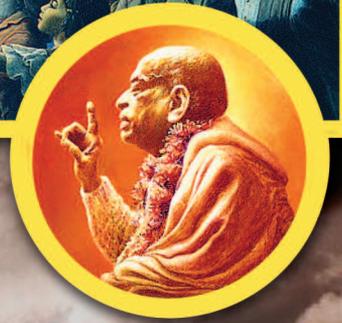


Godhead is light. Nescience is darkness. Where there is Godhead there is no nescience



The Magazine of the  
Hare Krishna Movement

August 2010



# Let There Be Calamities



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Founded 1944. Vol. 7 No. 8 August 2010

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*Instead of trying to be master  
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better if one simply keeps the  
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—Śrīla Prabhupāda  
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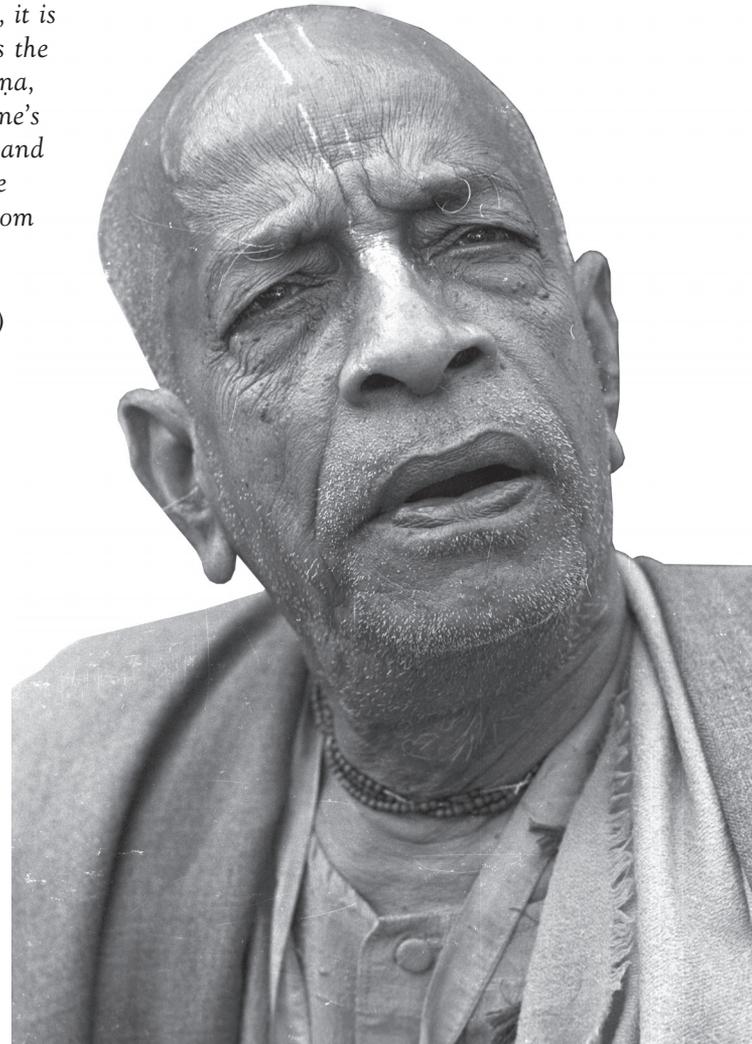
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*A Serial Child-killer  
Meets Her Nemesis.*

Cover  
Photo by  
Umesh  
Chirmure



### 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. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

BTG INDIA: **EDITOR** Śyamānanda Dāsa  
• **ASSISTANTS** Nimāi Devī Dāsī, Murāri Gupta Dāsa, Nanda Dulāl Dāsa, Mukunda Mālā Dāsa • **EDITORIAL CONSULTANT** Caitanya Carāṇa Dāsa • **PROOFREADER** Rādhā Rasikrāja Dāsa, Tāriṇī Rādhā Devī Dāsī, Revatī Vallabha Dāsa • **PUBLISHER** Yudhiṣṭhira Dāsa (Ujwal Jajoo)  
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## SENSATIONAL AND UNINTELLECTUAL

While I generally appreciate your endeavors in making *Back to Godhead* a lively and interesting magazine for everyone, I have come across few things, which I wanted to point out for your correction and action.

1. In the article about rebirth (BTG April 2010), the section about the previous lives of Abdul Kalam, Amitabh Bachchan, Rekha, etc is without *pramāṇa*. Although BTG says it does not make any claim of such statements, it is improper to publish something which doesn't have any *pramāṇa*. Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted BTG to be like an authorized scripture and not something that will create some sensation to stupid minds.

If I were an intellectual, neutral reader of BTG, I would simply consider such claims very cheap and the entire magazine would lose its authenticity. The general unintellectual public may become interested in such sensational things, but if we have to feed public sensation through our magazine, then how does ISKCON differ from other so-called spiritual groups who just deal with the sentiments of the people?

2. In "Orkuting with Kṛṣṇa," (BTG April 2010), why should someone write a letter from Kṛṣṇa, as if he were Kṛṣṇa? Although the subject may be valid and based on what Kṛṣṇa says in various places, it is improper to speculate and publish it as a "Letter from Kṛṣṇa."

3. My next strong objection is about "Founder's Views." The word *views* reduces the authentic presentation of Śrīla Prabhupāda into somebody's "views." The messages given are not Śrīla Prabhupāda's views, but his presentation of the authentic message of the *śāstra*. By keep-

ing the word *views*, we are offending the teachings of Śrīla Prabhupāda. *Views* would mean something of a person's opinion, but Śrīla Prabhupāda's points are not his own views but the views of *śāstra* and authentic presentation of the *śāstras*. Whatever we do, let us remember to please Śrīla Prabhupāda, who will not be pleased with presenting his teachings as his views.

I hope that necessary actions will be taken on these points.

—Śrī Giridhārī dāsa,  
via e-mail

OUR REPLY: 1. We cannot have *pratyakṣa-* and *śabda-pramāṇas* for this case. For *anumāna-pramāṇa*, we have quoted the words of an authority in this field. Moreover, the photos speak for themselves.

As per *Bhagavad-gītā* (8.6), "In whatever condition one quits his present body, in his next life he will attain to that state of being without fail." *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (6.1.47) also mentions, "Just as springtime in the present indicates the nature of springtimes in the past and future, so this life of happiness, distress or a mixture of both gives evidence concerning the religious and irreligious activities of one's past and future lives." Śrīla Prabhupāda elaborates in his purport, "As soon as spring arrives, the usual exhibition of various types of fruits and flowers automatically becomes manifest, and therefore we may conclude that spring in the past was adorned with similar fruits and flowers and will be so adorned in the future also."

Based on these two verses, we can infer that material nature offers an opportunity to a spirit soul to continue similar activities in the next life provided he does not degrade himself.

Also, devotees, when presenting Kṛṣṇa consciousness philosophy, often quote non-Vedic references if they conform to scriptures. Even Śrīla Prabhupāda would quote contemporary persons whose opinions matched with the Vedic conclusions. When scientists proposed the theory of matter and anti-matter, Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote an entire series of articles in BTG (Volume 3.15, 20 February 1960), which was later compiled into a book *Easy Journey to Other Planets*. We also follow the same principle.

2. Reply by Yugāvatāra Dāsa, author of “Orkuting with Kṛṣṇa”: It is true that we cannot write on behalf of Kṛṣṇa. But if you read the lines carefully it is written, “Here is the reply we are waiting for.” That means that this is a reply I desire that Kṛṣṇa will send me. Also all the lines of that letter were based on our philosophy and there was no deviation.

3. We agree. Your suggestions for a better heading are invited.

### A YOUTH-FRIENDLY MAGAZINE

Thanks to a recent need for extra rest, and the yearning to read something new and light yet Kṛṣṇa conscious, I finally got to read recent issues of BTG India cover to cover (whereas earlier I had only glanced at the titles before setting the magazine aside) and I loved every page. I am very happy to see that BTG India is so much more youth-friendly, giving clear answers from the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* to modern day confusions. I have made reading BTG India compulsory for my teenage son and am recommending it to other teenagers too. It seems to be a good stepping-stone to children of devotees who are yet to delve themselves into Prabhupāda’s books and others who are still searching

for spiritual truth.

Personally, I also feel encouraged to contribute articles. BTG India is showing openness to all levels of Kṛṣṇa conscious writers honoring their devotional feelings, services, and aspirations.

Thank you for making BTG India reach the depths of our mind and giving a fearless arena for readers to share the Kṛṣṇa conscious depths of their minds! Hope you maintain it through the years to come.

—Tāriṇī Rādhā Devī Dāsi  
ISKCON Chennai

### WONDERFUL ISSUE

Thank you very much for the wonderful June 2010 issue. The cover story on the farm community in Hungary was fantastic. We just felt that we were actually on that farm. We would like to have more and more such spot-reporting stories.

—Śāntipura Nātha Dāsa,  
via e-mail

### LIVE-IN RELATIONSHIPS EXISTED IN INDIA

In BTG May 2010, there were two articles on live-in relationships. One was by Murāri Gupta Dāsa (“Perks without Liabilities”) and the other was by Śyāmānanda Dāsa (“Live-in relationships and Rādhā Kṛṣṇā”). Both have criticized the Hon’ble Supreme Court for citing Rādhā-Kṛṣṇā relationship to uphold live-in relationship.

In this context, I would like to mention that live-in relationship existed among Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas (i.e. the Vaiṣṇavas of Bengal) for many centuries. This was called *saṁyogī upāsana*. I quote one incident narrated in the book *Shri Shri Sadguru Sanga* written by Shri Kuladananda Brahmachari about his guru Shri Bijoy Krishna

Goswami. In part two of this book, one day a young Bengali *brāhmaṇa* widow comes to Bijoy Krishna Goswami and complains that the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas of Vṛndāvana are harassing her because she is not agreeing to have *saṁyogī upāsana* (or live-in relationship) with them. She wants to know whether Mahāprabhu had prescribed such *upāsana*. Shri Bijoy Krishna Goswami tells her that Mahāprabhu had never prescribed such *upāsana*. In fact, Mahāprabhu had never said anything contrary to *śāstra*. He advises her to shun the company of such Vaiṣṇavas.

In Bengali society, Vaiṣṇavas were looked down upon because of their sexual promiscuity and live-in relationships. The Brahma Samaj had come down heavily on the Vaiṣṇavas because of this. In those days, a person putting the Vaiṣṇava *tilaka* was looked down upon as a man of bad character. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura started the reform movement among Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, which was further strengthened by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura.

So, the statement in your articles that live-in relationship is a product of western culture is not true. It existed in India long before it existed in Europe or America.

—Debi Prasad Bhattacharya,  
Mangalore

OUR REPLY: First let us understand why Vaiṣṇavism was condemned as encouraging promiscuity. After the disappearance of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, many deviant sects sprang up. We should be very careful not to be fooled by them. Śrīla Prabhupāda explains in a lecture: “In Caitanya (please turn to page 29)

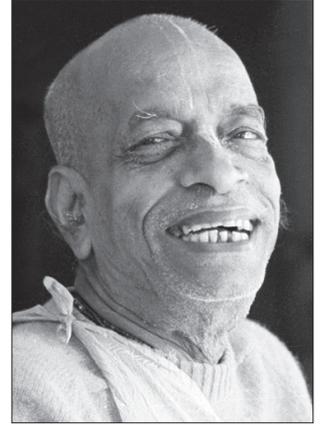
# Mystic Powers

*Supernatural powers are real, but not the highest.*

by His Divine Grace

**A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda**

Founder-Ācārya of The International Society for Krishna Consciousness.



## ELEVATED BEINGS HAVE MYSTIC POWERS

Those who are spiritually advanced by yogic mystic power, they can move anywhere they like. *Aṇimā*, *laghimā siddhi*. There are still yogis in India who early in the morning take bath in four *dhāmas*: Hardwar, Jagannātha Purī,



*The residents of higher planets display all kinds of mystic skills.*

Rāmeśvaram, and Dvārakā—*sarva-gataḥ*. They'll sit down in one place and by yogic process within a few minutes will get up and dip in here, in this water.

