

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



The Magazine of the Hare Krishna Movement

January 2011

Marriage Ties

Understanding Them Better



C O N T E N T S

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One who is engaged in Kṛṣṅa consciousness and devotional service has without doubt become freed from all contaminations of material sinful activities. Devotional service therefore has the power to actually nullify all kinds of reactions to sinful deeds. A devotee is nevertheless always alert not to commit any sinful activities.

—Śrīla Prabhupāda from
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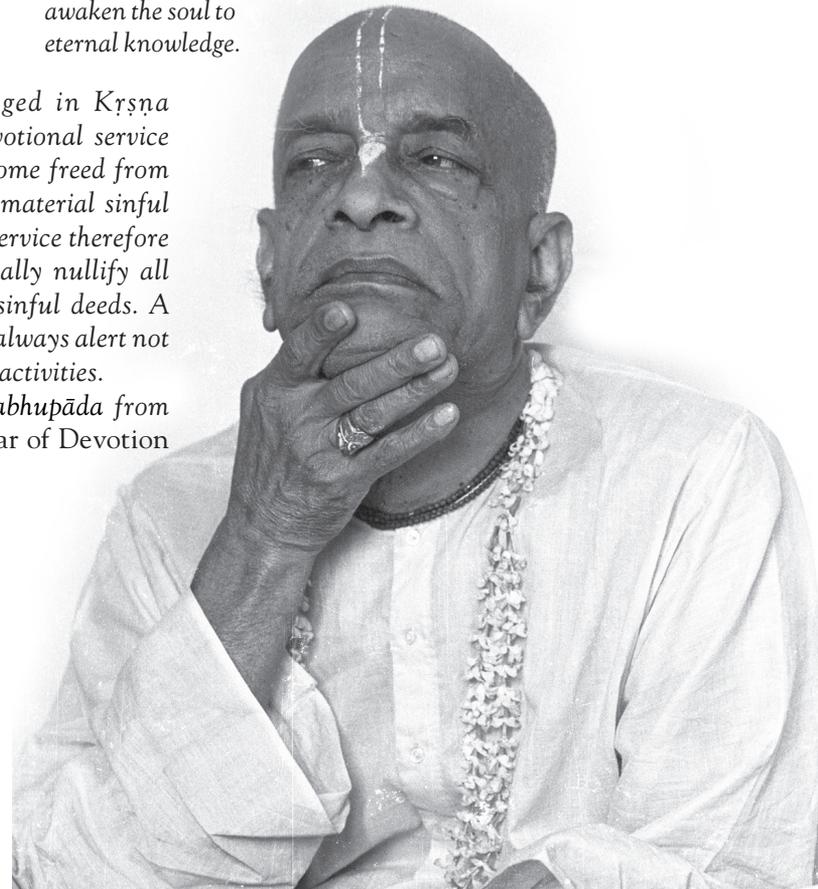
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OUR PURPOSES

• To help all people discern reality from illusion, spirit from matter, the eternal from the temporary. • To expose the faults of materialism. • To offer guidance in the Vedic techniques of spiritual life. • To preserve and spread the Vedic culture. • To celebrate the chanting of the holy names of God as taught by Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu • To help every living being remember and serve Śrī Kṛṣṅa, 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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I read your article “The Magic Wand” (Nov. 2010). I liked the story of Sumukhi and Dumukhi where Sumukhi got *prasāda* while Dumukhi remained hungry. I am also a Life Member of ISKCON and a regular reader of *Back to Godhead*.

—Er. V.K. Goel, Lucknow

DREAMING ABOUT KṚṢṆA

Hare Kṛṣṇa, Mātājī. *Danḍavat praṇām*. I am into ISKCON since the last two years. Your article “The Magic Wand” that came in November BTG is really worth reading. I enjoyed it.

It was surprising to learn that Lord Rāma appeared in Nitāi’s dream. My question is regarding this aspect itself: Is it really possible to see the Supreme Lord or His image in our dreams? Or does it happen only with small children whose minds are pure and unpolluted? I remember seeing a statue of Shirdi Sāi Bābā once in my dreams. But never has an image of Kṛṣṇa or Rāma appeared in my dreams. Would it happen with me like Nitāi?

—Shantanu Patil,
Goa

TĀRIṆĪ RĀDHĀ DEVĪ DĀSĪ REPLIES:

Thank you so much for your encouraging words. The Lord appears by His will only to pure devotees. For us, who are just learning to appreciate Lord Kṛṣṇa, it is mostly a projection of our subconsciousness. Probably children born to devotee parents have a longer connection with Kṛṣṇa consciousness from previous births and so get such dreams from their subconscious minds. As we continue practicing devotional service and fill our minds with things related to Lord

Kṛṣṇa during our waking hours, slowly our sleeping minds will also relate to Kṛṣṇa.

QUALIFICATIONS OF A DISCIPLE

Could you kindly help me to know the minimum qualification for a disciple?

—R. Radha Krishna
by email

OUR REPLY: “Disciple” means one who has an attitude of surrender and submission toward the guru and is willing to follow instructions with discipline. That attitude is essential. Any guru in ISKCON will ask you to follow basic rules, the four regulative principles: no eating of meat, fish or eggs; no illicit sex (sex only in marriage, and only to have children); no gambling; and no intoxication (including caffeinated beverages). Also, you will be asked to chant a minimum of sixteen good rounds of *japa* on beads every day. Many ISKCON gurus require at least one year of “testing” each other, so that both can learn more about each other and become fixed in the confidence that each will do his or her part to assist in the growth of the disciple’s Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* states that for learning to take place, both the hearer and the speaker must be qualified. Some gurus also require systematic study of Prabhupāda’s books, sometimes followed by an exam, to see that the potential disciple is fully aware of the basic philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. But the “minimum” is to have a servant’s mentality, a desire to please guru and Kṛṣṇa, and the determination to fol-

low the vows required at initiation: the four regulative principles and sixteen rounds daily.

STORIES FROM OTHER PLANETS

It is mentioned in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* that it contains stories about devotees from other planets, not just this planet. How does the story come to be known here and then be written in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*?

—Pooja Jayaswal
by email

OUR REPLY: *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* was compiled by Śrīla Vyāsadeva, a *śaktyāveśa-avatāra* of Lord Viṣṇu. Vyāsadeva is a *jīva* soul like us, but he has been directly empowered by the Supreme Lord to compile *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. The stories in the *Bhāgavatam* are historical, and the Lord and many of His empowered devotees are *trikāla-jña*: they can know the past, the present, and the future. Śrīla Prabhupāda mentions in his purport to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.5.13): “Such liberated persons as Vyāsadeva are perfect not only by the power of vision and wisdom, but also in aural reception, in thinking, feeling, and all other sense activities. A liberated person possesses perfect senses, and with perfect senses only can one serve the sense proprietor, Hṛṣīkeśa, Śrī Kṛṣṇa the Personality of Godhead. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, therefore, is the perfect description of the all-perfect Personality of Godhead by the all-perfect personality Śrīla Vyāsadeva, the compiler of the *Vedas*.”

REGAINING SPIRITUAL STRENGTH

I used to be strong, used to per-

form devotional activities, viz. *ārati*, *japa* etc. Since a few months, I have lost my confidence and enthusiasm because of some negative thoughts. How do I come back to my original state?

—Laxmikant Verma, by email

REPLY BY NANDA DULĀL DĀSA: For progressive life in devotional service, enthusiasm is the first necessity. Success even in ordinary endeavors demands enthusiasm. Enthusiasm is generally interpreted as eagerness or keenness for some cause. Śrīla Prabhupāda, however, provides an interesting insight in his book *The Nectar of Instruction*: “Endeavor executed with intelligence in Kṛṣṇa consciousness is called enthusiasm.” It is clear then that to succeed we need to understand intelligently what will facilitate our advancement and what will hamper it.

Rendering devotional service is like declaring war on *māya*, and there is all chance to get hurt, sometimes even fatally. Being careful, however, can prevent us from getting hurt. To specifically counteract negative thoughts, we can reflect on the many wonderful experiences that we have experienced in Kṛṣṇa consciousness while in touch with *sādhus*, Deities, holy places, etc. Contrast these with the experiences an ordinary person has and we can instantly realize our extraordinary fortune. Such reflection on our privileged condition can give us an immediate sense of relief and jubilation. It can help us rise above the many negativities around us in a moment. You have mentioned that previously you used to chant and perform *ārati*, etc. With a mind filled with positive thoughts,

you can re-connect to Kṛṣṇa by resuming your devotional activities.

Some replies were written by Krishna.com's Live Help volunteers. Write to us at: Back to Godhead, 3rd Floor, 302, Amrut Industrial Estate, Western Express Highway, Mira Road (E)-401104.

Email: ed.btgindia@pamho.net

VEDIC THOUGHTS

Causeless devotional service is unmotivated by sense enjoyment, perfection, or liberation. When one is freed from all these contaminations, he can bring Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is very funny, under control.

—Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu
Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta,
(Madhya 24.29)

O Lord Narahari, persons who have attained this human form live uselessly, merely breathing like bellows, if they fail to worship You by hearing about You, chanting Your glories, remembering You, and performing the other devotional practices.

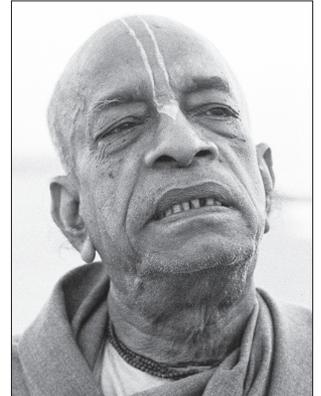
—Śrīla Śrīdhara Svāmī,
commentary on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.87.17

One is truly a Vaisnava who has given up the habit of falling victim to the ferocious tigress of wealth, beauty, and fame. Such a soul is factually detached from material life and is known as a pure devotee. Someone with this consciousness of detachment has thereby become victorious over the mundane world of birth and death.

—Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta
Sarasvatī Ṭhākura
(Duṣṭa-Mana, 11)

Marriage Ties

Marriage is more than two individuals coming together. There is a sacred goal behind it, and it's the responsibility of both partners to pursue it together.



by His Divine Grace

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

Founder-Ācārya of The International Society for Krishna Consciousness

MARRIAGE WITH A PURPOSE

There are many purificatory processes for advancing a human being to spiritual life. The marriage ceremony, for example, is considered to be one of these sacrifices. It is called *vivāha-yajña*. . . . The Lord says here that any sacrifice that is meant for human welfare should never be given up. *Vivāha-yajña*, the marriage ceremony, is meant to regulate the human mind so that it may become peaceful for spiritual advancement. (Bg. 18.5, purport)

Marriage based on the principles of religious life is therefore current in all civilized human society because that is the way for restricted sex life. This restricted, unattached sex life is also a kind of *yajña* because the restricted householder sacrifices his general tendency toward sense gratification for higher, transcendental life. (Bg. 4.26, purport)

The *Vedas* prescribe, therefore, sacred marriage for regulated sense gratification. Thereby one is gradually elevated to the platform of release from material bondage, and the highest perfection of liberated life is to associ-

ate with the Supreme Lord. (Bg. 4.31, purport)

Marriage, or the combination of a man with a woman, is necessary for progeny, but it is not meant for sense enjoyment. In the absence of voluntary restraint, there is propaganda for family planning, but foolish men do not know that family planning is automatically executed as soon as there is search after the Absolute Truth. (SB 1.2.10, purport)

Marriage means taking complete charge of a woman and living peacefully without debauchery. At the present moment, however, debauchery is unrestricted. (SB 4.26.6, purport)

