ALTAR OF THIS “GODDESS”

In South India one “goddess” rules over the passionate, lusty hearts of her followers and has given her followers some mantras such as “There are no virgins today, so young men should not harbor false hopes”, “It is alright to have premarital sex as long as it is protected.” Those angered by these extremely prejudiced and ignorant comments had protested that “there should be some morality in the comments made by people of prominence.” However, even this observation on part of lawyers protesting the statements angered one of the Supreme Court’s Honorable justices. When the justice was told that this actress has a temple in her honor, he shot back: “And this is how you revere your goddess by dragging her to court?”

The average Indian today is in the grip of these guttersnipe personalities who have absolutely no understanding as to what constitutes culture or dignity. In the name of freedom of expression they spout any nonsense which ultimately supports the old saying, “The only bad publicity is no publicity.”

This “goddess” making comments about pre-marital sex and non-availability of virgin brides is a classic case of the cheaters and the cheated. The public want to get cheated and such cheating “goddesses” are made available to fulfill their desires. According to folklore some people would send their young daughters to seek out renunciates performing meditation in a holy place in order to serve them. They secretly hoped that if one of the sadhus gets attracted to his daughter then she would obtain good progeny. Knowing this, many rogues would don the robes of a renunciate and wait for the “service” rendered by these young girls. Thus both would end up getting cheated. Here the public want to adore their stars for their so-called talents and thus entertain them. However most of today’s stars have scant regard for India’s culture. Drunk with success and using their fame-addled brains to comment of society’s issues only worsens the situation.

We really need to give a serious look at the wisdom left behind by our sages. Adopting Western values even when fully knowing that they have caused serious problems in the Western countries is fatal. ❁

-Śyāmānanda Dāsa