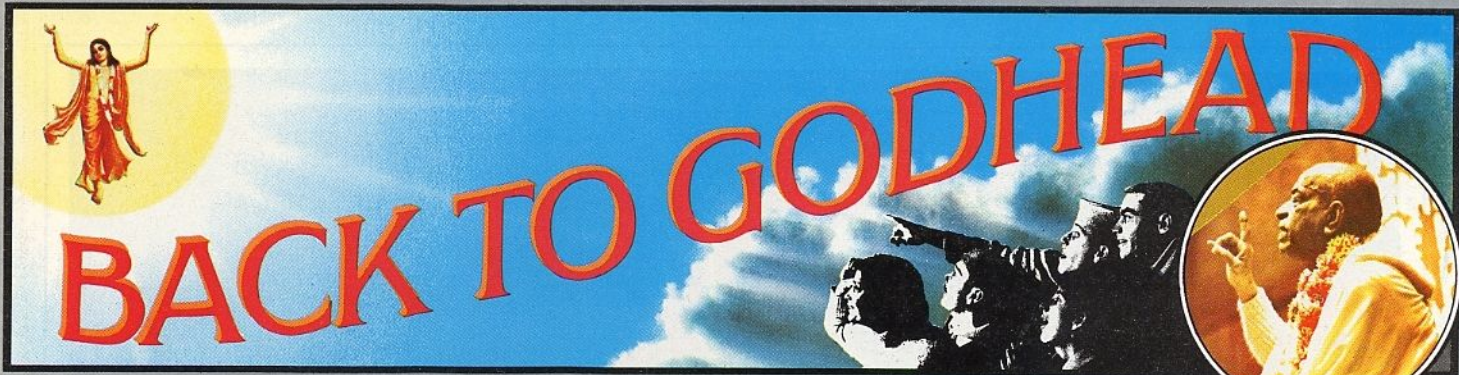
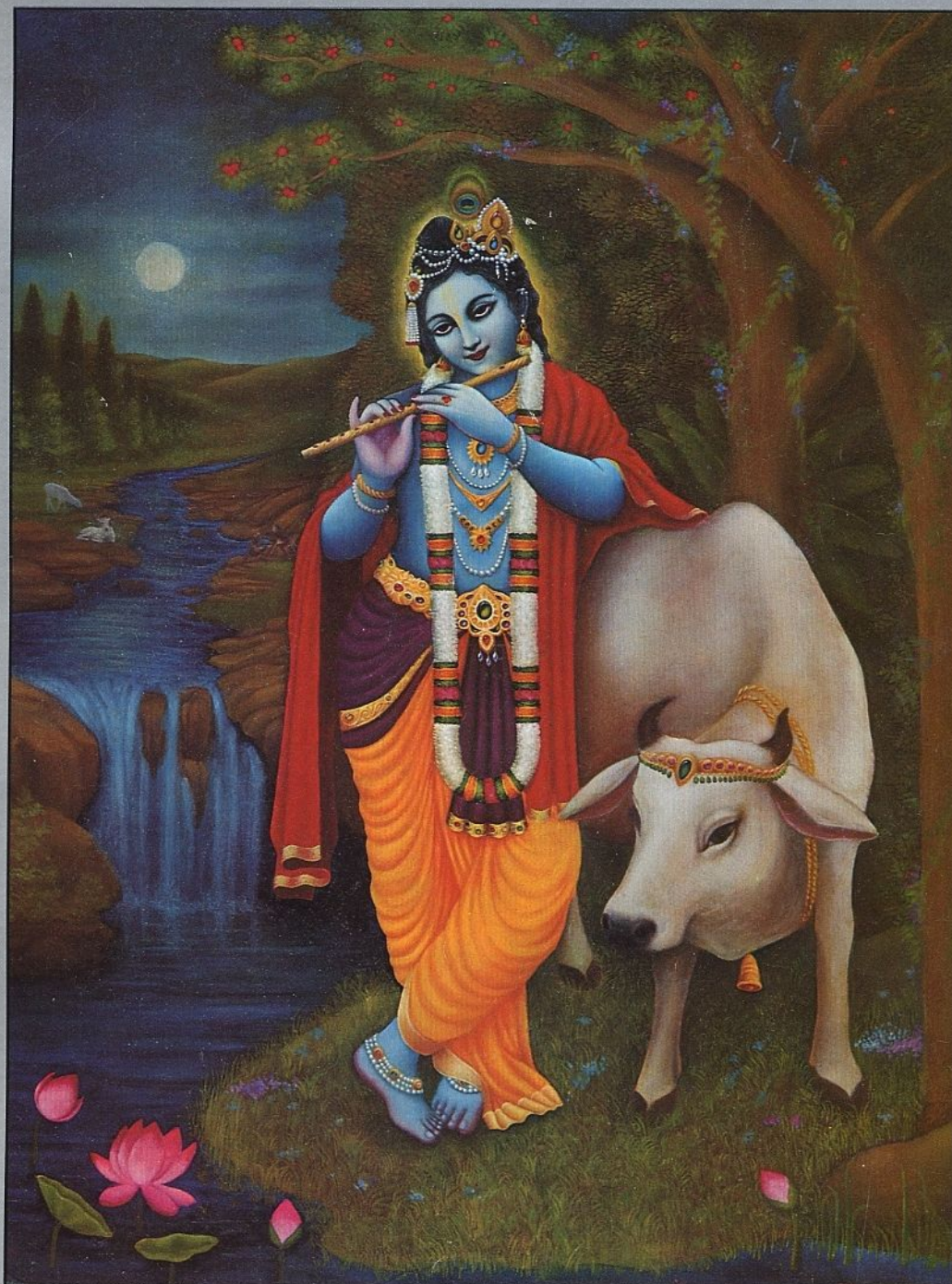


Godhead is light. Nescience is darkness. Where there is Godhead there is no nescience.



Vol.11 No.1

THE MAGAZINE OF THE HARE KRISHNA MOVEMENT



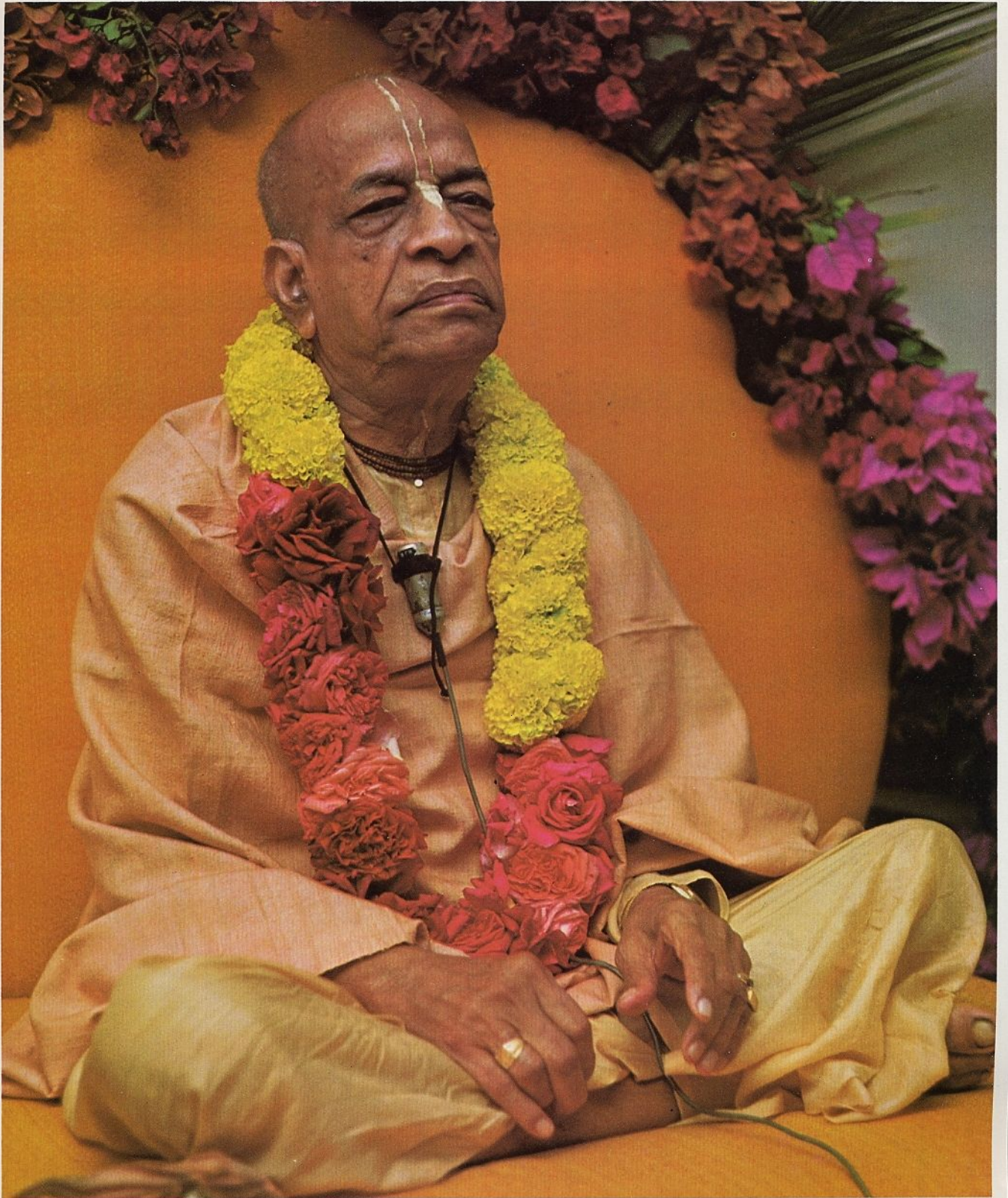


Photo: Bhāṅgava dāsa

His Divine Grace
A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda
Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare

IT'S NATURAL to praise someone who does something wonderful, and God does the most wonderful things of all. He creates the entire cosmic manifestation, orbiting countless planets and stars with astonishing skill and artistry. He gives light to the sun and fragrance to a rose, and He invests life in all that lives. Whatever wealth, wisdom, beauty, strength, fame or renunciation we see in this world is merely a fragment of His opulence. He directs the wanderings of all living beings by expanding Himself into everyone's heart. Indeed, the entire universe is pervaded by His energy.

He gives humanity great scriptures revealing the eternal truth about Himself, which can liberate us from all suffering, and He sends His representatives to teach it. Moreover, He Himself descends into the material world and performs superhuman activities to attract and purify our minds.

He knows everything—past, present and future—and never forgets any service rendered to Him, no matter how small. His glorious qualities are unlimited, and He is known by millions of names, like Kṛṣṇa and Rāma. The Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* is both a glorification of God and an appeal to be engaged in His service. Find out more in this issue of BACK TO GODHEAD.

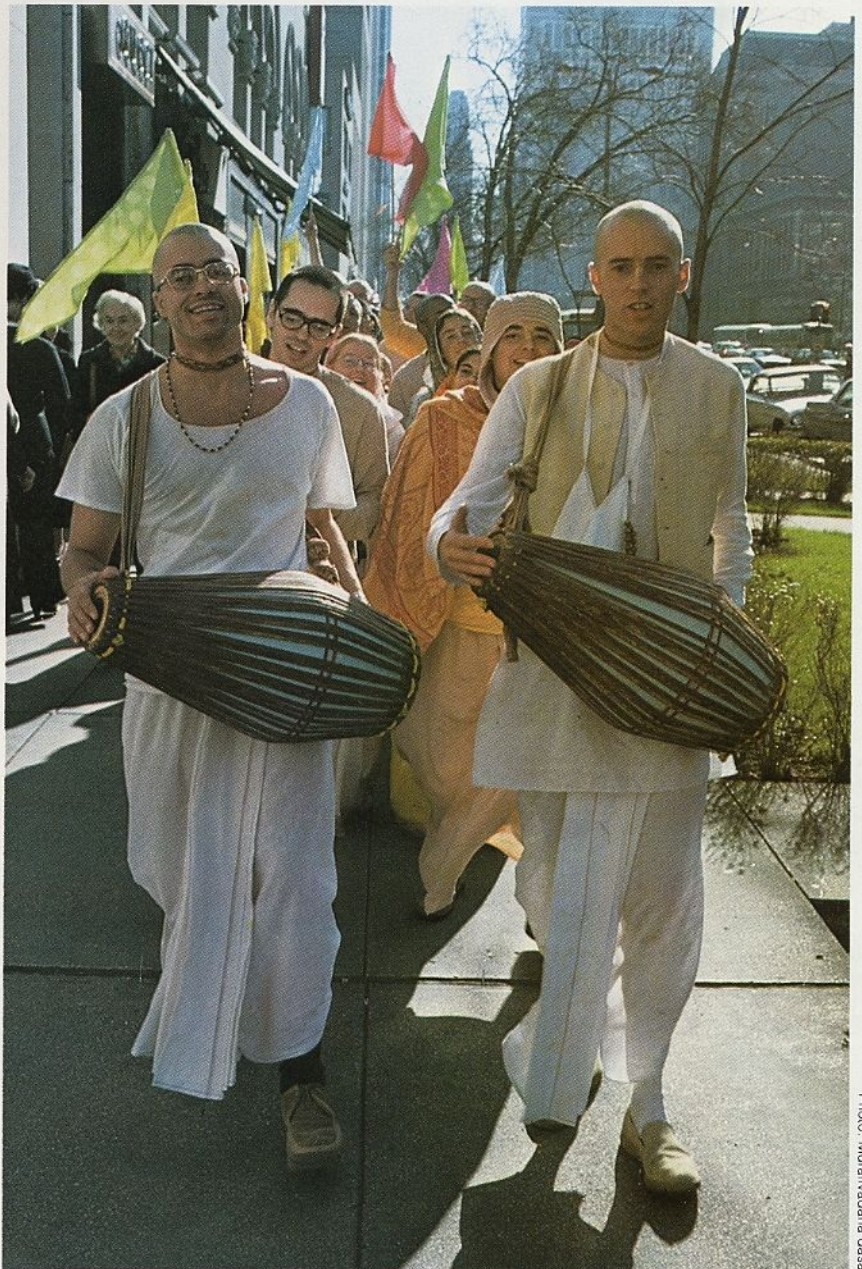


Photo: Muralivadana dāsa

A SHORT STATEMENT OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF KṚṢṆA CONSCIOUSNESS

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) is a worldwide community of devotees practicing bhakti-yoga, the eternal science of loving service to God. The Society was founded in 1966 by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, a pure devotee of God representing an unbroken chain of spiritual masters originating with Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself. The following eight principles are the basis of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. We invite all our readers to consider them with an open mind and then visit one of the ISKCON centers to see how they are being applied in everyday life.



Photo: Viśākha-devī dāsi

Devotees at ISKCON's New Vr̥ndāvana community in Moundville, W. Va.

1. By sincerely cultivating a bona fide spiritual science, we can be free from anxiety and come to a state of pure, unending, blissful consciousness.
2. We are not our bodies but eternal spirit souls, parts and parcels of God (Kṛṣṇa). As such, we are all brothers, and Kṛṣṇa is ultimately our common father.
3. Kṛṣṇa is the eternal, all-knowing, omnipresent, all-powerful, and all-attractive Personality of Godhead. He is the seed-giving father of all living beings, and He is the sustaining energy of the entire cosmic creation.
4. The Absolute Truth is contained in all the great scriptures of the world. However, the oldest known revealed scriptures in existence are the Vedic literatures, most notably the *Bhagavad-gītā*, which is the literal record of God's actual words.
5. We should learn the Vedic knowledge from a genuine spiritual master—one who has no selfish motives and whose mind is firmly fixed on Lord Kṛṣṇa.
6. Before we eat, we should offer to the Lord the food that sustains us. Then Kṛṣṇa becomes the offering and purifies us.
7. We should perform all our actions as offerings to Kṛṣṇa and do nothing for our own sense gratification.
8. The recommended means for achieving the mature stage of love of God in this age of Kali, or quarrel, is to chant the holy names of the Lord. The easiest method for most people is to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

BACK TO GODHEAD

THE MAGAZINE OF THE HARE KRISHNA MOVEMENT

Vol.11 No.1

FOUNDER

(under the direction of His Divine Grace
Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda)

His Divine Grace

A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda

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PRONUNCIATION OF SANSKRIT WORDS

Sanskrit words and names in BACK TO GODHEAD are spelled according to a system that scholars throughout the world use to show how to pronounce each word. Vowels in Sanskrit are pronounced almost as in Italian. The sound of the short *a* is like the *u* in *but*. The long *ā* is like the *a* in *far* and held twice as long as the short *a*, and *e* is like the *a* in *evade*. Long *ī* is like the *i* in *pique*. The vowel *ṛ* is pronounced like the *ri* in the English word *ring*. The *c* is pronounced as in the English word *chair*. The aspirated consonants (*ch*, *jh*, *dh*, etc.) are pronounced as in *staunch-heart*, *hedge-hog* and *red-hot*. The two spirants *ś* and *ṣ* are like the English *sh*, and *s* is like the *s* in *sun*. So pronounce *Kṛṣṇa* as KRISHNA and *Caitanya* as CHAITANYA.

ON THE COVER

When the supremely beautiful Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa appeared on this earth five thousand years ago, He showed by His own example how the cow should be protected and revered.

(An original oil painting by Jayarāma dāsa.)

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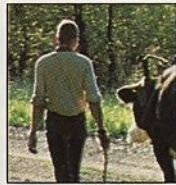


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"Back to the land" means "back to the cow" in the Vedic concept of community life, where the cow and the bull are the basis of the economy. The cow, with her milk, and the bull, with his strength, together can support human society. In return, all they ask is a little human kindness.



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A prostitute dragged him down to degradation, but his offenseless chanting of God's name at the time of his death gained Ajāmila entry into the spiritual world. A classic narrative from the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. (Translation and commentary by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda)



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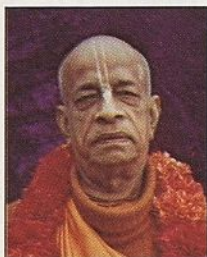
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Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam

The continuing presentation of India's great spiritual classic. Translation and commentary by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda.



The founder and original editor of BACK TO GODHEAD is His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda. Śrīla Prabhupāda first came to the United States in September of 1965, and by October of 1966 he and his first American students had begun the International Society for Krishna Consciousness in a small storefront in New York City.

From the beginning, BACK TO GODHEAD magazine was an integral part of ISKCON. In fact, it has often been called "the backbone of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement" by Śrīla Prabhupāda, who began writing, printing and distributing it himself in 1944. Over the years, BACK TO GODHEAD has changed in many ways, but its purpose has remained one: to present topics concerning Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, for the spiritual enlightenment of its readers.

WHY AND WHAT TO DO

Criminals struck every three seconds in the United States as crime rose a dramatic eighteen percent in 1974. His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda discusses the problem with Chicago Police Department media relations expert Lt. David Mozee.