VEDIC MARRIAGES

The general procedure of Vedic marriage is that a father offers his daughter to a suitable boy. That is a very respectable marriage. A boy should not go to the girl's father and ask for the hand of his daughter in marriage. That is considered to be humbling one's respectable position. (SB 3.22.13, purport)

There are different kinds of marriages, of which the first-class



An ideal family pursuing the Absolute Truth.

marriage is held by inviting a suitable bridegroom for the daughter and giving her in charity, well dressed and well decorated with ornaments, along with a dowry according to the means of the father. (SB 3.22.15, purport)

There are eight forms of marriage mentioned in the scripture *Manu-smṛiti*, but only one process of marriage, *brāhma* or *rājasika* marriage, is now current. Other kinds of marriage—by love, by exchange of garlands, or by kidnapping the bride—are now forbidden in this Kali age. (SB 3.22.16, purport)



A traditional Vedic marriage

SIGNIFICANCE OF GOTRA AND ASTROLOGY

The custom in Vedic society is to examine the horoscopes of a girl and boy being considered for marriage to see whether their combination is suitable. Vedic astrology reveals whether one has been born in the *vipra-varṇa*, *kṣatriya-varṇa*, *vaiśya-varṇa* or *śūdra-varṇa*, according to the three qualities of material nature. This must be examined because a marriage between a boy of the *vipra-varṇa* and a girl of the *śūdra-varṇa* is incompatible; married life would be miserable for both husband and wife. Consequently, a boy should marry a girl of the same category. Of course, this is *trai-guṇya*, a material calculation according to the *Vedas*, but if the boy and girl are devotees there need be no such considerations. A devotee is transcendental, and therefore in a marriage between devotees, the boy and girl form a very happy combination. (SB 6.2.26, purport)

If according to astrological calculations the boy and girl were compatible in every respect, the match was called *yoṭaka* and the marriage would be accepted. . . . Regardless of the affluence of the boy or the personal beauty of the girl, without this astrological compatibility the marriage would not take place. (SB 9.18.23, purport)

WHO IS A DHARMA-PATNĪ?

A real wife is *dharma-patnī*. That is, a woman accepted in marriage by ritualistic ceremony is called *dharma-patnī*, which signifies that she is accepted in terms of religious principles. Children born of *dharma-patnī* . . . inherit the property of the father, but children born of a woman who is not properly married do not inherit the father's property. The word *dharma-patnī* also refers to a chaste wife. A chaste wife is one who never had any connection with men before her marriage. (SB 4.26.16, purport)

DUTY OF PARENTS

It is the duty of a father and mother to arrange for the marriage of their sons and daughters. . . . Sons and daughters should not be allowed freedom to intermingle with the opposite sex unless they are married. This Vedic social organization is very good in that it stops the promulgation of illicit sex life, or *varṇa-saṅkara*, which appears under different names in this present day. (SB 4.27.8, purport)

BROKEN MARRIAGES

In this age illicit connection with women will render many women and children uncared for. Circumstantially, the women will try to become independent of the protection of men, and marriage will be performed as a matter of formal agreement between man and woman. (SB 1.16.21, purport)

A girl of godly quality should be handed over to a boy of godly quality. A girl of demoniac quality should



Incompatible marriage partners—they often end up getting divorced.

be handed over to a boy of demonic quality. Then they will be happy. But if the girl is demonic and the boy is godly, then the combination is incompatible; they cannot be happy in such a marriage. At the present moment, because boys and girls are not married according to quality and character, most marriages are unhappy, and there is divorce. (SB 3.24.15, purport)

IDEAL MARRIAGES

Śrīla Prabhupāda was in New York, and he installed the first Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities and the deities of Jagannātha-Baladeva-Subhadrā. He initiated some devotees and married some devotees. So Śrīla Prabhupāda was marrying me to Advaita, and my mother first said—Śrīla Prabhupāda told her what to say—she said, “My girl was so long under my guidance; now I entrust this girl under your guidance.” And Advaita said, “I accept this girl for life.” And Balāi says, “I accept you as my husband, to serve you through my whole life.” Then Śrīla Prabhupāda said, “You are promising before Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa so you must take this responsibility. I speak to the husbands especially. According to Vedic principles, a woman is always to be given protection. They have no freedom. Women are like children. If you give freedom to a child it means death to them. They are tender, feeble, and weak. People will exploit them. So long as a girl is young she is under the protection of her parents. In India girls don’t mix with boys. Then she is handed over to a suitable boy to take charge of her. In old age the husband leaves home and takes *sannyāsa*. There is no question of divorce or separation. If there is any misunderstanding between husband and wife it should

be neglected, not taken seriously. Just like if there is fighting between two goats it should not be taken seriously; they cannot hurt each other. If there is a thunder sound in the morning it should not be taken seriously; there is no rain. Nobody should go to court. No question of divorce. It is lifelong. You are promising before the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa. If you break this

promise there will be serious reaction. As a *sannyāsī* I am not to perform marriage ceremonies, but for the benefit of my disciples I am doing it. Please remember your responsibility and be happy and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. There is no need of abstinence, but don’t beget children like cats and dogs. A person in Kṛṣṇa consciousness must be serious about his position. If you can produce children in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then you may have hundreds of children; otherwise no children.

By Śrīmatī Balāi, from *Memories of Śrīla Prabhupāda*

Man and woman both seek sexual enjoyment, and when they are united by the ritualistic ceremony of marriage, they are happy for some time, but finally there is dissension, and thus there are so many cases of separation and divorce. Although every man and

woman is actually eager to enjoy life through sexual unity, the result is disunity and distress. Marriage is recommended to give men and women a concession for restricted sex life, which is also recommended in *Bhagavad-gītā* by the Supreme Personality of Godhead. *Dharmāviruddho bhūteṣu kāmo ’smi*: sex life not against the principles of religion is Kṛṣṇa. (SB 7.13.26, purport)



Although a *sannyāsī*, Śrīla Prabhupāda encouraged family life in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

By the Vedic injunction, the wife is accepted as the better half of a man’s body because she is responsible for discharging half of the duties of the husband. . . . When a man becomes qualitatively like the cats and dogs, he forgets his duties in cultivating spiritual values, and thus he accepts his wife as a sense gratificatory agency. When the wife is accepted as a sense gratificatory agency, personal beauty is the main consideration, and as soon as there is a break in personal sense gratification, there is disruption or divorce. But when husband and wife aim at spiritual advancement by mutual cooperation, there is no consideration of personal beauty or the disruption of so-called love.

Marriage is actually a duty performed in mutual cooperation as directed in the authoritative scriptures for spiritual advancement. (SB 3.14.19, purport)

INTERCASTE MARRIAGES IN VEDIC TIMES

Kardama Muni was a *brāhmaṇa*, whereas Emperor Svāyambhuva was a *kṣatriya*. [Still Kardama Muni married Devahūti, the daughter of Svāyambhuva.] Therefore, intercaste marriage was current even in those days. The system was that a *brāhmaṇa* could marry the daughter of a *kṣatriya*, but a *kṣatriya* could not marry the daughter of a *brāhmaṇa*. We have evidences from the history of the Vedic age that Śukrācārya offered his daughter to Mahārāja Yayāti, but the King had to refuse to marry the daughter of a *brāhmaṇa*; only with the special permission of the *brāhmaṇa* could they marry. Intercaste marriage, therefore, was not prohibited in the olden days, many millions of years ago, but there was a regular system of social behavior. (SB 3.21.285, purport)

THE DOWRY SYSTEM

The dowry system is not illegal. It is a gift given to the daughter by the father to show good will. If the father is unable to give a dowry, he must at least give a fruit and a flower. God can also be pleased even by a fruit and a flower. (SB 3.22.23, purport)

An affectionate father, during the marriage of his daughter, would give her as much as possible. Immediately after the marriage, the daughter goes to her husband's house, and it is also a custom for the brother of the bride to accompany his sister and brother-in-law to exhibit affection for her. (SB 10.1.31–32, purport)

LORD BRAHMĀ ON WEDDING CARDS

Lord Brahmā, the creator of the universe, is interested in good progeny. Therefore unless he is pleased, one cannot get a suitable wife. In fact, Lord Brahmā is worshiped in marriage ceremonies. In India even today, wedding invitations are still issued with a picture of Lord Brahmā on the face of the card. (SB 5.2.15, purport)



SVAYAMVARA— ROYAL MARRIAGES

Exceptionally qualified daughters of powerful kings were allowed to make a choice of their own bridegrooms in open competition, and such ceremonies were called *svayamvara*, or selection of the bridegroom. Because the *svayamvara* was an open competition between the rival and valiant princes, such princes were invited by the father of the princess, and usually there were regular fights between the invited princely order in a sporting spirit. But it so happened that sometimes the belligerent princes were killed in such marriage-fighting, and the victorious prince was offered the trophy princess for whom so many princes died. (SB 1.10.29, purport)



(top) Kṛṣṇa rescuing 16,100 queens whom He later married; (above) the marriage of Sītā Devī with Lord Rāma

HOW KṚṢṆA MARRIES

Kṛṣṇa is exactly like us, and He

has all the propensities of an individual living being in fullness. He marries exactly like us, but His marriage is neither mundane nor limited by our experience in the conditioned

state. His wives, therefore, appear like mundane women, but factually they are all transcendental liberated souls, perfect manifestations of internal
(please turn to page 25)

Cancer or Kṛṣṇa?

A story of how fear of cancer was instrumental in making a whole family Kṛṣṇa conscious

by Yugāvātāra Dāsa

As I was running around with my cousin Ranjeet to arrange for the maiden *satsaṅga* program in my hometown, my grandmother observed us with visible irritation on her face. Every day she would advise us that we should practice this age-old devotion to Kṛṣṇa once we become old. This philosophy, however, did not appeal to us youngsters because we never saw any old person practicing devotion to Kṛṣṇa. Everyone—old and young—was absorbed in television, sports, movies, etc. Śrīla Prabhupāda's books had convinced us that youth is the time to practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness, not old age.

We must practice devotion to Kṛṣṇa today because tomorrow we may die. Never plan to surrender to God at the eleventh hour; we may die at 10.30. Śrīla Prabhupāda would ask, who is young and who is old. A young boy who is destined to die today is actually older than

old are quite confusing and misleading in this unpredictable world, as anybody can become a victim of the three-fold miseries at any time.

THE APPEARANCE OF "CANCER"

My grandmother was next in queue to suffer the onslaught of this world. She had a small swelling in her neck, which was diagnosed as cancer. Doctors referred her to a cancer hospital. Since my elder sister, Aparna (now Anaṅga Gopī Devī Dāsī) and I are doctors, we were called to make all the arrangements. We thought that as doctors one of our prime duties was to treat the soul. I handed sacred *japa* beads to my scared grandmother and told her to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*. We



(from left) Hlādinī, the author's daughter; his grandfather; the author; and Hamsarūpa Devī Dāsī

an old man who will live for ten more years. The terms *young* and

grandmother and told her to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*. We

told her the philosophy of the *Bhagavad-gītā* (18.66), which states that one should surrender unto the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa. He will deliver us from all sinful reactions. Diagnosed with cancer, my grandmother was shattered. In this stage, one realizes the futility of worldly happiness. The movies, media, television—nothing seems to give solace due to the fear of impending death. My grandmother realized the emergency to take up to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Not only she, but also my grandfather, uncles, aunts, cousins—twenty family members started chanting. Seeing all of them chanting, I realized that Kṛṣṇa had entered our home in the form of cancer.

THE DIVINE HOSPITAL STAY

By the time we reached the hospital, my grandmother was chanting eight rounds. My elder sister stayed with her all the time. She kept on reciting the wonderful philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness: the impermanence of the material body and the eternality of the spirit soul; how there is life after death, which depends on our consciousness cultivated during this lifetime; the law of action and reaction, etc. All this was soothing my grandma. She had become deeply appreciative of the teachings of Śrīla Prabhupāda. She lamented that she should have been convinced about the philosophy earlier.

