

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



BACK TO GODHEAD



Vol. 12 No. 8

THE MAGAZINE OF THE HARE KRISHNA MOVEMENT



The Birth
of Lord Kṛṣṇa

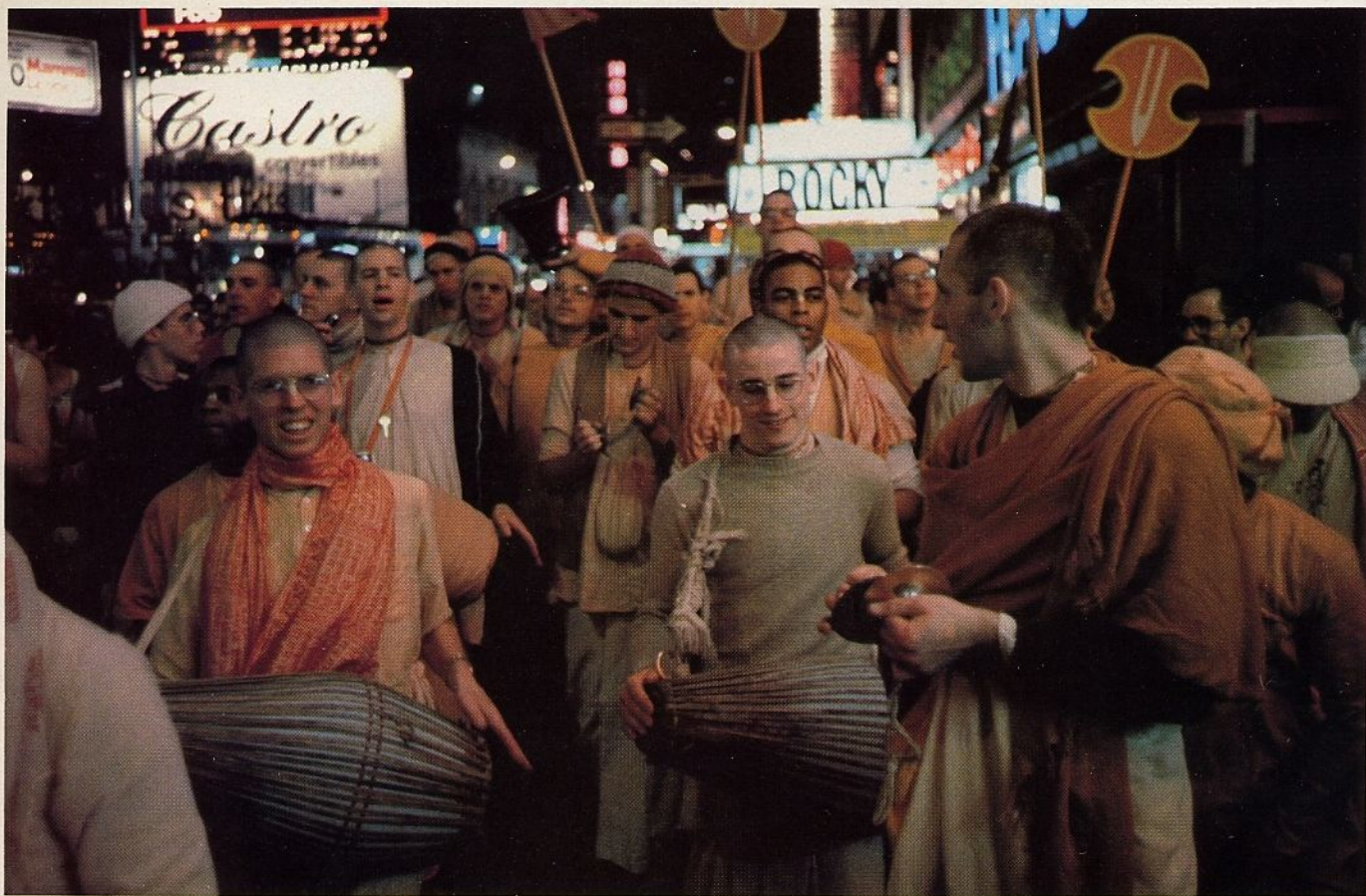


Photo: Vipra dāsa

Devotees chant Hare Kṛṣṇa in Times Square.

A short statement of the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa Consciousness

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) is a worldwide community of devotees practicing bhakti-yoga, the eternal science of loving service to God. The Society was founded in 1966 by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, a pure devotee of God representing an unbroken chain of spiritual masters originating with Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself. The following eight principles are the basis of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.

We invite all our readers to consider them with an open mind and then visit one of the ISKCON centers to see how they are being applied in everyday life.

1. By sincerely cultivating a bona fide spiritual science, we can be free from anxiety and come to a state of pure, unending, blissful consciousness in this lifetime.

2. We are not our bodies but eternal spirit souls, parts and parcels of God (Kṛṣṇa). As such, we are all brothers, and Kṛṣṇa is ultimately our common father.

3. Kṛṣṇa is the eternal, all-knowing, omnipresent, all-powerful, and all-attractive Personality of Godhead. He is the seed-giving father of all living beings, and He is the sustaining energy of the entire cosmic creation.

4. The Absolute Truth is contained in all the great scriptures of the world. However, the oldest known revealed scriptures in existence are the Vedic literatures, most notably the *Bhagavad-gītā*, which is the literal record of God's actual words.

5. We should learn the Vedic knowledge from a genuine spiritual master—one who has no selfish motives and whose mind is firmly fixed on Kṛṣṇa.

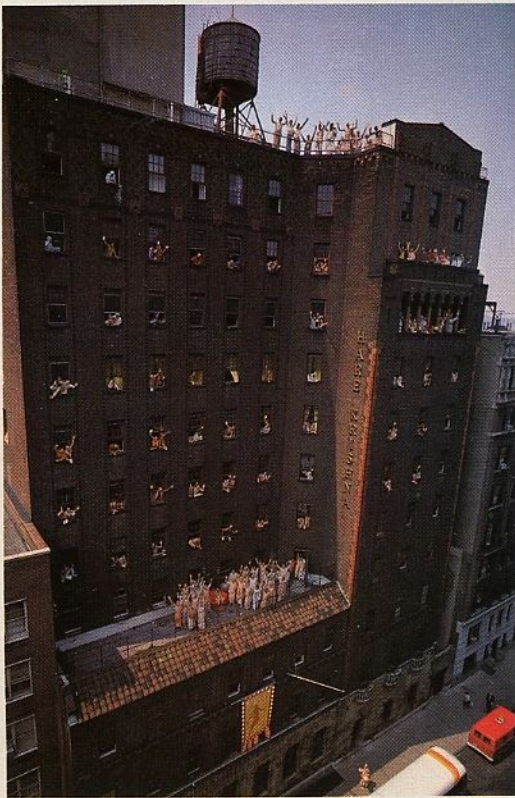
6. Before we eat, we should offer to the Lord the food that sustains us. Then Kṛṣṇa becomes the offering and purifies us.

7. We should perform all our actions as offerings to Kṛṣṇa and do nothing for our own sense gratification.

8. The recommended means for achieving the mature stage of love of God in this age of Kali, or quarrel, is to chant the holy names of the Lord. The easiest method for most people is to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra:

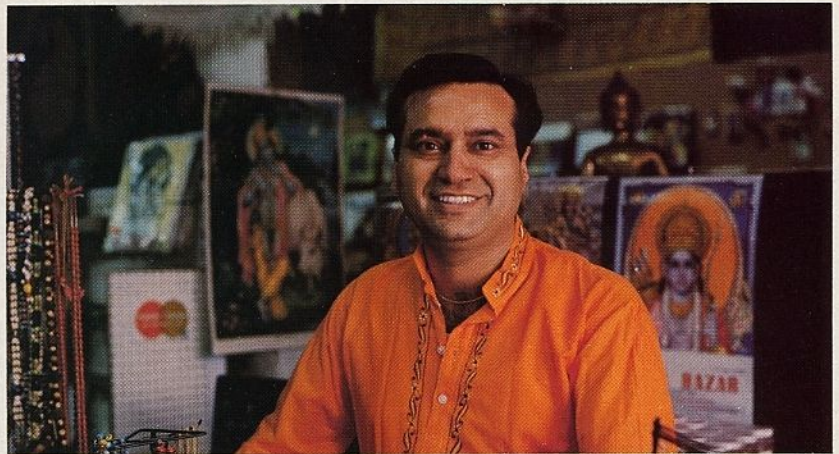
Hare Kṛṣṇa
 Hare Kṛṣṇa
 Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa
 Hare Hare
 Hare Rāma
 Hare Rāma
 Rāma Rāma
 Hare Hare

Chant and be happy...



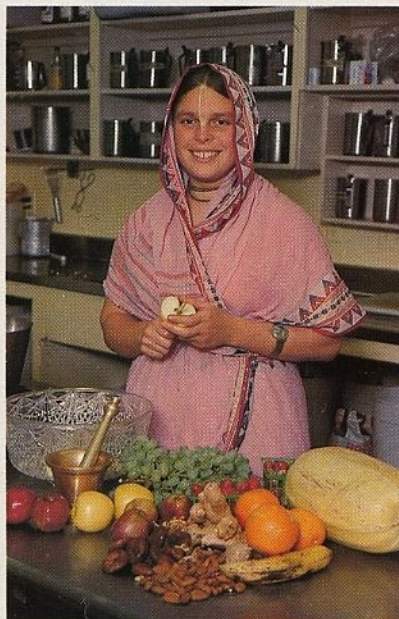
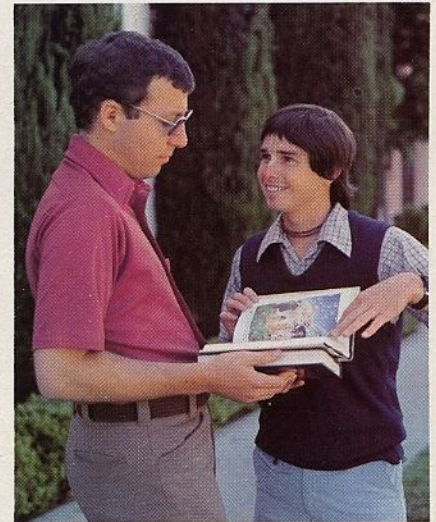
New Yorkers will be the first to admit that “Fun City” is often a hard place to be happy in. But the devotees at ISKCON’s center on Manhattan’s West 55th Street (*above*) know the secret. By chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra they’ve opened their minds to a whole new dimension of consciousness—God consciousness, Kṛṣṇa consciousness. In other words, the pleasure they get from chanting doesn’t come from their senses contacting something outside; it comes from their soul contacting the Supreme Soul, Kṛṣṇa, within. Since Kṛṣṇa is the reservoir of all pleasure, by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa they enjoy being with Him at all times, everywhere, and they stay happy and peaceful in all circumstances.

Find out more about Kṛṣṇa consciousness in this issue of BACK TO GODHEAD magazine.



Krishan Bhalla, Los Angeles businessman: “When I visit the Hare Kṛṣṇa temple and hear the devotees chanting so blissfully, I am very happy to see Americans deriving so much benefit from India’s Kṛṣṇa-conscious culture.”

Dattātreya dāsa, book distributor: “I’ve distributed books about the science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the airports, the shopping malls, the downtown streets—and everywhere I’ve seen that people are simply trying to find pleasure through their senses. But they get about as much pleasure from that as a thirsty man gets from a drop of water in the desert. These Kṛṣṇa-conscious books, though, show us how real pleasure comes from serving God, Kṛṣṇa. And chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa brings us in direct contact with Kṛṣṇa, the reservoir of pleasure.”



Mahāsini-devi dāsi, Head Cook, Los Angeles Temple: “Lord Kṛṣṇa is never hungry. He’s completely self-sufficient. But just as a father is pleased when his small child offers him a morsel from his plate, so Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Father, is pleased when we offer back to Him what He has given us. Everyone knows that God provides the sun, rain, fruits, vegetables, and grains; we can’t manufacture any of these things in our factories. Kṛṣṇa also gives us the intelligence to make nice combinations of foods.

“Here in Los Angeles we cook for Kṛṣṇa and His hundreds of guests and devotees every day. It’s a big job, so I chant Hare Kṛṣṇa to stay in touch with the Supreme Energetic—the source of all strength and ability—Kṛṣṇa.”

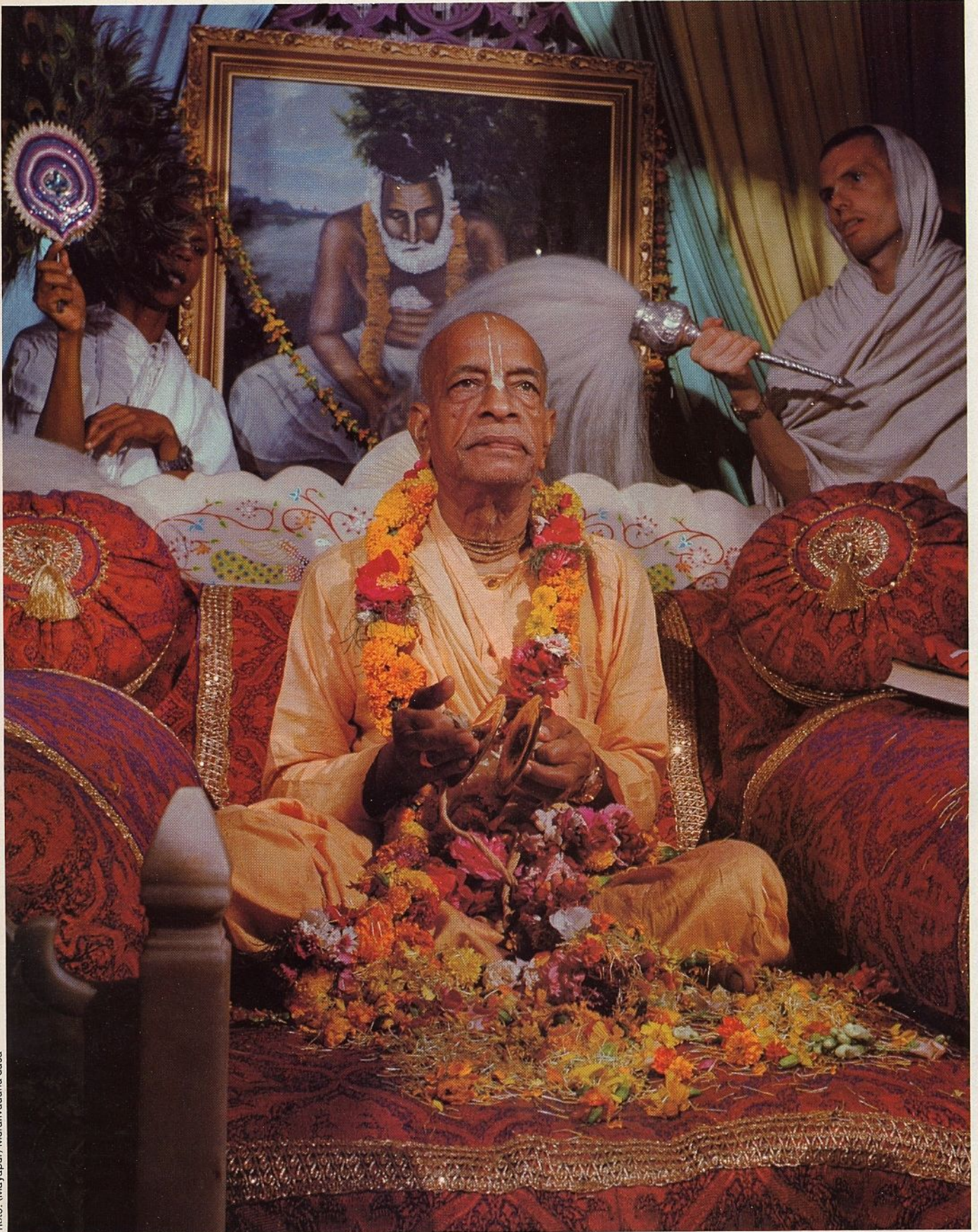


Photo: (Māyāpur) Muralivadana dāsa

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

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FOUNDER

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

His Divine Grace

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

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PRONUNCIATION OF SANSKRIT WORDS

Sanskrit words and names in BACK TO GODHEAD are spelled according to a system that scholars throughout the world use to show how to pronounce each word. Vowels in Sanskrit are pronounced almost as in Italian. The sound of the short **a** is like the **u** in **but**. The long **ā** is like the **a** in **far** and held twice as long as the short **a**, and **e** is like the **a** in **evade**. Long **ī** is like the **i** in **pique**. The vowel **ī** is pronounced like the **ri** in the English word **rim**. The **e** is pronounced like the **e** 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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◀ **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.

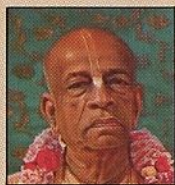
In fact, since 1944, when he started writing, editing, printing, and distributing BACK TO GODHEAD, Śrīla Prabhupāda has often called it "the backbone of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement." Although over the years it has changed in some ways, BACK TO GODHEAD remains, in Śrīla Prabhupāda's words, "an instrument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

CONTENTS



What Augustine Knew and Didn't Know About the Science of the Soul 4

Augustine supposed that the soul is immortal—but that God can forever abandon it to "soul-death." His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda cuts through this and other contradictions with "the sword of knowledge"—ancient India's Vedic literature.



Who is a Real Guru? 10

With more than nineteen million people now taking up yoga and meditation, you can be sure a few others are taking up the "guru business." In this special article by the BACK TO GODHEAD staff, the Vedic literature proves who is a fraud and who is a real guru.



Lord Kṛṣṇa Comes to Earth 19

Fifty centuries ago Kṛṣṇa came to destroy demonic influences and promote religious principles. Now the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement does the same task through Kṛṣṇa-conscious art and literature—notably the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, whose Tenth Canto depicts Kṛṣṇa's coming.



The Long Arm of the Law Catches Lord Caitanya's Mercy 25

Lord Caitanya came to spread love of Kṛṣṇa everywhere, London included. Some people—Her Majesty's Royal Police Force, for example—might not understand at first. But this true story by Śākṣī Gopāla dāsa testifies they're getting the message (and the mercy) at last.

Kṛṣṇa's Birthday: A Worldwide Celebration 8

An Emergency Prayer 12

Every Town and Village 15

Vaiṣṇava Calendar 15

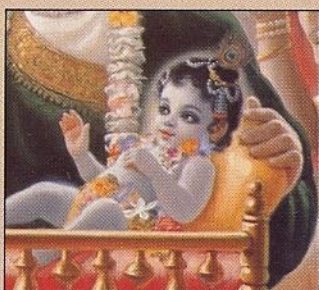
Śrīla Prabhupāda Speaks Out 16

Letters 17

Special Center Section:

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam

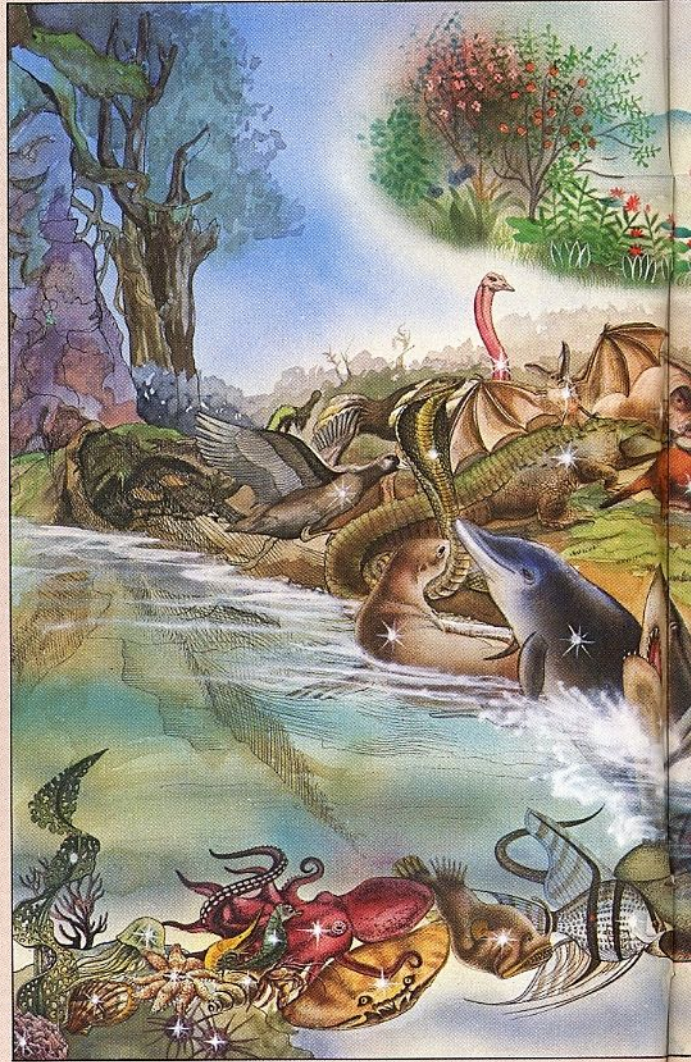
The continuing presentation of India's great spiritual classic. Translation and commentary by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda.



ON THE COVER

"This is Kṛṣṇa's original birthday celebration," says artist Muralīdhara dāsa. "The cowherd men and women, the musicians—everyone is giving something to Kṛṣṇa. Of course, Kṛṣṇa... through His father Nanda Mahārāja... is giving everyone gifts, too. It's a far cry from today—when so many people don't even believe in God, or if they do believe, they just ask Him for things but don't give Him anything. Kṛṣṇa consciousness means giving everything to Kṛṣṇa." On September 5, join us in celebrating the birthday of Kṛṣṇa; and on September 6, the birthday of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, who is teaching the whole world how to give everything to Kṛṣṇa.

What Augustine Knew and Didn't Know About **The Science of The Soul**



Early Church father Augustine thought that God eternally abandons some souls to “soul-death.” “This is not so,” says His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. “Our consciousness can always be revived, and that is the conviction of this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. . . .”



Hayagrīva dāsa: Augustine considered the soul to be spiritual and different from the material body—but he also believed that the soul did not exist before the body’s birth. He simply supposed that the soul is the superior part of the person and the body the inferior part. He also thought that the soul attains immortality only after God creates it—only after God brings it into being. At death, Augustine said, the soul goes on to live eternally.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: But if the soul is created, how is it immortal? How is it eternal? How can the soul sometimes not be eternal?

Hayagrīva dāsa: Well, first of all, Augustine considered that because of Adam’s fall, all men are subject to the death of the body. In addition, Augustine believed that while God destines some men to enjoy everlasting happiness after death, He destines others to undergo everlasting suffering. In other words, Augustine said that some people endure both physical death—when the soul abandons the body—and “soul-death”—when God abandons the soul. Thus, when one is damned he faces not

only physical death but also “soul-death.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Figuratively speaking, when one forgets his identity as a servant of God, he undergoes a kind of death—but actually the soul is eternal. So, what Augustine calls “soul-death” is actually forgetfulness of God. Of course, until one acquires his freedom from material existence, he is “spiritually dead,” even though still existing in the material form. Forgetfulness of one’s real identity is a kind of death, because only when one is alive to God consciousness is he actually alive. In any case, the soul is eternal and survives the annihilation of the body.

