



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



BACK TO GODHEAD



The Magazine of the Hare Krishna Movement • July/August 2001 • \$4.00/£2.50



Rādhārāṇī

The Feminine Side of God

ALSO: What Is Real Humility? • Temple of
The Supreme Enchanter • Optimism and
Pessimism • An Abortion Doctor's
Change of Heart • Ashes in the
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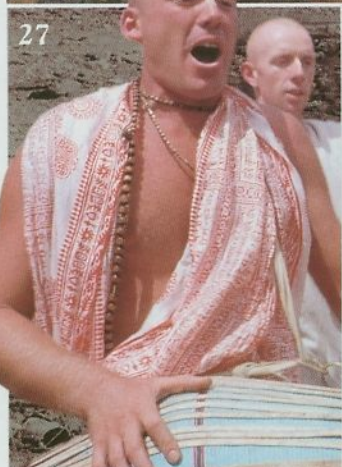
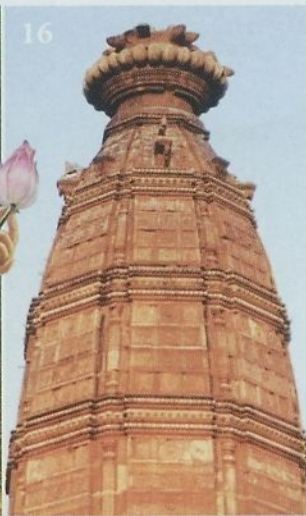
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Back to Godh

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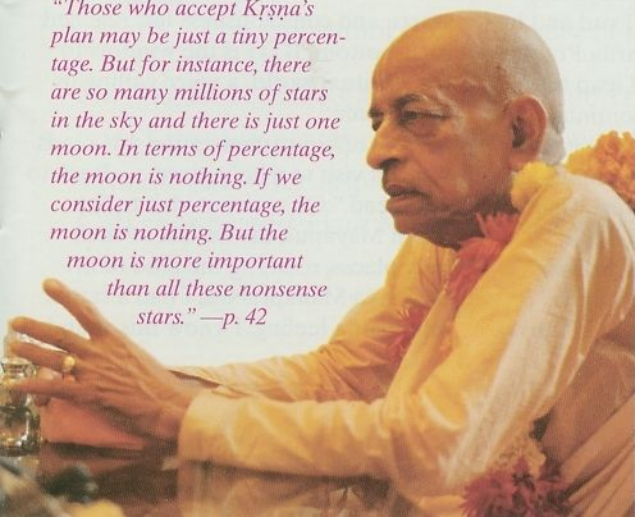
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COVER In spiritual ecstasy, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, Lord Kṛṣṇa’s feminine counterpart, talks with a bee about Lord Kṛṣṇa, the only object of Her pristine, fathomless love. Please see the article about Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī beginning on page 22. (Painting by Muralīdhara Dāsa.)

“Those who accept Kṛṣṇa’s plan may be just a tiny percentage. But for instance, there are so many millions of stars in the sky and there is just one moon. In terms of percentage, the moon is nothing. If we consider just percentage, the moon is nothing. But the moon is more important than all these nonsense stars.” —p. 42



WELCOME



THIS ISSUE coincides with Janmāṣṭamī, the anniversary of Lord Kṛṣṇa’s appearance on earth fifty centuries ago. Chief among the reasons for Lord

Kṛṣṇa’s descent is His desire to attract all souls to Him and to their rightful position as His servants. In this issue we visit a temple where Kṛṣṇa’s power to attract is proclaimed by the deity’s name: Madana-Mohana, “The Attractor of Cupid.” Cupid, or lust for sensual enjoyment, lures us all, but if we “Practice Loving Kṛṣṇa,” as Śrīdhara Swami entreats us, we’ll witness the superior pull of Kṛṣṇa.

But even all-powerful Lord Kṛṣṇa can be conquered, as Śrīla Prabhupāda explains in “Conquering the Unconquerable.” And, we learn from Satyarāja Dāsa in “Rādhārāṇī: The Feminine Side of God,” Kṛṣṇa is especially defeated by the love of His greatest devotee.

The exchanges of love between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are the essence of purity, understood and savored by only the purest, most devoted souls. In “Real Humility,” rmlā Devī Dāsī provides insight into what it takes to develop even one of the essential qualifications of such purified souls.