On the day of surgery, she was taken to the operation theatre. Lying on a stretcher, her hands raised like Draupadī, she was loudly chanting the *mahā-mantra*. My eyes filled with tears, and I thought, “She was just introduced to devotion at the

fag end of her life. Will Kṛṣṇa give her another chance to taste the nectar of Kṛṣṇa consciousness?”

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF CANCER

The surgery was done. The tumor turned out to be benign; the previous diagnosis was wrong. How wonderful Kṛṣṇa is: He came in the form of cancer, blessed the whole family with devotion, and granted a second chance to my grandmother. As we were about to leave the hospital, the cancer surgeon came near my grandmother and said, “Grandma, you don’t have cancer. Just relax now and enjoy life.” But my grandma was already enjoying the blissful life of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I cautioned my grandmother and instructed her not to be deluded by the doctor’s advice. She might have escaped death this time, but one day she will have to face it. We all have to face it.

In a chicken shop, a chicken sometimes escapes death when it weighs less than what the customer demands. When the chicken is put back in the cage, it foolishly thinks, “I have escaped death.” But for how long? After a few hours another customer who wants a smaller chicken comes, and the previously escaped chicken is then slaughtered. Our occasional escape from death is like the chicken’s death-escape—temporary and short-lived.

IN ISKCON HOSPITAL

My grandmother and uncle returned to Pune. They remembered the grace of Kṛṣṇa, and all of them started visiting the ISKCON temple in Pune. By the time my grandmother left the hospital she had started chanting 16 rounds.

Senior devotees at the temple Jayadeva Dāsa and Satyavatī Devī Dāsī guided her further. Now she had begun her new treatment of getting rid of the disease of materialism at the ISKCON temple, which is like a hospital. Devotees in the temple are like expert doctors who remove the cataract of illusion and grant us spiritual vision. My grandmother started following the spiritual diet of *prasāda* and started regularly consuming the medicine of the holy name.

A year later her name was recommended for initiation, the ceremony in which one accepts a bona fide spiritual master. This is a special moment in every devotee’s life as this marks a solid connection with Kṛṣṇa. When she visited Mumbai to receive initiation, she learned that her cancer doctor, who had told her to relax, had died of a heart attack at the age of 45. But she remained fearless because she had taken shelter of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

When her name was called for initiation, we saw her swiftly getting up and prostrating before her spiritual master. But none of us could see what happened next as our eyes were loaded with tears. Then we heard her spiritual master saying, “Hirabai, from today onwards your spiritual name will be Hamsarūpa Devī Dāsī.” ❀

(Hamsarūpa Devī is now in her eighties. Despite her advanced age and physical weakness, she chants her 16 rounds of *japa* early in the morning.)

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

Exchanges Of Love

In the interactions between the Lord and His devotees, both relish the highest happiness.

by Mohinī Rādhā Devī Dāsī

Bhagavad-gītā and other scriptures praise Arjuna for his close relationship with Kṛṣṇa. Arjuna is known for his mood of friendship (*sakha-bhāva*). Since relationships are by definition reciprocal, not only is Arjuna known as Kṛṣṇa’s friend, but Kṛṣṇa is known as Arjuna’s friend. Kṛṣṇa drove Arjuna’s chariot and is therefore called Pārtha-sārathi, the “charioteer of Pārtha (Arjuna).” This name shows Kṛṣṇa’s special relationship with His devotee Arjuna.

Discussions of devotional service often emphasize the activities devotees perform to please Kṛṣṇa, but the transcendental relationship between the Lord and His devotees is dynamic, with the loving exchanges originating from both sides. Although Kṛṣṇa is sympathetic to everyone, He is especially

favorable toward His devotees. This is called bhakta-vatsala, the Lord’s affection for His devotees. In *Bhagavad-gītā* (9.29) Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna, “I envy no one, nor am I partial to anyone. I am equal to all. But whoever renders service unto Me in devotion is a friend, is in Me, and I am also a friend to him.” It seems contradictory to say that the Lord can be “equal to all” and, at the same time, pays special attention to His devotees. In his purport to this verse, Śrīla Prabhupāda explains that the Lord takes care of all living entities, or *jīvas*, who are all part of Him. He provides all resources necessary to sustain life; indeed, not a blade of grass moves without His sanction. As the Su-

preme controller who maintains all *jīvas*, Kṛṣṇa is equal to all.

On the other hand, Kṛṣṇa distinguishes among His parts according to how they relate to Him. He rewards degree of surrender: “All of them—as they surrender unto Me—I reward accordingly.” (*Bg.* 4.11) It is natural, therefore, that Kṛṣṇa takes special interest in His devotees, who are completely surrendered to Him and are constantly serving Him with love and devotion.

The Lord is a person, and the living entities are also individual persons, although they are minute and the Supreme Lord is unlimited. The analogy of a fire surrounded by many tiny sparks illustrates this

Right: Even though Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Lord, He and Arjuna interact with the relaxed familiarity of close friends.



concept: The sparks are tiny compared to the original fire, but the composition is the same. Like the relationship between the individual sparks and the fire, an eternal reciprocal relationship exists between the living entities and the Lord.

For the devotee, who is favorably disposed toward the Lord in a relationship of loving service, this relationship is very special and the essence of his or her life. Kṛṣṇa consciousness means that Kṛṣṇa is the single focus for the devotee's actions, words, and desires. When this perfection is achieved, true reciprocity between Kṛṣṇa and the

He appears in this world just to please His devotees and punish demons who challenge His authority and trouble the devotees. (Bg. 4.8)

When the pure devotee renders service without asking anything in return, Kṛṣṇa is obliged and "becomes a kind of debtor to the devotees." (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.8.27, purport) This fact is often explained in connection with Rādhārāṇī and the *gopīs*, who are glorified by Caitanya Mahāprabhu as the topmost devotees. No one can control Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, but Rādhārāṇī controls Him with her devotion. Likewise,

of Puri traditionally sweeps in front of Jagannātha's chariot at the annual Ratha-yātrā festival.) The humble king did not take the insult personally but as an offense against his beloved Jagannātha, and therefore he went into battle, emerging victorious under the command of the two Lords.

THE POET SALABEGA

Jagannātha is Kṛṣṇa, and His transcendental pastimes are unlimited and beyond comprehension. He showed special mercy to His poet-devotee Salabega, whose example illustrates the Lord's eagerness to reciprocate with His devotees. Born in the beginning of the seventeenth century, Salabega was the son of the widow of a Hindu *brāhmaṇa* and Lalbeg, a merciless commander of the Moghul Empire. Although his ruthless father intensely hated the Hindus, Salabega's mother was a fervent devotee of Lord Jagannātha, and she taught her son about the Lord.

Once, as a child or young man, Salabega became very ill, and the attending physicians thought he would die. Salabega miraculously recovered when he heard some devotees singing bhajanas (devotional songs) about Kṛṣṇa and Jagannātha and he began chanting Jagannātha's names. This was a pivotal moment in his devotional life. He remembered his mother's description of Viṣṇu's rescue of Gajendra, the king of the elephants, when chased by a crocodile. Like Dhruva Maharāja and Śrī Prahlāda, Salabega had intense childlike faith in the mercy of the Lord.

As he grew older, Salabega learned to sing and compose devotional songs for the pleasure of Jagannātha, whom he sometimes called Kālia, "the dark darling." He

Kṛṣṇa is completely independent and self-satisfied, He accepts service from His devotees, and thus remains at the center of their lives.

devotees takes place. Kṛṣṇa is dear to His devotees, and the devotees are dear to Him. Although He is completely independent and self-satisfied, He accepts service from His devotees, and thus remains at the center of their lives. The reciprocation between Kṛṣṇa and His devotees, enjoyable for both, is unique. Elsewhere in the *Gītā* (6.30), Kṛṣṇa confirms this reciprocity: "For one who sees Me everywhere and sees everything in Me, I am never lost, nor is he ever lost to Me."

In his explanation of the transcendental reciprocation between the Lord and His devotees, Śrīla Prabhupāda gives the example of a diamond ring: the diamond looks more beautiful next to the gold, and the gold looks more beautiful next to the diamond. (Bg. 9.29, purport) In this way, the devotees glorify the Lord, and the Lord does not hesitate to glorify His devotees.

He willingly allowed His mother, Yaśodā, to bind and scold Him. He showed His universal form to Arjuna and His four-armed form to Bhīṣmadeva upon hearing their prayers. Kṛṣṇa is the source of pleasure for His devotees, and He enjoys fulfilling their desires because their desires are purely Kṛṣṇa conscious.

Kṛṣṇa's desire to serve His devotees is prominent in His form as Lord Jagannātha, who presides at the great temple in Puri, Orissa, with His brother Baladeva and sister Subhadrā. Histories of the temple have recorded Lord Jagannātha's pastimes over hundreds of years. Once, Jagannātha and Baladeva disguised Themselves as soldiers and fought alongside Puruṣottama Maharāja, the king of Puri, in a battle against the king of Kañci. The king of Kañci had insulted Puruṣottama Maharāja for being a street-sweeper. (The king

eventually lived in Vṛndāvana, but he became anxious to see Lord Jagannātha in Puri. Because of his Muslim birth, Salabega was denied entrance to the Puri temple, and he returned to Vṛndāvana in disappointment. Lord Jagannātha is known as Patita Pāvana, “the savior of the fallen,” and so He comes out from the temple every year during the Ratha-yātrā festival to bestow his merciful glance upon all creatures. Salabega planned to visit Puri during the Ratha-yātrā festival.

On the way to Puri, however, he fell ill. Lamenting at the thought that he would miss the opportunity to see Jagannātha, he prayed that Jagannātha would wait for him, a sentiment prevalent in one of his songs: *satasa pacasha kosha cali na parai/ moha jivajaen nandighose thiva rahi*. “It is very difficult to walk the 750 *kośas* [the distance between Vṛndāvana and Jagannātha Puri] to see You. Please remain on Nandighoṣa until then.”

Just then, a miracle occurred. Lord Jagannātha’s cart, called Nandighoṣa, stopped, and no one could budge it. Jagannātha waited for the arrival of His dear devotee Salabega, who had the opportunity to sing directly to his dark darling and look at Him to his heart’s content. Those who had criticized Salabega for his low birth were humbled as they saw the greatness of Salabega’s devotion.

Salabega often returned to compose songs for Jagannātha at the spot where the Lord had stopped. Today, his samādhi (tomb) stands nearby on Grand Road.

Salabega’s devotion apparently brought the Lord of the universe under his control. In tribute to this pastime, even to this day Lord Jagannātha’s cart stops at Salabega’s samādhi on Grand Road

during the Ratha-yātrā procession.

Salabega’s example teaches us that birth does not matter, that pure devotion transcends social status, such as being a *brāhmaṇa*. After all, we are not these bodies but spirit souls. To show the world that anyone can become Kṛṣṇa’s pure devotee, Prabhupāda wanted his followers, most of whom were not *brāhmaṇa* as by birth, to be brahminical in devotion and behavior.