—Lecture on *Bhagavad-gītā* (2.1),  
6 December 1972, Ahmedabad

The inhabitants of higher planets are empowered with eightfold achievements of mystic perfection. They do not have to learn and practice the mystic processes of yoga perfection and achieve the power of becoming small like a particle (*aṇimā-siddhi*), or lighter than a soft feather (*laghimā-siddhi*). They do not have to get anything and everything from anywhere and everywhere (*prāpti-siddhi*), to become heavier than the heaviest (*mahimā-siddhi*), to act freely even to create

something wonderful or to annihilate anything at will (*īśitva-siddhi*), to control all material elements (*vaśitva-siddhi*), to possess such power as will never be frustrated in any desire (*prākāmya-siddhi*), or to assume any shape or form one may even whimsically desire (*kāmāvasāyitā-siddhi*).

—*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (2.2.22), purport

## WORTHLESS MYSTICISM

**Bhakta Gene:** I think that so many people have been playing with the term *mysticism*, particularly here in the United States.

**Prabhupāda:** So many people, we have nothing to do with these people. If you are actually servant of God, so God is there, you are servant. So your transaction is there. Just to carry out the orders of God, that's all. Why do you want mysticism? Just to show some jugglery to the people? You serve God. That's all. And it is a very simple thing what God orders. *Man-manā bhava mad-bhakto mad-yājī māṁ namaskuru* [Bg. 18.65]. Where is the question of mysticism? There is no question of mysticism. God says, "Just always think of Me. Offer your obeisances and worship Me." That's all. Where is the need of mysticism? It is all jugglery.

The problem is that we are suffering in this material world life after life, and our aim is how to again go back to home, back to Godhead. That they do not know. They are showing some mysticism. Stop death. Then I shall see your mysticism. What is this nonsense mysticism? Can you stop death? Is it possible? Then what is the meaning of this mysticism? All bogus.

—*Morning Walk*, 17 June 1976, Toronto

A yogī indulging in sex and intoxication is a mockery. Even those yogīs who are attracted by the *siddhis* in the process of yoga are not perfectly situated. If yogīs are attracted by the by-products of yoga, then they cannot attain the stage of perfection, as is stated in this verse. Persons, therefore, indulging in the make-show practice of gymnastic feats or *siddhis* should know that the aim of yoga is lot in that way.

—*Bhagavad-gītā* (6.20-23), purport

### MYSTIC YOGIS ARE NOT GOD

After mystic power, a yogī also wants to show magic: “I shall make like this and gold will be there. People will worship me as I am God.” People do that. If you play something wonderful they will accept you: “Oh, you are God.” But he does not know that he cannot become God.

The modern fashion is that they want to become God by meditation, by advancement of mystic power. But Kṛṣṇa is not that kind of God. Kṛṣṇa does not become God; He’s God always. Others, they try to become God by mystic power. We have heard so many so-called Gods, that “He attained such perfection of mystic power. Now he has become God.” That is also another *māyā*. Nobody can become God.

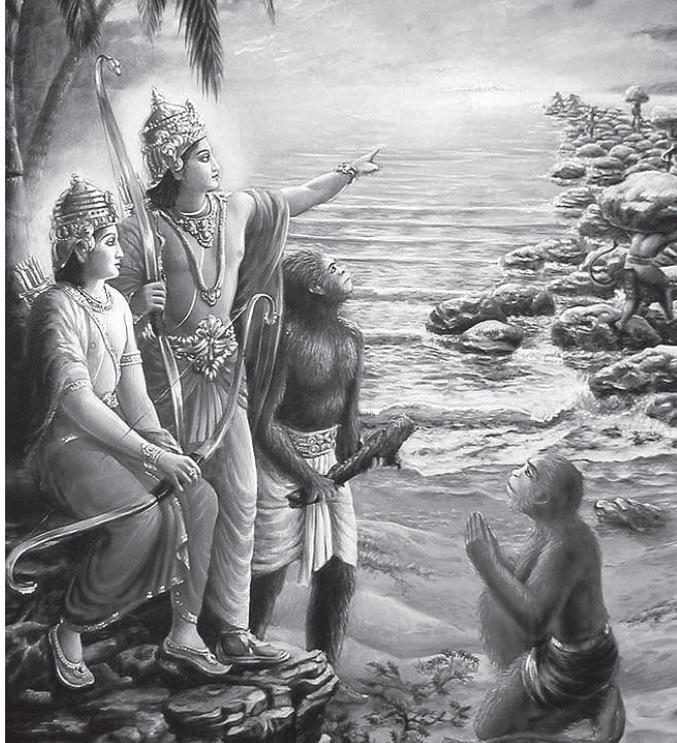
—*Lecture on Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.2.34),  
November 13, 1972, Vṛndāvana

### SUPREME MYSTIC POWER

We must see the inconceivable mystic power. Just like Kṛṣṇa, as a child, lifted a hill. This is inconceivable mystic power. Rāmacandra, He constructed a bridge of stone without pillars. The stone began to float. So that is an inconceivable power. And because you cannot adjust this inconceivable power, when they are described, you say, “Oh, these are all stories, mythology. . .” There was forest fire. All the friends and cowherd boys, they became disturbed. They began to look towards Kṛṣṇa: “Kṛṣṇa, what to do?” “All right.” He simply swallowed up the whole fire. This is inconceivable mystic power. That is God.

—*Morning Walk at Cheviot Hills Golf Course*,  
May 17, 1973, Los Angeles

In *Bhagavad-gītā* (18.78) it is said wherever there is the master of all mystic powers (*yatra yogeśvaraḥ kṛṣṇaḥ*), victory, fortune and all other opulences are present. Devotional service is so powerful. When a devotee achieves what he wants to accomplish, it is not by his own mystic power but by the grace of the



Lord Rāma exhibited His mystic power  
by floating stones on water.

master of mystic power. Lord Kṛṣṇa: by His grace, a devotee can accomplish wonderful things unimaginable even to the most powerful scientist.

—*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (5.1.30)



Lord Kṛṣṇa swallowed the forest fire by His mystic power.

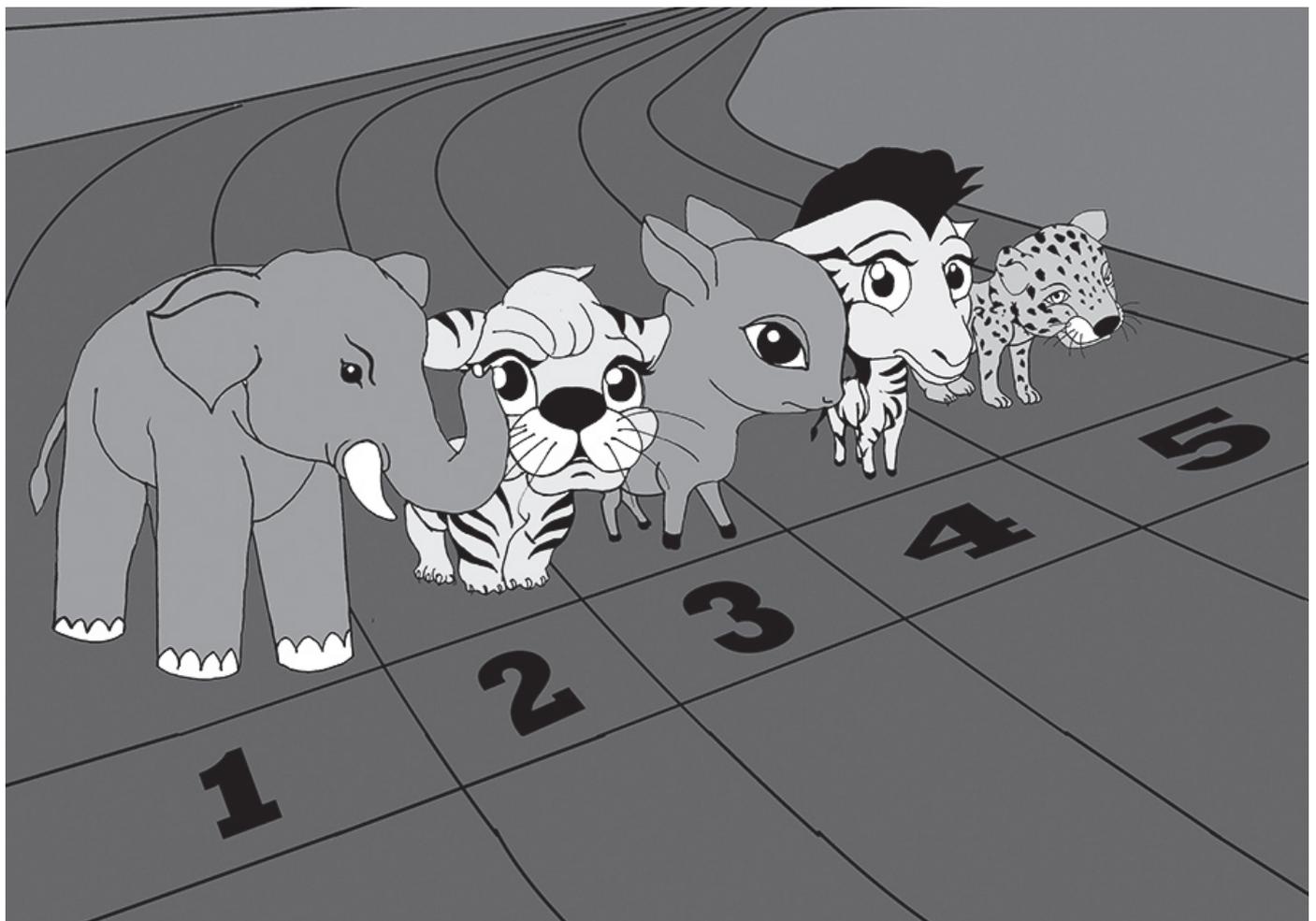
Just as the living body of a man produces many chemicals, the supreme life (the Supreme Lord) is producing all the chemicals found in the atmosphere, in the water, in humans, in animals and in the earth. And that is called mystic power. Unless the mystic power of the Lord is accepted, there is no solution to the problem of the origin of life.

—*Science of Self-realization*  
(please turn to page 27)

# An Elephant in a Race

*A fable reveals a lot  
about raising kids to  
their natural potential.*

by Deepak Bharwani



Art by [www.iskcondesiretree.info](http://www.iskcondesiretree.info)

Oh, you are looking so cute,” said Mama Elephant to Baby Elephant as the elephant family walked into the stadium for the annual athletics meet. The stands were soon filling up with parents, some anxious and some excited.

“Son, cheer up,” said Papa Elephant to Jumbo. “You will do well. I am sure you will.” Jumbo did not reply. Dragging his feet, he walked towards the start line of the 100-meter dash.

In the lineup were Baby Cheetah, Baby Zebra, Baby Deer, Baby Tiger, and Baby Elephant.

“On your marks... get, set, go!” Zoom! Everybody sped. The spectators were on their feet cheering loudly and clapping. Baby Cheetah flew past everybody and won the race. Jumbo did not complete the race as he fell down trying to run very fast.

Papa and Mama Elephant ran to the tracks to help Baby Jumbo get up. With tears in his eyes, Jumbo cried out to his parents, “I told you Papa, I do not want to run this race.”

### THE RACE OF LIFE

Does your child feel like Baby Jumbo in the race of life, trying to compete with the leopards, cheetahs, and tigers and always struggling to win and complete the race?

“Yes. But in this rat race what are the options?” you may exclaim.

We go back to Papa Elephant. He tried some options and next year Baby Elephant won three gold medals and the Promising Athlete of the Year award.

How did this happen?

Firstly, Papa gave up his expectation of his son winning the 100-meter race. He started observing what made Jumbo happy; he started seeing Jumbo from Jumbo's eyes and heart and not from his.

He saw his son as somebody unique who was born to win. He observed that Jumbo enjoyed picking and throwing heavy things around with great ease. He got him some heavy weights to carry and Jumbo did that with great ease.

He took him for wrestling matches and Papa saw a shine in Jumbo's eyes. The other day Baby Cheetah came home to spend the day and Jumbo invited him to a wrestling match. In no time, Baby Cheetah was licking the dust on the floor. Proud Papa and Mama Elephants were all praises for their son.

Jumbo grew in confidence and enrolled for coaching in wrestling. He would wake up early in the morning, excited to go and wrestle with his friends. He would spend hours practicing and discussing wrestling. He started beating everybody around him...one could see the bounce in Jumbo's walk and talk.

