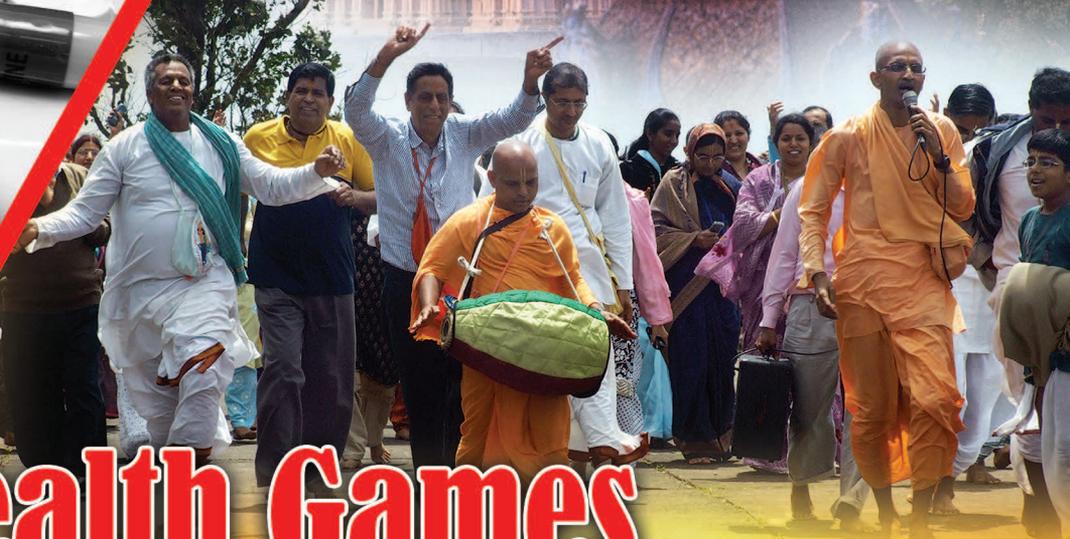


Godhead is light. Nescience is darkness. Where there is Godhead there is no ne

BACK TO GODHEAD

The Magazine of the Hare Krishna Movement

September 2010



Loot Wealth Games

Growing our roots for our growth



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Founded 1944. Vol. 7 No. 10 October 2010

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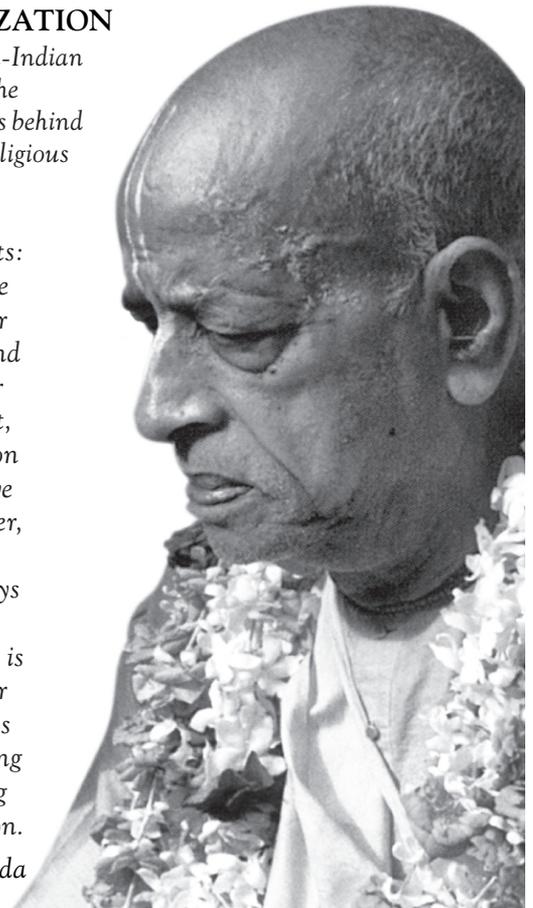
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Caustic Soda + Oil = Soap. Wrong !

We have got four defects: we commit mistake, we become illusioned, our senses are imperfect, and we cheat. Because our knowledge is imperfect, still, we take the position of teacher; therefore we are cheater—not teacher, but cheater. So the teacher society nowadays is the cheater society. And this modern world is a society of the cheater and the cheated. That's all. Somebody is cheating and somebody is being cheated. This is going on.

—Śrīla Prabhupāda



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

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DISCREPANCIES

There are certain things that I
need clarification about and I hope
necessary action will be taken.

In your reply to Śrī Giridhārī Dāsa
in the August 2010 issue, you said,
“Also, devotees, when presenting
Kṛṣṇa consciousness philosophy, of-
ten quote non-Vedic references if they
conform to scriptures. Even Śrīla
Prabhupāda would quote contempo-
rary persons whose opinions matched
with the Vedic conclusions.” This is
an incorrect reply to his question. In
the Reincarnation article, April 2010
issue, the source of the controversy,
you said, “BTG does not confirm or
refute the following claims, but is only
reporting them.”

1. Why do you want to report some-
thing if you don’t confirm its views?
Is it that BTG wants to attract large
crowds by displaying such reincarna-
tions?

2. Śrīla Prabhupāda (to my knowl-
edge) when learning about something
non-Vedic that matched with the
Vedic conclusions would readily ac-
cept it. But your statement is like say-
ing, “This analogy suits the Vedic con-
clusion, but BTG doesn’t accept or
deny it.”

3. This has become a speculative
view that so and so has reincarnated
like this. Do you know for sure that
Mr. Amitabh Bachchan was Edwin
Booth in his previous birth?

4. There may be another person
who may have the same qualities as
Amitabh, and Amitabh may have
been that person in his previous birth.
We don’t know. So it’s not right to
arrive at that conclusion.

5. And even if someone concludes
in this way (as in *Human Devolution*),
it’s not good to be published in an

authoritative spiritual magazine as the
BTG.

6. Any intellectual would strongly
disagree with your views and would
conclude that we are also one among
the pack of sentimentalists. It pains
me when I realize that our ISKCON
magazine is publishing something in-
conclusive, sentimental, and unau-
thorized.

7. I fully agree with Śrī Giridhārī
Dāsa’s points mentioned in his letter.
I hope you give an open-minded and
authoritative answer to my questions
and take the necessary action to avoid
future errors.

—Chandru

Reply by Murāri Gupta Dāsa:
Thanks for your valuable feedback.

1. We reported the news because
it serves our purpose, which is to at-
tract large crowds towards the phi-
losophy of reincarnation and Kṛṣṇa
consciousness.

2. Here is an excerpt from a con-
versation with Śrīla Prabhupāda:

Śrīla Prabhupāda: ...Recently one
astrologer has said that one of the
biggest politicians in India, he has
now become a dog in Sweden. May
be correct or not, but there is possi-
bility. There is possibility. (*Room Con-
versation with Dr. Arnold Toynbee, 22
July 1973, London*)

Just as Śrīla Prabhupāda used a
secular authority to support a śāstric
principle while at the same time be-
ing noncommittal about the correct-
ness of the secular authority, we too
have done the same following in his
footsteps.

3. No.

4. We leave it for the readers to
arrive at their own conclusions. We
accept it because it suits our philoso-

phy. But we have no tool to prove it. That way, there is no tool to prove scientifically either the process of reincarnation, or to refute or confirm who one was in his previous life. One may try verifying with *Bhṛgu-saṁhitā*, but we have neither the time nor the resources to do so. In the present case, a popular book is highlighting reincarnation, which is the basis of our philosophy. We are using it. Some may choose not to believe it. We respect their choice.

5. Again, it's your choice and perspective. *Human Devolution* is written by a devotee scientist of international repute, who was personally trained by Śrīla Prabhupāda. He knows his stuff better than most of us.

6. There are sufficient arguments to whet an intellectual's appetite in the remaining article. If believing in reincarnation is sentimentalism, then so be it. I quoted an authority who is doing ground breaking research on the subject and widely popularizing it in the western world. His methodology may appear unconventional, so for interested readers I gave a list of websites and books for reference. Lot of research went into compiling the article, which is based on evidences so far not used in mainstream ISKCON and have just begun to gain popularity and acceptance in the secular world.

7. We will consider your views in the future. BTG is meant to stir intellectual debate and heart-felt contemplation. It's not a placid, sterilized version of Vedic spirituality, but a dynamic tool to inform, inspire, and enlighten. Whatever helps us in these aims will be used.

AN AMAZING EXPERIENCE

Recently I had an amazing experience that I want to honestly share with you. I chanced to read two issues of BTG (June 2009 and June 2010). Since I had no distractions and was all alone in the room, I read them and didn't realize the passing of time until I completed both the issues. It was simply excellent. So many varieties of articles and such hard work have gone into these issues.

I was particularly impressed with the articles "Finding Shelter in Sufferings," "Educating about Education," and "Safar or Suffer." The column "In Your Own Words" on My Favorite Character in *Rāmāyaṇa* was very interesting read. Also

I liked the mistakes and blunders of devotees **w h e r e** Yudhiṣṭhira Dāsa shared his **e x p e r i e n c e**. That was a brilliant idea to have such a column to show the human side of devotees and how we too are fallible. This column makes so much sense and it helps us get out of the holier-than-thou attitude.

I particularly liked Śrīla Prabhupāda's quotations on Illusion of Progress. I think it is excellent to have a collection of quotes rather than have one lecture. It is very much in touch with changing times.

I am very much inspired now to read BTG every month and also write articles for the magazine.

—Vraja Bihārī Dāsa

VIBRANT AND GODLY

I have been living in Delhi for the past six years. Here I have visited many temples, but I really like the Pārthasārathī Temple, East of Kailash (see below). It is not only a great architectural beauty, magnificent to look at, but it is a place where I find true serenity, peace, and solace from the multitude problems of the world. The Lotus Temple might be attracting more people than the ISKCON, but the former is only known for its architecture. I visited that temple only twice, once when I first came to Delhi and then when I showed it to some relatives on a Delhi tour. On both occasions, I felt people were being forced into silence and discipline without any godliness. In



contrast, the ISKCON temple is vibrant with devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa, who pray, sing, dance, and worship with religious ardor. So, I have made it a point to come here regularly. Although not a member of the ISKCON community, I wish it every success and bow down to Śrīla Prabhupāda, who created this wonderful organization.

—Birendra Nayak

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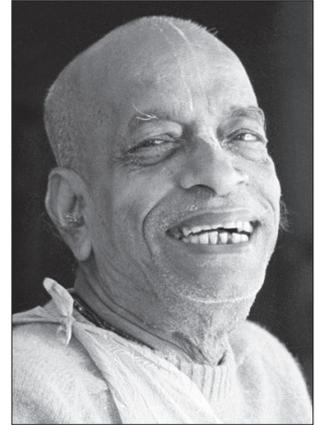
Illusion of Sports

From anxiety-giving sports to games of pure pleasure.

by His Divine Grace

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

Founder-Ācārya of The International Society for Krishna Consciousness.



1. The average person is illusioned in childhood, playing frivolous games.

—*Transcendental Teachings of Prahlāda Mahārāja*

2. In this age, men are victims not only of different political creeds and parties, but also of many different types of sense-gratificatory diversions, such as cinemas, sports, gambling, clubs, mundane libraries, bad association, smoking, drinking, cheating, pilfering, bickerings, and so on. Their minds are always disturbed and full of anxieties due to so many different engagements.

—*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (1.1.10), purport*



3. Demons arrange many kinds of performances to see the glaring beauty of a beautiful woman. Here it is stated that they saw the girl playing with a ball. Some-

times the demoniac arrange for so-called sports, like tennis, with the opposite sex.

The purpose of such sporting is to see the bodily construction of the beautiful girl and enjoy a subtle sex mentality.

—*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (3.20.35), purport*

4. Aristocratic girls would not play in a public place.

—*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (3.22.17), purport*

5. Generally, people think that childhood is meant for enjoying life by engaging oneself in sports and play, youth is meant for enjoying the company of young girls, and when one becomes old, at the time of death, then he may try to execute devotional service or a mystic yoga process. But this conclusion is not for devotees who are actually serious.

—*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (4.8.32), purport*

6. Although they were impartial by nature, those followers of the Vedānta blessed me with their causeless mercy. As far as I was concerned, I was self-controlled and had no attachment for sports, even though I was a boy.

—*Nārada Muni in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (1.5.24)*

7. The inner member shall not indulge in unnecessary indoor or outdoor games, sporting or gambling habit. (Rules for inner members willing to live with us

for spiritual upliftment.)

—Letter, Allahabad, 1 January 1955

8. Although one may be born in a family of Āryans, where there are restrictions against meat-eating, intoxication, gambling and illicit sex, still one may want to enjoy these forbidden things. There is always someone who wants to go to a prostitute for illicit sex or to a hotel to eat meat and drink wine. There is always someone who wants to gamble at nightclubs or enjoy so-called sports. All these propensities are already within the hearts of the living entities, but some living entities stop to enjoy these abominable activities and consequently fall down to a degraded platform.

—Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (4.29.4), purport

9. By nature children are restless and playful, so in the kindergarten they are given toys and games to interest them in learning. Similarly, a neophyte is trained to perform activities in the mood of sacrifice, and he



is encouraged to worship the Deities according to the scriptural injunctions. The expert Vaiṣṇava preceptor then gradually draws him toward the platform of pure devotion by narrating the spiritually potent topics of Kṛṣṇa consciousness and giving him the remnants of food offered to the Supreme Lord.

—Renunciation Through Wisdom

KṚṢṆA GAMES FOR KIDS

We train our children in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, just by keeping them always attending our regular program and associating with Kṛṣṇa's devotees, teaching them in spiritual realization by giving them the idea that sacrifice and *tapasya* for achieving the highest goal of life is a very nice way of life. Not that we shall give

them many games for playing.

—Letter to Satyabhama, Mayapur, 28 February 1972

The children should always be instructed by taking advantage of their playful mood and teaching them to play Kṛṣṇa games like become cowherd boys, cows, peacocks, demons and in this way if they always think of Kṛṣṇa by playing just like they are actually present in association with Kṛṣṇa then they will become Kṛṣṇa conscious very quickly.

—Letter to Stoka-kṛṣṇa, Los Angeles, 13 June 1972

Teach the small children to play Kṛṣṇa games: one child is a cow, another is cowherd boy, they go to the forest, there are demons there, Kṛṣṇa kills the demons, like that.

—Letter to Giriraja, Amsterdam, 30 July 1972

The Pāṇḍavas, all being devotees of the Lord, certainly venerated family Deities in the royal palace for worship. Children who appear in such families fortunately generally imitate such worship of the Deities, even in the way of childhood play.

—Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (2.3.15), purport

THE SPORTING TENDENCY COMES FROM KṚṢṆA

In this way the boys spent their childhood in the land of Vṛndāvana playing hide-and-go-seek, building play bridges, jumping about like monkeys and engaging in many other such games.

—Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.14.61), purport

Lord Govinda's pastimes of stealing butter, drink-



ing the *gopīs'* breast milk, tending the calves, playing His flute and playing childhood sports are extraordinary even in comparison with the activities of the Lord's Viṣṇu expansions.

—*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*
(10.14.2), *purport*

Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī explains that the word *ādyaiḥ*, “by other such sports,” indicates such games as chasing one another and building bridges. Another pastime would occur at noon, while Lord Kṛṣṇa was taking rest. Nearby, the young cowherd girls would be passing by, singing, and Kṛṣṇa's boyfriends would pretend to inquire from them about the price of milk. Then the boys would steal yogurt and other items from them and run away. Kṛṣṇa, Balarāma and Their friends would also play games in which they would cross the river in boats.

Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura further explains that the boys would play with fruits by throwing a few in the air and then throwing others to try to hit them. The word *netra-bandha* indicates a game in which one boy would approach a blindfolded boy from behind and place his palms over the blindfolded boy's eyes. Then, simply by

the feel of his palms, the blindfolded boy would have to guess who the other boy was. In all such games the boys put up stakes for the winner, such as flutes or walking sticks. Sometimes the boys would imitate the various fighting methods of the forest animals, and at other times they would chirp like birds.

—*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*
(10.18.14), *purport*

est deer and various kinds of birds. They joked with one another by imitating croaking frogs, and they enjoyed swinging underneath the trees. Sometimes they would play amongst themselves like a king and his subjects. In this way, Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa, along with all Their friends, played all kinds of sports and enjoyed the soothing atmosphere of Vṛndāvana, full of rivers, lakes, rivulets, fine trees and excellent gardens filled with fruits and flowers.

—*Kṛṣṇa Book*,
Chapter 18

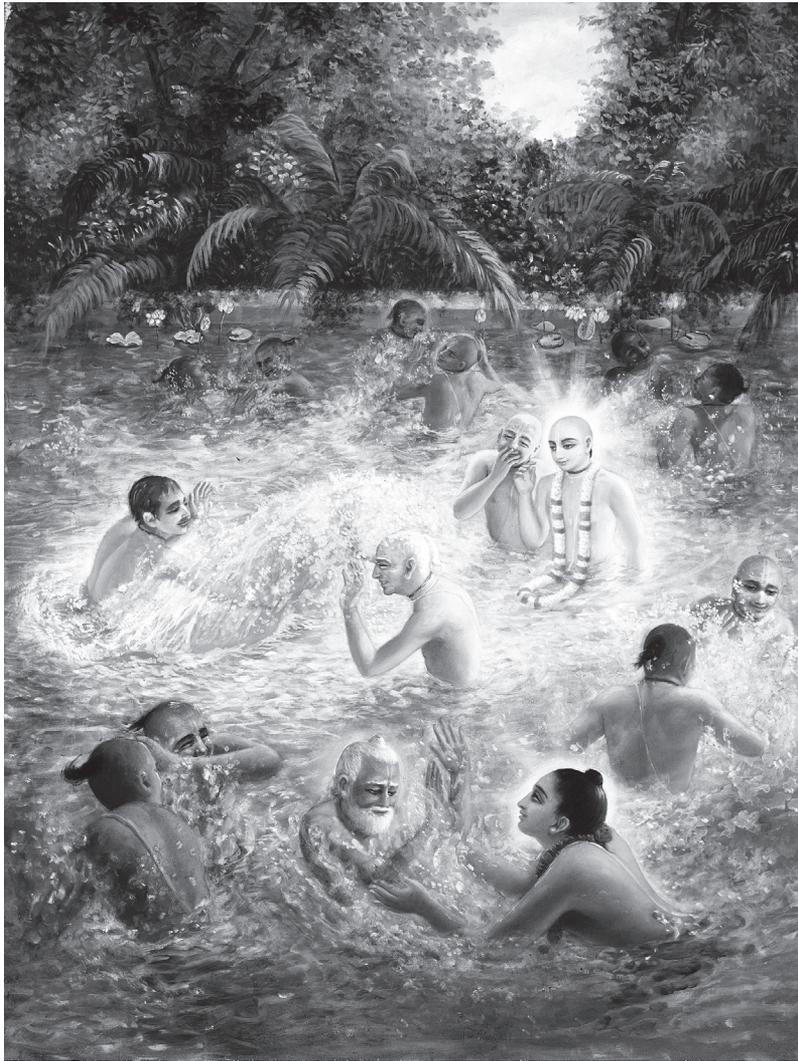
There are many sports wherein people enjoy striking a ball or similar object with a stick or bat. This sporting propensity exists originally in the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who playfully (*līlayā*) pulverized the deadly boulders hurled at Him by the powerful Dvidida.

—*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*
(10.67.23), *purport*

There were many gardens near the Guṇḍicā temple, and Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and His devotees used to perform the pastimes of Vṛndāvana in each

of them. In the lake named Indradyumna, He sported in the water.

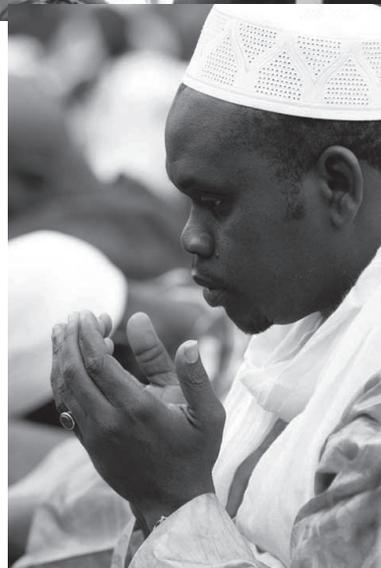
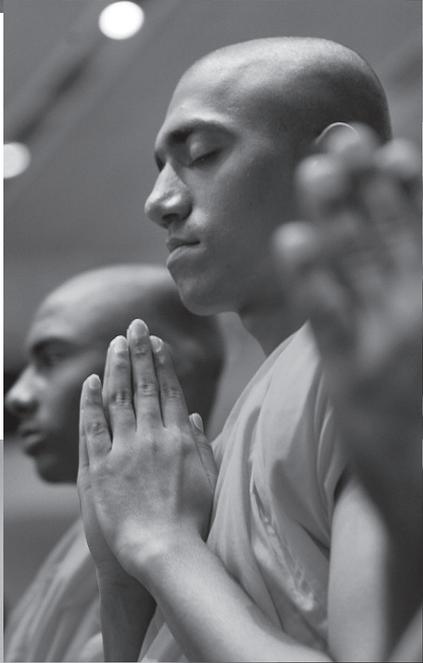
—*Cc. Madhya* (14.75)



Lord Caitanya and His associates sporting in Indradyumna Lake in Purī.

The boys played at catching ball with fruits such as *bael* and *āmalaka*. They played blindman's buff, challenging and touching one another. Sometimes they imitated the for-

TRUTH AND RELIGION



Sincere people want to approach religion to learn how to love, to learn how to be good to others. All great religions, scriptures, and true saints of the world end up at one subject matter—not being a Muslim, Christian, Hindu, Jew, or a Buddhist—but knowledge of truth. Truth cannot be different in different places in different times. Truth is a universal principle. What we learn in colleges today are relative truths, which are helpful in our practical everyday lives: how to be a good engineer or computer technologist, or manager or businessman. But what is the underlying truth? Where I am coming from? What is the goal of human life? Who am I? What is consciousness?

To understand the nature of consciousness within you is truth. Every part of your body is changing; even your mind is changing to some extent. But there is something constant throughout the changes, and that is our consciousness. Therefore, when we talk about religion we are not talking about beliefs, blind faith or a particular set of rituals. We are talking about that science which gives us an understanding and an experience of truth—the underlying truth within us and within all living beings. That truth harmonizes humanity and all living beings. Without that truth, all so-called harmony is superficial and is doomed to failure. ☸

THE DEBT OF KHICARĪ

This simple prasāda takes the author back to his college days.

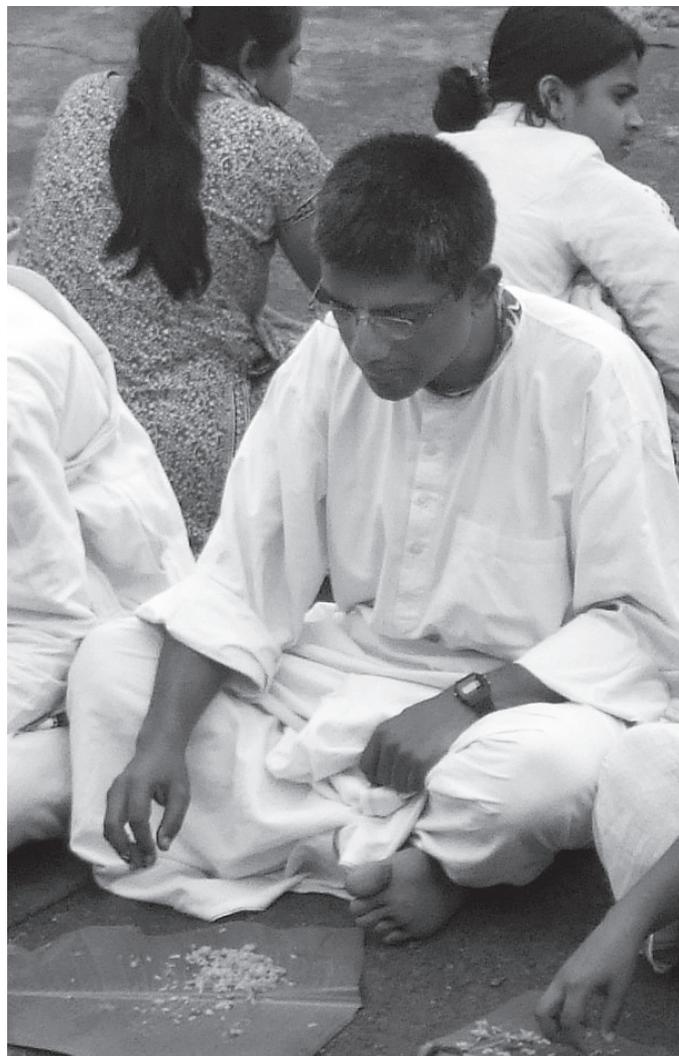
By Yugāvatāra Dāsa

The mercy of the Lord flows from ISKCON temples via multiple channels. Sometimes it flows in the form of the holy name, sometimes in the form of the *Bhagavad-gītā* and sometimes in the form of *prasāda*, sanctified food. This *prasāda* ranges from sweet rice to *khicarī*, a simple rice-and-lentil preparation. Whatever its form, *prasāda* is always full of the Lord's mercy.

Whenever I am offered *khicarī* in the temple I offer it to my daughter. A devotee observed this and out of curiosity he asked, "I see that every time you receive *khicarī* you feed a major portion to your daughter. Any special reason?" Yes, there is a special reason. If you are cured by some medicine, you enthusiastically prescribe it to others. I had a similar experience with *khicarī*.