Even the most neophyte devotees of the Lord can taste the sweetness of the Lord’s reciprocity. It is said that when we take one step toward Kṛṣṇa, He takes a hundred steps toward us. When we remember that Vāmanadeva, Kṛṣṇa’s incarnation as a dwarf *brāhmaṇa*, crossed the entire universe with two steps, Kṛṣṇa’s hundred steps toward us are particularly significant. Even though no one is truly eligible to serve the Supreme Lord, He is so merciful that He accepts the devotee’s humble attempts. (See *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 6.16.25, purport.) The Lord is more eager to reclaim His conditioned parts than they are to return to Him, and He helps His devotees return home, back to Godhead: “Those who worship Me with devotion, meditating on My transcendental form—to them I carry what they lack and

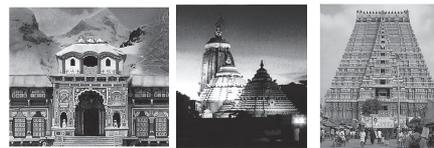
preserve what they have.” (Bg. 9.22) Even if a devotee does not become completely purified in this lifetime, he or she will be able to continue on the path of devotional service in the next life. Spiritual gains, unlike material gains, are never lost.

The easiest way for us to feel Kṛṣṇa’s reciprocation is through hearing and chanting His names: *śravaṇam kīrtanam*. When Kṛṣṇa descended as Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, He made pure love of God, *prema*, available to everyone through the chanting of the holy names. In degraded Kali-yuga, the current age of quarrel and hypocrisy, this is the best method to achieve perfect Kṛṣṇa consciousness. It is the *yuga-dharma*, the prescribed activity for the age. Kṛṣṇa’s names are endowed with all His potency, which means He is present in His names. When we chant attentively, He will come to dance on our tongues. What greater reciprocation do we need than this? ❀

Mohini Rādhā Devī Dāsī graduated from Columbia University with a degree in English literature in 2004. She is a disciple of His Holiness Gopāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami and lives with her husband, Nārada Ṛṣi Dāsa, in New York City.

The BTG Yatra Seva has been organizing conducted tours of spiritual places (dhams) as part of a sincere effort to revive the true Indian culture in these changing times. Pilgrims on these well-planned tours shall gain much spiritual insight from authentic guidance based on in-depth study of the scripture.

We welcome all spiritual seekers to participate in this blissful exploration of THE SPIRITUAL INDIA.



CHAR DHAM, VṚNDĀVANA, JAGANNĀTHA PURI, DWARAKA, AHOBILAM, ŚRIRANGAM, AYODYA, SIMHĀCALAM, HARIDWAR, RAMESWARAM, MAYAPUR ETC.

Rejuvenate the Body, Mind & Soul

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Conducted Spiritual Vacations

BIG PRESENT



Can I say something about your smile,
 So attractive, so pure, so versatile.
 Can I say something about your dear flute,
 The threads and their sparkles are so cute.
 Shall I dare to say something about your toe,
 One visible and one not, makes my heart to flow.

Your evergreen dresses,
 make my life colorful
 The colors get their meaning,
 when they see You who is even more beautiful.

The peacock feathers on your head,
 brings life even to the dead.
 The sparkle in your eyes,
 give stars their way to shine.

The crown on your head,
 holds you so high.
 The shine on your cheeks,
 makes you fly.

The ring on your fingers,
 gives song to singers
 The beads in your ears,
 makes you more dear.

The chanting on the beads,
 gives devotees a way to please
 The fasting on Ekadaśī each fortnight,
 makes devotees' life bright.

It's six days now and I have not
 completely described your beauty,
 To be a good devotee
 is now my only duty.

To admire your beauty,
 six days are just a remark
 Without Rādhājī's loving heart,
 it's only a continuous task.
 To explain you without her,
 makes this poem vacant,
 But to understand you completely,
 is only Rādhājī's talent.

But an effort is still there,
 Forgive me Kṛṣṇa if some mistake is here.

—Neha Jalan

Lovable Kṛṣṇa

The day I saw you,
 I was feeling so blue.
 The shine in your eyes,
 made me forget my hue.
 Every time I wonder,
 about your voice with a thunder.
 That creates a magic in my life,
 with a lot of wonder.

**BRITISH PM RECEIVES
BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ**

London, UK: At the recent Divāli function held at 10



Downing Street in London, Śrutidharma Dāsa, the President of Bhaktivedanta Manor, presented a copy of *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* to the British Prime Minister David Cameron.

On receiving the *Bhagavad-gītā* the Prime Minister said, “I remember coming to Bhaktivedanta Manor, and I enjoyed my visit immensely. Thank you. I shall keep this book in 10 Downing Street.”

**BHAKTI HITS UK
BANKERS**

Canary Wharf, UK: On 11 November over 200 bankers and traders assembled 512 feet high in Barclays skyscraper for an evening event to celebrate the message of Divāli with Bhakti Cāru Swami. Most of the attendees were from non-Indian origins or affiliations. Ashika Patel says, “By providing spiritual concepts from the *Vedas*, our European, American, Afro-Caribbean and wide range of west-

ern attendees highly appreciate the thought provoking Vedic versions for both inside banking and in their own lives too.”

**FAITH DIA-
LOGUE
WITH
CATHOLIC
BISHOPS**

**Washington,
USA:** ISKCON representatives, recently attended Generations of Faith, an event sponsored by the US Conference of Catholic Bish-

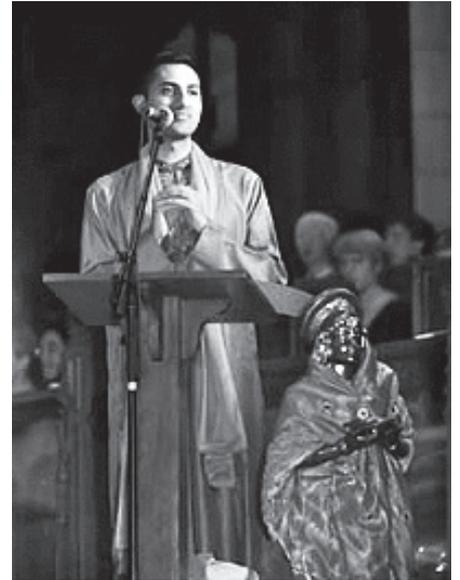
ops that reached out to religious leaders from the Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, and Sikh traditions. Held on 19 November at the John Paul II Cultural Center, the event was intended to raise awareness of why and how each tradition has come to see the need for interreligious dialogue—leading to mutual appreciation, respect and cooperation in our increasingly pluralistic society.

Anuttama Dāsa, Dr. Ravi Gupta (Radhikā Ramaṇa Dāsa) and Vineet Chander (Venkaṭa Bhaṭṭa Dāsa) represented ISKCON in this event.

**BRINGING EAST AND
WEST TOGETHER**

Princeton, New Jersey, USA: Over 500 people attended Princeton University’s third annual Divāli celebration on Saturday, 13 November 2010. In August 2008, Princeton celebrated its first official Divāli in the magnificent Princeton University Chapel, the first time the church

hosted a non-Christian service in its eighty-year history. The celebra-



Vineet Chander representing ISKCON

tions included *kīrtanas* and dance performances.

**ISKCON DEVOTEES OFFER
PRAYER ON BBC RADIO 4**

London, UK: From the 30 October till 5 November, Śaunaka Ṛṣi Dāsa, the Director of the Oxford Center for Hindu Studies, offered daily contemplations and meditations on UK’s prestigious BBC Radio 4 Channel. This program is usually being followed by millions of listeners.

Contributed by Madhava Smullen, Rādhāramaṇa Dāsa and Rādhā Mohana Dāsa.

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

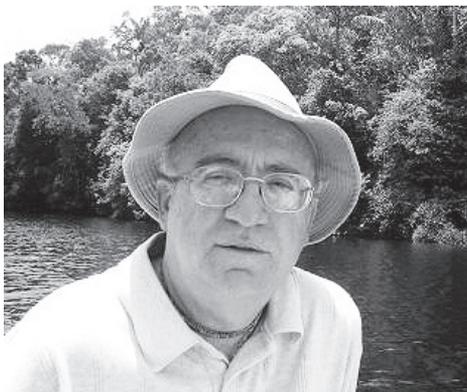
A Scientist on a Spiritual Mission

Dr. Michael Cremo, aka Drutakarma Dāsa —whose books have sold over 300,000 copies in 26 languages—is a well-known scientist. His global fame stems from his classic book Forbidden Archeology, which was hailed as “one of the landmark intellectual achievements of the late twentieth century.”

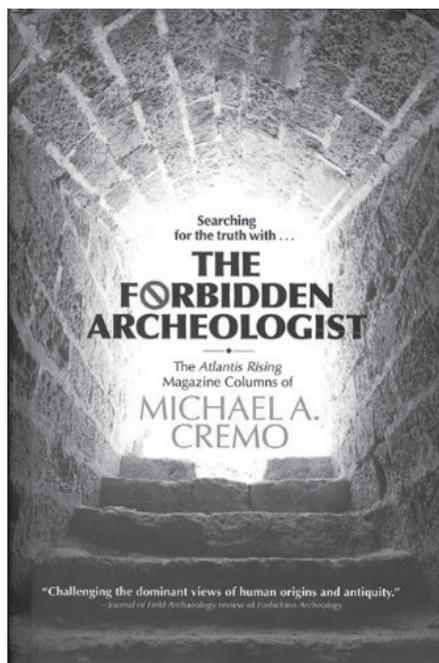
Born on 15 July 1948 in New York, USA, he had an inborn literary inclination. He also had an innate passion for the truth that inspired him in his teenage years to go to India on a search for truth. Though he couldn't make it to India then, the best of India came to him in America in the form of ISKCON in 1973. Thereafter he integrated his literary and spiritual interests by sharing Kṛṣṇa consciousness through writing and editing. In addition to serving as an associate editor for *Back to Godhead* for over three decades, he has also co-authored several books published by the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust

(BBT) including *The Higher Taste, Chant and Be Happy, Divine Nature, and Coming Back*. In the 1980's, on repeated reading of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books, he felt impelled to fulfill his spiritual master's desire to counter atheism masquerading as science and scientifically present the theistic worldview explained in the Vedic literature of an-

cient India. After co-authoring the *Origins* magazine with Dr. Richard L. Thompson (Sadāpūta Dāsa) in 1984, he continued the teamwork for nearly a decade of extensive research to publish in 1993 the encyclopedic classic *Forbidden Archeology*, which documented heaps of evidence that directly disproved the atheistic Darwinian theory of evolution. The book became a controversial bestseller, which led to the author being highly praised as an archaeological detective who has “opened the locked doors of humanity's history,” and despised as a pseudo-scientist whose books “do not deserve to be taken seriously by anyone but a fool.” Never one to miss an opportunity to drive home his message, Dr. Cremo brilliantly used the controversy raised by his first book to author a second book, *Forbidden Archeology's Impact*, in 1998 which he demonstrated in action the very process of “knowledge filtration” that he had pointed out in his previous book. In 1999, he released an abridged version of *Forbidden Archeology*, called the *Hidden History of the Human Race*, which



Dr. Michael Cremo and his latest book



was translated into twenty different languages. In 2003, he published *Human Devolution: A Vedic Alternative to Darwinian Evolution*, which presented the Vedic understanding that human beings are comprised of not just matter, but matter, mind and consciousness and that human beings have not evolved from monkeys, but have “devolved” or descended from the spiritual realm. Dr. Cremo, who holds a doctorate in Vaiṣṇava Theology and Science, is a member of many reputed global scientific forums, has presented dozens of research papers at prestigious international conferences and has delivered hundreds of lectures at universities all over the world. On the occasion of the release of his latest book *The Forbidden Archeologist* and his upcoming tour of India in February, we present here an interview with Dr. Michael Cremo. The interview was taken by BTG editorial consultant, Caitanya Carāṇa Dāsa.

1. When modern science and technology has made such tremendous leaps in progress, what can the Vedic texts of ancient India contribute to science in particular and to society at large?