Lieutenant Mozee: I understand you have some ideas that could help us in our efforts to prevent crime. I'd be very interested to hear them.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: The difference between a pious man and a criminal is that one is pure in heart and the other is dirty. This dirt is like a disease in the form of uncontrollable lust and greed in the heart of the criminal. Today people in general are in this diseased condition, and thus crime is very widespread. When the people become purified of these dirty things, crime will disappear.

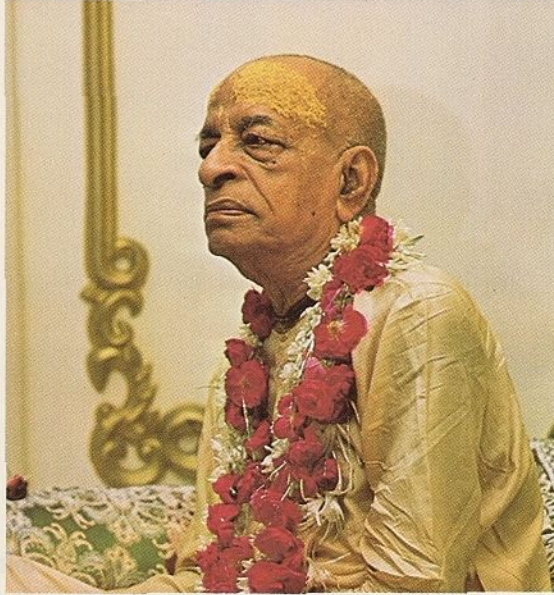
The simplest process of purification is to assemble in congregation and chant the holy names of God. This is called *saṅkīrtana* and is the basis of our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. So, if you want to stop crime, then you must gather as many people as possible for mass *saṅkīrtana*. This congregational chanting of the holy name of God will dissipate all the dirty things in everyone's heart. Then there will be no more crime.

Lieutenant Mozee: Do you have any feelings about crime here in the United States as opposed to the crime in your own country of India?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: What is your definition of crime?

Lieutenant Mozee: Any trampling on the rights of one person by another person.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes. Our definition is the same. In the *Upaniṣads* it is said, *iśāvāsyam idaṁ*



sarvam: "Everything belongs to God." So, everyone has the right to utilize whatever is allotted to him by God, but he may not encroach upon others' property. If he does so, he becomes a criminal. Actually the first crime is that you Americans are thinking this land of America is yours. Although two hundred years ago it was not yours, you have come from other parts of the world and claimed it as your land. Actually it is God's land, and therefore it belongs to everyone, since everyone is a child of God. But the vast majority of people have no conception of God. Practically speaking, everyone is godless. Therefore they should be educated to love God. In America, your government has a slogan: "In God we trust." Is that correct?

Lieutenant Mozee: Yes.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: But where is the education about God? To trust is

very good, but simple trust will not endure unless it is backed up with scientific knowledge of God. One may know that he has a father, but unless he knows who his father is, his knowledge is imperfect. And that education in the science of God is lacking.

Lieutenant Mozee: Do you feel that it's lacking only here in the United States?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: No. Everywhere. The age we live in is called Kali-yuga, the age of forgetting God. It is an age of misunderstanding and quarrel, and the people's hearts are filled with dirty things. But God is so

powerful that if we chant His holy name we become purified, just as my disciples have become purified of their bad habits. Our movement is based on this principle of chanting the holy name of God. We give everyone the opportunity, without any distinction. They can come to our temple, chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*, take a little *prasāda** as refreshment, and gradually become purified. So if the governmental authorities give us some facilities, then we can hold mass *saṅkīrtana*. Then, without a doubt, the whole society will change.

Lieutenant Mozee: If I understand you correctly, sir, you are saying that we should emphasize a return to religious principles.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Certainly. Without religious principles what is

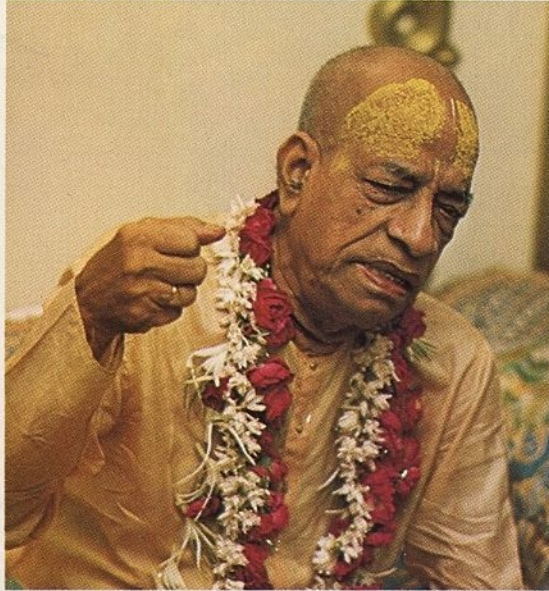
*Food first offered to the Supreme Lord.

“If human beings are not given the facility to learn about God, then they remain on the level of cats and dogs. You cannot have peace in a society of cats and dogs.”

the difference between a dog and a man? Man can understand religion, but a dog cannot. That is the difference. So if human society remains on the level of dogs and cats, how can you expect a peaceful society? If you bring a dozen dogs and put them together in a room, will it be possible to keep them peaceful? Similarly, if human society is filled with men whose mentality is on the level of dogs, how can you expect peace?

Lieutenant Mozee: If some of my questions sound disrespectful, it is only because I do not completely understand your religious beliefs. I mean no disrespect whatsoever.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: No, it is not a question of my religious beliefs. I am simply pointing out the distinction between human life and animal life. Animals cannot possibly learn anything about God, but human beings can. However, if human beings are not given the facility to learn about God, then they remain on the level of cats and dogs. You cannot have peace in a society of cats and dogs. Therefore, it is the duty of the governmental authorities to see that people are taught how to become God conscious. Otherwise, there will be trouble, because without God consciousness there is no difference between a dog and a man: the dog eats, we eat; the dog sleeps, we sleep; a dog has sex, we have sex; a dog tries to defend itself, and we also try to defend ourselves. These are the common factors. The only difference is that a dog cannot be in-



structed about his relationship with God, but a man can.

Lieutenant Mozee: Wouldn't peace be a precursor to a return to religion? Must we not first have peace?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: No, no, that is the difficulty. At the present moment, no one actually knows the meaning of religion. Religion means to abide by the laws of God, just as good citizenship means to abide by the laws of the government. Because no one has any understanding of God, no one knows the laws of God, or the meaning of religion. This is the present status of people in today's society. They are forgetting religion, taking it to be a kind of faith. Faith may be blind faith. Faith is not the real description of religion. Religion means the laws given by God, and anyone who follows those laws is religious, whether a Christian, a Hindu, or a Muslim.

Lieutenant Mozee: With all due

respect, isn't it true that in India, where religious customs have been followed for centuries upon centuries, we are seeing not a return but a drawing away from spiritual life?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes, but it is due only to bad leadership. Otherwise, the vast majority of the Indian people are fully conscious of God, and they try to follow the laws of God. Here in the West, even big college professors do not believe in God, or life after death. But in India, even the poorest man believes in God, and in a next life. He knows that if he com-

mits sins he will suffer and if he acts piously he will enjoy. To this day, if there is a disagreement between two villagers, they will go to the temple to settle it, because everyone knows that the opposite parties will hesitate to speak lies before the Deities. So in most respects, India is still eighty percent religious. That is the special privilege of taking birth in India, and the special responsibility also. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu has said,

*bhārata-bhūmite haila manuṣya-janma
yāra
janma sārthaka kari' kara para-upakāra
(Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi 9.41)*

Anyone who has taken birth in India should make his life perfect by becoming Kṛṣṇa conscious. Then he should distribute Kṛṣṇa consciousness all over the world.

Lieutenant Mozee: Sir, there is a Christian parable that says it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a

“Give us the facility to chant the holy name of God and distribute prasāda. If this is done on a mass scale, the entire society will become very pleasing.”

needle than for a rich man to come before the throne of God. Do you think the wealth of the United States and other Western countries is a block to spiritual faith?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes. Too much wealth is a block. Kṛṣṇa states in *Bhagavad-gītā* (2.44):

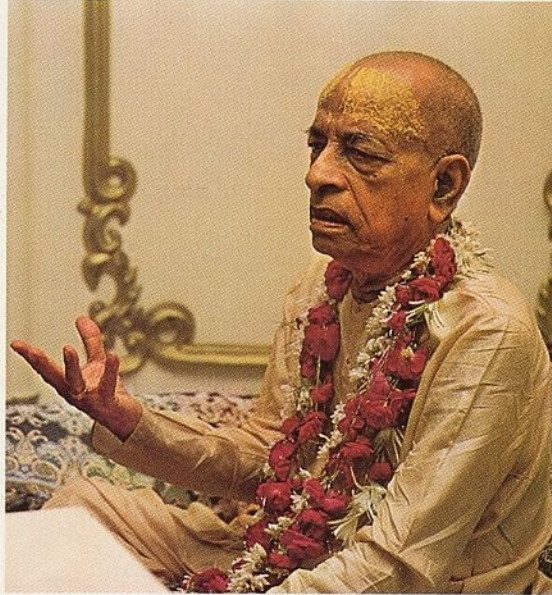
*bhogaiśvarya-prasaktānām
tayāpahṛta-cetasām
vyavasāyātmikā buddhiḥ
samādhau na vidhīyate*

If one is materially very opulent, he forgets God. Therefore too much material wealth is a disqualification for understanding God. Although there is no absolute law that only the poor man can understand God, generally if one is extraordinarily rich, his only ambition is to acquire money, and it is difficult for him to understand spiritual teachings.

Lieutenant Mozee: In America, those who belong to the Christian faith also believe these things. I don't see any vast differences between the spiritual beliefs of one religious group and another.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes, the essence of all religion is the same. Our proposal is that whatever religious system one follows, he should try to understand God and love Him. If you are a Christian, we do not say, “That is no good; you must become like us.” Our proposition is that whether you are a Christian, Muslim, or Hindu, simply try to understand God and love Him.

Lieutenant Mozee: If I could



return to my original purpose for coming, might I ask what advice you could give to assist us in reducing crime? I recognize that the first and foremost way would be a return to God, as you say—there's no doubt about that—but is there something that we could immediately do to diminish this spreading criminal mentality?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes. As I've already outlined in the beginning of our talk, you should give us the facility to chant the holy name of God and distribute *prasāda*. Then there will be a tremendous change in the population. I came alone from India, and now I have many followers. What did I do? I asked them to sit down and chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*, and afterwards I distributed a little *prasāda*. If this is done on a mass scale, the entire society will become very pleasing. This is a fact.

Lieutenant Mozee: Would you

want to start the program in an area of affluence or an area of poverty?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: We do not draw such distinctions. Any place easily available to all kinds of men would be very suitable to hold *sankīrtana*. There is no restriction that only the poor men need the benefit, but the rich do not. Everyone needs to be purified. Do you think criminality exists only in the poorer section of society?

Lieutenant Mozee: No. But I meant to ask whether there would be more of a beneficial influence—more of a strengthening of the community—if the program were held in a poorer area rather than an affluent area.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Our treatment is for the spiritually diseased person. When a person is afflicted with a disease, there are no distinctions between a poor man and a rich man. They are both admitted to the same hospital. Just as the hospital should be in a place where both the poor man and the rich man can easily come, similarly the location of the *sankīrtana* facility should be easily accessible to all. Since everyone is materially infected, everyone should be able to take advantage.

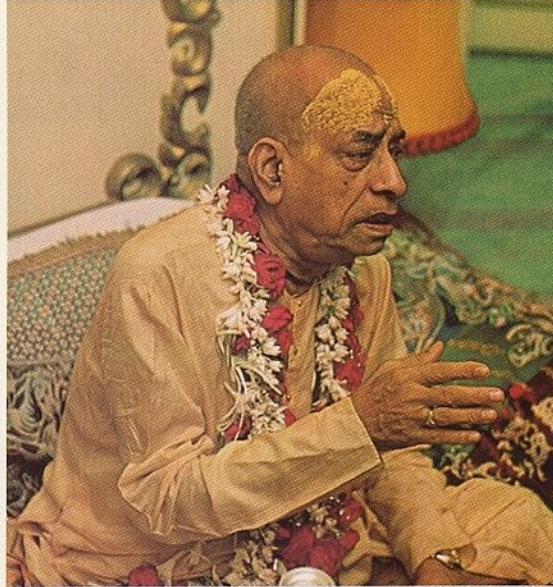
The difficulty is that the rich man thinks he's perfectly healthy, although he's the most diseased of all. But as a policeman, you well know that there's criminality among rich men and poor men alike. So our chanting process is for everyone because it cleanses the heart, regardless of the man's opulence or poverty.

“The thief and the murderer already know the law, yet they still commit violent crimes due to their unclean hearts. So our process is to cleanse the heart. Then all the troubles of this material world will be solved.”

The only way to permanently change the criminal habit is to change the heart of the criminal. As you well know, many thieves are arrested numerous times and put into jail. Although they know that if they commit theft they will go to jail, still they are forced to steal because of their unclean hearts. Therefore without cleansing the heart of the criminal, you cannot stop crime simply by more stringent law enforcement. The thief and the murderer already know the law, yet they still commit violent crimes due to their unclean hearts. So our process is to cleanse the heart. Then all the troubles of this material world will be solved,

Lieutenant Mozee: That’s a very difficult task, sir.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: It is not difficult. Simply invite everyone: “Come, chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, dance and take sumptuous *prasāda*!” What is the difficulty? We are doing this at our centers, and people are coming. But because we have very little money, we can hold *saṅkīrtana* only on a small scale. We invite everyone, and gradually people are coming to our centers and becoming devotees. If the government would give us a large facility, however, we could expand unlimitedly. And the problem is big; otherwise why are there national news articles asking what to do? No civil state wants this criminality. That’s a fact. But the leaders do not know how to stop it. If they listen to us, however, we can give them the answer: Why crime?



Because people are godless. And what to do? Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and take *prasāda*. If you like, you can adopt this process of *saṅkīrtana*. Otherwise, we will continue conducting it on a small scale. We are just like a poor medical man with a small private practice who could open a big hospital if he’s given the facility. The government is the executor. If they take our advice and adopt the process of *saṅkīrtana*, then the problem of crime will be solved.

Lieutenant Mozee: There are many Christian organizations in the United States that give the holy communion. Why doesn’t this work? Why is this not cleansing the heart?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: To speak frankly, I find it difficult to find one real Christian. The so-called Christians do not abide by the Bible’s order. One of the ten commandments in the Bible is, “Thou shalt not kill.” But where is that Christian

who does not kill by eating the flesh of the cow? The process of chanting the Lord’s holy name and distributing *prasāda* will be effective if carried out by persons who are actually practicing religion. My disciples are trained to strictly follow religious principles, and therefore their chanting of the holy name of God is different from others’. Theirs is not simply a rubber-stamped position. They have realized the purifying power of the holy name through practice.

Lieutenant Mozee: Sir, isn’t the difficulty that although a small circle of priests and devotees may follow the religious principles, those on the fringe deviate and cause trouble? For example, assume that the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement grows to gigantic proportions, as Christianity has. Wouldn’t you then have a problem with people on the fringe of the movement who professed to be followers, but were actually not?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: That possibility is always there, but all I am saying is that if you are not a true Christian, then your preaching will not be effective. And because we are strictly following religious principles, our preaching will be effective in spreading God consciousness and alleviating the problem of crime.

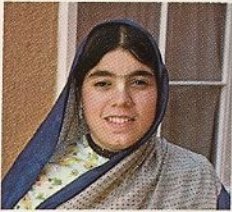
Lieutenant Mozee: Sir, let me thank you for your time. I will deliver this tape recording to my superiors. Hopefully, it will be effective, as you are effective.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Thank you very much.

How I Came to the Kṛṣṇa Consciousness Movement

by
Duḥkahantri-devī dāśī

as told to Bibhāvati-devī dāśī



When I was a young girl in Bordentown, New Jersey, I went to a strict Catholic elementary school.

The religious training I received there wasn't too satisfying, though. I remember asking questions like, "Is God old?" "What does He look like?" "What does He do all day?" Unfortunately, none of my teachers could answer these questions, so I began reading outside books to satisfy my curiosity.

During my high school years, I became very interested in journalism—especially the technical aspects of graphics and printing. After I graduated, I got a job at Princeton University Press as an IBM type composer. They put me to work composing a thousand-page book on the Arab-Israeli conflict. In the evenings I read books on Oriental religion and mysticism, looking for answers to the questions that had first occurred to me in grade school. But the books were all very vague. They talked about things like "the light" and "cosmic consciousness," but they never gave any concrete answers to my basic questions. One book told me that to meditate I must sit down and try to clear my mind of all thoughts. But when I sat down and tried to do this, all of a sudden I thought, "How can you possibly clear your mind of all thoughts if you're thinking about clearing your mind of all thoughts? That's a thought, and you always have to keep that thought in your mind in order to do it." So I just threw the book out. Meanwhile, I was becom-

ing very bored with the Arab-Israeli conflict.

One day a friend of mine showed me a book she had gotten from a Hare Kṛṣṇa devotee. It was called *Śrī Īsopaniṣad*. The book's introduction alone was so complete—it explained all the things I'd been wondering about! I didn't know anything about the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement, but I was so impressed with the book's author, His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, that I said to myself, "He must be my spiritual master." Following his instructions in *Śrī Īsopaniṣad*, I started chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra.

A few months later, while browsing in a bookstore, I found another book by Śrīla Prabhupāda: *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*. It was the most beautiful book I'd ever seen. I was very excited about it, so I bought it, took it home, and began to read it. I couldn't put it down. Every day, I brought the book to work with me. That wonderful *Bhagavad-gītā* changed my life. In fact, it convinced me to become a devotee of Kṛṣṇa.

One day I was working at my desk when a young man walked into the office. I immediately noticed his saffron robes and shaven head, and then I saw that he was carrying a copy of the same *Bhagavad-gītā* I had on my desk. He was a Hare Kṛṣṇa devotee, and he'd come to Princeton Press to check on their book production methods. I'd never met a devotee before, but I'd been praying to Kṛṣṇa to send someone, and I felt that this devotee had been sent by Kṛṣṇa for my sake.

Later, when I had a chance to talk with him, my first question was,

"Do you need any composers?" I'd noticed that *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* was published by ISKCON Press, and I'd daydreamed of working for them. "If I can compose books like the *Bhagavad-gītā*," I told him, "I'll work for free." The devotee, whose name was Rādhāvallabha dāśa, encouraged me to visit the Hare Kṛṣṇa temple in New York. He told me about the four basic rules of spiritual life: no meat eating, gambling, illicit sex or intoxication. I immediately began following them because I saw how pure and happy he was, and I wanted to be like that.