Hayagrīva dāsa: Augustine would consider that in some cases the forgetful stage is everlasting, that God eternally abandons the damned soul to eternal perdition.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: This is not so. Our consciousness can always be revived, and that is the conviction of this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. A man is unconscious when he is sleeping, but if you call him again and again, the sound of his

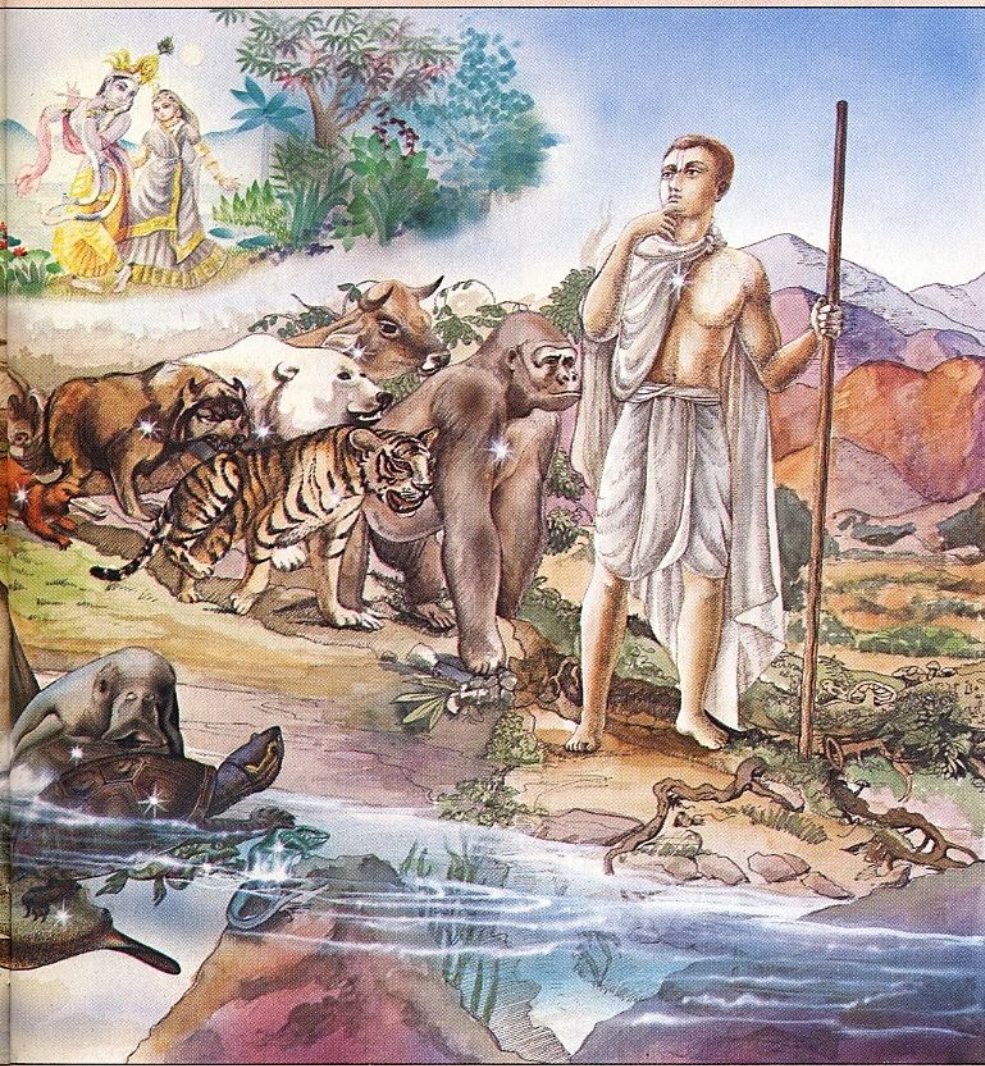


Illustration: Ramanātha dāsa

Augustine wrote, “Reincarnation is ridiculous. There is no such thing as a return to this life for the punishment of souls. . . .” “The soul is essentially part and parcel of God,” says Śrīla Prabhupāda, “but in this material world the soul is factually imprisoned in different types of bodies. . . . The desires of the soul actually determine higher or lower bodies.” Left: the soul (indicated by a star) makes his long journey up through millions of lower bodies—aquatics, plants, birds, beasts—to the human body. In the human body he at last gets the chance to revive his long-forgotten relationship with Lord Kṛṣṇa and His eternal consort Rādhā.

name enters his ear, and he awakens. Similarly, this process of chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra awakens one to spiritual consciousness. Then one can return to his normal, spiritual life.

Of course, one may be “eternally abandoned” in the sense that one may remain forgetful for millions of years. It may seem eternal, but actually one’s spiritual consciousness can be revived at any moment by good association, by the method of hearing and chanting about Kṛṣṇa. Devotional service therefore begins with *śravaṇam*—hearing. In the beginning especially, hearing is very important. If one hears the truth from a self-realized soul, one can awaken to spiritual life and remain spiritually alive in devotional service.

Hayagrīva dāsa: Augustine rejected the idea that the various material bodies in this world are like prisons for the punishment of sin.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: The soul is essentially part and parcel of God, but in this material world the soul is factually imprisoned in different types of bodies. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* [14.4] Śrī Kṛṣṇa says:

*sarva-yoniṣu kaunteya
mūrtayaḥ sambhavanti yāḥ
tāsām brahma mahad yonir
aḥam bija-pradaḥ pitā*

“It should be understood that all species of life, O son of Kuntī, are made possible by birth in this material nature, and that I am the seed-giving father.” From material nature—the mother—different species are coming. The living entities are found in earth, water, air, and even fire. The individual souls, however, are part and parcel of the Supreme Lord, who impregnates them within this material world. The living entity then comes out into the material world through the womb of some mother. It appears that the soul is coming out of matter, but the soul is not composed of matter. The soul, always part and parcel of God, simply assumes different types of bodies according to his pious or impious activities and desires. The desires of the soul actually determine higher or lower bodies. But in any case the soul is the same. It is therefore said that those who are advanced in spiritual consciousness

see the same quality of soul in each and every body, whether it is the body of a dog or a *brāhmaṇa* [a saintly person].

Hayagrīva dāsa: Also, Śrīla Prabhupāda, Augustine considered the soul to be created to inhabit only one particular body, which he felt was a gift from God. Augustine thus rejected reincarnation or transmigration. He wrote, “Let these Platonists stop threatening us with reincarnation as a punishment for our souls. . . . Reincarnation is ridiculous. . . . There is no such thing as a return to this life for the punishment of souls. . . . If our creation, even as mortals, is due to God, how can the return to bodies, which are gifts of God, be punishment?” So if the body is a gift of God, Augustine would ask how it could also be a punishment.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Does he think that if someone takes the body of a hog or a similar lower creature, that is not punishment? Why does one person get the body of King Indra or Lord Brahmā and another the body of a pig or insect? How does he explain the body of a pig? If the body is a gift from God, it can also be

a punishment from God. When one is rewarded, he gets the body of a Brahmā or an Indra, and if he is punished he gets the body of a pig.

Hayagrīva dāsa: So the degree of punishment or suffering is proportionate to the kind of body one has?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes. There are many men who are well situated, and there are others who are suffering. Suffering and enjoyment take place according to one's body. That is explained in the *Bhagavad-gītā* [2.14]:

*mātrā-sparśās tu kaunteya
śītoṣṇa-sukha-duḥkha-dāḥ
āgamāpāyino 'nityās
tāms titikṣasva bhārata*

“O son of Kuntī, the nonpermanent appearance of happiness and distress, and their disappearance in due course, are like the appearance and disappearance of winter and summer seasons. They arise from sense perception, O scion of Bharata, and one must learn to tolerate them without being disturbed.” A man may perceive cold very acutely, while a fish may not perceive it. So the perception is relative to the body. Thus the body is a source of suffering and enjoyment—or we may consider it as punish-

ment and reward.

Hayagrīva dāsa: What about the human body? Is that a gift or a punishment?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: It is both. In the human form of life, as in other forms, material nature punishes the living entity with so much suffering. But at the same time, you can consider human life a gift—because in the human form we can approach God. We should think that if God has given us this body for our punishment, it is His mercy; for by undergoing His punishment willingly and practicing Kṛṣṇa consciousness, we may become purified and progress toward God. Devotees think in this way. Although the body is a form of punishment, they consider it a reward—because by undergoing the punishment, they are progressing toward God-realization. Even when the body is given by God for our correction, it can thus be considered a gift.

Hayagrīva dāsa: According to Augustine, the physical body precedes the spiritual. He writes, “If there is a natural [physical] body, there is also a spiritual body . . . but it is not the spiritual that comes first, but the physical, and then the spiritual. . . .”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: No. Every living entity has an eternal spiritual body, which exists before he takes on a material body. As we said, entering the material body is a kind of punishment. Every soul is eternally part and parcel of God, but because of some sinful activity, the living entity comes into this material world. In the Bible it is said that due to disobedience to God, Adam and Eve lost paradise and had to come into the material world. The soul belongs to the paradise in heaven—the planets of Kṛṣṇa—but somehow or other he falls within this material world and takes on a material body. According to one's activities one is elevated or degraded—as a demigod, human being, animal, or plant. In any case, the soul is always aloof from the material body. This is confirmed by the Vedic literatures. Our actual, spiritual life is revived when we are freed from material contamination, or, in other words, from

reincarnation.

Hayagrīva dāsa: Augustine conceived of a spiritual world in which all the souls would be in bliss, and would be eternally loving and glorifying God. They would still possess freedom of will, but sin would have no power to tempt them.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes, sin cannot touch one who remains in contact with God. According to our desires, we associate with the modes of material nature and acquire different types of bodies. Nature, the agent of Kṛṣṇa, affords us facilities by giving us a body which is like a machine. When a son insists, “Father, give me a bicycle,” the affectionate father complies. This is similar to our relationship with Kṛṣṇa, as He explains in the *Bhagavad-gītā* [18.61]:

*īśvaraḥ sarva-bhūtānāṃ
hr̥d-deśe 'rjuna tiṣṭhati
bhr̥māyan sarva-bhūtāni
yantrārūḍhāni māyayā*

“The Supreme Lord is situated in everyone's heart, O Arjuna, and is directing the wanderings of all living entities, who are seated as on a machine, made of the material energy.” The Supreme Father, Kṛṣṇa, is within the core of everyone's heart. As the living entity desires, the Father supplies a body manufactured by material nature. This body is destined to suffer, but the spiritual bodies in the Vaikuṅṭhas [spiritual planets] are not subject to birth, old age, disease, or death, or the threefold miseries.* The spiritual bodies are eternal and full of knowledge and bliss.

Hayagrīva dāsa: Augustine seems to admit the transcendence and omnipresence of God, but he seems at the same time to reject His existence as the localized Paramātmā [Supersoul] accompanying each individual soul. He writes, “God is not the soul of all things but the maker of all souls.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Then how is God omnipresent? The Paramātmā is indicated as the all-pervading Supersoul both in the *Brahma-saṃhitā* and the *Bhagavad-gītā*. Besides the verse I have just mentioned, elsewhere in the *Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa says:

*upadraṣṭānumantā ca
bhartā bhoktā maheśvaraḥ
paramātmēti cāpy ukto
dehe 'smin puruṣaḥ paraḥ*

“Yet in this body there is also a transcendental enjoyer, who is the Lord. He is

*Miseries arising from our own body and mind, miseries caused by other living beings, and miseries caused by natural disturbances.

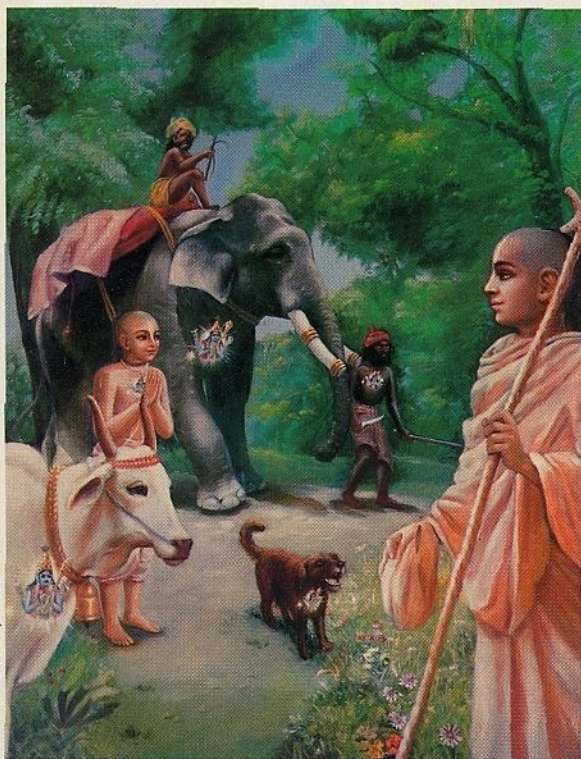


Illustration: Baradrāja dāsa

“ . . . In any case the soul is the same. It is therefore said that those who are advanced in spiritual consciousness see the same quality of soul in each and every body, whether it is the body of a dog or the body of a brāhmaṇa [saintly person].”

the supreme proprietor, overseer, and permitter, and He is known as the Supersoul” [Bg. 13.23]. The Supersoul is also present within every atom: *viṣṭabhyāham idam kṛtsnam ekāṁśena sthito jagat*: “With a single fragment of Myself I pervade and support this entire universe” [Bg. 10.42]. So God’s all-pervading Paramātmā feature cannot be denied.

Hayagrīva dāsa: For Augustine, the human mind and soul—he called it the “reasonable soul”—were one and the same.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: No. These are different identities. The soul is placed in various bodies that have different ways of thinking, feeling, and willing—different minds. For instance, a dog’s mind is not equal to that of a human being, but this is not to say that a dog does not have a soul. So the mind differs according to the body, but the soul always remains the same.

Hayagrīva dāsa: Well, because he lumped together the soul and the mind, Augustine held that the souls of animals are not the same as the eternal, “reasonable” souls of human beings. In this way he could justify animal killing. He wrote, “Indeed, some people try to stretch the prohibition ‘Thou shalt not kill’ to cover beasts and cattle, and make it unlawful to kill any such animal. But then, why not include plants and anything rooted in and feeding on the soil? . . . Putting this nonsense aside, we do not apply ‘Thou shalt not kill’ to plants, because they have no sensation; or to irrational animals that fly, swim, walk, or creep, because they are linked to us by no association or common bond. By the creator’s wise ordinance they are meant for our use, dead or alive. It only remains for us to apply the commandment ‘Thou shalt not kill’ to man alone—oneself and others.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: The Bible says, “Thou shalt not kill”—without qualification. Of course, our Vedic philosophy does admit that one living entity serves as food for another living entity. That is a natural law. As stated in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, those animals who have hands eat animals without hands. And the four-legged animals eat animals that cannot move, as well as vegetables. So the weak are food for the strong. One must eat an animal or a vegetable—whatever the case, one must inevitably eat some living entity. It thus becomes a question of selection. However, our Kṛṣṇa consciousness philosophy does not teach us to select our foodstuff on the basis that plant life is less sensitive than animal life, or that animal life is less sensitive than human life. We consider all human beings, animals, and plants to

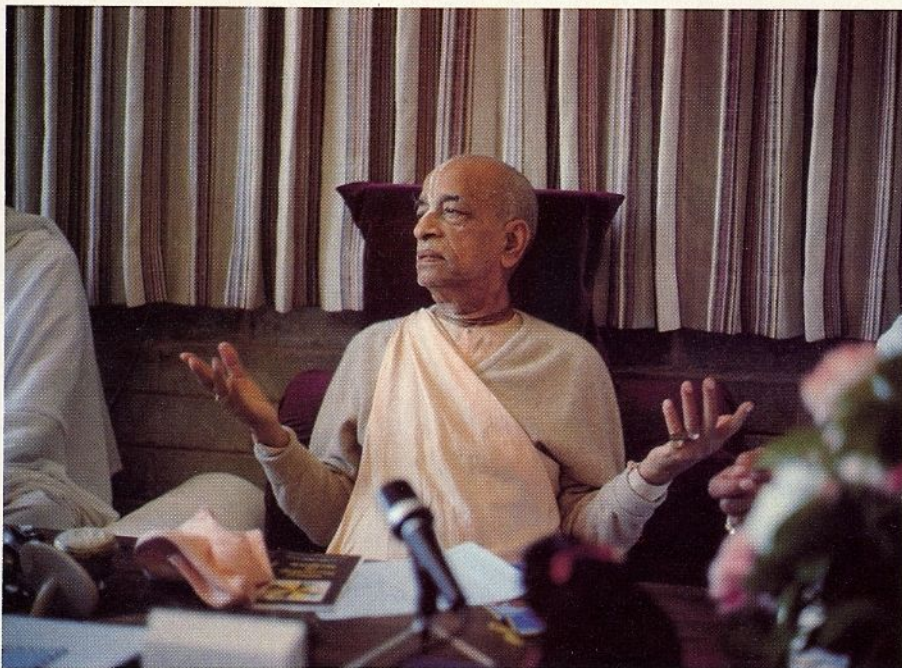


Photo: Bhārgava dāsa

“The soul belongs to the paradise in heaven—the planets of Kṛṣṇa. Our actual, spiritual life is revived when we are freed from contamination—or, in other words, from reincarnation.”

be living entities, spirit souls.

So, apart from vegetarian or non-vegetarian diets, we are basically concerned with Kṛṣṇa *prasāda* [“Kṛṣṇa’s mercy,” food offered to Kṛṣṇa with love and devotion.] We simply take the remnants of whatever Kṛṣṇa eats. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* [9.26] Śrī Kṛṣṇa says:

*patraṁ puṣpaṁ phalaṁ toyam
yo me bhaktyā prayacchati
tad ahaṁ bhakty-upahṛtam
aśnāmi prayatātmanaḥ*

“If one offers Me with love and devotion a leaf, a flower, fruit or water, I will accept it.” This is our philosophy. We are concerned with taking the remnants of Kṛṣṇa’s food, which we call *prasāda*, mercy.

Since we want to act on the level of loving devotion to Kṛṣṇa, we have to find out what He wants and offer Him only that. We cannot offer Him anything undesirable or unasked for. So meat, fish, and eggs cannot be offered to Kṛṣṇa. If He desired such things He would have said so. Instead He clearly requests that a leaf, fruit, flower, and water be given to Him. Therefore we should understand that He will not accept meat, fish, or eggs. Vegetables, grains, fruits, milk, and water are the proper foods for human beings and are prescribed here by Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself. Whatever else we might wish to eat cannot be offered to Him, since He will not accept it, and thus we cannot be acting

on the level of loving devotion to Kṛṣṇa if we eat such foods.

Hayagrīva dāsa: Concerning peace, Augustine writes: “Peace between a mortal man and his Maker consists in ordered obedience, guided by faith, under God’s eternal law. . . .”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes. Peace means coming in contact with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. A man in ignorance thinks that he is the enjoyer of this world, but when he contacts the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the supreme controller, he understands that God is the enjoyer. A servant supplies the needs of his master, and we are servants meant to supply enjoyment to God. Actually God has no needs to fulfill, yet He enjoys the company of His servants, who in turn enjoy His company. A servant is very happy when he receives a good master, and a master is happy to acquire a very faithful servant. This is the relationship between the individual soul and God, and when this relationship is destroyed, it is said that the individual soul exists in *māyā* [illusion]. When the relationship is restored, the individual is situated in his spiritual consciousness—Kṛṣṇa consciousness—by which he understands that the Supreme God is the actual enjoyer and that we are His servants. God is the actual enjoyer and proprietor as well as the Supreme Being. When we understand God’s transcendental qualities, we become happy and attain peace.

KṚṢṆA'S BIRTHDAY

A Worldwide Celebration

Not long ago, few people outside India had even heard of Him. Now people all over the world celebrate the day that Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, appeared on earth.



Photo: Bhārgava dāsa

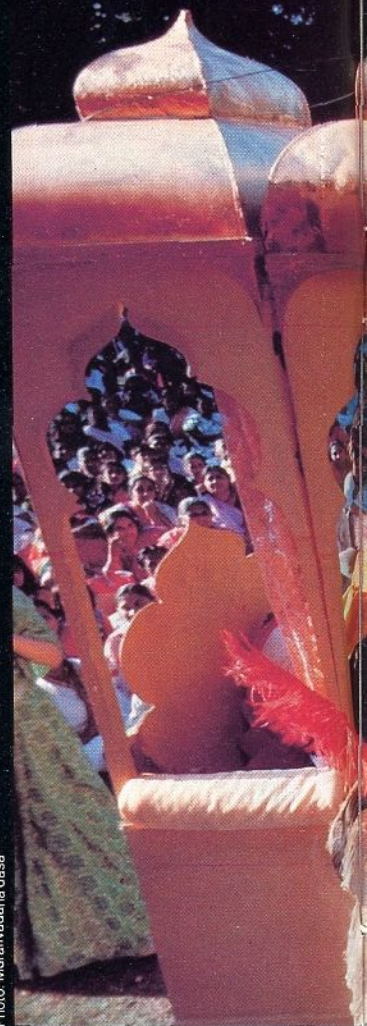


Photo: Muralivadana dāsa

Lord Kṛṣṇa took a humble birth, in the North Indian district of Mathurā (above)—inside King Kāmsa's prison. The demonic Kāmsa (whom a devotee dramatizes, above right, driving a chariot) even tried to kill Kṛṣṇa, but Kṛṣṇa defeated him and delivered His devotees. Despite modern-day Kāmsas posing as cultural and political leaders, Kṛṣṇa's pure devotee His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda has delivered the devotional science of Kṛṣṇa to all the people of the world. And just as people celebrate the birth of Christ, God's son, so, at places like London's Bhaktivedanta Manor (the scene of the above gathering), millions celebrate *Janmāṣṭamī*—the birth of Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Father of all living beings.

Photo: Nityatṛptā-devī dāśī

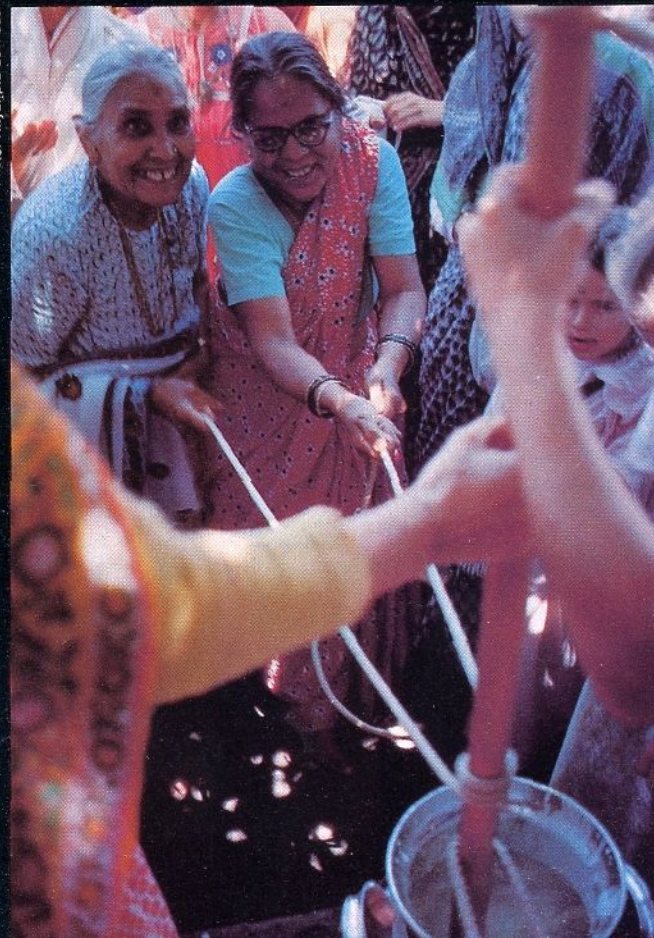




Photo: Bhārgava dāsa

From India to California (as far left), people find Kṛṣṇa attractive. They like to remember Kṛṣṇa's mother Yaśodā churning butter (and Kṛṣṇa stealing it). And they like to remember Kṛṣṇa and His eternal consort Rādhā (left, shown in Their Deity forms on the Manor's altar). Great minds like Emerson and Thoreau have always felt attracted to Kṛṣṇa's *Bhagavad-gītā*, the guidebook to God-realization. So on September 5 visit an ISKCON center, feel the attraction of chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa and feasting on food offered to Kṛṣṇa, and bring home the *Bhagavad-gītā*—the science of Kṛṣṇa, "the all-attractive."