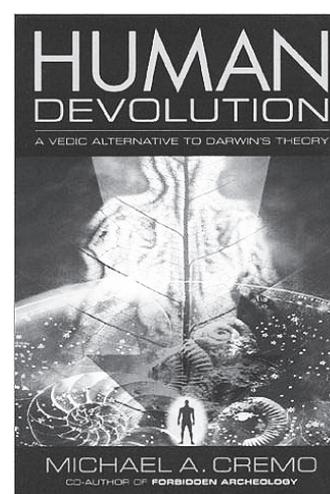
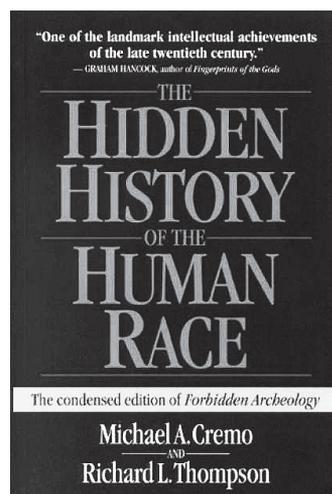
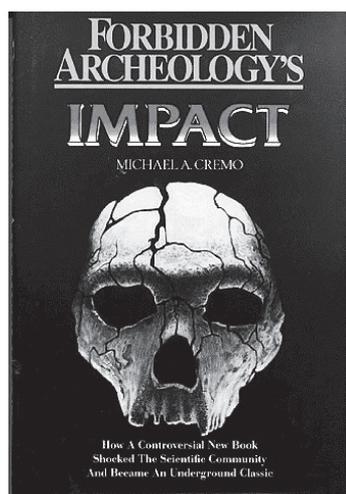
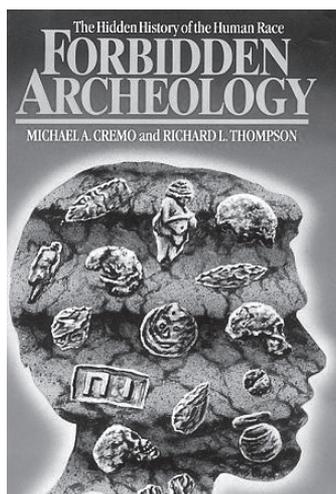
When modern science began to develop in Europe a few centuries ago, influential scientists made a decision to exclude the subtle mate-

rial (mental, mystical) and spiritual aspects of reality (the soul and God) from their work. They decided to focus on ordinary matter. This was productive for science. By focusing on ordinary matter, and how it operated predictably according to mathematically describable laws, science made tremendous advancement in its ability to control matter. This led to the development of many useful technologies. Scientists gradually extended their attempts to understand and control matter from the realm of physics to the realm of biology. This led to theories that human beings are just complex machines made of matter. These theories claimed that not only are we machines made of matter, but we are machines made of matter in competition with each other for survival. So we have achieved a lot of material progress, but at a tremendous cost to human welfare. We now tend to think that the most important purpose of human life is to produce and consume more and more material things. We are doing that, but in doing so, we are destroying the environment. We are poisoning the air, poisoning the land, poisoning the water. Also, human society is involved in intense competition for the control of material resources and wealth. There is conflict among individuals, classes, nations, and even

religions. In this conflict and competition for material wealth and resources, some act in unfair ways to get more than their fair share. This is the root of the world’s current financial crisis. I believe the root cause of this is divorcing our understanding of matter from its connection with the spiritual. The Vedic literature offers a more balanced and complete picture of reality, with an understanding of matter integrated with an understanding of spirit. The *Vedānta-sūtra* says *aham brahmāsmi*: “I am spirit.” So ultimately we are all beings of pure consciousness, all coming from the same source, and all related to each other. The *Vedānta-sūtra* also says *janmādyasya yataḥ*: “Everything is ultimately coming from a spiritual source.” If these things were understood, we would be able to keep our use of the earth’s material resources within sustainable, environmentally healthy limits. If we understood we are all coming from the same source, we are all part of the same spiritual family, there would be less conflict and violence in the world, and a fairer distribution of the earth’s resources.

2. Is being both a scientist and a spiritualist not self-contradictory? How do you integrate these two roles?

I see myself as a human being looking for truth. And I accept



truth wherever I find it, be it in science or spirituality. For me, a real science includes spirituality, and a real spirituality is a science. Einstein famously said, "Science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind." A real science should deal with everything that is possibly true about reality. There should not be artificial rules that scientists cannot take the soul and God into account in their work. Such decisions should be up to each individual scientist to make. And if we look at the history of science, we see that many of the greatest scientists did so. And as for religion, it should not be just a set of blind rituals. It should be scientific in the sense that if you perform certain activities you

association with Bhaktivedanta Institute in 1984. Since that time, I have been engaged in scientific work, writing scientific books like *Forbidden Archeology* and *Human Devolution: A Vedic Alternative to Darwin's Theory*. These books present a version of human origins consistent with the accounts found in the Vedic literature. The system of spirituality practiced in ISKCON is *bhakti-yoga*, the yoga of devotion. A big part of *bhakti-yoga* is using one's talents and abilities in the service of the Lord. For example, Arjuna was a warrior, and he used his abilities in the service of the Lord during the battle of Kurukṣetra. In the same way, I am using my intellectual abilities for the service of the

store a proper balance. For example, if someone eats too much of the wrong kinds of food, one will become overweight and diseased. The solution is not to stop eating. The solution is to eat the right amounts of the right kinds of food. So today human society is too materialistic, and we are suffering the results. The insights from the ancient texts of India can help restore a proper balance to human life on this planet. We can learn how to satisfy our material needs in the most simple, natural and efficient way possible, while putting most of our human energy into developing our spiritual consciousness. The *Vedānta-sūtra* says *athāto brahma jijñāsā*. We should inquire about and develop our spiritual nature. Of course, anyone can do this individually, but it would be better if whole societies were arranged to facilitate this. Ancient Indian society was arranged to facilitate such development of one's spiritual nature, and that social arrangement continues to some extent even to this date. Nowadays many Indians being enamored by the West are neglecting or rejecting their traditional wisdom and culture, and thus losing the spiritual enrichment that it can offer. If Indians would study openmindedly their own spiritual legacy and empower themselves with its spiritual practices, then they can not only restore their country to its lost greatness, but can make India a global spiritual superpower. ISKCON, by its systematic presentation of philosophy and culture, is offering Indians this opportunity to rediscover their lost glory. ☸

***Bhakti-yoga* means using one's talents and abilities in the service of the Lord. I am using my intellectual abilities for the Lord's service. So my work is part of my yoga.**

should get a definite observable result. This is what I find so attractive about yoga. In its purest form, it is a science for the transformation of consciousness. And if you do the experiment, you get an observable result.

3. ISKCON being a spiritual organization, what role does science play in it and how does a scientist like you fit into it?

The founder-*ācārya* of ISKCON, my guru, His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, wrote in his commentary on the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.5.22): "Advanced people are eager to understand the Absolute Truth through the medium of science, and therefore a great scientist should endeavor to prove the existence of the Lord on a scientific basis." For this purpose, in 1974 he established the Bhaktivedanta Institute. I began my

Lord. So my work is part of my yoga.

4. As an American scientist who is also a scholar in India's ancient texts, what message would you like to give to Indians?

The ancient texts of India, like the *Vedas*, *Upaniṣads*, and *Purāṇas*, contain insights that can help science gain a better picture of reality, one that properly balances the material and spiritual. Of course, in the world of science, it is not enough to just give some quotes from the scriptures. One has to present evidence that is consistent with the principles of the ancient texts. The most essential insight given in the Vedic literature is that life does not come from matter. Life comes from life. We are spiritual beings with spiritual needs, not simply machines made of matter with exclusively material needs. I am not saying we should ignore the material side of life. But we need to re-

The *Forbidden Archeologist* is available through Amazon.com and all good book stores from 9 November. For information about upcoming bookstore signings and radio appearances, please also visit <http://www.mcremo.com/>

SEARCH FOR Happiness

Part
1

By Vraja Vihārī Dāsa

Real happiness is more than the happiness enjoyed by animals.

This is the first in a series of six articles that will deal with understanding happiness and how to obtain it.

said, “Dear king, happiness is simply a butterfly.” The king, confused by the cryptic answer, probed further, to which the revered sage

butterfly resting on a leaf. Intrigued by the sage’s wisdom that he had pondered upon, he carefully went behind to catch the butterfly. As soon as he moved his hand, the butterfly flew away and landed on another plant. The king pursued the butterfly, but each time the insect slipped away to another leaf, flower or a plant. A little later, the king, exasperated by his unsuccessful attempts, resigned to his seat. As he closed his eyes, he felt a slight itch on his arm. Slowly he opened his eyes and, lo and behold, the same butterfly now rested on his arm. He was amazed, and just then a special realization gushed forth in his heart, “Yes, the sage was indeed right. Happiness is a butterfly, for when we intensely search after it, it eludes us and when we least expect it, we receive it.”



Happiness is like a butterfly—it eludes us when we try to get it, but it comes to us when we least expect it.

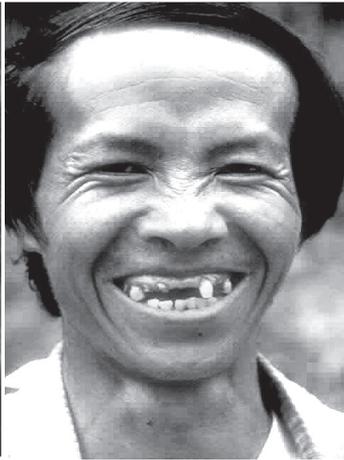
A king enquired from a learned sage, “I often wonder what happiness really is. O enlightened one, could you please reveal to me the secrets of happiness?” The sage cast his merciful glance upon the king and

smiled and said, “Very soon, O King, it will be revealed to you.” The sage then departed, leaving the king confused about the mysterious wisdom he had just heard.

A few days later as the king relaxed in his royal garden, he saw a

SIMILARITIES BETWEEN HUMANS AND ANIMALS

To explore higher and deeper levels of happiness, we need to understand that humans are a very special species in God’s creation, and they are capable of experiencing a much more satisfying and purposeful life. Let us first exam-



THE SEED OF HUMANS AND ANIMALS

While animals eat raw, uncooked food, without complaint, humans

ment with foods that are unnatural to the human body. A friend of mine in Singapore had a Chinese lady secretary who sipped on monkey blood during her office breaks. She also feasted on roasted snakes as her favorite delicacy. Multinational companies spend millions of dollars on research to improve the nutrient content of chocolates, potato wafers or corn flakes—all in pursuance of the glorious activity of eating.

Sleeping isn't a problem for animals. They sleep anywhere without an alarm to wake them. Sleeping isn't a problem for the animals. Humans have plush apartments and expensive bedrooms, and even special water beds have been designed to help them experience a sound sleep. Once we are fast asleep, it doesn't matter if we are lying on the

ine the similarities and differences between humans and animals.

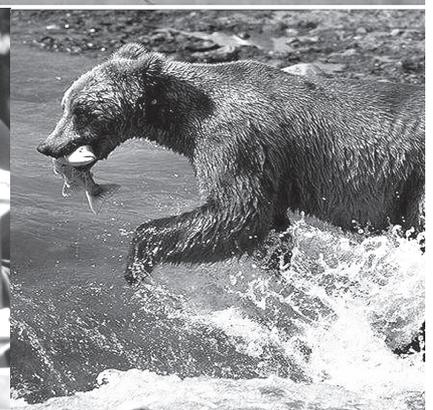
The *Mahabharata*, an ancient Indian scripture, highlights the similarities that form the acronym SEED:

*āhāra-nidrā-bhaya-maithunam ca
sāmānyam etat paśubhir narāṇām
dharmo hi teṣām adhiko viśeṣo
dharmena hīnāḥ paśubhiḥ samānāḥ*

thrive on a variety of foodstuffs. And they can get fussy about it too. Yet we observe that the propensity and experience of eating is similar to both. However it is the humans who have degraded to lower than animals in their eating propensities. While on one hand we have a rich inter-continental cuisine, on the other hand humans also experi-



Nidra means “sleeping,” *āhāra* refers to “eating,” *maithuna* is “sex life or enjoyment,” and “*bhaya*” is “defending.” (Thus the acronym SEED is indicative of these four similarities between animals and humans) We can examine each of these four more elaborately.