Soon afterward I visited the temple in New York. Everyone was very friendly, especially one girl named Rukmiṇī dāśī, who went out of her way to be pleasant and encouraged me to move in with the devotees and take up their way of life.

Back in Princeton, I thought about everything that had happened, and I decided to become a full-time devotee. After moving into the temple I immediately began to compose my spiritual master's books at ISKCON Press, and I've been working there ever since. Sometimes, during a rush, I work up to sixteen hours a day, but because these books are sacred, I feel very fulfilled. Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the practical *yoga* I'd been looking for all along.

Finding Kṛṣṇa consciousness was like finding a raincloud in the desert. It's revealing the truths I've always wanted to know. And I'm especially fortunate to be working on the books of my spiritual master, His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, for in this way I am helping others to also find out the truth.





The vast wheel of birth and death carries the soul on its seemingly endless sojourn through 8,400,000 species of life. At the top of the wheel is human life, which, if spent wisely, can liberate the soul from the bondage of repeated birth and death.

REINCARNATION-

The Soul's Journey on the Wheel of Birth and Death

By Dāmodara dāsa

“I adopted the theory of reincarnation when I was twenty-six.” Henry Ford said that in the San Francisco *Examiner* on August 26, 1928. This surprising announcement put him in the ranks of a select group of Americans—Thomas Edison, Benjamin Franklin, Tom Paine, and of course Emerson, Thoreau and Whitman—who believed that the soul goes on to a new body when the present body dies. We tend to think of reincarnation, or transmigration of the soul, as a recent import from India, but actually the concept of reincarnation plays an important role in the philosophical and theological tradition of the West. Plato, who lived in Greece during the fourth century B.C. and who helped lay the foundations of Western philosophy, held that “a soul is allied with different bodies at different times.” (*Laws*, 10.903) And in the third century A.D., Origen, one of the fathers of the Christian Church, wrote in his book *First Principles*:

By some inclination towards evil [certain] souls lose their wings and come into bodies, first of men; then through their association with the irrational passions, after the allotted span of human life they are changed into beasts, from which they sink to the level . . . of plants. From this condition they rise again to the same stages and are restored to their heavenly place.

However, as Christian theology solidified over the centuries, this view became decidedly heretical, and in A.D. 553, Emperor Justinian issued his *Anathemas Against Origen*: “If anyone assert the fabulous pre-existence of souls and the monstrous restoration which follows from it, let him be anathema [cursed].” This edict snuffed out almost all talk of transmigration throughout Christendom.

Was Justinian right to condemn the idea of reincarnation as “fabulous” and “monstrous,” or is the soul actually “allied with different bodies at different times,” as Plato thought? The best way to settle the matter is to go directly to the source—the earliest men-

tion of reincarnation. Fortunately, the earliest records of transmigration are also the most philosophically complete. They’re found in the Vedic Sanskrit literature written around 3,000 B.C. in India.

The Vedic view of reincarnation is clearly explained in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, which is universally accepted as the essence of Vedic spiritual knowledge. In the *Gītā*, the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa enlightens His student and friend Arjuna in the science of self-realization, beginning with a lucid presentation of the process of reincarnation.

The Soul Within the Body

Right at the beginning of His instruction to Arjuna, Lord Kṛṣṇa declares that transmigration of the soul is a fact: “As the embodied soul passes, in this body, from boyhood, to youth, to old age, the soul similarly passes into another body at death.” (Bg. 2.13) The existence of the soul—an unchanging conscious principle within an ever-changing material body—is implied by the recent findings of modern science. In *The Human Brain*, Professor John Pfeiffer points out that “your body does not contain a single one of the molecules that it contained seven years ago.” He compares the living body to a whirlpool. The form doesn’t change, but all the ingredients stream through at a dizzying pace. In his *Foundations of Biology*, L. L. Woodruff gives another apt analogy:

. . . The old saying that the materials forming the human body change completely every seven years is a tacit recognition that lifeless material, in the form of food, is gradually transformed into similar living matter under the influence of the body. Indeed, just as a geyser retains its individuality from moment to moment, though it is at no two instants composed of the same two molecules of water identically placed, so the living individual is a focus into which materials enter, play a part for some time, and then emerge to become dissipated in the environment.

“Our next body after this one is better or worse according to the quality of our activities in this life.”

So, during the seventy-year lifetime of an average American, he has “died” and been “reborn” ten times. Of course, unlike the body’s ultimate demise, when personal identity seems to end, these intermediate “deaths” don’t destroy the body’s structure and personal characteristics. Be that as it may, however, the physical substances of a seventy-year-old person’s body have actually changed ten times over. Has he been ten different people? Of course not. But then what exactly do we mean by the word “person”?

The best way to answer this question is to contemplate the person we know best—ourselves—through a simple exercise in memory. For instance, the farthest back I can remember is a day when I was about one-and-a-half years old. I was asking my mother if she could understand what I had been saying to her. I didn’t know the right words, though, and I became very frustrated. In my mind this incident sticks out vividly—what it was like physically and psychologically. Through such memories I can directly experience the continuity of my existence over the years. I can recall millions of things I did, saw, heard and felt. No one else enjoyed or suffered all these things—only I did. Thus I as a person am continuous, despite the discontinuity of my body.

Going further, I can become aware that my emotions, thoughts and memories are also ever-changing. I’m actually an observer of even these mental phenomena. They are flowing by me in the same way that the molecules of my physical body are flowing by me. My body is a gross form made of gross particles, and my mind is a subtle form made of subtle particles. But I’m neither one of them. The person I call myself is in reality a continuity of consciousness—an eternal spiritual soul.

The question now arises, “Why haven’t the scientists found the soul?” The simple answer is that an empirical scientist observes everything through his material senses and mind, which are too gross to perceive the subtle spiritual soul. There are some scientists, however, who do understand something of the existence of the person beyond the mind and body. For example, physicist Irwin Schroedinger, who in 1933 won the Nobel Prize in physics for his work in wave mechanics, wrote in *What Is Life?*: “Even if a skilled hypnotist succeeded in blotting out all your earlier

reminiscences, you would not find that he had killed you. In no case is there a loss of personal existence to deplore. Nor will there ever be.” Of course, the most definitive statement on this subject is given by Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself: “For the soul there is never birth nor death. Nor, having once been, does he ever cease to be. He is unborn, eternal, ever-existing, undying and primeval. He is not slain when the body is slain.” (Bg. 2.20)

The Sojourn of the Soul

How you (the soul) pass from one body to another is explained by Lord Kṛṣṇa through a striking analogy: “Just as a person puts on new garments, giving up old ones, similarly the soul accepts new material bodies, giving up the old and useless ones.” (Bg. 2.22) Lord Kṛṣṇa explains that the mind is the mechanism behind these transmigrations: “Whatever state of being one remembers when he quits his body, that state he will attain without fail [in his next life].” (Bg. 8.6) Everything we’ve thought and done during our life makes an impression on our mind, and the sum total of all these impressions determines our final thoughts at death. According to the quality of these thoughts, we are awarded a suitable new body after death.

I remember that when I was ten or twelve, back in the early fifties, we used to jokingly say things like “Don’t kill that fly! It may be your great-grandfather!” That wasn’t too far off, but we missed the real point of transmigration, which is that our next body after this one is better or worse according to the quality of our activities in this life. If we’re saintly, we’ll get a saintly body next time, but if we’re doggish, we’d better prepare ourselves for a dog’s life after this one. This is the law of *karma*, which states that for every action we perform, either good or bad, there is an appropriate reaction to be reaped either in this life or in a future life.

So the millionaire and the genius are reaping the benefits of good *karma*, and the pauper and the dunce, having committed sinful activities, are getting their just deserts. Perhaps we would like the system better if everyone became a millionaire or a genius, but the purpose of the law of *karma* is not to provide us a cozy homestead in the material world. The purpose is to bring us to the point of asking the all-important

question: "How can I escape from the painful cycle of birth and death?"

And a tediously painful cycle it is. According to the *Vedas*, the vast cosmic wheel of birth and death rolls through 8,400,000 species of life: 900,000 aquatics, 2,000,000 plants, 1,100,000 insects, 1,000,000 birds, 3,000,000 quadrupeds, and 400,000 humans. If you start at the lowest level, you first have to pass through the very simplest one-celled organisms before reaching those with sense perception. Finally, you evolve through all the mammals up to the human stage. Kṛṣṇa explains that after death "the living entity, thus taking another gross body, obtains a certain type of eye, ear, tongue, nose, and sense of touch, which are grouped about the mind. He thus enjoys a particular set of sense objects." (Bg. 15.9) Therefore the type of body we have now is an expression of our consciousness at the time of our last death.

As Origen guessed back in the third century, the path of *karma* doesn't always lead uphill. Once having reached the human stage, we can fall back down into lower forms of life if we misuse the facilities of the human body. The human form is special because only human beings have sufficient intelligence to inquire into the means for getting out of the cycle of birth and death. Only in the human form can we stop identifying ourselves with the bodies we are passing through and learn to see our spiritual identity within. Once we realize our eternal, indestructible spiritual nature, we are free from the vicious cycle of birth and death.

The Soul and the Supersoul

To actually establish ourselves on the spiritual platform, not only must we know ourselves (spirit) and matter (our bodies, minds and the world around us), but we must know the controller of both (God) as well. We know that God exists because there's no other sensible explanation for the design of the universe. A story about Isaac Newton illustrates this point well. The famous British scientist once made an intricate model of the solar system. Somehow he'd figured out how to gear miniature planets to revolve around a miniature sun in a facsimile of their observed orbits. One day an acquaintance, an atheist, dropped by his house and was astonished by the ingenious machine.

"Who made this wonderful machine?" he asked.

"Nobody," Newton replied. "It just happened."

"Oh come now, stop teasing me. Who put together this machine?"

"Well," said Newton, "you're convinced that some person constructed this machine. But when you

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confront the entire universe, which is manufactured with a degree of precision far beyond that of this model, and on a scale infinitely greater, then you say it just happened by chance. Why is that? Only because you don't want to admit there's a person so great he could do such a thing. But there is, and He is God."

What role God plays in our sojourn throughout the many species of life in the material world is explained by Lord Kṛṣṇa in the *Bhagavad-gītā*: "The Supreme Lord is situated in everyone's heart . . . and is directing the wanderings of all living entities, who are seated as on a machine made of the material energy." (Bg. 18.61) When we transmigrate from one body to another, we forget all our past activities and unfulfilled desires. But the omniscient Lord, the eternal witness within our heart, knows all these things, and He fashions another body just suitable for us to try to satisfy our unfulfilled desires.

Thus the only way to escape from the chained victimization of repeated birth and death in this material world is to transform our mentality in such a way that at the moment of death we'll be completely free of all material desires. It's not necessary, or even possible, to stop desiring altogether; rather, it is the *quality* of our desires that must change—from material to spiritual. Material desires we're familiar with—we've been

cultivating them all our lives. But what are spiritual desires, and how can we cultivate them? Kṛṣṇa explains in the *Bhagavad-gītā*: "Engage your mind always in thinking of Me and become My devotee. Offer obeisances and worship Me. Being completely absorbed in Me, surely you will come to Me." (Bg. 9.34)

At present we are always absorbed in thoughts of material well-being. As we have seen, however, this mentality inevitably leads to the misery and frustration of repeated birth and death. To be released from this painful wheel of *karma*, we need only transfer our thoughts to the Supreme Lord, Kṛṣṇa. Then, at the time of death, He will award us a spiritual body to enjoy eternal, blissful association with Him.

The easiest way to absorb our mind in thoughts of Kṛṣṇa is to hear and chant His glories, beginning with the *mahā-mantra*: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. In addition, His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda has written many books describing the activities, qualities and words of Lord Kṛṣṇa. By sincerely trying to follow the instructions found in these books, all of which contain the highest Vedic wisdom, one can cultivate loving devotion to Kṛṣṇa and go back home, back to Godhead at the end of this lifetime.



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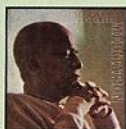
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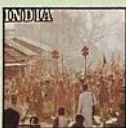
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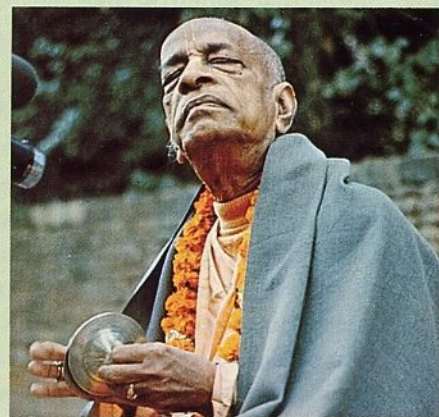
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First Canto "Creation"

Chapter Three

Kṛṣṇa is the Source of All Incarnations

(continued)

TEXT 37

न चास्य कश्चिन्निपुणेन धातु-
रवैति जन्तुः क्लमनीष उतीः ।
नामानि रूपाणि मनोवचोभिः
सन्तन्वतो नटचर्यामिवाङ्गः ॥३७॥

*na cāsya kaścīn nīpūṇena dhātuḥ
avaiti jantuḥ kṣamaṇīṣa ūtīḥ
nāmāni rūpāṇi mano-vacobhīḥ
santanvato ṇaṭacaryām ivāṅgaḥ*

na—not; *ca*—and; *asya*—of Him; *kaścīn*—anyone; *nīpūṇena*—by dexterity; *dhātuḥ*—of the creator; *avaiti*—can know; *jantuḥ*—the living being; *kṣamaṇīṣaḥ*—with a poor fund of knowledge; *ūtīḥ*—activities of the Lord; *nāmāni*—His names; *rūpāṇi*—His forms; *mano-vacobhīḥ*—by dint of mental speculation or deliverance of speeches; *santanvataḥ*—displaying; *ṇaṭacaryām*—a dramatic action; *iva*—like; *aṅgaḥ*—the foolish.

TRANSLATION

The foolish with poor fund of knowledge cannot know the transcendental nature of the forms, names and activities of the Lord, who is playing like an actor in a drama. Nor can they express such things, neither in their speculations nor their writings.

PURPORT

No one can properly describe the transcendental nature of the Absolute Truth. Therefore it is said that He is beyond the expression of mind and speech. And yet there are some men, with poor fund of knowledge, who desire to understand the Absolute Truth by imperfect mental speculation and faulty description of His activities. To the layman His activities, appearance and disappearance, His names, His forms, His paraphernalia, His personalities and all things in relation with Him are mysterious acts. There are two classes of materialists, namely the fruitive workers and the empiric philosophers. The fruitive workers have practically no information of the Absolute Truth, and the mental speculators, after being frustrated in fruitive activities, turn their faces towards the Absolute Truth and try to know Him by mental speculation. And for all these men, the Absolute

Truth is a mystery, as the jugglery of the magician is a mystery to children. Being deceived by the jugglery of the Supreme Being, the nondevotees, who may be very dexterous in fruitive work and mental speculation, are always in ignorance. With such limited knowledge, they are unable to penetrate into the mysterious region of transcendence. The mental speculators are a little more progressive than the gross materialists or the fruitive workers, but because they are also within the grip of illusion, they take it for granted that anything which has form, a name and activities is but a product of material energy. For them the Supreme Spirit is formless, nameless and inactive. And because such mental speculators equalize the transcendental name and form of the Lord with mundane names and form, they are in fact in ignorance. With such a poor fund of knowledge, there is no access to the real nature of the Supreme Being. As stated in *Bhagavad-gītā*, the Lord is always in a transcendental position, even when He is within the material world. But ignorant men consider the Lord one of the great personalities of the world, and thus they are misled by the illusory energy.

TEXT 38

स वेद धातुः पदवीं परस्य
दुरन्तवीर्यस्य रथाङ्गणोः ।
योऽमायया संततयानुवृत्त्या
भजेत तत्पादसरोजगन्धम् ॥३८॥

*sa veda dhātuḥ padavīm parasya
duranta-vīryasya rathāṅga-pāṇeḥ
yo'māyayā santatayānuvṛtīyā
bhajeta tat-pāda-saroja-gandham*

saḥ—He alone; *veda*—can know; *dhātuḥ*—of the creator; *padavīm*—glories; *parasya*—of the transcendence; *duranta-vīryasya*—of the greatly powerful; *ratha-aṅga-pāṇeḥ*—of Lord Kṛṣṇa, who bears in His hand the wheel of a chariot; *yaḥ*—one who; *amāyayā*—without reservation; *santatayā*—without any gap; *anuvṛtīyā*—favorably; *bhajeta*—renders service; *tat-pāda*—of His feet; *saroja-gandham*—fragrance of the lotus.

TRANSLATION

Only those who render unreserved, uninterrupted, favorable service unto the lotus feet of Lord Kṛṣṇa, who carries the wheel of the chariot in His hand, can know the creator of the universe in His full glory, power and transcendence.

PURPORT

Only the pure devotees can know the transcendental name, form and activities of Lord Kṛṣṇa due to their being completely freed from the reaction of fruitive work and mental speculation. The pure devotees have nothing to derive as personal profit from their unalloyed service to the

Lord. They render incessant service to the Lord spontaneously without any reservation. Everyone within the creation of the Lord is rendering service to the Lord indirectly or directly. No one is an exception to this law of the Lord. Those who are rendering service indirectly, being forced by the illusory agent of the Lord, are rendering service unto Him unfavorably. But those who are rendering service unto Him directly under the direction of His beloved agent are rendering service unto Him favorably. Such favorable servitors are devotees of the Lord, and by the grace of the Lord they can enter into the mysterious region of transcendence by the mercy of the Lord. But the mental speculators remain in darkness all the time. As stated in *Bhagavad-gītā*, the Lord Himself guides the pure devotees toward the path of realization due to their constant engagement in the loving service of the Lord in spontaneous affection. That is the secret of entering into the kingdom of God. Fruitive activities and speculation are no qualifications for entering.

TEXT 39

अथेह धन्या भगवन्त इत्थं
यद्वासुदेवेऽखिललोकनाथे ।
कुर्वन्ति सर्वात्मकमात्मभावं
न यत्र भूयः परिवर्त उग्रः ॥३९॥

*athaha dhanyā bhagavanta ittham
yad vāsudeve 'khīla-lokanāthe
kurvanti sarvātmakam āma-bhāvaṁ
na yatra bhūyaḥ parivarta ugraḥ*

atha—thus; *iha*—in this world; *dhanyāḥ*—successful; *bhagavantaḥ*—perfectly cognizant; *ittham*—such; *yat*—what; *vāsudeve*—unto the Personality of Godhead; *akhīla*—all-embracing; *lokanāthe*—unto the proprietor of all the universes; *kurvanti*—inspires; *sarvātmakam*—one hundred percent; *ātma*—spirit; *bhāvam*—ecstasy; *na*—never; *yatra*—wherein; *bhūyaḥ*—again; *parivartaḥ*—repetition; *ugraḥ*—dreadful.

