

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



BACK TO GODHEAD



Vol. 12 No. 1

THE MAGAZINE OF THE HARE KRISHNA MOVEMENT

A FARM IN FRANCE:
Each Day's a Festival



When you receive your copy, you'll understand why so many persons seeking peace of mind today are turning to the special form of yoga taught in this book. There are no torturous exercises, no mind-straining meditation, no far-off mysticism, and no obscure philosophy. It is simple, safe, and sound; anyone can learn and practice it. And no wonder—the book is written by the world's leading exponent of this form of yoga, His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, founder and director of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.

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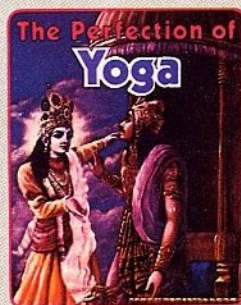
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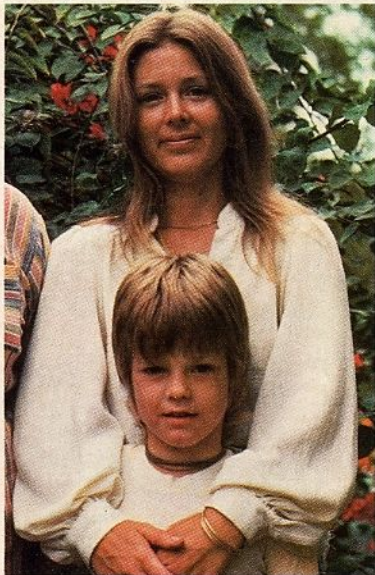
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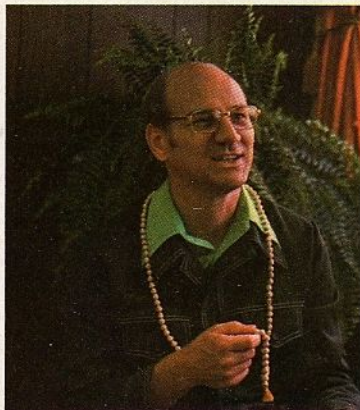
Jane Lahner, jewelry designer, with son Jason: "Chanting makes me more perceptive, more in harmony with everything and everyone around me."



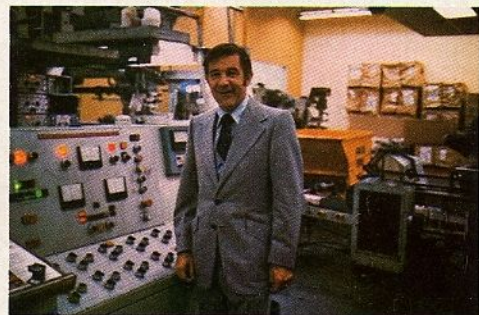
Mrs. Sally Raleigh, merchandiser: "When I'm nervous I find chanting very calming. I don't get shaken up at little things."



Bruce Kleinberg, executive secretary: "Chanting helps you see things in perspective. My outlook is a lot brighter."



Dr. Donald R. Tuck, associate professor, Western Kentucky University: "I've noticed that as chanters progress from level to deeper level, they become more realistic, more tolerant."

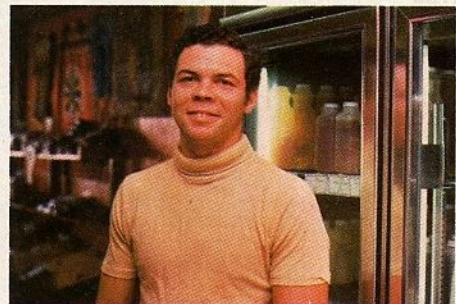


Paul Bleier, printing executive: "When there's pressure, I chant. It's the one thing that charges my batteries. It clears my mind and brings me back in focus."

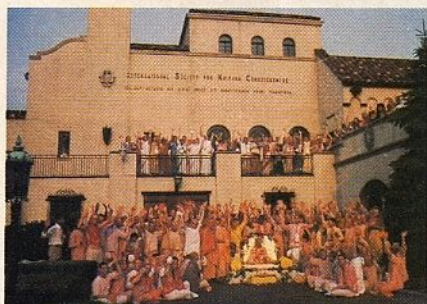


Mrs. Grace Acquistapace, housewife: "I'm more openminded. Chanting has opened my eyes to things I never noticed. It's like beautiful music—a very peaceful feeling, very satisfying."

**Hare Krishna
Hare Krishna
Krishna Krishna
Hare Hare
Hare Rama
Hare Rama
Rama Rama
Hare Hare**



Stephen Farmer, health food store owner: "If I start my day on a spiritual note by chanting Hare Krishna, I can make it through the day in a pleasant mood."



Anyone can chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa (Huh-ray Krish-na) mantra, anytime, anywhere. The main thing is to listen closely to the sound. Whether you sing it or say it, alone or with others, the Hare Kṛṣṇa chant brings about joyful spiritual awareness.

Chanting can work for everyone, and there's no fee or initiation. If you'd like to meet other people who chant, visit any of the more than 120 centers worldwide (like the one in Detroit, Michigan, pictured at left). See last page for addresses.

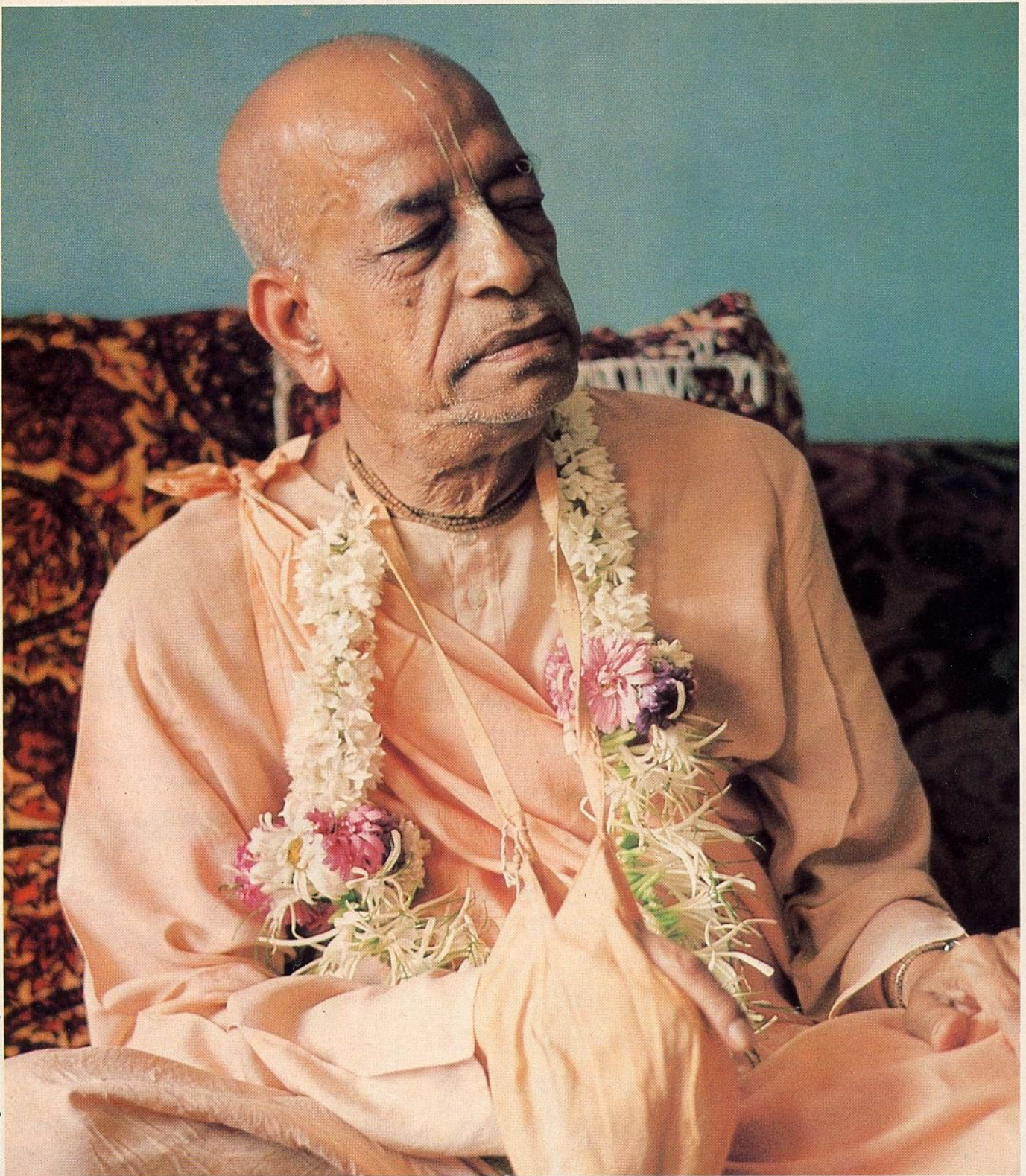


Photo: Bhārgava dāsa (Bombay)

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

Founder—Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

The founder and original editor of BACK TO GODHEAD is His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. In September, 1965, Śrīla Prabhupāda arrived in the United States. In July, 1966, in a storefront in New York City, he began the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. And from those beginning days, BACK TO GODHEAD has been an integral part of ISKCON.

In fact, since 1944, when he started writing, editing, printing, and distributing BACK TO GODHEAD, Śrīla Prabhupāda has often called it “the backbone of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.” Although over the years it has changed in some ways, BACK TO GODHEAD remains, in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s words, “an instrument for training the mind and educating human nature to rise up to the plane of the soul spirit.”

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Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda)

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A Short Statement of the Philosophy of Kṛṣṇa Consciousness

1. By cultivating a bona fide spiritual science, we can be free from anxiety and achieve pure, unending, blissful consciousness in this lifetime.
2. We are not our bodies but eternal spirit souls, parts and parcels of God (Kṛṣṇa).
3. Kṛṣṇa is the eternal, all-knowing, omnipresent, all-powerful, and all-attractive Personality of Godhead, the sustaining energy of the entire cosmic creation, and the seed-giving father of all living beings.
4. The Absolute Truth is present in all the world's great scriptures, particularly the ancient Vedic literatures, whose *Bhagavad-gītā* records 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 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 offer to Kṛṣṇa all that we do and do nothing for our own sense gratification.
8. The recommended way to achieve mature love of God in this age of Kali (quarrel) is to chant the Lord's holy names. For most people it is easiest to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra:
Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare
Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

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 *pike*. The vowel *ṛ* is pronounced like the *ri* in the English word *rim*. 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.

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BACK TO GODHEAD

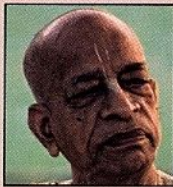
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That's what India's *Bhavans Journal* wants to know in this interview. If, as many have said, it actually is a "dog-eat-dog world," how did it get that way, and what can we do to make it better? His Divine Grace. A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda provides some startling answers.



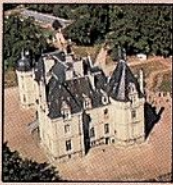
The World of Names 11

What would we do without names?—they're so convenient. In fact, sometimes if people want to know your name they'll ask you, "What's your handle?" Names, it appears, are a way to "handle" things, places, and persons. Then again, many people complain about "mishandling."



A Farm in France 16

In his book *Small Is Beautiful*, E. F. Schumacher asks us to return to a simpler, smaller-scale, and more spiritual lifestyle—which, of course, seems easier said than done. To do it the way it's already been done, a new community in France is drawing on the Vedic culture of ancient India.



The Year-long Lunch 24

It seems that kidnapping Kṛṣṇa's devotees didn't start yesterday, nor need the culprit be narrow-minded. Five thousand years ago, Brahmā ("the broad-minded one," who governs the universe) kidnapped Kṛṣṇa's friends and cows and turned a lunch hour into a "lunch year."



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Special Center Section:

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam

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



ON THE COVER

"I never lived on a farm before, but I always wanted to," says Kṛṣṇa-bhāminī-devī dāsi. "It's the perfect setting, especially for children." (She and her husband Bhagavān dāsa have three—including daughter Gauravāni-devī dāsi, shown helping in the carnation patch. In the background is the farm's old chateau.) "You can do everything here—planting, building, beekeeping, artwork, writing, publishing—so many things are going on. And when you're so close, there's a community feeling, a satisfying feeling. If you're aware, each day's a festival."



Can We Keep Society From Going to the Dogs?

Many observers feel that with corruption so common and scandal nearly standard, society is in a bad way and getting worse. What's really happening, and what to do? India's *Bhavans Journal* interviews His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda.

Interviewer: The first question is this: "Is the influence of religion on the wane? And if so, does this factor account for the increase in corruption and the widespread deterioration of moral values?"

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes, religion is on the wane. This is predicted in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* [12.2.1]: *tataś cānudinam dharmāḥ satyam saucam kṣamā dayāl kālena balinā rājan naṅksyaty āyur balaṁ smṛtiḥ* "In the Kali-yuga [the present age of quarrel and hypocrisy] the following things will diminish: religiosity, truthfulness, cleanliness, mercifulness, duration of life, bodily strength, and memory."

These are human assets, which make the human being distinct from the animal. But these things will decline. There will be no mercifulness, there will be no truthfulness, memory will be short, and the duration of life will be cut short. Similarly, religion will vanish. That means that gradually we will come to the platform of animals.

Interviewer: Religion will vanish? We'll become animals?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Especially when there is no religion, it is simply animal life. Any common man can distinguish that the dog does not understand what religion is. The dog is also a living being, but he is not interested to understand the *Bhagavad-gītā* or the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. He is not interested. That is the distinction between man and dog: the animal is not interested.

So when the human beings become disinterested in religious things, then they are animals. And how can there be happiness or peace in animal society? They want to keep people as animals, and they are making a United Nations. How is it possible? United animals, society for united animals? These things are going on.

Interviewer: Do you see any hopeful signs?

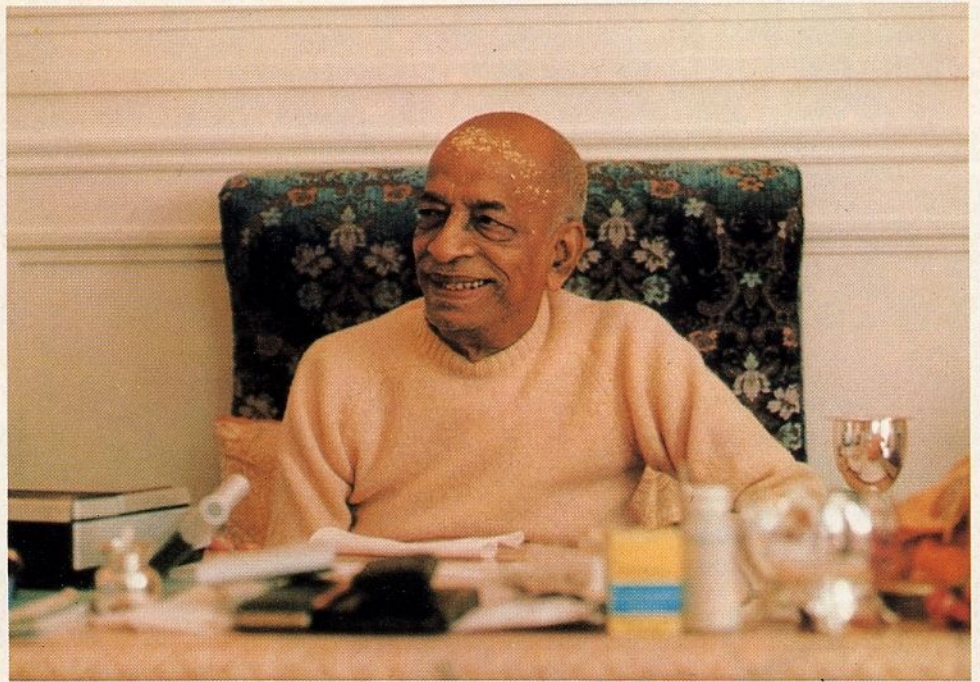
Śrīla Prabhupāda: At least they have detected that religion is declining. That is good. "Declining" means they are going to be animals. In logic it is said that man is a rational animal. When the rationality is minus, then he is simply an animal, not a human being. In the human society either you become Christian, Muhammadan, Hindu, or Buddhist; it doesn't matter. There must be some system of religion. Human society without religion is animal society. This is a plain fact. Why are people so unhappy now? Because there is no religion. They are neglecting religion.

One gentleman has written me that Tolstoy once said, "Unless dynamite is put underneath the church, there cannot be any peace." Even now the Russian government is very strictly against God consciousness, because they think that religion has spoiled the whole social atmosphere.

Interviewer: It seems there could be some truth in that.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: The religious system might have been misused, but that does not mean that religion should be

“A dog comes when there are some eatables; I say ‘Hut!’ and he goes away. But again he comes—he has no memory. So when our memory of God is reducing, that means that our human qualities are reducing.”



avoided. Real religion should be taken. It does not mean that because religion has not been properly executed by the so-called priests, religion should be rejected. If my eye is giving me some trouble on account of a cataract, it does not mean that the eye should be plucked out. The cataract should be removed. That is Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Interviewer: I think history shows that many people have misused religion. Isn't that a fact?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: These people have no conception of God, and they are preaching religion. What is religion? Religion means *dharmam tu sākṣād bhagavat-praṇītam*: “The path of religion is directly enunciated by the Supreme Lord.” God's order. They have no conception of God—they do not know what God is—and they are professing some religion. How long can it go on artificially? It will deteriorate.

That has become the present condition. They have no idea of God, so how will they know what is the order of God? Religion means the order of God. For example, law means the order of the state. If there is no state, then where is the order? We have got a clear conception of God—Kṛṣṇa. And He is giving His order, and we accept it. It is clear religion. If there is no God, no conception of God, no order of God, then where is religion? If there is no government, then where is the law?

Interviewer: Well, there wouldn't be any law. It would be an outlaw society.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Outlaw—everyone is an outlaw, manufacturing his own concocted system of religion. That is going on.

Just ask—in any religious system, what is their conception of God? Can anybody tell clearly? Nobody can tell. But we shall immediately say,

*veṇuṁ kvaṇantam aravinda-dalāyatākṣam
barhāvataṁ samasitāmbuda-sundarāṅgam
kandarpa-koṭi-kamaṇīya-viśeṣa-śobham
govindam ādi-puruṣam tam aham bhajāmi*

“I worship Govinda, the primeval Lord, who is adept in playing on His flute, whose blooming eyes are like lotus petals, whose head is bedecked with a peacock's feather, whose figure of beauty is tinged with the hue of blue clouds, and whose unique loveliness charms millions of cupids” [*Brahma-saṁhitā* 5.30]. Immediately, we can give a description of God.

If there is no idea of God, then what kind of religion is that?

Interviewer: I don't know.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: It is bogus. They have no conception of God, and therefore there is no understanding of religion. That is the decline, and because religion is declining, the human beings are becoming more and more like animals.

“Animal” means one has no memory. A dog comes when there are some eatables; I say “Hut!” and he goes away. But again he comes—he has no memory. So when our memory of God is reducing, that means that our human qualities are reducing. In the Kali-yuga these human qualities will be reduced. That means that people are becoming like cats and dogs.

Interviewer: Here's the second question: “The traditional charge against Vedic [Indian] culture is that it is

fatalistic, that it makes people slaves to the belief in predestination, and that it therefore inhibits progress. How far is this charge true?”