The four activities common to animals and humans: (opposite page, middle and down) Sleeping and eating; (above) mating and defending

other hand can sleep anywhere at any time. Thus we see that the precious human intelligence has been channeled to experience pleasures that are easily met by the animals.

Enjoyment primarily refers to sex life. Animals do it on the street. Humans have a sophisticated set up of courtship and they go through a lot of struggle and emotional complexities as they seek to fulfil gross carnal pleasures.

Defending is the fourth similarity between humans and animals. While ani-

mals defend with their claws, humans have metal detectors, special locks, bank insurances, security men, buzzer alarms, and enormous defense expenditures.

Thus we can see humans and animals pursue similar goals. However intuitively we know humans are special. What makes humans special *vis-a-vis* the animals? The answer to this question will help us discover newer and richer happiness. ☸

To be continued.... How are Humans special?

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road or resting on an attractive bed. The experience of sleeping, the *Mahābhārata* declares, is the same for a human and an animal.

Humans, however, spend a great amount of energy, time and money figuring out how to get good, undisturbed sleep. Special alarm clocks have been designed that compel even the most die-hard sleeper to wake up. One such chicken-shaped alarm clock rings, making the eggs fall off the clock. The loud noise of the alarm is accompanied by the scattering of eggs. One has to collect all the eggs and put them back inside the clock to stop its ringing. The rationale behind it is that by the time one finishes the task, his sleepiness has gone. Another alarm clock is shaped like a fan. The moment it goes off, it also flies all over the room. One has to wake up and catch the fan with great endeavor.

This amounts to a good workout until one finally manages to turn it off. By then, one fully awake.

German scientists have created a special bed that is super-programmed through latest software technology. For example, if one plans to wake up at three in the afternoon but desires to experience a sunrise, this bed will create a pleasing sound of bird song and a fragrance of early morning flowers. The bed guarantees to wake up a sound sleeper with water aimed at the eyes of the sleeper. If one still doesn't get up, the bed has an eject system that will throw the person out, thus ensuring that he is fully awake.

Human intellect has also discovered sleep-enhancers and drugs that induce sleep; even a diehard insomniac can take those medications and experience sound sleep. It's amazing how animals on the

FRIENDSHIP

A MATTER OF CHOICE

by Rashi Parikh



A scene inside a typical pub

All dressed for the evening, I was ready to go for dinner with my college friends. It was the send-off of a friend, and we reached an expensive restaurant in the suburbs of Mumbai. Sometimes, I feel I have to keep quiet about my preferences of where we can go because my friends feel limited thinking of a place where Vaiṣṇava food (without onion and garlic) would be available.

It was a nice, pleasant evening. As it is with friends, jokes and laughter filled the atmosphere. It was time to place the order. The others did it first. And then I was asked. In my attempt to explain what I really wanted, there was a little confusion.

This ticked off certain unnecessary remarks from a friend who's known for his satire. It was annoying. But I kept mum so as to not spoil the evening and continued placing my order. The dinner was done. Everybody seemed to have a good time.

PUB REALIZATIONS

As we left the restaurant, a pub stood across the road. Two of my friends wanted a drink. I was a little hesitant and tired too. But they insisted that I come for at least 15-20 minutes and then I'd be dropped home. Since one of them was an old friend and she was going to be leaving the country the next day, I agreed. We entered the pub and

found ourselves among seventy other people. A friend came to me with the news that people who don't drink cannot stay in. Another friend who doesn't drink, and myself, stood pokerfaced. I was happy since I wanted to leave anyway. We all walked out. But as we did, I heard the same friend swear, saying, "Why did she have to come if she didn't want a drink!" I couldn't believe my ears! Seven years of good, close friendship—and was this the result? And he knew I don't indulge in drinks. I felt less important than a drink that he so desperately needed to have. I had to get out of there and asked to be dropped home.

On the way back, I was furious. I criticized them because my ego was hit hard. And I didn't stop venting for quite some time. Another friend listened attentively and supported my complaints.

After a while I fell silent, watching the brightly lit streets of the city through the window of my taxi. At midnight it was nearly as bright as evening. The rickshaws and taxis stopped each time they saw somebody stick a hand out for a ride, people waited for the light to turn red to be able to cross, the ambulance rushed ahead in urgency, a policeman stood checking the licenses of violators of the law. I ob-

served that everybody was doing his or her duty. And that's when I realized that when my friends went for an expensive dinner, they were following their principles. When they got annoyed with my restrictions, they were following their principles. When they insisted that I join them inside the club, they were following their principles. When it irritated them that because of me they had to leave the club and they spoke rudely, they were still following their principles.

The only misfit in all of it was me because I was the one was not following what was really expected of me by my inner self and also my seniors. I blew so much money on a Chinese dinner that wasn't even satiating. Certain satirical comments also played their part in spoiling my mood. But I still went.

I have been a fence-sitter for a long time now. I believed I could live my life with these two opposite routes that cannot tolerate each other: spirituality and modern-day material culture. But on that day I realized I needed to make a choice. And it was urgent. Otherwise I'd have to lose both!

One cannot please everyone. I tried changing my priorities that night, but I succumbed to their demands—partially. I compromised on my code of behavior but failed to please my friends. Like all neophytes, I too was a victim of questions like, "But what about my friends? Will I have to leave them to practice spirituality? If they don't follow it, are they bad people?" I was always told, "If your friends are true, they will support you despite all inconvenience. They will respect you and your happiness, they will love to see you do it." I didn't discard the thought, but because of lack of experience to back it, I didn't take it seriously.

REAL FRIENDSHIP— WHAT IS IT?

But yesterday was an eye-opener. My friends know how much my spiritual priorities mean to me. They did support me all through too. But when it affected their convenience, they thought I should have compromised a little on my principles to make the evening a success. That's not friendship, is it? I don't blame them. As I mentioned, they were so dedicated to what they think was a way of life. It is so inspiring that they are not willing to compromise on their life style no matter what. Then why should

gross, something that has a limited life? My friends constantly remind me of how fortunate I am to have taken to the path of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Sometimes, their acts urge me to take to it much more seriously, so I am even more grateful. It is nice to have friends. Friends always inspire. But when you have only one life, you must carefully choose whom to draw your inspiration from. Devotee friends will always pull you closer to your real goal—pleasing guru and Kṛṣṇa. Because they will always show you your humble position so that you respect everyone. Because they will always



Real friends always inspire us to do the right thing.

we? I didn't think my friend was lower than me when he decided to drink. Then why did he speak mean words when I put my foot down?

If you don't associate with like-minded people but remain with people who follow contrasting ideals, the conflict is natural. And it results in no happy faces on either side. A choice is therefore necessary. I'm upset to see my friends rely on a can of drink for pleasure. Happiness is so subtle—how can one find it in something so material and

guide you in a way to bring you closer to Kṛṣṇa. And the greatest reason is that because they see you as part and parcel of Kṛṣṇa and want to share immense love with you, which in turn, will make you share that love with everyone else.

I have made my choice now; I have burnt my fingers and won't touch fire again. ❁

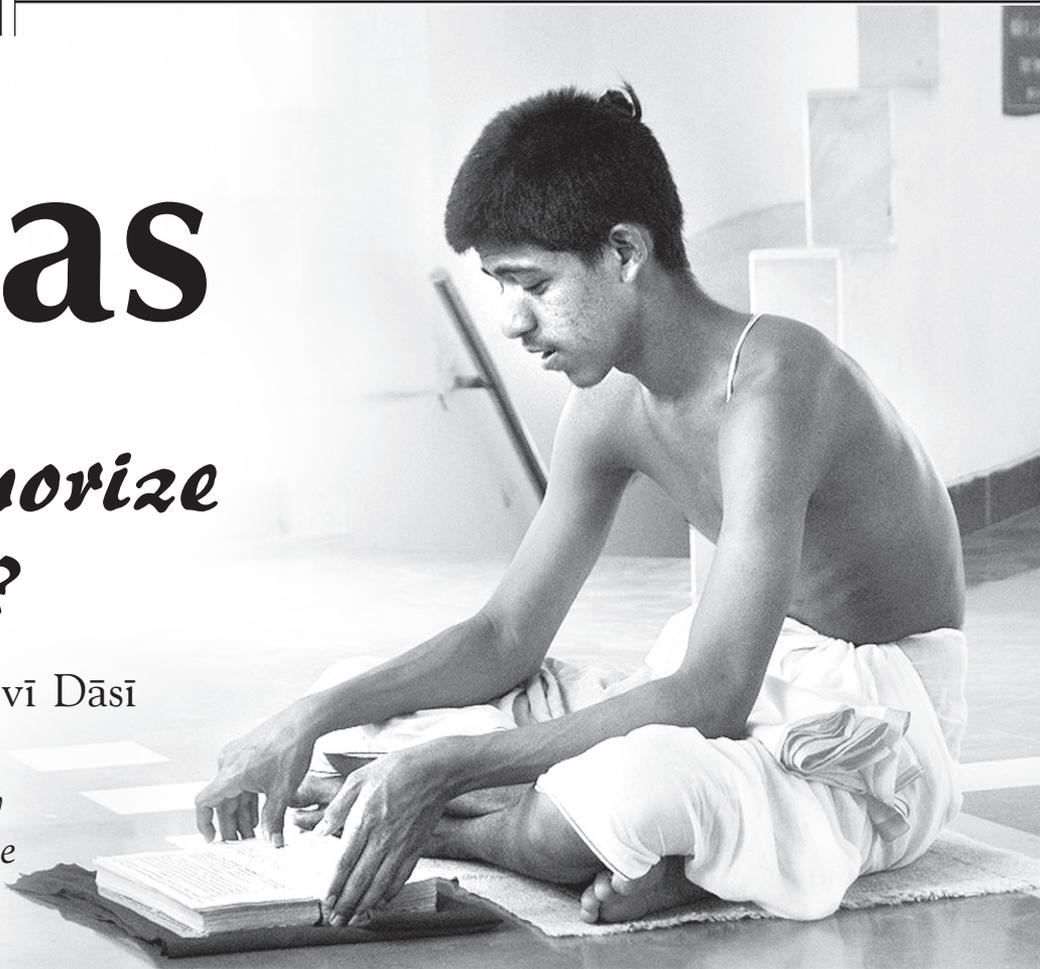
Rashi Parikh is a freelance graphic designer and stays in Mumbai.

Ślokas

Why memorize them?

By Tāriṇī Rādhā Devī Dāsī

Reciting ślokas that glorify Lord Kṛṣṇa can awaken the soul to eternal knowledge.



Today, as I came by bus in the morning,” reported our ethics lecturer, “a person was repeating a *śloka*. What is the purpose of such muttering? What is the use of such repetition of words such as *modaka hasta* (with the *modaka* sweet in hand)? This is a silly practice.”

This statement came as a real surprise to me as I had been taught many *ślokas* as a child and I enjoyed chanting them too whether I understood them or not. I did not tire from repeating them over and over again. Now, to hear a critical statement like this, that too in the Ethics period of our college life, ridiculing the central point of Vedic life was a shock to me.