BACK TO MY COLLEGE DAYS

The devotee's question made me nostalgic for my college days. I was staying in the hostel of the medical college along with my friend Dr. Shankar Sawant (now Śukadeva Dāsa). We were the only two students in the whole institution who were showing some interest in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Therefore we were pampered by all the devotees like parents pamper their only child. We used to receive *prasāda* from the ISKCON temple. As a devotee eagerly waits for the Lord, we used to wait for the *prasāda* in the morning. As a lion jumps over a deer, both of us would swoon over the *prasāda* and eat it. On free days, after honoring *prasāda* we would fall into deep slumber. We would lie on the ground for hours



Devotees relishing kṛṣṇa-prasāda

as if exhibiting symptoms of ecstasy. By the time the evening tiffin of *khicarī* would arrive, we would still be struggling to digest the lunch *prasāda*. Still we were so addicted to *khicarī* that we would always make space in our stomachs to accommodate it. There was no Kṛṣṇa consciousness in our blood, but *kṛṣṇa-prasāda* was definitely circulating everywhere in our bodies.

The only progress I achieved in Kṛṣṇa consciousness was that my weight jumped from 60 to 70 kgs. The other 998 students in the hostel would joke at us. Their discourses on sense gratification would appeal to us more than the lectures on the *Gītā*. Everyday we would be persuaded to quit Kṛṣṇa consciousness but the thought of losing *prasāda* would overwhelm us. The *kṛṣṇa-prasāda* would empower us (two Pāṇḍavas) to fight against the 1000 Kauravas. We kept on fighting. Eventually Śukadeva led the Hare Kṛṣṇa explosion in our medical college from which hundreds of trained devotee doctors are now spread all over the world, from Detroit to small places in India. All this is thanks to *kṛṣṇa-prasāda*, which sustained us and helped us to sail through the wavy, shaky preliminary years.

SIX BOXES OF THE GĪTĀ

After I finished my MBBS exams, I went home for a month. Just before leaving, the Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees handed me six boxes of the *Bhagavad-gītā* for the December book distribution marathon. I was the only so-called devotee in my hometown. Every day after breakfast I would leave my house on my bicycle with copies of *Bhagavad-gītā* and I would return in the evening only after distribut-

ing them. I never got time to have my lunch for that entire month. For the first time in my life, I made productive use of my vacations. All the copies of *Gītā* were sold out.

As I was about to board the train after my vacation, I felt very light. I checked my weight and discovered I had lost exactly 10 kilos. Kṛṣṇa had utilized all that extra fat deposited by the *khicarī* for fulfilling His plan for book distribution. Kṛṣṇa had

recovered the debt of *khicarī* by engaging me in book distribution.

It is for this reason that I regularly feed *khicarī* to my daughter. I have firm faith that one day Kṛṣṇa, just to recover the debt of each bite, will engage her in His service. ❀

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

Kṛṣṇa is the Source of All Incarnations and Expansions

Usually Śrīla Prabhupāda accepted devotees for initiation based on the temple president's recommendation, but sometimes he personally interviewed devotees to see if they were fit. Once he called Śubhānanda dāsa, Śrīnātha dāsa, and another devotee into his room in June of 1971 before awarding them their brahminical initiation.

"What is your conception of Kṛṣṇa?" Śrīla Prabhupāda asked, turning to Śubhānanda.

"He is the Supreme Personality of Godhead," Śubhānanda replied, and he enumerated Kṛṣṇa's six qualities—all strength, all beauty, all knowledge, all wealth, all fame, and all renunciation.

"Thank you," said Śrīla Prabhupāda.

He then turned to Śrīnātha and asked, "Who is Lord Caitanya?"

Śrīnātha replied confidently, "Lord Caitanya is the most munificent incarnation of Kṛṣṇa."

"No," said Prabhupāda. Śrīnātha was surprised. "Not incarnation," Prabhupāda said, "He is Kṛṣṇa Himself." At first Śrīnātha thought to defend himself, remembering how Prabhupāda used the word "incarnation" for Lord Caitanya in Teachings of Lord Caitanya, but then he realized that he should not argue with the spiritual master. Śrīla Prabhupāda was correcting and refining his improper understanding. Then Śrīla Prabhupāda briefly explained that there is no difference between Lord Kṛṣṇa and Lord Caitanya.

"Have you read the Bhāgavatam?" Prabhupāda addressed all three of them, and they nodded yes.

"Have you read the chapter on incarnations and expansions?" Again they all nodded and said yes.

"Kṛṣṇa is the source of all incarnations and expansions," said Śubhānanda, and Prabhupāda again replied, "Thank you."

"All glories to you, Śrīla Prabhupāda!" they said upon leaving.

"Jaya," Prabhupāda replied.

Conferring among themselves, the devotees agreed that Śrīla Prabhupāda's requirements seemed very little. They had not been devotees very long, and they had been born and raised in the degraded Western culture. Yet it had been so simple. He had only asked, "Do you know who Kṛṣṇa is? Who is Lord Caitanya? How are They different?" It required no great learning or austerities, but faith that Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead and Lord Caitanya is Kṛṣṇa Himself. ❀

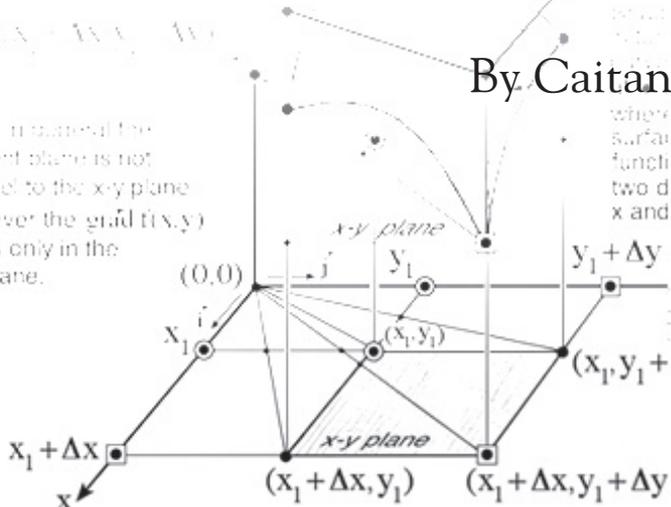
Escaping from Scientism

Science does not have a monopoly on human knowledge.

By Caitanya Carāṇa Dāsa

Note: in general the tangent plane is not parallel to the x-y plane. However the grad $f(x,y)$ exists only in the x-y plane.

where surface function two d x and



$$\text{grad } f(x,y) = \frac{\partial f(x,y)}{\partial x} \vec{i} + \frac{\partial f(x,y)}{\partial y} \vec{j} = \vec{\nabla} f(x,y)$$

vector notation

$$= \frac{1}{|\Omega|} \int_{\Omega} \psi^2 \quad F_+ = \frac{1}{|\Omega_+|} \int_{\Omega_+} \psi^2$$

$$\frac{1}{|\Omega|} \int_{\Omega_+ \cup \Omega_-} \psi^2 = \frac{1}{|\Omega|} \int_{\Omega_+} \psi^2 + \frac{1}{|\Omega|} \int_{\Omega_-} \psi^2$$

$$= \frac{|\Omega_-|}{|\Omega| |\Omega_-|} \int_{\Omega_-} \psi^2 + \frac{|\Omega_+|}{|\Omega| |\Omega_+|} \int_{\Omega_+} \psi^2$$

$$= \frac{1}{2} (F_- + F_+) \quad \text{same for } f = \frac{1}{2} (f_+ - f_-)$$

$$\frac{1}{|\Omega|} \int_{\Omega} \psi^2 \geq \frac{1}{|\Omega_+|} \int_{\Omega_+} \psi^2 + \frac{1}{|\Omega_-|} \int_{\Omega_-} \psi^2$$

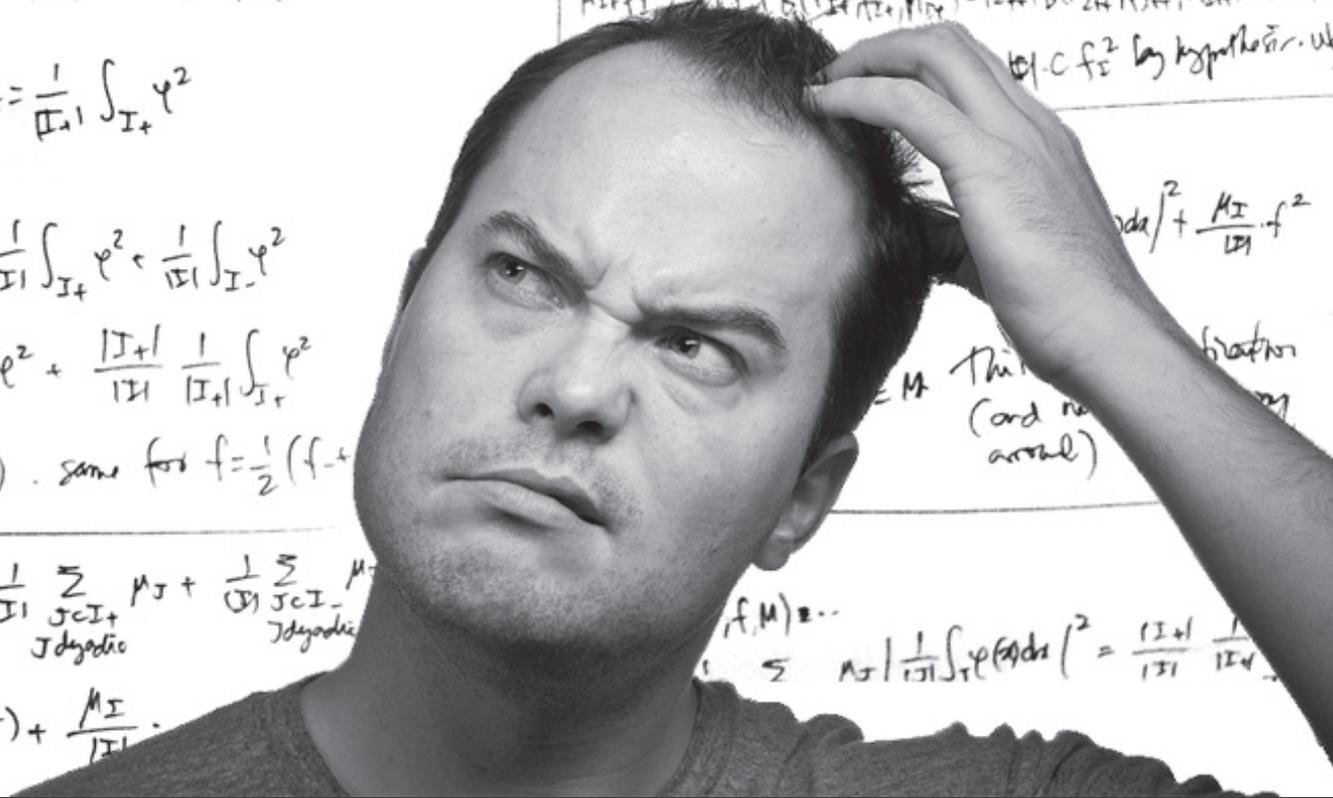
$$\frac{1}{|\Omega|} \int_{\Omega} \psi^2 \geq \frac{1}{|\Omega_+|} \int_{\Omega_+} \psi^2 + \frac{1}{|\Omega_-|} \int_{\Omega_-} \psi^2$$

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$$\frac{1}{|\Omega|} \int_{\Omega} \psi^2 \geq \frac{1}{|\Omega_+|} \int_{\Omega_+} \psi^2 + \frac{1}{|\Omega_-|} \int_{\Omega_-} \psi^2$$

$$\frac{1}{|\Omega|} \sum_{\substack{J \in \Omega \\ J \text{ dyadic}}} \mu_J = \frac{1}{|\Omega|} \sum_{\substack{J \in \Omega_+ \\ J \text{ dyadic}}} \mu_J + \frac{1}{|\Omega|} \sum_{\substack{J \in \Omega_- \\ J \text{ dyadic}}} \mu_J$$

$$= \frac{1}{2} (\mu_+ + \mu_-) + \frac{\mu_{\Omega}}{|\Omega|}$$



Question: When I talk about God, the soul, and rebirth, people often ask, “Why discuss such unscientific things in this modern age of science?”

Answer: Their question betrays their basic misconception that science has a monopoly on human knowledge and that only things that are “scientific” are true. This misconception is not a result of science, but of scientism, the school of thought that places around science a halo of “omniscience.” However, scientism itself is unscientific. There is no scientific experiment to prove that scientific knowledge is the only true knowledge. The question, based on an unscientific assumption, is not scientific. If people feel that people should not discuss unscientific things, then they themselves should stop raising this question.

Nonetheless, now that the question has been raised, let’s explore its answer further. Pointing out the proper place of science in humanity’s quest for knowledge is sometimes misunderstood as an insult to science and to the human intellect itself. But far from being an insult, it is a tribute to the human intellect. The same extraordinary human intellect that has led humans to the heights of scientific knowledge has also led to us to remarkable insights in many other fields. As Albert Einstein stated, “All religions, arts and sciences are branches of the same tree.” By

acknowledging this all-round accomplishment of the human intellect and not letting scientism monopolize human knowledge, we open the door to a holistic understanding of ourselves and the world we live in.