“Among the naïve, of course, one may pass for a spiritual master by wearing robes and a beard, bearing a twinkle in one’s eye, performing some magic tricks, or speaking riddles. But intelligent people won’t settle for these outer trappings. . . .”

Establishing the Proof:

Who Is a Real Guru?

A Special Article by the Back to Godhead Staff

A recent Gallup poll revealed that more than nineteen million American adults are now practicing some form of yoga, meditation, or other “self-renewal” process. To meet this great demand, many “gurus” have appeared on the scene, each teaching his version of spiritual truth. Some have attracted large followings, and every disciple undoubtedly feels that his guru is the best. But for the serious seeker of truth, choosing a spiritual master cannot be a matter of mere sentiment. Spiritual life is factual and scientific, and we have to test the qualifications of any spiritual teacher by referring to the standard authority. This authority is scripture, especially the Sanskrit Vedic scriptures, which throughout history have provided the philosophical basis for the guru-disciple relationship. By referring to Vedic scriptures we can know the criteria for a bona fide spiritual master. Then we can easily see who is actually a spiritual master, and who is a fraud.

Examining the Guru’s Teachings

Among the naïve, of course, one may pass for a spiritual master by wearing robes and a beard, bearing a twinkle in one’s eye, performing some magic tricks, or speaking riddles. But intelligent people won’t settle for these outer trappings; they’ll want to know the real criteria for determining a teacher’s authenticity.

The first criterion, according to the Vedic scriptures, is the quality of the words the teacher speaks. (Even a fool may be highly esteemed—until he

speaks.) In the *Bhagavad-gītā* Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the original spiritual master, tells his disciple Arjuna, “The self-realized soul can impart knowledge unto you because he has seen the truth.” In other words, a genuine guru must have realized the Absolute Truth, the Personality of Godhead, and he must be able to impart this truth to his disciple, thus freeing him (or her) from repeated birth and death.

We should therefore immediately reject as outright charlatans those so-called gurus who pretend to have some spiritual knowledge, but who teach their disciples only how to gain some material advantage—a slimmer body, better sex life, success in business, and so on. Real spiritual life means getting free from the agony of birth and death. How can a common man, unable to distinguish spirit from matter—and thus *himself* caught in the cycle of birth and death—claim to be a spiritual master? Such cheaters generally take up the “guru business” just to earn a living. But the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the essence of all Vedic scriptures, sternly warns, “No one should become a guru unless he can free his disciple from birth and death.”

A true spiritual master must not only be able to distinguish spirit from matter; he must also be able to distinguish the minute, individual spirit (the soul) from the supreme spirit (the Supersoul, or God). Failure to make this important distinction disqualifies many of today’s so-called spiritual masters. In fact, blurring the difference between God and the living entity is the most common philosophical flaw among modern gurus. Their reasoning goes something like

this: “The eternal spirit soul within the body is Brahman, and the supreme spirit beyond the body is also Brahman. Therefore, we are all equal to the Supreme Brahman—or in other words, everyone is God.”

But Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself denies this idea in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (15.7): “The living entities in this material world are eternally My fragmental parts.” It is certainly true that the Vedic scriptures, especially the *Upaniṣads*, teach meditation on Brahman, the eternal spirit. And they also teach the realization that each one of us, as a spirit soul, is also Brahman, separate from our material body. But beyond this all the Vedic scriptures explain that although each of us is spirit, we are only minute sparks of the supreme spirit, God. In other words, God is supreme and infinite, and we are all His infinitesimal expansions; therefore, our duty is to serve Him. This simple axiom is the essence of theism, and all the world’s religions loudly declare it. For a guru to omit or distort this teaching is a serious philosophical lapse. Behind his negligence we will usually find a cheating mentality—a strong aversion for surrendering to the mastership of God. So, when the teachings of a spiritual master are inimical to *bhakti*, or loving devotion to God—when he teaches that there is no personal God, or that God is only an energy, or that we can become God—then we should reject him.

Just as it is a fraud for a so-called guru to offer only gross material benefits, or to collect money from his disciples for selfish aims, or to teach the disciples that they are God or can become God—so it is an even greater fraud for the so-called

guru to proclaim that he himself is an incarnation of God. The Vedic scriptures predict the incarnations of God and describe their extraordinary qualities and activities. So any ordinary person who poses as a guru and says *he* is an incarnation of God exposes himself as the greatest fool in human society. The truth is that everyone, including the spiritual master, is an eternal servant of God.

Since we are all servants of the Supreme Lord, a bona fide guru must be a devotee of the Supreme Lord and teach others how to become His devotees. In fact, unless the guru is a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa, he cannot understand transcendental knowledge—what to speak of imparting it to others. An ideal example of a qualified recipient of transcendental knowledge is Arjuna, whom Lord Kṛṣṇa empowered to understand the *Bhagavad-gītā* because of his devotional attitude. Kṛṣṇa explains in the fourth chapter, “O Arjuna, this very ancient science of the relationship with the Supreme is today told by Me to you because you are My devotee as well as My friend; therefore you can understand the transcendental mystery of this science” (Bg. 4.3). Though Kṛṣṇa spoke the *Bhagavad-gītā* five thousand years ago, His words still hold true today: only the Lord’s devotees can understand transcendental knowledge.

Another important criterion for a guru is that he himself must be a disciple of a bona fide spiritual master—one who is part of a succession of spiritual masters coming from Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself. A guru’s teachings cannot be genuine unless he has received his knowledge by this process of disciplic succession, because one who is not part of a genuine disciplic chain can have no access to the Vedic knowledge. So we cannot over-emphasize the importance of the disciplic succession in determining the credibility of a spiritual teacher. No matter how learned a scholar one may be, he cannot understand the import of Vedic knowledge by the speculative approach. In other words, no one can know the Transcendence by his imperfect sense perception. As the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* (6.23) explains, “Only unto those great souls who simultaneously have implicit faith in both the Lord and the spiritual master are all the imports of Vedic knowledge automatically revealed.”

Examining the Guru’s Life

A genuine guru must not only *speak* the truth; he must also *live* it. In other words, his character must be perfect and his behavior exemplary. In the West we commonly see that a professor or phi-

losopher achieves renown on the basis of his teachings alone, regardless of his personal life. But in Vedic society, if a man is a drunkard or in some other way violates the ideal principles he teaches, then he is considered not a teacher but a cheater. According to the *Gītā* a real guru, who teaches by example, must have the qualities of peacefulness, sense control, austerity, purity, tolerance, honesty, wisdom, and faith in God. So-called gurus who indulge in abominable things like meat eating, cigarette smoking, and illicit sex, and who covet wealth for purchasing various other forms of sense gratification, are all disqualified. One who cannot control his senses cannot rightfully bear the title “guru.”

Since renunciation is a criterion for a

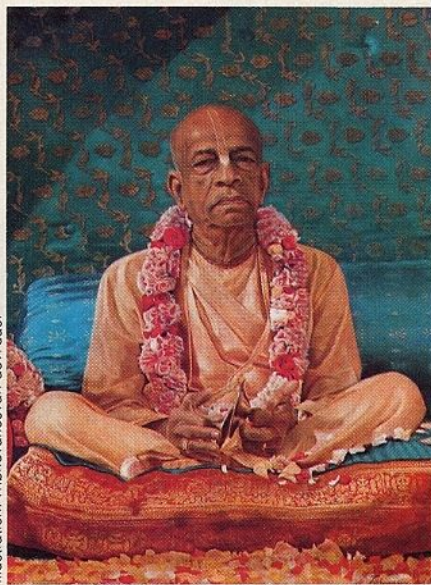


Illustration: Tribhuvaneshvari-devi dāsi

A genuine guru must not only speak the truth; he must also live it. His character must be perfect and his behavior exemplary.

genuine guru, then what about yogis who remain alone in silent meditation, seeking to stay pure by avoiding all material contact? Are they the ideal gurus? No—because such withdrawal from the mass of people does not help those who are suffering without God consciousness. One of the greatest God-realized gurus, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, states in his *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, “If one rejects material things which could be used in the service of Kṛṣṇa [God], his renunciation is incomplete.” Everything should be used to serve God. By not withdrawing from the world, but rather by using worldly things (including money, cars, public media, buildings, and so on) to spread God consciousness, a genuine guru can actually attain complete renunciation and also help humanity.

Sometimes a so-called guru seeks to help humanity by performing some social welfare mission, such as opening hospitals or uplifting the poor. Such a man is generally an atheist, devoid of any real spiritual knowledge. A true spiritual master engages wholeheartedly in glorifying the Supreme Lord, fully convinced that this alone will bring the highest happiness, even within the material sphere. Such a true guru has complete faith in Nārada Muni’s words in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*: “As pouring water on the root of a tree energizes the trunk, branches, twigs, and leaves; and as supplying food to the stomach enlivens the senses and limbs of the body; so simply worshiping Lord Kṛṣṇa through devotional service automatically satisfies the Lord’s parts and parcels, the demigods [who supply the rain, air, sunlight, and all other necessities for man].” So a bona fide spiritual master makes broadcasting the glories of the Supreme Personality of Godhead his only business. He never wastes time making materialistic plans or concocting dry philosophical speculations about God, for he knows full well that all people will be completely satisfied if they simply glorify God. Lord Kṛṣṇa describes such genuine *mahātmās* (great souls) as follows: “Always chanting My glories, endeavoring with great determination, bowing down before Me, these great souls perpetually worship Me with devotion” (Bg. 9.14).

The perfect example of such a *mahātmā* is Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, an incarnation of Kṛṣṇa who appeared five hundred years ago in Bengal, India, to teach pure devotional service. Lord Caitanya taught that one should perfect his own life by practicing the science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and that one should also teach others this science. In one sense, then, He taught that everyone could become a guru simply by telling others about the pastimes and teachings of Kṛṣṇa. During His manifest existence on earth, Lord Caitanya acted as a devotee and always tried to engage others in chanting the glories of the Lord. Thus, He set the example of an ideal spiritual master.

To summarize, we can see that six chief criteria mentioned in the authoritative Vedic scriptures determine the authenticity of a guru. First, the guru’s teachings must be fully spiritual: he must not cheat his disciples by promising them material benefits; rather, he must teach them how to become free from material life and obtain liberation from the miseries of repeated birth and death. Second, the guru must have attained the highest realization of the Absolute

Truth—the personality of God—which is beyond the incomplete impersonal conception. In this way the guru will be competent to distinguish between the infinite Supreme Spirit (God) and the infinitesimal spirit souls. Fully aware of this distinction between God and the individual soul, he should engage himself as a devotee of the Supreme Lord and teach devotional service to his disciples. The third criterion is that the guru must have received his knowledge from a bona fide spiritual master through the authorized process of disciplic succession, as explained in the Vedic literature. The fourth is that the guru's character must be pure: he must rigidly follow all the religious principles governing saintly behavior. Fifth, he must engage himself and others in the glorification of the Lord as the ultimate activity for human society, and he should not divert his energies to material welfare work. And sixth, a guru of the highest order must spread the message of God (Kṛṣṇa) consciousness throughout the world.

Śrīla Prabhupāda

Now, let's apply these six criteria to the Founder-*Ācārya* of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, so that we can see whether he is in fact a bona fide spiritual master.

First, are Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings purely spiritual—free of any material tinge—and can they liberate one from the misery of repeated birth and death? Yes. Śrīla Prabhupāda bases all of his teachings on the *Bhagavad-gītā*, and throughout the *Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa declares that His devotee attains the highest perfection: "Devotional service is the highest activity. . . . Only by devotional service can one achieve transcendental knowledge. . . . One engaged in devotional service is already liberated from birth and death. . . ." Again and again Lord Kṛṣṇa declares that *bhakti*, devotional service, is the best method for spiritual realization. Although the *Vedas* teach many other paths besides *bhakti* (such paths as knowledge, severe austerities, *karma-yoga*, and mystic yoga) the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the final word in Vedic literature, refers to all these as *kaitava-dharma*, or "cheating religion." In truth only unalloyed devotional service (*bhakti*) can give satisfaction to the soul; other practices are of value only insofar as they lead to *bhakti*. Thus, at the conclusion of the *Bhagavad-gītā* Lord Kṛṣṇa declares, *sarva-dharmān parityajya*: "Give up all other so-called religious activities and surrender unto Me alone" (Bg. 18.66). On Kṛṣṇa's au-

thority, Śrīla Prabhupāda is teaching only *bhakti-yoga*, love of God.

Second, has Śrīla Prabhupāda realized the Absolute Truth, the Personality of Godhead, and is he imparting that realization to his disciples? Yes. It is said that one can recognize the fully God-conscious spiritual master by his ability to raise many fallen souls to the level of God consciousness. Unquestionably, Śrīla Prabhupāda exhibits this strength to a remarkable degree. Simply by coming into contact with Śrīla Prabhupāda, thousands of people have devoted their lives to Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples are popularly known as "Kṛṣṇas" and "Hare Kṛṣṇa people"—evidence of how totally dedicated to God they have actually become. Also, Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples strictly avoid the four sinful activities: meat eating, illicit sex, intoxication, and gambling. These four activities, the pillars of sinful life, are an integral part of our modern society. That so many young people have given them up so unreservedly is certainly revolu-

tionary, and is but another tribute to the bona fide guru.

Third, has Śrīla Prabhupāda received his knowledge from a bona fide spiritual master through the authorized process of disciplic succession? Yes. Śrīla Prabhupāda is the present representative of the most authorized disciplic succession, the Brahma-Mādhva-Gauḍīya-sampradāya. The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Kṛṣṇa, has blessed this disciplic succession by appearing first as its original preceptor and again, only five hundred years ago, as Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu. In the beginning of creation, Lord Kṛṣṇa taught the *Vedas* to Brahmā, the "cosmic engineer," who in turn instructed his son and chief disciple, Nārada Muni. Nārada then passed down the transcendental knowledge to Vyāsa-deva (the literary incarnation of God), who compiled all the Vedic literature, including the *Upaniṣads*, *Vedānta-sūtra*, *Purāṇas*, and *Mahābhārata* (which contains the *Bhagavad-gītā*). During the twelfth century the great Madhvācārya, who defeated both Buddha's voidist

AN EMERGENCY PRAYER FOR THE HEALTH OF OUR SPIRITUAL MASTER

On a recent tour of India, Śrīla Prabhupāda became ill and returned home to Vṛndāvana. Deeply concerned, many of his elder disciples went there to be with him. When they asked how they could assist him, Śrīla Prabhupāda said his recovery depended on Kṛṣṇa. Rūpānuga dāsa, one of Śrīla Prabhupāda's eldest disciples, wrote this prayer:

O superior Vaiṣṇavas!¹
O compassionate Ācāryas²
of the Holy Name!
O supreme authorities,
Masters of our fate!
Have mercy upon us!
(We are not able to make any prayers,
but this is an emergency!)

*Sāstra*³ teaches that because of disciples' bad behavior, or to allow some personal service, or to exhibit ecstatic symptoms, the spiritual master may display bad health (although he so kindly says it is simply due to old age and personal neglect of his health—meaning that he has worked too hard to save us). But we may not speculate upon the mind of the Ācāryas.

Please hear our petition!
We pray for the kindness of our Grandfather, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura,⁴ who is by nature merciful upon his spiritual grandchildren. We pray for the continued compassion of the Six Gosvāmīs,⁵ who are already famous in all the three worlds for saving conditioned souls. We pray for the benediction of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the most magnanimous Supreme Personality of Godhead. We pray to Rādhārāṇī,⁶ Queen of Vṛndāvana, protector of our neophyte *bhakti* [devotional service]. And we pray to Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself, whom we cannot even approach without the guidance of our Śrīla Prabhupāda.

We, the fallen servants of His Divine Grace, beseech all of our Masters—Please give Śrīla Prabhupāda more time! Time to insure the strength of this movement. Time to finish the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. And a little more time for us to spend at the lotus feet of His Divine Grace—that we may become pure devotees by his mercy.

philosophy and Śaṅkara's impersonalist philosophy, also appeared in this disciplic succession. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, the most renowned authority on *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*, and Jīva Gosvāmī, India's greatest scholar, are two more links in this unbroken chain of spiritual masters. And today Śrīla Prabhupāda represents the entire line as the disciple of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. Certainly no other genuine guru has such credentials—what to speak of the cheaters who concoct their own philosophies and deceive the public for their personal aggrandizement.

This brings us to the fourth point: the extraordinary purity of Śrīla Prabhupāda's character. Unlike those pseudo gurus who preach one thing and practice another, Śrīla Prabhupāda exemplifies all the qualities of a *mahātmā* (great soul) described in the scriptures. He is peaceful, tolerant, merciful, austere, totally self-controlled, humble, perfectly clean (externally and within his heart), and friendly to everyone. Above all, he has perfect, unshakable faith in Lord

Kṛṣṇa. Anyone who has met him can testify that, without question, he is a modern saint in the most profound sense.

Fifth, does Śrīla Prabhupāda teach glorification of God as the *only* means for self-realization, and does he shun materially motivated welfare work? Yes. In perfect accord with the scriptures and the preceding spiritual masters, Śrīla Prabhupāda is exclusively propagating the *saṅkīrtana* movement—the congregational chanting of God's names and engagement in His devotional service. Many parts of the Vedic literature proclaim that of all spiritual practices, *saṅkīrtana* is the most effective for this materialistic age: the *Brhan-nāradya Purāṇa* explains that no other method of God-realization is possible for the people of this age; the *Kali-santarāna Upaniṣad* declares that the holy name will cure the chanter of the poisonous effects of the present materialistic age of Kali; and the *Nārada Pañcarātra* says that the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra (composed entirely of God's names) is equal to all other mantras and sacrifices combined. Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu also taught glorification of God through *saṅkīrtana*, and He particularly stressed the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. As for material well-being, Lord Caitanya explains in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (*Madhya* 22.62) that anyone who glorifies Lord Kṛṣṇa through devotional service automatically performs all subsidiary activities. In other words, he attains both spiritual *and* material fulfillment. So what need is there for materialistic philanthropy?

Since Śrīla Prabhupāda is teaching the conclusion of the scriptures and is supported by the past authorities, the knowledge he is giving is the purest and most authorized. None of today's gurus is even nearly as qualified in this respect. If a would-be guru is not teaching the message of the disciplic succession from Kṛṣṇa, and if he does not put forward the philosophy of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, and if he does not stress the glorification of God by chanting His holy names—then he cannot be accepted as genuine.

Finally, the conclusive evidence that Śrīla Prabhupāda is the only real guru today is that he is effectively spreading God (Kṛṣṇa) consciousness throughout the world. Some persons object when we praise Śrīla Prabhupāda so highly. They think we are saying no one can become a guru except our guru. But actually Lord Caitanya says that everyone—especially those born in India—should make his life perfect by practicing Kṛṣṇa con-

sciousness and then teach Kṛṣṇa consciousness to others. Only Śrīla Prabhupāda, however, has taken up the Lord's order with so much determination and so much success. Twelve years ago, while living in Vṛndāvana, the land of Kṛṣṇa, Śrīla Prabhupāda saw that his elder Godbrothers were not carrying out the order of Lord Caitanya and Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura to spread the message of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Now that Śrīla Prabhupāda has taken up that order, he deserves not criticism but praise. Indeed, the entire world should cooperate with such a selfless universal teacher.

The Miracle of Śrīla Prabhupāda's Books

Certainly there is abundant evidence of Śrīla Prabhupāda's greatness, but the most conclusive of all is his books. First, Śrīla Prabhupāda is the only guru who has presented the *Bhagavad-gītā* purely, without misleading commentary. As long ago as the end of the nineteenth century, many Hindu gurus came to the United States claiming to be great saints and scholars of the *Bhagavad-gītā*. They presented the *Gītā* in many versions—nearly one hundred—but not one produced even a single devotee of Kṛṣṇa. In other words, these false gurus put forth the *Bhagavad-gītā* with self-interested interpretations, simply to popularize their own philosophies. Thus they ignored the *Gītā*'s real philosophy of surrender to Kṛṣṇa. And the result? Although many people admired the *Bhagavad-gītā*, no one could understand it, and no one cared to become a devotee of Kṛṣṇa. However, since Śrīla Prabhupāda's publication of the *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, thousands of people have become purified by this knowledge and have taken up devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Among Śrīla Prabhupāda's other books are the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (a work in progress) and the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, two of the most important Vedic scriptures. To date Śrīla Prabhupāda has written more than sixty volumes, and he is currently producing one complete book nearly every month. These publications (and their author) have won the praise of leading scholars throughout the world, as the following comments will attest.

Professor Garry Gelade of Oxford University writes, "This [*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*] is a book to be treasured. . . . The clarity and precision of Śrīla Prabhupāda's commentaries on the text can rarely have been equaled. No one of whatever faith or philosophical persuasion who reads this book with an

We implore you—these ten years have passed so quickly, and we are caught far too short of perfection (You know that actually only ten milliseconds have passed in eternal time). Therefore kindly extend his stay, lest we fall from the spiritual path.

O Vaiṣṇava saints!
 O Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura,
 Our eternal grandfather,
 O Six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana,
 O Rādhārāṇī, Mother of *Bhakti*,
 O Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu,
 the Master of all,
 O Lord Kṛṣṇa, the final repose of our love,
 O Vaiṣṇava Ācāryas—
 Kindly have mercy upon us:
 Please don't yet take
 Śrīla Prabhupāda away!
 Kindly grant this emergency prayer. . . .

Your most fallen servant, Rūpānuga dāsa

Note: Śrīla Prabhupāda has since gradually recovered from his illness and is again engaging in his regular activities, including his translation of and commentary on the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

1. *Vaiṣṇavas*: devotees of Viṣṇu (Kṛṣṇa).
2. *Ācāryas*: spiritual masters who teach by setting a perfect example.
3. *Sāstra*: the scriptures.
4. *Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura*: the spiritual master of Śrīla Prabhupāda.
5. *The Six Gosvāmīs*: the immediate disciples of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu.
6. *Rādhārāṇī*: Kṛṣṇa's eternal consort.

open mind can fail to be moved and impressed."