TRANSLATION

Only by making such inquiries in this world can one be successful and perfectly cognizant, for such inquiries invoke transcendental ecstatic love unto the Personality of Godhead, who is the proprietor of all the universes, and guarantee cent percent immunity from the dreadful repetition of birth and death.

PURPORT

The inquiries of the sages headed by Śaunaka are herewith praised by Sūta Gosvāmī on the merit of their transcendental nature. As already concluded, only the devotees of the Lord can know Him to a considerable extent, and no one else can know Him at all, so the devotees are perfectly cognizant of all spiritual knowledge. The Personality of Godhead is the last word in Absolute Truth. Impersonal Brahman and localized Paramātmā Supersoul are included in the knowledge of the Personality of Godhead. So one who knows the Personality of Godhead can automatically know all about Him, His multipotencies and expansions. So the devotees are congratulated as being all successful. A cent percent devotee of the Lord is immune to the dreadful material miseries of repeated birth and death.

TEXT 40

इदं भागवतं नाम पुराणं ब्रह्मसम्मितम् ।
उत्तमश्लोकचरितं चकार भगवानृषिः ।
निःश्रेयसाय लोकस्य धन्यं स्वस्त्ययनं महत् ॥४०॥

*idaṁ bhāgavatam nāma
purāṇam brahma-sammitam
uttama-śloka-caritam
cakāra bhagavān ṛṣiḥ
niḥśreyasāya lokasya
dhanyaṁ svasty-ayanam mahat*

idaṁ—this; *bhāgavatam*—book containing the narration of the Personality of Godhead and His pure devotees; *nāma*—of the name; *purāṇam*—supplementary to the *Vedas*; *brahma-sammitam*—incarnation of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa; *uttama-śloka*—of the Personality of Godhead; *caritam*—activities; *cakāra*—compiled; *bhagavān*—incarnation of the Personality of Godhead; *ṛṣiḥ*—Śrī Vyāsadeva; *niḥśreyasāya*—for the ultimate good; *lokasya*—of all people; *dhanyam*—fully successful; *svasti-ayanam*—all-blissful; *mahat*—all-perfect.

TRANSLATION

This Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is the literary incarnation of God, and it is compiled by Śrīla Vyāsadeva, the incarnation of God. It is meant for the ultimate good of all people, and it is all-successful, all-blissful and all-perfect.

PURPORT

Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu declared that *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the spotless sound representation of all Vedic knowledge and history. There are selected histories of great devotees who are in direct contact with the Personality of Godhead. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the literary incarnation of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa and is therefore nondifferent from Him. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* should be worshiped as respectfully as we worship the Lord. Thereby we can derive the ultimate blessings of the Lord through its careful and patient study. As God is all light, all bliss and all perfection, so also is *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. We can have all the transcendental light of the Supreme Brahman Śrī Kṛṣṇa from the recitation of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, provided it is received through the medium of the transparent spiritual master. Lord Caitanya's private secretary Śrīla Svarūpa Dāmodara Gosvāmī advised all intending visitors who came to see the Lord at Purī to make a study of the *Bhāgavatam* from the person *Bhāgavatam*. Person *Bhāgavatam* is the self-realized bona fide spiritual master, and through him only can one understand the lessons of *Bhāgavatam* in order to receive the desired result. One can derive from the study of the *Bhāgavatam* all benefits that are possible to be derived from the personal presence of the Lord. It carries with it all the transcendental blessings of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa that we can expect from His personal contact.

TEXT 41

तदिदं ब्राह्म्याभास सुतमात्मवतां वरम् ।
सर्ववेदेतिहासानां सारं सारं समुद्धृतम् ॥४१॥

*tad idaṁ grāhayāmāsa
sutam ātmavatām varam
sarva-vedetihasānām
sāraṁ sāraṁ samuddhṛtam*

tat—that; *idaṁ*—this; *grāhayāmāsa*—made to accept; *sutam*—unto his son; *ātmavatām*—of the self-realized; *varam*—most respectful; *sarva*—all; *veda*—Vedic literatures (books of knowledge); *itihāsānām*—of all the histories; *sāraṁ*—cream; *sāraṁ*—cream; *samuddhṛtam*—taken out.

TRANSLATION

Śrī Vyāsadeva delivered it to his son, who is the most respected among the self-realized, after extracting the cream of all Vedic literatures and histories of the universe.

PURPORT

Men with a poor fund of knowledge only accept the history of the world from the time of Buddha, or since 600 B.C., and prior to this period all histories mentioned in the scriptures are calculated by them to be only imaginary stories. That is not a fact. All the stories mentioned in the *Purāṇas* and *Mahābhārata*, etc., are actual histories, not only of this planet but also of millions of other planets within the universe. Sometimes the history of planets beyond this world appear to such men to be unbelievable. But they do not know that different planets are not equal in all respects and that therefore some of the historical facts derived from other planets do not correspond with the experience of this planet. Considering

the different situation of different planets and also time and circumstances, there is nothing wonderful in the stories of the *Purāṇas*, nor are they imaginary. We should always remember the maxim that one man's food is another man's poison. We should not, therefore, reject the stories and histories of the *Purāṇas* as imaginary. The great ṛṣis like Vyāsa had no business putting some imaginary stories in their literatures.

In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* historical facts selected from the histories of different planets have been depicted. It is therefore accepted by all the spiritual authorities as the *Mahāpurāṇa*. The special significance of these histories is that they are all connected with activities of the Lord in a different time and atmosphere. Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī is the topmost personality of all the self-realized souls, and he accepted this as the subject of studies from his father Vyāsadeva. Śrīla Vyāsadeva is the great authority, and the subject matter of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* being so important, he delivered the message first to his great son Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī. It is compared to the cream of the milk. Vedic literature is like the milk ocean of knowledge. Cream or butter is the most palatable essence of milk, and so also is *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, for it contains all palatable, instructive and authentic versions of different activities of the Lord and His devotees. There is no gain, however, in accepting the message of *Bhāgavatam* from the unbelievers, atheists and professional reciters who make a trade of *Bhāgavatam* for the laymen. It was delivered to Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī, and he had nothing to do with the *Bhāgavata* business. He did not have to maintain family expenses by such trade. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* should therefore be received from the representative of Śukadeva, who must be in the renounced order of life without family encumbrance. Milk is undoubtedly very good and nourishing, but when it is touched by the mouth of a snake it is no longer nourishing; rather, it becomes a source of death. Similarly, those who are not strictly in the Vaiṣṇava discipline should not make a business of this *Bhāgavata* and become a cause of spiritual death for so many hearers. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* the Lord says that the purpose of all the *Vedas* is to know Him (Lord Kṛṣṇa), and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself in the form of recorded knowledge. Therefore, it is the cream of all the *Vedas*, and it contains all historical facts of all times in relation with Śrī Kṛṣṇa. It is factually the essence of all histories.

TEXT 42

स तु संश्रवयामास महाराजं परिक्षितम् ।
प्रायोपविष्टं गङ्गायां परितं परमर्षिभिः ॥४२॥

sa tu saṁśravayāmāsa
mahārājam parikṣitam
prāyopaviṣṭam gaṅgāyām
paritam paramarṣibhiḥ

saḥ—the son of Vyāsadeva; tu—again; saṁśravayāmāsa—made them audible; mahārājam—unto the emperor; parikṣitam—of the name Parikṣit; prāya-upaviṣṭam—who sat until death without food or drink; gaṅgāyām—on the bank of the Ganges; paritam—being surrounded; paramarṣibhiḥ—by great sages.

TRANSLATION

Śukadeva Gosvāmī, the son of Vyāsadeva, in his turn delivered the *Bhāgavatam* to the great Emperor Parikṣit, who sat surrounded by sages on the bank of the Ganges, awaiting death without taking food or drink.

PURPORT

All transcendental messages are received properly in the chain of disciplic succession. This disciplic succession is called *paramparā*. Unless therefore *Bhāgavatam* or any other Vedic literatures are received through the *paramparā* system, the reception of knowledge is not bona fide. Vyāsadeva delivered the message to Śukadeva Gosvāmī, and from Śukadeva Gosvāmī Sūta Gosvāmī received the message. One should, therefore, receive the message of *Bhāgavatam* from Sūta Gosvāmī or from his representative and not from any irrelevant interpreter.

Emperor Parikṣit received the information of his death in time, and he at once left his kingdom and family and sat down on the bank of the

Ganges to fast till death. All great sages, ṛṣis, philosophers, mystics, etc., went there due to his imperial position. They offered many suggestions about his immediate duty, and at last it was settled that he would hear from Sukadeva Gosvāmī about Lord Kṛṣṇa, and thus the *Bhāgavatam* was spoken to him.

Śrīpāda Śaṅkarācārya, who preached Māyāvāda philosophy and stressed the impersonal feature of the Absolute, also recommended that one must take shelter at the lotus feet of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, for there is no hope of gain from debating. Indirectly Śrīpāda Śaṅkarācārya admitted that what he had preached in the flowery grammatical interpretations of the *Vedānta-sūtra* cannot help one at the time of death. At the critical hour of death one must recite the name of Govinda. This is the recommendation of all great transcendentalists. Śukadeva Gosvāmī had long stated the same truth, that at the end one must remember Nārāyaṇa. That is the essence of all spiritual activities. In pursuance of this eternal truth, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* was heard by Emperor Parikṣit, and it was recited by the able Śukadeva Gosvāmī. And both the speaker and the receiver of the messages of *Bhāgavatam* were duly delivered by the same medium.

TEXT 43

कृष्णे स्वधामोपगते धर्मज्ञानादिभिः सह ।
कलौ नष्टदशमेष पुराणाकोऽधुनोदितः ॥४३॥

kṛṣṇe sva-dhāmopagate
dharma-jñānādibhiḥ saha
kalau naṣṭa-dśameṣa
purāṇārko'dhunoditah

kṛṣṇe—in Kṛṣṇa's; sva-dhāma—own abode; upagate—having returned; dharma—religion; jñāna—knowledge; adibhiḥ—combined together; saha—along with; kalau—in the Kali-yuga; naṣṭa-dśame—of persons who have lost their sight; eṣaḥ—all these; purāṇa-arka—the *Purāṇa* which is brilliant like the sun; adhunā—just now; uditah—has arisen.

TRANSLATION

This *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* is as brilliant as the sun, and it has arisen just after the departure of Lord Kṛṣṇa to His own abode, accompanied by religion, knowledge, etc. Persons who have lost their vision due to the dense darkness of ignorance in the age of Kali shall get light from this *Purāṇa*.

PURPORT

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa has His eternal *dhāma* or abode where He eternally enjoys Himself with His eternal associates and paraphernalia. And His eternal abode is a manifestation of His internal energy, whereas the material world is a manifestation of His external energy. When He descends on the material world, He displays Himself with all paraphernalia in His internal potency, which is called *ātma-māyā*. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* the Lord says that He descends by His own potency (*ātma-māyā*). His form, name, fame, paraphernalia, abode, etc., are not, therefore, creations of matter. He descends to reclaim the fallen souls and to reestablish codes of religion which are directly enacted by Him. Except God no one can establish the principles of religion. Either He or a suitable person empowered by Him can dictate the codes of religion. Real religion means to know God, our relation with Him, our duties in relation with Him and to know ultimately our destination after leaving this material body. The conditioned souls who are entrapped by the material energy hardly know all these principles of life. Most of them are like animals engaged in eating, sleeping, fearing and mating. They are mostly engaged in sense enjoyment under the pretention of religiosity, knowledge or salvation. They are still more blind in the present age of quarrel or Kali-yuga. In the Kali-yuga the population is just a royal edition of the animals. They have nothing to do with spiritual knowledge or godly religious life. They are so blind that they cannot see anything beyond the needs of the body. They have no information of the spirit soul beyond the jurisdiction of the subtle mind, intelligence or ego, but they are very much proud of their advancement in knowledge, science and material prosperity. They can risk their lives to become a dog or hog just after leaving the present body, for they have

completely lost sight of the ultimate aim of life. The Personality of Godhead Śrī Kṛṣṇa appeared before us just a little prior to the beginning of Kali-yuga, and He returned to His eternal home practically at the commencement of Kali-yuga. While He was present, He exhibited everything by His different activities. He spoke the *Bhagavad-gītā* specifically and eradicated all pretentious principles of religiosity. And prior to His departure from this material world, He empowered Śrī Vyāsadeva through Nārada to compile the messages of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and thus both the *Bhagavad-gītā* and the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* are like torch bearers for the blind people of this age. In other words, if men in this age of Kali want to see the real light of life, they must take to these two books only, and their aim of life will be fulfilled. *Bhagavad-gītā* is the preliminary study of the *Bhāgavatam*. And *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the *summum bonum* of life, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa personified. We must therefore accept *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* as the direct representation of Lord Kṛṣṇa. One who can see *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* can see also Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa in person. They are identical.

TEXT 44

तत्र कीर्तयतो विप्रा विप्रर्षेभूरितेजसः ।
अहं चाप्यगमं तत्र निविष्टस्तदनुग्रहात् ।
सोऽहं वः श्रावयिष्यामि यथाधीतं यथामति ॥४४॥

*tatra kīrtayato viprā
viprarṣeḥ bhūri-tejasah
aham cādhyagamam tatra
niviṣṭas tad anugrahāt
so'haṁ vaḥ śrāvayiṣyāmi
yathādhītaṁ yathāmati*

tatra—there; *kīrtayataḥ*—while reciting; *viprah*—O brāhmaṇas; *viprarṣeḥ*—from the great brāhmaṇa ṛṣi; *bhūri*—greatly; *tejasah*—powerful; *aham*—I; *ca*—also; *adhyagamam*—could understand; *tatra*—in that meeting; *niviṣṭaḥ*—being perfectly attentive; *tad-anugrahāt*—by his mercy; *sah*—that very thing; *aham*—I; *vaḥ*—unto you; *śrāvayiṣyāmi*—shall let you hear; *yathādhītam yathāmati*—as far as my realization.

TRANSLATION

O learned brāhmaṇas, when Śukadeva Gosvāmī recited Bhāgavatam there [in the presence of Emperor Parīkṣit], by his mercy I heard this from that great and powerful sage with rapt attention. Now I shall try to make you hear the very same thing as I learned it from him and as I have realized it.

PURPORT

One can certainly see directly the presence of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the pages of *Bhāgavatam* if one has heard it from a self-realized great soul like Śukadeva Gosvāmī. One cannot, however, learn *Bhāgavatam* from a bogus hired reciter whose aim of life is to earn some money out of such recitation and employ the earning in sex indulgence. No one can learn *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* who is associated with persons engaged in sex life. That is the secret of learning *Bhāgavatam*. Nor can one learn *Bhāgavatam* from one who interprets the text by his mundane scholarship. One has to learn *Bhāgavatam* from the representative of Śukadeva Gosvāmī and no one else, if one at all wants to see Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the pages. That is the process, and there is no alternative. Sūta Gosvāmī is a bona fide representative of Śukadeva Gosvāmī because he wants to present the message which he had received from the great learned brāhmaṇa. Śukadeva Gosvāmī also presented *Bhāgavatam* as he heard it from his great father, and so also Sūta Gosvāmī is presenting *Bhāgavatam* as he had heard it from Śukadeva Gosvāmī. Simple hearing is not all; one must realize the text with proper attention. The word *niviṣṭa* means that Sūta Gosvāmī drank the juice of *Bhāgavatam* through his ears. That is the real process of receiving *Bhāgavatam*. One should hear with rapt attention from the real person, and then he can at once realize the presence of Lord Kṛṣṇa in every page. The secret of knowing *Bhāgavatam* is mentioned here. No one can give

rapt attention who is not pure in mind. No one can be pure in mind who is not pure in action. No one can be pure in action who is not pure in eating, sleeping, fearing and mating. But somehow or other if someone hears with rapt attention from the right person, at the very beginning one can assuredly see Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa in person in the pages of *Bhāgavatam*.

Thus end the Bhaktivedanta purports of the First Canto, Third Chapter, of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, entitled "Kṛṣṇa Is the Source of All Incarnations."

Chapter Four Appearance of Śrī Nārada

TEXT 1

व्यास उवाच
इति ह्रुवाणं संस्तुय धृतीनां दीर्घसत्रिणाम् ।
वृद्धः कुलपतिः स्रतं बह्वृचः शौनकोऽब्रवीत् ॥ १ ॥

*vyāsa uvāca
iti bruvāṇaṁ saṁstūya
munināṁ dīrgha-satriṇām
vṛddhaḥ kula-patiḥ sūtaḥ
bahurcaḥ śaunako'bravīt*

vyāsaḥ—Vyāsadeva; *uvāca*—said; *iti*—thus; *bruvāṇam*—speaking; *saṁstūya*—congratulating; *muninām*—of the great sages; *dīrgha*—prolonged; *satriṇām*—of those engaged in the performance of sacrifice; *vṛddhaḥ*—elderly; *kula-patiḥ*—head of the assembly; *sūtam*—unto Sūta Gosvāmī; *bahurcaḥ*—learned; *śaunakaḥ*—of the name Śaunaka; *abravīt*—addressed.

TRANSLATION

On hearing Sūta Gosvāmī speak thus, Śaunaka Muni, who was the elderly, learned leader of all the ṛṣis engaged in that prolonged sacrificial ceremony, congratulated Sūta Gosvāmī by addressing him as follows.

PURPORT

In a meeting of learned men, when there are congratulations or addresses for the speaker, the qualifications of the congratulator should be as follows. He must be the leader of the house and an elderly man. He must be vastly learned also. Śrī Śaunaka Ṛṣi had all these qualifications, and thus he stood up to congratulate Śrī Sūta Gosvāmī when he expressed his desire to present *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* exactly as he heard it from Śukadeva Gosvāmī and also realized it personally. Personal realization does not mean that one should, out of vanity, attempt to show one's own learning by trying to surpass the previous *ācārya*. He must have full confidence in the previous *ācārya*, and at the same time he must realize the subject matter so nicely that he can present the matter for the particular circumstances in a suitable manner. *The original purpose of the text must be maintained.* No obscure meaning should be screwed out of it, yet it should be presented in an interesting manner for the understanding of the audience. This is called realization. The leader of the assembly, Śaunaka, could estimate the value of the speaker, Śrī Sūta Gosvāmī, simply by his uttering *yathādhītam* and *yathāmati*, and therefore he was very glad to congratulate him in ecstasy. No learned man should be willing to hear a person who does not represent the original *ācārya*. So the speaker as well as the audience were bona fide in this meeting where *Bhāgavatam* was being recited for the second time. That should be the standard of recitation of *Bhāgavatam*, so that the real purpose can be served without difficulty. Unless this situation is created, *Bhāgavatam* recitation for extraneous purposes is useless labor both for the speaker and the audience.