The next year, he swept three gold medals in wrestling, weight-lifting, and shot-put and got the Promising Athlete of the Year award.

### A BABY ELEPHANT AT HOME

Although this is an imaginary story, it is real for many children who are living the aspirations of their parents, trying to run the 100-meter race while they are not cut out for it.

I am sure you want your child to be confident and happy like Jumbo and this is how you can do it.

● *A gardener, before deciding on cultivating the seed, understands the characteristics of the seed.*

Parents are like gardeners who need to invest time in observing their child: what makes the child happy, what comes naturally to the child. Some children take to numbers very easily while some are easy with words.

● *A gardener does not modify the seed; he accepts the seed as it is.*

Accept your child as somebody unique. Appreciate their strengths and tolerate their limitations with grace.

● *A gardener nurtures the seed with the right amount of water and earth.*

Provide the right kind of support to help the talent in your child become a strength. You could enroll them to learn a musical instrument if they like or join abacus if they are number-oriented. Teach them subjects in the way they understand better. If they are visually intelligent use a lot of pictures, doodles and cartooning to explain theories.

● *A gardener regularly checks how the plant is doing by observing the plant.*

As parents we need to observe how our children are doing. Listen to the child with your eyes and ears, connect with their feelings and you will understand their pain and challenges. This will help your child overcome his disappointments and also find a friend in you.

The supreme gardener God provides air and sunshine to all the plants irrespective of who they are. Similarly we need to provide unconditional love to our children irrespective of their achievements. This helps children deal with rejections and failures as they know someone at home is there to receive them unconditionally.

Finally, whatever they achieve, if you appreciate them for their efforts and also for the results, you will find your daffodils and lilies dancing and singing happily in the garden of life.☀

*Deepak Bharwani, MBA, is a facilitator with a leadership institute, and is actively involved in running a spiritual school for children.*

COVER STORY

# "Let There



# Be Calamities . . . "

*A devotee happily invites miseries if they help in remembering the Lord.*

by Mukundamālā Dāsa

**M**ost people worship God with a material motive. As Lord Kṛṣṇa explains in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (7.16), such people can broadly be classified into four groups: the distressed, the needy, the inquisitive and those who are searching for knowledge of the Absolute. In most cases, such worshipers stop their worship as soon as their objective is fulfilled. They regard God as someone who can mitigate the miseries of their life and make everything happy and peaceful. Such people can be considered pious because they have chosen to approach God in their hour of difficulty and not someone mundane. Even Lord Kṛṣṇa accepts them as pious (*Bhagavad-gītā* 7.18).

Among all worshipers, Lord Kṛṣṇa singles out the one who is in full knowledge as the best, for he always engages in Kṛṣṇa's pure devotional service with love. A person in full knowledge, knowing Kṛṣṇa to be the cause of all causes, surrenders unto Him. His only purpose is to serve Kṛṣṇa selflessly with love and devotion. Therefore, Kṛṣṇa says of him, "I am very dear to him, and he is dear to Me."

When a devotee has developed

intense love for Kṛṣṇa, he cannot live a second without seeing or serving the Supreme Lord. For such a devotee the pain of separation from Him is too unbearable.

### QUEEN KUNTĪ'S EXEMPLARY DEVOTIONAL SENTIMENTS

One such devotee was Queen Kuntī, the mother of the five Pāṇḍava brothers. The *Mahābhārata* explains how Kuntī underwent great sufferings throughout her life. Before getting married, she gave birth to Karṇa, her first son. However, being a maiden, she rejected him to save herself from social condemnation. Soon after getting married, her husband Pāṇḍu died, and Kuntī raised her five children alone. Although entrusted under the care of King Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Pāṇḍu's elder brother, Duryodhana and the other sons of the King mistreated her five sons and even attempted to kill them by several means. When Duryodhana plotted to kill them in the house of shellac at Vāraṇāvata, Kuntī and her five sons secretly escaped from the house and hid in the forest without being noticed by anyone. When Duryodhana ar-

ranged a gambling match to rob the Pāṇḍavas of all their wealth and possessions, the Pāṇḍavas being *kṣatriyas* could not refuse. The match was rigged; the five brothers lost everything and were banished to the forest for a thirteen-year exile. During this period, Kuntī stayed back in the palace and spent all these years without her dear sons. Finally, in the Battle of Kurukṣetra, even though the Pāṇḍavas emerged victorious, Kuntī bore the loss of many of her grandsons and other relatives and well-wishers.

Despite all these reversals in her life, Kuntī maintained her faith and devotion to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. In the midst of all these troubles, she continued to seek Kṛṣṇa's shelter. She never prayed to Kṛṣṇa for a peaceful life or restoration of the kingdom to her sons. She never complained to Kṛṣṇa as to why He was allowing her family to undergo such suffering even though He was personally present. In fact, after the battle, when her sons regained their lost kingdom, she prayed to Kṛṣṇa for more calamities in her life. This is how she prayed:

*vipadaḥ santu tāḥ śaśvat  
tatra tatra jagad-guro  
bhavato darśanam yat syād  
apunar bhava-darśanam*

“I wish that all those calamities would happen again and again so that we could see You again and again, for seeing You means that we will no longer see repeated births and deaths.” (Bhāg. 1.8.25)

### DIFFICULT SITUATIONS STIMULATE MORE LOVE

Love in this world manifests in various ways between two individuals. Generally, the lover and the beloved like to spend all their time together without any hindrance. When some external calamity threatens to break that love, however, then this love intensifies greatly. That is the nature of love. When one of them goes through a difficult situation, the other sacrifices his or her comforts and goes to great extents to help the other person. Thus, difficulties and calamities in life deepen the love between two individuals. The bond between them strengthens, and their relationship becomes more sweet and dynamic.

The perfection of loving relationships lies in one’s original relationship with Kṛṣṇa. In relation to Kṛṣṇa, a devotee experiences similar kind of love dynamics. Although he would always like to serve Kṛṣṇa directly,

Kṛṣṇa, in order to increase the devotee’s love for Him, puts him in a difficult situation. He generally does this by personally taking charge of the devotee’s karmic backlog and adjusting it in a way that will bring the devotee closer to Him. In exceptional cases, like in the case of pure liberated devotees, who have no karmic backlog accompanying them, Kṛṣṇa deliberately puts them in the midst of great calamities so that by their exemplary faithful response in such situations, those less accomplished on the spiritual path can learn how to face adversities with dignity and integrity. When the devotee thus

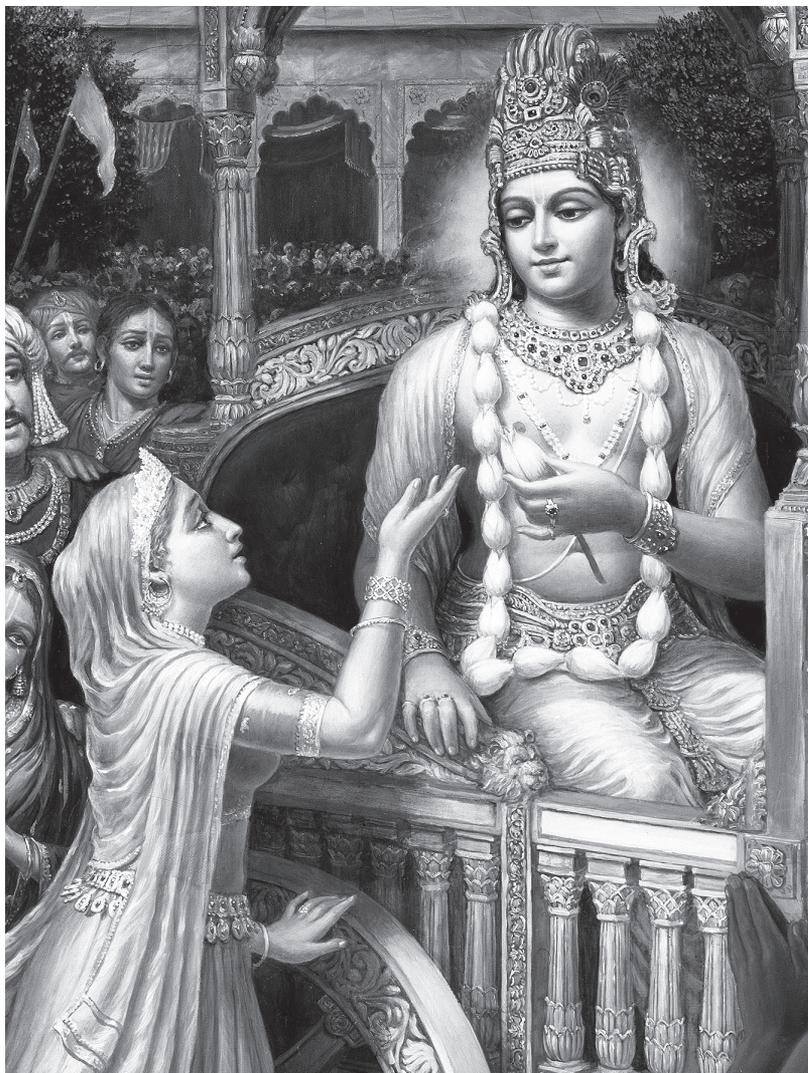
feels helpless, he completely surrenders to Kṛṣṇa knowing well that the Lord will always protect him. When he experiences the Lord’s loving reciprocation in such situations, his love for Kṛṣṇa increases many times. He realizes that all those difficulties were, in fact, great blessings because in all those situations the Lord was always with him, protecting him at every moment.

### PAIN OF CALAMITY IS INSIGNIFICANT

Compared to the pain of separation from the Lord, a devotee considers the pain of calamity insignificant. If in calamities he can

perceive the Lord’s loving embrace, the devotee will prefer to undergo all kinds of miserable situations. He understands that the Lord is his loving father who will never fail to protect him. He accepts all situations in life, gratefully considering them Kṛṣṇa’s arrangement for his purification.

Kuntī recalled the various miseries Duryodhana had inflicted upon her and her sons. When Draupadī was being disrobed in front of the Kuru assembly, Kṛṣṇa miraculously saved her from humiliation by supplying her unlimited sari. During their exile in forest, when



Queen Kuntī praying to Kṛṣṇa

Durvāsā Muni and his disciples came to their place upon Duryodhana's request, Kṛṣṇa, by His mystic potency, saved the Pāṇḍavas from the Muni's wrath. In the Battle of Kurukṣetra, Kṛṣṇa became Arjuna's charioteer and guided him in overcoming all the mighty Kuru warriors like Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Karṇa and Jayadratha. And when Aśvatthāmā released the *brahmāstra* to kill the unborn child within Uttarā's womb, Kṛṣṇa covered the womb by His personal energy and protected the child.

While remembering these events, Kuntī realized that without Kṛṣṇa's presence, there was no way they could have overcome these dangers. When Kṛṣṇa was leaving for Dvārakā after installing Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira as the world emperor, Kuntī submitted the above prayer before Him because she feared that now that they were comfortable in royal position, she might forget Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, she prayed to Kṛṣṇa for more sufferings, which means she will continue to remember Him and never forget Him.

### KṚṢṆA'S PROTECTION IN CALAMITIES

In the case of Kuntī and the Pāṇḍavas, Kṛṣṇa saved them in extraordinary ways, using His mystic powers. Every time their lives were in danger, Kṛṣṇa protected them from death. Many such stories are described in scriptures where devotees have felt Kṛṣṇa's protection in times of crisis. Devotees in recent times, too, have perceived Kṛṣṇa's inconceivable protection in dangerous situations.

In most cases, however, Kṛṣṇa's protection may not come in the form of protection from death. A practicing devotee must firmly understand that the body is temporary

and destined to perish. As spirit souls, we are separate from the body, so we should not always expect that Kṛṣṇa would protect us from death. Real protection is protection of our consciousness—our devotional faith and remembrance of Kṛṣṇa. By Kṛṣṇa's mercy, a devotee gets a favorable environment and several opportunities to continue his devotional service in his next life.

The greatest fear of a devotee is forgetfulness of Kṛṣṇa, which means continuing in the cycle of birth and death in ignorance. A devotee does not mind going to hell if he can serve Kṛṣṇa there, but he will reject a life devoid of ser-

shown us the standard of ideal prayer. He says, *na dhanam na janam na sundarim kavitam va jagad-isa kamaye/ mama janmani janmaniśvare bhavatād bhaktir ahaitukī tvayi*: "O Almighty Lord, I have no desire to accumulate wealth, nor to enjoy beautiful women. Nor do I want any number of followers. I only want Your causeless devotional service, birth after birth."