Hare Kṛṣṇa.—Nāgarāja Dāsa, Editor

OUR PURPOSES

- To help all people discern reality from illusion, spirit from matter, the eternal from the temporary.
- To expose the faults of materialism.
- To offer guidance in the Vedic techniques of spiritual life.
- To preserve and spread the Vedic culture.
- To celebrate the chanting of the holy names of God as taught by Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.
- To help every living being remember and serve Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Personality of Godhead.



Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead and source of all material and spiritual worlds



Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Kṛṣṇa’s most recent incarnation, taught Kṛṣṇa consciousness through the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa



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

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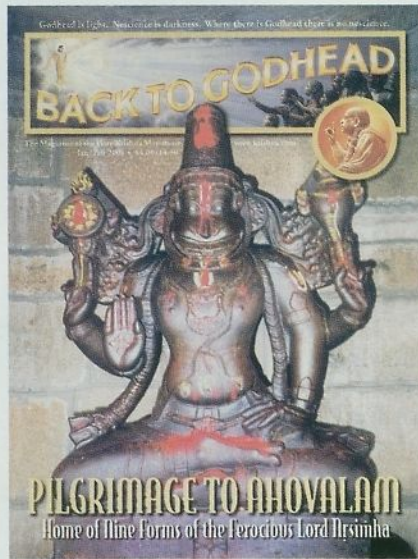
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Letters

Youthful Inspiration

I am an Indian devotee who, despite being raised in the West, grew up with Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings and temples and have been reading BTG since childhood. I love BTG beyond words, and whenever I come home from college, I run first to my mother's bedside table to snag the latest issues.

The January/February issue had one article in particular that deserves special praise: "Ahovalam Revisited." Reading an article about someone in my peer group making such an aston-



ishing journey of love for Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva gave me goose bumps! Many of my close friends are *guru-kulis* [former students of ISKCON schools], and I'm involved in Berkeley's new Hare Kṛṣṇa Youth club, but never have I come across such inspiration in a young devotee. Dhruva Dāsa's dedication to the Lord and his courage truly show that Śrīla Prabhupāda's grandchildren will lead the future of ISKCON and continue to provide an inspiration to those of us fortunate to be born in India but unfortunate to forget our Lord. Thank you, Dhruva Prabhu, and BTG!

Rupali Chadha
U.C. Berkeley
Berkeley, California

Burning the Bad Karma

Many people have the idea that bad karma can be reduced or removed through meditation, worship, *sam-skāra*, or sacrifice. Do you think so? I believe that bad karma cannot be reduced. We have to suffer all our karma. Please clarify.

Wu, Chung Fai
Via the Internet

OUR REPLY: The Vedic scriptures describe say devotional service to the Lord destroys the results of previous sins—in other words, bad karma. The effectiveness of the process depends on its purity. For example, pure chanting of the holy names of the Lord destroys all sinful reactions. But the chanting is usually not pure in the beginning. When one begins the practice of devotional service, it is said to be like unplugging a fan. The fan will still turn for some time. So in the stage of devotional practice, the reactions will continue, but as we become more and more purified by devotional service, eventually we'll be free of all reactions and enjoy the bliss of full spiritual life. And even in the stage of practice, Lord Kṛṣṇa adjusts the karma so that His aspiring devotees get just what they need to progress steadily toward Him.

A Voice Calling Us Home

When we're lost in the concrete jungle, losing the rat race, it's wonderful to receive *Back to Godhead* magazine. Even when devotee association is scarce and consciousness has reached rock-bottom, BTG is the window to the spiritual world, a voice calling us back home.

One of your subscription ads reads "Like a visit to a holy place . . . Back to Godhead." On a recent visit to Śrīdhām Māyāpur, the holiest of such holy places, roaming the land of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, I had a rather interesting feeling. I know this sounds

What Is the Hare Kṛṣṇa Movement?

Founded in 1966 by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) carries on in the modern world a great ancient tradition rooted in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, the teachings Lord Kṛṣṇa spoke five millenniums ago. The *Gītā* and the other Vedic scriptures declare Kṛṣṇa to be the original person, God Himself, who appears periodically in this world to liberate all living beings.

Only five hundred years ago, Kṛṣṇa descended as Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu to teach the most sublime and effective means of meditation for the present day: the chanting of the names of God, especially as found in the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra.