TEXT 2

शौनक उवाच
स्रतं स्रतं महाभाग वद नो वदतां वर ।
कर्णा भागवतीं पुण्यां यदाह भगवाञ्छुकः ॥ २ ॥

śaunaka uvāca
sūta sūta mahā-bhāga
vada no vadatām vara
kathām bhāgavatīm puṇyām
yad āha bhagavān chukaḥ

śaunakaḥ—Śaunaka; uvāca—said; sūta sūta—O Sūta Gosvāmī; mahā-bhāga—the most fortunate; vada—please speak; naḥ—unto us; vadatām—of those who can speak; vara—respectful; kathām—message; bhāgavatīm—of the Bhāgavatam; puṇyām—pious; yat—which; āha—said; bhagavān—greatly powerful; śukaḥ—Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī.

TRANSLATION

Śaunaka said: O Sūta Gosvāmī, you are the most fortunate and respected of all those who can speak and recite. Please relate the pious message of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, which was spoken by the great powerful sage Śukadeva Gosvāmī.

PURPORT

Sūta Gosvāmī is twice addressed herein by Śaunaka Gosvāmī out of great joy because he and the members of the assembly were eager to hear the text of Bhāgavatam uttered by Śukadeva Gosvāmī. They are not interested in hearing it from a bogus person who interprets in his own way to suit his own purpose. Generally the so-called Bhāgavatam reciters are either professional readers or so-called learned impersonalists who cannot enter into the transcendental personal activities of the Supreme Person. Such impersonalists eschew some meanings out of Bhāgavatam to suit and support impersonalist views, and the professional readers at once go to the Tenth Canto to misexplain the most confidential part of the Lord's pastimes. Both these reciters are not bona fide persons to recite Bhāgavatam. Only one who is prepared to present Bhāgavatam in the light of Śukadeva Gosvāmī and only those who are prepared to hear Śukadeva Gosvāmī and his representative are bona fide participants in the transcendental discussion of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.

TEXT 3

कस्मिन् युगे प्रवृत्तेयं स्थाने वा केन हेतुना ।
कुतः सञ्चोदितः कृष्णः कृतवान् संहितां मुनिः ॥ ३ ॥

kasmin yuge pravṛtṭeyaṁ
sthāne vā kena hetunā
kutaḥ sañcoditaḥ kṛṣṇaḥ
kṛtavān saṁhitān muniḥ

kasmin—in which; yuge—period; pravṛtṭā—was this begun; iyam—this; sthāne—in the place; vā—or; kena—on what; hetunā—ground; kutaḥ—wherefrom; sañcoditaḥ—inspired by; kṛṣṇaḥ—Kṛṣṇa-dvaipāyana Vyāsa; kṛtavān—compiled; saṁhitān—Vedic literature; muniḥ—the learned.

TRANSLATION

In what period and at what place was this first begun, and why was this taken up? From where did Kṛṣṇa-dvaipāyana Vyāsa, the great sage, get the inspiration to compile this literature?

PURPORT

Because Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is the special contribution of Śrīla Vyāsa-deva, there are so many inquiries by the learned Śaunaka Muni. It was known to them that Śrīla Vyāsa-deva had already explained the text of the Vedas in various ways up to the Mahābhārata for the understanding of less intelligent women, śūdras and fallen members of the family of twice-born men. Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is transcendental to all of them because it has nothing to do with anything mundane. So the inquiries are very intelligent and relevant.

TEXT 4

तस्य पुत्रो महायोगी समदृष्ट् निर्विकल्पकः ।
एकान्तमतिरुचिद्रो गृढो मूढ इवेत्येते ॥ ४ ॥

tasya putro mahā-yogī
samadr̥ṣṭ nirvikalpakāḥ
ekānta-matir unnidraḥ
gūḍho mūḍha iveyate

tasya—his; putraḥ—son; mahā-yogī—a great devotee; sama-dr̥ṣṭ—equi-balanced; nirvikalpakāḥ—absolute monist; ekānta-matīḥ—fixed in monism or oneness of mind; unnidraḥ—surpassed nescience; gūḍhaḥ—not exposed; mūḍhaḥ—stunted; iva—like; iyate—appears like.

TRANSLATION

His [Vyāsadeva's] son was a great devotee, an equibalanced monist, whose mind was always concentrated in monism. He was not ignorant, but was transcendental to mundane activities.

PURPORT

Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī was a liberated soul, and thus he remained always alert not to be trapped by the illusory energy. In the Bhagavad-gītā this alertness is very lucidly explained. The liberated soul and the conditioned soul have different engagements. The liberated soul is always engaged in the progressive path of spiritual attainment, which is something like a dream for the conditioned soul. The conditioned soul cannot imagine the actual engagements of the liberated soul. While the conditioned soul thus dreams about spiritual engagements, the liberated soul is awake. Similarly, the engagement of a conditioned soul appears to be a dream for the liberated soul. Apparently a conditioned soul and a liberated soul may seem to be on the same platform, but factually they are differently engaged, and their attention is always alert, either in sense enjoyment or in self-realization. The conditioned soul is absorbed in matter, whereas the liberated soul is completely indifferent to matter. This indifference is explained as follows.

TEXT 5

दृष्टानुयान्तमृषिमात्मजमप्यनर्ग
देव्या हिया परिदधुर्न सुतस्य चित्रम् ।
तद्दीप्त्य पृच्छति मुनी जगदुस्तवास्ति
स्त्रीपुम्भिदान्तु सुतस्य विविकटदृष्टेः ॥ ५ ॥

dṛṣṭvānuyāntam ṛṣim ātmajam apy anagnam
devyā hriyā paridadhur na sutasya citram
tad vīkṣya pṛcchati munau jagadus tavāsti
strī-pum-bhidā na tu sutasya vivikta-dṛṣṭeḥ

dṛṣṭvā—by seeing; anuyāntam—following; ṛṣim—the sage; ātmajam—his son; api—in spite of; anagnam—not naked; devyāḥ—beautiful damsels; hriyā—out of shyness; paridadhur—covered the body; na—not; sutasya—of the son; citram—astonishing; tat vīkṣya—by seeing that; pṛcchati—asking; munau—unto the muni (Vyāsa); jagaduh—replied; tava—your; asti—there are; strī-pum—male and female; bhidā—differences; na—not; tu—but; sutasya—of the son; vivikta—purified; dṛṣṭeḥ—of one who looks.

TRANSLATION

While Śrī Vyāsadeva was following his son, beautiful young damsels, who were bathing naked, covered their bodies with cloth, although Śrī Vyāsadeva himself was not naked. But they did not do so when his son passed. The sage inquired about this, and the young ladies replied that his son was purified and when looking at them made no distinction between male and female. But the sage made such distinctions.

PURPORT

In the Bhagavad-gītā it is said that a learned sage looks equally on the learned and gentle brāhmaṇa, a caṇḍāla (dog-eater), a dog or cow due to his spiritual vision. Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī attained that stage. Thus he did not see a male or female, but he saw all living entities in different dress. The ladies who were bathing could understand the mind of a man simply by studying his demeanor, just as by looking at a child one can understand how innocent he is. Śukadeva Gosvāmī was a young boy sixteen years old,

and therefore all the parts of his body were developed. He was naked also, and so were the ladies. But because Śukadeva Gosvāmī was transcendental to sex relations, he appeared very innocent. The ladies, by their special qualifications, could sense this at once, and therefore they were not very concerned about him. But when his father passed, the ladies quickly dressed. The ladies were exactly like his children or grandchildren, yet they reacted to the presence of Vyāsadeva according to the social custom because Śrīla Vyāsadeva played the part of a householder. A householder has to distinguish between a male and female, otherwise he cannot be a householder. One should, therefore, attempt to know the distinction between soul and body without attachment for male and female. As long as such attachment is there, one should not try to become a *sannyāsī* like Śukadeva Gosvāmī. At least theoretically one must be convinced that a living entity is neither a male nor female. The outward dress is made of matter by material nature to attract the opposite sex and thus keep one entangled in material existence. A liberated soul is above this perverted distinction. He does not distinguish between one living being and another. For him they are all one and the same spirit. The perfection of this spiritual vision is the liberated stage, and Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī attained that stage. Śrīla Vyāsadeva was also in the transcendental stage, but because he was in the householder's life, he did not pretend to be a liberated soul, as a matter of custom.

TEXT 6

कथमालक्षितः पौरैः सम्प्राप्तः कुरुजाङ्गलान् ।
उन्मत्तमूकजडवद्विचरन् गजसाह्वये ॥ ६ ॥

*katham ālakṣitaḥ pauraiḥ
samprāptaḥ kuru-jāṅgalān
unmatta-mūka-jaḍavat
vicaran gaja-sāhvaye*

katham—how; *ālakṣitaḥ*—recognized; *pauraiḥ*—by the citizens; *samprāptaḥ*—reaching; *kuru-jāṅgalān*—the Kuru-jāṅgala provinces; *unmatta*—mad; *mūka*—dumb; *jaḍavat*—stunted; *vicaran*—wandering; *gaja-sāhvaye*—Hastinapura.

TRANSLATION

How was he [Śrīla Śukadeva, the son of Vyāsa] recognized by the citizens when he entered the city of Hastinapura [now Delhi], after wandering in the provinces of Kuru and Jāṅgala, appearing like a madman, dumb and retarded?

PURPORT

The present city of Delhi was formerly known as Hastinapura because it was first established by King Hasti. Gosvāmī Śukadeva, after leaving his paternal home, was roaming like a madman, and therefore it was very difficult for the citizens to recognize him in his exalted position. A sage is not, therefore, recognized by sight, but by hearing. One should approach a *sādhu* or great sage not to see but to hear him. If one is not prepared to hear the words of a *sādhu*, there is no profit. Śukadeva Gosvāmī was a *sādhu* who could speak on the transcendental activities of the Lord. He did not satisfy the whims of ordinary citizens. He was recognized when he spoke on the subject of *Bhāgavatam*, and he never attempted jugglery like a magician. Outwardly he appeared to be a retarded, dumb madman, but in fact he was the most elevated transcendental personality.

TEXT 7

कथं वा पाण्डवेयस्य राजर्षेर्मुनिना सह ।
संवादः समभूपात यत्रैवा सात्वती श्रुतिः ॥ ७ ॥

*katham vā paṇḍaveyasya
rājarṣer muninā saha
saṁvādaḥ samabhūt tāta
yatraiḥ sātvaṭī śrutiḥ*

katham—how it is; *vā*—also; *pāṇḍaveyasya*—of the descendant of Pāṇḍu (Parīkṣit); *rājarṣeḥ*—of the king who was a sage; *muninā*—with the muni; *saha*—with; *saṁvādaḥ*—discussion; *samabhūt*—took place; *tāta*—O darling; *yatra*—whereupon; *eṣā*—like this; *sātvaṭī*—transcendental; *śrutiḥ*—essence of the Vedas.

TRANSLATION

How did it so happen that King Parīkṣit met this great sage, making it possible for this great transcendental essence of the Vedas [Bhāgavatam] to be sung to him?

PURPORT

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is stated here as the essence of the Vedas. It is not an imaginary story as it is sometimes considered by unauthorized men. It is also called *Śuka-saṁhitā*, or the Vedic hymn spoken by Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī, the great liberated sage.

TEXT 8

स गोदोहनमात्रं हि गृहेषु गृहमेधिनाम् ।
अवेक्षते महाभागस्तीर्थोत्सदाश्रमम् ॥ ८ ॥

*sa go-dohana-mātram hi
gṛheṣu gṛha-medhinām
avekṣate mahā-bhāgaḥ
tīrthi-kurvaṁs tad āśramam*

saḥ—he (Śukadeva Gosvāmī); *go-dohana-mātram*—only for the time of milking the cow; *hi*—certainly; *gṛheṣu*—in the house; *gṛha-medhinām*—of the householders; *avekṣate*—waits; *mahā-bhāgaḥ*—the most fortunate; *tīrthi*—pilgrimage; *kurvaṁs*—transforming; *tad āśramam*—the residence.

TRANSLATION

He [Śukadeva Gosvāmī] was accustomed to stay at the door of a householder only long enough for a cow to be milked. And he did this just to sanctify the residence.

PURPORT

Śukadeva Gosvāmī met Emperor Parīkṣit and explained the text of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. He was not accustomed to stay at any householder's residence for more than half an hour (at the time of milking the cow), and he would just take alms from the fortunate householder. That was to sanctify the residence by his auspicious presence. Therefore Śukadeva Gosvāmī is an ideal preacher established in the transcendental position. From his activities, those who are in the renounced order of life and dedicated to the mission of preaching the message of Godhead should learn that they have no business with householders save and except to enlighten them in transcendental knowledge. Such asking for alms from the householder should be for the purpose of sanctifying his home. One who is in the renounced order of life should not be allured by the glamour of the householder's worldly possessions and thus become subservient to worldly men. For one who is in the renounced order of life, this is much more dangerous than drinking poison and committing suicide.

TEXT 9

अभिमन्युसुतं स्यात् प्राहुर्मगवतोत्तमम् ।
तस्य जन्म महाश्रयं कर्मणि च गृणीहि नः ॥ ९ ॥

*abhimanyu-sutaṁ sūta
prāhur bhāgavatottamam
tasya janma mahāścaryam
karmāṇi ca gṛṇīhi naḥ*

abhimanyu-suta—the son of Abhimanyu; *sūta*—O Sūta; *prāhuḥ*—is said to be; *bhāgavata-uttamam*—the first-class devotee of the Lord; *tasya*—his; *janma*—birth; *mahāścaryam*—very wonderful; *karmāṇi*—activities; *ca*—and; *gṛṇīhi*—please speak to; *naḥ*—us.

TRANSLATION

It is said that Mahārāja Parīkṣit is a great first-class devotee of the Lord and that his birth and activities are all wonderful. Please tell us about him.

PURPORT

The birth of Mahārāja Parīkṣit is wonderful because in the womb of his mother he was protected by the Personality of Godhead Śrī Kṛṣṇa. His activities are also wonderful because he chastised Kali, who was attempting to kill a cow. To kill cows means to end human civilization. He wanted to protect the cow from being killed by the great representative of sin. His death is also wonderful because he got previous notice of his death, which is wonderful for any mortal being, and thus he prepared himself for passing away by sitting down on the bank of the Ganges and hearing the transcendental activities of the Lord. During all the days he heard *Bhāgavatam*, he did not take food or drink, nor did he sleep a moment. So everything about him is wonderful, and his activities are worth hearing attentively. Desire is expressed herein to hear about him in detail.

TEXT 10

स सम्राट् कस्य वा हेतोः पाण्डूनां मानवर्धनः ।
प्रायोपविष्टो गङ्गायामनादृत्याधिराट्श्रियम् ॥१०॥

sa samrāt kasya vā hetoḥ
pāṇḍūnāṁ māna-varadhanah
prāyopaviṣṭo gaṅgāyām
anādṛtyādhirāt-śriyam

saḥ—he; samrāt—the Emperor; kasya—for what; vā—or; hetoḥ—reason; pāṇḍūnām—of the sons of Pāṇḍu; māna-varadhanah—one who enriches the family; prāya-upaviṣṭah—sitting and fasting; gaṅgāyām—on the bank of the Ganges; anādṛtya—neglecting; adhirāt—acquired kingdom; śriyam—opulences.

TRANSLATION

He was a great emperor and possessed all the opulences of his acquired kingdom. He was so exalted that he was increasing the prestige of the Pāṇḍu dynasty. Why did he give up everything to sit down on the bank of the Ganges and fast until death?

PURPORT

Mahārāja Parīkṣit was the Emperor of the world and all the seas and oceans, and he did not have to take the trouble to acquire such a kingdom by his own effort. He inherited it from his grandfathers Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira and brothers. Besides that, he was doing well in the administration and was worthy of the good names of his forefathers. Consequently there was nothing undesirable in his opulence and administration. Then why should he give up all these favorable circumstances and sit down on the bank of the Ganges, fasting till death? This is astonishing, and therefore all were eager to know the cause.

TEXT 11

नमन्ति यत्पादनिकेतमात्मनः
शिवाय हानीय धनानि शत्रवः ।
कर्षं स वीरः श्रियमङ्गं दुस्त्यजां
युवैषतोत्स्राष्टमहो सहासुभिः ॥११॥

namanti yat-pāda-niketam ātmanah
śivāya hānīya dhanāni śatravaḥ
katham sa vīraḥ śriyam aṅga dustyajām
yuvaiṣatotsraṣṭum aho sahāsubhīḥ

namanti—bow down; yat-pāda—whose feet; niketam—under; ātmanah—own; śivāya—welfare; hānīya—used to bring about; dhanāni—wealth; śatravaḥ—enemies; katham—for what reason; saḥ—he; vīraḥ—the chivalrous;

śriyam—opulences; aṅga—O; dustyajām—insuperable; yuvā—just in full youth; aiṣata—desired; utsraṣṭum—to give up; aho—exclamation; saha—with; asubhīḥ—life.

TRANSLATION

He was such a great emperor that all his enemies would come and bow down at his feet and surrender all their wealth for their own benefit. He was full of youth and strength, and he possessed insuperable kingly opulences. Why did he want to give up everything, including his life?

PURPORT

There was nothing undesirable in his life. He was quite a young man and could enjoy life with power and opulence. So there was no question of retiring from active life. There was no difficulty in collecting the state taxes because he was so powerful and chivalrous that even his enemies would come to him and bow down at his feet and surrender all wealth for their own benefit. Mahārāja Parīkṣit was a pious king. He conquered his enemies, and therefore the kingdom was full of prosperity. There was enough milk, grains and metals, and all the rivers and mountains were full of potency. So materially everything was satisfactory. Therefore, there was no question of untimely giving up his kingdom and life. They were eager to hear about all this.

TEXT 12

शिवाय लोकस्य भवाय भूतये
य उत्तमश्लोकपरायणा जनाः ।
जीवन्ति नात्मार्थमसौ पराश्रयं
मुमोच निर्विद्यं कुतः कलेवरम् ॥१२॥

śivāya lokasya bhavāya bhūtaye
ya uttama-śloka-parāyaṇā janāḥ
jīvanti nātmārtham asau parāśrayam
mumoca nirvidya kutaḥ kalevaram

śivāya—welfare; lokasya—of all living beings; bhavāya—for flourishing; bhūtaye—for economic development; ye—one who is; uttama-śloka-parāyaṇāḥ—devoted to the cause of the Personality of Godhead; janāḥ—men; jīvanti—do live; na—but not; ātma-artham—selfish interest; asau—that; parāśrayam—shelter for others; mumoca—gave up; nirvidya—being freed from all attachment; kutaḥ—for what reason; kalevaram—mortal body.