Asking for material benefits, which are temporary and illusory, should be given up. Of course, one may sometimes pray for those material facilities that help in increasing one's devotional service to the Lord, but even such prayers should

**The greatest fear of a devotee is forgetfulness of Kṛṣṇa, which means continuing in the cycle of birth and death in ignorance.**

vice to Kṛṣṇa even if he is offered the greatest heavenly delights. As Lord Śiva advised Pārvatī in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (6.17.28), *nārāyaṇa-parāḥ sarve na kutaścana bibhyati/ svargāpavarga-narakeṣv api tulyārtha-darśinaḥ*: "Devotees solely engaged in the devotional service of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Nārāyaṇa, never fear any condition of life. For them the heavenly planets, liberation and the hellish planets are all the same, for such devotees are interested only in the service of the Lord."

### AN EXTRAORDINARY PRAYER

Well, not everyone can pray like Kuntī Devī—one needs a lot of courage to pray in this way. From Kuntī's example, however, we can learn how to pray and know the required mood while praying to Kṛṣṇa. Lord Caitanya also has

be accompanied by and subservient to the prayers that intensify one's devotional service, whatever be the circumstances one finds oneself in. Many people who claim to be religious generally pray for their "daily bread" of life's material necessities. Ignorant of a higher objective in life, such people try to fulfill their utopian dreams in this illusory world. Kuntī's prayer, therefore, is far superior to prayers that ordinary conditioned souls offer to God asking for material rewards. Such a prayer transcends all selfish and ulterior desires that usually motivate the practice of religious faiths. ❀

*Mukundamālā Dāsa has a degree in engineering and serves full-time in ISKCON Mumbai. He is a part of the India BTG team and teaches Kṛṣṇa consciousness to students.*

# Artificial Life.

## Why Not Real Life?



*“Scientists create artificial life,” announced the media. Genome pioneer J. Craig Venter claimed, “This is a philosophical advance as much as a technical advance.” Is it?*

by Caitanya Carāṇa Dāsa and Aja Govinda Dāsa

**W**hat is life? With the recent reports from scientists such as Craig Venter about creation of synthetic life, this question becomes all the more important. Let’s investigate biological life from the perspective of biology. About half a century ago, the famous scientist pair, Watson and Crick, discovered the genetic material that is inherited from parent to offspring. That material comprising of genes or biological units of heredity is known as DNA, organized in strands built of chemical bases (bases are just specific molecules). The complete DNA (also known as the genome) is comprised of a few billion chemical bases paired together into a double helix. The sequences of the chemical bases are templates for proteins (chemical



compounds used by living cells), which are built by “gene expression” machines in the cell that copy the DNA and use the copies to assemble proteins. Each different gene sequence results in a protein with a distinct structure, shape, and consequently distinct function in the cell.

### REDUCTIONISM

The advance in biology has changed the way scientists see life. It has fueled the modern scientists’ perspective into a reductionist one in which living organisms are reduced down to their fundamental building blocks, even beyond the cell, down to the microscopic and nanoscopic scale of genes. However, some biologists took this reductionistic approach one step further. In particular, many scientists including Richard Dawkins promoted genetic determinism, i.e. the theory that genes exclusively determine every aspect of a living organism, its functions, traits, behaviors, etc. In this article we show the faults in the theory of genetic determinism, and how biological life is much more than just genes.

### MULTI-SCALE CAUSALITY

Eminent Oxford biologist Denis Noble, renowned for his contributions to physiology, disagrees with Richard Dawkins about the function of genes. While Dawkins

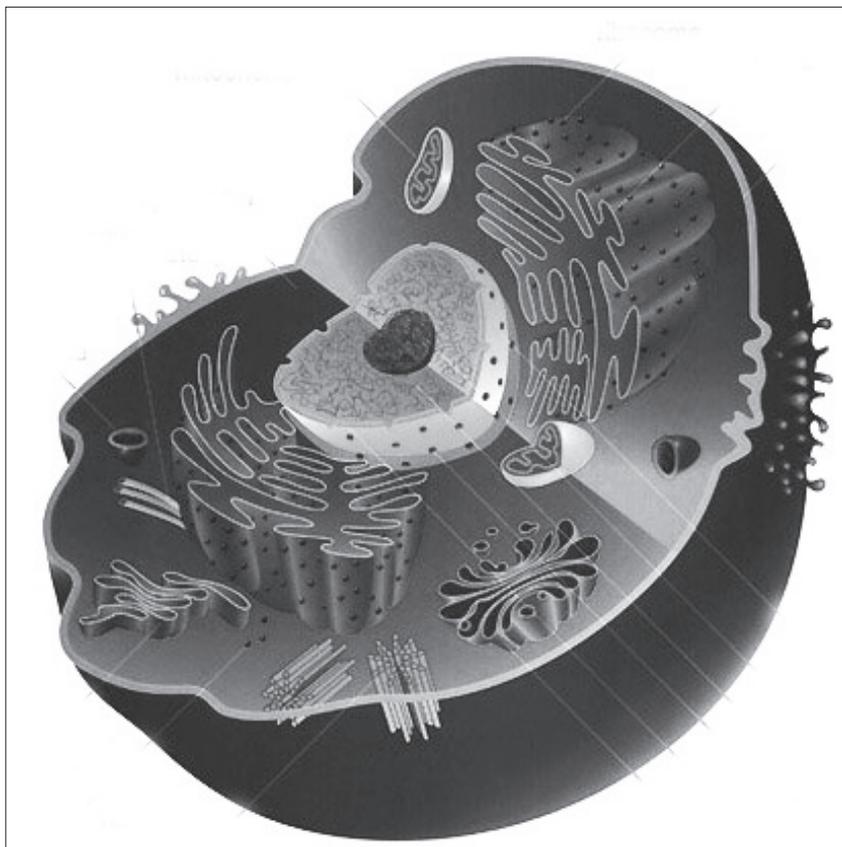
propounded a one-way causality from genes to cellular functions, Noble believes this model is too simplistic. In his work in systems biology, Noble has scientifically demonstrated that biological functions in living organisms are multi-scale in complexity, and the causality is two-way in the sense that cellular mechanisms above the DNA also influence the way genes are interpreted into proteins. In the most simplistic terms, genes are only part of but not completely responsible for all complex biological functions. We have to remember that genes are useless without the gene expression machinery. The cell machinery that decodes the genetic code of the DNA is responsible for the actual building of the protein. Furthermore, the same gene sequence code of the DNA can be

converted to different proteins depending on the particular cell that it is in. So the genes do not control all the functions but are simply templates that are interpreted into differently functioning and distinct proteins depending on the environment and need of the cell.

### THE PROGRAM OF LIFE

Many scientists, such as French Nobel laureates Jacques Monod and Francois Jacob, considered the DNA to be the “program of life” or “the book of life.” Richard Dawkins further reinforced the idea by propounding genes as the principal causal agents of life in his book *The Selfish Gene*. However, Denis Noble disagrees with the causality of genes as primal agents. In his book *The Music of Life*, he asserts that the analogy of DNA as

the “program or blueprint of life” deifies DNA into the superagent behind all biological life. A better analogy according to Noble is that the DNA is more like a database. The distinction between a “database” and a “program” in computer terminology is that the former is organized storage of data and the latter is a list of instructions to be executed. The DNA only contains data, but this data is useless unless it is read by



Both the cell (above) and the DNA (opposite page) are highly complex.

“gene expression” cellular machinery that actually executes the “program of life” of building proteins. To complete the computer analogy then, the cell is a computer, the cell nucleus is the controller (control unit that manages the entire operation of the cell), DNA is the database that contains genetic memory data and program data, protein production is the program (the biological tasks to be completed to build proteins), gene expression mechanism is the processing unit, and proteins are the output.

### MUSIC OF LIFE

To further understand the function of DNA in biological life, Denis Noble gives the following analogy: Let us say, a person relaxes at home by playing a music CD. Upon hearing the music, tears flow from the person’s eyes. Imagine aliens observing this scene. The

was playing. In their empirical scientific method, they reason that the music and subsequent tears were caused by the digital information encoded in the CD track being played. Whereas the aliens consider that the music and emotion must be caused by the digital information, we understand that the aliens are jumping to conclusions. The emotion could have been triggered by one or several factors including the context and memories attached to the melody, song, players, etc. The CD track is only one way of representing or encoding the music, among many forms of media. The music does not originate from the CD but from the musician who recorded it onto the CD. The music is independent of the CD, which is only a medium that allows the music to be stored and played. French philosopher Andre Pichot considers the DNA-mania of modern geneticists to be similar to the aliens’

is thus not life and is also not the absolute cause of life, just as the CD music track is neither the music nor is it the primal cause of the music. Life is thus like music, both of which cannot be reduced down to digital or biological codes. DNA or the genome is like a CD track—the CD track stores digital data for creating sounds and DNA stores biological data for creating proteins. The music and life do not originate from and are not caused by the CD or the DNA, which are just temporary media for data storage. As the CD is useless without the CD player, the DNA is useless without the gene expression cellular machinery that copies and converts the gene code into proteins.

### SYNTHETIC LIFE

Having understood the function of DNA as only a genetic database, we can realize the over-exaggeration of scientists’ claims to have created synthetic life in the laboratory. Craig Venter and his team only synthesized a DNA strand—they recreated a modified genetic database of a simple bacterial cell. Their replacing the original DNA genetic database in the bacterial cell with a synthetic genetic database does not imply that they have created biological life artificially. They have only replaced one component, the database component, of the complete biological living system.

Caltech biologist and Nobel laureate, David Baltimore, cautioned that Venter has “overplayed the importance” of his



*The CD track stores digital data for creating sounds and DNA stores biological data for creating proteins.*

alien scientists in studying the cause for the tears trace it back to the speaker system, to the CD player, to the CD, to the particular track that

hasty reasoning. Just as the CD is only a medium for storing music, DNA is only a medium for storing and recreating biological life. DNA

results: he “has not created life, only mimicked it.” To summarize, Venter’s research:

1. Determined the sequence of the DNA in one of the world’s simplest bacteria,
2. Synthesized a copy of that DNA from components sold by a biological supply company,
3. Replaced the natural DNA in a living bacterial cell with this synthetic DNA.

Now we need to remember that DNA is not life. It is simply a sequence of biological codes storing the instructions for building proteins. As Oxford biologist Richard Dawkins noted, “The machine code of the genes is uncannily computer-like.” So, speaking analogically, the complete computer has certainly not been created, as the headlines misleadingly depict. All that has been done is comparable to a chip with new data and programs being replaced within a pre-existing computer. Contradicting the media hype, Boston University bioengineer James Collins admitted the scientific reality that “Scientists don’t know enough about biology to create life.”

### LIFE BEYOND BIOLOGY

Up to this point, the life that was being discussed was biological life, i.e., life existing in biological organisms. According to the Vedic understanding, just as music is independent of any media but can be stored and played through that media, life is independent of biological machines, cells, bodies, etc., but it manifests in our physical realm in biological media.

The analogy of life as music as proposed by Professor Denis Noble aptly fits the Vedic paradigm when we consider that just as music can only originate from a musician, life

can only originate from a living person. That living person according to the *Vedas* is the pure conscious spirit soul, a spark of consciousness and part and parcel of the Supreme Consciousness or Absolute Truth.