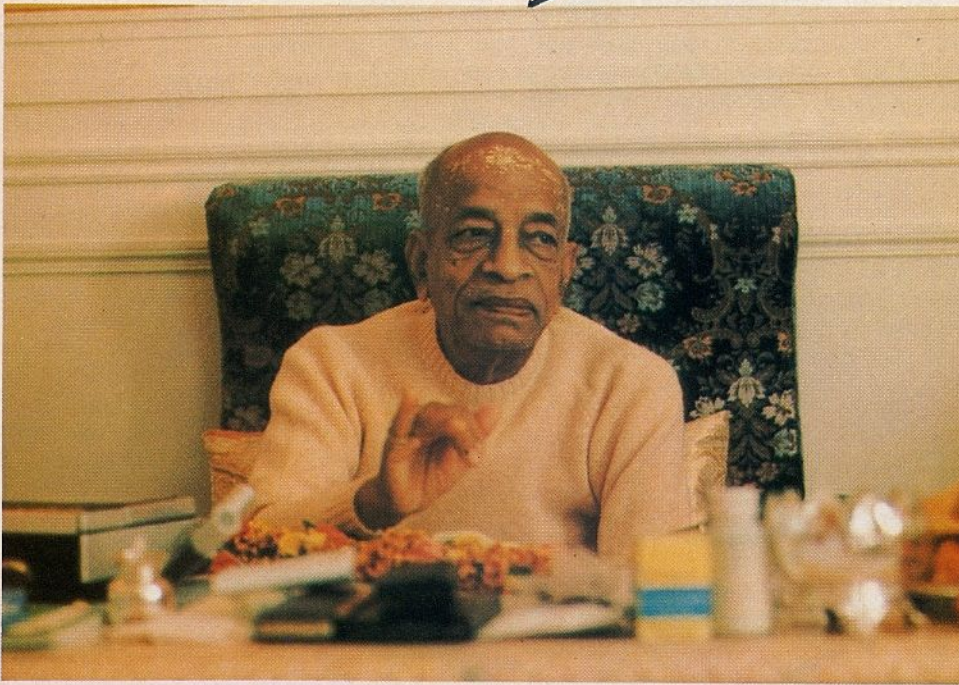
Śrīla Prabhupāda: What is that progress? Is a dog's jumping progress? Is that progress? A dog is running here and there on four legs, and you are running here and there on the four wheels of the automobile. Is that progress? That is not the Vedic system. According to the Vedic system, the human being has a certain amount of energy, and since the human being has better consciousness than the animals, therefore the energy of the human being is more valuable than the energy of the animals.

Interviewer: Probably no one would dispute that the human being has more freedom or, I suppose, responsibility than the animals.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: So human energy should be utilized for spiritual advancement, not that the energy should be employed to compete with the dog. The saintly person is not busy like the dog. Today people think that “dog-ness” is life, but actual life is spiritual progress. Therefore, the Vedic literature says,

*tasyaiva hetoḥ prayateta kovido
na labhyate yad bhramatām upary adhaḥ
tal labhyate duḥkhavad anyataḥ sukham
kālena sarvatra gabhīra-ramhasā*

“Persons who are actually intelligent and philosophically inclined should endeavor only for that purposeful end which is not obtainable even by wandering from the topmost planet (Brahmaloka) down to the lowest planet (Pātāla). As far as happiness derived from sense enjoyment is concerned, it can be obtained auto-



“The dog is busy for sense gratification: Where is food, where is shelter, where is a female, where is defense? The man is also doing the same business, in different ways. This business is going on life after life.”

matically in the course of time, just as in the course of time we obtain miseries even though we do not desire them” [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.5.18].

Interviewer: Could you explain that a little further?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: The human being should exert his energy for that thing which he did not get in many, many lives. In many, many lives the soul has been in the form of dogs, or demigods, or cats, birds, beasts, and many others. There are 8,400,000 different types of bodies. So this transmigration of the soul is going on. The business in every case is sense gratification.

Interviewer: Which means?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: For example, the dog is busy for sense gratification: Where is food, where is shelter, where is a female, where is defense? The man is also doing the same business, in different ways. This business is going on life after life. Even a small insect is trying for the same thing. Birds, beasts, fish—everywhere the same struggle is going on. Where is food, where is sex, where is shelter, and how to defend. The Vedic literature says that these things we have done for many, many lives, and that if we don’t get out of this struggle for existence, we will have to do them again for many, many lives.

Interviewer: I’m beginning to see.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes, so these things should be stopped. Therefore, Prahlāda Mahārāja makes this statement:

*sukham aindriyakam daityā
deha-yogena dehinām
sarvatra labhyate daivād
yathā duḥkham ayatnataḥ*

“My dear friends born of demoniac families, the happiness perceived with reference to the sense objects by contact with the body can be obtained in any form of life, according to one’s past fruitive activities. Such happiness is automatically obtained without endeavor, just as we obtain distress” [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.6.3].

A dog has got a body and I have got a body. So, my sex pleasure and the dog’s sex pleasure—there is no difference. The pleasure derived out of sex is the same. A dog is not afraid of having sex pleasure on the street before everyone, and we hide it. That’s all. People are thinking that to have sex pleasure in a nice apartment is advanced. However, that is not advanced. And they are making a dog’s race for this so-called advancement. People do not know that according to whatever kind of body one has acquired, the pleasure is already stored up.

Interviewer: What do you mean, “the pleasure is already stored up”?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: That is called destiny. A pig has got a certain type of body, and his eatable is the stool. You cannot change it. The pig will not like to eat halvah [a sweetmeat made of wheat toasted in butter]. It is not possible. Because he has got a particular type of body, he must eat like that. Can any scientist improve the standard of living of the pig?

Interviewer: I doubt it.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Therefore, Prahlāda Mahārāja says that it is already stored up. The pleasure is basically the same, but a little different according to the body. The uncivilized man in the jungle is having the same thing.

Now people are thinking that civilization means constructing skyscraper buildings. But Vedic civilization says, No, that is not advancement. The real advancement of human life is self-realization, how much you have realized your *self*. Not that you have constructed skyscraper buildings.

Interviewer: But wouldn’t what you’re saying make sense to most people?

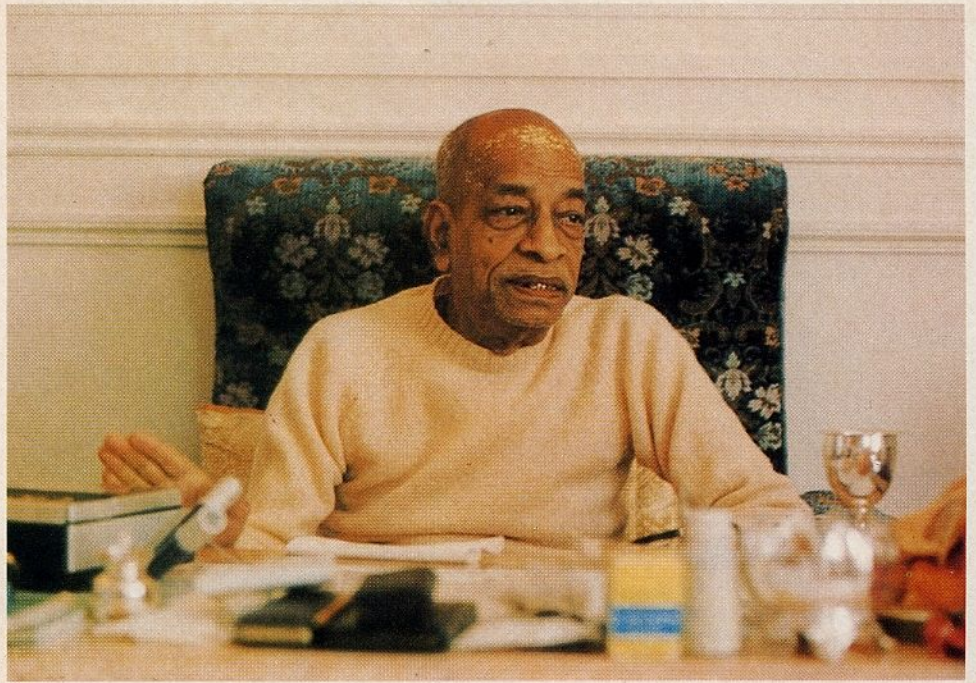
Śrīla Prabhupāda: Sometimes people misunderstand. In a high court, a judge is sitting soberly, apparently doing nothing, and he is getting a high salary. Someone else is thinking, “I am working so hard in the same court, rubber stamping—and not getting one-tenth of the salary of the judge.” He is thinking, “I am so busy, working so hard, and I am not getting as good a salary as the man who is just sitting on the bench.” The situation is like that: the Vedic civilization is meant for self-realization, not for a dog’s race.

Interviewer: Still, isn’t it usually considered honorable to work hard, to struggle and eventually “get ahead” in life?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: The *karmīs*, fruitive workers, have been described in the *Bhagavad-gītā* as *mūḍhas*, asses. Why are they compared to the asses? Because the ass works very hard with loads on his back, and in return his master gives him only a little morsel of grass. He stands at the door of the washerman and eats grass while again the washerman loads his back. He has no sense that if I go out of the cottage of the washerman I can get grass anywhere—why am I carrying so much?

Interviewer: That brings to mind some people I know.

“There is no religion, simply a dog’s race. The dog is running on four legs, and you are running on four wheels—that’s all. And you think that the four-wheel race is advancement of civilization.”



Śrīla Prabhupāda: The fruitive worker is like that. He is very busy in the office, and if you want to see him he will say, “I am very busy.” So what is the result of your being so busy? He takes two pieces of toast and one cup of tea. And for this purpose you are so busy? He does not know why he is busy. In the account books he will find that the balance was one million dollars and now it has become two million. He is satisfied with that, but he will take only two pieces of toast and one cup of tea, and still he will work very hard. That is what is meant by *karmī*. Asses—work like asses, without any aim in life.

But Vedic civilization is different. The accusation is not correct—people in Vedic civilization are not at all lazy. They are busy for a higher subject matter. Prahāda Mahārāja stresses that this busy-ness is so important that it should begin from the very childhood. *Kaumāra ācaret prājñāḥ*: one should not lose a second’s time. That is Vedic civilization. The asses see, “These men are not working like I am”—like dogs and asses—and they consider that we are escaping. Yes, escaping your fruitless endeavor. The Vedic civilization is meant for self-realization.

Interviewer: Could you give us more of an idea what the Vedic civilization is like?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: The Vedic civilization begins from the *varṇāśrama* system. In the *varṇāśrama* system there is this arrangement: *brāhmaṇas* [intellectuals, advisers], *kṣatriyas* [administrators], *vaiśyas* [merchants, farmers], *sūdras* [workers], *brahmacārīs* [students], *gṛhasthas* [householders], *vānaprasthas*

[retired married people], and *sannyāsīs* [renounced monks].

The ultimate goal is that Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Lord, should be worshiped. So if you worship Kṛṣṇa, then you fulfill all your occupational duties, either as a *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya*, *sūdra*, *brahmacārī*, anything. Take to it immediately—take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. This is so important.

Interviewer: If people really knew about a lifestyle that was more natural, more fulfilling, what would be the problem? They actually would, as you say, take to it.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: But because they do not know, therefore there is no religion, simply a dog’s race. The dog is running on four legs, and you are running on four wheels—that’s all. And you think that the four-wheel race is advancement of civilization.

Therefore, modern civilization is practically said to do nothing. Whatever is obtainable by destiny, you will get it, wherever you are. Rather, take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The example is given by Prahāda Mahārāja, that you do not want anything distasteful and yet it comes upon you. Similarly, even if you do not want happiness which you are destined, it will come upon you. You should not waste your energy for material happiness. You cannot get more material happiness than you are destined.

Interviewer: How can you be so sure of that?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: How shall I believe it? Because you get some distressful condition although you do not want it. For instance, President Kennedy died by the hand of his own countryman. Who

wanted it, and why did it come? He was a great man, he was protected by so many, and still he was destined to be killed. Who can protect you?

So if the distressful condition comes upon me by destiny, then the other position, the opposite number—happiness—will also come. Why shall I waste my time for this rectification? Let me use my energy for Kṛṣṇa consciousness. That is intelligent. You cannot check your destiny. Everyone will experience a certain amount of happiness and a certain amount of distress. Nobody is enjoying uninterrupted happiness. That is not possible.

Just as you cannot check your distressed condition of life, so you cannot check your happy condition of life. It will come automatically. So don’t waste your time for these things. Rather, you should utilize your time for advancing in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Interviewer: Would a Kṛṣṇa-conscious person not try for progress?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: The thing is that if you try for progress vainly, then what is the use of that? If it is a fact that you cannot change your destiny, then what is the use of that? We will be satisfied with the amount of happiness and distress that we are destined.

Vedic civilization is meant for realization of God. That is the point. You’ll still find in India that during important festivals many millions of people are coming to take bath in the Ganges, because they are interested how to become liberated. They are not lazy. They are going thousands of miles, two thousand miles away to take bath in the Ganges. They are not lazy, but they are not busy

in the dog's race. Rather, they are busy right from their childhood trying to become self-realized. *Kaumāra ācaret prājño dharmān bhāgavatān iha.* They are so busy that they want to begin the business from their very childhood. So it is the wrong conception to think that they are lazy.

Interviewer: Then the question may be raised that if destiny cannot be checked, then why not let every newborn child simply run around like an animal, and whatever is destined to happen to him will happen?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: No, the advantage is that you can train him spiritually. Therefore it is said, *tasyaiva hetoh prayateta kovidaḥ:* You should engage your energy for self-realization. *Ahaituky apratihātā:* Devotional service, Kṛṣṇa consciousness, cannot be checked. Just as material destiny cannot be checked, your advancement in spiritual life cannot be checked if you endeavor for it.

Actually, Kṛṣṇa will change destiny—but only for His devotee. He says, *aham tvām sarva-pāpebhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi* [*Bhagavad-gītā* 18.66]: "I shall give you all protection from all reactions of sinful activities."

For instance, if one is condemned by the law court to be hanged, nobody can

check it. Even the same judge who has given this verdict cannot check it. But if the defendant begs for the mercy of the king, who is above all the laws, then the king can check it.

Therefore, our business is to surrender to Kṛṣṇa. And if we artificially want to be more happy by economic development, that is not possible. So many men are working so hard, but does it mean that everyone will become a Henry Ford or a Rockefeller? Everyone is trying his best. Mr. Ford's destiny was to become a rich man, but does it mean that every other man who has worked as hard as Ford will become a rich man like Ford also? No. This is practical. You cannot change your destiny simply by working hard like an ass or a dog. But you can utilize that energy for improving your Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Interviewer: Exactly what is Kṛṣṇa consciousness? Could you tell us more?


Śrīla Prabhupāda: How to love God—that is Kṛṣṇa consciousness. If you have not learned to love God, then what is the meaning of your religion? When you are actually on the platform of love of God, you understand your relationship with God—that "I am part and parcel of God." Then you extend your love to the animal, also. If you actually love God,

then your love for the insect is also there. You understand, "This insect has got a different body, but he is also part and parcel of my father; therefore, he is my brother." Then you cannot maintain a slaughterhouse. If you maintain a slaughterhouse and disobey the order of Christ, "Thou shalt not kill," and you proclaim yourself as Christian or Hindu, that is not religion. Then it is simply a waste of time—because you do not understand God, you have not got any love for God, and you are labeling yourself under some sect, but there is no real religion. That is going on all over the world.

Interviewer: How can we cure the situation?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. If you do not accept that Kṛṣṇa is the supreme entity, then try to understand. That is education: there is somebody supreme; Kṛṣṇa is not Indian; He is God. Just like the sun rises first in India but that does not mean that the sun is Indian, similarly, although Kṛṣṇa appeared in India, now He has come to the Western countries, through this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.

Interviewer: Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Hare Kṛṣṇa. 

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Everywhere you look there are so many names. Names for packages, names for signposts, names for places, names for plants, names for people. Names are convenient, and maybe a little confusing.

By Dāmodara dāsa

THE WORLD OF NAMES

"History's first psychotherapy session," on a battlefield, raises a question: "John," "Jane," "Black," "White," "Girl," "Boy," "Student," "Soldier"—what's in a name?

People hailed him as a great military hero. They said he was as strong as a lion. With bow and arrow he was beyond belief: he could hit a hundred-foot-high target obscured by the spokes of a chariot wheel—even if he had to take aim by looking at the target's rippling reflection in a water pail. More than once he'd fought off hundreds of soldiers without any help.

But today, as the time for his next battle drew near, Arjuna was shaking with anxiety. Looking over the two armies from a vantage point midway between them, Arjuna slumped down on his chariot, in despair.

His physical strength hadn't failed him. He was still the match of any soldier on the enemy side (with the exception of Bhīṣma, perhaps). But even Bhīṣma's skill and fortitude couldn't have driven Arjuna into this deep depression.

The renowned warrior had lost his courage because

he was about to take part in a civil war—a war in which he would be pitted against his grandfather, his father-in-law, his cousins, his uncles, and the very teacher at whose feet he'd learned the art of war. Others, too, on both sides, were now poised to plunge arrows, swords, and lances into the bodies of their relatives and superiors. Arjuna's skin burned and his mouth dried up as he contemplated the horrible events to come.

"How can any good come from this?" he thought aloud. "What use would our victory be if we should ruin our whole society, our whole culture, in the process? We'll rip apart the fabric of family ties, and then our civilization will lie in shreds."

His only desire was to leave at once—to leave the battlefield and leave his profession. To go to the woods, perhaps, and take up the life of a beggar. "I'd rather live by other people's money than by my relatives' blood," he decided.

Uncles, cousins, teachers, grandfathers, fathers-in-law, sons, brothers-in-law—the very network of social relationships that before had given Arjuna so much pleasure, now had driven him to a nervous breakdown. How could he kill these people? He knew the enemy soldiers by name—names that sound strange to us (like Duryodhana, Bhūriśravā, Droṇa), but names that signified intimate relationships to him. Meditating on those names and relationships, Arjuna wept out of compassion and hopelessness.

Arjuna's self-searching, recorded in the opening pages of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, was a natural response to a terrifying situation. Caught in a web of conflicting social designations, he considered that his only way out was to change his own designation from "soldier" to "beggar." But soon Arjuna's trusted friend and teacher, Lord Kṛṣṇa (the Supreme Personality of Godhead) was to show him that even as a beggar he would be unhappy. The answer, said Lord Kṛṣṇa, was to stop thinking of himself as "soldier," "beggar," "student," and start looking for his real identity on a level deeper than that. Otherwise, Kṛṣṇa suggested, Arjuna's life would be full of anxiety.

The same is true for me. It's a commonsense fact of my life that if somebody approaches me at my job or on the street and asks me in an offhand way who I am, then I'll probably answer



**“What’s in a name?
That which we call a
rose / By any other
name would smell as
sweet.” Names are
convenient, but
what’s in a name?**

with my name. Names are convenient. They make social interaction possible. How could we ever finalize legal documents, sign checks, introduce ourselves at parties, reminisce about old friends, if we didn't use names? It would be nearly impossible.

But the name is not the same as the thing named. In this connection we usually think of Shakespeare: "What's in a name? That which we call a rose / By any other name would smell as sweet." How much more true that is, then, of a human being. As convenient as names are, they're just superficial concepts of our personal identity.

Names are superficial, because, for one thing, each of us has little choice about the designations that fix us in this world, the world of names. For instance,

take that triumphant cheer heard in hundreds of languages, in thousands of maternity rooms: "It's a boy!" Suddenly, that little human being who had been a mystery, an *it*, has been pinned down. It's a *boy*. For the parents, the relatives, the family's friends, and for the whole culture, that means a lot. A complex structure of obligations and expectations has been set up. Starting with blue (not pink) baby clothes, moving through baseball and Boy Scouts, on through high school to high finance, that little person's trajectory through life has to a great extent been determined for him just by the pronouncing of the word *boy*.

You may object that the word *boy* alone isn't determining the baby's future. It's the condition that the word denotes. If John Doe had a baby girl and yet insisted on calling her a boy, he wouldn't be able to make his dream come true simply on the authority of the name itself. Surely there's a real quality, the baby's sex, that the name is intended only to represent, and not to *be*. Am I stretching the point to call so much attention to a simple word?

Yes, I would be stretching the point if all we had to contend with was one or two names—"boy," "girl"; "man," "woman"; "Me Tarzan, you Jane." Then life, and self-awareness, would be an easy job. But we don't live in that kind of world. Like Arjuna, we live in a world of millions of names. And to make things worse, even the names we call our own are usually assigned to us before we have any choice. Somebody's waiting for us, before we emerge, with a complete outfit of names ready to put on us. We don't have any say in the matter. We're controlled.

That American slang expression "handle" is a good one. In some parts of the country they'll ask you, "What's your handle?" if they want to know your name. That says a lot. A name is a way to control another person, to handle him. As the baby squeezes out of the womb into the world of social realities, he's assigned all kinds of handles: "boy," "John," "American," "white," "Presbyterian," "middle class," "midwesterner," "middletowner." Before he even knows what hit him, he's spinning in the social whirl. And by the time he's old enough to do something about it, old enough to take control of his life, "John" is too bewildered by his desig-

nated names, and by the superficial qualities they represent, to be able to sense his deeper, personal qualities.