TRANSLATION

Those who are devoted to the cause of the Personality of Godhead live only for the welfare, development and happiness of others. They do not live for any selfish interest. So even though the Emperor [Parīkṣit] was free from all attachment to worldly possessions, how could he give up his mortal body, which was shelter for others?

PURPORT

Parīkṣit Mahārāja was an ideal king and householder because he was a devotee of the Personality of Godhead. A devotee of the Lord has automatically all good qualifications. And the Emperor was a typical example of this. Personally he had no attachment for all the worldly opulences in his possession. But since he was king for the all round welfare of his citizens, he was always busy in the welfare-work of the public, not only for this life, but also for the next. He would not allow slaughter-houses or killing of cows. He was not a foolish and partial administrator who would arrange for the protection of one living being and allow another to be killed. Because he was a devotee of the Lord, he knew perfectly well how to conduct his administration for everyone's happiness, men, animals, plants and all living creatures. He was not selfishly interested. Selfishness is either self-centered or self-extended. He was neither. His interest was to please the Supreme Truth Personality of Godhead. The king is the representative of the Supreme Lord, and

therefore the king's interest must be identical with that of the Supreme Lord. The Supreme Lord wants all living beings to be obedient to Him and thereby become happy. Therefore the king's interest is to guide all subjects back to the kingdom of God. Hence the activities of the citizens should be so coordinated that they can at the end go back home, back to Godhead. Under the administration of a representative king, the kingdom is full of opulence. At that time human beings need not eat animals. There is ample food, grains, milk, fruit and vegetables so that the human beings as well as the animals can eat sumptuously and to their heart's content. If all living beings are satisfied with food and shelter and obey the prescribed rules, there cannot be any disturbance between one living being and another. Emperor Parīkṣit was a worthy king, and therefore all were happy during his reign.

TEXT 13

तत्सर्वं नः समाचक्ष्व पृष्टो यदिह किञ्चन ।
मन्ये त्वां विषये वाचां स्नातमन्यत्र चान्दसात् ॥१३॥

*tat sarvaṁ naḥ samācakṣva
pṛṣṭo yad iha kiñcana
manye tvāṁ viṣaye vācāṁ
snātam anyatra chāndaśāt*

tat—that; *sarvam*—all; *naḥ*—unto us; *samācakṣva*—clearly explain; *pṛṣṭaḥ*—questioned; *yad iha*—herein; *kiñcana*—all that; *manye*—we think; *tvām*—yourself; *viṣaye*—in all subjects; *vācām*—meanings of words; *snātam*—fully acquainted; *anyatra*—except; *chāndaśāt*—portion of the *Vedas*.

TRANSLATION

We know that you are expert in the meaning of all subjects, except some portions of the *Vedas*, and thus you can clearly explain the answers to all the questions we have just put to you.

PURPORT

The difference between the *Vedas* and the *Purāṇas* is like that between the *brāhmaṇas* and the *parivrājakas*. The *brāhmaṇas* are meant to administer some fruitive sacrifices mentioned in the *Vedas*, but the *parivrājakācāryas*, or learned preachers, are meant to disseminate transcendental knowledge to one and all. As such, the *parivrājakācāryas* are not always expert in pronouncing the Vedic *mantras*, which are practiced systematically by accent and meter by the *brāhmaṇas* who are meant for administering Vedic rites. Yet it should not be considered that the *brāhmaṇas* are more important than the itinerant preachers. They are one and different simultaneously because they are meant for the same end, in different ways.

There is no difference also between the Vedic *mantras* and what is explained in the *Purāṇas* and *Itihāsa*. According to Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, it is mentioned in the *Mādhyaṅgīna-śruti* that all the *Vedas*, namely the *Sāma*, *Atharva*, *Rk*, *Yajus*, *Purāṇas*, *Itihāsa*, *Upaniṣads*, etc., are emanations from the breathing of the Supreme Being. The only difference is that the Vedic *mantras* are mostly begun with *praṇava omkāra*, and it requires some training to practice the metric pronunciation of the Vedic *mantras*. But that does not mean that *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* was of less importance than the Vedic *mantras*. On the other hand, it is the ripened fruit of all the *Vedas*, as stated before. Besides that, the most perfectly liberated soul, Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī, is absorbed in the studies of the *Bhāgavatam*, although He is already self-realized. Śrīla Sūta Gosvāmī is following his footsteps, and therefore his position is not the least less important because he was not expert in chanting Vedic *mantras* with metric pronunciation, which depends more on practice than actual realization. Realization is more important than parrot-like chanting.

TEXT 14

सुत उवाच
द्वापरे समनुप्राप्ते तृतीये युगपर्यये ।
जातः पराशरायोगी वासव्यां कलयया हरेः ॥१४॥

*sūta uvāca
dvāpare samanuprāpte
tṛtīye yuga-paryaye
jātaḥ parāśarād yogī
vāsavyāṁ kalayā hareḥ*

sūtaḥ—Sūta Gosvāmī; *uvāca*—said; *dvāpare*—in the second millennium; *samanuprāpte*—on the advent of; *tṛtīye*—third; *yuga*—millennium; *paryaye*—in the place of; *jātaḥ*—was begotten; *parāśarāt*—by Parāśara; *yogī*—the great sage; *vāsavyām*—in the womb of the daughter of Vasu; *kalayā*—in the plenary portion; *hareḥ*—of the Personality of Godhead.

TRANSLATION

Sūta Gosvāmī said: When the second millennium overlapped the third, the great sage [Vyāsadeva] was born to Parāśara in the womb of Satyavatī, the daughter of Vasu.

PURPORT

There is a chronological order of the four millenniums, namely Satya, Dvāpara, Tretā and Kali. But sometimes there is overlapping. During the regime of Vaivasvata Manu, there was an overlapping of the twenty-eighth round of the four millenniums, and the third millennium appeared prior to the second. In that particular millennium, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa also descends, and because of this there was some particular alteration. The mother of the great sage was Satyavatī the daughter of the Vasu (fisherman), and the father was the great Parāśara Muni. That is the history of Vyāsadeva's birth. Every millennium is divided into three periods, and each period is called a *sandhyā*. Vyāsadeva appeared in the third *sandhyā* of that particular age.

TEXT 15

स कदाचित्सरस्वत्या उपस्पृश्य जलं शुचिः ।
विविक्त एक आसीन उदिते रविमण्डले ॥१५॥

*sa kadācit sarasvatyā
upaspr̥śya jalam śuciḥ
vivikta eka āsīna
udite ravi-maṇḍale*

saḥ—he; *kadācit*—once; *sarasvatyāḥ*—on the bank of the Sarasvatī; *upaspr̥śya*—after finishing morning ablutions; *jalam*—water; *śuciḥ*—being purified; *vivikte*—concentration; *ekaḥ*—alone; *āsīnaḥ*—being thus seated; *udite*—on the rise; *ravi-maṇḍale*—of the sun disc.

TRANSLATION

Once upon a time, he [Vyāsadeva], as the sun rose, took his morning ablution in the waters of the Sarasvatī and sat alone to concentrate.

PURPORT

The River Sarasvatī is flowing in the Badarikāśrama area of the Himalayas. So the place indicated here is Śamyāprāsa in Badarikāśrama where Śrī Vyāsadeva is residing.

(continued in next issue)



ISKCON NEWS

A look at the worldwide activities of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA VISITS MAURITIUS



Śrīla Prabhupāda and his disciples meet with Mr. Gungah and Mr. Teelock.

A recent tour of Africa took His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda through East and South Africa, and to the island state of Mauritius, six hundred miles off the coast of Madagascar. There he spoke with many people, among them Mr. Khemraj Gungah, president of the Narmadeśvara Śivālaya temple in Rose Bell, and Mr. Gautum Teelock, ex-Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture. Contrasting ancient Vedic culture with modern civilization, His Divine Grace noted:

“Vedic society is based on the principle of love—between husband and wife, father and son, the king and the citizens, and so on. Civilization must be founded on love, not law. By law you cannot make a person love you. First he must love you, then he will gladly follow your law.

“Modern civilization lacks this basis of love, so everything is super-

ficial and false. But if devotion to Kṛṣṇa [God] is made the basic principle, then people will be happy.”

Knowing of local plans to reorganize social and political structures, Śrīla Prabhupāda then proposed that an ideal state based on the instructions of *Bhagavad-gītā* be set up in Mauritius. “People will be very inclined to it,” he said. “In a big state—especially a highly industrialized one—it would not be possible, but in a small state like Mauritius you can make it happen. You wouldn’t be making a new experiment. This experiment has already been made and proven successful. In Vedic days, people lived strictly according to the principles summarized by Kṛṣṇa in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. They made the test and proved that the principles are true. So you just have to follow what is already there. You simply have to accept the Vedic authority.”

ISKCON Flourishing in Latin America

Returning from a ten-week tour of Latin America, His Holiness Hṛdayānanda dāsa Gosvāmī, director of ISKCON’s activities in that part of the world, reported that the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is flourishing there. “We’re even distributing Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books in the middle of the Amazon jungle,” he said. He went on to describe how a small party of devotees rode a jungle boat up the Amazon river to the city of Manaus in the interior of Brazil. They stayed there for one week, distributing literature and giving talks on Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Elsewhere in Brazil, thirty devotees transformed a large house in the modern city of São Paulo into a gracious temple. They’re looking forward to touring the country in a newly acquired bus to distribute the forthcoming Portuguese-language *Śrī Īsopaniṣad*, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and *Bhagavad-gītā*. Another new facility is a beautiful fifty-acre farm about one hundred miles north of Rio de Janeiro.

In San Jose, Costa Rica, His Holiness met with acting President José Guzmán and later made two one-hour guest appearances on Costa Rica’s most popular TV talk show.

And in Trinidad, the devotees went to court after the police tried to stop their public chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa. The verdict? “Why are you bothering these respectable young men and women?” the judge asked the police. “Let them go on with their work. They’re doing good.”

COW PROTECTION

Practical Necessity for a Peaceful Society



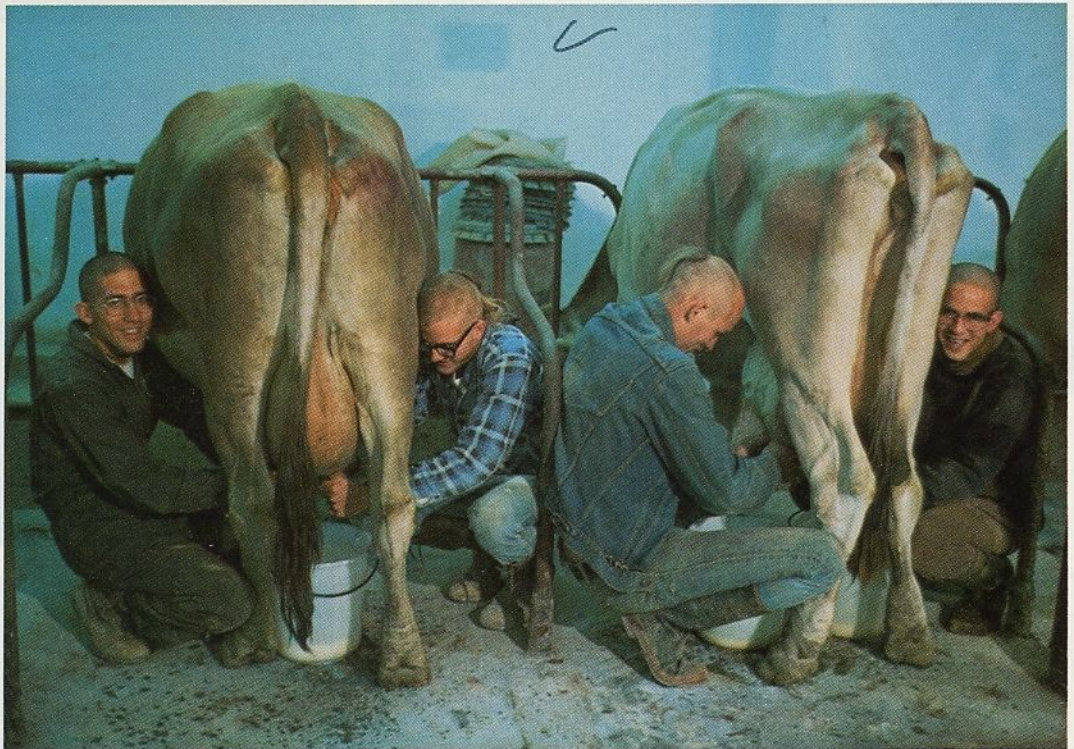
Photographs by Viśākhā-devī dāsī

SPEAKING ON THE TROUBLED CONDITION of our modern world, the late historian Arnold Toynbee once said, "The cause of it [the world's malady] is spiritual. We are suffering from having sold our souls to the pursuit of an objective which is both spiritually wrong and practically unobtainable. We have to reconsider our objective and change it. And until we do this, we shall not have peace, either amongst ourselves or within each of us."

The conditions of our urbanized, technology-oriented society that prompted Dr. Toynbee's remarks are no mystery to us. Especially in the West, and increasingly in the rest of the world, the mad quest for artificial luxuries has created a chaotic atmosphere pervaded by greed and power-seeking. The goal of life? "How many ways can I make money?" and "How many ways can I spend it?" The results of such a philosophy are painfully evident: internationally, we face the risk of nuclear destruction; nationally, crime waves and political corruption rule

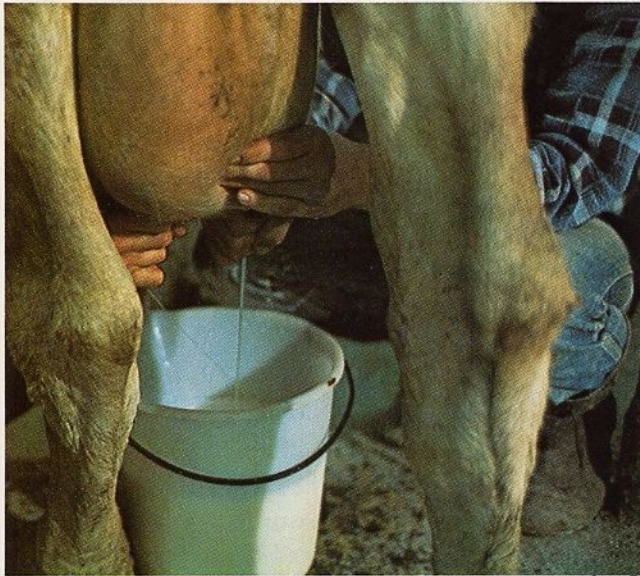
the land; and individually, we are plagued with anxiety, frustration and despair.

This is the unfortunate result of a society without spiritual direction. According to the Vedic scripture *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, a truly peaceful, progressive society must be based on service to God. Such a spiritually evolved civilization actually flourished on this planet five thousand years ago and the people were rich in both spiritual and material assets. The Supreme Lord was pleased with the service rendered by the citizens, and thus He profusely supplied the necessities of life—milk, food grains, fruits, vegetables, silk, cotton, minerals and jewels. Being fully satisfied spiritually, people did not look for pleasure in artificial sensual stimulation indulged in at the cost of health and sanity. People lived simply, close to nature and close to God—free of the encumbrances of a modern mechanistic civilization. Dwelling on tracts of land suitable for complete self-sufficiency, Vedic agricultural families used all the resources at



In the peaceful hill country near Moundsville, West Virginia, a sprawling thousand-acre farm called New Vṛndāvana gives sanctuary to cows, guaranteeing them a long and happy life in return for their bountiful supply of milk. Milking the cows is a cheerful activity for the herdsmen, who appreciate the animals' good temperament.

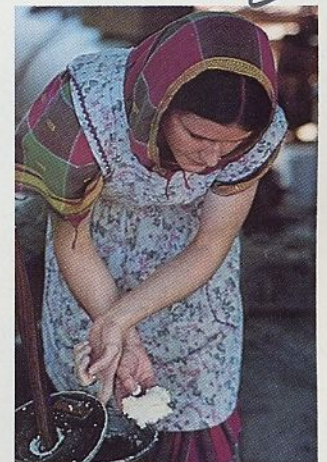
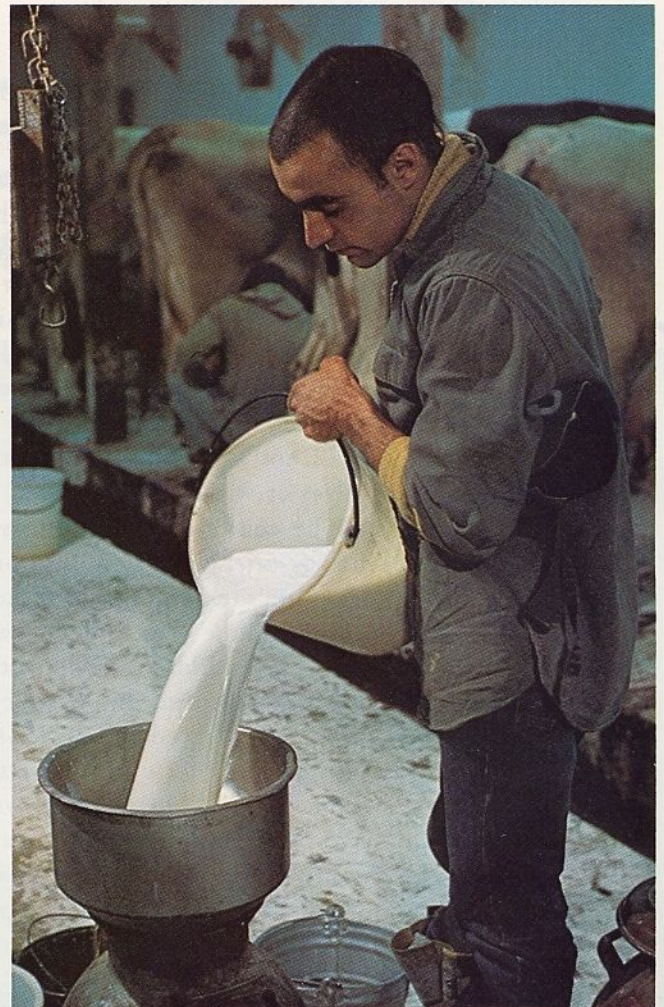
Jets of warm milk squirt into a bucket from a cow's generous udder. Buckets are then poured into ten-gallon-cans. On a good day, a holstein fills up one can with eighty pounds of milk.