Dr. Shaligram Shukla, Professor of Sanskrit at Georgetown University, praises Śrīla Prabhupāda's *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*: "It is a deeply felt, powerfully conceived, and beautifully explained work... I have never seen any other work on the *Gītā* with such an ardent voice and style."

And Dr. Kailash Vajpey, Visiting Professor of Indian Studies at the University of Mexico, expresses himself in this way: "Of all commentaries on the *Bhagavad-gītā* that have appeared until now in the West, this present edition by Śrī A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda is the best... Śrīla Prabhupāda's Sanskrit scholarship is without parallel. His penetration into the meaning of the text indicates the deepest realization and understanding of the profound meaning of the *Gītā*."

Conclusion

From every angle of vision and on every count, it is clear that Śrīla Prabhupāda is *jagad-guru*—a pure devotee empowered by the Supreme Personality of

Godhead to teach Kṛṣṇa consciousness to the entire world. Indeed, more than a century ago Śrīla Bhaktinoda Ṭhākura, one of the great spiritual masters in the line of disciplic succession, predicted the advent of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda. Śrīla Bhaktinoda wrote, "A personality will soon appear to preach the teachings of Lord Caitanya and move unrestrictedly over the whole world with His message."

In 1965, at the advanced age of seventy, with no companion and practically no money (about five dollars)—but with the ardent desire to execute the instruction of his guru—Śrīla Prabhupāda left his home in Vṛndāvana, India, and sailed to America. On his arrival in Boston Harbor, Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote, "I do not know, Kṛṣṇa, why You have sent me here. These people are all demonic, engaged in meat eating and illicit sex. How will they be able to hear the message of Kṛṣṇa?" Śrīla Prabhupāda wasn't patronized by any organization in the United States, nor was he helped by His Godbrothers in India. Yet as a surrendered servant of his spiritual

master, he tried to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness, beginning from a humble storefront on New York's Lower East Side. The success of the worldwide Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement today is a testimony to Kṛṣṇa's favor upon His pure devotee.

Śrīla Prabhupāda started the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement single-handedly, and in only eleven years he has laid the foundation, organized the framework, and imparted the philosophy for a universal movement to establish God consciousness throughout human society. In only eleven years Śrīla Prabhupāda has circled the globe more than a dozen times—preaching, translating, opening more than one hundred centers, managing worldwide affairs, and accepting thousands of disciples—all at a pace that none of his youthful followers has been able to match. His sixty-plus books have been translated into fifteen major languages, and they are standard texts in colleges and universities throughout North America, Europe, Australia, and parts of Asia.

Śrīla Prabhupāda has taught businessmen to do business for Kṛṣṇa, artists to paint and sculpt for Kṛṣṇa, and scientists to use their brainpower and know-how for Kṛṣṇa. He has taught mothers to raise Kṛṣṇa-conscious children, actors to perform dramas depicting the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa, and anyone and everyone to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and eat *prasāda*, food offered to Kṛṣṇa. He has transformed his fortunate disciples (who had formerly been brainwashed by today's demonic propaganda of sense gratification) into peaceful, self-controlled *brāhmaṇas*, the most intelligent members of human society. Śrīla Prabhupāda is *jagad-guru*, the spiritual master of all of us (all of us who agree to hear him submissively), and he is teaching the world how to have peace, both individually and internationally, by using everything in the service of its rightful owner—Kṛṣṇa—and by chanting Kṛṣṇa's holy names.

The glory of Śrīla Prabhupāda as the representative of God surpasses any attempt to define his greatness. Beyond the proofs cited in these few pages, a closer study of Śrīla Prabhupāda's life and teachings will reveal many more unprecedented achievements and afford further transcendental enlightenment. The reader of this humble attempt to praise a great soul has been very kind to consider our presentation. To you our concluding words are these: we respectfully request you to read the books of this highly exalted bona fide spiritual master. If you submissively hear his message, certainly it will touch your heart and benefit you eternally.

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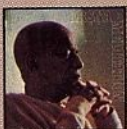


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First Canto "Creation"

CHAPTER TWELVE

Birth of Emperor Parīkṣit

(continued from previous issue)

TEXT 7

मातुर्गर्भगतो वीरः स तदा भृगुनन्दन ।
ददर्श पुरुषं कञ्चिद्दह्यमानोऽस्रतेजसा ॥ ७ ॥

*mātur garbha-gato vīrah
sa tadā bhṛgu-nandana
dadarśa puruṣaṁ kañcid
dahyamāno 'stra-tejasā*

mātuḥ—mother; *garbha*—womb; *gataḥ*—being situated there; *vīrah*—the great fighter; *saḥ*—child Parīkṣit; *tadā*—at that time; *bhṛgu-nandana*—O son of Bhṛgu; *dadarśa*—could see; *puruṣam*—the Supreme Lord; *kañcit*—as someone else; *dahyamānaḥ*—suffering from being burned; *astra*—the *brahmāstra*; *tejasā*—temperature.

TRANSLATION

O son of Bhṛgu [Śaunaka], when the child Parīkṣit, the great fighter, was in the womb of his mother, Uttarā, and was suffering from the burning heat of the *brahmāstra* [thrown by Aśvatthāmā], he could observe the Supreme Lord coming to him.

PURPORT

Death generally involves remaining in trance for seven months. A living being, according to his own action, is allowed to enter into the womb of a mother by the vehicle of a father's semina, and thus he develops his desired body. This is the law of birth in specific bodies according to one's past actions. When he is awake from trance, he feels the inconvenience of being confined within the womb, and thus he wants to come out of it

and sometimes fortunately prays to the Lord for such liberation. Mahārāja Parīkṣit, while in the womb of his mother, was struck by the *brahmāstra* released by Aśvatthāmā, and he was feeling the burning heat. But because he was a devotee of the Lord, the Lord at once appeared Himself within the womb by His all-powerful energy, and the child could see that someone else had come to save him. Even in that helpless condition, the child Parīkṣit endured the unbearable temperature due to his being a great fighter by nature. And for this reason the word *vīrah* has been used.

TEXT 8

अङ्गुष्ठमात्रममलं स्फुरत्पुरटमौलिनम् ।
अपिव्यदर्शनं श्यामं तडिद्वाससमच्युतम् ॥ ८ ॥

*aṅguṣṭha-mātram amalam
sphurat-puraṭa-maulinam
apīvyā-darśanam śyāmaṁ
taḍid vāsasam acyutam*

aṅguṣṭha—by the measure of a thumb; *mātram*—only; *amalam*—transcendental; *sphurat*—blazing; *puraṭa*—gold; *maulinam*—helmet; *apīvyā*—very beautiful; *darśanam*—to look at; *śyāmaṁ*—blackish; *taḍid*—lightning; *vāsasam*—clothing; *acyutam*—the Infallible (the Lord).

TRANSLATION

He [the Lord] was only thumb high, but He was all transcendental. He had a very beautiful, blackish, infallible body, and He wore a dress of lightning yellow and a helmet of blazing gold. Thus He was seen by the child.

TEXT 9

श्रीमदीर्घचतुर्बाहुं तप्तकाञ्चनकुण्डलम् ।
क्षतजाक्षं गदापाणिमात्मनः सर्वतोदिशम् ।
परिभ्रमन्तशुल्काभां भ्रामयन्तं गदां मुहुः ॥ ९ ॥

*śrīmad-dīrgha-catur-bāhuṁ
tapta-kāñcana-kuṇḍalam
kṣatajākṣaṁ gadā-pāṇim
ātmanaḥ sarvato diśam
paribhramantaṁ ulkābhāṁ
bhṛmayantaṁ gadāṁ muhuḥ*

śrīmat—enriched; *dirgha*—prolonged; *catur-bāhum*—four-handed; *tapta-kāncana*—molten gold; *kuṇḍalam*—earrings; *kṣataja-akṣam*—eyes with the redness of blood; *gadā-pāṇim*—hand with a club; *ātmanaḥ*—own; *sarvataḥ*—all; *diśam*—around; *paribhramantam*—loitering; *ulkābhām*—like shooting stars; *bhramāyantam*—encircling; *gadām*—the club; *muhuh*—constantly.

TRANSLATION

The Lord was enriched with four hands, earrings of molten gold and eyes blood red with fury. As He loitered about, His club constantly encircled Him like a shooting star.

PURPORT

It is said in the *Brahma-saṁhitā* (Ch. 5) that the Supreme Lord Govinda, by His one plenary portion, enters into the halo of the universe and distributes himself as Paramātmā, or the Supersoul, not only within the heart of every living being, but also within every atom of the material elements. Thus the Lord is all-pervading by His inconceivable potency, and thus He entered the womb of Uttarā to save His beloved devotee Mahārāja Parīkṣit. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* (9.31) the Lord assured everyone that His devotees are never to be vanquished. No one can kill a devotee of the Lord because he is protected by the Lord, and no one can save a person whom the Lord desires to kill. The Lord is all-powerful, and therefore He can both save and kill as He likes. He became visible to His devotee Mahārāja Parīkṣit even in that awkward position (in the womb of his mother) in a shape just suitable for his vision. The Lord can become bigger than thousands of universes and can become smaller than an atom at the same time. Merciful as He is, He becomes just suitable to the vision of the limited living being. He is unlimited. He is not limited by any measurement of our calculation. He can become bigger than what we can think of, and He can become smaller than what we can conceive. But in all circumstances He is the same all-powerful Lord. There is no difference between the thumblike Viṣṇu in the womb of Uttarā and the full-fledged Nārāyaṇa in the Vaikuṇṭha-dhāma, the kingdom of Godhead. He accepts the form of *arca-vigraha* (worshipable Deity) just to accept service from His different incapable devotees. By the mercy of the *arca-vigraha*, the form of the Lord in material elements, the devotees who are in the material world can easily approach the Lord, although He is not conceivable by the material senses. The *arca-vigraha* is therefore an all-spiritual form of the Lord to be perceived by the material devotees; such an *arca-vigraha* of the Lord is never to be considered material. There is no difference between matter and spirit for the Lord, although there is a gulf of difference between the two in the case of the conditioned living being. For the Lord there is nothing but spiritual existence, and similarly there is nothing except spiritual existence for the pure devotee of the Lord in his intimate relation with the Lord.

TEXT 10

अस्त्रतेजः खगदया नीहारमिव गोपतिः ।
विधमन्तं संनिकर्षे पर्यैक्षत क इत्यसौ ॥१०॥

astra-tejaḥ sva-gadayā
nīhāram iva gopatiḥ
vidhamantaṁ sannikarṣe
paryaiṣata ka ity asau

astra-tejaḥ—radiation of the *brahmāstra*; *sva-gadayā*—by means of His own club; *nīhāram*—drops of dew; *iva*—like; *gopatiḥ*—the sun; *vidhamantaṁ*—the act of vanishing; *sannikarṣe*—nearby; *paryaiṣata*—observing; *kaḥ*—who; *ity asau*—this body.

TRANSLATION

The Lord was thus engaged in vanquishing the radiation of the *brahmāstra*, just as the sun evaporates a drop of dew. He was observed by the child, who thought about who He was.

TEXT 11

विधूय तदमेयात्मा भगवान्धर्मगुब् विभुः ।
मिषतो दशमासस्य तत्रैवान्तर्दधे हरिः ॥११॥

vidhūya tad ameyātmā
bhagavān dharmā-guḥ vibhuḥ
miṣato daśamāsasya
tatraivāntardadhe hariḥ

vidhūya—having completely washed off; *tat*—that; *ameyātmā*—the all-pervading Supersoul; *bhagavān*—the Personality of Godhead; *dharmā-guḥ*—the protector of righteousness; *vibhuḥ*—the Supreme; *miṣataḥ*—while observing; *daśamāsasya*—of one who is dressed by all directions; *tatra eva*—then and there; *antaḥ*—out of sight; *dadhe*—became; *hariḥ*—the Lord.

TRANSLATION

While thus being observed by the child, the Supreme Lord Personality of Godhead, the Supersoul of everyone and the protector of the righteous, who stretches in all directions and who is unlimited by time and space, disappeared at once.

PURPORT

Child Parīkṣit was not observing a living being who is limited by time and space. There is a gulf of difference between the Lord and the individual living being. The Lord is mentioned herein as the supreme living being unlimited by time and space. Every living being is limited by time and space. Even though a living being is qualitatively one with the Lord, quantitatively there is a great difference between the Supreme Soul and the common individual soul. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* both the living beings and the Supreme Being are said to be all-pervading (*yena sarvaṁ idaṁ tatam*), yet there is a difference between these two kinds of all-pervasiveness. A common living being or soul can be all-pervading within his own limited body, but the supreme living being is all-pervading in all space and all time. A common living being cannot extend its influence over another common living being by its all-pervasiveness, but the Supreme Supersoul, the Personality of Godhead, is unlimitedly able to exert His influence over all places and all times and over all living beings. And because He is all-pervasive, unlimited by time and space, He can appear even within the womb of the mother of child Parīkṣit. He is mentioned herein as the protector of the righteous. Anyone who is a surrendered soul unto the Supreme is righteous, and he is specifically protected by the Lord in all circumstances. The Lord is the indirect protector of the unrighteous also, for He rectifies their sins through His external potency. The Lord is mentioned herein as one who is dressed in the ten directions. This means dressed with garments on ten sides, up and down. He is present everywhere and can appear and disappear at His will from everywhere and anywhere. His disappearance from the sight of the child Parīkṣit does not mean that He appeared on the spot from any other place. He was present there, and even after His disappearance He was there, although invisible to the eyes of the child. This material covering of the effulgent firmament is also something like a womb of the mother nature, and we are all put into the womb by the Lord, the father of all living beings. He is present everywhere, even in this material womb of mother Durgā, and those who are deserving can see the Lord.

TEXT 12

ततः सर्वगुणोदके सानुकूलग्रहोदये ।
जज्ञे वंशधरः पाण्डुर्भूयः पाण्डुरिवौजसा ॥१२॥

tataḥ sarva-guṇodarke
sānukūla-grahodaye
jajñe vaṁśa-dharaḥ pāṇḍor
bhūyah pāṇḍur ivaujasā

tatah—thereupon; *sarva*—all; *guṇa*—good signs; *udarke*—having gradually evolved; *sānukūla*—all favorable; *grahodaye*—constellation of stellar influence; *jajñe*—took birth; *vaṅśa-dharaḥ*—heir apparent; *pāṇḍoh*—of Pāṇḍu; *bhūyah*—being; *pāṇḍuḥ iva*—exactly like Pāṇḍu; *ojasā*—by prowess.

TRANSLATION

Thereupon, when all the good signs of the zodiac gradually evolved, the heir apparent of Pāṇḍu, who would be exactly like him in prowess, took birth.

PURPORT

Astronomical calculations of stellar influences upon a living being are not suppositions, but are factual, as confirmed in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Every living being is controlled by the laws of nature at every minute, just as a citizen is controlled by the influence of the state. The state laws are grossly observed, but the laws of material nature, being subtle to our gross understanding, cannot be experienced grossly. As stated in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (3.9), every action of life produces another reaction, which is binding upon us, and only those who are acting on behalf of Yajñā (Viṣṇu) are not bound by reactions. Our actions are judged by the higher authorities, the agents of the Lord, and thus we are awarded bodies according to our activities. The law of nature is so subtle that every part of our body is influenced by the respective stars, and a living being obtains his working body to fulfill his terms of imprisonment by the manipulation of such astronomical influence. A man's destiny is therefore ascertained by the birthtime constellation of stars, and a factual horoscope is made by a learned astrologer. It is a great science, and misuse of a science does not make it useless. Mahārāja Parikṣit or even the Personality of Godhead appear in certain constellations of good stars, and thus the influence is exerted upon the body thus born at an auspicious moment. The most auspicious constellation of stars takes place during the appearance of the Lord in this material world, and it is specifically called *jayantī*, a word not to be abused for any other purposes. Mahārāja Parikṣit was not only a great *ksatriya* emperor, but also a great devotee of the Lord. Thus he cannot take his birth at any inauspicious moment. As a proper place and time is selected to receive a respectable personage, so also to receive such a personality as Mahārāja Parikṣit, who was especially cared for by the Supreme Lord, a suitable moment is chosen when all good stars assembled together to exert their influence upon the King. Thus he took his birth just to be known as the great hero of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. This suitable arrangement of astral influences is never a creation of man's will, but is the arrangement of the superior management of the agency of the Supreme Lord. Of course, the arrangement is made according to the good or bad deeds of the living being. Herein lies the importance of pious acts performed by the living being. Only by pious acts can one be allowed to get good wealth, good education and beautiful features. The *saṁskāras* of the school of *sanātana-dharma* (man's eternal engagement) are highly suitable for creating an atmosphere for taking advantage of good stellar influences, and therefore *garbhādhāna-saṁskāra*, or the first seedling purificatory process prescribed for the higher castes, is the beginning of all pious acts to receive a good pious and intelligent class of men in human society. There will be peace and prosperity in the world due to good and sane population only; there is hell and disturbance only because of the unwanted, insane populace addicted to sex indulgence.

TEXT 13

तस्य प्रीतमना राजा विप्रैर्धैर्म्यकृपादिभिः ।
जातकं कारयामास वाचयित्वा च मङ्गलम् ॥१३॥

tasya prītamanā rājā
viprair dhaumya-kṛpādibhiḥ
jātakam kārayām āsa
vācayitvā ca maṅgalam

tasya—his; *prītamanāh*—satisfied; *rājā*—King Yudhiṣṭhira; *vipraih*—by the learned *br̥hmanas*; *dhaumya*—Dhaumya; *kṛpa*—Kṛpa; *ādibhiḥ*—and others also; *jātakam*—one of the purificatory processes performed just after the birth of a child; *kārayām āsa*—had them performed; *vācayitvā*—by recitation; *ca*—also; *maṅgalam*—auspicious.

TRANSLATION

King Yudhiṣṭhira, who was very satisfied with the birth of Mahārāja Parikṣit, had the purificatory process of birth performed. Learned *br̥hmanas*, headed by Dhaumya and Kṛpa, recited auspicious hymns.

PURPORT

There is a need for a good and intelligent class of *br̥hmanas* who are expert in performing the purificatory processes prescribed in the system of *varṇāśrama-dharma*. Unless such purificatory processes are performed, there is no possibility of good population, and in the age of Kali the population all over the world is of *sūdra* quality or lower for want of this purificatory process. It is not possible, however, to revive the Vedic process of purification in this age, for want of proper facilities and good *br̥hmanas*, but there is the *Pāñcarātrika* system also recommended for this age. The *Pāñcarātrika* system acts on the *sūdra* class of men, supposedly the population of the Kali-yuga, and it is the prescribed purificatory process suitable to the age and time. Such a purificatory process is allowed only for spiritual upliftment and not for any other purpose. Spiritual upliftment is never conditioned by higher or lower parentage.

After the *garbhādhāna* purificatory process, there are certain other *saṁskāras* like *simantonnayana*, *sadhabhakṣaṇam*, etc., during the period of pregnancy, and when the child is born the first purificatory process is *jātakarma*. This was performed duly by Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira with the help of good and learned *br̥hmanas* like Dhaumya, the royal priest, and Kṛpācārya, who was not only a priest but also a great general. Both these learned and perfect priests, assisted by other good *br̥hmanas*, were employed by Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira to perform the ceremony. Therefore all the *saṁskāras*, purificatory processes, are not mere formalities or social functions only, but they are all for practical purposes and can be successfully performed by expert *br̥hmanas* like Dhaumya and Kṛpa. Such *br̥hmanas* are not only rare, but also not available in this age, and therefore, for the purpose of spiritual upliftment in this fallen age, the Gosvāmis prefer the purificatory processes under *Pāñcarātrika* formulas to the Vedic rites.

Kṛpācārya is the son of the great Ṛṣi Sardban and was born in the family of Gautama. The birth is said to be accidental. By chance, the great Ṛṣi Sardban met Janapadi, a famous society girl of heaven, and the Ṛṣi Sardban discharged semina in two parts. By one part immediately a male child and by the other part a female child were born as twins. The male child was later on known as Kṛpa, and the female child was known as Kṛpi. Mahārāja Śantanu, while engaged in chase in the jungle, picked up the children and brought them up to the brahminical status by the proper purificatory process. Kṛpācārya later became a great general like Droṇācārya, and his sister was married to Droṇācārya. Kṛpācārya later on took part in the Battle of Kurukṣetra and joined the party of Duryodhana. Kṛpācārya helped kill Abhimanyu, the father of Mahārāja Parikṣit, but he was still held in esteem by the family of the Pāṇḍavas due to his being as great a *br̥hmana* as Droṇācārya. When the Pāṇḍavas were sent to the forest after being defeated in the gambling game with Duryodhana, Dhṛtarāṣṭra entrusted the Pāṇḍavas to Kṛpācārya for guidance. After the end of the battle, Kṛpācārya again became a member of the royal assembly, and he was called during the birth of Mahārāja Parikṣit for recitation of auspicious Vedic hymns to make the ceremony successful. Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira, while quitting the palace for his great departure to the Himalayas, entrusted Kṛpācārya with Mahārāja Parikṣit as his disciple, and he left home satisfied because of Kṛpācārya's taking charge of Mahārāja Parikṣit. The great administrators, kings and em-

perors were always under the guidance of learned *brāhmaṇas* like Kṛpācārya and thus were able to act properly in the discharge of political responsibilities.

TEXT 14

हिरण्यं गां महीं ग्रामान् हस्त्यश्वान्नुपतिर्वरान् ।
प्रादात्स्वन्नं च विप्रेभ्यः प्रजातीर्थे स तीर्थवित् ॥१४॥

hiraṇyam gām mahīm grāmān
hasty-aśvān nṛpatir varān
prādāt svannam ca viprebhyaḥ
prajā-tīrthe sa tīrthavit

hiraṇyam—gold; *gām*—cows; *mahīm*—land; *grāmān*—villages; *hasti*—elephants; *aśvān*—horses; *nṛpatiḥ*—the King; *varān*—rewards; *prādāt*—gave in charity; *svannam*—good food grains; *ca*—and; *viprebhyaḥ*—unto the *brāhmaṇas*; *prajā-tīrthe*—on the occasion of giving in charity on the birthday of a son; *saḥ*—he; *tīrtha-vit*—one who knows how, when and where charity is to be given.

TRANSLATION

Upon the birth of a son, the King, who knew how, where and when charity should be given, gave gold, land, villages, elephants, horses and good food grains to the *brāhmaṇas*.

PURPORT

Only the *brāhmaṇas* and *sannyāsīs* are authorized to accept charity from the householders. In all the different occasions of *saṁskāras*, especially during the time of birth, marriage and death, wealth is distributed to the *brāhmaṇas* because the *brāhmaṇas* give the highest quality of service in regard to the prime necessity of humankind. The charity was substantial in the shape of gold, land, villages, horses, elephants and food grains, with other materials for cooking complete foodstuff. The *brāhmaṇas* were not, therefore, poor in the actual sense of the term. On the contrary, because they possessed gold, land, villages, horses, elephants and sufficient grains, they had nothing to earn for themselves. They would simply devote themselves to the well-being of the entire society.