Question: But isn’t science the most reliable way of acquiring knowledge?

Answer: That depends on the field one is considering. Nobel laureate physicist Erwin Schrodinger eloquently stated the abilities and the inabilities of science: “I am very astonished that the scientific picture of the real world around me is very deficient. It gives a lot of factual information, puts all our experience in a magnificently consistent order, but it is ghastly silent about all and sundry that is really near to our heart, that really matters to us. It cannot tell us a word

about red and blue, bitter and sweet, physical pain and physical delight; it knows nothing of beautiful and ugly, good or bad, God and eternity. Science sometimes pretends to answer questions in these domains, but the answers are very often so silly that we are not inclined to take them seriously.” To better appreciate Schrodinger’s remark, let’s consider an example. Suppose a neurosurgeon returns home to find his wife upset with him. If science were his only means of acquiring knowledge, he would have to do a brain scan of his wife to find why she is annoyed. Would that help? Obviously not; it would compound his wife’s annoyance into rage.

Here’s another example. Consider seeing a beautiful sunset. We can directly experience the beauty of the sunset. But can any scientific experiment measure that beauty? Science could perhaps measure some parameters like the intensity of the



We relish the beauty of a sunset, but science cannot measure that beauty.

sunlight, but such measurements would do little to convey or explain the actual experience of the beauty.

To summarize, science does have utility and authority in certain fields, but extrapolating that authority to judge all fields of knowledge is unwarranted, unproductive, and sometimes even counterproductive. We can save ourselves from the misleading spell of scientism, while simultaneously maintaining due respect for science, by bringing to mind the sage advice of Copernicus about what constitutes knowledge: "To know that we know what we know, and to know that we do not know what we do not know, that is true knowledge."

Question: Isn't science more reliable than other branches of knowledge because it deals with factual things?

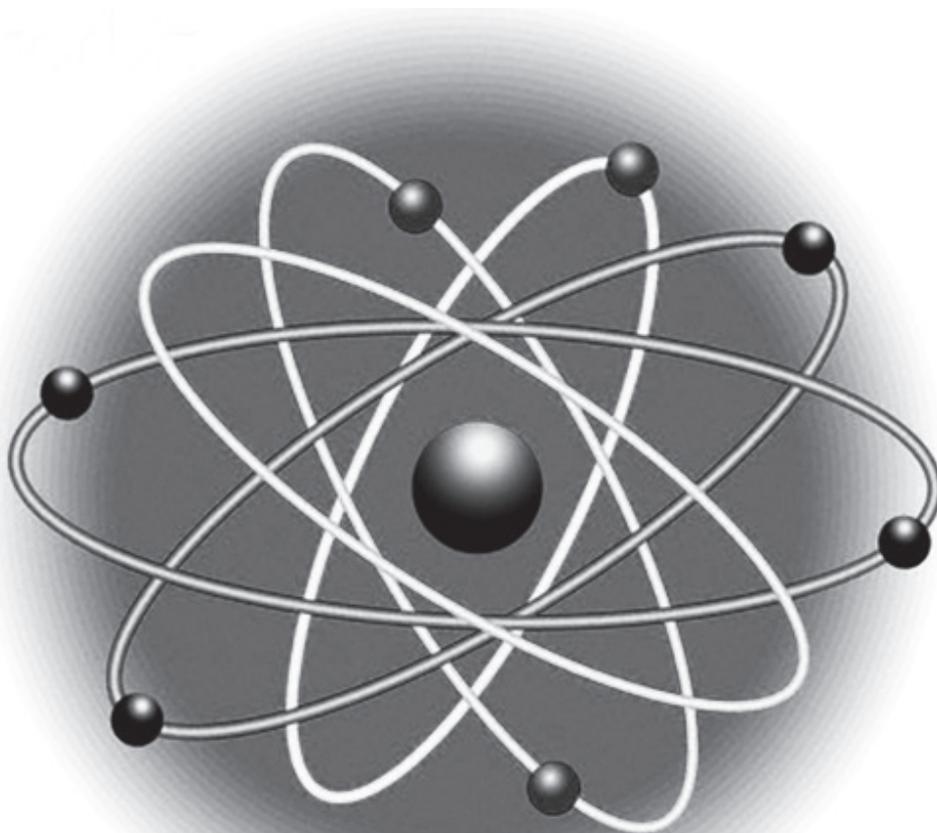
Answer: By factual, if you mean things that are seen by our eyes or otherwise perceived by our senses, then science certainly doesn't deal only with perceivable things. In fact, most of the objects studied in modern physics (which is considered the most scientific of all sciences) are not perceivable at all: electrons, mesons, neutrinos, and hadrons, to name a few. Moreover, in some cases, this non-perceivability is not just a practical limitation imposed by insufficiently sophisticated instruments. Quarks, for example, are considered non-perceivable even in principle; they are so tightly bound inside the protons and neutron that nothing can make them break out on their own. Science treats all these particles as factual, and their existence and behavior is given as a scientific explana-

tion for many direct physical observations.

Additionally, with the increasing use of abstract mathematics in physics, the gap between the concepts studied by science and the factual objects of the world has widened. This trend, which was noted by Nikola Tesla nearly a century ago, has only grown since he made

tions of one scientist can be verified by others.

Answer: Not all scientific observations are easily verifiable. For example, when physicists claim to have observed a fundamental particle using a high-energy particle accelerator, their observation can be verified only by those who have access to the equipment and can



None of the atomic elements are perceivable to us, but yet we believe in their existence.

his insightful observation: "Today's scientists have substituted mathematics for experiments, and they wander off through equation after equation, and eventually build a structure which has no relation to reality."

Question: Isn't scientific knowledge more reliable because it is objective? After all, the observa-

understand the complex technical jargon used to explain the claim.

Further, in quantum physics, objectivity is impossible because the very act of observation is said to change the observed object.

Moreover, observations are not as objective as they seem to be, as pointed out by the English astronomer Arthur Eddington: "A scientist commonly professes to base

his beliefs on observations, not theories. Theories, it is said, are useful in suggesting new ideas and new lines of investigation for the experimenter; but hard facts are the only proper ground for conclusion. I have never come across anyone who carries this profession into practice—certainly not the hard-headed experimentalist, who is more swayed by his theories because he is less accustomed to scrutinize them... It is better to admit frankly that theory has, and is entitled to have, an important share in determining belief.”

The pioneering quantum physicist Max Planck was even more forthright in stating the role of subjectivity: “A new scientific truth does not triumph by convincing its opponents and making them see light, but rather because its opponents die, and a new generation grows up that is familiar with it.”

The subjectivity inherent within the scientific enterprise is eye-opening documented by historian of science Thomas Kuhn in his landmark book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. He shows that scientists, like the rest of us, are fallible human beings, who are often motivated by their personal interests and preconceptions, constricted by the beliefs and biases of their superiors, subject to peer pressure and concerned about the availability and continuance of research grants.

Question: Isn't scientific knowledge preferable because it is free from dependence on faith?

Answer: Science demands faith both in its general method as well as in its specific theories.

Consider the statement of physicist Gerard 't Hooft, “We [physicists] are trying to uncover

more of that [the universality of our scientific theories]. It is our belief that there is more.” Obviously, “our belief” means “our faith.” Scientific research is based on the implicit faith that nature behaves according to laws that can be uncovered by human intelligence. This implicit faith is just an assumption without any actual proof or without even any theoretical possibility of proof. In fact, the behavior of many of the fundamental particles in atomic physics defies description by any scientific laws. Nonetheless, physicists toil on hoping to find out some such laws in the future. To hope for the existence of unseen and unproven

observations will. For example, evolutionists believe that all species have evolved from a common ancestor, but the fossil record doesn't show any evidence of transitional links (intermediate species that are supposed to have existed in the past and that formed the evolutionary link between two existing species). Some evolutionists claim that evolution occurs too slowly to be seen by the human eye and too fast to be seen in the fossil record. Even the most dull-witted person can understand what this claim boils down to: faith, despite the absence of supporting evidence.

Far greater than the faith that

Evolutionists claim that evolution occurs too slowly to be seen by the human eye and too fast to be seen in the fossil record. Such claims are unscientific and based on blind faith.

things—isn't that what faith is all about?

Most scientific knowledge is acquired using the inductive method, in which patterns discerned from finite observations are extrapolated into universal laws. The 18th-century Scottish philosopher David Hume argued that the use of induction can never be rationally justified, and his arguments have never been persuasively refuted. Inductive reasoning is thus a fundamental, indispensable article of faith in science.

When scientists propose a specific hypothesis to explain a set of observations, they have faith that their hypothesis is correct and that it will be verified by future observations. Often, even when subsequent observations don't support the hypothesis, they continue to believe it, hoping that future

scientists require in their research is the faith that common people have in the findings of scientists. The extent of unquestioning faith that scientific findings command is seen in the following observation of Einstein: “Tell a man that there are 300 billion stars in the universe, and he'll believe you. Tell him that a bench has wet paint upon it and he'll have to touch it to be sure.”

Question: Isn't science special because it follows the scientific method?

Answer: Let's consider the steps that comprise the scientific method.

1. Observe some aspect of the universe.

2. Form a hypothesis that potentially explains the observation.

3. Devise testable predictions from that hypothesis.

(please turn to page 15)

A WEDDING ANNIVERSARY GIFT

By Parama Puruṣa Dāsa

On 17 Jan 2009, we had a big program at our house to welcome the Deities of Gaura-Nitāi and Jagannātha-Baladeva-Subhadṛā. The next day, my wife and I had to attend a meeting at Mira Road, Mumbai, at 8:30 am. After taking rest at midnight, we got up early to leave for Mira Road.

We left home at 7:45 am and took a cab to go to Dadar railway station. At the station, my wife suddenly exclaimed, “Oh my beads! I left my bead bag in the cab.” We rushed back outside hoping to find the cab, but it was gone. We frantically looked for the driver everywhere but couldn’t find him. Disappointed, we gave up the search and went to attend the meeting, all the while mourning over the loss. An ISKCON devotee receives beads on which their spiritual master has chanted. These beads are sacred and precious.

When we would go out, my wife would often say, “Don’t carry your initiation beads,” as I would often forget them. But this time she took her initiation beads and regretted it.

Two days later, she had a dream in which someone came and re-

turned the cloth bag carrying the beads. We had tried to locate the taxi driver but couldn’t find him. We asked other drivers where they reported lost-and-found articles. They directed us to their office at Grant Road, where drivers deposited articles left by passengers. We thought of going there but wondered, “Who will hand over a bead bag?” So we dropped the idea.

We reported the incident to our

spiritual authorities. “It is a serious thing,” they said. “You have to pay a fine and might also be chastised for losing the sacred beads.”

A week passed. We went to Pune for some work and returned on January 27. Due to travel fatigue I could not attend the *maṅgala-ārati* in the temple on returning. January 29 was our wedding anniversary day.

On this day, I left home for the



Parama Puruṣa Dāsa (left) with the taxi driver(right) and the latter’s friend who told the driver to return the beads.

temple to attend the morning program as usual. But as soon I reached the spot where we had boarded the cab on January 17, someone shouted, “O Mahārāja, Mahārāja.” (I generally wear *dhoti-kurtā*, so most people call me “Mahārāja.”) When I looked across the street, I saw a man shouting, and in his right hand, he was holding my wife’s bead bag. I recognized him—he was the same cab driver. When I saw those sacred beads, I paid my respectful obeisances. I happily went to collect them. The man then informed me how he had been searching for us for the past few days. I told him we had been out of town. “I know what happens when you lose your beads,” the man continued. “*Mein bhi mala jaap karta hoon. Mujhe bhi malum hai kitni takleef hoti hai jab japa mala kho jaati hai.* (I also chant the holy names, so I know how painful it is when you lose chanting beads.) I therefore kept these beads carefully. My friend, who also chants, advised me to return the beads.” I thanked him very much for this invaluable service.

Immediately after collecting those beads, I rang up my wife, “I have a surprise gift for you today. Guess what.” She couldn’t. “Your beads are with me.” “What a miracle!” she exclaimed.

I met that taxi driver twice after the incident, and I invited him to visit our temple. I pray that Lord Kṛṣṇa gives His mercy to him. ❀

Share your experiences with the Deities, holy name, sacred books, dhāma, spiritual master, or even those from every day life. Write to us at: ed.btgindia@pamho.net



Hare Kṛṣṇa
Hare Kṛṣṇa
Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa
Hare Hare
Hare Rāma
Hare Rāma
Rāma Rāma
Hare Hare

Escaping from

(Continued from page 13)

4. Conduct experiments that can test those predictions.

5. Modify the hypothesis until it is in accord with all observations and predictions.

6. Arrive at a conclusion of whether the hypothesis is true or not.

Now consider the reasoning of a cricket fan:

1. Observation: A cricketer X hits sixers frequently.

2. Hypothesis: His ability to hit frequent sixers is due to his strong arms and his swift, smooth arm swing.

3. Experiment: When cricketers with strong arms and swift, smooth arm swings are tested, they are seen to hit sixers frequently. When cricketers without these bodily attributes are examined, they do not hit sixers so frequently.