Psychologist Rollo May quotes one of his patients as saying, "I'm just a collection of mirrors, reflecting what everyone else expects of me." In a well-known survey of the 1950's, a distraught American housewife made this disclosure:

I've tried everything women are supposed to do—hobbies, gardening, pickling, canning, being very social with my neighbors, joining committees, running PTA teas. I can do it all, and I like it, but it doesn't leave you time to think about—any feeling of who you are. There's no problem you can even put a name to. But I'm desperate. Who am I?

"There's no problem you can even put a name to," the lady laments. But names *are* her problem. She's been assigned too many names, none of them getting to the heart of her personal identity. Today's foremost scholar of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, suggests a cure for the problem of names:

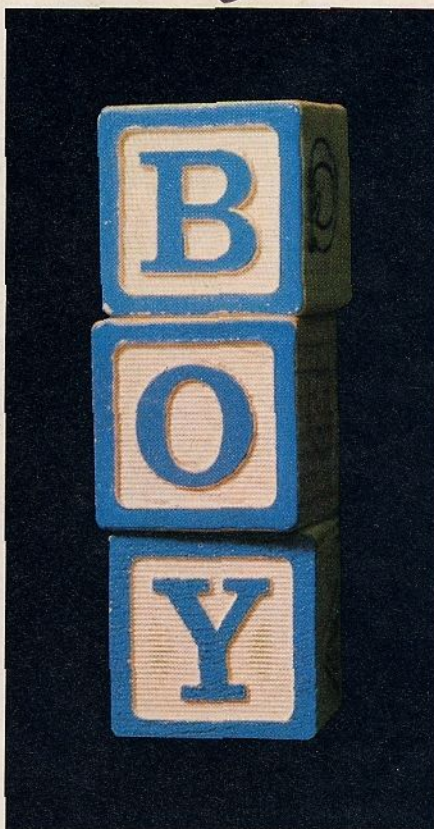
American, or Indian, or German, or Englishman; cat or dog, or bee or bat, man or wife: all of these are designations. In spiritual consciousness we become free from all such designations.

Many people have fought against the false limitations imposed on them by superficial designations; many have tried to become free. In the 1960s Theodore Roszak wrote, "The bohemian fringe of our youth culture . . . is grounded in an intensive examination of the self, of the buried wealth of personal consciousness." Today the beat goes on in a more respectable way. In a September 13, 1976, *Newsweek* article on genealogy ("perhaps the fastest-growing hobby in America"), the writers noted,

Although genealogy's uses range from investigating possible hereditary causes of cancer to settling estate disputes, the single most compelling reason for its new popularity comes down to the question "Who am I?"

And the problem of identity is deeply enmeshed in one of the longest-standing, most divisive issues in American culture—the racial problem. The names "black" and "white" have stirred destructive emotions since the 1600s. In his autobiographical novel of 1937, *Black Boy*, Richard Wright told of his struggle to get free from designations:

The white South said it knew "niggers," and I was what the white South called a "nigger."



"It's a boy!"
Suddenly, that
little human being
who had been a
mystery, an *it*, has
been pinned
down. It's a *boy*.

Well, the white South had never known me—never known what I thought, what I felt. . . . The pressure of Southern living kept me from being the kind of person that I might have been. I had been what my surroundings had demanded, what my family—conforming to the dictates of the whites above them—had expected of me, and what the whites had said that I must be.

Having decided "that the South could recognize but part of a man," Wright moved north to Chicago in his search for freedom. Some people move north, some take drugs, some hire genealogists or psychologists. They want to leave, as Arjuna did, the artificial conflicts brought upon them by designations assigned to them by others.

How superficial those conflicts are! Because others have assigned me certain names, or because circumstances have

put me in a certain position, I'm forced into conflicts I can't avoid—simply because of the social commitments my name implies. If I'm a Hatfield, then I must be against the McCoys. If I'm a fifth-century-B.C. Athenian, then I must fight against the Spartans. If today I'm a Northern Irish Catholic, then I must fight the Protestants. Owners vs. Workers. Black vs. White. Men vs. Women. Town vs. Gown. "Anybody over thirty can't be trusted." This is very frustrating for me because I'm not really fighting for *my* rights, or perhaps not even for anything I believe in if given a chance to think about it. I'm defending something superficial, which somebody else most likely assigned to me without my asking for it.

To be sure, we can change some of our designations. Age, of course, changes anyway, of its own accord. Then, I can change my educational status, my occupation, my social class, or perhaps my given name, if I'm determined. And some people in extreme circumstances even decide to change their sex (the 1975 *Obstetrics and Gynecology Annual* reports that "it is apparent that several thousand transsexuals of both sexes live in the U.S. today"). Or, in protest, like many draft evaders during the Vietnam War, I could emigrate to Canada or Sweden and change my citizenship. On the other hand, as a last resort, I might try to shed all my names, escape from all my qualities, to become "one with the void," as some Buddhists do.

But these reactions to discontent are probably as meaningless as the conflicts that caused the discontent. Without a look deeper within, a mere shuffling around of names or superficial qualities isn't going to help. As Lord Kṛṣṇa told Arjuna, "of the nonexistent there is no endurance, and of the existent there is no cessation." In other words, things that change aren't real, and things that are real don't change. Changing names isn't going to free us from the tyranny of names.

That could leave us in a pretty desperate place, were it not for a simple feeling that we've all had. It comes out in your life in a natural way, because it's a natural thing to feel. It's almost like changing names, but it isn't really, because it's just a matter of discovering the identity you *already* have but just aren't aware of. It's a matter of finding your *permanent* name.

With proper direction, this feeling of permanent identity, or permanent consciousness, can lead to great things. And the first step is very simple. We ask, “What is the identity that I have throughout life, that I can’t change even by the most drastic measures?” Let’s not think of changing. Let’s think of that which we *cannot* change. Now, there may be many answers to this question. But it seems the most meaningful answer for us right now would be something like this: “I am a human being.” Yes, “human being” is a name. But at least for this lifetime it’s a permanent name. With this understanding, we jump the first hurdle—the most difficult hurdle—on the path of liberation from the tyranny of names.

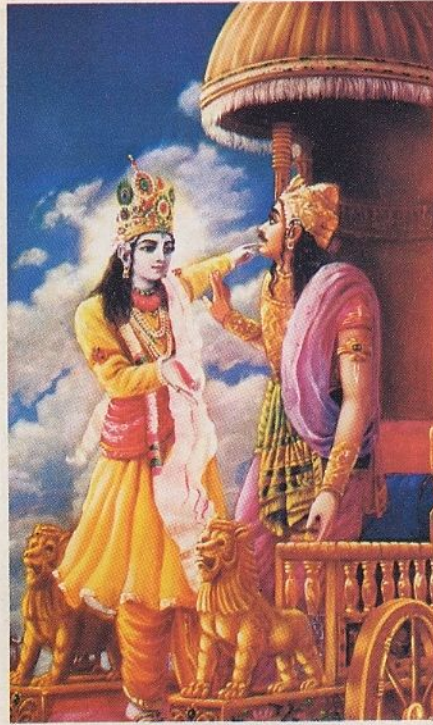
Still, that name “human being” can easily turn into a cliché, a sentimental catchword as bad as any other. It might go no further than sending UNESCO Christmas cards to the people on your mailing list. So we need to know the implications of this label “human being.” What is the essence of a human being? What makes man so different from the other animals? So many philosophers and anthropologists have spoken and written so many words on this subject that it may seem impossible to come to a final definition.

But with a little careful study, we can make out a clear pattern in most of the attempts. I don’t have the space to indulge in full-scale analysis, but I hope a few examples will suffice. For instance, Kierkegaard said that man is unique because “he can concentrate his entire energy upon the fact that he is an existing individual.” Again, Rollo May has noted, “man is very different from the rest of nature. He possesses consciousness of himself; his sense of personal identity distinguishes him from the rest of living or nonliving things.” We hardly need to go on, except perhaps to hark back to that classic statement of Plato’s:

Self-knowledge would certainly be maintained by me to be the very essence of knowledge, and in this I agree with him who dedicated the inscription “Know Thyself!” at Delphi.

René Descartes was one who undertook to know himself. After formulating his famous statement, “I think, therefore I am,” he said,

I thence concluded that I was a substance whose whole essence or nature consists only in thinking, and which, that it may exist, has



On the battlefield, Kṛṣṇa appealed to Arjuna’s reason and brought him to a higher awareness of his personal existence.

need of no place, nor is dependent on any material thing; so that “I,” that is to say, the mind [soul] by which I am what I am, is wholly distinct from the body, and is even more easily known than the latter.

This ability of ours to inquire about our identity—the very size and sophistication of the human brain underscores this ability—receives much clearer definition in the Vedic literature of India. There we read that self-realization is the *law* of human life, just as swimming is the law of fish life, and flying is the law of bird life. Each kind of body is meant for a particular purpose, and if that purpose isn’t fulfilled, then that animal has wasted its life. So if the human animal doesn’t spend his time seriously inquiring into the quality of the self, then he is, so to speak, breaking the law of human life.

Our life in these human bodies isn’t something neutral. The body may be a machine, but still we have feelings, and we can’t deny that for much of life our feelings are painful. Arjuna on the

battlefield, the confused housewife at her PTA teas, Richard Wright in the South—they all were suffering. In his introduction to the *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, Śrīla Prabhupāda writes about this point:

Every man is in difficulty in so many ways, as Arjuna was also in difficulty in having to fight the Battle of Kurukṣetra. Arjuna surrendered unto Lord Kṛṣṇa, and consequently this *Bhagavad-gītā* was spoken. Not only Arjuna, but every one of us is full of anxieties because of this material existence. Our very existence is in the atmosphere of nonexistence. Actually we are not meant to be threatened by nonexistence. Our existence is eternal. . . .

Out of so many human beings who are suffering, there are a few who are actually inquiring about their position, as to what they are, why they are put into this awkward position, and so on. Unless one is awakened to this position of questioning his suffering, unless he realizes that he doesn’t want suffering but rather wants to make a solution to all sufferings, then one is not considered to be a perfect human being. Humanity begins when this sort of inquiry is awakened in one’s mind.

The message, then, coming to us from those who’ve researched the problems of living, is that human life is meant for self-knowledge. Of all life forms, only man can understand the purpose of existence—to break free from the suffering brought on by illusory names, and to gain happiness in real selfhood.

On the battlefield, Lord Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna discussed the science of self-knowledge at length. Kṛṣṇa told His friend that the self is spiritual: “For the self there is never birth nor death. Nor, having once been, does he ever cease to be. . . . He is not slain when the body is slain. . . . 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.”

Kṛṣṇa appealed to Arjuna’s reason and direct perception and brought him from a fragmented, name-bound concept of self to a higher awareness of his personal existence, beyond material conflicts. Secure in self-knowledge, Arjuna could then choose a role for himself that fully satisfied his spiritual nature. In other words, he could see his real spiritual identity—neither warrior nor beggar but an eternal servant of God.

By the end of Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa’s dialogue (the end of the *Bhagavad-gītā*), Arjuna was cured of his anxiety. A person who studies their conversation today can get the same benefit. One scholar has termed it “history’s first psychotherapy session,” and for countless people the first is still the best.

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CHAPTER NINE

The Passing Away of Bhiṣmadeva in the Presence of Lord Kṛṣṇa

(continued from previous issue)

TEXT 27

दानधर्मान् राजधर्मान् मोक्षधर्मान् विभागशः ।
स्त्रीधर्मान् भगवद्धर्मान् समाप्तव्यासयोगतः ॥२७॥

*dāna-dharmān rāja-dharmān
mokṣa-dharmān vibhāgaśah
strī-dharmān bhagavad-dharmān
samāsa-vyāsa-yogatah*

dāna-dharmān—the acts of charity; *rāja-dharmān*—pragmatic activities of the kings; *mokṣa-dharmān*—the acts for salvation; *vibhāgaśah*—by divisions; *strī-dharmān*—duties of women; *bhagavat-dharmān*—the acts of the devotees; *samāsa*—generally; *vyāsa*—explicitly; *yogatah*—by means of.

TRANSLATION

He then explained, by divisions, acts of charity, the pragmatic activities of a king and activities for salvation. Then he described the duties of women and devotees, both briefly and extensively.

PURPORT

To give charity is one of the householder's main functions, and he should be prepared to give in charity at least fifty percent of his hard-earned money. A *brahmacārī*, or student, should perform sacrifices, a householder should give charity, and a person in the retired life or in the renounced order should practice penances and austerities. Those are the general functions of all the *āśramas*, or orders of life on the path of self-realization. In the *brahmacārī* life the training is sufficiently imparted so that one may understand that the world as property belongs to the

Supreme Lord, the Personality of Godhead. No one, therefore, can claim to be the proprietor of anything in the world. Therefore, in the life of a householder, which is a sort of license for sex enjoyment, one must give in charity for the service of the Lord. Everyone's energy is generated or borrowed from the reservoir of energy of the Lord; therefore, the resultant actions of such energy must be given to the Lord in the shape of transcendental loving service for Him. As the rivers draw water from the sea through the clouds and again go down to the sea, similarly our energy is borrowed from the supreme source, the Lord's energy, and it must return to the Lord. That is the perfection of our energy. The Lord, therefore, in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (9.27) says that whatever we do, whatever we undergo as penance, whatever we sacrifice, whatever we eat or whatever we give in charity must be offered to Him (the Lord). That is the way of utilizing our borrowed energy. When our energy is utilized in that way, our energy is purified from the contamination of material inebrieties, and thus we become fit for our original natural life of service to the Lord.

Rāja-dharma is a great science, unlike modern diplomacy for political supremacy. The kings were trained systematically to become munificent and not merely be tax collectors. They were trained to perform different sacrifices only for the prosperity of the subjects. To lead the *prajāś* to the attainment of salvation was a great duty of the king. The father, the spiritual master and the king are not to become irresponsible in the matter of leading their subjects to the path of ultimate liberation from birth, death, diseases and old age. When these primary duties are properly discharged, there is no need of government of the people, by the people. In modern days the people in general occupy the administration by the strength of manipulated votes, but they are never trained in the primary duties of the king, and that is also not possible for everyone. Under the circumstances the untrained administrators play havoc to make the subjects happy in all respects. On the other hand, these untrained administrators gradually become rogues and thieves and increase the taxation to finance a top-heavy administration that is useless for all purposes. Actually the qualified *brāhmaṇas* are meant to give direction to the kings for proper administration in terms of the scriptures like the *Manu-saṁhitā* and *Dharma-sāstras* of Parāśara. A typical king is the ideal of the people in general, and if the king is pious, religious, chivalrous and munificent, the citizens generally follow him. Such a king is not a lazy sensuous person living at the cost of the subjects, but alert always to kill thieves and dacoits. The pious kings were not merciful to dacoits and thieves in the name of nonsensical *ahiṁsā* (nonviolence). The thieves and dacoits were punished in an exemplary way so that in the future no one would dare commit such nuisances in an organized form. Such thieves and dacoits were never meant for administration as they are now.

The taxation law was simple. There was no force, no encroachment. The king had a right to take one fourth of the production made by the

subject. The king had a right to claim a fourth of one's allotted wealth. One would never grudge parting with it because due to the pious king and religious harmony there was enough natural wealth, namely grains, fruits, flowers, silk, cotton, milk, jewels, minerals, etc., and therefore no one was materially unhappy. The citizens were rich in agriculture and animal husbandry, and therefore they had enough grains, fruits and milk without any artificial needs of soaps and toilets, cinemas and bars.

The king had to see that the reserved energy of humanity was properly utilized. Human energy is meant not exactly for fulfilling animal propensities, but for self-realization. The whole government was specifically designed to fulfill this particular purpose. As such, the king had to select properly the cabinet ministers, but not on the strength of voting background. The ministers, the military commanders and even the ordinary soldiers were all selected by personal qualification, and the king had to supervise them properly before they were appointed to their respective posts. The king was especially vigilant to see that the *tapasvīs*, or persons who sacrificed everything for disseminating spiritual knowledge, were never disregarded. *The king knew well that the Supreme Personality of Godhead never tolerates any insult to His unalloyed devotees.* Such *tapasvīs* were trusted leaders even of the rogues and thieves, who would never disobey the orders of *tapasvīs*. The king would give special protection to illiterates, the helpless and widows of the state. Defense measures were arranged previous to any attack by the enemies. The taxing process was easy, and it was not meant for squandering, but was for strengthening the reserve fund. The soldiers were recruited from all parts of the world, and they were trained for special duties.

As far as salvation is concerned, one has to conquer the principles of lust, anger, unlawful desires, avarice and bewilderment. To get freedom from anger, one should learn how to forgive. To be free from unlawful desires one should not make plans. By spiritual culture one is able to conquer sleep. By tolerance only can one conquer desires and avarice. Disturbances from various diseases can be avoided by regulated diets. By self-control one can be free from false hopes, and money can be saved by avoiding undesirable association. By practice of *yoga* one can control hunger, and worldliness can be avoided by culturing the knowledge of impermanence. Dizziness can be conquered by rising up, and false arguments can be conquered by factual ascertainment. Talkativeness can be avoided by gravity and silence, and by prowess one can avoid fearfulness. Perfect knowledge can be obtained by self-cultivation. One must be free from lust, avarice, anger, dreaming, etc., to actually attain the path of salvation.

As far as the women class are concerned, they are accepted as a power of inspiration for men. As such, women are more powerful than men. Mighty Julius Caesar was controlled by a Cleopatra. Such powerful women are controlled by shyness. Therefore, shyness is important for women. Once this control valve is loosened, women can create havoc in society by adultery. Adultery means production of unwanted children known as *varna-saṅkara*, who disturb the world.

The last item taught by Bhīṣmadeva was the process of pleasing the Lord. We are all eternal servants of the Lord, and when we forget this essential part of our nature we are put into material conditions of life. The simple process of pleasing the Lord (for the householders especially) is to install the Deity of the Lord at home. By concentrating on the Deity, one may progressively go on with the daily routine work. Worshiping the Deity at home, serving the devotee, hearing the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, residing in a holy place and chanting the holy name of the Lord are all inexpensive items by which one can please the Lord. Thus the subject matter was explained by the grandfather to his grandchildren.

TEXT 28

धर्मार्थकाममोक्षांश्च सहोपायान् यथा मुने ।
नानाख्यानैतिहासेषु वर्णयामास तच्चिवत् ॥२८॥

*dharmārtha-kāma-mokṣāṁś ca
sahopāyān yathā mune*

*nānākhyānetihāseṣu
varṇayām āsa tattvavit*

dharma—occupational duties; *artha*—economic development; *kāma*—fulfillment of desires; *mokṣān*—ultimate salvation; *ca*—and; *saha*—along with; *upāyān*—means; *yathā*—as it is; *mune*—O sage; *nānā*—various; *ākhyāna*—by recitation of historical narrations; *itihāseṣu*—in the histories; *varṇayām āsa*—described; *tatta-vit*—one who knows the truth.

TRANSLATION

Then he described the occupational duties of different orders and statuses of life, citing instances from history, for he was himself well acquainted with the truth.

PURPORT

Incidents mentioned in the Vedic literatures, such as the *Purāṇas*, *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa* are factual historical narrations that took place sometime in the past, although not in any chronological order. Such historical facts, being instructive for ordinary men, were assorted without chronological reference. Besides that, they happen on different planets, nay, in different universes, and thus the description of the narrations is sometimes measured by three dimensions. We are simply concerned with the instructive lessons of such incidents, even though they are not in order by our limited range of understanding. Bhīṣmadeva described such narrations before Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira in reply to his different questions.

TEXT 29

धर्मं प्रवदतस्तस्य स कालः प्रत्युपस्थितः ।
यो योगिनश्छन्दमृत्योर्वाञ्छितस्तत्तृत्तरायणः ॥२९॥

*dharmam pravadataḥ tasya
sa kālah pratyupasthitaḥ
yo yoginaś chanda-mṛtyoḥ
vāñchitāḥ tūttarāyaṇaḥ*

dharmam—occupational duties; *pravadataḥ*—while describing; *tasya*—his; *sah*—that; *kālah*—time; *pratyupasthitaḥ*—exactly appeared; *yah*—that is; *yoginaḥ*—for the mystics; *chanda-mṛtyoḥ*—of one who dies according to one's own selection of time; *vāñchitāḥ*—is desired by; *tu*—but; *uttarāyaṇaḥ*—the period when the sun runs on the northern horizon.

TRANSLATION

While Bhīṣmadeva was describing occupational duties, the sun's course ran into the northern hemisphere. This period is desired by mystics who die at their will.