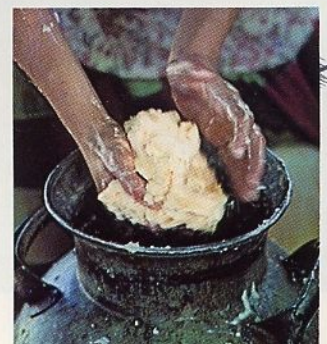
hand. Because the cows were treated very affectionately and protected from any harm, they were very joyful and secure. Thus, they contributed much greater amounts of milk than today's animals. The very valuable cow dung was used not only as a fertilizer but also as a heating and cooking fuel, and even as a cleanser. (Modern science has confirmed the disinfectant properties of cow dung.) And bulls provided the muscle for plowing and harvesting the fields, milling the grain, and pulling oxcarts full of people and commodities.

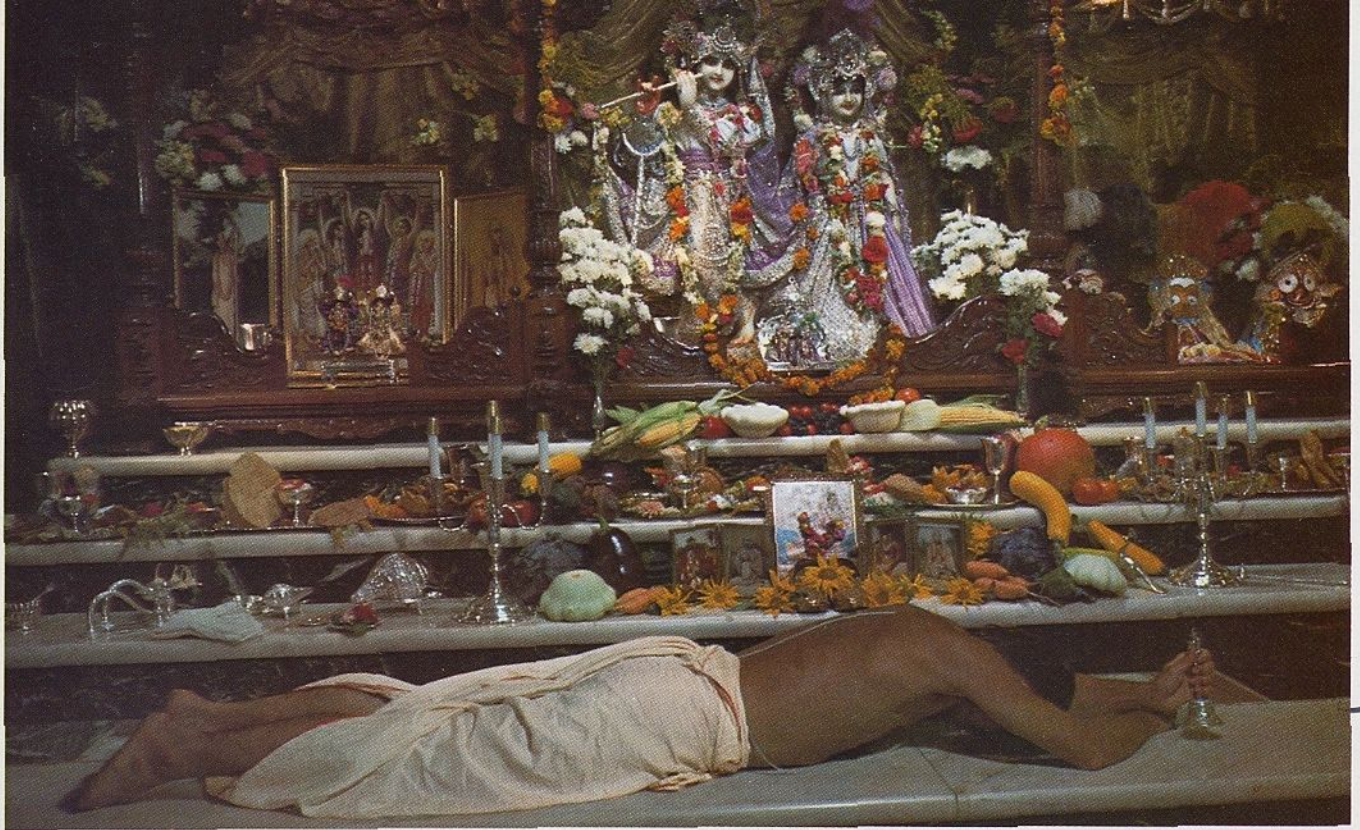
Accustomed as we are to modern conveniences, we may regard such a life as primitive and far from ideal. However, when the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa appeared on this planet five thousand years ago, He showed by His own example that for both material prosperity and spiritual advancement, human civilization must maintain the cow and bull very carefully.

At New Vṛndāvana, ISKCON's Vedic village near Moundsville, West Virginia, Lord Kṛṣṇa's example is being put into practice. Established by His Divine Grace Śrīla Prabhupāda nine years ago, New Vṛndāvana now spreads over one thousand acres of hilly farmland and is a perfect example of the benefits derived from organizing society according to the principles of cow protection and service to Kṛṣṇa. His Holiness Kīrtanānanda Svāmī, leader of the New Vṛndāvana community, describes the project's purpose: "It is a great vision of presenting to everyone, not only in this country but in the whole world, how one can become Kṛṣṇa conscious living just as Kṛṣṇa lived in Vṛndāvana, depending on nature and the cows."



Every day at four P.M., the cream from the day's two milkings is churned into butter by Vidhūttama dāsi. Inside the can, the rod she holds is attached to a round wooden disc with a saw-toothed edge. When the rod is moved up and down, the disc churns the cream into a rich, light-colored butter.





A devotee offers dairy foods and a variety of the farm's harvest to please Lord Kṛṣṇa on the altar at New Vr̥ndāvana. Below are a few of the many tasty dishes that can be made with milk.

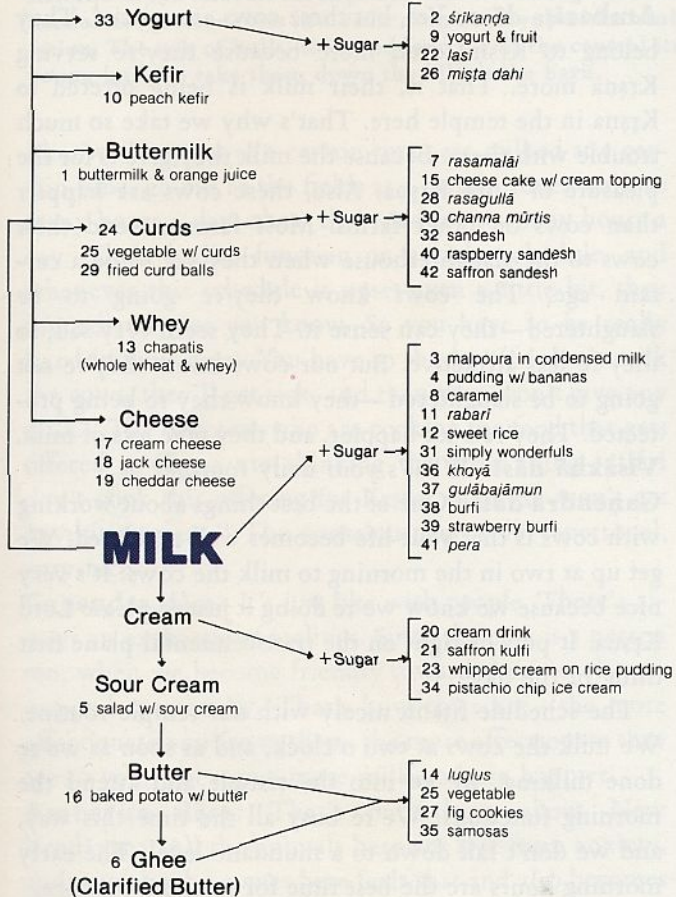
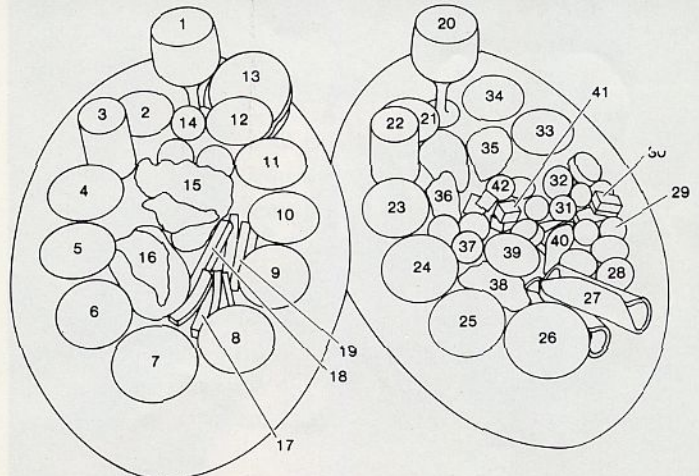


Photo: Gopavindesa dāsa





Children love the cows at New Vṛndāvana. Above, Jennifer enjoys a pastry cooked in clarified butter. Below, feeding the calves half gallons of milk at a time, Ambariṣa's wife Vijaya dāsi fills in for the mother cows. When feeding directly from their mothers, calves often get sick from their inevitable overindulgence. For cows, calves and bulls to live happily, human beings must protect them.



The following is a conversation between BTG staff photographer Viśākhā-devī dāsi and two cowherd men of New Vṛndāvana.

Viśākhā dāsi: You seem to enjoy working with cows very much. Can you tell us why?

Ambariṣa dāsa: The cows here at New Vṛndāvana are special. You can sense this immediately when you come in contact with them. They're Kṛṣṇa's cows. They're very dear to Kṛṣṇa, and when you work with them it's easy to remember Him. They're mellow and their temperament reflects on you.

You have to approach them with an attitude of service. By relating to them on a personal basis and serving them with a humble attitude, you can see them as living beings with feelings and personalities. Most farmers raise cows with a dollar sign in their mind. It's very impersonal. Regular dairy farmers or ranchers use the cow as a machine or a tool for their own selfish ends. It's very gross. But when we serve Kṛṣṇa's cows, we realize that each one has a specific personality.

Viśākhā dāsi: Why do you say that these cows at New Vṛndāvana are Kṛṣṇa's cows? Aren't all the cows everywhere Kṛṣṇa's cows?

Ambariṣa dāsa: Yes, but these cows are special. They belong to Kṛṣṇa even more because they're serving Kṛṣṇa more. That is, their milk is being offered to Kṛṣṇa in the temple here. That's why we take so much trouble with them. Because the milk they give is for the pleasure of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Also, these cows are happier than cows on other farms. Most farmers send their cows to the slaughterhouse when they get to be a certain age. The cows know they're going to be slaughtered—they can sense it. They seem very sad, so they're less attractive. But our cows know they're not going to be slaughtered—they know they're being protected. They're a lot happier, and they give lots of milk.

Viśākhā dāsi: What's your daily routine?

Gaṇendra dāsa: One of the best things about working with cows is that your life becomes well regulated. We get up at two in the morning to milk the cows. It's very nice because we know we're doing it just to please Lord Kṛṣṇa. It puts us right on the transcendental plane first thing in the day.

The schedule fits in nicely with our temple routine. We milk the cows at two o'clock, and as soon as we're done milking, we go into the temple and attend the morning functions. We're busy all the time this way, and we don't fall down to a mundane level. The early morning hours are the best time for spiritual practice.

Ambariṣa dāsa: Cows are the most regulated animals



Afternoon sun streams through late summer foliage as an ox team hauls logs for winter firewood out of the forest. Bulls are needed as much as cows in a Vedic community; besides hauling, they plow the fields, grind the grains, and provide transportation. The trio of bulls, cows and land forms the central structure of Vedic economy. Below, Ambariṣa dāsa rounds up two young bulls to take them down the hill to the barn.

I know. They eat at a certain time, are milked at a certain time, go out to the fields at a certain time, walk so many hours a day, chew their cud for so many hours a day. Their bodies function on a tight schedule, and whenever this schedule is upset even a little bit, they immediately let you know. So you have to be really fixed in your duty. You have to think, “If I don’t milk the cows, they’ll get sick, and then they won’t give any milk.” The devotees who are cooking the food that gets offered to Kṛṣṇa are thinking the same thing—“If I don’t cook this offering for Kṛṣṇa, then He won’t get anything to eat.” The consciousness is very personal, very nice.

Gaṇendra dāsa: It’s just like with people. There’s always an exchange of feelings. Since the cow is a person too, when we become friendly toward them, each cow responds personally. That’s how cows are—the more affectionate you are to them, the more affectionate they are to you. They give more milk and are happier.

Ambariṣa dāsa: That’s one thing about New Vṛndāvana. All the animals here are free from anxiety, and anyone who comes here feels that and also becomes free from anxiety. Recently a newspaper reporter




visited us, and he wrote in his article that when you’re at New Vṛndāvana you may not realize how free from the mundane rat race you are, but as soon as you go back you understand that you’ve been in a transcendental place.

Viśākhā dāsi: Do you think it’s practical to put so much emphasis on the cow?

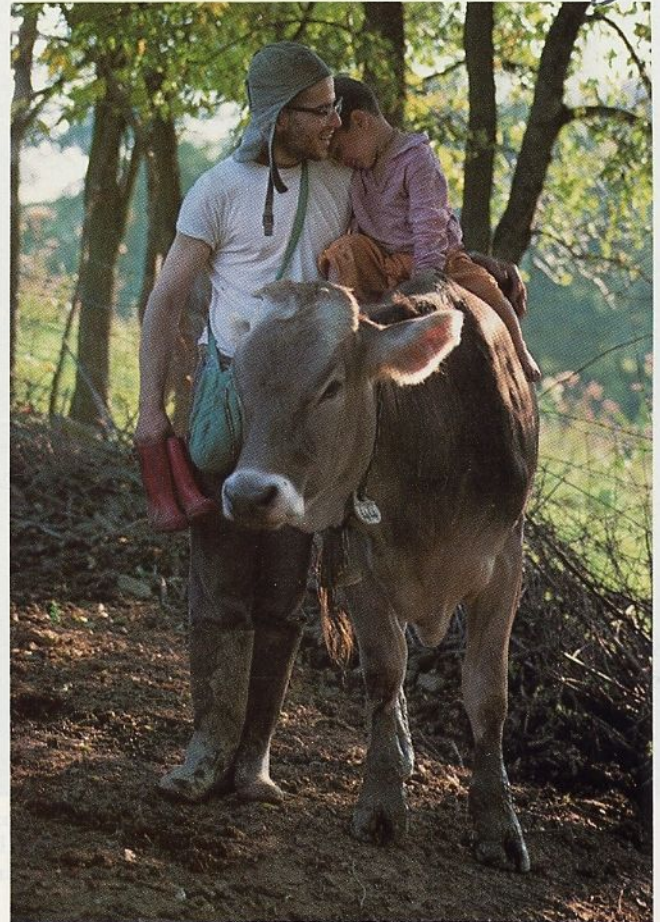
Gaṇendra dāsa: Well, we’ve seen here that cows actually can support human society materially and

spiritually. In fact, that's the purpose of the cow. They give more milk than their calves can drink. So the extra milk is meant for us—it helps us develop a good brain for understanding spiritual life. Also, she supplies pure cow dung that can be recycled into the fields to cultivate the grains and the pastures. And the bull helps till the fields. In this way a perfect cycle is maintained. We cultivate crops on land fertilized with manure; then we offer the food to Lord Kṛṣṇa: Kṛṣṇa eats sumptuously, we eat sumptuously, the cows eat sumptuously, and everyone is satisfied.

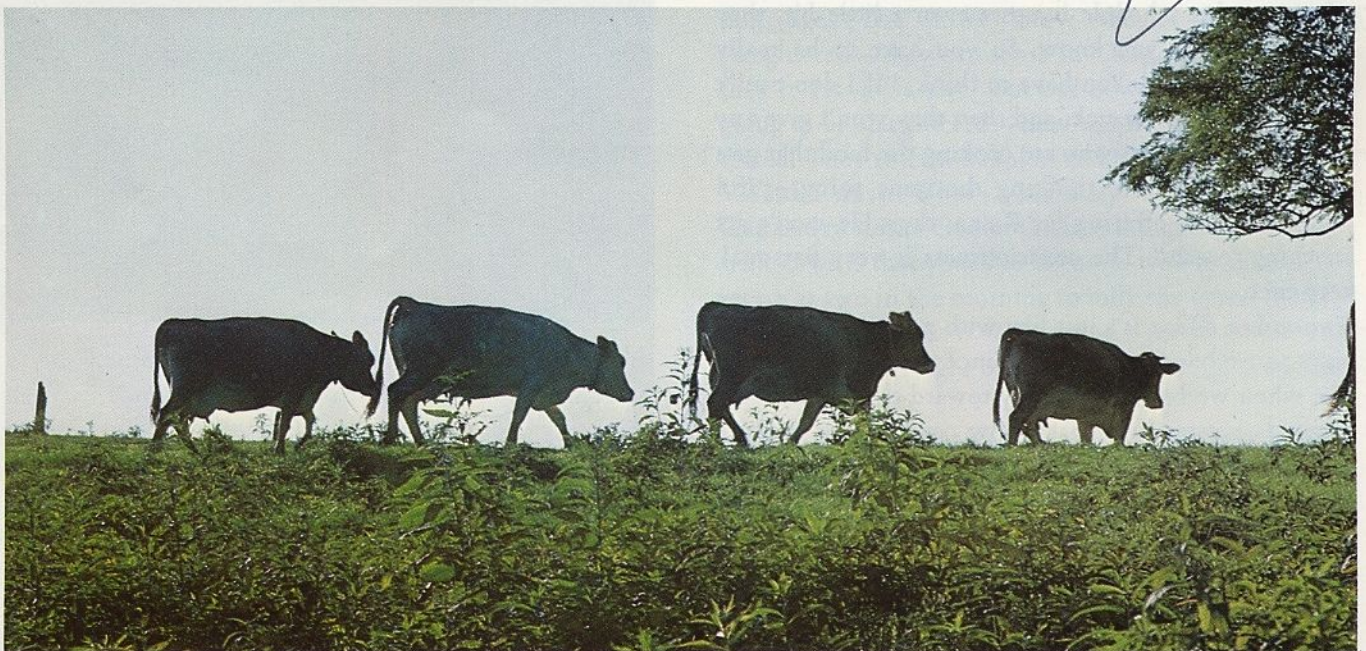
On the other hand, slaughtering the cow is detrimental to everyone. The meat is harmful to your body and your brain. And the cow has been caused much pain, so there are great sinful reactions to suffer. If you protect the cows, give them what they want, and derive the benefits in the way Kṛṣṇa intended, then when they die of their own accord you can use the skin for leather, if necessary. But you don't have to kill cows.

The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* says the cow is an offenseless living being. It's Kṛṣṇa's arrangement that the cow takes so little and gives so much. From her milk you can make hundreds of delicious preparations. She simply performs her service very peacefully without any bother to anyone. These are the qualities of an ideal devotee, and they're reflected on those who work with the cows. 