The word *tīrthavit* is significant because the King knew well where and when charity has to be given. Charity is never unproductive or blind. In the *sāstras* charity was offered to persons who deserve to accept charity by dint of spiritual enlightenment. The so-called *daridra-nārāyaṇa*, a misconception of the Supreme Lord by unauthorized persons, is never to be found in the *sāstras* as the object of charity. Nor can a wretched poor man receive much munificent charity in the way of horses, elephants, land and villages. The conclusion is that the intelligent men, or the *brāhmaṇas* specifically engaged in the service of the Lord, were properly maintained without anxiety for the needs of the body, and the King and other householders gladly looked after all their comforts.

It is enjoined in the *sāstras* that as long as a child is joined with the mother by the navel pipe, the child is considered to be of one body with the mother, but as soon as the pipe is cut and the child is separated from the mother, the purificatory process of *jātakarma* is performed. The administrative demigods and past forefathers of the family come to see a newly born child, and such an occasion is specifically accepted as the proper time for distributing wealth to the right persons productively for the spiritual advancement of society.

TEXT 15

तमूचुर्ब्राह्मणास्तुष्टा राजानं प्रश्रयान्वितम् ।
एष ह्यस्मिन् प्रजातन्तो पुरुषां पौरवर्षभ ॥१५॥

tam ūcur brāhmaṇās tuṣṭā
rājānaṁ praśrayānvitam

eṣa hy asmin prajā-tantau
purūṇām pauraṣabha

tam—unto him; *ūcuḥ*—addressed; *brāhmaṇāḥ*—the learned *brāhmaṇas*; *tuṣṭāḥ*—very much satisfied; *rājānam*—unto the King; *praśrayānvitam*—very much obliging; *eṣaḥ*—this; *hi*—certainly; *asmin*—in the chain of; *prajā-tantau*—descending line; *purūṇām*—of the Purus; *paura-ṣabha*—the chief among the Purus.

TRANSLATION

The learned *brāhmaṇas*, who were very satisfied with the charities of the King, addressed him as the chief amongst the Purus and informed him that his son was certainly in the line of descent from the Purus.

TEXT 16

दैवेनाप्रतिघातेन शुक्ले संस्थाद्युपेयुषि ।
रातो वो ऽनुग्रहार्थाय विष्णुना प्रभविष्णुना ॥१६॥

daivenāpratighātena
śukle saṁsthāṁ upeyuṣi
rāto vo 'nugrahārthāya
viṣṇunā prabha-viṣṇunā

daivena—by supernatural power; *apratighātena*—by what is irresistible; *śukle*—unto the pure; *saṁsthāṁ*—destruction; *upeyuṣi*—having been enforced; *rātaḥ*—restored; *vaḥ*—for you; *anugraha-arthāya*—for the sake of obliging; *viṣṇunā*—by the all-pervasive Lord; *prabha-viṣṇunā*—by the all-powerful.

TRANSLATION

The *brāhmaṇas* said: This spotless son has been restored by the all-powerful and all-pervasive Lord Viṣṇu, the Personality of Godhead, in order to oblige you. He was saved when he was doomed to be destroyed by an irresistible supernatural weapon.

PURPORT

The child Parikṣit was saved by the all-powerful and all-pervasive Viṣṇu (Lord Kṛṣṇa) for two reasons. The first reason is that the child in the womb of his mother was spotless due to his being a pure devotee of the Lord. The second reason is that the child was the only surviving male descendant of Puru, the pious forefather of the virtuous King Yudhiṣṭhira. The Lord wants to continue the line of pious kings to rule over the earth as His representatives for the actual progress of a peaceful and prosperous life. After the Battle of Kurukṣetra, even up to the next generation of Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira was annihilated, and there were none who could generate another son in the great royal family. Mahārāja Parikṣit, the son of Abhimanyu, was the only surviving heir apparent in the family, and by the irresistible supernatural *brahmāstra* weapon of Aśvatthāmā, he was forced to be annihilated. Lord Kṛṣṇa is described herein as Viṣṇu, and this is also significant. Lord Kṛṣṇa, the original Personality of Godhead, does the work of protection and annihilation in His capacity of Viṣṇu. Lord Viṣṇu is the plenary expansion of Lord Kṛṣṇa. The all-pervasive activities of the Lord are executed by Him in His Viṣṇu feature. Child Parikṣit is described here as spotlessly white because he is an unalloyed devotee of the Lord. Such unalloyed devotees of the Lord appear on the earth just to execute the mission of the Lord. The Lord desires the conditioned souls hovering in the material creation to be reclaimed to go back home, back to Godhead, and thus He helps them by preparing the transcendental literatures like the *Vedas*, by sending missionaries of saints and sages and by deputing His representative, the spiritual master. Such transcendental literatures, missionaries and representatives of the Lord are spotlessly white because the contamination of the material qualities cannot even touch them. They are always protected by the Lord when they are threatened with annihilation. Such foolish

threats are made by the gross materialists. The *brahmāstra*, which was thrown by Aśvatthāmā at the child Parikṣit, was certainly supernaturally powerful, and nothing of the material world could resist its force of penetration. But the all-powerful Lord, who is present everywhere, within and without, could counteract it by His all-powerful potency just to save a bona fide servant of the Lord and descendant of another devotee, Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira, who was always obliged by the Lord by His causeless mercy.

TEXT 17

तस्मान्नाम्ना विष्णुरातइति लोके भविष्यति।
न संदेहो महाभा महाभागवतो महान् ॥१७॥

tasmān nāmnā viṣṇu-rāta
iti loke bhaviṣyati
na sandeho mahā-bhāga
mahā-bhāgavato mahān

tasmāt—therefore; *nāmnā*—by the name; *viṣṇu-rātaḥ*—protected by Viṣṇu, the Personality of Godhead; *iti*—thus; *loke*—in all the planets; *bhaviṣyati*—shall become well known; *na*—no; *sandehaḥ*—doubts; *mahā-bhāga*—most fortunate; *mahā-bhāgavataḥ*—the first-class devotee of the Lord; *mahān*—qualified by all good qualities.

TRANSLATION

For this reason this child will be well known in the world as one who is protected by the Personality of Godhead. O most fortunate one, there is no doubt that this child will become a first-class devotee and will be qualified with all good qualities.

PURPORT

The Lord gives protection to all living beings because He is their supreme leader. The Vedic hymns confirm that the Lord is the Supreme Person amongst all personalities. The difference between the two living beings is that the one, the Personality of Godhead, provides for all other living beings, and by knowing Him one can achieve eternal peace (*Kaṭha Upaniṣad*). Such protection is given by His different potencies to different grades of living beings. But as far as His unalloyed devotees are concerned, He gives the protection personally. Therefore, Mahārāja Parikṣit is protected from the very beginning of his appearance in the womb of his mother. And because he is especially given protection by the Lord, the indication must be concluded that the child would be a first-grade devotee of the Lord with all good qualities. There are three grades of devotees, namely the *mahā-bhāgavata*, *madhyam-adhikāri* and the *kaniṣṭha-adhikāri*. Those who go to the temples of the Lord and offer worshipful respect to the Deity without sufficient knowledge in the theological science and therefore without any respect for the devotees of the Lord are called materialistic devotees, or *kaniṣṭha-adhikāri*, the third-grade devotees. Secondly, the devotees who have developed a mentality of genuine service to the Lord and who thus make friendships only with similar devotees, show favor to the neophytes and avoid the atheists are called the second-grade devotees. But those who see everything in the Lord or everything of the Lord and also see in everything an eternal relation of the Lord, so that there is nothing within their purview of sight except the Lord, are called the *mahā-bhāgavatas*, or the first-grade devotees of the Lord. Such first-grade devotees of the Lord are perfect in all respects. A devotee who may be in any of these categories is automatically qualified by all good qualities, and thus a *mahā-bhāgavata* devotee like Mahārāja Parikṣit is certainly perfect in all respects. And because Mahārāja Parikṣit took his birth in the family of Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira, he is addressed herein as the *mahā-bhāgavata*, or the greatest of the fortunates. The family in which a *mahā-bhāgavata* takes his birth is fortunate because due to the birth of a first-grade devotee the members of the family, past, present and future up to one hundred generations, become liberated by the grace of the Lord, out of respect for

His beloved devotee. Therefore, the highest benefit is done to one's family simply by becoming an unalloyed devotee of the Lord.

TEXT 18

श्रीराजोवाच

अप्येष वंश्यान् राजर्षीन् पुण्यश्लोकान् महात्मनः।
अनुवर्तिता खिद्यशसा साधुवादेन सत्तमाः ॥१८॥

śrī-rājovāca
apy eṣa vaṁśyān rājarṣīn
puṇya-ślokān mahātmanah
anuvartitā svīd yaśasā
sādhu-vādena sattamāḥ

śrī-rājā—the all-good king (Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira); *uvāca*—said; *api*—whether; *eṣaḥ*—this; *vaṁśyān*—family; *rāja-rṣīn*—of saintly kings; *puṇya-ślokān*—pious by the very name; *mahā-ātmanah*—all great souls; *anuvartitā*—follower; *svīd*—will it be; *yaśasā*—by achievements; *sādhu-vādena*—by glorification; *sat-tamāḥ*—O great souls.

TRANSLATION

The good King [Yudhiṣṭhira] inquired: O great souls, will he become as saintly a king, as pious in his very name and as famous and glorified in his achievements, as others who appeared in this great royal family?

PURPORT

The forefathers of King Yudhiṣṭhira were all great saintly kings, pious and glorified by their great achievements. They were all saints on the royal throne. And therefore all the members of the state were happy, pious, well behaved, prosperous and spiritually enlightened. Under strict guidance of the great souls and spiritual injunctions, such great saintly kings were trained up, and as a result the kingdom was full of saintly persons and was a happy land of spiritual life. Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira was himself a replica of his ancestors, and he desired that the next king after him become exactly like his great forefathers. He was happy to learn from the learned *brāhmaṇas* that by astrological calculations the child would be born a first-grade devotee of the Lord, and more confidentially he wanted to know whether the child was going to follow in the footsteps of his great forefathers. That is the way of the monarchical state. The reigning king should be a pious, chivalrous devotee of the Lord and fear personified for the upstarts. He must also leave an heir apparent equally qualified to rule over the innocent citizens. In the modern setup of the democratic states, the people themselves are fallen to the qualities of the *sūdras* or less, and the government is run by their representative, who is ignorant of the scriptural mode of administrative education. Thus the whole atmosphere is surcharged with *sūdra* qualities, manifested by lust and avarice. Such administrators quarrel every day among themselves. The cabinet of ministers changes often due to party and group selfishness. Everyone wants to exploit the state resources till he dies. No one retires from political life unless forced to do so. How can such low-grade men do good to the people? The result is corruption, intrigue and hypocrisy. They should learn from the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* how ideal the administrators must be before they can be given charge of different posts.

TEXT 19

श्रीब्राह्मणा उचुः

पार्थ प्रजाविता साक्षादिश्वकुरिव मानवः।
ब्रह्मण्यः सत्यसंधश्च रामो दाशरथिर्यथा ॥१९॥

brāhmaṇā ūcuḥ
pārtha prajāvitā sāksād
iṣṭvākur iva mānavaḥ

*brahmanyah satya-sandhaś ca
rāmo dāsarathir yathā*

brāhmaṇāḥ—the good *brāhmaṇas*; *ūcuḥ*—said; *pārtha*—O son of Pṛthā (Kuntī); *prajā*—those who are born; *avitā*—maintainer; *sākṣāt*—directly; *ikṣvākuḥ iva*—exactly like King Ikṣvāku; *mānavaḥ*—son of Manu; *brahmanyah*—followers and respectful to the *brāhmaṇas*; *satya-sandhaś*—truthful by promise; *ca*—also; *rāmaḥ*—the Personality of Godhead Rāma; *dāsarathih*—the son of Mahārāja Daśaratha; *yathā*—like Him.

TRANSLATION

The learned *brāhmaṇas* said: O son of Pṛthā, this child shall be exactly like King Ikṣvāku, son of Manu, in maintaining all those who are born. And as for following the brahminical principles, especially in being true to his promise, he shall be exactly like Rāma, the Personality of Godhead, the son of Mahārāja Daśaratha.

PURPORT

Prajā means the living being who has taken his birth in the material world. Actually the living being has no birth and no death, but because of his separation from the service of the Lord and due to his desire to lord it over material nature, he is offered a suitable body to satisfy his material desires. In doing so, one becomes conditioned by the laws of material nature, and the material body is changed in terms of his own work. The living entity thus transmigrates from one body to another in 8,400,000 species of life. But due to his being the part and parcel of the Lord, he not only is maintained with all necessities of life by the Lord, but also is protected by the Lord and His representatives, the saintly kings. These saintly kings give protection to all the *prajāś*, or living beings, to live and to fulfill their terms of imprisonment. Mahārāja Parikṣit was actually an ideal saintly king because while touring his kingdom he happened to see that a poor cow was about to be killed by the personified Kali, whom he at once took to task as a murderer. This means that even the animals were given protection by the saintly administrators, not from any sentimental point of view, but because those who have taken their birth in the material world have the right to live. All the saintly kings, beginning from the King of the sun globe down to the King of the earth, are so inclined by the influence of the Vedic literatures. The Vedic literatures are taught in higher planets also, as there is reference in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (4.1) about the teachings to the sun-god (Vivasvān) by the Lord, and such lessons are transferred by disciplic succession, as it was done by the sun-god to his son Manu, and from Manu to Mahārāja Ikṣvāku. There are fourteen Manus in one day of Brahmā, and the Manu referred to herein is the seventh Manu, who is one of the *prajāpatis* (those who create progeny), and he is the son of the sun-god. He is known as the Vivasvata Manu. He had ten sons, and Mahārāja Ikṣvāku is one of them. Mahārāja Ikṣvāku also learned *bhakti-yoga* as taught in the *Bhagavad-gītā* from his father, Manu, who got it from his father, the sun-god. Later on the teaching of the *Bhagavad-gītā* came down by disciplic succession from Mahārāja Ikṣvāku, but in course of time the chain was broken by unscrupulous persons, and therefore it again had to be taught to Arjuna on the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra. So all the Vedic literatures are current from the very beginning of creation of the material world, and thus the Vedic literatures are known as *apauruṣeya* (not made by man). The Vedic knowledge was spoken by the Lord and first heard by Brahmā, the first created living being within the universe.

Mahārāja Ikṣvāku: One of the sons of Vivasvata Manu. He had one hundred sons. He prohibited meat eating. His son Śāsāda became the next king after his death.

Manu: The Manu mentioned in this verse as the father of Ikṣvāku is the seventh Manu, of the name Vivasvata Manu, the son of sun-god Vivasvān, to whom Lord Kṛṣṇa instructed the teachings of *Bhagavad-gītā* prior to His teaching them to Arjuna. Mankind is the descendant of Manu. This Vivasvata Manu had ten sons, named Ikṣvāku, Nabhaga, Dhṛṣṭa, Śaryāti, Nariṣyanta, Nābhāga, Diṣṭa, Karuṣa, Pṛṣadhra and

Vasumān. The Lord's incarnation Matsya (the gigantic fish) was advented during the beginning of Vivasvata Manu's reign. He learned the principles of *Bhagavad-gītā* from his father, Vivasvān, the sun-god, and he reinstructed the same to his son Mahārāja Ikṣvāku. In the beginning of the Tretā-yuga the sun-god instructed devotional service to Manu, and Manu in his turn instructed it to Ikṣvāku for the welfare of the whole human society.

Lord Rāma: The Supreme Personality of Godhead incarnated Himself as Śrī Rāma, accepting the sonhood of His pure devotee Mahārāja Daśaratha, the King of Ayodhyā. Lord Rāma descended along with His plenary portions, and all of them appeared as His younger brothers. In the month of Caitra on the ninth day of the growing moon in the Tretā-yuga, the Lord appeared, as usual, to establish the principles of religion and to annihilate the disturbing elements. When He was just a young boy, He helped the great sage Viśvāmitra by killing Subahu and striking Māricā, the she-demon, who was disturbing the sages in their daily discharge of duties. The *brāhmaṇas* and *kṣatriyas* are meant to cooperate for the welfare of the mass of people. The *brāhmaṇa* sages endeavor to enlighten the people by perfect knowledge, and the *kṣatriyas* are meant for their protection. Lord Rāmacandra is the ideal king for maintaining and protecting the highest culture of humanity, known as *brahmanyadharmā*. The Lord is specifically the protector of the cows and the *brāhmaṇas*, and hence He enhances the prosperity of the world. He rewarded the administrative demigods by effective weapons to conquer the demons through the agency of Viśvāmitra. He was present in the bow sacrifice of King Janaka, and by breaking the invincible bow of Śiva, He married Sitādevī, daughter of Mahārāja Janaka.

After His marriage He accepted exile in the forest for fourteen years by the order of His father, Mahārāja Daśaratha. To help the administration of the demigods, He killed fourteen thousand demons, and by the intrigues of the demons, His wife, Sitādevī, was kidnapped by Rāvaṇa. He made friendship with Sugrīva, who was helped by the Lord to kill Vali, brother of Sugrīva. By the help of Lord Rāma, Sugrīva became the king of the Vānaras (a race of gorillas). The Lord built a floating bridge of stones on the Indian Ocean and reached Laṅkā, the kingdom of Rāvaṇa, who had kidnapped Sitā. Later on Rāvaṇa was killed by Him, and Rāvaṇa's brother Vibhiṣaṇa was installed on the throne of Laṅkā. Vibhiṣaṇa was one of the brothers of Rāvaṇa, a demon, but Lord Rāma made him immortal by His blessings. On the expiry of fourteen years, after settling the affairs at Laṅkā, the Lord came back to His kingdom, Ayodhyā, by flower plane. He instructed His brother Śatrughna to attack Lavṇāsura, who reigned at Mathurā, and the demon was killed. He performed ten *Asvamedha* sacrifices, and later on He disappeared while taking a bath in the Śarayu River. The great epic *Rāmāyaṇa* is the history of Lord Rāma's activities in the world, and the authoritative *Rāmāyaṇa* was written by the great poet Vālmiki.

TEXT 20

एष दाता शरण्यश्च यथा ह्यौशीनरः शिविः ।
यशो वितनितान् स्वानां दौष्यन्तिरिव यज्वनाम् ॥२०॥

*eṣa dātā śaraṇyaś ca
yathā hy auśīnaraḥ śibih
yaśo vitanitā svānām
dausyantir iva yajvanām*

eṣaḥ—this child; *dātā*—donor in charity; *śaraṇyaḥ*—protector of the surrendered; *ca*—and; *yathā*—as; *hi*—certainly; *auśīnaraḥ*—the country named Uśīnara; *śibih*—Śibi; *yaśaḥ*—fame; *vitānitā*—disseminator; *svānām*—of the kinsmen; *dausyantiḥ iva*—like Bharata, the son of Duṣyanta; *yajvanām*—of those who have performed many sacrifices.

TRANSLATION

This child will be a munificent donor of charity and protector of the surrendered, like the famous King Śibi of the Uśīnara country.

And he will expand the name and fame of his family like Bharata, the son of Mahārāja Duṣyanta.

PURPORT

A king becomes famous by his acts of charity, performances of *yajñas*, protection of the surrendered, etc. A *kṣatriya* king is proud to give protection to the surrendered souls. This attitude of a king is called *īśvara-bhava*, or factual power to give protection in a righteous cause. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* the Lord instructs living beings to surrender unto Him, and He promises all protection. The Lord is all-powerful and true to His word, and therefore He never fails to give protection to His different devotees. The king, being the representative of the Lord, must possess this attitude of giving protection to the surrendered souls at all risk. Mahārāja Śibi, the King of Uśinara, was an intimate friend of Mahārāja Yayāti, who was able to reach the heavenly planets along with Mahārāja Śibi. Mahārāja Śibi was aware of the heavenly planet where he was to be transferred after his death, and the description of this heavenly planet is given in the *Mahābhārata* (*Ādi-parva*, 96.6-9). Mahārāja Śibi was so charitably disposed that he wanted to give over his acquired position in the heavenly kingdom to Yayāti, but he did not accept it. Yayāti went to the heavenly planet along with great *ṛṣis* like Aṣṭaka and others. On inquiry from the *ṛṣis*, Yayāti gave an account of Śibi's pious acts when all of them were on the path to heaven. He has become a member of the assembly of Yamarāja, who has become his worshipful deity. As confirmed in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, the worshiper of the demigods goes to the planets of the demigods (*yānti deva-vratā devān*); so Mahārāja Śibi has become an associate of the great Vaiṣṇava authority Yamarāja on that particular planet. While he was on the earth he became very famous as a protector of surrendered souls and a donor of charities. The King of heaven once took the shape of a pigeon-hunter bird (eagle), and Agni, the fire-god, took the shape of a pigeon. The pigeon, while being chased by the eagle, took shelter on the lap of Mahārāja Śibi, and the hunter eagle wanted the pigeon back from the King. The King wanted to give it some other meat to eat and requested the bird not to kill the pigeon. The hunter bird refused to accept the King's offer, but it was settled later on that the eagle would accept flesh from the body of the King of the pigeon's equivalent weight. The King began to cut flesh from his body to weigh in the balance equivalent to the weight of the pigeon, but the mystic pigeon always remained heavier. The King then put himself on the balance to equate with the pigeon, and the demigods were pleased with him. The King of heaven and the fire-god disclosed their identity, and the King was blessed by them. Devarṣi Nārada also glorified Mahārāja Śibi for his great achievements, specifically in charity and protection. Mahārāja Śibi sacrificed his own son for the satisfaction of human beings in his kingdom. And thus child Parikṣit was to become a second Śibi in charity and protection.

Duṣyanti Bharata: There are many Bharatas in history, of which Bharata the brother of Lord Rāma, Bharata the son of King Rṣabha, and Bharata the son of Mahārāja Duṣyanta are very famous. And all these Bharatas are historically known to the universe. This earth planet is known as Bhārata, or Bhārata-varṣa, due to King Bharata the son of Rṣabha, but according to some this land is known as Bhārata due to the reign of the son of Duṣyanta. So far as we are convinced, this land's name Bhārata-varṣa was established from the reign of Bharata the son of King Rṣabha. Before him the land was known as Ilāvati-varṣa, but just after the coronation of Bharata, the son of Rṣabha, this land became famous as Bhārata-varṣa.

But despite all this, Bharata, the son of Mahārāja Duṣyanta was not less important. He is the son of the famous beauty Śakuntalā. Mahārāja Duṣyanta fell in love with Śakuntalā in the forest, and Bharata was conceived. After that, Mahārāja forgot his wife Śakuntalā by the curse of Kaṇva Muni, and the child Bharata was brought up in the forest by his mother. Even in his childhood he was so powerful that he challenged the lions and elephants in the forest and would fight with them as little children play with cats and dogs. Because of the boy's becoming so

strong, more than the so-called modern Tarzan, the *ṛṣis* in the forest called him Sarvadaman, or one who is able to control everyone. A full description of Mahārāja Bharata is given in the *Mahābhārata*, *Ādi-parva*. The Pāṇḍavas, or the Kurus, are sometimes addressed as Bhārata due to being born in the dynasty of the famous Mahārāja Bharata, the son of King Duṣyanta.