PURPORT

The perfect *yogīs* or mystics can leave the material body at their own sweet will at a suitable time and go to a suitable planet desired by them. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* (8.24) it is said that self-realized souls who have exactly identified themselves with the interest of the Supreme Lord can generally leave the material body during the time of the fire-god's effulgence and when the sun is in the northern horizon, and thus achieve the transcendental sky. In the *Vedas* these times are considered auspicious for quitting the body, and they are taken advantage of by the expert mystics who have perfected the system. Perfection of *yoga* means attainment of such supermental states as to be able to leave the material body as desired. *Yogīs* can also reach any planet within no time without a material vehicle. The *yogīs* can reach the highest planetary system within a very short time, and this is impossible for the materialist. Even attempting to reach the highest planet will take millions of years at a speed

of millions of miles per hour. This is a different science, and Bhīṣmadeva knew well how to utilize it. He was just waiting for the suitable moment to quit his material body, and the golden opportunity arrived when he was instructing his noble grandsons, the Pāṇḍavas. He thus prepared himself to quit his body before the exalted Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the pious Pāṇḍavas and the great sages headed by Bhagavān Vyāsa, etc., all great souls.

TEXT 30

तदोपसंहृत्य गिरः सहस्रणी-
विमुक्तसङ्गं मन आदिपूरुषे ।
कृष्णे लसत्पीतपटे चतुर्भुजे
पुरःस्थितेऽमीलितदृग्ब्यधारयत् ॥३०॥

*tadopasamhṛtya girāḥ sahasraṇī
vimukta-saṅgam mana ādi-pūruṣe
kṛṣṇe lasat-pīta-paṭe catur-bhuje
puraḥ sthite 'mīlita-dṛg vyadhārayat*

tadā—at that time; *upasamhṛtya*—withdrawing; *girāḥ*—speech; *saahasraṇīḥ*—Bhīṣmadeva (who was expert in thousands of sciences and arts); *vimukta-saṅgam*—completely freed from everything else; *manaḥ*—mind; *ādi-pūruṣe*—unto the original Personality of Godhead; *kṛṣṇe*—unto Kṛṣṇa; *lasat-pīta-paṭe*—decorated with yellow garments; *catur-bhuje*—unto the four-handed original Nārāyaṇa; *puraḥ*—just before; *sthite*—standing; *amīlita*—widespread; *dṛk*—vision; *vyadhārayat*—fixed.

TRANSLATION

Thereupon that man who spoke on different subjects with thousands of meanings and who fought on thousands of battlefields and protected thousands of men, stopped speaking and, being completely freed from all bondage, withdrew his mind from everything else and fixed his wide-open eyes upon the original Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who stood before him, four-handed, dressed in yellow garments that glittered and shined.

PURPORT

In the momentous hour of leaving his material body, Bhīṣmadeva set the glorious example concerning the important function of the human form of life. *The subject matter which attracts the dying man becomes the beginning of his next life.* Therefore, if one is absorbed in thoughts of the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, he is sure to go back to Godhead without any doubt. This is confirmed in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (8.5–15):

5: And whoever, at the time of death, quits his body remembering Me alone, at once attains My nature. Of this there is no doubt.

6: Whatever state of being one remembers when he quits his body, that state he will attain without fail.

7: Therefore, Arjuna, you should always think of Me in the form of Kṛṣṇa and at the same time carry out your prescribed duty of fighting. With your activities dedicated to Me and your mind and intelligence fixed on Me, you will attain Me without doubt.

8: He who meditates on the Supreme Personality of Godhead, his mind constantly engaged in remembering Me, undeviated from the path, he, O Pārtha [Arjuna], is sure to reach Me.

9: One should meditate upon the Supreme Person as the one who knows everything, as He who is the oldest, who is the controller, who is smaller than the smallest, who is the maintainer of everything, who is beyond all material conception, who is inconceivable, and who is always a person. He is luminous like the sun and, being transcendental, is beyond this material nature.

10: One who, at the time of death, fixes his life air between the eyebrows and in full devotion engages himself in remembering the Supreme Lord will certainly attain to the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

11: Persons learned in the *Vedas*, who utter *omkāra* and who are great sages in the renounced order, enter into Brahman. Desiring such perfection, one practices celibacy. I shall now explain to you this process by which one may attain salvation.

12: The yogic situation is that of detachment from all sensual engagements. Closing all the doors of the senses and fixing the mind on the heart and the life air at the top of the head, one establishes himself in *yoga*.

13: After being situated in this *yoga* practice and vibrating the sacred syllable *om*, the supreme combination of letters, if one thinks of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and quits his body, he will certainly reach the spiritual planets.

14: For one who remembers Me without deviation, I am easy to obtain, O son of Prthā, because of his constant engagement in devotional service.

15: After attaining Me, the great souls, who are *yogīs* in devotion, never return to this temporary world, which is full of miseries, because they have attained the highest perfection.

Śrī Bhīṣmadeva attained the perfection of quitting his body at will and was fortunate enough to have Lord Kṛṣṇa, the object of his attention, personally present at the time of death. He therefore fixed his open eyes upon Him. He wanted to see Śrī Kṛṣṇa for a long time out of his spontaneous love for Him. Because he was a pure devotee, he had very little to do with the detailed performance of yogic principles. Simple *bhakti-yoga* is enough to bring about perfection. Therefore, the ardent desire of Bhīṣmadeva was to see the *person* of Lord Kṛṣṇa, the most lovable object, and by the grace of the Lord, Śrī Bhīṣmadeva had this opportunity at the last stage of his breathing.

TEXT 31

विशुद्धया धारणया हताशुभ-
स्तदीक्षयैवाशु गताशुभ्रमः ।
निवृत्तसर्वेन्द्रियवृत्तिविभ्रम-
स्तुष्टाव जन्यं विशुज्जनार्दनम् ॥३१॥

*viśuddhayā dhāraṇayā hatāśubhaḥ
tat-ikṣayaivāśu gatā-yudha-śramaḥ
nivṛtta-sarvendriya-vṛtti-vibhramas
tuṣṭāva janyaṁ viśraṇ janārdanam*

viśuddhayā—by purified; *dhāraṇayā*—meditation; *hata-śubhaḥ*—one who has minimized the inauspicious qualities of material existence; *tat*—Him; *ikṣayā*—by looking on; *eva*—simply; *āśu*—immediately; *gatā*—having gone away; *yudha*—from the arrows; *śramaḥ*—fatigue; *nivṛtta*—being stopped; *sarva*—all; *indriya*—senses; *vṛtti*—activities; *vibhramah*—being widely engaged; *tuṣṭāva*—he prayed; *janyam*—the material tabernacle; *viśraṇ*—while quitting; *janārdanam*—to the controller of the living beings.

TRANSLATION

By pure meditation, looking at Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, he at once was freed from all material inauspiciousness and was relieved of all bodily pains caused by the arrow wounds. Thus all the external activities of his senses at once stopped, and he prayed transcendently to the controller of all living beings while quitting his material body.

PURPORT

The material body is a gift of the material energy, technically called illusion. Identification with the material body is due to forgetfulness of our eternal relationship with the Lord. For a pure devotee of the Lord like Bhīṣmadeva, this illusion was at once removed as soon as the Lord arrived. Lord Kṛṣṇa is like the sun, and the illusory, external material energy is like darkness. In the presence of the sun there is no possibility that darkness can stand. Therefore, just on the arrival of Lord Kṛṣṇa, all

material contamination was completely removed, and Bhīṣmadeva was thus able to be transcendently situated by stopping the activities of the impure senses in collaboration with matter. The soul is originally pure and so also the senses. By material contamination the senses assume the role of imperfection and impurity. By revival of contact with the Supreme Pure, Lord Kṛṣṇa, the senses again become freed from material contaminations. Bhīṣmadeva attained all these transcendental conditions prior to his leaving the material body because of presence of the Lord. The Lord is the controller and benefactor of all living beings. That is the verdict of all *Vedas*. He is the supreme eternity and living entity amongst all the eternal living beings.* And He alone provides all necessities for all kinds of living beings. Thus He provided all facilities to fulfill the transcendental desires of His great devotee Śrī Bhīṣmadeva, who began to pray as follows.

TEXT 32

श्रीभीष्म उवाच

इति मतिरुपकल्पिता वितृष्णा
भगवति सात्वतपुङ्गवे विभूम्नि ।
स्वसुखमुपगते क्वचिद्विहर्तुं
प्रकृतिमुपेयुषि यद्भवप्रवाहः ॥३२॥

śrī-bhīṣma uvāca

iti matir upakalpītā vitṛṣṇā

bhagavati sātvaṭa-puṅgave vibhūmni

sva-sukham upagate kvacid vihartum

prakṛtim upeyusi yad-bhava-pravāhaḥ

śrī-bhīṣmaḥ uvāca—Śrī Bhīṣmadeva said; *iti*—thus; *matih*—thinking, feeling and willing; *upakalpītā*—invested; *vitṛṣṇā*—freed from all sense desires; *bhagavati*—unto the Personality of Godhead; *sātvaṭa-puṅgave*—unto the leader of the devotees; *vibhūmni*—unto the great; *sva-sukham*—self-satisfaction; *upagate*—unto He who has attained it; *kvacit*—sometimes; *vihartum*—out of transcendental pleasure; *prakṛtim*—in the material world; *upeyusi*—do accept it; *yad-bhava*—from whom the creation; *pravāhaḥ*—is made and annihilated.

TRANSLATION

Bhīṣmadeva said: Let me now invest my thinking, feeling and willing, which were so long engaged in different subjects and occupational duties, in the all-powerful Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. He is always self-satisfied, but sometimes, being the leader of the devotees, He enjoys transcendental pleasure by descending on the material world, although from Him only the material world is created.

PURPORT

Because Bhīṣmadeva was a statesman, the head of the Kuru dynasty, a great general and a leader of *kṣatriyas*, his mind was strewn over so many subjects, and his thinking, feeling and willing were engaged in different matters. Now, in order to achieve pure devotional service, he wanted to invest all powers of thinking, feeling and willing entirely in the Supreme Being, Lord Kṛṣṇa. He is described herein as the leader of the devotees and all-powerful. Although Lord Kṛṣṇa is the original Personality of Godhead, He Himself descends on earth to bestow upon His pure devotees the boon of devotional service. He descends sometimes as Lord Kṛṣṇa as He is, and sometimes as Lord Caitanya. Both are leaders of the pure devotees. Pure devotees of the Lord have no desire other than the service of the Lord, and therefore they are called *sātvaṭa*. The Lord is the chief amongst such *sātvaṭas*. Bhīṣmadeva, therefore, had no other desires. Unless one is purified from all sorts of material desires, the Lord

does not become one's leader. Desires cannot be wiped out, but they have only to be purified. It is confirmed in the *Bhagavad-gītā* by the Lord Himself that He gives His instruction from within the heart of a pure devotee who is constantly engaged in the service of the Lord. Such instruction is given not for any material purpose but only for going back home, back to Godhead (Bg. 10.10). For the ordinary man who wants to lord it over material nature, the Lord not only sanctions and becomes a witness of activities, but He never gives the nondevotee instructions for going back to Godhead. That is the difference in dealings by the Lord with different living beings, both the devotee and the nondevotee. He is leader of all the living beings, as the king of the state rules both the prisoners and the free citizens. But His dealings are different in terms of devotee and nondevotee. Nondevotees never care to take any instruction from the Lord, and therefore the Lord is silent in their case, although He witnesses all their activities and awards them the necessary results, good or bad. The devotees are above this material goodness and badness. They are progressive on the path of transcendence, and therefore they have no desire for anything material. The devotee also knows Śrī Kṛṣṇa as the original Nārāyaṇa because Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, by His plenary portion, appears as the Kāraṇodakaśāyī Viṣṇu, the original source of all material creation. The Lord also desires the association of His pure devotees, and for them only the Lord descends on the earth and enlivens them. The Lord appears out of His own will. He is not forced by the conditions of material nature. He is therefore described here as the *vibhu*, or the almighty, for He is never conditioned by the laws of material nature.

TEXT 33

त्रिभुवनकमनं तमालवर्णं
रविकरगौरवाम्बरं दधाने ।
वपुरलककुलावृताननाब्जं
विजयसखे रतिरस्तु मेऽनवद्या ॥३३॥

tri-bhuvana-kamaṇaṁ tamāla-varṇaṁ
ravi-kara-gaura-vara-ambaraṁ dadhāne
vapur alaka-kulāvṛtānābjaṁ
vijaya-sakhe ratir astu me 'navadyā

tri-bhuvana—three statuses of planetary systems; *kamaṇaṁ*—the most desirable; *tamāla-varṇaṁ*—bluish like the *tamāla* tree; *ravi-kara*—sun rays; *gaura*—golden color; *varāmbaram*—glittering dress; *dadhāne*—one who wears; *vapuḥ*—body; *alaka-kula-āvṛta*—covered with paintings of sandalwood pulp; *anana-abjam*—face like a lotus; *vijaya-sakhe*—unto the friend of Arjuna; *ratih astu*—may attraction be reposed upon Him; *me*—my; *navadyā*—without desire for fruitive results.

TRANSLATION

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the intimate friend of Arjuna. He has appeared on this earth in His transcendental body, which resembles the bluish color of the *tamāla* tree. His body attracts everyone in the three planetary systems [upper, middle and lower]. May His glittering yellow dress and His lotus face, covered with paintings of sandalwood pulp, be the object of my attraction, and may I not desire fruitive results.

PURPORT

When Śrī Kṛṣṇa by His own internal pleasure appears on earth, He does so by the agency of His internal potency. The attractive features of His transcendental body are desired in all the three worlds, namely the upper, middle and lower planetary systems. Nowhere in the universe are there such beautiful bodily features as those of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Therefore His transcendental body has nothing to do with anything materially created. Arjuna is described here as the conqueror, and Kṛṣṇa is described as his intimate friend. Bhīṣmadeva, on his bed of arrows after the Battle of Kurukṣetra, is remembering the particular dress of Lord Kṛṣṇa which

* nūtyo nūtyānām cetanaś cetanānām
eko bahūnām yo vidadhāti kāmān
(Kātha Upaniṣad)

He put on as the driver of Arjuna's chariot. While fighting was going on between Arjuna and Bhiṣma, Bhiṣma's attraction was drawn by the glittering dress of Kṛṣṇa, and indirectly he admired his so-called enemy Arjuna for possessing the Lord as his friend. Arjuna was always a conqueror because the Lord was his friend. Bhiṣmadeva takes this opportunity to address the Lord as *vijaya-sakhe* (friend of Arjuna) because the Lord is pleased when He is addressed conjointly with His devotees, who are related with Him in different transcendental humors. While Kṛṣṇa was the charioteer of Arjuna, sun rays glittered on the dress of the Lord, and the beautiful hue created by the reflection of such rays was never forgotten by Bhiṣmadeva. As a great fighter he was relishing the relation of Kṛṣṇa in the chivalrous humor. Transcendental relation with the Lord in any one of the different *rasas* (humors) is relishable by the respective devotees in the highest ecstasy. Less intelligent mundaners who want to make a show of being transcendently related with the Lord artificially jump at once to the relation of conjugal love, imitating the damsels of Vrajadhāma. Such a cheap relation with the Lord exhibits only the base mentality of the mundaner because one who has relished conjugal humor with the Lord cannot be attached to worldly conjugal *rasa*, which is condemned even by mundane ethics. The eternal relation of a particular soul with the Lord is evolved. A genuine relation of the living being with the Supreme Lord can take any form out of the five principal *rasas*, and it does not make any difference in transcendental degree to the genuine devotee. Bhiṣmadeva is a concrete example of this, and it should be carefully observed how the great general is transcendently related with the Lord.

TEXT 34

युधि तुरगरजोविधूम्रविष्वक्-
कचलुलितश्रमवार्धलङ्कृतस्ये ।
मम निशितशरैर्विभिद्यमान-
त्वचि विलसत्कवचेऽस्तु कृष्ण आत्मा ॥३४॥

*yudhi turaga-rajo-vidhūmra-ṣiṣvak-
kaca-lulita-śramavārdhya-lāṅkṛtāsye
mama niśita-śarair vibhidyamāna-
tvaci vilasat-kavace 'stu kṛṣṇa ātmā*

yudhi—on the battlefield; *turaga*—horses; *rajaḥ*—dust; *vidhūmra*—turned an ashen color; *ṣiṣvak*—waving; *kaca*—hair; *lulita*—scattered; *śramavāri*—perspiration; *alāṅkṛta*—decorated with; *āsyē*—unto the face; *mama*—my; *niśita*—sharp; *śaraiḥ*—by the arrows; *vibhidyamāna*—pierced by; *tvaci*—in the skin; *vilasat*—enjoying pleasure; *kavace*—protecting armor; *astu*—let there be; *kṛṣṇe*—unto Śrī Kṛṣṇa; *ātmā*—mind.

TRANSLATION

On the battlefield [where Śrī Kṛṣṇa attended Arjuna out of friendship], the flowing hair of Lord Kṛṣṇa turned ashen due to the dust raised by the hoofs of the horses. And because of His labor, beads of sweat wetted His face. All these decorations, intensified by the wounds dealt by my sharp arrows, were enjoyed by Him. Let my mind thus go unto Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

PURPORT

The Lord is the absolute form of eternity, bliss and knowledge. As such, transcendental loving service to the Lord in one of the five principal relations, namely *sānta*, *dāsya*, *sakhya*, *vātsalya* and *mādhurya*, i.e., neutrality, servitorship, fraternity, filial affection and conjugal love, is graciously accepted by the Lord when offered to the Lord in genuine love and affection. Śrī Bhiṣmadeva is a great devotee of the Lord in the relation of servitorship. Thus his throwing of sharp arrows at the transcendental body of the Lord is as good as the worship of another devotee who throws soft roses upon Him.

It appears that Bhiṣmadeva is repenting the actions he committed against the person of the Lord. But factually the Lord's body was not at all pained, due to His transcendental existence. His body is not matter. Both He Himself and His body are complete spiritual identity. Spirit is never pierced, burnt, dried, moistened, etc. This is vividly explained in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. So also it is stated in the *Skanda Purāna*. It is said there that spirit is always uncontaminated and indestructible. It cannot be distressed, nor can it be dried up. When Lord Viṣṇu in His incarnation appears before us, He seems to be like one of the conditioned souls, materially engaged, just to bewilder the *asuras*, or the nonbelievers, who are always alert to kill the Lord, even from the very beginning of His appearance. Kamsa wanted to kill Kṛṣṇa, and Rāvaṇa wanted to kill Rāma, because foolishly they were unaware of the fact that the Lord is never killed, for the spirit is never annihilated.

Therefore Bhiṣmadeva's piercing of the body of Lord Kṛṣṇa is a sort of bewildering problem for the nondevotee atheist, but those who are devotees, or liberated souls, are not bewildered.

Bhiṣmadeva appreciated the all-merciful attitude of the Lord because He did not leave Arjuna alone, although He was disturbed by the sharpened arrows of Bhiṣmadeva, nor was He reluctant to come before Bhiṣma's deathbed, even though He was ill-treated by him on the battlefield. Bhiṣma's repentance and the Lord's merciful attitude are both unique in this picture.

Śrī Viśvanātha Cakravartī Thākura, a great *ācārya* and devotee in the humor of conjugal love with the Lord, remarks very saliently in this regard. He says that the wounds created on the body of the Lord by the sharpened arrows of Bhiṣmadeva were as pleasing to the Lord as the biting of a fiancée who bites the body of the Lord directed by a strong sense of sex desire. Such biting by the opposite sex is never taken as a sign of enmity, even if there is a wound on the body. Therefore, the fighting as an exchange of transcendental pleasure between the Lord and His pure devotee, Śrī Bhiṣmadeva, was not at all mundane. Besides that, since the Lord's body and the Lord are identical, there was no possibility of wounds in the absolute body. The apparent wounds caused by the sharpened arrows are misleading to the common man, but one who has a little absolute knowledge can understand the transcendental exchange in the chivalrous relation. The Lord was perfectly happy with the wounds caused by the sharpened arrows of Bhiṣmadeva. The word *vibhidyamāna* is significant because the Lord's skin is not different from the Lord. Because our skin is different from our soul, in our case the word *vibhidyamāna*, or being bruised and cut, would have been quite suitable. Transcendental bliss is of different varieties, and the variety of activities in the mundane world is but a perverted reflection of transcendental bliss. Because everything in the mundane world is qualitatively mundane, it is full of inebrieties, whereas in the absolute realm, because everything is of the same absolute nature, there are varieties of enjoyment without inebriety. The Lord enjoyed the wounds created by His great devotee Bhiṣmadeva, and because Bhiṣmadeva is a devotee in the chivalrous relation, he fixes up his mind on Kṛṣṇa in that wounded condition.