EFFECT ON THE MIND

Chanting forms the basis of Vedic life. Whether in the earlier ages of fire sacrifices or the present age, chanting, either of Vedic mantras or the holy name is very important. The Vedic verses are transcendental and not made of mundane sound. Repeating these verses does not cause boredom but increases peace in the mind. The powerful effects of chanting mantras are glorified not only in the Vedic literature but also by psychological researchers of the modern period.

When we try to memorize a *śloka*, it keeps reverberating in our minds, leaving no room for the devil. First it is a challenge to memorize it and when that is done, it becomes a pleasure to just keep

repeating it.

A mother, memorized verses and songs as she cooked, while another learnt from a sheet stuck on the tiles of the wall as she washed the utensils. And there was another devotee that would stick up the *śloka* on the front part of his motor bike and learn as he drove. There are devotees that would teach *ślokas* over the phone and I am sure devotees eager to keep their minds busy with transcendental vibration would have found so many other ways.

Parents find unique times to teach their children *ślokas* because it is difficult for most to find that solitary time to sit together and learn. Neither do children always sit in one place for long enough. One devotee would teach his chil-

dren as he brought them to school, and one mother when she would bathe the children or brush their hair! Technology was put to its best use by Mother Kāṁdī who would record one śloka on her mobile, put it on repeat mode and give it to her chatterbox daughter, Bhadrīkā. With this arrangement not only her chanting time become peaceful, it also made occasions of traveling less arduous as the śloka learning activity put on hold Bhadrīkā's endless questions.

Competitions that invite children to learn ślokas are also extremely useful but the challenge here is in getting the child to continue chanting the ślokas on a regular basis. Most children just go to the competition and later on forget what they learnt.

ŚLOKAS COME TO OUR RESCUE

Besides filling up our minds with positive vibrations and thoughts, ślokas also serve to remind us of helpful philosophy at difficult times. For example, after a long time, I had to undertake a journey on a public bus. Having got used to the security of private travel, the bus journey seemed very arduous. Then from within came a kind reminder, a śloka I had learnt from the *Bhāgavatam*:

*nārāyaṇa-parāḥ sarve
na kutaścana bibhyati
svargāpavarga-narakeṣu
āpi tulyārtha-darśinaḥ*

“A pure devotee of Nārāyaṇa is never afraid of going anywhere and everywhere. For him heaven and hell are one and the same.” (SB 6.17.28)

This śloka reminded me to stop

fretting about my environment by remembering the pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa. The purport of a śloka can dawn on us as a realization by the mercy of the Lord during difficult moments.

This timely reminder came to me a few more times later on convincing me of the importance of memorizing ślokas. Ślokas are a lot of information: a lot of philosophy packed into two or four cryptic liners that can expand greatly. Just like Lord Caitanya was able to render eighty-four explanations to the famous *ātmārāma* verse.

Ślokas connected to Lord Kṛṣṇa occupy a very deep place in our heart, awakening the soul to its eternal knowledge. When Anand was in school, he had learnt a lot of ślokas. Forty years later, when there was a death in the family, and there was a chanting of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, he surprised everyone by chanting along without seeing the book. In fact, looking at the book only confused him, clashing with the depths of his memory.

THE BEST ŚLOKA FOR THIS AGE

The Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* is the essence of all Vedic mantras and chanting it constantly is the best occupation for the mind. However, since our minds look for variety and our intellect for some mental activity, learning ślokas helps to satisfy these needs and keeps our minds in transcendence above the material modes.

Śrīla Prabhupāda explains: “They are not ordinary poems. *Cintāmaṇi-prakara-sadmasu kalpa-vṛkṣa-lakṣāvṛteṣu surabhīr abhipālayan*. [Bs. 5.29]. These are not ordinary verse. These are transcendental verses: *Govindam ādi-*

puruṣam tam aham bhajāmi. So Kṛṣṇa is worshiped by transcendental verses, transcendental language, Vedic language. That is transcendental language. Therefore it is called *uttama-śloka*. (SB 1.8.32, Mayapur, Oct 12, 1974.) ❀

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Marriage ties

(Continued from page 6)

energy. (SB 1.11.35, purport)

In almost all cases, the *kṣatriya* king has to secure a wife by fighting or kidnapping. This sort of behavior for a *kṣatriya* is praiseworthy in the sense that a *kṣatriya* must show his power of chivalry to his would-be wife so that the daughter of a *kṣatriya* can see the valor of her would-be husband. Even the Personality of Godhead Śrī Rāma displayed such a spirit of chivalry during His marriage. He broke the strongest bow, called *Haradhanur*, and achieved the hand of *Sītādevī*, the mother of all opulence. The *kṣatriya* spirit is displayed during marriage festivals, and there is nothing wrong in such fighting. Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa discharged such responsibility fully because although He had more than sixteen thousand wives, in each and every case He fought like a chivalrous *kṣatriya* and thus secured a wife. To fight sixteen thousand times to secure sixteen thousand wives is certainly possible only for the Supreme Personality of Godhead. (SB 1.16.26-30, purport) ❀

My Journey to Theism

“Though I was an atheist, God always attracted me, and He was a real mystery to me.”

by Kishore Kumar Sarder

When I was a fourteen-year-old schoolboy, I met a communist who gave me some books to read. Reading was my favorite hobby, and I had great interest in reading different types of books. So I started to read the communist books. I was at the age when many boys and girls want to revolt against traditions and norms, and I was no exception. Rather, I was more revolutionary than my classmates, and the communist books only made things worse.

The books said that capitalists deceive people in the name of God and religion. The books explained how our solar system was created and how our blue planet Earth and other planets were created from the sun some billions of years ago. I had learned before that God created everything, but I did not know the details of how He did it. That is why when I read that the Earth was created because of the great attraction between the sun and another star, I promptly

accepted this phenomena without question. My mind was ready to grasp these fantastic ideas that are against tradition. As a result, I became an atheist in my early age and continued to be one for about thirty years, until I was forty-four.

When I went to college I never stopped reading books. I always wanted to learn more. When I was

home with the hope that I would join some religious mission and become a monk. Then, by meditation, I would devote myself to knowing and discovering God.

I went to India and joined a Ramakrishna Mission group to become a perfect monk. The Mission had very hard and fast rules. Everyone had to get up very early in

the morning to meditate and perform other regular activities. But I was not used to getting up early, and I was addicted to smoking, which was strictly prohibited in the Mission house. After three months, I left the group and returned home, not knowing God at all. My own mission had failed. But at my age, the attempt was a thrill nonetheless.

Later, I went back to study in the university. All my effort went into gaining more and more knowledge so that I could disprove God in any debate or argument. I ignored people who were religious and be-



eighteen years old and a student at college, suddenly I decided to discover God. Though I was an atheist, God always attracted me, and He was a real mystery to me. I left

lieved in God. Gradually, theistic people seemed to be great stupid fools to me. Sometimes I would think, “How can a person be so blind as to believe in God?” Theism seemed extreme superstition. The Big Bang theory, Darwin’s evolution theory, as well as fantasy books on UFOs and extraterrestrial beings, made me more and more atheistic.

MY FATHER’S DISTURBING CHANTING

I was born and brought up in an environment where my father was a lifelong Vaiṣṇava and a vegetarian. When I would see him not eating any fish or flesh, I would consider him stupid because it was beyond my imagination that a person could avoid eating delicious fish and flesh and eat only vegetables. He would get up from bed very early, at 4:00 A.M., and alone would sing the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* with some musical instruments. That greatly disturbed me because I could not sleep comfortably. But I could never stop him.

Days, months, and years passed. Gradually I could feel one thing inside me: As much as I was trying to know more and more to disprove God, I would see that there are some problems and fundamental limitations the scientists can never resolve. For instance, scientists say that the universe was created from a Big Bang. They have tried to describe all the states of the universe just after the Big Bang and up till the present time. They say space-time was created from the Big Bang and that it is still expanding today. They have tried to show how the many kinds of particles and sub-particles were created at that very early stage of the universe and how this super-fine-tuned universe came to be what it is now. But sur-

prisingly, no scientist can say why the Big Bang occurred and why it happened about fifteen billion years ago rather than earlier or later. Finally, where did the singularity (the “thing” that exploded to become the Big Bang) get its mass of infinite density?

Scientists cannot answer these fundamental questions. Rather they can only suggest possibilities and promote their own opinions. I started to doubt their theories because it seemed scientists themselves believe in something they do not know at all. In the name of science they promote their beliefs, and that is wrong.

So my question was if both theists and scientists believe in something they do not really know, what

temperature in a laboratory or elsewhere by which a mini Big Bang can be created artificially. That’s required to get all the information about what happened during the supposed original Big Bang.

I would always remain busy with this kind of thinking. Because of being an atheist, I was not really happy. Feeling empty inside, I thought that life had no meaning or greater purpose. But I was not ready to think of myself as an animal, as per Darwinism. I identified with my situation in the world and held a respectable position in the work force.

MAKING THE CONNECTIONS

One day while I was going to the

All my effort went into gaining more and more knowledge so that I could disprove God in any debate or argument.

is the difference between them? That made me think again about God. I became busy trying to know God by way of scientific exploration. In 1992 I read Stephen Hawking’s best-selling book, *A Brief History of Time*. In 1980, when he wrote the book, he said that the Grand Unified Theory might be discovered within twenty years. Twenty-eight years have passed, but physicists are still stumped. The Grand Unified Theory is an effort to explain the world with one almighty theory, most likely with God absent. In a narrow sense, GUT is the effort to find the one and only particle from which all other particles have been built up and to unravel the mystery of the universe. But theoretically, discovering GUT is impossible, because it is impossible to create any infinite

office on my motorbike, I was thinking of God and was trying to connect God, His creation, scientific explorations, and theories of the origin of the universe. Suddenly there was a storm inside my brain. I thought about how the universe is fine tuned, with proper balance on a large scale, but according to the second law of thermodynamics, the universe should not be fine tuned and balanced. It should come to a disorderly state over time. To justify this discrepancy, scientists imagine a kind of dark matter spread throughout the universe, creating balance. Scientists say that only ten percent of the mass of the universe is visible; the remaining ninety percent is invisible dark matter.

I recalled that the word *kṛṣṇa* means both “dark” and “attrac-

tion.” I thought that maybe Kṛṣṇa was the solution to this great fundamental problem.

I turned my motorbike around. Instead of going to the office, I went to the local ISKCON temple and bought a *Bhagavad-gītā* and a full set of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. I went home and started to read the *Gītā* first, without any delay. Like a person dying of thirst, I drank in the words. Here are some of the verses that especially struck me:

“O conqueror of wealth, there is no truth superior to Me. Everything rests upon Me, as pearls are strung on a thread.” (Bg. 7.7)

“At the beginning of Brahma’s day, all things become manifest from the unmanifest state, and thereafter, when the night falls, all things they are merged into the unmanifest again.” (Bg. 8.18)

“O son of Kuntī, at the end of the millennium all material manifestations enter into My nature, and at the beginning of another millennium, by My potency, I create them again.” (Bg. 9.7)

“The whole cosmic order is under Me. Under My will it is automatically manifested again and again, and under My will it is annihilated at the end.” (Bg. 9.8)

“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.” (Bg. 9.10)

“The total material substance, called Brahman, is the source of birth, and it is that Brahman that I impregnate, making possible the births of all living beings, O son of Bharata.” (Bg. 14.3)

I was greatly surprised. Instantly I realized that this is the real theory of the creation of the universe.

Scientists have been looking for it a long time, but in the wrong way—like going to Japan when you’re looking for America.