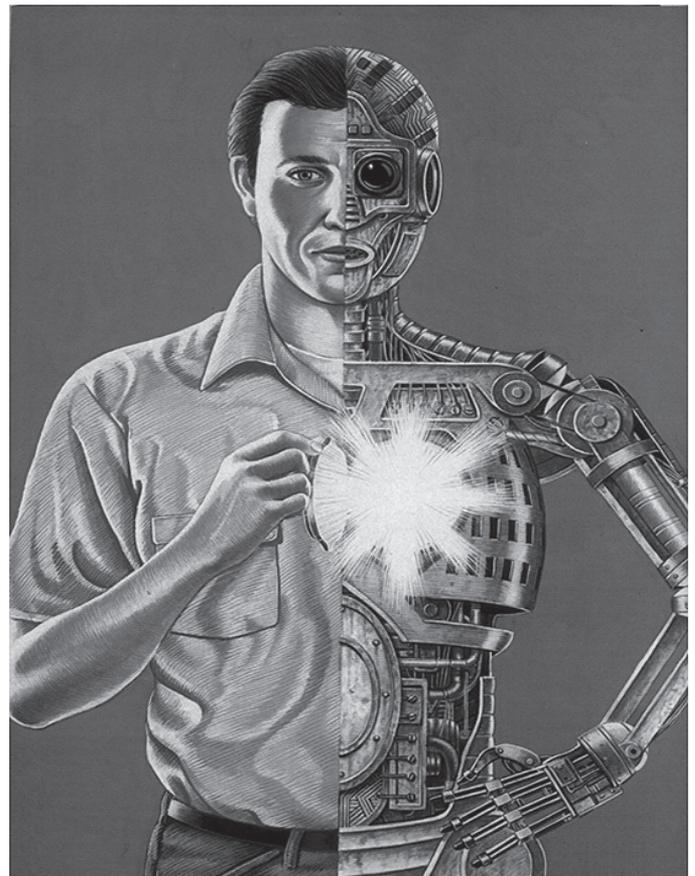
Though life is not caused by the biological or chemical media, it exists in and can exist independent of it as the pure spirit soul. When that spirit soul enters a biological media such as our body, it initiates biological life. Just as the CD and CD player both require a living person to play them, it is only the presence of the living conscious spirit soul that allows the dead inert cellular machinery to read the DNA genetic code to run biochemical processes in the living cells.

### LIVING SPIRIT

What if scientists someday use chemical components to create an entire cell? Would that amount to creating life? No, because that would just be like making the computer, not the person who would use the computer. Although materialistic scientists would have us believe that there is no such “person” and that life is a product of biochemicals, living systems

behave in ways fundamentally and inexplicably different from nonliving objects. Nonliving objects are created, deteriorate over time and eventually meet with destruction. Living systems exhibit three additional features: maintenance, growth, and reproduction. If a living human hand is cut, it can clot and heal itself; if an artificial hand is cut, it cannot. The simplest unicellular organism can grow; the most sophisticated computer cannot. The most primitive living systems can reproduce; even the most advanced robots can’t.

What gives living systems these remarkable properties? The presence of the soul, which the *Bhagavad-gītā* explains is the source of life. The soul is eternal and can never be created. The *Gītā* (2.25)



*The soul gives living systems properties of growth, maintenance and reproduction.*

explains that the soul is “invisible and inconceivable”, implying that its presence cannot be detected by our senses and sense-created instruments. Analogically, the soul is like the computer user distinct from the computer.

The *Gītā* (13.33-34) also points out that the soul remains distinct from the organic system it animates, as does sunlight illuminating the universe or air pervading space. So when a part of the system is changed, the soul remains unchanged. This is like the computer-user remaining unchanged when a program within the computer is changed.

### PLAYING GOD

But the world may not remain

by poverty, hunger and hopelessness, multitudes of them committed suicide. While some may see these as extrinsic and exceptional consequences of GM foods, the health hazards posed by such foods are intrinsic and universal to them. That’s why the European Union has banned the use of GM food.

Genome manipulation of the kind done by Dr. Venter can lead to the development of medicine-resistant variants of disease-producing microbes, which could trigger a pandemic. The genome Dr. Venter synthesized was copied from a natural bacterium that infects goats. Before copying the DNA, he claims to have excised fourteen genes likely to be

within six months.

### REAL LIFE

On a positive note, the “artificial life” news, by bringing to the forefront the age-old question of what life actually is, may prompt some soul-searching—at least figuratively and maybe even literally. Developing the computer analogy further, the late ISKCON scientist Dr. Richard L. Thompson (Sadāpūta Dāsa) in his groundbreaking book *Maya: The World as a Virtual Reality* explains how our entire present existence is like a computer simulation, a virtual reality. As spiritual beings, the material existence that we are currently leading is itself an artificial life. From that perspective, the attempt to create artificial life within an artificial life is little more than an artifice. An alternative to such artifices is the spiritual technology described in the *Gītā*, that enables us to progress from our current artificial life to our real life as eternal beings. If the energy spent on creating artificial life were used to cultivate spiritual knowledge and practice, humanity would make quantum leaps in its understanding of life. The scientific establishment may or may not do this, but each of us individually can. Then we will no longer be taken in by overhyped reports about artificial life, for we would be constantly experiencing and relishing the meaning of real life. ☀

*Caitanya Carāṇa Dāsa has a degree in E&TC Engineering and serves full-time in ISKCON Pune. To read his other articles visit [thespiritualscientist.com](http://thespiritualscientist.com). Aja Govinda Dāsa is a graduate student of biology at the University of Oxford.*

**If the energy spent on creating artificial life were used to cultivate spiritual knowledge, we would make quantum leaps in our understanding of life.**

unchanged by scientists’ attempts to “play God.” While researchers promise beneficial, often sensational, future results, the past track record of such promises shows counterproductive, often devastating, consequences. In the field of genetic engineering itself, genetically-modified (GM) food was advertised as the solution to world hunger, but it ended up causing hunger-deaths of hundreds of farmers in Maharashtra, India. These farmers were captivated by promises of pest-resistant seeds and high yields, but when the pests developed resistance to the seeds, the yields failed utterly. And as the GM seeds are designed to not give seeds for the next sowing, the farmers had no chance of a yield in the next season either. Afflicted

pathogenic, so that the new bacterium, even if it escaped, would be unlikely to cause goats harm. But such measures may not be incorporated in future similar research—either unintentionally or intentionally. Will we then see headlines of artificial deaths in the papers? While some may consider such a scenario unlikely and even unduly pessimistic, it is certainly a possibility. And perhaps contemplation of the worst-case possibility is necessary to prevent it from becoming a reality. A good cautionary step is that the US President acknowledged the development raised “genuine concern” and asked the White House bioethics commission to study the issues raised by synthetic biology and report back to him

Art by Janardhan Salkar



# ARTIFICIAL LIFE GOD

by Śyāmānanda Dāsa

**Tenali:** Gopal, did you know that scientists are claiming that they have made the first artificial living cell?

**Gopal:** What? Is it really possible?

**Tenali:** Craig Venter, the scientist who leads a team for developing synthetic life forms, admitted, “We have not created life. We’ve created the first synthetic cell. We definitely have not created life from scratch because we used a recipient cell to boot up the synthetic chromosome.”

**Gopal:** Explain this to me.

**Tenali:** Well, see if you get this. They synthesized a copy of an extant bacterial genome through known molecular biology techniques, made some changes so that they could identify the synthetic version, and put it inside a bacterium, and were able to show after a few generations that the cells were alive and replicating using solely their synthetic copy as its genome. So basically, they built something that already exists, but from scratch, chemically. In other words they copied an existing

bacterial genome. They sequenced its genetic code and then used synthesis machines to chemically construct a copy. The synthetic DNA was transferred to a host cell. The resulting microbe then looked and behaved like the species “dictated” by the synthetic DNA.

**Gopal:** I think this language is useful only for getting research grants or to confuse simple folks like me.

**Tenali:** Simply put, he took one existing, biologically evolved genome and put it in an empty cell. The achievement is that the cell didn’t die outright.

**Gopal:** This reminds me of a contest between a scientist and God. The scientist was angry that people were giving credit to God for creating life from earth. So he challenged God saying that due to tremendous advancement in science and technology he too can do the same thing. God accepted the challenge. As he picked a handful of mud, however, God stopped him and said, “No, not like that. Make your own mud.” Tenali, please educate me. All my life I

have seen that no one can create life with only matter, and matter cannot create itself. You, Tenali, a living person, can mix hydrogen and oxygen to create water. But matter itself has no creative energy. If you place a bottle of hydrogen near a bottle of oxygen, will they automatically combine without your help?

**Tenali:** Of course not!

**Gopal:** This seems more to me like a man has practiced for ten years to perfectly bark like a dog. And after this arduous struggle people flock to see him at a circus tent and marvel at his talent. All the while millions of dogs are perfectly barking with their God-given talents.

**Tenali:** By the way, to produce this first synthetic cell it took 15 years and cost 40 million dollars. When Craig Venter was asked whether he was playing God, he said, “Someone has to do it.”

**Gopal:** Tenali, why does man have to compete with God instead of co-operating with Him?

**Tenali:** That, Gopal, I really don’t know! ❁

# “Thank God! I am not God!”

*God unable to help himself! A banker realizes the folly of impersonalism.*

by Kalānidhi Dāsa

I came to know about ISKCON as a serious spiritual movement in the year 2002. A senior executive in State Bank of India (SBI), I was posted in Mumbai as a Relationship Manager to high-value corporate clients and had a tight work schedule. I never dreamed that the answers to my innermost quest would be found in this commercial capital, that too very near to my workplace!

Born in a *smārta-brāhmaṇa* family, I had been brought up as a Śiva worshiper. At home we used to worship different demigods such as Ganeśa, Kārtikeya, Sarasvatī, Durgā, etc., and observed various religious festivals with gusto, despite my father’s limited means. Right from my early age, I memorized and recited Sanskrit *ślokas* and mantras with feeling for different gods and goddesses, thanks to my upbringing.



*Kalānidhi Dāsa with his wife, Śyāmā Vallabhī Devī Dās*

But, as I grew up amongst materialistic friends in school, I started developing doubts about these practices and almost became agnostic at college. I picked up habits like meat-eating, smoking intoxicants and regular cinema-going, as well as besides reading popular gossip

magazines.

After graduation, I became a bank officer and became completely materialistic. With growing skepticism about religion, I was shy of even revealing to friends that I visited temples. My religiosity morphed into a vague faith that there is an unchanging unitary reality behind the changing nature and that merging in that formless reality is the goal of existence. This can be done anytime we choose because we are non-different from that truth and there is no urgency. All life is a dream

and there are no serious consequences to our actions. There is no God as such and hence the work of self-realization can be done by our own efforts at a time of our choosing. I also concluded that all religions exploited our gullibility. My vices continued to grow. I took

pride in them and believed they brought me closer to friends. Guilt and shame, I thought, are a sign of immaturity, and real advancement in life comes from overcoming these limitations.

But my philosophy, which found an echo in most modern thinkers, left me all alone to achieve the great leap from material consciousness to spiritual consciousness and I found myself ill equipped to do so.

However, incongruently, I continued vainly chasing after God with no clear conception of what I wanted. In 1984, while working in London, a friend introduced me to some occult books on yoga and I entered a new world of armchair philosophy—reading many books and debating, without any realization or *sādhana*. The books were interesting and I thought they would change my life forever. But except for getting a swollen head by knowing more than others, I made no advancement.

My desire to know more of spirituality was growing and the pain and disappointments from chasing many mirage-like movements was causing great anguish.

My journey can be summarized as follows:

- I ran after many so-called *gurus* and learnt *āsanas*, *prāṇāyāma*, meditations on the formless and nameless.

- I enrolled with great hope in a correspondence course to learn *kriyā-yoga* disciplines and took initiation too, but very soon gave it up as useless.

- I mastered the books of a famous yogī on Māyāvāda philosophy (the philosophy that stresses the impersonal feature of the Absolute Truth and states that the form of even the Supreme Lord is *māyā*) and used to quote them with ease in my speeches. Yet, after several

years of remaining enthralled in the philosophy that “I am God who is thinking of himself as human in illusion,” I finally gave it up as impractical. Despite sitting with closed eyes for days, I could not close the doors on my mind that thwarted me every time. It was frustrating to think that being God myself, I could not help myself, nor could expect anyone (higher than God?) to help me.

- I took *mantra-dīkṣā* from many masters, not even knowing what it meant. Some of these encounters appear bizarre and ludicrous to me now, but not to the tortured and hankering soul that I was earlier.

- I practiced *haṭha-yoga* with many reputed institutions but soon realized that despite their pronouncements, they had nothing to do with spirituality.

- I practiced a *kriyā* for four years, but apart from helping me to develop a healthier body and sharper mind (which it certainly did), it had no impact in my spiritual development; rather it retarded the process by making me more body-centered.

- I also followed some famous *śahaja-mārga* gurus for a while, but interestingly, none of them gave any prescriptions to implement in life, nor elaborated on life’s goals. People simply go to gaze at the face of the guru and listen to lectures and hope that he or she will remove all material and spiritual obstacles. The aspirant has to do nothing, except to keep visiting.