TEXT 35

सपदि सखिचो निशम्य मध्ये
निजपरयोर्बलयो रथं निवेश्य ।
स्थितवति परसैनिकायुरक्षणा
हृतवति पार्थसखे रतिर्ममास्तु ॥३५॥

*sapadi sakhi-vaco niśamya madhye
nija-parayor balayo ratham niveśya
sthītavati para-sainikāyur akṣṇā
hṛtavati pārtha-sakhe ratir mamāstu*

sapadi—on the battlefield; *sakhi-vacaḥ*—command of the friend; *niśamya*—after hearing; *madhye*—in the midst; *nija*—His own;

parayoh—and the opposite party; *balayoh*—strength; *ratham*—chariot; *niveśya*—having entered; *sthītavati*—while staying there; *para-sainika*—of the soldiers on the opposite side; *āyuh*—duration of life; *akṣṇā*—by looking over; *hṛtavati*—act of diminishing; *pārtha*—of Arjuna, son of Pṛthā (Kuntī); *sakhe*—unto the friend; *ratih*—intimate relation; *mama*—my; *astu*—let there be.

TRANSLATION

In obedience to the command of His friend, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa entered the arena of the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra between the soldiers of Arjuna and Duryodhana, and while there He shortened the life spans of the opposite party by His merciful glance. This was done simply by His looking at the enemy. Let my mind be fixed upon that Kṛṣṇa.

PURPORT

In the *Bhagavad-gītā* (1.21–25) Arjuna ordered the infallible Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa to place his chariot between the phalanxes of the soldiers. He asked Him to stay there until he had finished observing the enemies he had to face in the battle. When the Lord was so asked, He at once did so, just like an order carrier. And the Lord pointed out all the important men on the opposite side, saying, “Here is Bhīṣma, here is Droṇa,” and so on. The Lord, being the supreme living being, is never the order supplier or order carrier of anyone, whoever he may be. But out of His causeless mercy and affection for His pure devotees, sometimes He carries out the order of the devotee like an awaiting servant. By executing the order of a devotee, the Lord becomes pleased, as a father is pleased to carry out the order of his small child. This is possible only out of pure transcendental love between the Lord and His devotees, and Bhīṣmadeva was quite aware of this fact. He therefore addressed the Lord as the friend of Arjuna.

The Lord diminished the duration of life of the opposite party by His merciful glance. It is said that all the fighters who assembled on the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra attained salvation by personally seeing the Lord at the time of death. Therefore, His diminishing the duration of life of Arjuna’s enemy does not mean that He was partial to the cause of Arjuna. Factually He was merciful to the opposite party because they would not have attained salvation by dying at home in the ordinary course of life. Here was a chance to see the Lord at the time of death and thus attain salvation from material life. Therefore, the Lord is all good, and whatever He does is for everyone’s good. Apparently it was for the victory of Arjuna, His intimate friend, but factually it was for the good of Arjuna’s enemies. Such are the transcendental activities of the Lord, and whoever understands this also gets salvation after quitting this material body. The Lord does no wrong in any circumstance because He is absolute, all good at all times.

TEXT 36

व्यवहितप्रतनामुखं निरीक्ष्य
स्वजनवधाद्विमुखस्य दोषबुद्ध्या ।
कुमतिमहरदात्मविद्यया य-
श्चरणरतिः परमस्य तस्य मेऽस्तु ॥३६॥

vyavahita-prtanā-mukhaṁ nirikṣya
sva-jana-vadhād vimukhasya doṣa-buddhyā
kumatim aharad ātma-vidyayā yaś
caraṇa-ratih paramasya tasya me 'stu

vyavahita—standing at a distance; *prtanā*—soldiers; *mukham*—faces; *nirikṣya*—by looking upon; *sva-jana*—kinsmen; *vadhāt*—from the act of killing; *vimukhasya*—one who is reluctant; *doṣa-buddhyā*—by polluted intelligence; *kumatim*—poor fund of knowledge; *aharat*—eradicated; *ātma-vidyayā*—by transcendental knowledge; *yaś*—He who; *caraṇa*—to the feet; *ratih*—attraction; *paramasya*—of the Supreme; *tasya*—for Him; *me*—my; *astu*—let there be.

TRANSLATION

When Arjuna was seemingly polluted by ignorance upon observing the soldiers and commanders before him on the battlefield, the Lord eradicated his ignorance by delivering transcendental knowledge. May His lotus feet always remain the object of my attraction.

PURPORT

The kings and the commanders were to stand in the front of the fighting soldiers. That was the system of actual fighting. The kings and commanders were not so-called presidents or ministers of defense as they are today. They would not stay home while the poor soldiers or mercenaries were fighting face to face. This may be the regulation of modern democracy, but when actual monarchy was prevailing, the monarchs were not towards elected without consideration of qualification. As it was evident from the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra, all the executive heads of both parties, like Droṇa, Bhīṣma, Arjuna and Duryodhana, were not sleeping; all of them were actual participants in the fighting, which was selected to be executed at a place away from the civil residential quarters. This means that the innocent citizens were immune from all effects of fighting between the rival royal parties. The citizens had no business in seeing what was going to happen during such fighting. They were to pay one fourth of their income to the ruler, whether he be Arjuna or Duryodhana. All the commanders of the parties on the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra were standing face to face, and Arjuna saw them with great compassion and lamented that he was to kill his kinsmen on the battlefield for the sake of the empire. He was not at all afraid of the giant military phalanx presented by Duryodhana, but as a merciful devotee of the Lord, renunciation of worldly things was natural for him, and thus he decided not to fight for worldly possessions. But this was due to a poor fund of knowledge, and therefore it is said here that his intelligence became polluted. His intelligence could not be polluted at any time because he was a devotee and constant companion of the Lord, as is clear in the Fourth Chapter of the *Bhagavad-gītā*. Apparently Arjuna’s intelligence became polluted because otherwise there would not have been a chance to deliver the teachings of *Bhagavad-gītā* for the good of all polluted conditioned souls engaged in material bondage by the conception of the false material body. The *Bhagavad-gītā* was delivered to the conditioned souls of the world to deliver them from the wrong conception of identifying the body with the soul and to reestablish the soul’s eternal relation with the Supreme Lord. *Ātma-vidyā*, or transcendental knowledge of Himself, was primarily spoken by the Lord for the benefit of all concerned in all parts of the universe.

TEXT 37

स्वनिगममपहाय मत्प्रतिज्ञा-
मृतमधिकर्तुमवप्लुतो रथस्य ।
धृतरथचरणोऽभ्ययाच्चलद्गु-
ह्रिरिव हन्तुमिभं गतोत्तरीयः ॥३७॥

sva-nigamam apahāya mat-pratijñā-
ṛtam adhikartum avapluto rathasthaḥ
dhṛta-ratha-caraṇo 'bhyayāc caladgur
harir iva hantum ibhaṁ gatottariyaḥ

sva-nigamam—own truthfulness; *apahāya*—for nullifying; *mat-pratijñām*—my own promise; *ṛtam*—factual; *adhi*—more; *kartum*—for doing it; *avaplutaḥ*—getting down; *ratha-sthaḥ*—from the chariot; *dhṛta*—taking up; *ratha*—chariot; *caraṇaḥ*—wheel; *abhyayāt*—went hurriedly; *caladguḥ*—trampling the earth; *harīḥ*—lion; *iva*—like; *hantum*—to kill; *ibham*—elephant; *gata*—leaving aside; *uttariyaḥ*—covering cloth.

TRANSLATION

Fulfilling my desire and sacrificing His own promise, He got down from the chariot, took up its wheel, and ran towards me hur-

riedly, just as a lion goes to kill an elephant. He even dropped His outer garment on the way.

PURPORT

The Battle of Kurukṣetra was fought on military principles but at the same time in a sporting spirit, like a friend's fight with another friend. Duryodhana criticized Bhiṣmadeva, alleging that he was reluctant to kill Arjuna because of paternal affection. A *kṣatriya* cannot tolerate insults on the principle of fighting. Bhiṣmadeva therefore promised that the next day he would kill all five Pāṇḍavas with special weapons made for the purpose. Duryodhana was satisfied, and he kept the arrows with him to be delivered the next day during the fight. By tricks Arjuna took the arrows from Duryodhana, and Bhiṣmadeva could understand that this was the trick of Lord Kṛṣṇa. So he took a vow that the next day Kṛṣṇa would have to take up weapons Himself, otherwise His friend Arjuna would die. In the next day's fighting Bhiṣmadeva fought so violently that both Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa were in trouble. Arjuna was almost defeated; the situation was so tense that he was about to be killed by Bhiṣmadeva the very next moment. At that time Lord Kṛṣṇa wanted to please His devotee, Bhiṣma, by keeping Bhiṣma's promise, which was more important than His own. Seemingly He broke His own promise. He promised before the beginning of the Battle of Kurukṣetra that He would remain without weapons and would not use His strength for either of the parties. But to protect Arjuna He got down from the chariot, took up the wheel of the chariot and hurriedly rushed at Bhiṣmadeva in an angry mood, as a lion goes to kill an elephant. He dropped His covering cloth on the way, and out of great anger He did not know that He had dropped it. Bhiṣmadeva at once gave up his weapons and stood to be killed by Kṛṣṇa, his beloved Lord. The fighting of the day was thus ended at that very moment, and Arjuna was saved. Of course there was no possibility of Arjuna's death because the Lord Himself was on the chariot, but because Bhiṣmadeva wanted to see Lord Kṛṣṇa take up some weapon to save His friend, the Lord created this situation, making Arjuna's death imminent. He stood before Bhiṣmadeva to show him that his promise was fulfilled and that He had taken up the wheel.

TEXT 38

शितविशिवहतो विशीर्णदंशः
क्षतजपरिप्लुत आततायिनो मे ।
प्रसभमभिसार मद्रथार्थं
स भवतु मे भगवान् गतिर्मुकुन्दः॥३८॥

śita-viśikha-hato viśirṇa-damśah
kṣataja-paripluta ātatāyino me
prasabham abhisāra mad-vadhārtham
sa bhavatu me bhagavān gatir mukundaḥ

śita—sharp; viśikha—arrows; hataḥ—wounded by; viśirṇa-damśah—scattered shield; kṣataja—by wounds; pariplutaḥ—smeared with blood; ātatāyinaḥ—the great aggressor; me—my; prasabham—in an angry mood; abhisāra—began to move on; mad-vadha-artham—for the purpose of killing me; saḥ—He; bhavatu—may become; me—my; bhagavān—the Personality of Godhead; gatir—destination; mukundaḥ—who awards salvation.

TRANSLATION

May He, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Personality of Godhead, who awards salvation, be my ultimate destination. On the battlefield He charged me, as if angry because of the wounds dealt by my sharp arrows. His shield was scattered, and His body was smeared with blood due to the wounds.

PURPORT

The dealings of Lord Kṛṣṇa and Bhiṣmadeva on the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra are interesting because the activities of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa ap-

peared to be partial to Arjuna and at enmity with Bhiṣmadeva; but factually all this was especially meant to show special favor to Bhiṣmadeva, a great devotee of the Lord. *The astounding feature of such dealings is that a devotee can please the Lord by playing the part of an enemy.* The Lord, being absolute, can accept service from His pure devotee even in the garb of an enemy. The Supreme Lord cannot have any enemy, nor can a so-called enemy harm Him because He is *ajita*, or unconquerable. But still He takes pleasure when His pure devotee beats Him like an enemy or rebukes Him from a superior position, although no one can be superior to the Lord. These are some of the transcendental reciprocity dealings of the devotee with the Lord. And those who have no information of pure devotional service cannot penetrate into the mystery of such dealings. Bhiṣmadeva played the part of a valiant warrior, and he purposely pierced the body of the Lord so that to the common eyes it appeared that the Lord was wounded, but factually all this was to bewilder the nondevotees. The all-spiritual body cannot be wounded, and a devotee cannot become the enemy of the Lord. Had it been so, Bhiṣmadeva would not have desired to have the very same Lord as the ultimate destination of his life. Had Bhiṣmadeva been an enemy of the Lord, Lord Kṛṣṇa could have annihilated him without even moving. There was no need to come before Bhiṣmadeva with blood and wounds. But He did so because the warrior devotee wanted to see the transcendental beauty of the Lord decorated with wounds created by a pure devotee. This is the way of exchanging transcendental *rasa*, or relations between the Lord and the servitor. By such dealings both the Lord and the devotee become glorified in their respective positions. The Lord was so angry that Arjuna checked Him when He was moving towards Bhiṣmadeva, but in spite of Arjuna's checking, He proceeded towards Bhiṣmadeva as a lover goes to a lover, without caring for hindrances. Apparently His determination was to kill Bhiṣmadeva, but factually it was to please him as a great devotee of the Lord. The Lord is undoubtedly the deliverer of all conditioned souls. The impersonalists desire salvation from Him, and He always awards them according to their aspiration, but here Bhiṣmadeva aspires to see the Lord in His personal feature. All pure devotees aspire for this.

TEXT 39

विजयरथकुटुम्ब आत्ततोत्रे
धृतहयरश्मिनि तच्छ्रियेक्षणीये ।
भगवति रतिरस्तु मे मुमूर्षो-
र्यमिह निरीक्ष्य हता गताः स्वरूपम् ॥३९॥

vijaya-ratha-kutumbha āta-totre
dhṛta-haya-raśmini tac-chriyēkṣaṇīye
bhagavati ratir astu me mumūrṣo-
yam iha nirīkṣya hatā gatāḥ sva-rūpam

vijaya—Arjuna; ratha—chariot; kutumbe—the object of protection at all risk; āta-totre—with a whip in the right hand; dhṛta-haya—controlling the horses; raśmini—ropes; tat-śriyā—beautifully standing; iṣṇāṇīye—to look at; bhagavati—unto the Personality of Godhead; ratih astu—let my attraction be; mumūrṣoḥ—one who is about to die; yam—upon whom; iha—in this world; nirīkṣya—by looking; hatāḥ—those who died; gatāḥ—attained; sva-rūpam—original form.

TRANSLATION

At the moment of death, let my ultimate attraction be to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Personality of Godhead. I concentrate my mind upon the chariot driver of Arjuna who stood with a whip in His right hand and a bridle rope in His left, who was very careful to give protection to Arjuna's chariot by all means. Those who saw Him on the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra attained their original forms after death.

PURPORT

A pure devotee of the Lord constantly sees the presence of the Lord within himself because of being transcendently related by loving ser-

vice. Such a pure devotee cannot forget the Lord for a moment. This is called trance. The mystic (*yogī*) tries to concentrate upon the Supersoul by controlling the senses from all other engagements, and thus he ultimately attains *samādhi*. A devotee more easily attains *samādhi*, or trance, by constantly remembering the Lord's personal feature along with His holy name, fame, pastimes, etc. Therefore, the concentration of the mystic *yogī* and that of the devotee are not on the same level. The concentration of the mystic is mechanical, whereas that of the pure devotee is natural in pure love and spontaneous affection. Bhīṣmadeva was a pure devotee, and as a military marshal he constantly remembered the battlefield feature of the Lord as Pārtha-sārathi, the chariot driver of Arjuna. Therefore, the Lord's pastime as Pārtha-sārathi is also eternal. The pastimes of the Lord, beginning from His birth at the prison house of Kāṁsa up to the *maūsala-līlā* at the end, all move one after another in all the universes, just as the clock hand moves from one point to another. And in such pastimes His associates like the Pāṇḍavas and Bhīṣma are constant eternal companions. So Bhīṣmadeva never forgot the beautiful feature of the Lord as Pārtha-sārathi, which even Arjuna could not see. Arjuna was behind the beautiful Pārtha-sārathi while Bhīṣmadeva was just in front of the Lord. As far as the military feature of the Lord is concerned, Bhīṣmadeva observed this with more relish than Arjuna.

All the soldiers and persons on the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra attained their original spiritual form like the Lord after their death because by the causeless mercy of the Lord they were able to see Him face to face on that occasion. The conditioned souls rotating in the evolutionary cycle from the aquatics up to the form of Brahmā are all in the form of *māyā*, or the form obtained by one's own actions and awarded by material nature. The material forms of the conditioned souls are all foreign dresses, and when the conditioned soul becomes liberated from the clutches of material energy, he attains his original form. The impersonalist wants to attain the impersonal Brahman effulgence of the Lord, but that is not at all congenial to the living sparks, parts and parcels of the Lord. Therefore, the impersonalists again fall down and get material forms, which are all false to the spirit soul. A spiritual form like the Lord's, either two-handed or four-handed, is attained by the devotees of the Lord either in the Vaikuṅṭhas or in the Goloka planet, according to the original nature of the soul. This form, which is cent percent spiritual, is the *svarūpa* of the living being, and all the living beings who participated on the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra, on both sides, attained their *svarūpa*, as confirmed by Bhīṣmadeva. So Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa was not merciful only to the Pāṇḍavas; He was also merciful to the other parties because all of them attained the same result. Bhīṣmadeva wanted the same facility also, and that was his prayer to the Lord, although his position as an associate of the Lord is assured in all circumstances. The conclusion is that whoever dies looking on the Personality of Godhead within or without attains his *svarūpa*, which is the highest perfection of life.

TEXT 40

ललितगतिविलासवल्गुहास-

प्रणयनिरीक्षणकल्पितोरुमानाः ।

कृतमनुकृतवत्य उन्मदान्धाः

प्रकृतमगन् किल यस्य गोपवध्वः ॥४०॥

lalita-gati-vilāsa-valguhāsa-

pranaya-nirīkṣaṇa-kalpitorumānāḥ

kṛta-manu-kṛta-vatya unmadāndhāḥ

prakṛtim agan kila yasya gopa-vadhvāḥ

lalita—attractive; *gati*—movements; *vilāsa*—fascinating acts; *valguhāsa*—sweet smiling; *pranaya*—loving; *nirīkṣaṇa*—looking upon;

kalpita—mentality; *urumānāḥ*—highly glorified; *kṛta-manu-kṛta-vatyaḥ*—in the act of copying the movements; *unmada-andhāḥ*—gone mad in ecstasy; *prakṛtim*—characteristics; *agan*—underwent; *kila*—certainly; *yasya*—whose; *gopa-vadhvāḥ*—the cowherd damsels.

TRANSLATION

Let my mind be fixed upon Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, whose motions and smiles of love attracted the damsels of Vrajadhāma [the *gopīs*]. The damsels imitated the characteristic movements of the Lord [after His disappearance from the *rāsa* dance].

PURPORT

By intense ecstasy in loving service, the damsels of Vrajabhūmi attained qualitative oneness with the Lord by dancing with Him on an equal level, embracing Him in nuptial love, smiling at Him in joke, and looking at Him with a loving attitude. The relation of the Lord with Arjuna is undoubtedly praiseworthy for devotees like Bhīṣmadeva, but the relation of the *gopīs* with the Lord is still more praiseworthy because of their still more purified loving service. By the grace of the Lord, Arjuna was fortunate enough to have the fraternal service of the Lord as chariot driver, but the Lord did not award Arjuna with equal strength. The *gopīs*, however, practically became one with the Lord by attainment of equal footing with the Lord. Bhīṣma's aspiration to remember the *gopīs* is a prayer to have their mercy also at the last stage of his life. The Lord is satisfied more when His pure devotees are glorified, and therefore Bhīṣmadeva has not only glorified the acts of Arjuna, his immediate object of attraction, but has also remembered the *gopīs*, who were endowed with unrivalled opportunities by rendering loving service to the Lord. The *gopīs'* equality with the Lord should never be misunderstood to be like the *sāyujya* liberation of the impersonalist. The equality is one of perfect ecstasy where the differential conception is completely eradicated, for the interests of the lover and the beloved become identical.