I realized that “become manifest” (Bg. 8.18) refers to the creation of the universe and its four dimensions (the fourth being time). The unmanifest state is the virtual world of more than four dimensions. Scientists theorize a virtual world of as many as eleven dimensions, and they say that our universe will be destroyed one day and then created again. According to the String Theory and other theories, this process repeats continually. The following verse states the same idea: “Again and again when Brahma’s day arrives all things come into being, and with the arrival of his night they are helplessly annihilated.” (Bg. 8.19)

Without any more delay, I turned away from atheism and became a theist, having wasted thirty valuable years of my life. But I feel lucky, and I’m happy to think that Lord Kṛṣṇa has showered His mercy on me. Now, following the example of Arjuna, I have wholeheartedly taken shelter under Lord Kṛṣṇa’s holy feet. As He instructs us, “Engage your mind always in thinking of Me, become My devotee, offer obeisance to Me, and worship Me. Being completely absorbed in Me, surely you will come to Me.” (Bg. 9.34) ❀

Kishore Kumar Sarder is a deputy director for the Red Cross Society in Bangladesh.



A Govardhana Diary ...
(Continued from page 32)

other demigods performed the sacred *abhiṣeka* ceremony of Kṛṣṇa. Indra called Kṛṣṇa “the real Indra”

and also chanted His glories as Govinda, one who gives pleasure to cows, earth and the senses.

Saturday, 20 Nov, 10:00 am: As we are performing a short *parikramā* I saw a strange sight. A monkey had lost both his hind legs and was balancing his body on his front legs. It was remarkable that he still managed to not only walk but run!

After coming back to our *āśrama*, we decide to do a full *parikramā* of Govardhana tomorrow.

Sunday, 21 Nov, 4:00 am: As I exit our *āśrama* gate, I see the full moon over Govardhana and offer my *daṇḍavats*. After attending the full morning program at Bhaktivedanta Āśrama, we chant till 5:30 am and begin our *parikramā*. After a kilometer or so we turn inward to the dirt road. The cool dirt was very pleasant to walk on. At a lake called Saṅkarṣaṇa-kuṇḍa we have to come out and walk on the tar road. At Govinda-kuṇḍa we again go back to the mud road. As we cross over to the other side of Govardhana, the sun rises and spreads orange hues all over. At 9:30, we arrive at Rādhā-kuṇḍa and sprinkle reverentially three drops of its water on our heads. At 10:30, we are back at our *āśrama* and finish the *parikramā* with *daṇḍavats* in the holy dust of Govardhana. ❀

—Śyāmānanda Dāsa

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

In your own words ...



What things do you think are beautiful?

O KṚṢṢṢA, THE MOST beautiful thing in this world is Your devotee. The devotees have different looks that make them so beautiful, and as soon as I see a devotee, You come in my mind. O KṚṢṢṢa, please therefore keep in the association of devotees forever.

—Khushboo Ratwani, Nasik

KṚṢṢṢA IS THE ORIGINAL seed-giving father (*aham bīja-pradaḥ pitā*), and the whole creation emanates from Him. Everyone and everything inherits His opulences, and one of His opulences is beauty. He shares the aspect of beauty with all His creations, and therefore everything in the creation is beautiful.

The beauty of any object used in the service of the Lord increases many times. For example, money used for our sense gratification is called Durgā Devī, but money used for serving KṚṢṢṢa is Lakṣmī Devī, who is more beautiful than Durgā Devī. Anything that has a connection with KṚṢṢṢa through loving service is beautiful.

—Anaṅga Mohinī Devī Dāsī,
Chennai.

THE SIGHT OF THE THRONG of devotees during Vraja-maṅḍala *parikrama*, their feet covered with soft *vraj-rajā*, looking blissful despite their long daily walks, are etched in my memory. The beauty of the clear pristine waters of the Yamunā as it flows by the tranquil *cintāharaṇa-ghāṭa* has no equal. The numerous trees in

Sevā-kuñja that bend low as if paying obeisances to the *nitya-lilā* of the Divine Couple is another beautiful thing. Further on a Kārtika evening, the sight of hundreds of *ghee* lamps being offered to their Lordships Śrī Śrī Rādhā Śyāmasundara to the accompaniment of *Dāmodarāṣṭa-kam* prayers is indeed thrilling. Of course, the crown jewel of all beauty are the forms of Rādhā Śyāmasundara at *maṅḡala-āratī*. In their freshly awakened glory, their beautiful eyes pour forth unconditional mercy on the assembled devotees.

—Rādhā Rañjana Devī Dāsī
Nigdi, Pune

EVERYTHING IS CREATED by KṚṢṢṢa, so everything is beautiful. But I would like to mention human beings.

As a child grows all bad habits come out in his behavior, like lust, anger, greed, etc. When we come to KṚṢṢṢa consciousness, we are trying to remove these negative factors from our life. Sometimes we succeed, sometimes we fail. But a child is so innocent he has no bad habits. He envies no one, for all are equal to him. When you beat him or tease him, he may cry but he will not get angry with you or keep bad feelings towards you. Rādhesyāma Dāsa writes in one of his books, “Chant Hare KṚṢṢṢa and be happy like an innocent child.” I found this beautiful, and I am trying to cultivate this innocence. It will be most beautiful thing for me if I can

do my bhakti and duties nicely and be happy like a child.

—Mala Sharma,
Baroda

EVERYTHING ABOUT Vṛndāvana is most beautiful. The holy streets with a temple on each side are extremely divine, because Śrī Śrī Rādhā KṚṢṢṢa and Śrī KṚṢṢṢa Caitanya Mahāprabhu have walked upon them. The wonderful sounds *Rādhe Rādhe* vibrate on everyone’s lips. KṚṢṢṢa’s favorite river, the sweet Yamunā, and the mountain form of KṚṢṢṢa, Giri Govardhana, rest in this most auspicious town. Rādhā Kuṅḍa and Śyāma Kuṅḍa, the bathing places of the Divine Couple have been formed in this place. Obviously, Vṛndāvana is most beautiful and spiritual!

—Varsha, a 10-year-old aspiring devotee from Hyderabad

IN YOUR OWN WORDS

QUESTION FOR THE FORTHCOMING ISSUES

What innovative way would you use to spread the glories of KṚṢṢṢa?

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VAIṢṆAVA CALENDAR

1 Jan. 2010 - 15 Feb. 2011

- 1 Jan: Break fast (Mumbai) 07:11 am - 10:51 am
- 2 Jan: Śrī Maheśa Paṇḍita Disappearance, Śrī Uddhāraṇa Datta Ṭhākura Disappearance
- 5 Jan: Śrī Locana Dāsa Ṭhākura Appearance
- 7 Jan: Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī Disappearance, Śrī Jagadīśa Paṇḍita Disappearance
- 15 Jan: Gaṅgā Sāgara Melā
- 16 Jan: Fasting for Putradā Ekādaśī
- 17 Jan: Break fast (Mumbai) 07:14 am - 08:30 am, Śrī Jagadīśa Paṇḍita Appearance
- 19 Jan: Śrī Kṛṣṇa Puṣya Abhiśeka
- 24 Jan: Śrī Rāmacandra Kavīrāja Disappearance, Śrīla Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī Appearance
- 25 Jan: Śrī Jayadeva Gosvāmī Disappearance
- 26 Jan: Śrī Locana Dāsa Ṭhākura – Disappearance
- 30 Jan: Pakṣa vardhini Mahāvādaśī, Fasting for Saṭ-tilā Ekādaśī
- 31 Jan: Break fast (Mumbai) 07:13 am - 10:59 am
- 8 Feb: Vasanta Pañcamī, Śrīmatī Viṣṇupriyā Devī Appearance, Sarasvatī Pūjā, Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura Disappearance, Śrī Puṇḍarīka Vidyānidhi Appearance, Śrī Raghunandana Ṭhākura Appearance, Śrīla Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī Appearance
- 10 Feb: Śrī Advaita Ācārya Appearance (Fast today)
- 11 Feb: Bhīṣmāṣṭamī
- 12 Feb: Śrī Madhvācārya Disappearance
- 13 Feb: Śrī Rāmānujācārya Disappearance
- 14 Feb: Fasting for Bhaimī Ekādaśī (Fast today for Varāha Dvādaśī)
- 15 Feb: Break fast (Mumbai) 07:07 am - 10:57 am, Varāha Dvādaśī: Appearance of Lord Varāhadeva (Fasting is done yesterday)

A GOVARDHANA DIARY

Tuesday, 16 Nov 2010, 9:00 pm: As I looked out of the vehicle, I saw jute stalks gently swaying in the open fields. Shortly we arrived in Govardhana town. At the point where devotees begin their *parikramā* (circumambulation of Govardhana Hill) there is a group offering their initial *daṇḍavats* (prostrated obeisances). Our driver slams on the brakes and our vehicle screeches to a halt. I thought we might have just missed running over someone, but our driver is cool, calm and collected. This happens here every day. Bang in the middle of an intersection human-pulled rickshaws, SUV's, compact cars, buses, trucks, motorcycles, stray cattle and whatnot - all converge and somehow decide who will have the right to pass. Welcome to Govardhana!

Wednesday, 17 Nov, 4:00 am: Even at such an early hour, I see devotees begin their *parikramā*. Two of us arrive at the heavy metal gate of Bhaktivedanta Ashram. The security guard does not respond to our loud calls. Desperate, we resort to banging the metal lock against the gate. At exactly 4:15 am, I hear the *maṅgala-ārati* (the first worship in the morning) conch shells blow loudly and reverberate. We are still left stranded outside. This property belonged to the Mahārāja of Chattarpur and was used by him whenever he came to Vraja for pilgrimage. I wondered whether any of our current politicians would have the desire to do such a thing today. This king was worshipping Lord Kṛṣṇa in the form of a *govardhana-śilā* (stone) in a small shrine. ISKCON devotees have continued that worship and when they were digging a large hole for an underground water tank another *śilā* was discovered. This white *śilā* was very similar as the existing *Kṛṣṇa-śilā*. Thus, now we have Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma on the temple's main altar.

At almost 4:55 the guard finally wakes up and lets us in. We enter the temple room to find that the morning services are over, so we decide to chant in front of the sacred *tulasī* plant. After some time

more devotees join, and we all decide to go on the terrace of the *āśrama*. The terrace affords a panoramic view of Girirāja Govardhana.

Thursday, 18 Nov, 4:00 am: I see a small trickle of devotees about to begin their *parikramā*. But today I am not surprised—rather I expected it. After breakfast *prasāda* at Bhaktivedanta Āśrama, we visit Cakaleśvara Mahādeva and the *bhajana-kuṭīra* (place of worship) of Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī. It is said that because Sanātana Gosvāmī was too much disturbed by mosquitoes he decided to move away. However, Lord Śiva intervened and requested him to stay. After that mosquitoes no longer disturbed Sanātana Gosvāmī. As I am narrating this story to our small group, a group of mosquitoes attack my right thigh. My karma—what else?!

Friday, 19 Nov, 10:00 am: We are at a very sacred *kuṇḍa* (lake) called Govinda-kuṇḍa. While Lord Kṛṣṇa was performing his pastimes as a cowherd boy, He saw that his community was busy preparing an elaborate ceremony to propitiate Indra, the chief of the demigods. Kṛṣṇa argued that although Indra is responsible for the rains and therefore the cowherd community should be grateful to him, he is no special well-wisher of them, since his rains also fall in the ocean. Instead, the whole community should worship Govardhana, who is their true friend. Everyone agreed to this proposal. Indra fumed with rage when he heard that a mere boy has stopped his worship, so blinded with anger he ordered his clouds to flood the entire Vraja area and wash it away into oblivion.

At this time, Kṛṣṇa, who was a mere seven-year-old boy, lifted the entire hill and gave complete protection to all the cowherds and their animals. Now Indra came to realize that this was no mere cowherd boy that he has insulted but indeed he had offended the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Thus at this place Indra and a host of
(please turn to page 28)