- I devoured many voluminous books containing conversations and talks by famous saints, known for the pithy wisdom replete in them. However, I ended up only being confused as they held no specific guidance on what I should do now. Rather, mostly they justified

doing anything, saying things like *yato mat tato pat*: “What you like is your path.”

My one good fortune, which I realize only now, was that in all my wild goose chasing, I was not seeking *siddhis* or miracles, extraordinary powers or even freedom from suffering. I would soon get fed up with my gurus and move on, without suffering much damage to my psyche or wallet. I guess many of them were not bad people, but in different ways were ignorant and deluded by their ego, senses, desire for prestige, etc.

## IN A DENTIST’S ROOM

As a married man with many responsibilities, my sufferings were compounded, but this only increased my hankering for the Truth, which I knew instinctively would liberate me forever. At this time, a root canal problem drove me to a dentist, Dr. Nitya Kṛṣṇa Dāsa in Sion (a Mumbai suburb). In his clinic, I saw BTG magazines for the first time. Awaiting my turn, I absorbed myself in those issues.

Having read many spiritual books and magazines before in my tortuous search for Truth, I found a unique appeal in these magazines, with contents simultaneously erudite and simple, refreshing in approach and talking directly to my heart. The books spoke from a different plane. The contents were simply a celebration of a spiritual reality and made no effort to talk about material sufferings and their solutions. My soul made an immediate connection. The spiritual aura of the clinic completed the effect.

My follow-up visits strengthened my attraction to the clinic and it was only on my final visit that I asked the good dentist how I could

subscribe to these magazines. He promptly took me in his car to the Rādhā-Gopināth temple on a Sunday afternoon. That evening I joined a *Bhagavad-gītā* course at the temple, taught by Rādhā-Gopinātha Dāsa. I was assailed by my bookish knowledge and Māyāvādī background for a while, but the beauty and perfection of what I was hearing was obvious from the very beginning, and the love and compassion of the presenter along with the nice *prasāda* at the end of each class convinced me very quickly. The concept of a personal God, which I lovingly nourished as a child (though there

practices to rid myself of this illusion, then how could I be God, because God being the supreme controller need not resort to some practices; He could come out anytime. If this illusory existence was my pastime, then why was I suffering in this pastime and why did I want to come out of it? These questions convinced me that God is a person.

During the week, my wife too joined and I don't know how my official duties permitted me to be at the temple on the dot for the whole week. Powerfully symbolic dreams with profound messages kept me in a reverie in daytime as

well. I was so moved that I disposed of our television shortly and completely read the *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* within the same week. My wife and I started chanting 16 rounds shortly thereafter. Implement-

passion and enthusiasm made a significant impact on both of us. Vamśidhara Dāsa and his wife Jahnāprijā Devī spent long hours discussing the practical aspects of Kṛṣṇa consciousness with us, which enhanced our faith and determination. We used to even take our personal problems that had no direct relevance in Kṛṣṇa consciousness to our counselor, from time to time, who mercifully guided us in the right path.

That October, I went on a *yātrā* to Vṛndāvana. The close association of Vaiṣṇavas had a transforming effect. Waking up at 3 am after sleeping four hours every day, taking a cold water bath, walking in the dark, barefoot, pricked by small sharp stones, to *maṅgala-āratī* at Śrīla Prabhupāda Samādhī were not austerities but ecstatic experiences.

#### MOVING OUT OF MUMBAI

My stay in Mumbai continued until December 2003, when I got a promotion. It was a recognition that I could not relish as it meant leaving Mumbai. Despite being under heavy work and family pressures and tensions during my 18 months in Mumbai, I clearly recollect even today that I was experiencing the greatest happiness of my life throughout that time. By the unending mercy of Vaiṣṇavas, even after leaving Mumbai I remained in the association of devotees, which protected my fledgling creeper of devotion. By the same mercy, now I am back in Mumbai and living close to the temple too.

Having meandered across many spiritual movements trying to satisfy my quest for definitive answers about ultimate reality, I now realize why the pursuits failed me. The mental speculations of armchair philosophers can never satisfy the soul. All questions arise apparently at the



Dr. Nitya Kṛṣṇa Dāsa and his wife, Vraja Līlā Devī Dāśī, in their dental clinic.

were many) and later on discarded as unscientific, sentimental, and completely childish, was being presented again so beautifully and convincingly that tears would come uncontrollably as I listened. A typical Māyāvādī's questions, which I thought were unanswerable, were comprehensively handled with ease. For example, if I were God and temporarily in illusion, then that would mean illusion was greater than God. How could God fall into illusion? If I had to undergo some

ing the regulative principles was never a problem because the Kṛṣṇa consciousness process and Vaiṣṇava association were more than compensation for the small austerities.

We became counselees of Nitya Kṛṣṇa Dāsa and started attending weekly counseling meetings. We also started attending the weekly *Bhagavad-gītā* program in Sion on Tuesdays and we got the wonderful association of Muralīdhara Dāsa and other Vaiṣṇavas there, whose com-

mental level, but the trigger for this lies at the soul, which is seeking to regain the intrinsic happiness that it has lost. Gurus who do not reveal this truth but only try to pander to this whim of creating and solving endless questions have really not understood the problem and therefore can neither satisfy their followers nor themselves. Even if they do, it is temporary and new doubts will invariably arise.

Unlike other popular spiritual movements, whose founders use scriptures only to lend legitimacy but do not fully believe in them, preferring to propagate their own mental speculations, ISKCON follows the recommended method of *guru, sādhu, and śāstra*. The bona fide guru is a transparent via medium for God's mercy and he continues the *parampara* system. He never deviates from *śāstra* and humbly repeats what he has learnt from his spiritual master. Kṛṣṇa is the original founder of the *paramparā* system and the devotee's connection to this system through the spiritual master is the key to accessing Kṛṣṇa's mercy.

Māyāvāda philosophers unquestioningly accept that individual existence is both unreal and miserable and see a solution only in committing a spiritual suicide, as they cannot imagine that the soul could ever be fully satisfied and eternally happy without impediment, in loving reciprocation with the Lord. Soon, the followers cloy from the endless dry mental speculative processes and with their souls seeking ever-new happiness, the gurus have to constantly invent many cheating methods to infuse some variety to keep them!

Having searched everywhere for answers to the questions troubling me, at last I find peace and happiness reigning in my heart and an

assurance that I have found the ultimate truth. My two sons, who have been witness to my restless quest over the years, sometimes taunt me that I will move on once again to another guru. But now they know this time it is different and they are happy too.

### UNBELIEVABLE AUSPICIOUSNESS

Many unbelievable blessings have come to me and my near ones in the last few years. My parents, who were in their late seventies, were with me in Mumbai. I took them to the temple a few times and they had some Vaiṣṇava association, started chanting 16 rounds regularly. My father increased his rounds to 80. They maintained this commitment until they left a year ago. My parents-in-law and a brother-in-

was highly appreciated by the corporates whose employees were benefited. I organized a well-attended public program in Jalandhar to introduce industrialists and prominent citizens to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I also arranged a *Bhagavad-gītā* course for the employees of our Vijayawada Zonal office for over five days and they greatly appreciated the initiative. I used to hold a *Bhagavad-gītā* study group in my residence for one evening each week for a whole year in Vijayawada.

I am eternally grateful to Dr. Nitya Kṛṣṇa Dāsa and his wife Vraja Līlā Devī for guiding me to this wonderful *saṅkīrtana* movement of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, which is the prescribed process to liberate the soul from the evil influences of Kali. But for their compas-

Having searched everywhere for answers to the questions troubling me, at last I find peace and happiness reigning in my heart and an assurance that I have found the ultimate truth.

law are chanting 16 rounds. My brothers and sisters have been influenced tremendously to take spiritual life seriously. In my workplace too, colleagues have shown enthusiasm to learn about the philosophy and practice of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. They are impressed by the depth of and my earnestness in the spiritual path, which is rarely seen among materialistic people. They appreciate the simple, yet profound and practical answers of Kṛṣṇa consciousness to the complex problems of the material world as a genuine alternative.

I was able to assist the book distribution team in distributing books in Ludhiana and in Vijayawada where I was posted for a while. This

sion I would have been lost among the other countless numbers of suffering souls vainly looking for redemption from the fire of material existence, either by taking shelter of sense gratification or mental speculation, which is like looking for water in a desert.

I pray at the lotus feet of all Vaiṣṇavas and my spiritual master that I eternally remain grateful to the mercy they have showered upon me and try to repay my debt by always trying to bring other conditioned souls to the shelter of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. ❁

*Kalānidhi Dāsa, a general manager in SBI, helps in organizing spiritual programs for corporations.*

# Kṛṣṇa Consciousness for Good Health



*How devotional practices can help you become overall healthy.*

by Yugāvatāra Dāsa

Although good health is not the ultimate aim of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, it a blessing bestowed on a devotee as a result of his regulated mind and body. Good health is one of the by-products of devotion. The World Health Organization (WHO) has defined *health* as a state of complete physical, mental, social, and spiritual well-being. A devotee easily achieves this well-being by the power of his devotion.

## PHYSICAL HEALTH

When a person constantly fails in the war with various diseases he is deemed physically unhealthy. Although the world is not Kṛṣṇa conscious, it is definitely health conscious. In regards to health, I used to always contemplate how dancing *kīrtana* can be a perfect exercise. Recently I was reading a

write-up on perfect exercise. It was stated that exercise should be preceded by stretching and concluded with relaxation by lying down. The next day as I saw the devotees doing *sāṅkīrtana*, I observed that the *kīrtana* always starts with a softer note with devotees stretching themselves back and forth. Then they dance which is like an intense cardio activity. At the end, all the devotees throw themselves onto the ground to chant the *prema-dhvani* prayers, perfectly following the process of perfect exercise—stretch, exercise, and relaxation. Apart from this, a devotee’s physical health is also guarded against all those physical ailments that arise from mental ill health and stress, as a devotee automatically achieves mental health. And, last but not least, devotional service burns all those sinful reactions to ashes which are the actual causes of all sufferings.

### MENTAL HEALTH

When a person constantly fails in the war with his mind he is labeled as mentally unhealthy. The mind of a mentally unhealthy person is constantly wandering and fails to concentrate on any activity. Arjuna says in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (6.34), “For the mind is restless, turbulent, obstinate and very strong, O Kṛṣṇa, and to subdue it, I think, is more difficult than controlling the wind.” As a devotee chants the holy name, in the initial stages the mind wanders. Then a devotee brings it back and makes it listen to the holy name. It’s a mental exercise which a devotee performs daily for 2-3 hours. Slowly the devotee makes the mind listen to the holy name. The holy name acts on the mind and purifies it from all the contaminated desires

which make the mind wild. There is no drug in this world which can purify the mind. There are blood-purifiers and body-purifiers available in the market but the holy name is the only mind-purifier. The Supreme Lord is supremely pure and He is not different from His holy name. The constant association with the holy name purifies us. A devotee also achieves perfect mental health by reading and hearing spiritual instructions from scriptures like *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

### SOCIAL HEALTH

When a person is constantly at war with his family members, rela-

The instructive stories of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* help him to live in harmony. Stories from *Rāmāyaṇa* in which both Lord Rāma and Bharata want the other to become kings serve as torchlights for destroying the nescience of social disharmony.

### SPIRITUAL HEALTH

When a person fails in the constant war with illusion or fails to initiate a war with illusion, he is considered spiritually unhealthy. Illusion makes the person feel secure in this unsecure world full of disease and death. Illusion makes the soul forget his eternal relation with the Lord. A devotee con-

**By practicing humility, a devotee contributes to social homeostasis.**

tives, and friends he is labeled as socially unhealthy. Social health is disturbed when a person fails to adjust within society. The principle of humility and tolerance, which are the basis of the teachings of Lord Caitanya, help a devotee to lovingly adjust in this society full of quarrel and hypocrisy. Lord Caitanya instructs in His *Śikṣāṣṭaka* (3): “One should be more humble than a blade of grass and more tolerant than a tree. One should offer all respect to others and expect none in return. In such a state of mind one can chant the holy name of the Lord constantly.” Practicing such humility and tolerance, a devotee tolerates all types of people and circumstances by keeping faith in the Lord’s supreme control. Thus he never becomes the cause of disturbances in social harmony and contributes to social homeostasis.

stantly hears instructions from *Bhagavad-gītā* (8.15) like *duḥkhālayam aśāśvatam*: “This world is full of miseries and is temporary.” He never gets allured by the glare of this world, which is nothing but a reflection of the Lord’s splendor. He gives up everything that is temporary and establishes his eternal relation with the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa. The engagement in this eternal service, which is the real instinct of the soul, makes a devotee spiritually healthy.