TEXT 41

मुनिगणनृपवर्यसंकुलेऽन्तः-

सदसि युधिष्ठिरराजस्य एषाम् ।

अर्हणमुपपेद ईक्षणीयो

मम दृशिगोचर एष आविरात्मा ॥४१॥

muni-gaṇa-nṛpa-varya-saṅkule 'ntaḥ-

sadasi yudhiṣṭhira-rājasūya eṣām

arhaṇam upapeda iṅṣaṇīyo

mama dr̥ṣi-gocara eṣa āvir ātmā

muni-gaṇa—the great learned sages; *nṛpa-varya*—the great ruling kings; *saṅkule*—in the great assembly of; *antaḥ-sadasi*—conference; *yudhiṣṭhira*—of Emperor Yudhiṣṭhira; *rāja-sūye*—a royal performance of sacrifice; *eṣām*—of all the great elites; *arhaṇam*—respectful worship; *upapeda*—received; *iṅṣaṇīyah*—the object of attraction; *mama*—my; *dr̥ṣi*—sight; *gocarah*—within the view of; *eṣaḥ āvir*—personally present; *ātmā*—the soul.

TRANSLATION

At the Rājasūya-yajña [sacrifice] performed by Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira, there was the greatest assembly of all the elite men of the world, the royal and learned orders, and in that great assembly Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa was worshiped by one and all as the most exalted Personality of Godhead. This happened during my presence, and I remembered the incident in order to keep my mind upon the Lord. (continued in next issue)



ISKCON NEWS

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

Kidnapped Devotee's Ordeal Ends

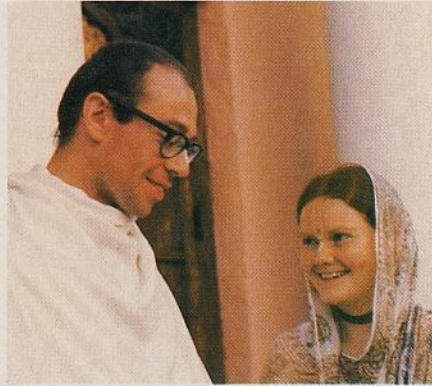
She Returns to Fiancé for Gala Wedding

Los Angeles—On November 7, more than one thousand guests attended the wedding of Madonna Slavín and Edward Walford, at the Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Temple. Madonna and Ed are known to friends by their Sanskrit names, Kulapriyā and Śrīkānta. After the wedding ceremony they were the guests of honor at a reception and dinner. "I last saw such a beautiful wedding at the Raj Bhavan in Bombay, thirty years ago," said Mr. Kantilal Khetani, president of a large Indian cultural society.

Only a few short weeks before their marriage, the mood had been different. Professional "deprogrammers" hired by the parents of the bride-to-be had forcibly abducted her. For five days the "deprogrammers" mistreated her and shifted her to different locations on the California coast. The kidnapers threatened her with physical torture, confiscated her sacred prayer beads, and derided the *Bhagavad-gītā*. On the sixth day Kulapriyā escaped, and police flew her back to Los Angeles. She asked her parents to apologize and sign a statement that they would not again have her abducted; they refused. Still, she invited them to her wedding. "I want to continue our relationship," she said, "but they must respect my right to live by the religion of my choice."

English Professor Praises Bhagavad-gītā As It Is

Dr. Ann Stanford, Professor of English at the Northridge campus of California State University, recently made this learned assessment of Śrīla Prabhupāda's *Bhagavad-gītā*: "*Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* is an excellent translation of this important religious work. Swami Prabhupāda renders the words of the master creator of the *Gītā* as only a person intimately familiar with the culture and language of ancient India as well as the full religious purport of its message can. Being myself a translator of the *Gītā*, I know he has been faithful to the tremendous task of bringing this work fully into the present."



"Deprogramming" Denounced at Scholars' Convention

At the annual joint meetings of the American Academy of Religion, the Society of Biblical Literature, and the American School of Oriental Research, some two hundred scholars signed a petition supporting religious freedom for the members of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

The St. Louis meeting of religion professors, theologians, archeologists, and graduate students took action on an appeal from a group of devotees and professors who felt that "deprogrammers" were threatening religious freedom.

The issue is a significant one on today's religious scene, with small

parents' organizations claiming that American youth are being "psychologically kidnapped" by religious groups. The parents advocate and practice forcible abductions and "deprogrammings" of individuals who have chosen religions different from their own.

The Kṛṣṇa conscious devotees hold that their religious practices have been part of the mainstream of Indian culture for thousands of years. In support of the movement, scores of Indian government and business leaders have sent letters to U.S. government authorities in New Delhi and Washington.

"We would attest to the fact that this is a bona fide Hindu religion," Professor J. Frank Kenney of the University of Arkansas said at the St. Louis meeting. Then he delivered a paper on His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the founder of the Kṛṣṇa conscious movement.

A concluding note of support came from Professor Shaligram Shukla of Georgetown University. "I am one who has practiced the same precepts of the Hindu faith, and therefore the activities of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda are most dear to me. We people of India are most grateful to the Kṛṣṇa conscious society; we frequent their temples regularly. . . . Their methods of worship are the same as are used in India. . . . To call them by unkind names is to insult the most precious tradition of the ancient Indian culture. This is my personal feeling and that of my whole family as well as millions of individual Indians."

Vedic Calendar

Year 490, Caitanya Era

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.

Jan. 5	Jan. 10	Jan. 11	Jan. 13	Jan. 16	Jan. 24	
Puṣpābhiseka-yātrā (flower-bathing festival) of Lord Kṛṣṇa	Appearance of Gopāla Bhāṭṭa Gosvāmī. Disappearance of Rāmacandra Kaviśāja.	Disappearance of Jayadeva Gosvāmī.	Disappearance of Locana dāsa Thākura.	Śat-tīkā Ekādāśī (fasting from grains and beans). Jan. 17 Break-fast after sunrise.	Vasanta-pañcamī of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Appearance of Viṣṇupriyā-devī, Puṇḍarīka Vidyādevī, Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī, and Rāghunāthana Thākura. Disappearance of Viśvanātha Cakravartī Thākura.	
Jan. 26	Jan. 28	Jan. 29	Jan. 30	Jan. 31	Feb. 2	Feb. 3
Appearance of Advaita Ācārya.	Disappearance of Śrīla Mādhvacārya.	Disappearance of Śrīla Rāmanujācārya.	Bhāimī Ekādāśī (fasting for Varāha-dvādāśī).	Appearance of Lord Varāha (break-fast).	Appearance of Lord Nityānanda.	Break-fast after sunrise.
Feb. 4	Feb. 8	Feb. 14	Feb. 15			
Appearance of Narottama dāsa Thākura.	Disappearance of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Thākura.	Vijayā Ekādāśī (fasting from grains and beans).	Break-fast after sunrise.			

by Dharmādhyakṣa dāsa
photographs by Muralīvadana dāsa

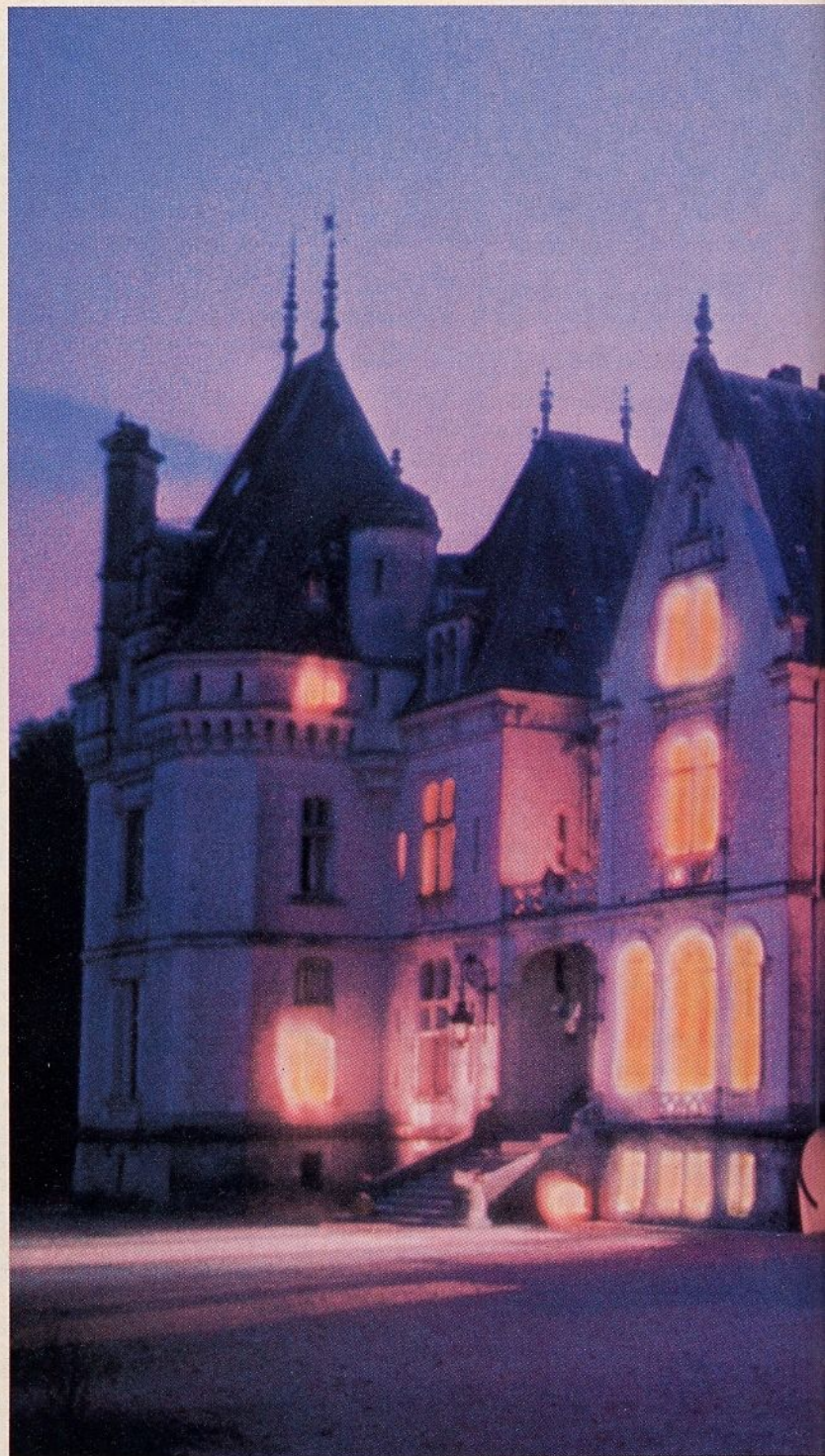
If air and noise pollution, commuting, traffic jams, inflation, crime, overcrowding, and speed mania make you hunger for a saner lifestyle, then you're not alone. Already, a growing number of concerned citizens (including intellectuals and scientists) are asking serious questions about where



modern society is going.

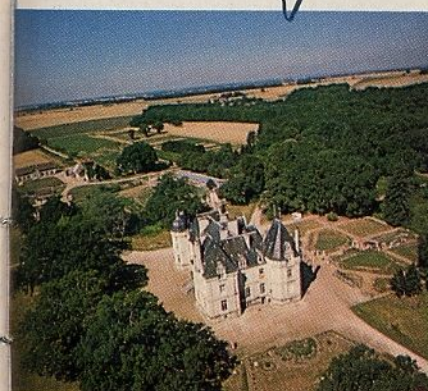
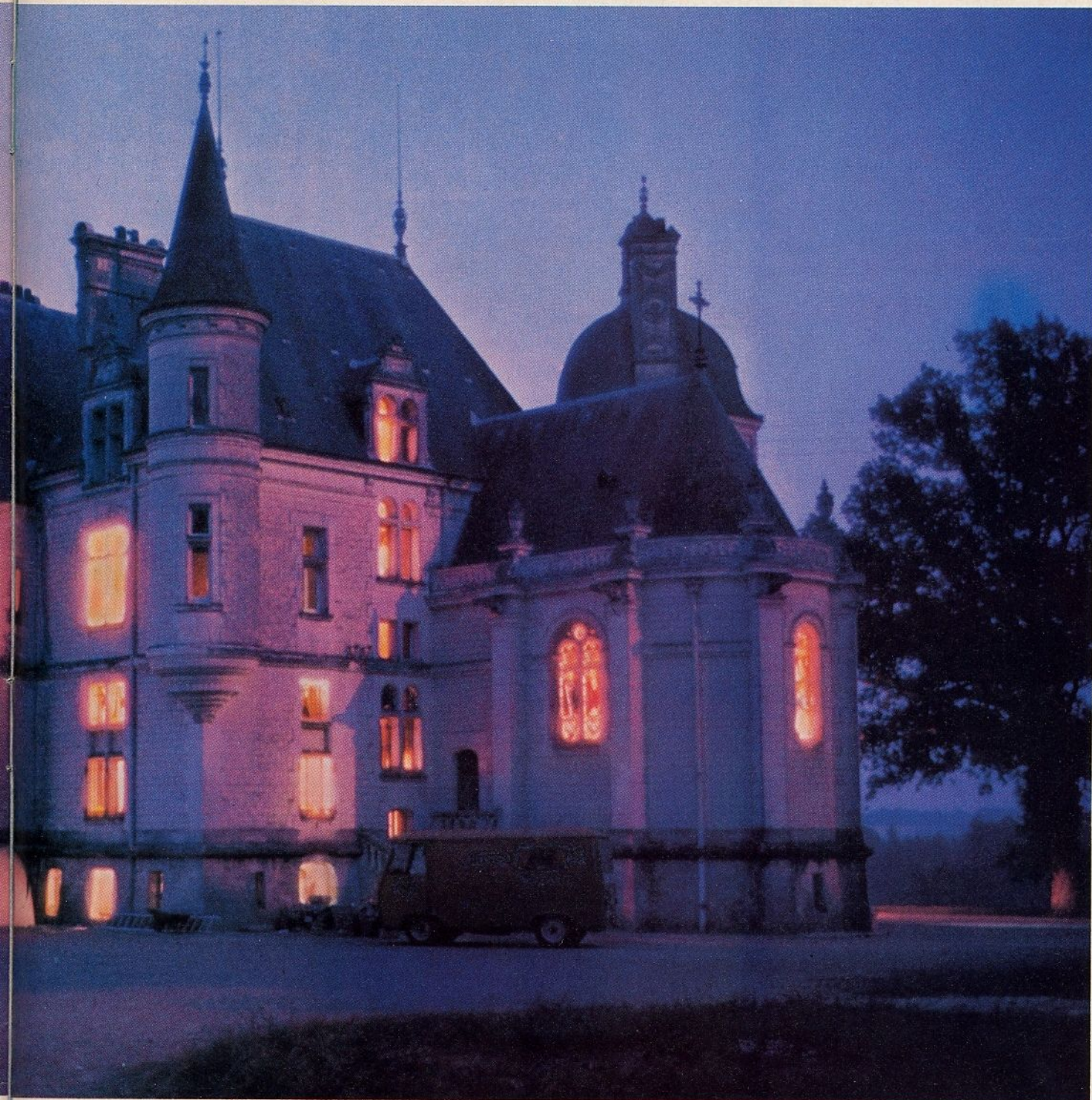
In the thought-provoking book *Small Is Beautiful* (which government officials around the world are reading carefully), E. F. Schumacher airs some of this new movement's views. As he sees it, today's society is based on "greed and envy." Thus, cities and nations have developed an almost exclusive eye for material (mostly economic) gain and have tragically neglected humanity's personal and spiritual needs. In other words, money—not mankind—matters. The remedy, Schumacher says, is to return to a simpler, smaller-scale, and more spiritual lifestyle.

In 1965, before these ideas were popular, His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami



A FARM IN FRANCE

"People are tired of struggling for the privilege of living in a pressure cooker. We see smaller, more spiritual communities as the trend of the future. . . ."

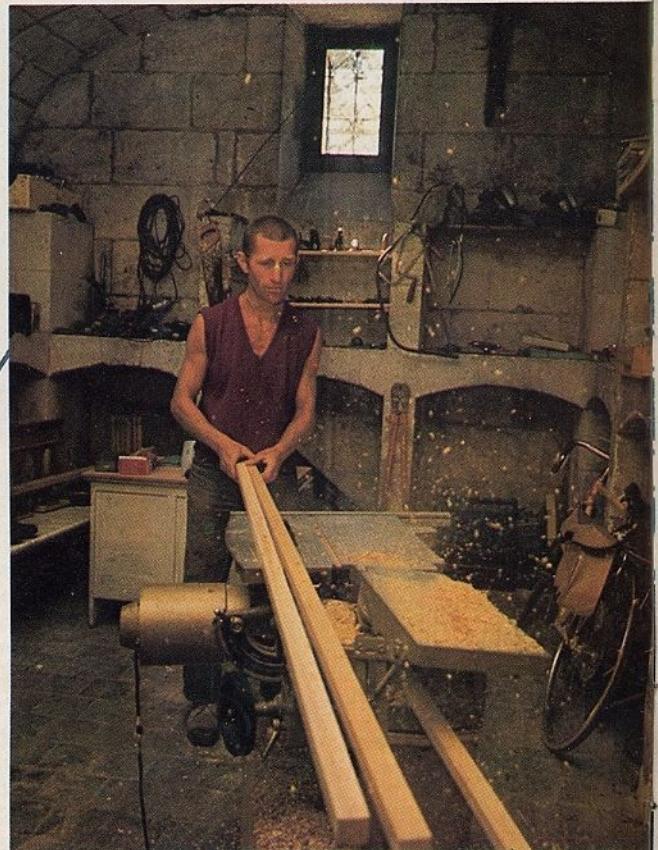


Prabhupāda traveled from India to the West and appealed for “simple living and high thinking”—the motto of the ancient Vedic culture. In general, people responded sympathetically, and many wanted to learn about the Vedic cultural experience, more than five thousand years of natural, spiritual living.

William Ehrlichman was one of the studious ones. While earning his Bachelor of Science degree at the State University of New York (Buffalo), he took a course in Kṛṣṇa consciousness and read some of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s English ren-

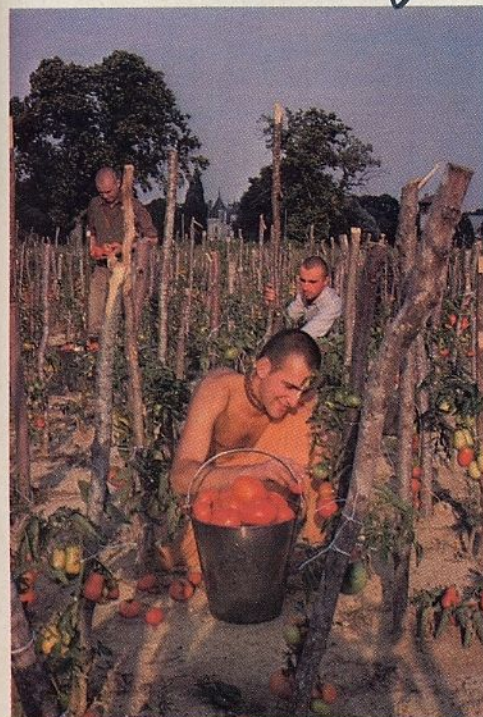
derings of the Vedic literature. Before long, Ehrlichman asked Śrīla Prabhupāda for formal initiation. He received the Sanskrit name Bhagavān dāsa, which means “one who serves the all-opulent Supreme Lord,” and his clear-sightedness and devotion quickly earned him a role of leadership in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.

In 1973, after Bhagavān dāsa had successfully managed the Kṛṣṇa consciousness center in Detroit for several years, Śrīla Prabhupāda asked him to go to France and help the Paris center. By



“Simple living”: free of overmechanized clutter and clatter, community members work in a happy mood. With his horse and wooden cart (top), Devarata brings a load of freshly cut straw to the cowshed. In the fifty-meter-long greenhouse he and the others made last winter, Haribol-ānanda waters new plants and flowers (above). A simple power saw (right) comes in handy when Bhavasindhupota constructs new farm buildings.

Harvest time is heartening: the community has been cultivating fruit, vegetables, flowers, and devotion to Lord Kṛṣṇa. Here are one bunch of chick-peas (below) and one pailful of tomatoes (bottom) out of thousands. At day's end (right) the devotees carry back the fruits of their labor, including gratitude.



1975 he was directing a thriving community of more than one hundred fifty people.

"Success brought its problems," Bhagavān dāsa says. "People felt attracted to the Vedic lifestyle, but the big-city atmosphere made things difficult. Of course, we'd been educating people with Prabhupāda's books. But still, I was feeling that the time had come to demonstrate the practicality of Kṛṣṇa consciousness by setting up a model Vedic community."