If you would like to visit ISKCON's New Vṛndāvana community, please write or call: R.D. No.1, Box 620, Moundsville, W. Va. 26041 / (304)845-2790



Gaṇendra dāsa treats his son to a ride on Dvipa, a two-year-old heifer. A local West Virginia newspaper recently called New Vṛndāvana's 120 cows "one of the best dairy herds in the state."



The Case Against Animal Slaughter

**From the standpoints of health,
economics and ethics, animal slaughter and
meat-eating are detrimental to human society.**

HEALTH

Although meat is certainly a source of concentrated protein it is a very poor source of other food elements like minerals, vitamins and carbohydrates. In addition, eating flesh from the cow or any other animal is detrimental to the health of human beings for many reasons. For example, if a human, who has a much longer colon than the carnivorous animals, eats flesh, the following problems will ensue:

1. Intestinal bacteria in the long bowel will change from fermentative to putrefactive, thus causing poisons to be absorbed into the bloodstream. These poisons need to be eliminated, so energy is diverted from other essential bodily functions, including thinking.
2. The natural synthesis of vitamin B₁₂ will be inhibited, possibly leading to anemia.
3. Animal toxins will tend to disrupt the proper metabolism of carbohydrates. This can cause diabetes.
4. Nonnutritive substances resulting from the digestion of animal flesh tend to be carcinogenic (cancer-inducing) irritants.

The minimum daily requirement of protein, which nutritional experts calculate to be between seventy and ninety grams, is easily achieved with dairy products and foods from the vegetable kingdom. Protein is found in ample quantity in milk, cheese, yogurt, whole wheat, corn, many varieties of nuts and beans, and some vegetables. Thus vegetables, fruits, grains and dairy products provide a perfectly balanced diet. Consuming animal flesh, on the other hand, results in excess protein, which produces liver ailments, high blood pressure, and hardening of the arteries.

In addition, dead animal flesh contains many toxic elements, such as:

1. Wastes from the dead animal's bloodstream, germs, and drugs injected to offset animal disease.
2. Fear poisons released into the bloodstream at the time of slaughter.
3. Bacteria from putrefactive decomposition, which commences as soon as the animal dies. Because flesh is an excellent insulator, not all of these bacteria are killed by cooking.

Due to forced feeding, penning, and other unnatural practices, animals raised for slaughter suffer from dozens of diseases, such as foot-and-mouth disease, fevers, catarrhal conditions, cancer, tuberculosis, and mastitis. In addition, poultry are often impregnated with estrogens, which can

cause cancer. Many studies in cancer research reveal that areas in which meat-eating is highest tend to have the highest cancer rate, while vegetarian areas generally have a far lower rate.

Immediately after an animal is slaughtered, rigor mortis sets in, and then the process of decay takes over. Thus meat-eating always involves consumption of decayed flesh together with its incumbent dangers to health.

ECONOMICS

The implementation of cow protection at the international level would be a massive step forward in solving the world food crisis. Some economic advantages of cow protection are as follows:

1. Flesh foods are more than fifty percent water and therefore extremely costly to buy as a source of protein.
2. Land that will produce one ton of beef will produce ten to twenty tons of highly nutritive vegetable food.
3. For every hundred pounds of dry substances eaten by cattle, only four to sixteen pounds comes back as flesh foods.

SOME ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. Slaughtering animals causes extreme suffering. Animals are sentient creatures with feelings like humans. Cows especially can sense that they are going to be slaughtered, and they live in constant fear.
2. We have no right to artificially end the life of any creature, especially that of a cow, who nurses her own offspring and the whole human society with her milk.
3. Killing animals breeds insensitivity toward all beings, sadism and general irreverence. Pythagoras taught, "Those who kill animals for food will be more prone than vegetarians to torture and kill their fellow men."

The strict law of *karma* deals measure for measure with anyone who violates the laws of nature. As long as the people of the world continue to murder and eat their two most benign friends, the cow and bull, they will perpetually suffer the sinful reactions of criminal violence and catastrophic wars.

References:

1. *The Case for Vegetarianism*, Geoffrey L. Rudd
2. *Man's Place in Nature*, T. H. Huxley
3. *H.M.S.O. Manual of Nutrition* (British Gov't.)

Letters

The editors of BACK TO GODHEAD welcome correspondence pertaining to spiritual enlightenment. All letters will receive personal replies, and correspondence of general interest will be published regularly.

Dear Editors,

I read in BTG, Vol. 10, No. 11, that your society recently acquired a twelve-story temple building near Columbus Circle in New York City. Isn't using a facility like this somewhat hypocritical for an organization that professes detachment from material things?

Jeffrey Schaefer
Portland, Oregon

Dear Mr. Schaefer,

As far as renunciation of material things is concerned, His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda has commented in *The Nectar of Devotion*:

"One should not give up anything which can be utilized in the service of the Lord. For instance, we are using many machines for the advancement of our present Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, machines like typewriters, dictaphones, tape recorders, microphones and airplanes. Sometimes people ask us, 'Why are you utilizing material products if you condemn the advancement of material civilization?' But actually we do not condemn. We simply ask

people to do whatever they are doing in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. If the typewriter can be utilized for advancing our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, we must accept it. Similarly, the dictaphone or any other machine must be used. Our vision is that Kṛṣṇa is everything. Kṛṣṇa is the cause and effect, and nothing belongs to us. Kṛṣṇa's things must be used in the service of Kṛṣṇa."

* * *

Dear Editors:

I have read in the *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* that to progress on the path of devotion to Kṛṣṇa, one must be in the association of other devotees and under the guidance of a bona fide spiritual master. Must this association and guidance be in person, or does studying the writings of the spiritual master amount to the same thing?

George Payne
Southington, Conn.

Dear Mr. Payne,

There are two kinds of association with the spiritual master—by his

physical presence and through his words. Śrīla Prabhupāda has emphasized that associating with him by hearing his words or reading his books is more important than being in his physical presence. In a letter to one of his disciples, he wrote: "It is stated in the *Bhagavad-gītā* that *māyā* [illusion] is very strong—insurmountable—but that one who surrenders to Kṛṣṇa is not touched by *māyā*. So, all our books are as good as Kṛṣṇa because in them we deal only with the topic of Kṛṣṇa. Therefore taking shelter of these books means taking shelter of Kṛṣṇa—there is no doubt about it. If you stick to this principle, *māyā* will not attack you."

As far as association with devotees is concerned, Lord Caitanya has declared that giving up the company of worldly-minded persons and associating only with devotees is the first principle of *bhakti-yoga*. Śrīla Prabhupāda has established numerous Kṛṣṇa consciousness centers throughout the world expressly for this purpose. Anyone can come and live at one of these centers, cultivate Kṛṣṇa consciousness according to the rules and regulations prescribed by the spiritual master, and be completely free from the influence of mundane persons. Of course, such total involvement is often out of the question for a person with deep family and business commitments, but as far as possible anyone serious about advancing in Kṛṣṇa consciousness should deal with nondevotees as little as possible and cultivate friendships with devotees through correspondence and personal visits to nearby Kṛṣṇa consciousness centers. In this way any sincere person, regardless of his circumstances, can advance on the path back to Godhead.

Kṛṣṇa Conscious Calendar

Kṛṣṇa conscious devotees follow a spiritual calendar that divides the year into twelve months, each named for a different form of Kṛṣṇa. The year is full of Kṛṣṇa conscious festivals, and some of the upcoming ones are listed here. The devotees of the ISKCON center nearest you will gladly tell you about the meaning of these festivals.

Year 489, Caitanya Era
Vaiṣṇava Month of Nārāyaṇa (December 19, 1975—January 17, 1976)

Sukla-pakṣa (bright fortnight)

January 2 (Nārāyaṇa 15)	January 4 (Nārāyaṇa 17)	January 13 (Nārāyaṇa 26)	January 14 (Nārāyaṇa 27)
Appearance of Śrīla Locana dāsa Thākura.	Disappearance of Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī and Śrīla Jagadīśa Paṇḍita.	Putradā-ekādaśī (fasting from grains and beans).	Ekādaśī Pāraṇa before 9:58 a.m.

Vaiṣṇava Month of Mādhava (January 18—February 15, 1976)

Kṛṣṇa-pakṣa (dark fortnight)

January 21 (Mādhava 4)	January 22 (Mādhava 5)	January 27 (Mādhava 10)	January 28 (Mādhava 11)
Disappearance of Śrīla Rāmacandra Kavirāja. Appearance of Śrīla Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī.	Disappearance of Śrīla Locana dāsa Thākura.	Ṣaṭ-tilā-ekādaśī (fasting from grains and beans).	Ekādaśī Pāraṇa before 10:01 a.m.



Illustration: Paṅgu dāsa

The Deliverance of Ajāmila

A story from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Translation and commentary by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

There was once a young *brāhmaṇa** named Ajāmila, who was a reservoir of good character and conduct. He was mild and gentle, always truthful, well versed in the Vedic scriptures, and very pure.

One day, on the request of his father, Ajāmila went to the forest to collect fruit, flowers and grasses. On the way home, he came upon a very

lusty low-class man embracing and kissing a prostitute. Both of them were drunk, and the man was smiling, singing and enjoying himself without shame. The prostitute's eyes were rolling in intoxication, and her dress had become loose. When Ajāmila saw her, the lusty desires in his heart awakened, and in illusion he fell under their control.

Remembering the instructions of the scriptures, Ajāmila tried not to

gaze at the woman. He strained to control his lusty desires with the help of his knowledge and intellect, but he failed and as a result lost all his good sense. In the days that followed he always thought about the prostitute, and within a short time he took her as a servant in his house and abandoned all the brahminical principles.

Ajāmila began spending the money he had inherited from his father on various gifts to satisfy the prostitute. He even abandoned his beautiful young wife, who came from a very respectable family. Thus Ajāmila spent his long life irresponsibly breaking all the rules and regulations of the holy scriptures. He was unclean and addicted to forbidden activities. Living extravagantly, he maintained his family by harassing others, cheating, gambling and theft.

Over the eighty-eight years of Ajāmila's life, he fathered ten sons by the prostitute. Ajāmila's youngest son, a baby named Nārāyaṇa, was naturally very dear to both his father and mother. The child's broken language and awkward movements greatly endeared him to old Ajāmila, who always took care of him and enjoyed his activities.

Nārāyaṇa is a name for God, and thus unintentionally the old man was always chanting the holy name of the Lord. Although he was referring to his son and not the original Nārāyaṇa, Ajāmila was becoming purified because the holy name of Nārāyaṇa is very powerful. Always taking care of his son and calling his name, Ajāmila was not aware that his own life was now exhausted. As the time of death approached for the foolish Ajāmila, he began thinking exclusively of his son Nārāyaṇa.

At the moment of death, Ajāmila saw three awkward persons with deformed bodily features, fierce and

*A priest or teacher.



twisted faces, and hair standing erect on their bodies. They were the Yamadūtas (the servants of Yamarāja, the lord of death), and they had come to take Ajāmila away to their master's abode. When Ajāmila saw them, he became extremely bewildered, and because of his attachment to his child, who was playing a short distance away, he loudly and tearfully called the child's name: "Nārāyaṇa!"

Immediately the Viṣṇudūtas, the servants of the Supreme Lord Viṣṇu (Nārāyaṇa), arrived on the spot. They had heard the holy name of their master from the mouth of the dying Ajāmila, who had chanted without offense because he had chanted in complete anxiety. As the Viṣṇudūtas arrived, the Yamadūtas were snatching the soul from the body of the dying Ajāmila. With resounding voices, the messengers of Lord Viṣṇu ordered them to stop and thus saved Ajāmila from death. Although the servants of Yamarāja have jurisdiction over all sinful living beings, the messengers of Viṣṇu are capable of punishing even Yamarāja himself if he wrongs a devotee of Viṣṇu, the Supreme Lord.

When the Yamadūtas were thus forbidden from carrying out their mission, they exclaimed, "Who are you, sirs, that you dare challenge the jurisdiction of Yamarāja? Whose servants are you, where have you come from, and why are you forbidding us to touch Ajāmila? You may know that this man Ajāmila did not undergo atonement for his sins. Because of his sinful life, we must take him to the court of Yamarāja for punishment. According to the extent of his sinful acts, he will be punished and thus purified."

The Viṣṇudūtas replied, "Ajāmila has already atoned not only for sins

performed in one life but for those performed in millions of lives, for in a helpless condition he chanted the holy name of Nārāyaṇa. Although he was calling his son's name, he nevertheless uttered the four syllables *nā-rā-ya-ṇa*. Simply by chanting the name of Nārāyaṇa in this way, he sufficiently atoned for the sinful reactions of millions of lives.

"Chanting the holy name of the Lord is the best process of atonement for a thief, for a drunkard, for one who betrays a friend or relative, for one who kills a *brāhmaṇa*, for one who indulges in sex with the wife of his *guru* or another superior, for one who murders women, the king or his father, for one who slaughters cows and for all other sinful men. Simply by chanting the holy name of the Lord, such sinful persons can attract His attention.

At the time of death, Ajāmila helplessly and very loudly chanted the holy name of the Lord. That chanting alone has already freed him from the reactions of all sinful life. Therefore, O servants of Yamarāja, do not try to take him to your master for punishment. One who chants the holy name is immediately freed from the reactions of unlimited sins, even if he chants indirectly to indicate something else, jokingly, for musical entertainment, or even neglectfully. This is accepted by all the learned scholars of the scriptures. If one chants the holy name of Hari and then dies because of an accidental misfortune, one is immediately absolved from having to enter hellish life, even though he is sinful.

"Although one may neutralize the reactions of sinful life through austerity, charity, vows and other such methods, these pious activities cannot uproot the material desires in

one's heart. However, if one serves the Personality of Godhead, he is immediately freed from all such contaminations. If a person unaware of the effective potency of a certain medicine takes that medicine, it will act even without his knowledge because the medicine's potency does not depend on the patient's understanding. Similarly, even though one does not know the value of chanting the holy name of the Lord, if one chants knowingly or unknowingly, the chanting will be very effective."

The Viṣṇudūtas released the *brāhmaṇa* Ajāmila from the bondage of the Yamadūtas and thus saved him from death. Ajāmila, now free from fear, came to his senses and immediately offered respects to the Viṣṇudūtas by bowing his head at their feet. He was extremely pleased by their presence, for they had saved him from the Yamadūtas. When the Viṣṇudūtas saw that Ajāmila was attempting to say something, they suddenly disappeared.

Having heard the discourse between the Yamadūtas and the Viṣṇudūtas, Ajāmila could now understand the transcendental religious principles concerning the relationship between the living being and the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Furthermore, since Ajāmila had heard their glorification of God, he was now a perfectly pure devotee and could thus remember all his past sinful activities, which he greatly regretted having performed.

I am such a sinful person," he said. "But now since I have this opportunity, I must completely control my mind, life and senses and always engage in devotional service so that I may not again fall into the deep darkness and ignorance of material life. Because I identified myself with my body, I was

◀ As the Viṣṇudūtas arrived, the Yamadūtas were snatching the soul from the body of the dying Ajāmila. With resounding voices, the messengers of Lord Viṣṇu ordered them to stop, and thus saved Ajāmila from death.

subjected to desires for sense gratification and thus performed many pious and impious acts. That was my material bondage.

But now I shall disentangle myself from that bondage. Being a most fallen soul, I was victimized by illusions and was like a dancing dog led around by a woman's hand. Now I shall give up these lusty desires and free myself from these illusions. I shall become a merciful, well-wishing friend to all living entities and always absorb myself in Kṛṣṇa consciousness."

Because of a moment's association with devotees of the Supreme Lord, Ajāmila was able to detach himself with determination from the material conception of life. Freed from all material attraction, he immediately started for the city of Hardwar on the Ganges River. In Hardwar, Ajāmila stayed at a Viṣṇu temple, where he executed *bhakti-yoga*, the process of devotional service. He controlled his senses and fully applied his mind in the service of the Lord. When his intelligence and mind were fixed on the form of

the Lord, Ajāmila once again saw before him the four celestial messengers of Viṣṇu. Recognizing them as the ones he had seen previously, he offered his respects by bowing down before them.

The Viṣṇudūtas had gone away for some time to allow Ajāmila to become firmly fixed in meditation on the Lord. Now that his devotion had matured, they returned to take him back to the spiritual world. Upon seeing the Viṣṇudūtas, Ajāmila gave up his material body and regained his original spiritual body, which was just suitable for an associate of the Lord. This is the result of perfection in Kṛṣṇa consciousness: after giving up the material body, one is immediately transferred to the spiritual world in one's original spiritual body to become an associate of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Accompanied by the Viṣṇudūtas, Ajāmila then boarded a golden airplane that took him through the airways, directly to the abode of the Supreme Lord Viṣṇu, the husband of the goddess of fortune. Although he

had been destined to be carried away to hell by the Yamadūtas, Ajāmila was saved by the Viṣṇudūtas and was able to go back home, back to Godhead, because he chanted the holy name of the Lord at the time of his death. Therefore if a person faithfully and inoffensively chants the holy name of the Lord, who can doubt that he will return to Godhead?

At the time of death one is certainly bewildered because his bodily functions are in disorder. At that time, even one who throughout his life has practiced chanting the holy name of the Lord may not be able to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* very distinctly. Nevertheless, such a person receives all the benefits of chanting the holy name. While the body is fit, therefore, we should chant the holy name of the Lord loudly and distinctly. If one does so, it is quite possible that even at the time of death he will be able to properly chant the holy name of the Lord with love and faith and return home, back to Godhead, without a doubt.

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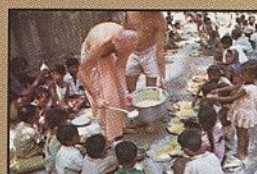
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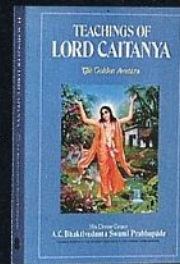
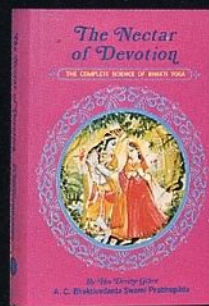
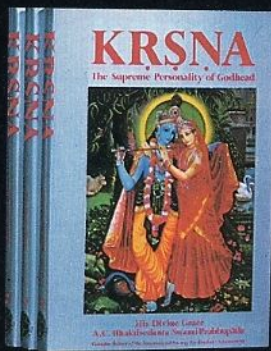
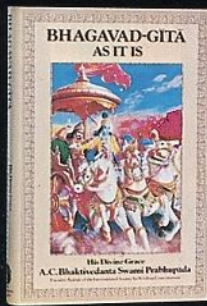
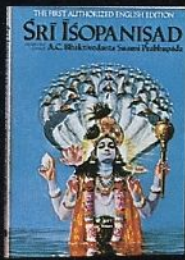


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