TEXT 21

धन्विनामग्रणीरेष तुल्यश्चाजुनयोर्द्वयोः ।
हुताश इव दुर्ध्वः समुद्र इव दुस्तरः ॥२१॥

dhanvinām agranīr eṣa
tulyaś cārjunayor dvayoḥ
hutāśa iva durdhvaḥ
samudra iva dustaraḥ

dhanvinām—of the great bowmen; *agranīh*—the foreman; *eṣaḥ*—this child; *tulyaḥ*—equally good; *ca*—and; *arjunayor*—of the Arjuna; *dvayoḥ*—of the two; *hutāśaḥ*—fire; *iva*—like; *durdhvaḥ*—irresistible; *samudraḥ*—ocean; *iva*—like; *dustaraḥ*—unsurpassable.

TRANSLATION

Amongst great bowmen, this child will be as good as Arjuna. He will be as irresistible as fire and as unsurpassable as the ocean.

PURPORT

In history there are two Arjuna. One is Kārtavīrya Arjuna, the King of Haihaya, and the other is the grandfather of the child. Both the Arjuna are famous for their bowmanship, and the child Parikṣit is foretold to be equal to both of them, particularly in fighting. A short description of the Pāṇḍava Arjuna is given below:

Pāṇḍava Arjuna: The great hero of the *Bhagavad-gītā*. He is the *kṣatriya* son of Mahārāja Pāṇḍu. Queen Kuntidevī could call for any one of the demigods, and thus she called Indra, and Arjuna was born by him. Arjuna is therefore a plenary part of the heavenly King Indra. He was born in the month of Phalguṇa (February-March), and therefore he is also called Phalguni. When he appeared as the son of Kuntī, his future greatness was proclaimed by air messages, and all the important personalities from different parts of the universe, such as the demigods, the Gandharvas, the Ādityas (from the sun globe), the Rudras, the Vasus, the Nāgas, the different *ṛṣis* (sages) of importance, and the Apsarās (the society girls of heaven), all attended the ceremony. The Apsarās pleased everyone by their heavenly dances and songs. Vasudeva, the father of Lord Kṛṣṇa and the maternal uncle of Arjuna, sent his priest representative Kāśyapa to purify Arjuna by all the prescribed *saṁskāras*, or reformatory processes. His *saṁskāra* of being given a name was performed in the presence of the *ṛṣis*, residents of Śatasṛṅga. He married four wives, Draupadī, Subhadrā, Citraṅgadā and Ulūpī, from whom he got four sons of the names Śrutakīrti, Abhimanyu, Babhruvāhana and Irāvān respectively.

During his student life he was entrusted to study under the great professor Droṇācārya, along with other Pāṇḍavas and the Kurus. But he excelled everyone by his studious intensity, and Droṇācārya was especially attracted by his disciplinary affection. Droṇācārya accepted him as a first-grade scholar and loved heartily to bestow upon him all the blessings of military science. He was so ardent a student that he used to practice bowmanship even at night, and for all these reasons Professor Droṇācārya was determined to make him the topmost bowman of the world. He passed very brilliantly the examination in piercing the target, and Droṇācārya was very pleased. Royal families at Maṇipur and Tripura are descendants of Arjuna's son Babhruvāhana. Arjuna saved Droṇācārya from the attack of a crocodile, and the Ācārya, being pleased with him, rewarded him with a weapon of the name *brahmaśira*.

Mahārāja Drupada was inimical toward Droṇācārya, and thus when he attacked the Ācārya, Arjuna got him arrested and brought him before Droṇācārya. He besieged a city of the name Ahichhatra, belonging to Mahārāja Drupada, and after taking it over he gave it to Droṇācārya. The confidential treatment of the weapon *brahmaśira* was explained to Arjuna, and Droṇācārya was promised by Arjuna that he would use the weapon if necessary when he (Droṇācārya) personally became an enemy of Arjuna. By this, the Ācārya forecasted the future battle of Kurukṣetra, in which Droṇācārya was on the opposite side. Mahārāja Drupada, although defeated by Arjuna on behalf of his professor Droṇācārya, decided to hand over his daughter Draupadī to his young combatant, but he was disappointed when he heard the false news of Arjuna's death in the fire of a shellac house intrigued by Duryodhana. He therefore arranged for Draupadī's personal selection of a groom who could pierce the eye of a fish hanging on the ceiling. This trick was especially made because only Arjuna could do it, and he was successful in his desire to hand over his equally worthy daughter to Arjuna. Arjuna's brothers were at that time living incognito under agreement with Duryodhana, and Arjuna and his brothers attended the meeting of Draupadī's selection in the dress of *brāhmaṇas*. When all the *kṣatriya* kings assembled saw that a poor *brāhmaṇa* had been garlanded by Draupadī for her lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa disclosed his identity to Balarāma.

He met Ulūpī at Haridvāra (Hardwar), and he was attracted by a girl belonging to Nāgaloka, and thus Irāvān was born. Similarly, he met Citraṅgada, a daughter of the King of Maṇipura, and thus Babhruvāhana was born. Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa made a plan to help Arjuna to kidnap Subhadrā, sister of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, because Baladeva was inclined to hand her over to Duryodhana. Yudhiṣṭhira also agreed with Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and thus Subhadrā was taken by force by Arjuna and then married to him. Subhadrā's son is Abhimanyu, the father of Parikṣit Mahārāja, the posthumous child. Arjuna satisfied the fire-god by setting fire to the Khāṇḍava Forest, and thus the fire-god gave him one weapon. Indra was angry when the fire was set in the Khāṇḍava Forest, and thus Indra, assisted by all other demigods, began fighting with Arjuna for his great challenge. They were defeated by Arjuna, and Indradeva returned to his heavenly kingdom. Arjuna also promised all protection to one Mayāsura, and the latter presented him one valuable conchshell celebrated as the Devadatta. Similarly, he received many other valuable weapons from Indradeva when he was satisfied to see his chivalry.

When Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira was disappointed in defeating the King of Magadha, Jarāsandha, it was Arjuna only who gave King Yudhiṣṭhira all kinds of assurances, and thus Arjuna, Bhīma and Lord Kṛṣṇa started for Magadha to kill Jarāsandha. When he went out to bring all other kings of the world under the subjection of the Pāṇḍavas, as was usual after the coronation of every emperor, he conquered the country named Kelinda and brought in subjugation King Bhagdutt. Then he traveled through countries like Antagiri, Ulukpur and Modapur and brought under subjugation all the rulers.

Sometimes he underwent severe types of penances, and later on he was rewarded by Indradeva. Lord Śiva also wanted to try the strength of Arjuna, and in the form of an aborigine, Lord Śiva met him. There was a great fight between the two, and at last Lord Śiva was satisfied with him and disclosed his identity. Arjuna prayed to the lord in all humbleness, and the lord, being pleased with him, presented him the *paśupata* weapon. He acquired many other important weapons from different demigods. He received *danḍāstra* from Yamarāja, *paśāstra* from Varuṇa, and *antardhana-astra* from Kuvera, the treasurer of the heavenly kingdom. Indra wanted him to come to the heavenly kingdom, the Indraloka planet beyond the moon planet. In that planet he was cordially received by the local residents, and he was awarded reception in the heavenly parliament of Indradeva. Then he met Indradeva, who not only presented him with his *vajra* weapon, but also taught him the military and musical science as used in the heavenly planet. In one sense, Indra is the real father of Arjuna, and therefore indirectly he wanted to entertain Arjuna with the famous society girl of heaven, Urvaśī, the celebrated

beauty. The society girls of heaven are lusty, and Urvaśī was very eager to contact Arjuna, the strongest human being. She met him in his room and expressed her desires but Arjuna sustained his unimpeachable character by closing his eyes before Urvaśī, addressing her as mother of the Kuru dynasty and placing her in the category of his mothers Kuntī, Mādri and Śacidevī, wife of Indradeva. Disappointed, Urvaśī cursed Arjuna and left. In the heavenly planet he also met the great celebrated ascetic Lomasa and prayed to him for the protection of Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira.

When his inimical cousin Duryodhana was under the clutches of the Gandharvas, he wanted to save him and requested the Gandharvas to release Duryodhana, but the Gandharvas refused, and thus he fought with them and got Duryodhana released. When all the Pāṇḍavas lived incognito, he presented himself in the court of King Virāṭa as a eunuch and was employed as the musical teacher of Uttarā, his future daughter-in-law, and was known in the Virāṭa court as the Bṛhannala. As Bṛhannala, he fought on behalf of Uttarā, the son of King Virāṭa, and thus defeated the Kurus in the fight incognito. His secret weapons were safely kept in the custody of a *somi* tree, and he ordered Uttarā to get them back. His identity and his brothers' identity were later on disclosed to Uttarā. Droṇācārya was informed of Arjuna's presence in the fight of the Kurus and the Virāṭas. Later, on the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra, Arjuna killed many great generals like Karṇa and others. After the Battle of Kurukṣetra, he punished Aśvatthāmā, who had killed all the five sons of Draupadī. Then all the brothers went to Bhīmadēva.

It is due to Arjuna only that the great philosophical discourses of the *Bhagavad-gītā* were again spoken by the Lord on the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra. His wonderful acts on the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra are vividly described in the *Mahābhārata*. Arjuna was defeated, however, by his son Babhruvāhana at Maṇipura and fell unconscious when Ulūpī saved him. After the disappearance of Lord Kṛṣṇa, the message was brought by Arjuna to Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira. Again, Arjuna visited Dvārakā, and all the widow wives of Lord Kṛṣṇa lamented before him. He took them all in the presence of Vasudeva and pacified all of them. Later on, when Vasudeva passed away, he performed his funeral ceremony in the absence of Kṛṣṇa. While Arjuna was taking all the wives of Kṛṣṇa to Indraprastha, he was attacked on the way, and he could not protect the ladies in his custody. At last, advised by Vyāsadeva, all the brothers headed for Mahāprasthan. On the way, at the request of his brother, he gave up all important weapons as useless, and he dropped them all in the water.

TEXT 22

मृगेन्द्र इव विक्रान्तो निषेव्यो हिमवानिव ।
तितिक्षुर्वसुधेवासौ सहिष्णुः पितराविव ॥२२॥

mṛgendra iva vikrānto
niṣevyo himavān iva
titikṣur vasudhevāsau
sahiṣṇuḥ pitarāv iva

mṛgendraḥ—the lion; *iva*—like; *vikrāntaḥ*—powerful; *niṣevyaḥ*—worthy of taking shelter; *himavān*—the Himalaya Mountains; *iva*—like; *titikṣuḥ*—forbearance; *vasudhā iva*—like the earth; *asau*—the child; *sahiṣṇuḥ*—tolerant; *pitarau*—parents; *iva*—like.

TRANSLATION

This child will be as strong as a lion, and as worthy a shelter as the Himalaya Mountains. He will be forbearing like the earth, and as tolerant as his parents.

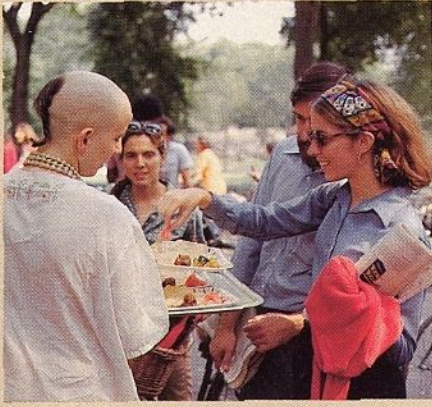
(continued in next issue)



Every Town and Village

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

College Students Discover Higher Taste—Kṛṣṇa



College students on two American campuses have discovered that they can add Kṛṣṇa consciousness to their college life by studying the philosophy of *Bhagavad-gītā* and eating *prasāda* (vegetarian food offered to Kṛṣṇa with devotion).

Every week at the University of Maryland, in College Park, sixty to ninety students attend a *prasāda*-cooking class taught by Gabhīra dāsa, who is an authorized chaplain there. While deftly demonstrating how to whip up some curried rice or milk sweets, Gabhīra expounds the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He also teaches yoga meditation through the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*, and four days a week he distributes *prasāda* and Kṛṣṇa-conscious literature outside the Student Union. In addition, Gabhīra has been a guest lecturer in history, American studies, anthropology, and health education courses.

Some of the other university-recognized chaplains (there are ten in all) take a dim view of Gabhīra's enthusiastic preaching. Rabbi Robert Saks, Hillel chaplain, disagrees with Gabhīra's idea that a chaplain's role is to elevate the spiritual climate of the campus. "We're not university chaplains," Rabbi Saks said. "We're here to serve our denominations as guests of the university. . . . I'm scared of opening the door to proselytizing."

Gabhīra responds, "Kṛṣṇa consciousness is non-sectarian: we want to elevate everyone's consciousness. We're basically teaching surrender to God . . . something like a spiritual peace corps. We're showing that there is

another way of life, a spiritual way."

Meanwhile, Amarendra dāsa has established a similar *prasāda*-oriented program at the University of Florida, in Gainesville. But he had to win the right to hold his transcendental picnics on campus. Last April campus police arrested him and another devotee on three occasions and charged them with various violations of civil codes. The third incident drew a crowd of students, who cheered Amarendra and booed the police. The overwhelming majority of the students saw the incident as a clear-cut case of religious persecution, and they came out for the devotees in the school newspaper, the *Alligator*. Finally the local circuit court lifted its injunction banning the *prasāda* distribution, and now Amarendra is back on campus to stay—dispensing rich, creamy Gaurāṅga potatoes; buttery, flat-bread *chapatis*; fruit nectar; and generous helpings of Kṛṣṇa-conscious philosophy.

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is Breaks Records, Draws Praise

Through the efforts of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the *Bhagavad-gītā* is enjoying a resurgence of popularity in the West. In fact, each of the last three years has seen Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples double their sales of his *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*. (To meet the great demand in 1977, Bhaktivedanta Book Trust Coordinator Rāmeśwara Swami ordered one and one-half million copies—one of the largest single-title book orders ever

placed!) What accounts for so much interest in Śrīla Prabhupāda's unique edition of the *Gītā*? A few of the hundreds of scholarly testimonials tell the story:

Back in 1968, just after the first printing of *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, the well-known clergyman and author Thomas Merton became one of the first to praise it. He wrote at that time, "The *Gītā* can be seen as the main literary support for the great religious civilization of India, the oldest surviving culture in the world. The present translation and commentary is another manifestation of the permanent living importance of the *Gītā*. Swami Bhaktivedanta brings to the West a salutary reminder that our highly activist and one-sided culture is faced with a crisis that may end in self-destruction because it lacks the inner depth of an authentic metaphysical consciousness. Without such depth, our moral and political protestations are just so much verbiage."

More recently, Dr. Davis Herron, Professor of Religion at Manhattan College, had this to say: "This definitive edition of the *Gītā* is, due to its extensive purports, a storehouse of ancient Vedic wisdom, poetry, politics, and history. It should serve as a useful textbook for students and as a reference book for scholars of religion, as well as a general introduction to Vedic culture and practical philosophy for the layman. It is written for serious readers in general, not only from a scholar's point of view, but from that of a life-long practitioner of the yoga of devotion. It is this sense of devotion that Śrīla Prabhupāda has captured in his discussion of the verses, and which other commentators have failed to reveal."

Vaiṣṇava Calendar

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

Year 491, Caitanya Era			
Vaiṣṇava months of Śrīdhara (July 31–August 28) and Hṛṣīkeṣa (August 29–September 27)			
August 25 (Śrīdhara 26)	August 26 (Śrīdhara 27)	August 28 (Śrīdhara 29)	August 29 (Hṛṣīkeṣa 1)
Pavitrārāṇī-ekādaśī (fasting from grains and beans) (North, Central and South America and Hawaii observe Ekādaśī on August 24). Beginning of Jhulana-yātrā of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda.	Ekādaśī break-fast after sunrise, before 6:49 A.M. Śrī Kṛṣṇa-pavitrārāṇotsava. Disappearance of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, Śrīla Gaurīdāsa Paṇḍita Gosvāmī and Śrī Govindadāsa Paṇḍita.	Pōmīmā. End of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda Jhulana-yātrā. Appearance of Lord Baladeva. Fasting.	Śrī Baladeva-pōmīmā-pāraṅga.
Sept 6 (Hṛṣīkeṣa 9)	Sept 7 (Hṛṣīkeṣa 10)	Sept 9 (Hṛṣīkeṣa 12)	Sept 10 (Hṛṣīkeṣa 13)
Śrī Kṛṣṇa-janmāṣṭami-vrata (North, South and Central America, Hawaii, Europe, Africa and Tehran observe Janmāṣṭami on September 5 and appearance of Śrīla Prabhupāda on September 6). Fasting.	Śrī Kṛṣṇa-janmāṣṭami-pāraṅga before 9:31 A.M. Śrī Nandotsava. Appearance of Om Viṣṇupāda 108 Śrī Śrīmad A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Mahārāja Prabhupāda.	Annada-ekādaśī (fasting from grains and beans).	Ekādaśī break-fast after sunrise and before 9:30 A.M.

Śrīla Prabhupāda Speaks Out

On Illicit Sex and Public Opinion

The following conversation between His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda and a social worker took place in Melbourne, Australia.

Social worker: I deal with divorce cases and adoption. Nowadays it has become very easy to get a divorce.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: So, the first defect of today's leaders is that they allow divorce. That is very dangerous for society, because it encourages illicit sex.

Social worker: Society wants it that way.

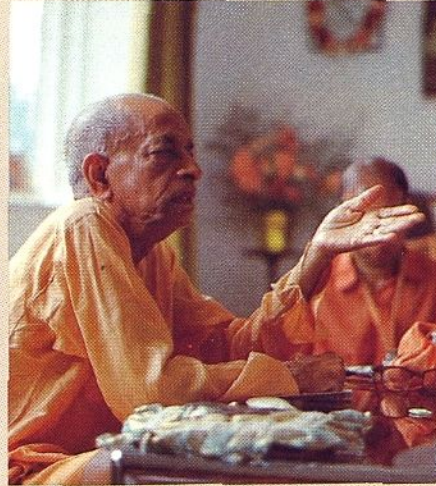
Śrīla Prabhupāda: Society is just like a child. If a child wants to go to hell, should the father allow it? Society may want so many nonsensical things, but it is the duty of the government to know how to uplift the citizens.

Social worker: It would be impossible for my department to teach...

Śrīla Prabhupāda: It's not impossible. Simply the government does not know how to do it. That is another defect—there is no method for training first-class members of society. But the ideal man is described in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, and we are training our men to that standard. That is the purpose of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Now there are no ideal men in the society, because you allow the young people to commit all kinds of sinful activities. Yesterday I was talking with a priest about illicit sex life. He said, "What is the harm? It is a great pleasure." But my first condition before accepting a disciple is that he must give up illicit sex, meat eating, intoxication, and gambling.

Social worker: But the people you can train will be only a tiny percentage of the population.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes, but example is better than precept. If even one percent of the population is trained as ideal men, the other ninety-nine percent will see and follow. But that example is lacking in society today. Even the priests have become licentious, and thousands of priests are going to the hospital to cure their drinking habit. They are sanctioning homosexuality. In a Christian newspaper I read about a priest even performing marriage between two men. So outside of this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, I don't find any group of ideal men. Therefore, if you want to help society, you must learn from us how to train men of ideal character.



Social worker: What you call "ideal character" is only your opinion. It may not be ideal to someone else.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: No, it is not my opinion—it is the verdict of the *śāstra* [scripture]. Opinion—what is the value of opinion when the people are like dogs and asses? What is the use of taking the opinion of an ass? This *vox populi*—taking the opinion of the public—is degrading modern society. If the public is composed of drunkards, smokers, meat eaters, gamblers, and woman hunters, then what is the value of their opinion? Why take the opinion of fourth-class men? What Kṛṣṇa says—that is the standard. Kṛṣṇa is the supreme, and His version is final. No other opinion is allowed. When I introduced the principle "No illicit sex life," I didn't ask for opinions—"It must be done."

Social worker: You don't think the people have any mind of their own?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes, they have a mind, just like a madman has a mind. But what is the value of his mind? Are you going to take the opinion of a madman? The *Bhagavad-gītā* says, *māyāpahṛta-jñānā*: "The miscreant's knowledge has been taken away by *māyā* [illusion]; therefore, his mind is distorted." So a madman's opinions have no value.

Social worker: Our business is to look after those who are in trouble.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: At the present moment even the government leaders are in trouble.

Social worker: Well—that is not part of our public...

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Why don't you send your supervisor to us for training? These leaders are also drunkards, woman hunters, meat eaters, and gamblers.

Social worker: You want to change the whole society!

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Unless you change the society, how can you do social welfare? If you keep society in the same condition it is in now, then where is the question of social welfare? You are working with the public, and we are also working with the same people. We take the same people—those addicted to drinking, addicted to prostitution, addicted to meat eating—and we make them into saintly persons. So our method is practical. You can see what their previous history was, and what they are now. You must train up one class of men like them—men of ideal character.

Social worker: Well, I'm a public servant, and we just try to follow public opinion.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: So the public elects a President Nixon, and then they drag him out of office. This is your public opinion.

Social worker: Yes, that is how the society works. If you change society, then we must change. I do what I'm asked; otherwise, I'll lose my job.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Our program is not *vox populi*. We are saying only what the authoritative scriptures say. If you actually want to do social welfare, then you must take to the standard formula as given in the scriptures. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa explains how one can become peaceful—a first-class man. But if you don't accept His authority—if you'd rather follow public opinion—you will never be successful. You want to make a peaceful society, but you do not know how. Therefore you must adopt this process of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. If anyone—even a madman—agrees to follow our principles, then he can become peaceful. He can become a first-class man.

Social worker: How do you explain the fact that you are such a small percentage of the population?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: In the sky there are so many stars, but there is only one moon. In terms of percentage, the moon is nothing. But in terms of its *value*, the moon is far more important than all the stars combined. So in our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, our aim is to

educate a few men of ideal character. If you and other leaders of society support this movement, you will be performing the highest social welfare.

Social worker: The head of the Social Welfare Bureau is also a servant of the people.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: That is the defect: the people are rascals, and they elect another rascal. But the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement will go on without depending on these rascals. We are publishing our books, we are spreading our movement, and we are training first-class men. For example, we don't

prohibit sex, but we say, "No illicit sex." Have you any objection?

Social worker: Yes, a private one.


Śrīla Prabhupāda: You have illicit sex?

Social worker: Yes, I couldn't live without it.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Just see! This is the defect in society. You are like a patient who wants treatment from a physician, but who at the same time wants to continue with his diseased activities. You have failed to help society, therefore you have come to me for help with your social welfare work. So why do you reject my advice? If you reject the medicine

prescribed by the physician, you will not be cured. But when I give you the prescription, you want the other patients to vote on it first. Daily one or two gentlemen like you visit me. They also find our prescription very strict. But we are not going to change it.

Social worker: Well, I do believe you should maintain a standard.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes, and that is making us successful. We do not make any compromise. This is our method. If you like it, you can take it; if you don't like it, you can reject it. We don't mind. We are not interested in *vox populi*. 

Letters

Dear Satsvarūpa Mahārāja,

Please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to Śrīla Prabhupāda.

I am the Indian boy who talked with you at the Kṛṣṇa temple in Los Angeles during the Sunday festival. I also spoke to you once over the phone in Dallas. Now I am staying here at the temple in Atlanta, and this has upset my parents very much. They started crying on the phone, and my mother even fainted once. Now I see what you meant when you told me that the family ties are much stronger in Indian families than in American families.