Thus a devotee perfectly achieves the state of complete physical, mental, social, and spiritual well-being. ❀

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

# Happy Independence Day?

by Suvarṇa Rādhikā Devī Dasi

15 August 2010 heralds the 63rd year of our independence from British rule. Externally it appears that India has made much material progress in these years. The people of free India now have access to a wide variety of technology, foods, and medicines. They can enjoy numerous facilities in terms of transport, education and lifestyle goods. At the same time, the problems that Indians face are multi-fold. We live in highly unstable times, where internal and external enemies can rip apart the fabric of our very existence without a moment's notice. The shootout in Mumbai on 26 November 2008, the Pune blast and the Naxal attacks are just a few examples. Besides this insecurity, we grapple with recession, pollution, corruption, inflation, congestion, and many other 'tions'. All this simply leads to frustration and dissatisfaction with the government.

It is clear that happiness in the life of an average Indian has barely improved from pre-independence to post-independence. We may no longer live under the oppression and autocracy of a foreign power, but life still has many insecurities.

Our problems have simply transformed, not vanished. There is no surprise in this. We are eternal spirit souls, and we can find real happiness only when we establish our relationship with the Supreme Soul, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura nicely explained this point: "Whether one power or another ruled was a temporary situation; but the eternal reality is Kṛṣṇa consciousness and the real self is the spirit soul. No man-made

political system could therefore, actually help humanity." (Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlamrita, Vol. 1, Ch. 3)

## THE REAL FIGHT IS YET TO BEGIN

15 August isn't a complete independence day. The real fight for independence hasn't even begun. We are all living under the illusion that we are these temporary material bodies. We seek happiness in



the temporary objects of this world. In illusion, we think of ourselves as masters and controllers, but we are slaves of *māyā*, illusion. We need to get rid of this false master and establish the government of Śrī Kṛṣṇa in our hearts.

Lord Kṛṣṇa is the true master, the only person who can reciprocate the love and service of we spirit souls perfectly. Unlike all other material governments, He is not interested in exploiting us. He loves each and every

one of us unlimitedly, and eternal bliss can be found just by rendering service to Him. Then we can gain liberation from the cycle of birth, death, old age and disease. As Kṛṣṇa says in *Bhagavad-gītā* (7.14), “This divine energy of Mine, consisting of the three modes of material nature, is difficult to overcome. But those who have surrendered unto Me can easily cross beyond it.” Since we are originally spirit souls, part and parcel of Kṛṣṇa, our real independence lies in reviving our lost relationship with Him. We shall then find unlimited eternal bliss at His lotus feet.

The first step in this struggle for independence is of course to realize that we are slaves of the wrong master. Once we have accepted this, we can use pointers from our Indian history in this spiritual fight too. Our independence movement was based mainly on two lines of thought—passive non-cooperation and active aggression.

Gandhi suggested non-cooperation with everything that was British. Let us too stop cooperating with everything that hampers our devotional life. Let us reject not only the grossly sinful substances like meat and intoxicants, but also the subtle substances like television, mundane books, movies and music and even materialistic association and talk, all of which distract us from Kṛṣṇa and increase our illusion. Gandhi suggested not only the rejection of British

goods but also their replacement with Indian made products. Similarly, we too can replace all of the above with Kṛṣṇa conscious books and music, devotee association, discussions of Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes and study of the scriptures. This will help us increase our attraction to God.

Subhash Chandra Bose and other nationalists suggested an all out attack against the English Government. We too can launch our attack on Māyā by sincere chanting of the holy name. The chanting of the names of God is the simplest method of remembering Him. By doing so, the darkness of illusion is dispelled from our hearts.

Just as a bullet shot at the enemy kills him, the holy name acts as a powerful weapon that destroys all the *anarthas* (lust, anger, etc.) within the heart. Let us be disciplined soldiers, chanting regulated number of rounds early in the morning, worshiping the Deities and Tulasī Devī. Let us attack relentlessly and continuously by rendering services in the temple and by active preaching of this eternal truth.

If we wage this two-pronged war on Māyā, then surely she will depart. We can then raise the flag of our love and devotion to the spiritual sky. God, along with His associates, will then wish us “Happy Independence Day!” ❁

BTG Yatra Seva presents a yatra to

# Melkote

Melkote is in Paṇḍavapura taluk of Mandya district, Karnāṭaka, is one of the sacred places in Karnāṭaka. The place is also known as Thirunarāyaṇapuram. It is built on rocky hills known as Yaḍavagiri or Yaḍugiri overlooking the Cauvery valley.

Date : 8 -11 Sept 2010

Yatra Charges: Rs. 4500/- per head  
(includes food, internal travel and stay)

Only  
**100**  
Seats  
Available

For yatra registration, contact : Pandurangdas : 9324581718,  
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Places we will visit

- CHELUVANARAYANA SWAMY TEMPLE
- YOGA-NARASIMHA SWAMY TEMPLE
- KALYANI OR PUSHKARANI
- SRIRANGAPATNA
- KAVERI RIVER
- TONDANUR
- HIMAVAD GOPALASWAMY TEMPLE,  
BANDIPUR FOREST:



# Charity

*This photo was taken at the Chowpatty Beach in Mumbai. A man is throwing seeds to birds. A street urchin is standing next to him, holding up a beaker, begging for some grains.*

*This is a face of charity.*

*Charity performed at an impure place, at an improper time, to unworthy persons, or without proper attention and respect is said to be in the mode of ignorance. Charity performed with the expectation of some return, or with a desire for fruitive results, or in a grudging mood, is said to be charity in the mode of passion. Charity given out of duty, without expectation of return, at the proper time and place, and to a worthy person is considered to be in the mode of goodness. (Bg. 17.20–22)*

*We should also know the best charity for the human*

*form of life. There is charity to the body, charity to the mind and charity to the soul. To give food, shelter, clothes and hospitalization is charity to the body. To encourage others, to be good to others, to be a friend is charity to the mind. To give transcendental knowledge, to give facilities for people to be educated in spiritual life is charity to the soul. You can feed the hungry man or hungry birds. It is a good thing. But both are going to become hungry again. But if you can teach a person how to be enlightened in devotional consciousness, revive a person's original spiritual consciousness, then that person never has to be lonely again. That person has achieved a step beyond. That is the greatest charity. Why not utilize our human birth for the greatest thing available? ❁*

## Mystic powers ....

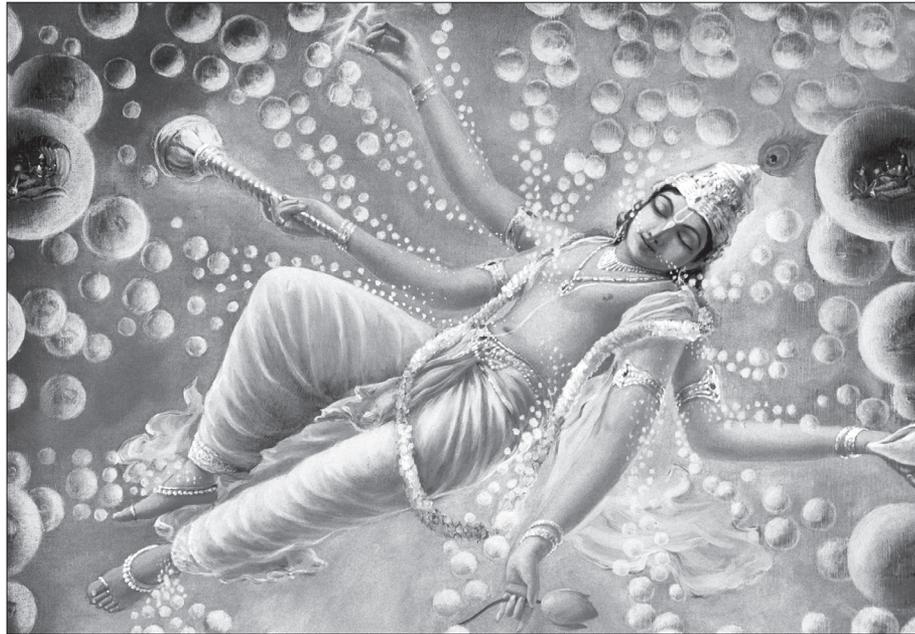
(Continued from page 5)

In the *Bhagavad-gītā* (10.8) Kṛṣṇa says, *aham sarvasya prabhavo mattaḥ sarvaṁ pravartate*: "I am the source of all spiritual and material worlds. Everything emanates from Me." Unless we accept this statement from God, there is no conclusive explanation to the origin of material nature. God cannot be understood without accepting the existence of mystic power,

full peace. Others, however, who want to fulfill desires even up to the limit of liberation, what to speak of material success, never attain peace. The fruitive workers, the salvationists, and also the yogīs who are after mystic powers are all unhappy because of unfulfilled desires. But the person in Kṛṣṇa consciousness is happy in the service of the Lord, and he has no desires to be fulfilled. In fact, he does not even desire liberation from the so-called material

A pure devotee is more interested in serving the Lord than in showing an exhibition of the mystic powers dormant in him. Śrī Nārada has explained all these from his personal experience, and one can obtain all the facilities which Śrī Nārada obtained by perfecting the chanting process of the sound representation of the Lord.

—*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.5.39),  
purport



The whole creation emanates from the supreme mystic Lord Viṣṇu, an expansion of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Those who have reached the highest perfectional stage of mystic power and can see everything in the past, present, and future are called *tri-kāla-jñas*. Similarly, the devotees of the Lord can see everything clearly that is in the revealed scriptures. The devotees of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa can very easily understand the science of Kṛṣṇa, as well as the situation of the material and spiritual creations, without difficulty. Devotees do not have to endeavor for any *yoga-siddhi*, or perfection in mystic powers. They are competent to understand everything by the grace of the Lord, who is sitting in everyone's heart.

—*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (3.11.17),  
purport

but if you understand God scientifically, then you will understand everything.

—*Life Comes from Life*

## HOW DEVOTEES REGARD MYSTIC POWERS

That is the proof of a Kṛṣṇa conscious man—one who has lost all inclinations for material sense gratification, although the desires are present. Because he remains satisfied in the transcendental loving service of the Lord, he can remain steady, like the ocean, and therefore enjoy

bondage. The devotees of Kṛṣṇa have no material desires, and therefore they are in perfect peace.

—*Bhagavad-gītā* (2.70), purport

Vaiṣṇavas do not care for all these yogic powers. They depend on Kṛṣṇa. . . Kṛṣṇa is *yogeśvara* . . . *Yatra yogeśvaraḥ kṛṣṇaḥ* [Bg. 18.78]. So if one takes shelter of the *Yogeśvara*, the master of all mystic power, why he should bother about this yogic power?

—*Lecture on Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* (1.5.23),  
August 4, 1974, Vṛndāvana

If some yogi shows some mystic power, and if he can manufacture little gold, we accept him as God. But we forget the real yogi who has created millions of gold mines, floating in the air. So we Kṛṣṇa conscious persons, we are not so foolish that we shall accept this kind of yogi as *Bhagavān*. We want the foremost yogi. *Varimṇaḥ sarva-yoginām*. That Kṛṣṇa, *Yogeśvara*.

—*Lecture on Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (3.25.2),  
November 2, 1974, Bombay

# In your own words ...



In Kṛṣṇa consciousness, which skill do you lack and would like to develop?

THE KṚṢṆA CONSCIOUS skill that I would like to develop is to make jewellery for Deities. Jewellery design requires not only creativity and imagination but also deftness of hands. During *darśana*, I can see the effort and talent of the devotees in the beautiful necklaces, earrings, waist-belts, bangles and anklets that adorn the Lord.

I feel jewellery-making is one way in which we can serve Deities intimately. Previously I attempted to design a few pieces for my home Deities but could not succeed. After that I have been unable to contribute time and effort required for this endeavor. Perhaps, in the near future, Kṛṣṇa willing, I will be able to learn this under the guidance of senior devotees, and serve my Deities better.