4. Conclusion: Hypothesis confirmed.

The above reasoning parallels the scientific method. This parallel shows that the much-touted scientific method is not unique to science; it

can be used and is often used in many other fields. In fact, the scientific method is nothing more than a systematized version of common sense, as is confirmed by Albert Einstein, “The whole of science is nothing more than a refinement of everyday thinking.” Just as common sense can give us right answers, so can science. And just as common sense can give us wrong answers, so can science. That’s why there’s no reason to consider scientific knowledge special and privileged because it is acquired using some reverence-worthy “scientific method.” There’s no such method. ❀

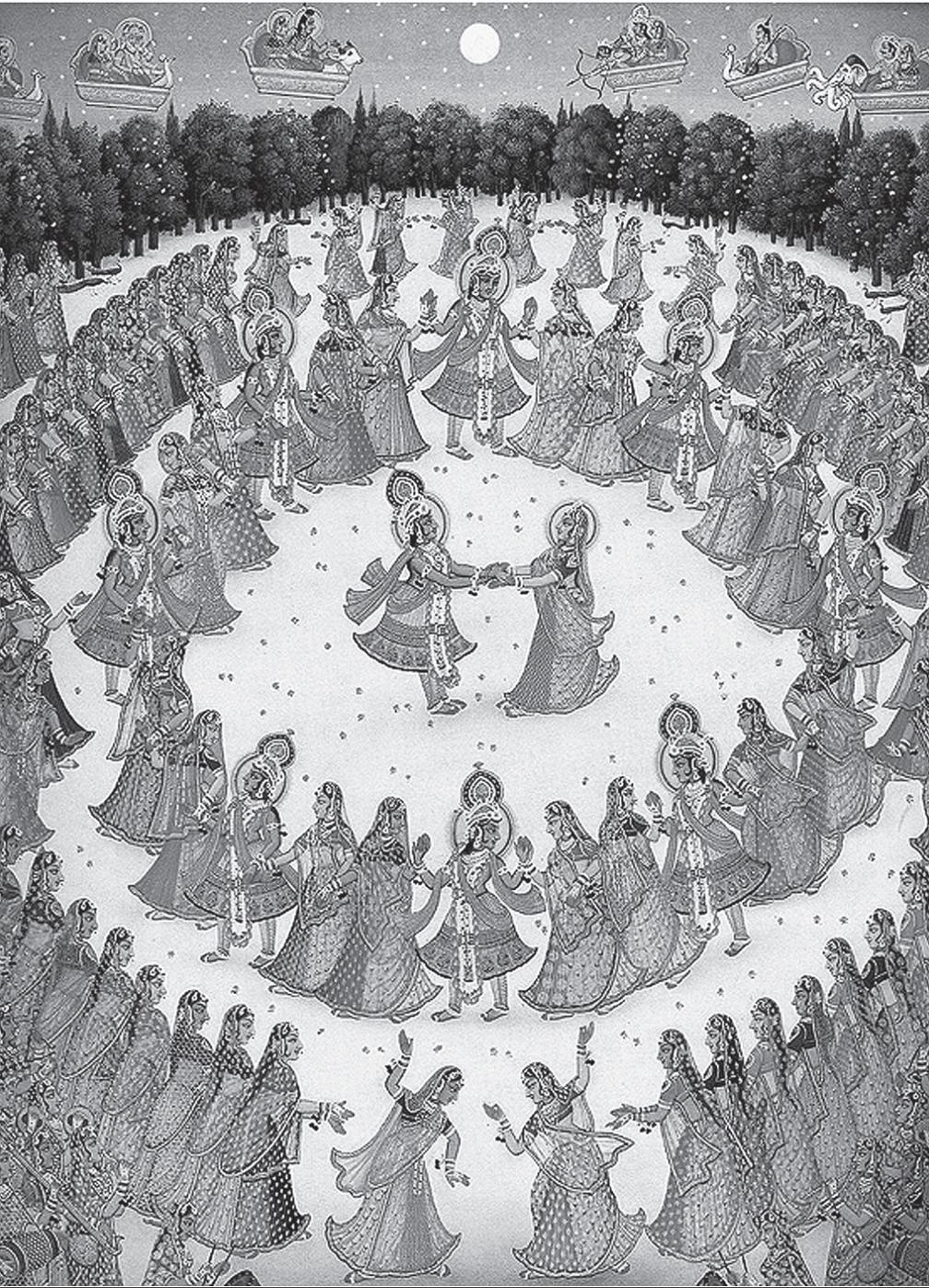
Caitanya Caraṇa Dāsa has a degree in E&TC engineering and serves full-time at ISKCON Pune. To read his other articles visit thespiritualscientist.com

This article is an extract from the author’s upcoming book *The Science of Spirituality*. To get a copy, contact: krishnakishoredas@gmail.com

The Divine Night

Understanding the deeper meanings of rāsa-līlā.

By Rādhānātha Swami



Śarat-pūrṇimā is the first day of the month of Kārtika (Oct.-Nov.). It is on this night that Lord Kṛṣṇa enacts His rāsa-līlā in Vṛndāvana. The rāsa-līlā is the ultimate culmination of spiritual realization. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Śukadeva Gosvāmī, Rūpa Gosvāmī, Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī, Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, the greatest of all sannyāsīs, and pure renunciants who have absolutely no interest in sensual enjoyment worship the five chapters of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam explaining this pastime as the revelation of the highest and purest spiritual love. It is the crest jewel, most precious, most elevated of all the pastimes of the Lord.

THE SUPREME LOVE

On this night, which is glorified by great personalities as the most beautiful night of the year, the sweet fragrance of jasmine and lotus flowers was permeating the atmosphere. The full moon rose. It had a golden reddish color and it illuminated all the directions, especially the western horizon, with a beautiful shade resembling kumkum. Kṛṣṇa was born in the

The supreme enjoyment of Lord Kṛṣṇa—the rāsa-līlā.

lunar dynasty, and so the moon was very anxious to assist the Lord. By His yoga-māyā potency, Kṛṣṇa created the most pleasing atmosphere surcharged with enchanting beauty, the atmosphere of the spiritual world.

Within Kṛṣṇa's heart arose the great desire to satisfy the hearts of His most beloved devotees. At that time on the bank of Yamunā, under the holy Vamśivata tree, Kṛṣṇa played the fifth note of His flute. The essence of the love of His heart came through His lips into the holes of the flute and formed into a beautiful song. It filled the atmosphere, entered the gopīs' ears, through their ears it entered into their hearts, and within their hearts it plundered the treasure of their entire consciousness. The song of Kṛṣṇa's flute stole the hearts of the gopīs. They were in such absorbed state of remembering Kṛṣṇa, wanting to please Kṛṣṇa through their services that they abandoned whatever they were doing. Some were milking cows, some were boiling milk, others were serving husbands or parents, some were serving prasāda or eating prasāda, some were bathing, some were putting on their clothes or their ornaments, but immediately without any consideration they left their homes; they forgot everything except Kṛṣṇa. But Kṛṣṇa is so kind. He did not want them to get in trouble, so He arranged by His yoga-māyā potency to make duplicate material forms of each gopī to stay home. Their spiritual bodies went into the forest but their family members thought that they changed their mind and stayed at home because there was an illusory form of them that remained at home.

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and the six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana declare that there is no love purer than that of the gopīs' of Vṛndāvana. Their hearts are not contaminated by even the slightest trace of selfish desires.

Why do the greatest ācāryas in

the renounced order of life consider that the gopīs represent the perfection of renunciation? This is a very subtle but important subject. The gopīs of Vṛndāvana exhibited complete renunciation, they are the supreme embodiments of *vairāgya*. For the pleasure and service of Kṛṣṇa they were willing to detach themselves from those forms of love that are most difficult to ever forget in this world. They were willing to leave the securities of their homes, with a good possibility that they would never be allowed back because the elders were forbidding

His wonderful three-fold bending form, His extraordinary pastimes—everything manifested within their hearts through the sound of His flute.

*sarva-dharmān parityajya
mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja
ahaṁ tvām sarva-pāpēbhyo
mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ*
—Bhagavad-gītā (18.66)

Kṛṣṇa tells us that we should abandon all varieties of dharma and surrender to Him. "I will protect you from all sinful reactions,"



Hearing Kṛṣṇa's flute, the gopīs abandoned everything and rushed to meet Him.

them to leave. Their reputation, the Vedic rules and regulations, the attachment of family members, the security of a home, going into the darkness of the forest—how would they survive? But their love was so deep and so pure that not a single gopī even considered these things for a moment. They forgot everything except their burning desire to serve Kṛṣṇa and please Kṛṣṇa. They surrendered their body, mind, words, life and soul only for the satisfaction of Kṛṣṇa. His beautiful smile,

He says. "Do not fear."

To put aside our desires for sense gratification for a higher purpose, for self-realization—that is *tapasya*. To actually be willing to do that is surrender. The gopīs gave up everything. The question or thought of sense gratification would never even enter their hearts. They had already given their hearts wholesale in love for Kṛṣṇa. Their absorption was single-minded; their renunciation was out of pure love.

WHO ARE THE GOPĪS?

There are different categories of *gopīs*. Some are *nitya-siddhas*, who descended from the spiritual world of Goloka in order to assist the Lord in His pastimes. These *gopīs* met with no problem when they went to meet Kṛṣṇa. But there were others. Some of them, by the arrangement of *yoga-māyā*, were forcibly locked in rooms so that they couldn't escape. They had such longing and intense feeling that they could do nothing but meditate in the core of their heart on meeting Kṛṣṇa and giving pleasure to Him. These *gopīs* were personified *Vedas*, who longed to have intimate relationships with Kṛṣṇa. They were allowed to take birth in Vṛndāvana to completely purify themselves in the association of other *gopīs*.

Some *gopīs* were the sages in Daṇḍakāraṇya forest who met Lord Rāma during His exile. They were all longing to have a loving relationship with Rāma. But in that incarnation, Śrī Rāma would only have such a relationship with one person—Sītā. Therefore, He gave them the benediction that when He appeared as Lord Kṛṣṇa on the earth, they would also reappear as *gopīs* to enjoy this relationship.

Some *gopīs*, although pure devotees of the Lord, had not yet achieved the absolute pure level of the *nitya-siddha gopīs*. These *gopīs* were not allowed to see Kṛṣṇa that night. They were locked in rooms. Due to the intensity of the separation, they were on the verge of death. This overwhelming desire to

be with Kṛṣṇa burned to ashes any tinge of material contamination that may have been in their hearts. They then entered into the realm of the *nitya-siddha gopīs*.

KṚṢṆA IS THE BASIS OF ALL LOVE

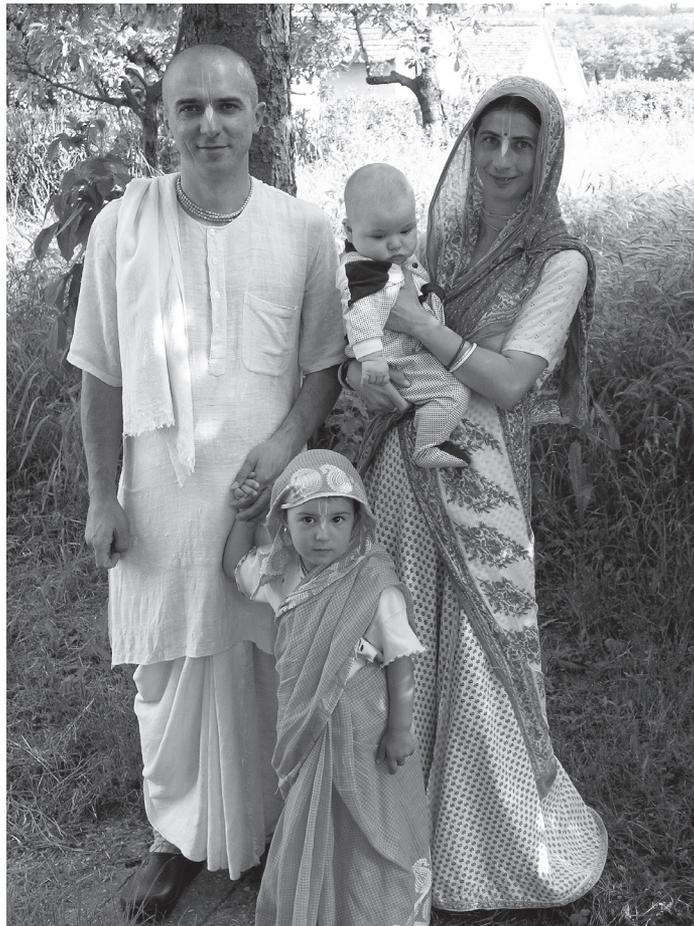
The gopīs came to Vamśivaṭa, and there with hearts anticipating a night of unalloyed service to the Supreme Lord, offered their hearts to Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa welcomed them very respectfully with deep love. After welcoming them Lord Kṛṣṇa wanted to test them. He said, "My dear gopīs, why have you come in the middle of the night? It is not appropriate for chaste young ladies like you to leave your fathers, brothers, husbands to meet another man in the forest. Besides that it's very dangerous; there is no security here. It

is very dark, you should go home. The gopīs began to weep, "We have given our hearts to You; we have abandoned everything only for You. Please smile upon us. Do not send us away." The gopīs gave so many heartfelt arguments; one was, "Kṛṣṇa, You are in everyone's heart. You are the source of life for every living being. If You leave a person's heart, all that is left is a dead corpse and no one loves dead corpses. They put them in fire or bury them underground. In truth, my dear Lord, it is Your presence within the person's heart that makes them lovable."