After months of searching, Bhagavān dāsa found an ideal location in the Loire Valley—two hundred acres of gently rolling hills, with forests, fields, a large chateau, and five other buildings. The owner, a World War II resistance hero now engaged in philanthropic work, sympathized with the Kṛṣṇa community's goals. So he sold the property for a low down-payment and financed the rest at excellent terms.

The farm project's name is New Māyāpur (after the birthsite of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who five hun-



dred years ago revived Kṛṣṇa consciousness for the modern age). The project's thirty-three-year-old coordinator, Viṣṇu dāsa, graduated from Middlebury College, in Vermont, and taught school in Ontario, Canada. He says, "New Māyāpur has had instant appeal, both for our members and for our guests. In big cities, when we talk about spiritual life it's hard for people to get more than an intellectual grasp of it. But here the atmosphere is so peaceful and alive that spiritual living comes naturally. At a place like this, people can feel themselves becoming spiritually transformed."

"There are no special qualifications for living at New Māyāpur," says Bhagavān dāsa. "Anybody with any kind of skill is welcome. And anybody can work the fields and provide his family with a good, wholesome life. Most people are looking for a really peaceful community, so it's important for us to supply what they want." He adds, "People are tired of struggling for the privilege of living in a pressure cooker.

We see smaller, spiritual communities as the trend of the future, and we want to accommodate anyone who feels interested in this kind of living."

FARMING

Śrīla Prabhupāda, who inspired the New Māyāpur project, has written, "Human energy should be utilized in developing the finer senses for spiritual understanding, in which lies the solution of life. Fruits, flowers, beautiful gardens, parks, reservoirs of water with ducks and swans playing in the midst of lotus flowers, and cows giving sufficient milk and butter are essential for developing the finer tissues of the human body."

New Māyāpur's chief gardener and farmer, twenty-seven-year-old Haribolānanda dāsa, is in charge of actualizing this Vedic vision on the fields of France. "I come from an English industrial town, Sheffield," he says. "I left school quite young, when I was fifteen, and immediately I got a job growing tomatoes in a nursery for two years. After that I worked as a landscape gardener for two and a half more years. Then, I just dropped out into the youth culture. Eventually, I ran into the Kṛṣṇa devotees in Amsterdam. They had a rare feeling about them, like pioneers. That aroused my curiosity, and I soon discovered that they *were* pioneers. They were bringing forward a higher consciousness, and at the same time they had their feet on the ground. So I joined them."

Although ordinarily it takes several years to switch a farm over to organic methods, Haribolānanda got some good results from his first organic crop. "We worked a lot of manure and compost into the soil," he says, "and we've been getting yields, for instance in the tomato patch, that would have required almost a ton of chemical fertilizers. And everyone says that our tomatoes taste better than the chemical ones."

Tomatoes aren't the only thing Haribolānanda cultivates. "We also raise cucumbers, bell peppers, broccoli, green peas, green beans, lima beans, lettuce, corn, carrots, squash, pumpkins, potatoes, spinach, cauliflower, cabbage, brussels sprouts, and melons.

"Kṛṣṇa [God] and Kṛṣṇa's creations are abundant, you know? People today feel out of touch with God and nature, so they don't realize the bounty that's theirs just for the asking (and a little planting and hoeing). If people all over the world raised gardens like this, they'd have no food shortages, and the out-of-doors work would make everyone a lot healthier."

As Śrīla Prabhupāda has said, flower gardens are conducive to physical and mental health. So the devotees have

The children like to help out by shelling peas (below) and picking blackberries (bottom). In New Māyāpur's devotional atmosphere, work and play are virtually the same. ✓



dedicated a full two acres to three thousand carnation plants and five hundred rose bushes, as well as marigolds, chrysanthemums, African gladiolas, and zinnias. Along with some other women, Bhagavān dāsa's wife Kṛṣṇa-bhāminī-devī dāsī likes to gather flowers and string garlands. "Flowers give the temple a festive feeling," she says. "You naturally think of Kṛṣṇa."

Haribolānanda has added even more variety to what was already a sizable tree population. "There were walnut, chestnut, hazelnut, and cherry trees here when we arrived," he says. "And we've planted a hundred fifty new fruit trees—apple, pear, peach, nectarine, red currant, and black currant. The land is also teeming with sixty or seventy kinds of medicinal herbs—peppermints, pines, rosemary, comfrey, and on and on. And everywhere you go there are plenty of



wild blackberries. We've picked a two-and-a-half-months' supply for making jams, chutneys, and pies.

"Only four people, including my wife and me, work the fields full-time. Of course, sometimes other devotees give a little help—maybe an hour of weeding or hoeing or whatever else needs doing." Haribolānanda feels that farming in Kṛṣṇa consciousness has made his life ecstatic.

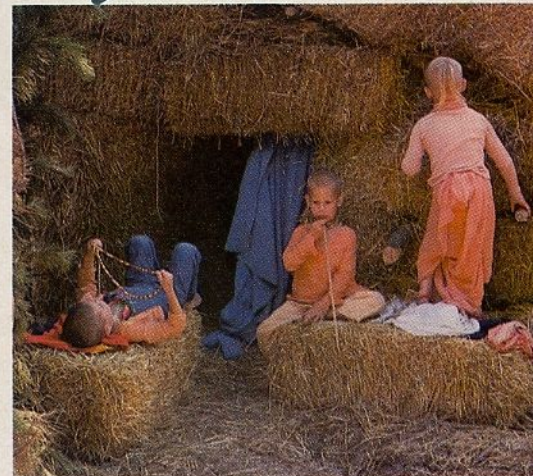
"I've always enjoyed raising plants, but the satisfaction is a thousand times better when you do it to please Kṛṣṇa. If you farm out of a spiritual motive, the harvest is a lot more than you can imagine. It's devotion for Kṛṣṇa. There's pure love involved."

THE CHILDREN

New Māyāpur's forty children have a mellowing effect on the whole community. "We're sure they'll grow up to be strong, saintly people," says Bhagavān dāsa, "So everyone really tries to keep their environment peaceful and full of devotion to Kṛṣṇa. These children are so bright and pure, and, fortunately for us, they're always around." The French public appreciates the Kṛṣṇa community's efforts to raise their children in a natural, uplifting setting rather than in the cities. "People see that the children here are healthy and happy," says Bhagavān dāsa. "It's something they want for their own



When the weather's warm, Jyotirmayī takes school out into nature (left). "Here," she says, "the children have so much room to run around and play in that they also enjoy sitting down for a class." In their straw playhouse (below), these lads sometimes act out Kṛṣṇa's pastimes as a cowherd boy. The children's special forest boasts many of these straw houses.



children."

French-born Jyotirmayī-devī dāsī studied ethnology at the Sorbonne, in Paris. Also, she helped to translate Śrīla Prabhupāda's *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* into a popular French edition, and she now heads the unique school system at New Māyāpur. She says, "We follow the traditional Vedic method of education, including subjects like history, geography, reading, writing, and math. The children really like the idea of self-discipline and higher wisdom. The God-centered feeling of Vedic culture is as natural to them as breathing.

"More and more, parents and students are feeling cheated by the modern educational system," says Jyotirmayī,

"because it fails to develop a child's character and sense of purpose in life. When you emphasize these things from the very beginning, the child is a lot happier. Many people underestimate children's potential. Children have minds that are yearning for meaning; that's why they're always asking questions. They want to do something meaningful with their lives, and the longer you wait to guide them, the harder it is for them to mature. And, of course, if the child is left without guidance, he usually develops in an unruly way and makes headaches for himself and society."

In Jyotirmayī's view, the students develop their spiritual qualities not so much from theoretical learning as from

the living example of their teachers (inside and *outside* the classroom). "The students and teachers have a very warm, personal relationship. The teachers care not just for the children's academic progress but also for their spiritual development. So the children feel a real sense of security."

A special forest is reserved for the children to play in and, as cottages are built, to live in. Jyotirmayī's face brightens whenever she discusses the forest and her plans for it. "It's a beautiful piece of land with tall trees," she says. "We're clearing out the old trees so we can plant lots of forest flowers. We'll have our own garden, and the children will help the teachers to grow all the fruits and vegetables that the school needs. It'll be like a heaven-on-earth for the children. They'll live naturally, just like in Vedic times." Right

now the children go to the forest for gathering wood, learning arts and crafts, gardening, eating their meals, and romping around. Jyotirmayī adds, “We like to get together and put on plays about the childhood pastimes of Kṛṣṇa. That way we think about Him and remember Him.”

Jyotirmayī measures the school’s success by “how happy the children are with their teachers and with themselves. Because the people who teach have a sense of spiritual vision, the children spontaneously share in it. This is the real Kṛṣṇa conscious way to teach and live.”

CULTURAL LIFE

As E. F. Schumacher points out in a recent issue of *East-West Journal*, “Congestion makes city life intolerable, and the emptiness—the mental starvation—makes rural life intolerable.” Fortunately, New Māyāpur transcends these two extremes and combines the best of both worlds. Sophisticated yet simple, this Vedic community is proving in the West what has long been known in the East: intellectual and spiritual interests flourish when nourished by the peace and energy of nature.

New Māyāpur serves as the French headquarters of the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust (BBT). Formerly, the Vedic classics were known only to the cream of French society (Victor Hugo, Romain Rolland, and André Malraux, for instance). Now the devotees are translating Śrīla Prabhupāda’s acclaimed English renderings into deluxe French editions and distributing them throughout the French-speaking world.

French scholars have lavished praise upon both Śrīla Prabhupāda and the BBT for the translations of the *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* and the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, among other works. Dr. Olivier Lacombe of the Sorbonne praises what he terms their “authenticity.” Dr. Francois Chenique of the Institute of Political Studies, Paris, says that *La Bhagavad-gītā tell qu’elle est* offers his countrymen “their first contact with the true India, the ancient India, the eternal India.” Paul Lesourd, writer and honorary professor at the Catholic University of Paris, vows that if the *Gītā’s* message “were wider spread and more respected, it would transform the world in which we live into a better, more fraternal place.”

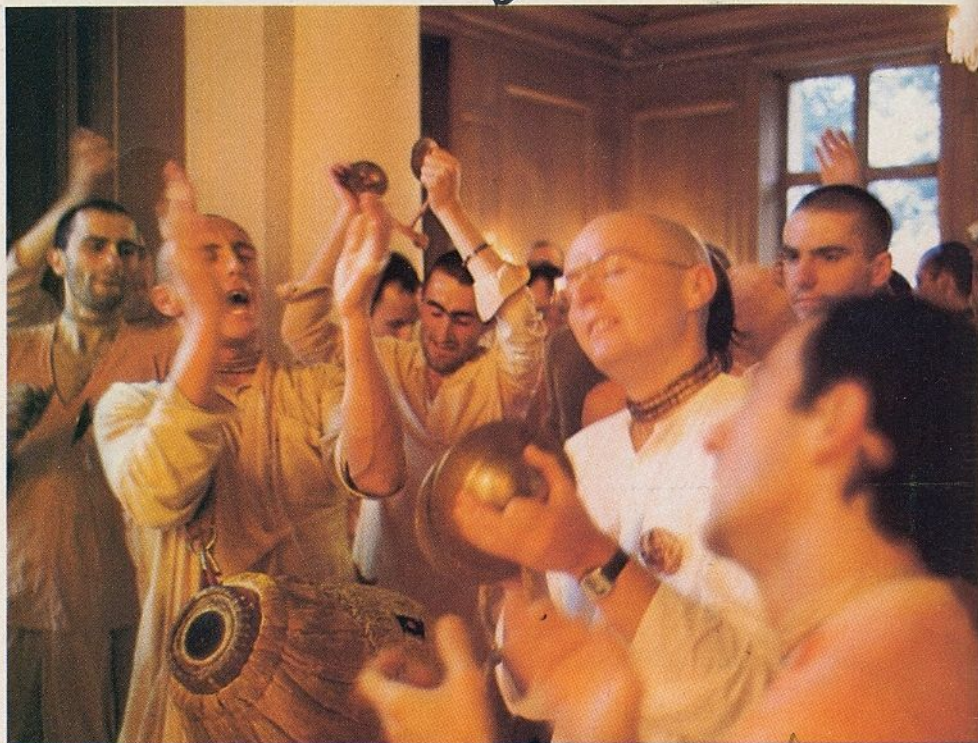
The devotees make a thorough study of the Vedic culture (through formal classes, informal discussions, and tests) and that’s what distinguishes New Māyāpur from a host of other back-to-the-land projects. Viṣṇuma says, “Spiritual life, developing a relationship with the supreme person, is what gives New Māyāpur so much harmony and joy. We not only till the land; we also till

our minds to come up with ideas that’ll please Kṛṣṇa. That’s the real source of our happiness.”

New Māyāpur also acts as a melting pot. People from more than twenty countries—including France, Germany, Greece, India, Israel, Italy, Poland, Spain, Sweden, the United States, Venezuela, and Vietnam—live there. “So many individuals from so many backgrounds are working together happily and communicating with ease. Kṛṣṇa consciousness is universal,” Bhagavān dāsa says. New Māyāpur’s everyday scenes of international cooperation bear out Paul Lesourd’s statement that the *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* offers a key to world peace.

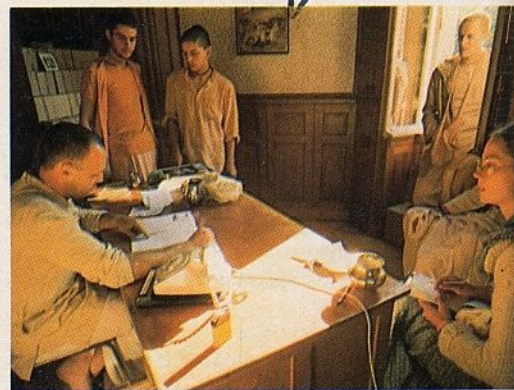
New Māyāpur’s ambitious social experiment offers us much hope. In a time when the world’s secular institutions are hard-pressed to meet even the minimal needs of civilized living—clean water and air, decent schools, parks, and so forth—New Māyāpur’s achievements

“High thinking”: chanting and dancing (below, middle) and feasting and philosophy (below) inspire everything community members do. The devotees find the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra especially enlightening. ✓



are notable. Organic farming, horticultural innovations, ecological planning, natural medicine, book publishing, spiritual education, community cultural life, personal fulfillment—all spring from the community’s God consciousness.

“The environmental crisis,” one ecologist has noted, “is an outward manifestation of a crisis of mind and spirit.” So we can understand why New Māyāpur has no crisis: the Vedic culture has always given first priority to spiritual development. Bhagavān dāsa says, “We’ve had no losses by doing that—only gains, in every way.”





On special occasions (below), the community celebrates by dedicating everything, including the fruit of the earth, to the Supreme Lord. Each morning and evening the devotees come together (left) to hear from and talk about the Vedic literatures. Says Bhagavān dāsa (shown giving a class), “Today’s society may be ‘civilized,’ but do we know who we really are, why we’re here, or what happens to us when we leave? Even the animals know the science of caring for the body. The Vedic culture stresses what only a human being can know—the science of caring for the soul.”



Whether the devotees are making clothes in the sewing room (left) or making plans in temple coordinator Viśvambhara’s office (far left), there’s a feeling of love and trust. Viśvambhara notes, “Even if you don’t know someone—if you know his father, you feel like walking over to the person and saying, ‘Hello. You’re the son of Mr. Jones—I can see him in you.’ So when you’re Kṛṣṇa conscious you feel good about everybody, because you can see Kṛṣṇa in everybody.”

The Year-long Lunch

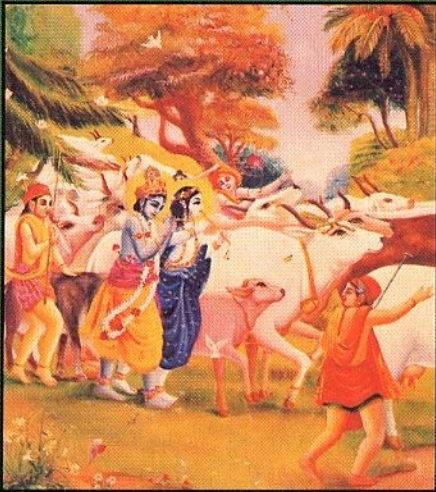


Illustration: Baradīja oḍḍā

The cowherd boys were glad to be having lunch on the river-bank with their friend Kṛṣṇa. How could they have known that a whole year later, the meal would still be going strong?

“Dear friends,” said Lord Kṛṣṇa to the other cowherd boys, “Look at this wonderful place!” He’d brought them to the sun-dappled bank of the Yamunā River, after an adventurous morning in the pastures outside Vṛndāvana town. “This is an ideal place to eat our lunch. Afterward, we can play on the soft, sandy river bank.”

Kṛṣṇa turned to the sparkling river and glorified its beauty. “See those lotus flowers in the water, their petals opened wide; and smell their fragrance drifting all around us. And listen—nearby in the trees the peacocks are calling out to one another, and their calls are mingling with the songs of other birds and the whispers

of the leaves. This is clearly the best place for us to have our lunch. The calves can stay close to us, drink water from the Yamunā, and graze on the tasty grass.”

Kṛṣṇa’s friends were glad to hear what sounded to them like a brilliant suggestion. It was late and they were feeling hungry; what’s more, they all agreed that Lord Kṛṣṇa had found a perfect place for them to sit and eat. So they let loose the calves and arranged themselves in a big circle. Kṛṣṇa sat in the center, and all the boys turned toward Him, so that while they ate they could see Him face to face. Kṛṣṇa was like the whorl of a big lotus flower, and the other boys were like the petals. Together, they opened up the lunch boxes their mothers had given them early that morning. Then they began to eat and joke with one another.

But as the boys ate, their attention given completely to Kṛṣṇa and the delicious food, they failed to notice that the calves had wandered away, allured by the fresh new grass of the deep forest. Soon the calves were out of sight entirely. When the boys discovered this, they became scared and called to Kṛṣṇa for help, as they always did when they were in distress.

“Oh, Kṛṣṇa!” they cried out. “The calves have disappeared! What should we do?”

“Don’t worry,” Lord Kṛṣṇa answered. “And don’t interrupt your lunch. Go on enjoying. I’ll look for them Myself.” So, sparing His friends the trouble, the Lord got up and walked away to search for the lost calves. He spent much time in His search, looking in the thickets and the forests and in the nearby caves and mountain crevices.