—Suvarṇa Rādhikā Devī Dāsī,  
Pune

WHEN WE SEE BIG TEMPLES in South India, an immediate thought comes to our minds: “How amazing are these carvings! This requires skilled laborers and craftsmanship.” Many of us lack in acting, instrument-playing, book distribution, dressing the Deities and much more. We realize this when we get an opportunity

but are not able to do that service. We have Gaura-Nitāi Deities at home, and in our Vaiṣṇava tradition we understand that the Deity



A devotee painting a mural of Deities

is non-different from the personality. Since last year I noticed the paint on Their eyes, lips, *tilaka* being wiped away. Seeing this, I started to paint them with water-colors since I am not skilled in painting. But, my son said, “Our Deities don’t look like before. Their smile is gone, and Their eyes are different.” I really felt bad. I realized that I always used to admire those devotees who were painting Kṛṣṇa’s lotus eyes, Rādhārāṇī’s beautiful lips.

O Govinda! When will I develop this skill to serve You?

—Mrs. Vina Aiyer, Goa

I WISH TO LEARN AND develop the following skills:

1. Complete surrender to Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet and full absorption in pleasing Kṛṣṇa’s devotees, guru and Nanda-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

2. Full absorption in *śravaṇam kīrtanam viṣṇoḥ*.

3. Humility, tolerance, simplicity and proactivity. These skills can help to fulfill Lord’s mission: Unalloyed devotional services — complete surrender to Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet and full absorption to please *bhaktas*, guru and Kṛṣṇa.

—Bh. Janis

I WOULD LIKE TO DEVELOP PATIENCE as

## IN YOUR OWN WORDS

QUESTION FOR THE FORTHCOMING ISSUES

Which things in nature remind you of Kṛṣṇa?

Deadline for submission is Aug. 20

Answers will be published in October

Word limit: 150 words

E-mail: ed.btgindia@pamho.net

the skill which is required to handle a variety of people from a variety of backgrounds carrying a variety of belief systems. In Kṛṣṇa consciousness, this skill naturally starts flowering with the progress of a devotee when the mercy of Kṛṣṇa starts showering. At this stage, the guidance and support of fellow devotees are required to recognize and contain the showering nectar at our lower level of existence. As the devotee progresses further, all these qualities start becoming visible in his day-to-day activities. In particular, while preaching, a variety of contradictory arguments starts bombarding from the opposite party, which may irritate a preacher and he may either lose patience or may get demoralized. Such a situation should be taken by the preacher as a test from Kṛṣṇa who is helping us to develop the habit of patience which is very much required for our progress in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

—Rajesh Kumar Mishra,  
BARC, Mumbai

THE SKILL THAT I lack in Kṛṣṇa consciousness but would like to develop is the ability to tolerate the urge of criticizing spiritual organizations other than ISKCON. I have a knack of openly speaking truths, which are not desired to be heard by the masses. This should be curbed as it would mostly lead to anti-preaching as far as the preaching of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is concerned. I need to see good in people and organizations and be appreciative of that, rather than sit back and condemn their philosophies. They might not be at par with what Kṛṣṇa consciousness has to offer philosophically, but all such organizations do play a decent role in serving societies, by promoting various kinds of Vedic activities like physical yoga, cow protection, etc.

I need to identify these acts and be appreciative of this attitude, and at the same time be loyal to Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings. This is the balance I strive for.

—Rahul Danait

THE KṚṢṆA CONSCIOUSNESS process is perfect. Bhaktivedanta purports give the classic understanding of *śāstra* enriched with many analogies. To put forward these jewels favorably to the people requires oratory skills and eloquence. An experienced orator can present the philosophy so as to appeal to the the mass and also to the class.

This can induce people to take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness seriously. It can transform the heart. I would like to develop this skill. As in the case of Prācīnabarhiṣat, Nārada Muni presented the allegorical story of Purañjana and city of nine gates. In many other instances, Nārada Muni transformed the heart through his speech. The process, which may appear as bitter medicine in conditioned state, if wrapped into a sweet cake, breaks the barrier of apprehension or stagnancy. The oratory skill can generate the appetite for Kṛṣṇa consciousness. At the same time without the substance—devotion and service attitude—these skills will not make any sense.

—Pradyumna Miśrā Dāsa



Letters ....

(Continued from page 3)

Mahāprabhu's time, this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement was going nicely. And after Him, there were six Gosvāmīs. They also managed. Then, as it is the rule of this material world that you start something very good but in due course of time

the things deteriorate, so this Vaiṣṇava, Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, also deteriorated in due course of time. After the disappearance of the Gosvāmīs, about 250 years after, the things became most ridiculous. The so-called devotees... Their representatives still are continuing. They are called *prākṛta-sahajiyās*. *Prākṛta-sahajiyā* means taking things very easily. They thought that Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa is just like a boy and girl's lusty affairs. And in this way they took sex life as religion.

“Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura was at that time a householder, government officer and magistrate. He felt very much: “Oh, as soon as one will see that he belongs to the Caitanya *sampradāya*, he'll deride, ‘Oh, these are all rascals, simply taking sex pleasures. That's all.’” (Los Angeles, 7 February 1969)

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has identified thirteen *apasampradāyas* that claim to have inherited Lord Caitanya's mission, though they have nothing to do with the Brahma-Madhva-Gauḍīya Sampradāya. They are known by the names *āula*, *bāula*, *kartābhāja*, *neḍā*, *daraveṣa*, *sānī*, *sahajiyā*, *sakhībhekī*, *smārta*, *jāta-gosānī*, *ativādī*, *cūḍadhārī*, and *gaurāṅga-nāgarī*. Because these *apasampradāyas* (*apa* means “deviated”) do not nurture Vaiṣṇava qualities, their missionary activities are condemned as cheating. *Sampradāya* means those who carefully follow the Vedic principles.

As mentioned in *Vaiṣṇava Ke* by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, the *apasampradāyas* display only inauspicious qualities viz. *anitya-vaibhava*, the hankering for material success; *kāminīra-kāma*, illicit

sexual affairs that are usually passed off as “transcendental; *māyāvāda*, philosophical speculation that undercuts the personal nature of God as taught by the Vaiṣṇava *sampradāyas*.

The conditioned soul is always mad for sense gratification and will justify it by whatever means possible—in the name of materialism as in the West or in the name of religion as in 18th-century Bengal. Today Indians are not practicing live-in because it was done by some Indians 250 years back, but they are doing so imitating the West. What we condemn is the blind following of a deviant practice—

whether followed in India or coming from the West. ☸

*Replies to the letters were written by Śyāmānanda Dāsa. Write to us at: ed.btgindia@pamho.net*



**A Serial killer ....**  
(Continued from page 32)

that Pūtanā was ordered by Kāmsa to kill all the newborn babies in the province of Mathurā but she hesitated when she entered the room where baby Kṛṣṇa was lying. Thus in order to assure her, Kṛṣṇa closed His eyes. Still another reason

could be that the Lord advents to kill all miscreants and demons, but this demon were in the form of a woman. That’s why He simply closed His eyes. Finally, it could be said that Kṛṣṇa simply took her to be His nurse and closed His eyes just like a small baby would do so.

She took Kṛṣṇa on her lap and pushed her nipple into His mouth. Although the nipple was smeared with deadly poison, it had no effect on Kṛṣṇa. Baby Kṛṣṇa, becoming very angry at her, took hold of her breast, squeezed it very hard with both hands and sucked out both her poison and her very life. ☸

—*Śyāmānanda Dāsa*



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## VAIṢṆAVA CALENDAR

1 Aug - 15 Sep, 2010

- 3 Aug: Śrīla Lokanātha Gosvāmī – Disappearance  
 4 Aug: The incorporation of ISKCON in New York  
 6 Aug: Fasting for Kāmikā Ekādaśī  
 7 Aug: Break fast (Mumbai) 06:17 am - 10:35 am  
 13 Aug: Śrī Raghunandana Ṭhākura – Disappearance, Śrī Vamsīdāsa Bābājī – Disappearance  
 20 Aug: Fasting for Pavitropanā Ekādaśī, Rādhā Govinda Jhulana Yātrā begins  
 21 Aug: Break fast (Mumbai) 06:21 am - 10:35 am, Śrīla Rupa Gosvāmī – Disappearance, Śrī Gauridāsa Paṇḍita – Disappearance  
 24 Aug: Jhulana Yātrā ends, Lord Balarāma – Appearance (Fasting till noon),  
 Second month of Cāturmāsya begins (Fast from yogurt for one month.)  
 25 Aug: Śrīla Prabhupāda's departure for the USA  
 2 Sep: Śrī Kṛṣṇa Janmāṣṭamī: Appearance of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa (Fasting till midnight)  
 3 Sep: Nandotsava, Śrīla Prabhupāda – Appearance (Fasting till noon)  
 5 Sep: Fasting for Annadā Ekādaśī  
 6 Sep: Break fast (Mumbai) 06:25 am - 10:33 am  
 12 Sep: Śrīmatī Sitā Thākuraṇī (Śrī Advaita's consort) – Appearance  
 13 Sep: Lalitā śaṣṭhī  
 15 Sep: Rādhāṣṭamī: Appearance of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī (Fasting till noon)

# A Serial Child-Killer Meets Her Nemesis

**K**ing Kaṁsa was desperate. Something had to be done. He was just informed by a mysterious goddess that his killer was still alive. Many months ago he had heard a voice from the sky broadcasting that the eighth son of his sister would kill him. At that time even while the royal wedding procession was moving towards Kaṁsa's brother-in-law, Vasudeva's palace, Kaṁsa had shamelessly caught his sister by her hair and was about to behead her in full public view. He thought that if his sister is no more, then there is no question of a son born from her. But the timely intervention of Vasudeva averted a catastrophe when he very diplomatically argued with Kaṁsa and promised him that every newborn baby would be brought to him to be disposed at his sweet will. Kaṁsa liked this proposal and the procession went ahead. In the months that followed, Kaṁsa did not wait until the birth of the eighth child but killed every child born to Devakī and Vasudeva. However, the eighth pregnancy was not a boy but a girl and this puzzled Kaṁsa. He thought that cheating and false propaganda exists even in the heavenly society. His guilt laden mind was veering towards despondency when his evil ministers argued that the only solution was to unleash more terror. They said that since his killer was still a newborn baby and could not be more than a few hundred villages away they should murder all newly born children within the entire province without delay. And thus the plot was hatched. But who could carry out such a dastardly act? There was only one person—Pūtanā, the child-killer. In fact this was her speciality. She knew the art of flying, so speed was no issue and she had applied deadly poison to her nipples. Whenever she would offer her breast to suck, the innocent child would die an instantaneous death. Additionally, Pūtanā would disguise herself as an extremely beautiful woman so that she gained instant access to every home.

Indeed, this was the way that she entered the village of Nanda Mahārāja. Looking at her exquisite beauty the simple village folk even confused her for the goddess of fortune, Lakṣmīdevī, and marveled at their good fortune that she should even consider to visiting their simple village. Smiling as she entered the inner precincts of the house and seemingly spreading rays of goodwill while hiding one of the most nefarious intentions of all time to come, Pūtanā was now face to face with her victim. Who was to become the nemesis of whom? She thought that today would also be another routine job and as a hardened serial killer approaches another of his hapless victims, she took one look at the baby. This time instead of the confidence and diabolical delight accompanying her act, a strange thought crossed her mind. Pūtanā thought, "This child is so powerful that He can destroy the whole universe immediately." She too decided to act immediately. At the same time Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, was immersed in His own thought process. He was thinking this woman has come to me with motherly feelings. Although her intentions are criminal, she ought to be rewarded appropriately. Therefore, He looked at her with a little perplexity and then closed His eyes again. As soon as He closed His eyes, it was Pūtanā's turn to be perplexed. She knew her task. It was to kill this baby, but she realized that this was no ordinary baby. Driven by her fierce and cruel heart she decided to go ahead and kill him.

Why did Kṛṣṇa close His eyes? Great Vaiṣṇava authorities have analyzed this simple phenomenon from various angles. As Kṛṣṇa had recently advented on this planet and was still playing the part of a small baby, He closed His eyes as is the nature of small babies. Another reason was that He did not like to see the face of a notorious child-killer like Pūtanā. It should be noted

*(please turn to page 30)*