My parents are going to come Sunday to take me home for a week. They want me to show them that my staying at the temple for the summer is really my own choice. They think I've been brainwashed by the devotees. Mainly they are worried about the future—who will take care of them in old age—because their only children are my sister and I.

I would deeply appreciate your writing to them. They think being a devotee means never seeing one's parents anymore. They also think that the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement somehow brainwashes the devotee to make him accept what, in my parents' opinion, is an impractical life of serving Kṛṣṇa all the time.

I want to serve Kṛṣṇa, and in my heart I know this will give the greatest benefit to my family, myself, and all people. But when I talk to my parents on the phone, sometimes I am overcome with grief because of their attachment to me. So again I humbly request you: please write to my father and mother. Thank you very much.

Your servant,
Bhakta Rakesh

Dear Mr. Sharma,

Recently I met your son Rakesh when you and your family visited our Hare Kṛṣṇa center in Los Angeles. Since then I've corresponded with him and learned that he sincerely wants to be a full-time devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa at our Atlanta temple. But he also is very concerned that you and your wife not think his taking up spiritual life is something bad. So he asked me to write you on his behalf.

First, I would like to call your attention to an article we published in *BACK TO GODHEAD*, Vol. 12, No. 6. It is an excerpt from the scripture *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* and is called "Lord Caitanya, the Joy of Mother Saci." It tells how the great devotee Lord Caitanya took up the renounced order of spiritual life: He did not neglect His mother (His father had passed away), nor did she try to dissuade Him from leaving home. Rather, Lord Caitanya and His mother maintained a sweet spiritual relationship even after He entered the renounced order.

Certainly you and Rakesh should also be able to maintain such a loving relationship—so that he will be allowed to perform his duties in service to Lord Kṛṣṇa (as his conscience dictates) and you may visit, write, or phone him as often as you like. On the other hand, if overly possessive affection causes you to obstruct your son's entry into spiritual life, then, according to the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, you are open to criticism.

I humbly pray that these words from a stranger do not offend you. I know how you feel toward Rakesh, but all scriptures declare that service to the Lord takes precedence, even over close family ties.

Another thing concerns me. Rakesh wrote me that you suspect Kṛṣṇa consciousness to be some kind of "brain-

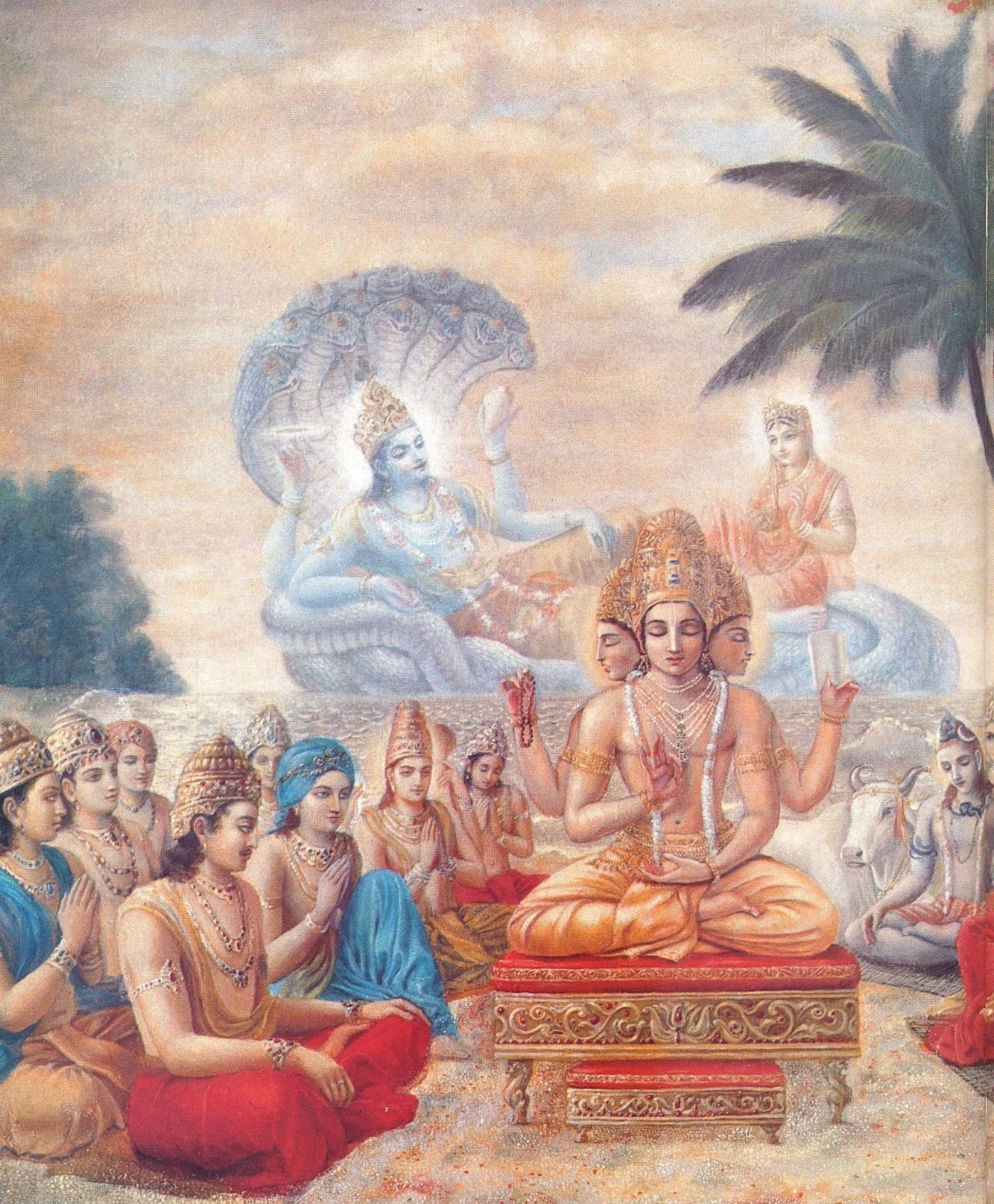
washing." I can see that the demonic propaganda prevalent in the West has affected your judgment. Certainly no one in India regards worshipping Lord Kṛṣṇa as "brainwashing." "Brainwashing" refers to a form of extreme coercion that convinces a person, *against his will*, to do something completely contrary to his nature. I would not expect you, an Indian and a Hindu, to think that if someone worships Kṛṣṇa with his heart and soul, he must be a victim of some kind of devious control by Kṛṣṇa-conscious devotees.

Of course, we were not born Hindus, so you might find some shortcomings in our practice. But we are all sincerely trying to follow our spiritual master, Śrīla Prabhupāda, who is a bona fide guru coming in the line of Lord Caitanya and Lord Kṛṣṇa. You can know that our movement is authentic, because we have all given up meat eating, illicit sex, intoxication, and gambling, and we have taken up chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra, which all the Indian Vedic scriptures strongly recommend for the troubled age we live in.

Finally, I beg you to please look upon us kindly. Talk things over with Rakesh and the Kṛṣṇa devotees at the Atlanta temple. I'm sure you will then be able to understand how Kṛṣṇa consciousness is beneficial not only for your son, but for yourself as well.

Yours in the service of Lord Kṛṣṇa,

Satsvarūpa dāsa Gosvāmī
Editor-in-chief
BACK TO GODHEAD magazine

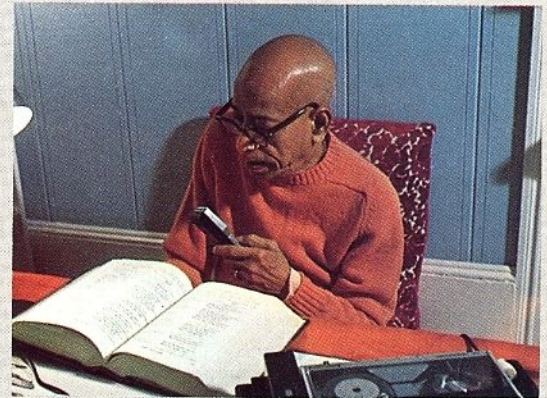


Aggrieved by the world's demonic politicians, Lord Brahmā and the other demigods went to the planet Svetadvīpa. There, at the shore of the milk ocean, they prayed for Lord Viṣṇu (Kṛṣṇa) to come to earth.

Lord Kṛṣṇa Gomes to Earth

An Excerpt from Srīla Prabhupāda's Work-in-Progress

Fifty centuries ago Lord Kṛṣṇa came, to protect His devotees and rid the world of demonic politicians. Now Kṛṣṇa comes again in another form—the Tenth Canto of the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (“The Beautiful Story of the Personality of Godhead”), translation and commentary by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda.



thousands of disciples), the appearance of the Tenth Canto marks a spiritual and literary event of the highest magnitude.

The reason the Tenth Canto has such special significance is that it describes Lord Kṛṣṇa in His original and most attractive feature—as a cowherd boy in the village of Vṛndāvana. There He plays on His flute, steals butter from His mother's churning pot, and charms His dear friends with His irresistible personality. With eyes like lotus petals and a complexion like a dark bluish cloud, He possesses an ever-fresh beauty that defies description. Other Vedic literatures give only a small hint of Lord Kṛṣṇa's own intimate, spiritual abode, but in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*—and especially in the Tenth Canto—Kṛṣṇa personally appears and reveals His supremely attractive and most confidential pastimes.

There is one great advantage that Srīla Prabhupāda's long-awaited translation of the Tenth Canto holds over previous translations. Because Srīla Prabhupāda is a pure devotee of the Lord, one who submissively hears Kṛṣṇa's pastimes from him experiences a change of heart, and the hearer's self-defeating disposition to enjoy the material world slackens. Thus his long-forgotten natural love for Kṛṣṇa awakens, and he develops an attraction for hearing more and more about the Lord.

For many years His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda has been preparing a multivolume English translation of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (“The Beautiful Story of the Personality of Godhead”)—a monumental Sanskrit work known as “the ripened fruit of the tree of Vedic literature.” Recently, Srīla Prabhupāda reached a milestone as he began translating the *Bhāgavatam*'s Tenth Canto, the essence of this five-thousand-year-old classic.

The imminent publication of the Tenth Canto is momentous not only for the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement but for the entire world. Scholars, theologians, and librarians throughout the United States, Canada, Europe, and India have already placed more than two thousand orders for all sixty volumes of Srīla Prabhupāda's *Bhāgavatam*—even before many of the books have been translated and printed! Many scholars, aware of the exalted place the *Bhāgavatam* holds in Vedic literature, have personally expressed their appreciation for Srīla Prabhupāda's unequalled English rendering. For these scholars (and, even more, for Srīla Prabhupāda's



Illustration: Parikṣit dāsa

On hearing that the eighth child of his sister Devakī would kill him, Kamsa was about to kill her. But Devakī's husband Vasudeva pacified Kamsa.

Unfortunately, those who receive the message of the *Bhāgavatam* from someone other than an expert spiritual master—a pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa in the discipic succession coming down from Kṛṣṇa Himself—generally misinterpret the Lord's pastimes described in the Tenth Canto. Instead of becoming purified by hearing of the Lord's spiritual loving affairs with His devotees, such careless interpreters, casual readers, and mental speculators offend the Lord, and their spiritual advancement is checked.

The conclusion, therefore, is that one must learn the *book Bhāgavata* from the person *bhāgavata*, one whose very life embodies the teachings of the *Bhāgavatam*. If one hears about the Lord in this authorized way, his feeling for loving devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead,

awakens within his heart and extinguishes the fire of material suffering. Ultimately, the sincere student of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* realizes his original, transcendental relationship with the Lord and, upon giving up his body at death, enters into Lord Kṛṣṇa's eternal pastimes in the spiritual world.

What follows is an excerpt from the recently completed third chapter of the Tenth Canto, prepared by Śrīla Prabhupāda at ISKCON's Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma temple in Vṛndāvana, India.

The Advent of Lord Kṛṣṇa

At the auspicious time for the appearance of the Lord, the entire universe was surcharged with all the qualities of goodness, beauty, and peace. The constellation Rohiṇī appeared, as did stars like Aśvinī. The sun, the moon, and the

other stars and planets were very peaceful. All directions appeared extremely pleasing, and the beautiful stars twinkled in the cloudless sky.

Decorated with towns, villages, mines, and pasturing grounds, the earth seemed all-auspicious. The rivers flowed with clear water, and the lakes and vast reservoirs, full of lilies and lotuses, were extraordinarily beautiful. In the trees and green plants, which were full of flowers and leaves, pleasing to the eyes, birds like cuckoos and swarms of bees began chanting with sweet voices for the sake of the demigods. A pure breeze began to blow, pleasing the sense of the hearer's touch and bearing the aroma of flowers, and when the *brāhmaṇas* who were engaged in ritualistic ceremonies ignited their fires according to Vedic principles, the fires burned steadily, undisturbed by the breeze.

Thus when the birthless Lord Viṣṇu, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, was about to appear, the saints and *brāhmaṇas*, who had always been disturbed by demons like Kamsa and his men, felt peace within the core of their hearts, and kettledrums simultaneously vibrated from the upper planetary system. The Kinnaras and Gandharvas, inhabitants of the heavenly planets, began to sing auspicious songs; the Siddhas and Cāraṇas offered auspicious prayers; and the Vidyādharis, along with the Apsarās, began to dance in jubilation.

The demigods and great saintly persons showered flowers in a joyous mood, and clouds gathered in the sky and very mildly thundered, making sounds like those of the ocean's waves. Then the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Viṣṇu, who is situated in the core of everyone's heart, appeared from the heart of Devakī in the dense darkness of night, like the full moon rising on the eastern horizon, because Devakī was of the same category as Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

[As stated in the *Brahma-saṁhitā* (5.37):

*ānanda-cinmaya-rasa-pratibhāvītābhis
tābhir ya eva nija-rūpatayā kalābhiḥ
goloka eva nivasaty akhilātmā-bhūto
govindam ādi-puruṣam tam aham bhajāmi*

This verse indicates that Kṛṣṇa and His entourage are of the same spiritual potency (*ānanda-cinmaya-rasa*). Kṛṣṇa's father, His mother, His friends the cowherd boys, and the cows are all expansions of Kṛṣṇa, as will be explained in the *brahma-vimohana-līlā*. When Brahmā took away Kṛṣṇa's associates to test the supremacy of Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Lord expanded Himself again in the forms of the many cowherd boys and

calves, all of whom, as Brahmā saw, were *viṣṇu-mūrtis* [forms of Kṛṣṇa]. Devakī is also an expansion of Kṛṣṇa, and thus the *Bhāgavatam* says, *devakyām deva-rūpiṇyām viṣṇuḥ sarva-guhā-śayah*.

The objection may be raised that since Lord Kṛṣṇa appeared on the eighth day of the waning moon, there could be no rising of the full moon. In answer to this it may be said that Lord Kṛṣṇa appeared in the dynasty which is in the hierarchy of the moon; therefore, although the moon was incomplete on that night, because of the Lord's appearance in the dynasty wherein the moon is himself the original person, the moon was in an overjoyous condition, so by the grace of Kṛṣṇa he could appear just as a full moon. To welcome the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the waning moon became a full moon in jubilation.

Those who are not in full knowledge that the appearance and disappearance of the Lord are transcendental (*janma karma ca me divyam*) are sometimes surprised that the Supreme Personality of Godhead can take birth like an ordinary child. Actually, however, the Lord's birth is never ordinary. The Supreme Personality of Godhead is already situated within the core of everyone's heart as *antaryāmi*, the Supersoul. Thus because He was present in full potency in Devakī's heart, He was also able to appear outside her body.

In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.9.42), Bhīṣma, a great authority to be followed by devotees, says that the Supreme Personality of Godhead is situated in the core of everyone's heart, just as the sun may be on everyone's head. Yet although the sun may be on the heads of

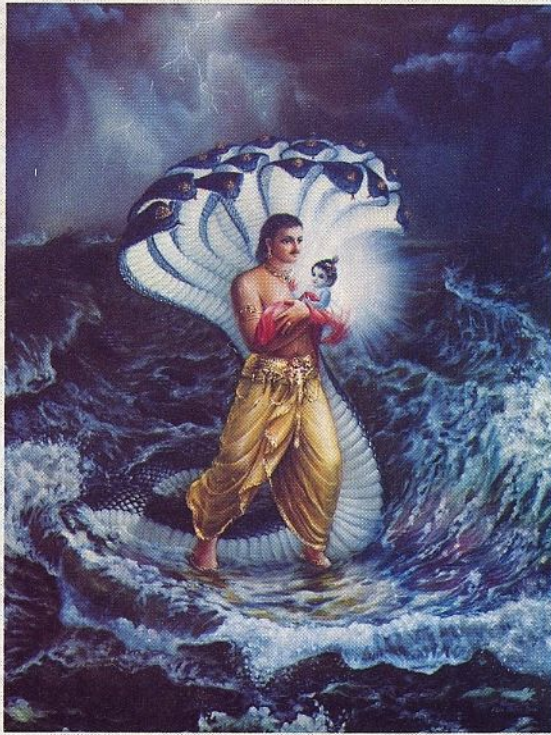


Illustration: Rāma dāsa Abhirāma dāsa

Ananta's hoods shielded Vasudeva and Kṛṣṇa, and the River Yamunā allowed Vasudeva to cross.

millions and millions of people, this does not mean that the sun is variously situated. Similarly, because the Supreme Personality of Godhead has inconceivable potencies, He can be within everyone's heart and yet not be variously situated. *Ekatvam anupaśyataḥ (Īśopaniṣad 7)*. The Lord is one, but He can appear in everyone's heart by His inconceivable potency. Thus although the Lord was within the heart of Devakī, He appeared as her child. According to the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, therefore, the Lord appeared like the sun (*anugrahasya*). The *Brahma-sāṃhitā* (5.35) confirms that the Lord is situated even within the atom (*andāntara-stha-paramāṇu-cayāntara-stham*). He is situated in Mathurā, in Vaikuṅṭha, and in the core of the heart. Therefore one should clearly understand that He did not live like an ordinary child in the heart or the womb of Devakī. Nor did He appear like an ordinary human child, although He seemed to do so in order to bewilder *asuras* (demons) like Kaṁsa. The *asuras* wrongly think that Kṛṣṇa took birth like an ordinary child and passed away from this world like an ordinary man. Such asuric conceptions are rejected by persons in knowledge of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. *Ajo 'pi sann avyayātmā bhūtānām īśvaro 'pi san* (Bg. 4.6). As stated in *Bhagavad-gītā*, the Lord is *aja*, unborn, and He is the supreme controller of everything. Nonetheless, He appeared as the child of Devakī. This verse describes the in-

conceivable potency of the Lord, who appeared like the full moon. Understanding the special significance of the appearance of the Supreme Godhead, one should never regard Him as having taken birth like an ordinary child.]

Vasudeva then saw the newborn child, who had very wonderful lotuslike eyes and who bore in His four hands the four weapons *śankha*, *cakra*, *gadā* and *padma* [conchshell, disc, club, and lotus]. On His chest was the mark of Śrīvatsa and on His neck the brilliant Kaustubha gem. Dressed in yellow, His body blackish like a dense cloud, His scattered hair fully grown, and His helmet and earrings sparkling uncommonly with the valuable gem Vaidūrya, the child, decorated with a brilliant belt, armlets, bangles, and other ornaments, appeared very wonderful.

When Vasudeva saw his extraordinary son, his eyes were struck with wonder. In transcendental jubilation, he mentally collected ten thousand cows and distributed them among the *brāhmaṇas* as a transcendental festival.

Vasudeva could understand that this child was the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Nārāyaṇa. Having concluded this without a doubt, he became fearless. Bowing down with folded hands and concentrated attention, he began to offer prayers to the child, who was illuminating His birthplace by His natural influence.

Vasudeva prayed, "O my Lord, proprietor of all creation, You have now appeared in my house, desiring to give protection to this world. I am sure that You will kill all the armies that are moving all over the world under the leadership of politicians who are dressed as *kṣatriya* rulers but who are factually all demons. They must be killed by You for the protection of the innocent public."

[Kṛṣṇa appears in this world for two purposes, *paritrāṇāya sādḥūnām vināśāya ca duṣkṛtām*: to protect the innocent, religious devotees of the Lord and to annihilate all the uneducated, uncultured *asuras* who unnecessarily bark like dogs and fight among themselves for political power. It is said, *kali-kāle nāma-rūpe kṛṣṇa avatāra*. The Hare Kṛṣṇa movement is also an incarnation of Kṛṣṇa in the form of the holy name (*nāma-rūpe*). Every one of us who is actually afraid of the asuric rulers and politicians must



Illustration: Sulakṣmaṇā-devi dāsi

The demigods offered songs and prayers for Kṛṣṇa in Devakī's womb.

welcome this incarnation of Kṛṣṇa: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. Then we will surely be protected from the harassment of asuric rulers. At the present moment these rulers are so powerful that by hook or by crook they capture the highest posts in government and harass countless numbers of people on the plea of national security or some emergency. Then again, one *asura* defeats another *asura*, but the public continues to suffer. Therefore the entire world is in a precarious condition, and the only hope is this Hare Kṛṣṇa movement.

Lord Nṛsimhadeva appeared when Prahāda was excessively harassed by his

prophecy that You would take birth in our home and kill him, this uncivilized Kāṁsa killed so many of Your elder brothers. As soon as he hears from his lieutenants that You have appeared, he will immediately come with weapons to kill You.”

[Kāṁsa has here been described as *asabhya*, meaning “uncivilized” or “most heinous,” because he killed the many children of his sister. When he heard the prophecy that he would be killed by her eighth son, this uncivilized man, Kāṁsa, was immediately ready to kill his innocent sister on the occasion of her marriage. An uncivilized man can do anything for the satisfaction of his senses. He can kill children, he can kill cows, he can kill *brāhmaṇas*, he can kill old men; he has no mercy for anyone. According to the Vedic civilization, cows, women, children, old men, and *brāhmaṇas* should be excused even if they are at fault. But *asuras*, uncivilized men, do not care about that. At the present moment, the killing of cows and the killing of children are going on unrestrictedly, and therefore this civilization is not at all human, and those who are conducting this condemned civilization are uncivilized *asuras*.

Such uncivilized men are not in favor of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. As public officers, they declare without hesitation that the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement is a nuisance, although the *Bhagavad-gītā* clearly says, *sataṁ kīrtayanto mām yataṁ ca dr̥ḍha-vratāḥ*. According to

this verse, it is the duty of the *mahātmās* to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra and try to spread it all over the world to the best of their ability. Unfortunately, society is in such an uncivilized state that there are so-called *mahātmās* who are prepared to kill cows and children and stop the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement. Such uncivilized activities, like those of history, were actually demonstrated in connection with the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement’s Bombay center, Hare Kṛṣṇa Land. As Kāṁsa was not expected to kill the beautiful child of Devakī and Vasudeva, the uncivilized society, although unhappy about the advancement of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, cannot be expected to stop

After learning that Vasudeva and Devakī’s eighth child would be the Supreme Lord (Kṛṣṇa), Kāṁsa arrested them. When Lord Kṛṣṇa finally appeared within Kāṁsa’s prisonhouse (right), He reassured His parents by showing them His four-armed form; then He appeared as an ordinary child.

it. Yet we must face many difficulties in many different ways. Although Kṛṣṇa cannot be killed, Vasudeva, as the father of Kṛṣṇa, was trembling because in affection he thought that Kāṁsa would immediately come and kill his son. Similarly, although the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement and Kṛṣṇa are not different and no *asuras* can check it, we are afraid that at any moment the *asuras* can stop it in any part of the world.]