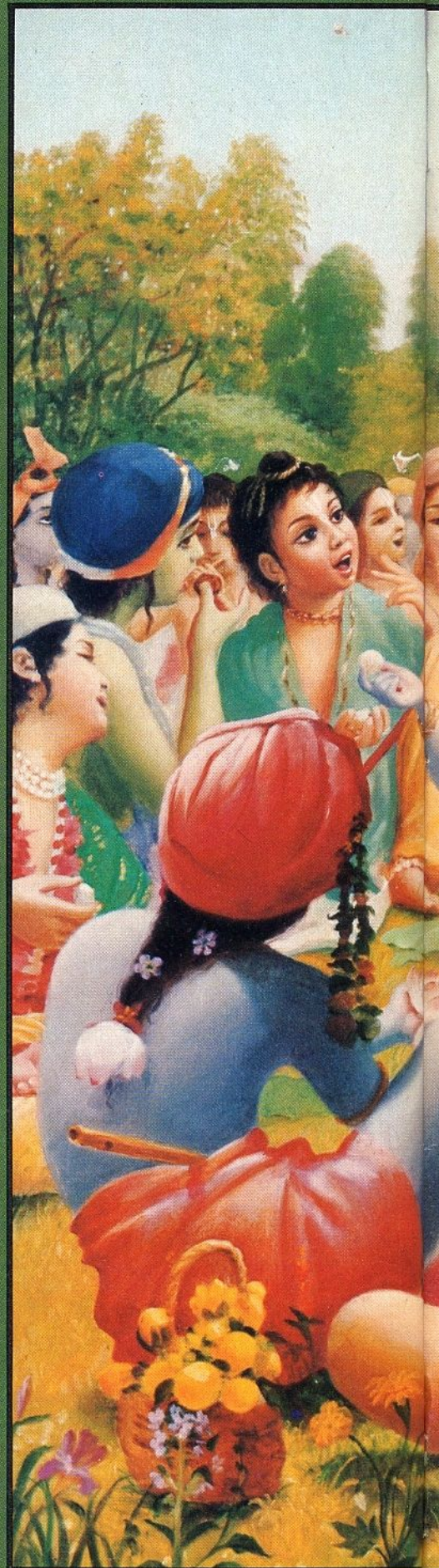
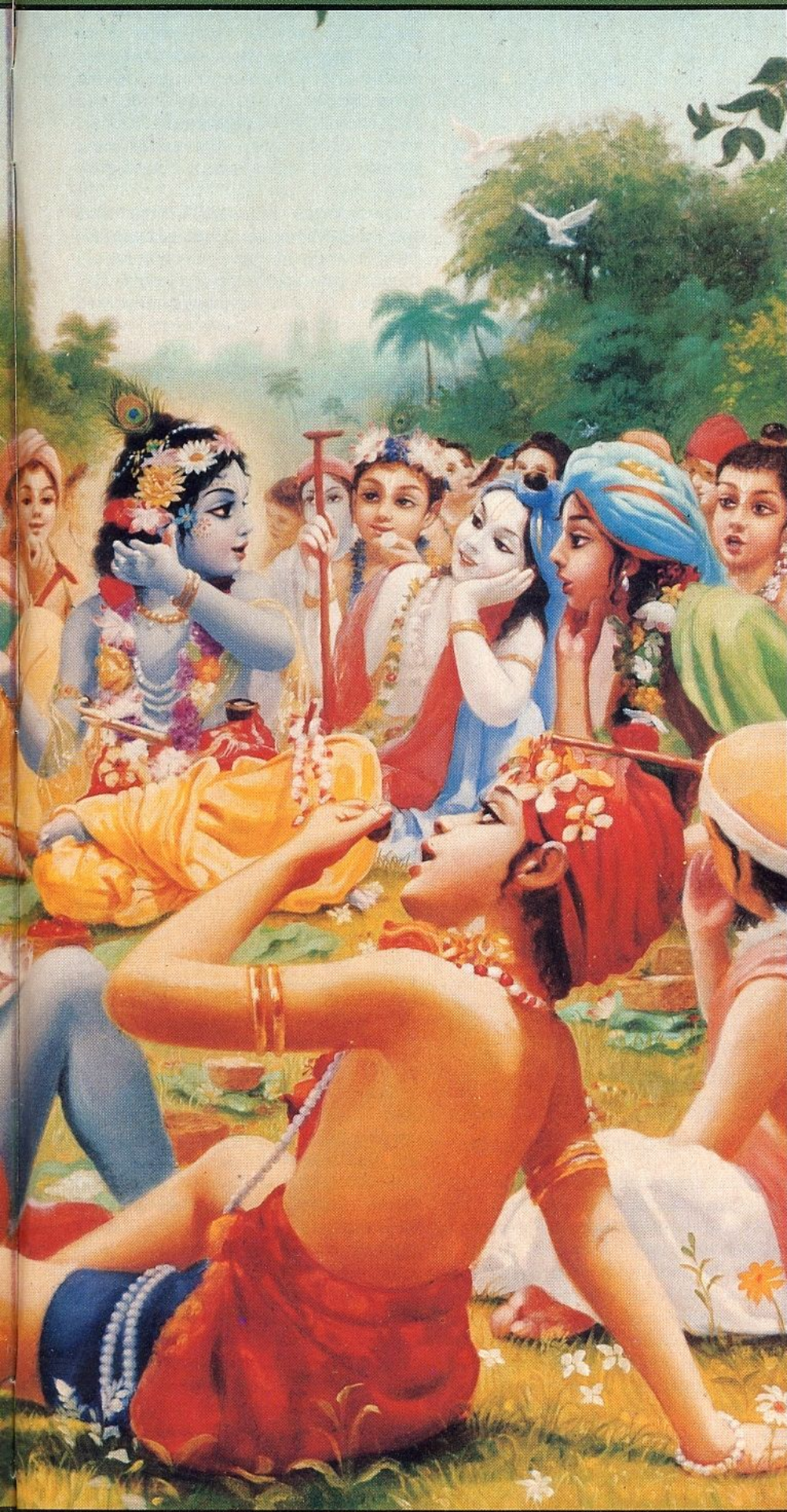


Illustration Muralidhara dāsa



The calves were nowhere to be found.

But Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, knew what was happening. He didn't really have to look for the calves, because He knows everything. Still, He was playing the part of an ordinary human being—just to please His friends. So He knew exactly where the calves were, and He also knew they hadn't left the river bank on their own. They'd been lured away by none other than four-headed Brahmā, the demigod who directs universal affairs. And, as Kṛṣṇa was enjoying climbing around the hills and looking in the caves, back at the lunch site Brahmā was now using his mystic powers to steal the cowherd boys. Then he hid the boys and the calves in a secret place and put them into a long, deep sleep.

Kṛṣṇa was aware, too, of the reason why Brahmā was playing these tricks on Him. Somebody had told Brahmā that the Supreme Personality of Godhead was living in the little town of Vṛndāvana as a five-year-old boy named Kṛṣṇa, the son of Nanda. On hearing this, Brahmā was skeptical. So he hit upon a plan to test Kṛṣṇa's powers for himself. He thought, "After His friends and calves have mysteriously disappeared, what will this little boy Kṛṣṇa do?"

Now, by Brahmā's magic, the picnic spot was deserted. Lord Kṛṣṇa thought, "Brahmā has taken away the boys and the calves. How can I go back to Vṛndāvana alone? The boys' mothers will cry in despair, and the calves' mothers will feel sick with grief."

The Lord asked Himself this question, but He was hardly at a loss for an answer. At once He manifested Himself in multiple forms—boys and calves who looked and acted precisely like the very boys and

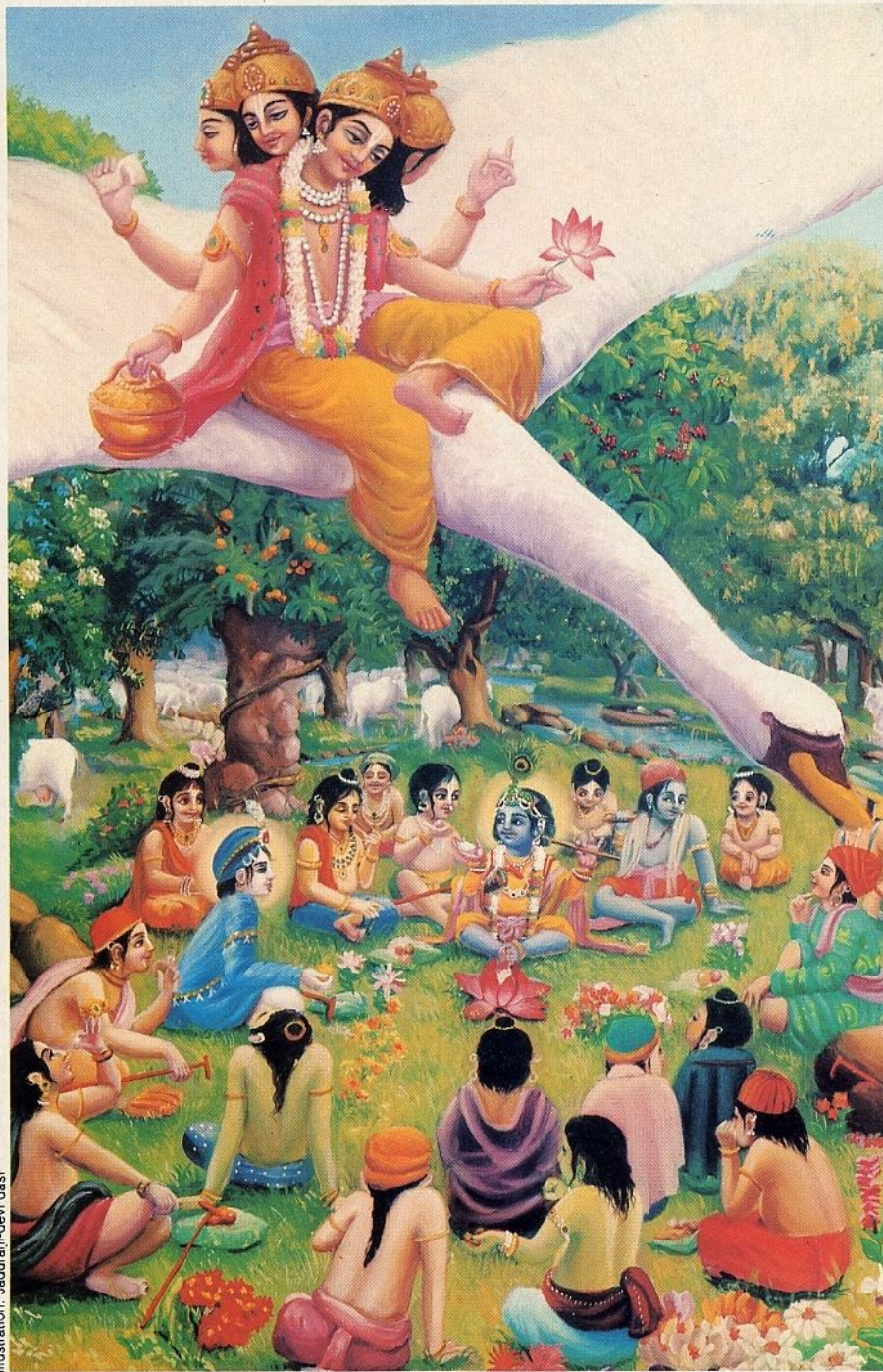


Illustration: Jadurāni-devī dāsī

Was Kṛṣṇa actually the Supreme Personality? Skeptical, Brahmā made a plan.

calves Lord Brahmā had hidden. Each new boy was in fact Kṛṣṇa, but had the bodily features and behavior of one of the original boys; and the same was true of each of the new calves. Appearances thus restored, soon the happy boys and calves were making their way back to town.

None of the townspeople in Vṛndāvana knew what had transpired that afternoon out in the pasture. They simply saw Kṛṣṇa and His friends strolling into the village, casually tapping the calves with sticks to keep them in order, and raising up a cloud of golden dust in

the late afternoon sun. There seemed to be nothing unusual. And, as always, the boys put the calves into their cowsheds and then went home.

Long before the boys arrived, the mothers had heard the sound of their flutes. Now the mothers ran out of their homes and embraced the boys. On account of their maternal affection, milk flowed from their breasts, and they allowed the boys to drink it. Although they didn't know it, their offering was not to their sons but to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Then the boys played at home, as usual. Also, during

the evening the mothers bathed the children, decorated them with ornaments, and gave them the food they needed after a hard day's work. In the cowsheds the mother cows, who had been away in the pasture during the day, now called the calves. The calves came joyfully, and the mothers licked their bodies.

Thus, family relations for the cows and the cowherds remained unchanged, except that the mothers' affection for the children grew and continued to grow day after day. Clearly, the cows and women of Vṛndāvana had even greater love for Kṛṣṇa than for their own offspring. And for many months Kṛṣṇa maintained Himself as the boys and calves of Vṛndāvana.

One day, after a full year had elapsed, Kṛṣṇa and His brother Balarāma were in the forest tending some calves. All at once, they noticed that the cows grazing atop Govardhana Hill were looking down upon the boys and calves in the valley. On sighting the calves, the cows started running toward them and leaping down the hill. Practically melting with love for the calves, the cows didn't care about the roughness of the path down to the pasture. With their milk bags full and their tails raised, they sped toward the calves, pouring milk on the ground as they ran.

The calves in the valley were older than the cows' own calves—they weren't expected to drink milk directly from the milk bag, but were ordinarily satisfied with grass. Yet the cows came running down to them anyway. When the cows reached the bottom, they licked the calves' bodies, and the calves drank the cows' milk. There appeared to be an extraordinary bond of love.

While the cows had been running down the hill, the men taking care of them had tried to stop them but had failed. Now the men felt baffled, ashamed, and angry. Yet as they came down the hill and into the valley, they saw the boys taking care of the calves and felt overwhelming paternal affection. At once, the fathers' anger and shame disappeared, and they lovingly lifted the boys up into their arms. After embracing the boys, the fathers went about the business of bringing the cows up the hill. Along the way, they thought of the children, and tears fell from their eyes.

As Balarāma gazed upon this remarkable exchange of love between the cows and calves and fathers and boys—when neither calves nor boys needed so much care—He began to wonder how it all had come about. Before long He concluded, "It was arranged by Kṛṣṇa, and even I

couldn't perceive His mystic power." In other words, Balarāma understood that all the boys and calves were really Lord Kṛṣṇa's expansions.

Balarāma quizzed Kṛṣṇa about the incident. "My dear Kṛṣṇa," He said, "at first I thought the boys and the calves were great sages or demigods in disguise. But now I think they are actually Your expansions. They are all You! You Yourself are playing as the boys and calves. Please, clear up this mystery for Me. Where have Our friends, the original boys and calves, gone to?"

Now Lord Kṛṣṇa briefly explained how Brahmā had stolen the boys and calves, and how He had concealed the theft so that the families wouldn't be distressed.

While They were talking, Brahmā

To convince Brahmā that these weren't the original boys and calves, Kṛṣṇa transformed His expansions into four-armed Viṣṇu forms. Besides a bluish complexion and yellow garments, They all had four hands and held a club, a disk, a lotus flower, and a conchshell. On Their heads They wore golden, jeweled helmets that glittered. Pearls, earrings, armlets, and flower garlands also be-decked Their beautiful bodies, and there were golden bells around Their waists and legs, splendid rings on Their fingers, and strings of gems around Their smooth necks. This display of divine potency left Brahmā utterly confounded.

At that time Kṛṣṇa took compassion upon the demigod. He saw that Brahmā's mind was reeling, so He

feet with his tears. He repeatedly fell and rose, praying to Kṛṣṇa and recalling His wonderful activities. Having emptied his heart, Brahmā stood up, smeared his hands over his eyes, and with the Lord's permission returned to his abode. He was convinced, at last, of Kṛṣṇa's identity as the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Kṛṣṇa had left His cowherd boy-friends eating lunch on the bank of the Yamunā—a year before. Then Brahmā had put the boys to sleep and had hidden them away, but the boys knew nothing of that. Now Kṛṣṇa brought them back, woke them up, and walked onto the picnic site as if nothing had happened. It was a whole year later, but the cowherd boys thought He'd



Illustration: Muralidhara dāsa

Kṛṣṇa took compassion on Brahmā, whose mind was reeling: He would change things back to the way they'd been before.

returned to Vṛndāvana. Only a moment had passed—by his reckoning of time. By human reckoning, a whole year had come and gone. At any rate, Brahmā wanted to see the fun caused by his kidnapping. But he was dumbfounded to see that the boys and calves were still playing with Kṛṣṇa, just as they had been a year earlier! How could this be? He was confident that he'd put them to sleep by his mystic spell. "How is it," he marveled, "that they appear to be here, playing with Kṛṣṇa?!"

As Brahmā stared at the scene, something even more wonderful happened.

decided to change things back to the way they'd been before He had expanded Himself as calves and cowherd boys.

Relieved from his confusion, Brahmā felt that he was waking up from a state near death. Before him he saw Lord Kṛṣṇa playing the part of a small cowherd boy—holding a lump of fruit salad in His left hand and searching for His lost calves and friends, just as He'd been doing a year earlier.

With great devotion, Brahmā bowed down on the ground before the Lord, his four helmets touching Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet. Joyfully, Brahmā washed Lord Kṛṣṇa's

returned after being away for just a moment. They laughed: Kṛṣṇa could never leave them for any longer than a little while. Overjoyed, they greeted Him. "Dear Kṛṣṇa, You've returned so quickly! Please, come and join us. Let's eat together." Kṛṣṇa smiled and accepted their invitation. Once again He enjoyed the lunchtime company of His friends, the cowherd boys.

Adapted from Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda.

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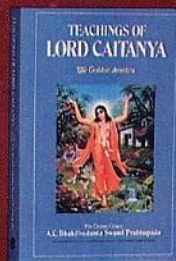
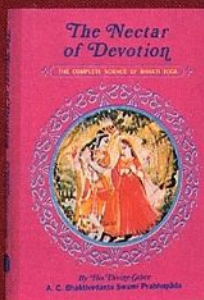
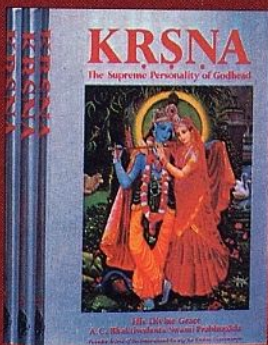
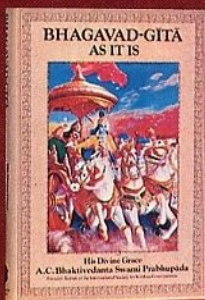
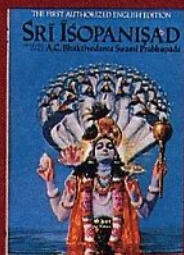
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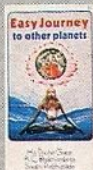
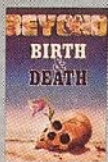
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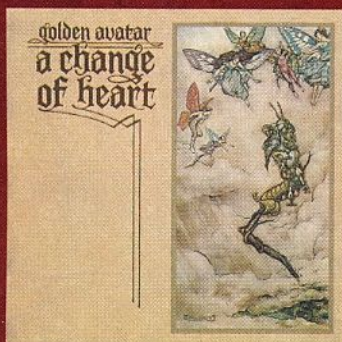


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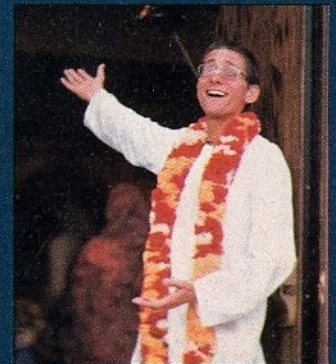
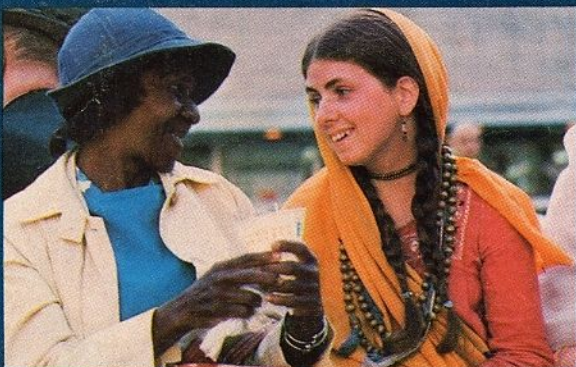
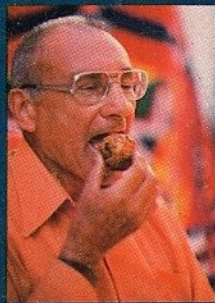
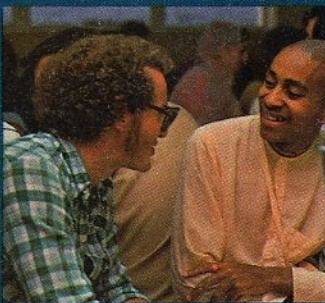
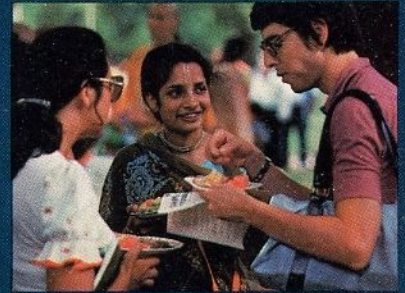
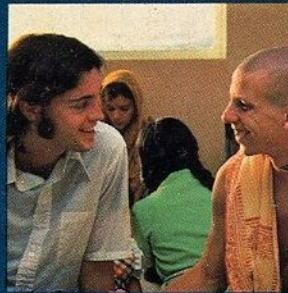
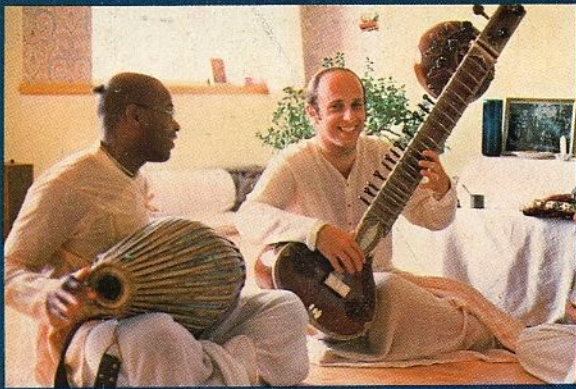
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