The *gopīs'* words help us understand that the actual attractive quality in the world is the presence of Kṛṣṇa. Because Kṛṣṇa is in the heart of our child, we love our child. Because Kṛṣṇa is in the heart of our

mother and father, we love them. It is actually Kṛṣṇa that we love. In the romantic relationship between a husband and wife, the basis of love is the presence of Kṛṣṇa within themselves. Because Kṛṣṇa is all-attractive and because we are all part of Kṛṣṇa, it is that attractive quality of Kṛṣṇa that attracts people to each other.

The only person we ever love is Kṛṣṇa. Unfortunately because we do not understand Kṛṣṇa in truth, our love is steeped in ignorance and therefore we don't taste the sweetness of transcendental ecstasy in our loving relationship in this world. If you learn how to love Kṛṣṇa then you will have loving relationship with everybody in this world, because you will see



Because Kṛṣṇa is the heart of our family members, we love them.

and reciprocate with Kṛṣṇa in their hearts. This is love.

The culmination of this pastime is so beautiful. Kṛṣṇa is bhaktavatsala. He is so gracious to His devotees because bhakti conquers Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Absolute Truth, the controller of all controllers. But Kṛṣṇa is controlled by the love of His devotees. That is why He is Rasarāja. He feels such a debt to those who surrender to love Him that Kṛṣṇa feels unable to repay. That is the nature of His love.

Kṛṣṇa then performed the topmost spiritual pastime of rāsa-līlā on the banks of Yamunā and through the forest of Vrajabhūmi with the gopīs. He danced with them throughout the night and just to fulfill the gopīs' desire to serve Him with love, Kṛṣṇa extended one night to be an entire night of Lord Brahmā. Who else can reciprocate with our love in that way?

UNDERSTANDING RĀSA-LĪLĀ

At the time of the rāsa-līlā Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Śyāmasundara, was only eight years old. At the age of eight, such a conjugal relationship, even from the material point of view, is in perfect innocence. There cannot be lust in an eight-year-old. In the rāsa-līlā, Kṛṣṇa, who is *sac-cid-ānanda-vigraha*, whose form is eternity, knowledge, and bliss, was reciprocating pastimes of pure love with the gopīs who were in their spiritual forms. The gopīs did not approach Kṛṣṇa with material bodies. They were in their original, spiritual pure forms where the modes of material nature have no access. So from the material and from the spiritual point of view, it was a perfectly pure exchange of love.

Kṛṣṇa's pastimes are not just meant for entertainment; they are meant for purification. If the rāsa-līlā is understood according to the

teachings of the great saints, there is great knowledge that we can practically apply to our lives. That is why Śrīla Prabhupāda and all of the great ācāryas in our *sampradāya* always give a commentary while translating the Vedic literature, because without that commentary you don't understand them in their proper spirit or content.

The rāsa-līlā is very instructive. Although the gopīs put aside all material attachment for the pleasure of Kṛṣṇa, when they went back to their homes, they performed all their responsibilities. They loved their children, husbands, parents because they felt and experienced Kṛṣṇa in their hearts. That means Kṛṣṇa's service is the unifying factor of all of our relationships. Whatever our activities in this world may be, they are perfect if we put Kṛṣṇa in the center. The perfect marriage is when the husband and the wife simply exist together for the pleasure and the loving service of Kṛṣṇa. If they do this, they will have perfect respect, compassion, and sympathy for one another because they won't see each other as objects of enjoyment but as the sacred property of God. The gopīs teach the householders the perfect household lives, and the gopīs also teach *sannyāsīs*, the perfect *sannyāsa* life.

If you hear properly the beautiful stories of *kṛṣṇa-līlā*, you will be inspired to surrender to Kṛṣṇa. You will be inspired to do something for the pleasure of Kṛṣṇa and His devotees. If this mood is absent, then you are not hearing properly or it's not being presented properly. We are not meant to enjoy, we are meant to be enjoyed, enjoyed by Kṛṣṇa. That is the meaning of *rāsa-līlā*—*śarat-pūrṇimā*, the night when everyone simply gives up all their ego, all their attachments for the

purpose of being enjoyed by Kṛṣṇa.

Lord Caitanya, who was Kṛṣṇa Himself, appeared in the guise of a devotee to teach us how to love, how to give pleasure, how to be enjoyed by God. And the most simple and sublime of all processes, the foundation on which we can build our devotion and our love, is the chanting of the holy name: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. This chanting is the offering of our hearts, an offering of our love, an offering of our life for the pleasure of Kṛṣṇa.

And Kṛṣṇa as Lord Caitanya has taught:

*tṛṇād api sunīcena
taror api sahiṣṇunā
amāninā mānadena
kīrtanīyaḥ sadā hariḥ
(Śrī Śikṣāṣṭaka, Text 3)*

The rāsa-līlā is about this principle. Lord Caitanya says, "If we have pure love then we are humble like a blade of grass, tolerant like a tree, ready to offer all respect to others and expect none in return. Our love is selfless."

*na dhanam na janaṁ na sundarīm
kavitām vā jagad-īśa kāmaya
mama janmani janmaniśvare
bhavatād bhaktir ahaitukī tvayi
(Śrī Śikṣāṣṭaka Text 4)*

Rādhārāṇī is speaking this verse in the *Śikṣāṣṭaka*. "I don't want wealth, I don't want anything, I only want to serve You Kṛṣṇa, to please You Kṛṣṇa." The process of achieving that perfection is to strive to be prideless in our chanting of the holy names. You cannot enter into the rāsa-līlā through mental gymnastics or through intellectual
(please turn to page 21)

The *ugly* face of facebook

Despite having plenty of virtual friends and a barrage of virtual games, people are lonely.

By Vraja Vihārī Dāsa



The sinister implications of getting hooked on technology are now dawning on the saner sections of society. A 12-year-old boy from the UK managed to blow £900 on an online game in Facebook without his parent's knowledge. Closer to home, in Mumbai, Rohan, a teenager, spent Rs. 5000 from his father's PayPal account. While the father was informed the money was

being spent for a school project, he later discovered his son had blown it on FarmVille, one of the most popular games on Facebook.

TECHNOLOGICAL EXPOSURE AND HUMAN FEELINGS

Technology exposure creates two extreme reactions among human beings—they may get lonely and desperately spend money like

water, hoping it would serve as an antidote. Or they may get hysterically aggressive and perpetrate violent and gruesome acts on others.

With no real friends, people get lonely, despite having plenty of virtual relationships and fun with a barrage of virtual games—the iPhone itself has 50,000. Dr. Linda Pagani and her colleagues at the Montreal University studied the effect of television on children and

claim their findings reveal that watching television makes children less intelligent and consequently lonely. Kaveri Subramanyam and Patrica Greenfield, psychologists at California State University and UCLA have also studied the impact of electronic communication on the minds of children. They noted in the journal, *Future of Children*, that electronic communication is making teens less interested in face-to-face communication with their friends. Many psychologists confirm that in the absence of human warmth, people seek refuge in shopping, filling their lives with things that they mostly do not need. It becomes a vicious circle: the more a person replaces human warmth with objects, the less chance they have to forge meaningful relationships with others. At the same time constant exposure to a make-believe world saps the ability to deal with life's complexities.

Some people don't get lonely, but they go the other extreme—they go berserk and get violent. Crazy, sadistic behavior is no longer uncommon. The disastrous social consequences of a lifestyle centered on machines and technology are there for all to see. We have seen frustrated people venting their anger by attacking vulnerable school children and youth. Anger and frustration is on the rise because there is no connection to other humans or to God.

Many people prefer the internet and television because they give us the feeling that we are in control. With just one push of a button, we can summon information from any corner of the world and communicate with people across continents in seconds. We can watch shows and hear music of our choice when we want and where we want. This increases our sense that we are the

controllers of our lives. As we control machines the whole day, we get desperate to be in a controller mode always. That becomes our second nature. However, when we deal with other people, we discover it is impossible to shut them up or make them speak with a push of a button. People have individual likes and dislikes, emotions and feelings. To experience love and meaningful relationships we need to spend time with others. We need to understand each other and be patient. Thanks to the rapid pace of technology, we have no time for each other and would prefer to spend time with TV and the internet. This distances people more from their loved ones.

CHOOSE THE RIGHT INFLUENCE

In the Vedic culture, men and women are trained to practice equilibrium amidst the swinging fortunes and unpredictable events of life. Daily prayers, collective worship of God and the cultivation of a service attitude help people come together in harmonious relationships. The Vedic scriptures advise humans to be equipoised during happiness and distress. The scriptures teach that the purpose of human life is to develop attraction to God. Extreme emotions overwhelm the consciousness and make it impossible to favorably remember God. Those who constantly watch television see even insignificant events being shown with great fanfare and loud propaganda. These shows agitate the mind more than pacify it, and they make us trust the external features of this world more than the substance. For example, physical attractiveness is more appealing than the strength of character, thanks to the exhibition of glamor in the media. This influences all aspects of society,

even the courts of law: Cornell University researchers found that unattractive defendants are 22% more likely to be convicted.

Let's make a conscious choice to include the right influences in our lives, before it's too late. ❁

Vraja Vihāri Dāsa, MBA, serves full-time at ISKCON Mumbai, and teaches Kṛṣṇa consciousness to students in various colleges.



Śarat Pūrṇimā ...

(Continued from page 19)

memorization of ślokas. It is only possible when we feel ourselves so humble, so much in need that we cry out to Kṛṣṇa like a baby crying for its mother.

PRAYERS

On this day, we pray for pure devotional service. We pray to follow in the footsteps of those Vaiṣṇavas who are following in the footsteps of the *gopīs*—no selfishness, no false ego, no separate interest, no agenda, except the aspiration to be the servant of the servant of the servant. To try to imitate the *gopīs* and meditate on their activities in their eternal forms is premature for a person who still has false ego. We want to be the servant of the servant of the servant of the *gopīs* by following their principles of having a pure heart of selfless surrender, focused in absorption on the pleasure of Kṛṣṇa. What pleases Kṛṣṇa the most is service to His devotees. To the degree our hearts become pure, we will derive the ultimate satisfaction to see Kṛṣṇa enjoying His pastimes with Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. At that stage, we want nothing else. ❁

Rādhānātha Swami is a guru and GBC in ISKCON.

Visit www.radhanathswami.com.

Loot Wealth Games

Why invest in a foreign concept that has repeatedly failed?

By Murāri Gupta Dāsa



Wow!" The New Delhi metro bowles me over. Smooth ride, air-conditioned, clean, bright, and hi-tech metro-station—it seems as if I am in a foreign country.

"This is all in preparation for the upcoming Commonwealth games," my friend Rohit informs me. "Cool!" I whistle, jump off the escalator, and trot to the exit gate.

"Five rupees!" A seven-year-old boy blocks my path. Unkempt hair, running nose, dirt covered face, and wearing ragged clothes, he stretches his hand and then touches it to his mouth. "I am hungry; please give me five rupees to buy roti." My stomach knots. I look around. A family of husband, wife and an infant kid, all dressed in shabby tattered clothes sit on the sidewalk, pleading the commuters for money. Construction debris and garbage litter the road.

I reach in to my bag and pull out a cookie. "Say, Hare Kṛṣṇa," I hand him the cookie. "Hare Kṛṣṇa," he smiles.

I move ahead. "Massive scam i Commonwealth Games (CWG), the headline screams from a newspaper in a stand on my left.

"What is up with these Commonwealth Games?" I ask Rohit.

"Big mess, man." he replies. "24,000 crore rupees. All spent on CWG. Oh, I am sorry. Maybe a few percent spent on the games; rest pocketed by the guys running the show."

"Oops."

"Yeah," he continues. "Every day there is news of more scandals in the games... What games, yaar? It's all money-making business."

"Who decided to have these games in India?" I ask.

"Who else but our great leaders. See, yaar, these games are a Western concept. Those guys spend on sports events, but then they make money too. Infrastructure develops. Tourists pour in, businesses boom. Compare it with India. Pathetic infrastructure, the stadiums leak or are incomplete. Most top athletes have refused to participate.

Tell me, which tourist will come to see a third class sporting event? "

"I won't," I confess.

"Nor will I," he says. "The only trade which seems to grow is the flesh trade. Prostitution, drugs, liquor, betting etc. are boosting up. What morals are we teaching our youngsters?"