Thereafter, exactly when Vasudeva, being inspired by the Supreme Personality of Godhead, was about to take the newborn child from the delivery room, Yogamāyā, the Lord’s spiritual energy, took birth as the daughter of Yaśodā, the wife of Mahārāja Nanda.

By the influence of Yogamāyā, all the doorkeepers fell fast asleep, their senses unable to work, and the other inhabitants of the house also fell deeply asleep. When the sun rises, the darkness automatically disappears; similarly, when Vasudeva approached the closed doors, which were strongly pinned with iron and locked with iron chains, they opened automatically. Since the clouds in the sky were mildly thundering and showering, Ananta-nāga, an expansion of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, followed Vasudeva, beginning from the door, with hoods expanded to protect Vasudeva and the transcendental child.

Because of constant rain sent by the demigod Indra, the River Yamunā was filled with deep water, foaming about with fiercely whirling waves. But as the great Indian Ocean had formerly given way to Lord Rāmacandra by allowing Him to construct a bridge, so the River Yamunā gave way to Vasudeva and allowed him to cross.

When Vasudeva reached the house of Nanda Mahārāja, he saw that all the cowherd men were fast asleep. Thus he placed his son on Yaśodā’s bed, picked up her daughter (an expansion of Yogamāyā) and then returned to the prisonhouse of Kāṁsa. Vasudeva then placed the female child on the bed of Devakī, bound his legs with the iron shackles, and thus remained there as before. Exhausted by the labor of childbirth, Yaśodā was overwhelmed with sleep and unable to understand what kind of child had been born.



Illustration: Dhriti-devi dāsi.

After Kṛṣṇa’s birth, Kāṁsa tried to kill Kṛṣṇa’s younger sister Yogamāyā, but she rose to the sky in her eight-armed form.

asuric father. Because of such asuric fathers—that is, the ruling politicians—it is very difficult to press forward the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement, but because Kṛṣṇa has now appeared in His holy name through this movement, we can hope that these asuric fathers will be annihilated and the kingdom of God will be established all over the world. The entire world is now full of many *asuras* in the guise of politicians, gurus, *sādhus*, yogīs, and incarnations, who are misleading the general public away from Kṛṣṇa consciousness, which can offer true benefit to human society.]

Vasudeva continued, “O my Lord, Lord of the demigods, after hearing the





The Long Arm of the Law Catches LORD CAITANYA'S MERCY

“Come on!” the constable said.
“You know as well as I do you’re causing an obstruction. Down to the station; you’re all under arrest!”
“Obstruction?” we protested.
“All around you there’s drug addiction, prostitution, crime, and violence, and you can’t find anything better to do than arrest us for chanting the names of God! What kind of policemen are you?”

The Arrest

It was the Thursday before Christmas, and London’s Oxford Street (the longest shopping street in the world) was brimming over with Christmas shoppers. Twice already that week plainclothes police had arrested devotees chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa there, but today we were intending to avoid any trouble. The five of us took a new route, profusely distributing the holy name to everyone within earshot. As we made our way through Piccadilly Circus (London’s “Times Square”) and then along crowded Regent Street, we brought smiles to many faces and raised eyebrows on many others. Finally we reached Oxford Circus, where we reluctantly stopped chanting and started back along Oxford Street toward the temple.

But all the shops were staying open late, so the street was still filled with pedestrians, though traffic had died down. The rustle of hundreds of footsteps filled the air. With so many materially conditioned souls surrounding us, there we were, chanting quietly to ourselves on our beads, and just holding our *karatālas* (hand cymbals) and *mṛdaṅga* drums! It was hard to restrain ourselves from the loud glorification of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*. In fact, it was impossible! Casting aside any thoughts of our inevitable arrest, we



Photo: Bhārgava dāsa

launched into the most ecstatic chant ever! The tall buildings echoed to the sounds of Lord Caitanya’s *saṅkīrtana* party* while dumbfounded shoppers stood open-mouthed and bus lines of bewildered souls turned their heads to see the source of the transcendental sound vibrations. Single file, we chanted and danced along the clear space at the edge of the pavement, which widened as the crowds thinned out. Tottenham Court Road Tube Station, the end of the gauntlet, loomed up ahead. We were almost there, with no police trouble, when three highly suspicious figures suddenly appeared, blocking our path a few yards ahead.

“All right, lads, yer nicked!” said the young “student,” flashing his police I.D. card with immense relish.

“What! How can you arrest us? We’re not doing anything illegal.”

*Lord Caitanya (left, wearing yellow) is the incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa who appeared in Bengal, India, to spread *saṅkīrtana*—the congregational chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*.

His two hard-faced confederates, similarly disguised, moved in closer.

“Come on! You know as well as I do you’re causing an obstruction. Down to the station; you’re all under arrest!”

“Obstruction? The pavement’s fifteen feet wide, we’re walking in the gutter, and there’s hardly anybody to ‘obstruct!’” we protested. “All around you there’s drug addiction, prostitution, crime, and violence, and you can’t find anything better to do than arrest us for chanting the names of God! What kind of policemen are you?”

The retort seemed to catch him by surprise, but he quickly regained his composure and barked, “Look lad, you’re under arrest. Anything you say may be used as evidence. Now move!” Then, adding a liberal quantity of unsavory words (quite unbecoming a constable of Her Majesty’s Police Force), he joined his two colleagues in forming a rear guard, and the three of them escorted us toward the police station.

We were thinking of how unfortunate they were. Not only were they obstructing Lord Caitanya’s *saṅkīrtana* party and harassing devotees, but these were the same policemen who had arrested the chanting party twice earlier that week! What demons! For protection we started chanting the glories of Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva—Kṛṣṇa’s half-man-half-lion incarnation—very softly at first, and then a little louder. The *mṛdaṅga* crept in, marking the rhythm, and the *karatālas* soon followed. With no complaints from our police escort as yet, we chanted louder and louder until the street once more resounded with the holy names. Amazed that they made no objection, we turned and saw that the three policemen were grinning from ear to ear! We were incredulous. Here was the mercy of Lord Caitanya! By repeatedly arresting the chanting party, these previously offensive policemen had become purified by associating with devotees, and now they were taking great pleasure in the chanting of the holy names!

“Now stop or you’ll cause an obstruction,” directed our police guide as we approached a large bus line, which engulfed the pavement. We obediently stopped, considering it our good fortune that we had been allowed to chant at all.

Then something totally unexpected happened. After we had passed the bus line, our captor definitely proved himself to be no ordinary police constable when he ordered, “Okay, start chanting again.”!!!

So we did, all the way to the police station, accompanied by the three blissful police constables, who, grinning from ear to ear, made no objection as the ecstatic *saṅkīrtana* party passed right into the police station, past the main doors, through the hallway, and into the charging room itself!!!

Everyone was thunderstruck. Arrestors and arrested alike couldn’t believe it. Shaven-headed Hare Kṛṣṇas chanting their way into the cop shop? With drums and cymbals? It was unthinkable! The sergeant on duty turned a vivid scarlet and exploded in a fit of anger, threatening to “throw the book” at us and charge us with all manner of subversive criminal activities. We apologized profusely, pleading that we didn’t quite realize where we were, and he became somewhat pacified. As we answered philosophical questions from some of the interested constables, the sergeant charged us with obstruction, one by one, and we had to wait as he filled in numerous forms.

“All right, boys, tomorrow morning at ten o’clock you’ll be appearing in the Magistrates Court,” said the sergeant, now quite amiable. And with that he allowed us to go. Feeling very blissful at the way things had turned out, we filed into the hallway and prepared to return to the temple for the evening *ārati* (temple worship) of Their Lordships Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Londonīśvara. (*Londonīśvara* means “Kṛṣṇa, the Lord of London.”) On our way out of the station, we passed a high-ranking plainclothes detective-inspector. He paused and turned in our direction. Not knowing what to expect, we were surprised when he glanced over us in an almost fatherly way and said in a concerned voice, “Don’t be discouraged, lads; keep up the good work!”

Next morning in court we pleaded “not guilty” to the charges against us, and the judge deferred our case to February 2. At the time, we were unaware of the significance of the appointed date. Our trial was to be on the appearance day of Lord Nityānanda—the incarnation of God who helped spread Lord Caitanya’s *saṅkīrtana* movement, and who personifies His mercy.



Photo: Bhārgava dāsa

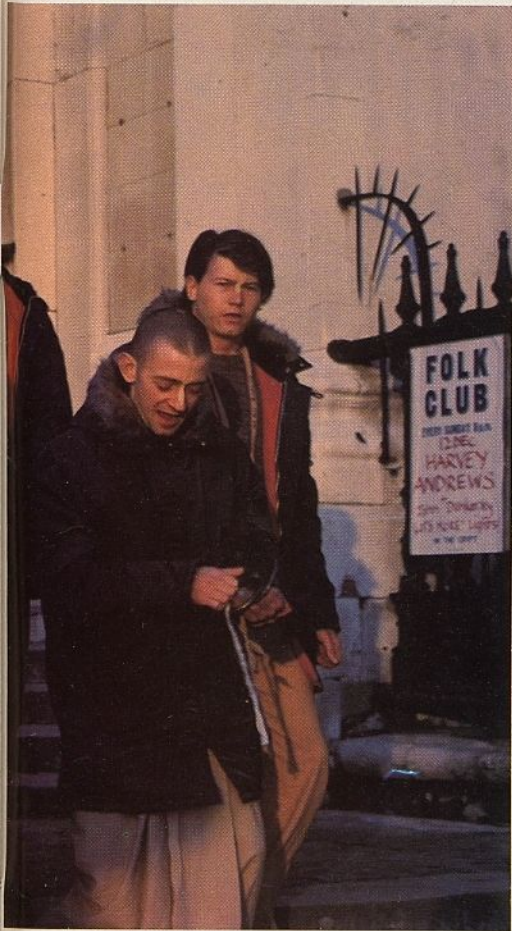
The Trial

As is customary on such holy days, the five of us fasted through the morning of Lord Nityānanda’s appearance day and chanted His glories. At noon we attended a blissful *ārati* and then broke our fast with a splendid feast. Afterward, we set off for Great Marlborough Street Magistrates Court, confident that Lord Nityānanda would protect us. We were accompanied by a new and enthusiastic visitor to the temple, the Reverend Norman Morehouse (second only to the Bishop of Norwich), who came along to observe the court proceedings.

We arrived at the courthouse a few minutes before our appointed time of 2:00 P.M. and waited in the big hallway while the Reverend went through to the public gallery. The plainclothesmen who arrested us soon turned up, now in uniform, and waited with us. (It took a little persuasion before they cautiously took some of the hazelnut cookies we had earlier offered to Lord Nityānanda.) At last we were beckoned into the courtroom itself and ushered into the dock. A stir went through the assembly. Shaven heads and saffron robes were the last thing anyone expected to see in

Magistrates Court on a Tuesday afternoon. The Magistrate (a balding, portly man in his late middle age, sporting a red rose in the lapel of his dark grey suit) surveyed us over the top of his gold-rimmed spectacles. After we reaffirmed our plea of “not guilty” to the court clerk, one of the constables, who had been sworn in at the witness box, proceeded to report the alleged conditions of our arrest.

In the constable’s version of the story, the chanting party miraculously grew from the original five members to seven—and later to eight when he described how three devotees “ran off and escaped arrest.” According to his description, it seemed that there were many more people on Oxford Street than we had been aware of. Indeed, we had supposedly forced unlimited numbers of pedestrians into the road and had exposed them to the grave risk of being run over by the almost nonexistent traffic! The judge listened impartially and then, since we had no lawyer to speak on our behalf, he asked us if we would like to comment on the policeman’s evidence. We humbly pointed out that the constable, like everyone else, had imperfect senses, and that he had contradicted himself in assessing the number of devotees on the chanting party. The judge



politely suggested the constable had made "a mathematical error." At this a titter of laughter rippled through the courtroom, while the constable shuffled his feet and looked embarrassed.

The magistrate then asked if we would like to speak in our own defense. Having been previously chosen as spokesman, I stepped forward to be sworn in at the witness box—and was taken aback when the usher asked me to hold a copy of the *Bhagavad-gītā* in my right hand. He handed me a card, and I read out the words: "I swear by almighty Śrī Kṛṣṇa that the evidence I give shall be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

Heartened by smiles from the devotees in the dock, I began to describe the circumstances of our arrest—this time as they actually had happened. The magistrate listened as I went on to say, "We understand that the police have a duty to perform, sir; but we also have a duty. We have been instructed by our spiritual master—indeed, we are instructed by all the principle scriptures of the world—the Koran, the Torah, the Bible, and the *Vedas*—that we should glorify God by chanting His holy names. Whether you know the Lord by the name of Allah, Jehovah, Rāma, Govinda, or Kṛṣṇa, God is one."

On the way back I read a verse that summed up our experience: "Lord Caitanya excused all the offenders, and they merged into the ocean of love of God. . . ."

"Oh, quite so, quite so," affirmed the magistrate.

Encouraged, I went on: "In the Vedic scriptures, in the *Bṛhan-Nāradya Purāṇa*, it is said, *harer nāma harer nāma harer namaiva kevalam*—"

"In English—but what does it mean in English, please?" he interjected.

"—*Kalau nāsty eva nāsty eva nāsty eva gatir anyathā*. This was written in the Sanskrit language five thousand years ago. It means, 'In this age of Kali [the present age of materialism and quarrel] there is no alternative, there is no alternative, there is no alternative for making positive spiritual advancement but the chanting of the holy name, the holy name, the holy name of the Lord.'"

The judge—in fact the whole courtroom—sat there fascinated. I remembered Śrīla Prabhupāda's introduction to the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and began to speak further.

"Although mankind has made great material advancement in so many spheres, we can see that factually there is a fault in the social body at large. People are not happy with their day-to-day activities, and there is an increasing disturbance of drug addiction, prostitution, violence, and crime. The root of the problem is lack of God consciousness. People are unaware of the actual purpose of life."

Intrigued by this sound philosophy coming from the witness box, the judge relaxed his judicial appearance, sat back, and took a sip of water from his glass.

Even more encouraged, I asked, "Sir, with your permission, I would like to read a short passage that appeared in the London *Observer* in October 1972. It is an excerpt from an article written by that eminent English historian, Arnold Toynbee."

Upon hearing the name of such a distinguished personality, the judge smiled slightly, and nodding his head in approval, he asked that I continue.

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

I continued, "As devotees of the Lord we strictly follow four principles: mercifulness, truthfulness, cleanliness, and austerity. These are the higher qualities of human life, and the absence of these qualities means the degradation of society. So the spreading of spiritual understanding among humanity at large is the highest welfare work. And an essential part of this program is the distribution of literature, and the congregational chanting—in the street—of the holy names of God."

"Is that all?" inquired the judge.

"Yes, sir," I replied.

"Then you may step down." Adjusting his spectacles and regarding the devotees, who were once more assembled in the dock, the judge then said in a very firm yet amicable manner, "In legal terms you are guilty of obstruction, although it is of a very minor degree. Taking this into consideration, and seeing your obvious sincerity, I have decided to dismiss the case."

We smiled jubilantly, thanked the magistrate, and were about to step down, when Kṛṣṇa prompted me to add, "Sir, we were wondering if you had a court library here, in which case we would like to present a book for addition to the collection."

"Thank you," he replied. "I am quite sure we can accommodate it."

I gave a copy of Śrīla Prabhupāda's *Śrī Īsopaniṣad* to one of the clerks, who promised to pass it on to the judge. Then we left the courtroom, thanking Lord Nityānanda for His mercy.

Outside, our friend Reverend Morehouse greeted us with an ecstatic "Hare Kṛṣṇa!" Beaming from ear to ear, he shook each of us warmly by the hand. "Congratulations!" he exclaimed. "It was wonderful! I am so proud of you all. I must say, though, I was somewhat surprised at the decision of the judge. In the cases before yours he had been quite severe. I'm sure that the Lord must have had a hand in the matter."

And so were we. *Saṅkīrtana* is always successful, but it is especially so on Lord Nityānanda's appearance day: even a judge will take a book!

On the way back to the temple, I read one verse in Śrīla Prabhupāda's *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* that summed up our whole wonderful experience:

*aparāḍha kṣamāila ḍubila prema-jale
kebā eḍāibe prabhura prema-mahājāle*

"Lord Caitanya excused all the offenders, and they merged into the ocean of love of God, for no one can escape the unique loving network of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu" (Cc. *Ādi-līlā*, 7.37). 🌸

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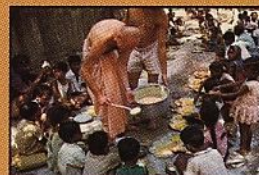
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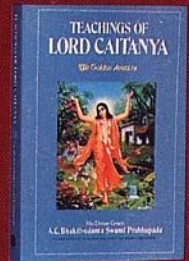
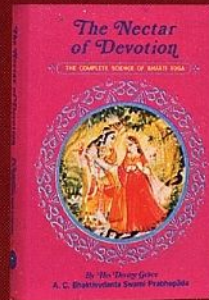
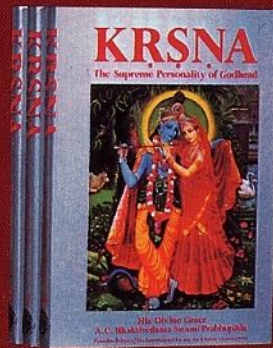
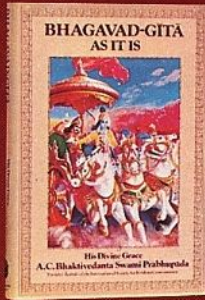
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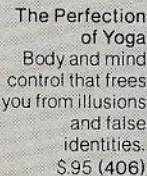
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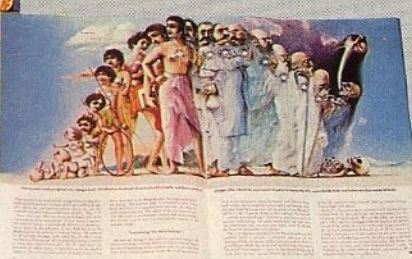
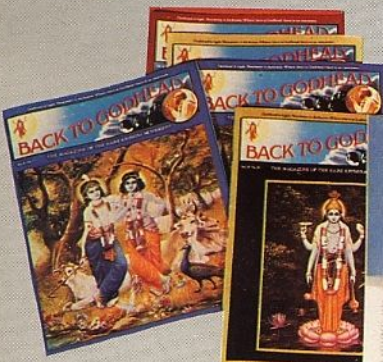


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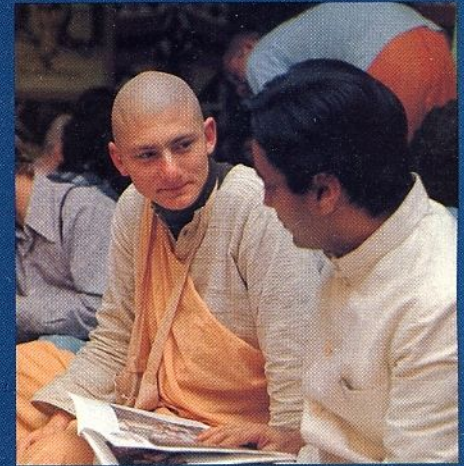
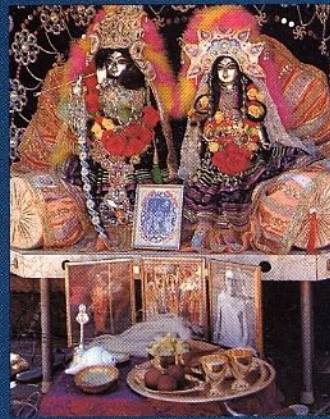
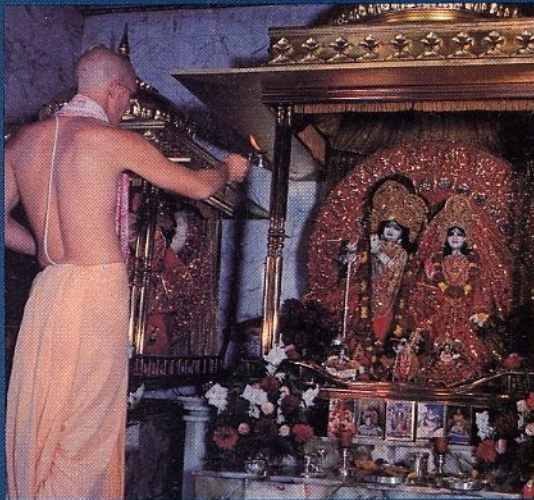
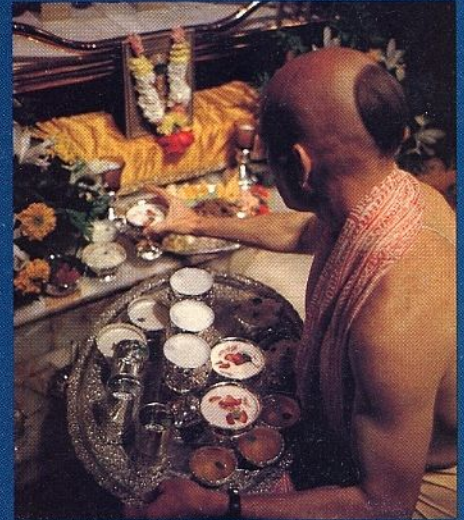
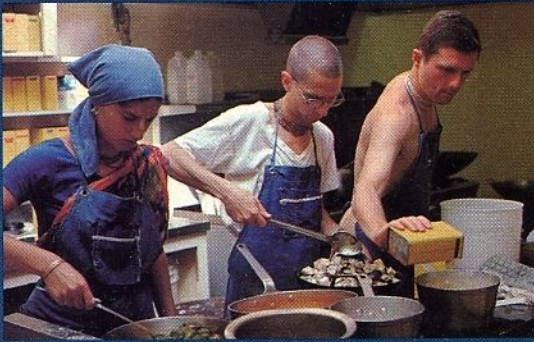
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“If one offers Me with love
and devotion a leaf, a flower,
fruit, or water, I will accept it.”

(*Bhagavad-gītā*)



The speaker of these words is Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Since He already possesses everything, surely He has no need of food. Yet He accepts His devotees' offerings to help them awaken their natural love for Him. As we can see, Kṛṣṇa accepts only vegetarian preparations offered to Him with love. This food then becomes *prasāda*—"the mercy of the Lord." The devotees are eager to distribute *prasāda*, because they know that whoever tastes it advances rapidly in spiritual life. And every Sunday afternoon thousands of people do just that—by visiting any of more than one hundred Hare Kṛṣṇa centers and partaking of the world-famous, incredibly delicious, transcendental Love Feast. So why not join us this Sunday? And after the feast, be sure to stay for the movie, play, or puppet show. (Please see page twenty-eight for the center nearest you.)