"I wonder why our country is spending so much money on—of all things—a sporting event. Come on, man. We are no USA or China. People here don't have two square meals a day. Imagine how many schools and hospitals this money could have built? How many jobs it could have generated? Why can't our leaders see the reality?"

A loud siren interrupts his speech. A convey of police jeeps escort a white luxury car having dark glasses.

"Look at that... Our great politicians on the move," Rohit sneers. "Dark glasses filter out poverty.

Hopeless. *Chi!*” He kicks a crushed cola tin scattered on the ground.

The tin hits a wall covered with a bright poster. “Śrī Jagannātha Ratha-yātrā. All are welcome.” The local ISKCON temple is advertising the Ratha-yātrā celebrations. My mind fills up with images of the great Ratha-yātrā parade in Puri and the ISKCON Ratha-yātrās celebrated worldwide.

“Here is an option,” I chirp.
“What?”

SPIRITUAL SHOWS

“Do you know,” I ask, “How many people attend the kumbh mela?”

“Lakhs...some times crores.”

“How many come for the Pandharpur Ashadhī celebrations, and the annual Jagannātha Ratha-yātrā in Puri?”

“Tens of lakhs.”

“I am happy with your general knowledge. Thousands of foreign tourists—many celebrities even—visit India for spiritual pursuits. Check them out at Rishikesh, Haridwar, Vṛndāvana, Vārāṇasī and other holy places. Don’t you think India is a happening spiritual tourist destination?”

“Yeah, no doubt about it. East or west, India is the best.” Rohit raises his thumb.

“But what do we do to promote spiritual tourism?”

“Hardly anything.”

“Most of our holy places,” I say, “are dirty, ill-maintained, with poor infrastructure and without a transparent management. It seems that the government deliberately wants to keep the people away from visiting them.

“But look at it this way,” I took

a deep breath. “Our famous temples are managed with such a system that they support the economy in an all round way. There are priests, cooks, helpers, singers, musicians, dancers, actors, florists, and farmers. Artisans make sculptures, jewellery, *pūjā* paraphernalia, handicrafts, clothes, carts, etc., and traders support Deity worship and visiting pilgrims. Hundreds are either employed directly by temple or are indirectly dependent on it. Most great cities in whole of India developed around a temple. For example Tirupati has Bālājī temple, Puri has Lord Jagannātha, Trichi has Śrī Raṅganātha, Ujjain has Mahākāla, Vārāṇasī has Kaśī Viṣvanātha, Madurai has Mīnākṣī and so on.

Their artistic beauty, spiritual grandeur, traditional culture and festivals are so attractive. Not just in India but wherever Vedic culture was present this concept was seen, for example Thailand and Indonesia. Those kings made investments thousands of years ago, and even now the society is reaping benefit.

“India is full of many such holy sites set amidst charming natural settings. Why not market our colorful festivals in our great holy temples and pilgrim places? Imagine inviting tourists for Baiśākḥī, Holi, Jhulana, Kārtika, Oṅam, Divāli, Ratha-yātrā, and different parades. What about building bona fide yoga and meditation centers? Who doesn’t want peace, satisfac-



A temple attracts spiritual tourism and boosts economy.

tion, and inner joy? This will promote moral values in our youth and also generate good revenue for the nation.

“Compare it with CWG. Can the CWG give anything else of lasting value? Games will come and go. Some stars will win medals and some will lose. Soon the entire show will be forgotten. What will remain are haunted stadiums, which even the common mass cannot routinely access because they are built so far from the main habitation. What name and fame will they bring to the nation, when the entire world is smirking at the numerous corruption scandals leaking out everyday?

“Moreover, the reason behind CWG is to glorify the British queen. Now that we are independent, why should we do so? Why continue our slavish mentality? Our freedom fighters fought in to bring Indian culture, not the Western one.

DUPLICATE HAS NO VALUE

“India’s real attraction is spirituality. Ignoring it, why run for modern icons, which do not have values? We are just duplicating the West. Duplicate has no value. Who goes for a concert of duplicate Michael Jackson? Why should we neglect a system working for thousands of year and import a foreign system that which repeatedly fails here? Our spiritual festivals beat any Western carnival, which anyway hardly click in India. Moreover, CWG proves that we cannot handle such shows. We lack the vitality and transparency to do so. In Kumbh-melā without any advertisement crores of people come. Even commercially analyzing the event we have to judge according

to the output and input. For spiritual events, the input is less and output is high. For the games, the input is so high and output is zero. A huge amount of taxpayers’ money is gone, but how will India benefit? Asiad Games ended and all the money went in drain. What was the output? Without spending much money on spiritual tourism if we are getting such a wide response, imagine the result if all the money spent on CWG was used to beautify, publicize, and build infrastructure, so that even the international tour-

understand India’s spiritual life, and the devotees in our temples ...should make arrangements to accommodate them as far as possible.” (Cc. *Madhya* 25.183, purport)

“I agree, dear,” Rohit smiles.

Suddenly, the familiar melody of Hare Kṛṣṇa *kīrtana* flows from somewhere near. I turn back. The ISKCON Food for Life team arrives with their truck at the station we just left and begin serving *kṛṣṇa-prasāda*. That little boy stands in the queue along with his family, holding a pot. Soon it fills with pip-



Śrīla Prabhupāda saw India as a spiritual destination of the entire world.

ists feel comfortable in our holy towns.

“Where the Indian leaders are ignorant or callous about the vast potential of spirituality as a national resource, ISKCON’s founder Śrīla Prabhupāda saw its global application. He writes, “...many Europeans and Americans have been visiting Vṛndāvana, but they have not been properly received... It is the purpose of ISKCON to give them shelter and train them in devotional service. There are also many tourists eager to come to India to

ing hot *khicari*. The boy goes back to his corner to enjoy the feast, joined by his family.

“See,” I smile to Rohit, “A flourishing temple can easily take care of the local society. Spirituality brings morality, social integration, and promotes economy with a vision of ultimate social welfare.” Better to invest in promoting the spiritual culture of India than blowing money on futile sporting events. ☸

(With inputs from Pranav D. Thakker)

From Rituals to Realizations

Raised in the Madhvācārya tradition of South India, a young woman seeks the essential truths behind her family's religious practices.

by Śrī Vidyā Bālājī

Kṛṣṇa consciousness was not an alien concept to me, as I was born in an orthodox Madhva community in South India. I grew up in a household where rituals and personal worship were the way of life. Our Deity of Lord Kṛṣṇa was treated as the most important member of the family. He was always the first to be served, from the first cup of milk in the morning to the last meal at night. No one was allowed to partake of any food without first offering it to the Lord. In the early morning, we sang a song called *Suprabhātam* to wake the Lord. Later, mother cooked while chanting Kṛṣṇa's names. Then father would perform

pūjā, or personal worship, offering the Lord flowers and prayers. *Naivedyam*, a food offering, would follow. In the evening my parents would light a lamp near the altar

and sing hymns. Days ended with offering the Lord a glass of milk and singing Him to sleep. As I watched this routine, I grew up to be a teen-

age girl. Childishness exited. Modern materialistic education made me wonder and ask questions.

INITIAL INQUIRY

Birth in a pious family is an advantage. However, that on its own does not guarantee anything. Kṛṣṇa Himself confirms in the *Bhagavad-gītā* that only He gives people the understanding by which they can reach Him. Until He gives that understanding, the transformation never takes place. And that's how it was with me. Until the Lord gave me the urge to find out what the Supreme is, I was adamant that religious activities were a waste of time and money. But the Lord inspired questions in my mind that would lead to an appreciation



and sing hymns. Days ended with offering the Lord a glass of milk and singing Him to sleep. As I watched this routine, I grew up to be a teen-

age girl. Childishness exited. Modern materialistic education made me wonder and ask questions.

of my spiritual heritage.

SEARCHING FOR AN ANSWER

To find answers to my questions, I first went to my father, considered an authority on spiritual subjects.

My questions: 1. What is our true identity? 2. Why does our family perform all these rituals at home? 3. How do our rituals help society?

His answers came spontaneously: 1. In our household, we follow Madhvācārya, who teaches that

core. South India was undergoing a transformation. Political leaders were condemning spirituality and anything God-related as “backward” and “obsolete.” It was chaotic. My young mind didn’t know what to hold on to, or what to let go of.

INTRODUCTION TO BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ AND ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA’S WORKS

I read many books, but the reading only confused me further and

disappear.

Just as she began the class, I interrupted and asked her if I could ask a few questions. She was happy to help me. During the conversation that followed, my life was transformed forever, becoming a blissful experience, a journey filled with love.

Teacher: Do you believe in God?

Me: Yes

Teacher: Do you believe that Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead?

Me: I’m confused. I can’t answer that question. I want to know who the ultimate God is.

Teacher: To know the Supreme, you have to refer to the *Vedas* and *Upaniṣads*. These are the basic scriptures explaining clearly who the Lord is. *Bhagavad-gītā* is an *Upaniṣad* explaining truth. Śrīla Prabhupāda presented the *Bhagavad-gītā* as it is, without concoctions and personal interpretations. I would recommend you to use this book rather than any other *Bhagavad-gītā*. Now tell me what you know about the *Gītā*.

Me: It’s a universal scripture, like the Bible and the Koran.

Teacher: That’s right. Now, if in a holy scripture Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa were to declare Himself the cause of all causes, and to show the world that He is the Supreme, would you believe that?

Me: Yes.

Teacher: You are about to listen to God. Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa speaks to everyone through the *Gītā*. The facilitator in this case is the great spiritual teacher Śrīla Prabhupāda. I encourage everyone here to read his books and books about him to get to know what ISKCON is all about.

Me: Before we begin, I would like

You are about to listen to God. Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa speaks to everyone through the *Gītā*.

we are *jīvātmās*, parts of God. 2. The rituals we perform at home are not meaningless, but are the very foundation of human life. 3. Performance of these rituals, along with our overall way of life, does, on the whole, help society.

Rather than quieting my mind, these responses led to yet more questions. “Why does Madhva say that Lord Nārāyaṇa is the Supreme?” I asked. “Where is the evidence that *jīvātmā* and *Paramātmā* are different? How can a life lived in accord with the scriptures help society?”

My father replied, “Truth should be sought after. So I encourage you to find answers to these questions. Read as many books as you can. Consult your own mind. Look inward, and let me know what you find.”

That was the best treatment my rebellious mind could ask for. From then on I read various texts, but could not find satisfactory answers to my questions. Youth, external influences, and materialistic education had confounded me to the

left me with even more questions. I approached my father and again asked him for help. He asked whether I had read the *Bhagavad-gītā*. “No,” I answered. He said it was good that I had not tried to read it on my own, because this scripture, although containing the answers to all my questions, had to be received in the proper way so that I could understand the true goal of human life. He said he would arrange for someone from ISKCON to teach me *Bhagavad-gītā*. There would be a small gathering in our house every Sunday evening. It would be fun and the perfect opportunity to find answers.

Answers

I imagined that the ISKCON teacher my father had invited would be an elderly person. Instead, a young woman arrived with a copy of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*. She offered prayers to the Lord at the altar and began with a smile. She seemed focused, happy, and clear. Somehow, I felt sure that all my doubts were about to

to address a few more questions on my mind. Why is devotional service to the Lord important? What do we achieve by feeding Him and serving Him? Does it benefit society in any way?

Teacher: Kṛṣṇa does not need our service. This whole system of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is designed to develop the ultimate love of God that Lord Caitanya propagated. The first step in getting close to God is to develop love for Him. Do you serve your parents?

Me: Yes.

Teacher: Just as we serve our parents and loved ones, we try to make Kṛṣṇa our very own family member. This develops intense love for Him and enables us to get back to Him as soon as possible, escaping the cycle of birth and death. You asked me if this benefits society. Let me explain. You grew up seeing your parents doing this from your childhood. Whether you believe in it or not, whenever you eat a fruit or a sweet, your hands automatically go to the altar to offer it, right?

Me: Yes.

Teacher: Your mother has raised a Kṛṣṇa conscious child. She created a spiritual environment for you. Even if you are offered chances to eat meat or drink liquor, you avoid them because these have been absent in your system right from childhood.

Me: That's true.

Teacher: Now imagine every household developing these practices, every citizen taking to these concepts and creating a wonderful society. Meat-eating, intoxication, gambling, and illicit sex cloud the consciousness, and then discrimination is lost. This is the exact reason behind all crimes and bad elements in our society. Now do you see how these practices benefit so-

ciety?

Me: I understand. My parents told me that we follow Śrī Madhvācārya's teachings, which say that we—*jīvātmā* and the Lord, *Paramātmā*—are different. But I read other philosophies that led me to think that we become one with the Lord at the end. Could you explain this?

Teacher: I'm glad you brought this up. Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings are based on the *Brahma-Mādhva-Gauḍīya* lineage. His teachings are authenticated, not mere imagination or speculation. The answer to your question is "apply common sense." Can you create one thing the Lord has created? Can you make an amoeba in a lab?

That class opened my mind to Kṛṣṇa consciousness and introduced me to the great spiritual teacher Śrīla Prabhupāda and his works.

Me: No.

Teacher: Then this proves that you are a limited and dependent entity. God, on the other hand, is the cause of all causes. He shows in the eleventh chapter of *Gītā* His universal form, how He is in everything and everything is in Him. Hence you, I, and all other living beings on earth are dependent and separate from the Lord. *Paramātmā* is unique and distinguished by His unlimited potencies. Though we are limited, we can gain His grace through *bhakti-yoga* and go back to Him, never to return to the material world.

That was the best thing that ever happened in my life. That class opened my mind to Kṛṣṇa consciousness and introduced me to the great spiritual teacher Śrīla Prabhupāda and his works.

ON THE PATH

I was wonderstruck. A young woman could apply such logic and explain the greatest truths in a simple way. What made her so clear, so intelligent? I understood that it was Śrīla Prabhupāda's instructions. I ended my questions. As she turned the pages of the divine scripture and started the class, I lost a lot of things and gained much more. I lost anxiety, doubt, depression, and anger. The things I gained were the pillars that would keep me going. I gained faith—unswerving faith in Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. I gained bliss—the natural state of every soul. And I gained perspective—correct ideas about life and afterlife. In the *Gītā* the Lord says that for the devotees,

"I carry what they lack, and I preserve what they have." Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa brought me what I lacked: faith. And He preserved what I had: the spiritual yearning in me. I thank Śrī Kṛṣṇa for showing me Śrīla Prabhupāda; any other teacher would have confused me. I thank the Lord again and again for giving me the best teacher who could lead me to Him. Now I'm reading many of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books. I am developing that ultimate love that Lord Caitanya showed through His own life. I am still a student. But now I am a bold student who can confidently say, "I am on the right path." 🌸

Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa
Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare
Hare Rāma Hare Rāma
Rāma Rāma Hare Hare

In your own words ...



Which things in nature remind you of Kṛṣṇa?

THE RAINBOW REMINDS me of the presence of Kṛṣṇa. All the colors of life are so vibrantly displayed, it seems like an autograph of Kṛṣṇa on the sky. We can see and feel its beauty, the quality that signifies the presence of the Lord. The rainbow is like a big colorful smile of the merciful Lord among the dark rain clouds. Although we can't find the origin and end of it, the rainbow is the sign that the sun is somewhere around just as the merciful Kṛṣṇa, who is always around to protect His devotees.

—Kunal Surana,
Pune

Duḥkhālayam aśāśvatam. The material world with all its miseries reminds me of Kṛṣṇa. One who does not have the proper understanding of the purpose behind this creation may apparently assume Kṛṣṇa to be a sadist who tortures living entities for His own enjoyment.

When a giraffe gives birth to its offspring, the mother giraffe immediately starts kicking the baby till it stands up and starts running. One may think that the mother giraffe is cruel. But the mother is actually trying to save the baby from becoming a prey to the wild animals. Similarly, Kṛṣṇa's material world is designed to give us continuous kicks in so many ways to remind us of the futility of this world. Kṛṣṇa does

not want us to rot here forever, but rather He wants us to enjoy eternal bliss by taking us back home, back to Godhead.

—Rasikacārya Dāsa

MOTHER COW IS A poignant reminder of the existence of God. She is a completely harmless creature and full of motherly love for all living beings. Pure cow's milk, when treated according to the Vedic process, is a miracle food and it increases one's *prajñā*, spiritual intellect. She is the only life form whose urine and dung are also beneficial for human beings.

Unfortunately, she is being cruelly slaughtered by the millions worldwide. Like the cow, Kṛṣṇa gives spiritual knowledge through the holy scriptures like *Bhagavad-gītā* for the ultimate welfare of all humanity for all time. Yet, His pure message is also being slaughtered by the atheists, impersonalists, and the agnostics. Therefore, the greatest need of the hour is to protect cows and spread bona fide knowledge of the scriptures.

—Nitāi Prasāda Dāsa

THE REDDISH GOLDEN GLOW of dawn reminds me of the color of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī and Lord Caitanya. Fanning sunrays that pierce the clouds appear like arms of the Lord ready to embrace. The mighty rivers with their gentle currents

beckon me like mothers. The baby-powder like soft mud of holy dhams pampers my feet as though I walk in the lap of the Supreme Mother. As the breeze rustles the tree leaves and lightly caresses me, I remember the words of my spiritual master, "When a cool breeze blows in Vṛndāvana, it means Lord Kṛṣṇa is embracing you." The trees in Vṛndāvana with Śrī Rādhē and Śrī Kṛṣṇa written on them seem like age-old friends. Early morning or in dark evenings, when no one watches, I embrace them, and a divine feeling of love enters within me as I press my heart to theirs.

—Murāri Gupta Dāsa

ACCORDING TO BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ, *prakṛti* (material nature) is Kṛṣṇa's energy. When we take nature walks, we see *kadamba* trees, *tulasī* plants, cows, monkeys, and peacocks. They remind us of Vṛndāvana. Lakes, rivers, and oceans remind us of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes with His cowherd friends on the banks of Yamunā and His stealing *gopīs* clothes. Stones remind us of *śalagrāma-śilā*. Hills and mountains remind us of Govardhana. When we see the *pārijāta* tree, it reminds us of Kṛṣṇa and Satyabhāmā in Dvārakā. And, when we see devotees wearing *tilaka*, *dhoti-kurtā* or *sārīs* and doing *nāma-saṅkīrtana*, we are immediately reminded of Kṛṣṇa.

The sky reminds of Kṛṣṇa's blue color, the rising and setting of the sun and moon reminds of Ṭime, and stars remind of Dhruva's pastime.

We live in this illusionary world but with beautiful nature around us, why not always remember Kṛṣṇa and never forget Him?

—Mrs. Iyer, Goa.

TIME REMINDS OF KṚṢṆA. When we think of nature generally what comes to mind are: sun, moon, air, ocean, Himalayan mountains, beautiful forests, flowers so on. Seldom do we think of time, for we are not used to it.

Time is like salt in a curry— invisible but integral. Lord Kṛṣṇa says in *Bhagavad-gītā* (10.33): "I am the inexhaustible time." Time is the representative of Kṛṣṇa because in due course of time, there will be a great fire and everything will be annihilated, so it is up to us how we use this beautiful nature in remembering the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa.

—Srinivas Kasturi, Hyderabad

MATERIAL SUFFERINGS in this world remind me of Kṛṣṇa. We, as humans tend to crib a lot about minor mishaps occurring in lives. But when we see hardcore sufferings that people go through, the thoughts that should strike a practicing devotee are, "Kṛṣṇa is so merciful upon me! He has given me so much. He has given me practically everything I need, except these few things that I am cribbing for!"

This is how the material world is. There will always be someone or something which irritates us. But we should know that for one practicing *bhakti*, reactions are received by us, but only after being filtered by the Lord Himself. This increases our appreciation and gratitude towards Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa preserves what we have and compensates what we lack. This affection of Kṛṣṇa will help one always prayerfully remember the Lord in all circumstances."

—Rahul Danait

IN YOUR OWN WORDS

QUESTION FOR THE FORTHCOMING ISSUES

Which things do you think are beautiful?

Deadline for submission is Oct. 25

Answers will be published in December

Word limit: 150 words

E-mail: ed.btgindia@pamho.net



I walk out and look at the sky,
That blue hue reminds me of Kṛṣṇa.
I see birds freely flying in the sky,
Their swift movements remind me of Kṛṣṇa.

I move ahead and wind gushes over my body,
That tickling sensation reminds me of Kṛṣṇa.
Then I see some trees swinging back and forth,
Their falling leaves and flowers remind me of Kṛṣṇa.

A lightening leaves me blind for few moments,
Those flashes of light remind me of Kṛṣṇa,
Suddenly, a thunder strikes my ears,
The growling of clouds reminds me of Kṛṣṇa.
Now, water is pouring all over my body,
These tears of the sun remind me of Kṛṣṇa.

I open my arms to welcome someone,
But absence of this someone reminds me of Kṛṣṇa.
Blinking of my eyes and breathing in of air,
Taste on my tongue and touch on my skin,
Moments of love and my tough times,
Some great laughs and some loud cries,
Everything in my life reminds me of Kṛṣṇa.

My heart is beating to love Him forever,
I will die if nothing in life will remind me of Kṛṣṇa.
A prayer that my heart cries out every moment,
"O Kṛṣṇa! Wherever I am, heaven or hell,
Give me a reason that reminds me of You."

—Manish Goel

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VAIṢṆAVA CALENDAR

1 Sept - 15 Oct, 2010

- 4 Oct: Fasting for Indirā Ekādaśī
 5 Oct: Break fast (Mumbai) 06:30 am - 10:28 am
 17 Oct: Rāmacandra Vijayotsava, Śrī Madhvācārya Appearance
 19 Oct: Pakṣa vardhini Mahādvādaśī, Fasting for Pāśāṅkuṣa Ekādaśī, Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī Disappearance, Śrīla Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī Disappearance, Śrīla Kṛṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī Disappearance
 20 Oct: Break fast (Mumbai) 06:34 am - 10:27 am
 22 Oct: Śrī Kṛṣṇa Śaradiya Rāsāyātrā, Śrī Murārī Gupta Disappearance, Lakṣmi Pūjā, Fourth month of Cāturmāsya begins (fast from urad dāl for one month)
 28 Oct: Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura Disappearance
 31 Oct: Appearance of Rādhā Kuṇḍa, snāna dāna, Bahulāṣṭamī, Śrī Virabhadra Appearance
 2 Nov: Fasting for Ramā Ekādaśī
 3 Nov: Break fast (Mumbai) 06:39 am - 10:28 am
 6 Nov: Dīpa dāna, Dīpāvalī
 7 Nov: Go Pūjā, Go Kṛdā, Govardhana Pūjā, Bali Daityarāja Pūjā, Śrī Rasikānanda Appearance
 8 Nov: Śrī Vāsudeva Ghosh Disappearance
 9 Nov: Śrīla Prabhupāda Disappearance
 14 Nov: Gopāṣṭamī, Goṣṭhāṣṭamī, Śrī Gadādhara dāsa Gosvāmī – Disappearance, Śrī Dhananjaya Paṇḍita Disappearance, Śrī Śrīnivāsa Ācārya Disappearance
 15 Nov: Jagaddhātṛī Pūjā

CAUSTIC SODA + OIL = SOAP. WRONG!

As you reach for your soap in the morning, ponder for a moment about what ingredients have gone into making it. The chemical procedure for making a basic soap is simple. Take caustic soda, add oil and some perfume. Mix them and you end up with some kind of soap.

What will happen if you keep containers of caustic soda and oil next to each other and wait?

Nothing. They will not mix on their own.

Surprisingly many so-called intelligent people believe that material nature is working on its own, with no one controlling it. The *Bhagavad-gītā* (16.8) describes such people in this way: “They say that this world is unreal, with no foundation, no God in control. They say it is produced of sex desire and has no cause other than lust.”

Coming back to soap. It is clear that without the superior touch of labor, soap cannot be manufactured. If someone claims that keeping soda and oil containers side-by-side will automatically produce soap, then is that intelligence?

Today we hear the scientists saying the same assertion: two or more things can combine automatically. But where is one single case of inert elements mixing with each other without a superior energy impelling them to do so?

A few decades ago, corporate businesses were using teletype technology. If an operator would press ‘A’ on one machine then immediately another machine connected to it through teletype technology would also type ‘A’. Now of course we have much more advanced methods for transferring data from one place to another. But, continuing our analogy, if two unconnected typewriters are set up next to each other, then how can we expect a similar result like teletype. Machinery can never act on its own.

So, it is common sense to conclude that without

the touch of the living entity nothing can be done. As man is necessary for activating his tiny machines in his tiny factories, the Supreme Person is necessary for activating this gigantic machinery called as Mother Nature.

The *Bhagavad-gītā* states (10.8): “I am the source of all spiritual and material worlds. Everything emanates from Me. The wise who perfectly know this engage in My devotional service and worship Me with all their hearts.”

The *Brahma-saṁhitā* states (5.1): “There are many personalities possessing the qualities of Bhagavān, but Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme because none can excel Him. He is the Supreme Person, and His body is eternal, full of knowledge, and bliss. He is the primeval Lord Govinda and the cause of all causes.” And how exactly Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa executes this function is also described in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (9.10): “This material nature, which is one of My energies, is working under My direction, O son of Kuntī, producing all moving and nonmoving beings. Under its rule this manifestation is created and annihilated again and again.”

Mayā means “by My,” *adhi* means “from above” and *akṣa* means “eyes.” Thus, *mayādhyakṣeṇa prakṛtiḥ* means “under My eyes.” Everything is done under Kṛṣṇa’s supervision. For example, in India the Prime Minister’s governmental business is carried out by his ministers. The uninvolved Prime Minister merely remains present. Still it is a fact that unless he gives orders, the ministers are incapable of enforcing any law. In the same way unless Śrī Kṛṣṇa gives His support as the supervisor, material nature (personified as Durgā Devī) cannot do anything.

So we revise our equation:

Caustic Soda + Oil + Touch of Spiritual Energy =
Soap ☸

—Śyāmānanda Dāsa