Today members of ISKCON continue Lord Caitanya's movement by distributing the teachings of Lord Kṛṣṇa and the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra all over the world.

Pronunciation

We spell Sanskrit words and names by a phonetic system that lets you know how to say each word. Pronounce short **a** like the **u** in **but**, long **ā** like the **a** in **far** (and held twice as long as the short **a**). Pronounce **e** like the **a** in **evade**, long **ī** like the **i** in **pique**. Pronounce the vowel **ṛ** like the **ri** in **rim**, and **ḥ** like the **ch** in **chair**. Pronounce consonants like **ch**, **jh**, and **dh** as in **staunch-heart**, **hedgehog**, and **red-hot**. Pronounce **ś** and **ṣ** like **sh**. So for *Kṛṣṇa* say KRISHNA, for *Caitanya* say CHAITANYA.

Spiritual Names

ISKCON members receive names of Lord Kṛṣṇa or His great devotees, combined with Dāsa, for men, or Dāsī, for women, both of which mean "servant." For instance, the name Kṛṣṇa Dāsa means "servant of Kṛṣṇa."

crazy, but it's true: I felt like I was walking through the pages of a BTG!

Every issue of BTG takes us to those holy places, on a captivating journey through Kṛṣṇa consciousness. There's no pretense—this magazine actually takes us "back to Godhead." For this, I'll always be grateful.

Yaśodā Dulāla Dāsa
South Africa

Just in Time

I've been reading *Back to Godhead* magazine for the past few years, and I can say that this is the best magazine in the world. It really enlivens my spirit of devotional service unto the supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Whenever I'm down or

in a confused state of mind, I read "Śrīla Prabhupāda Speaks Out." The one in the November/December 2000 edition, about Christianity and Kṛṣṇa consciousness, came just at the right time—I happened to be discussing the point with a Christian friend. I'd like to wish you all the best. May more and more people get to read this awesome magazine day by day.

Roshni
Jakarta, Indonesia ☀

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Come and celebrate with us!

JANMĀṢṬAMĪ

The Appearance Anniversary of Lord Kṛṣṇa

On August 12,* ISKCON temples around the world will honor Lord Kṛṣṇa's appearance and pastimes with festivals that climax at midnight—the auspicious moment of the Lord's appearance. Call your nearest Hare Kṛṣṇa center for details.

*The date may vary by one day in some parts of the world.



CONQUERING the UNCONQUERABLE

*The Supreme Truth is known as Ajita—the unconquerable—
but Lord Kṛṣṇa reveals how He can be conquered.*

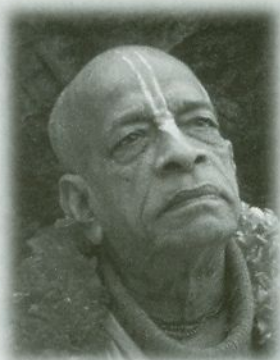
by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta
Swami Prabhupāda

Founder-Ācārya of the International Society
For Krishna Consciousness

*ananya-cetāḥ satatam
yo mām smarati nityaśaḥ
tasyāhaṁ sulabhaḥ pārtha
nitya-yuktasya yoginaḥ*

“For one who always remembers Me without deviation, I am easy to obtain, O son of Pṛthā, because of his constant engagement in devotional service.”

—*Bhagavad-gītā* 8.14



Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam [10.2.32] confirms this:

*ye 'nye 'ravindākṣa vimukta-
māninas
tvayy asta-bhāvād aviśuddha-
buddhayaḥ
āruhya kṛcchreṇa param padam
tataḥ
patanty adho 'nāḍṛta-yuṣmad-
aṅghrayaḥ*

YESTERDAY WE DISCUSSED how the impersonalists elevate themselves to the spiritual kingdom. The yogis and the *jñānīs* [speculative philosophers] are generally impersonalists. Their process is to vibrate the transcendental sound *om* at the time of death and thereby transfer to the spiritual world. But they do not enter the spiritual planets. And if we do not have any rest in the spiritual planets, if we remain in the outer space, then there is the risk of coming down again to the material world.

“O lotus-eyed Lord, although nondevotees who accept severe austerities and penances to achieve the highest position may think themselves liberated, their intelligence is impure. They fall down from their position of imagined superiority because they have no regard for Your lotus feet.”

However high you may rise in this material space, if you have no rest on any planet then naturally you'll come down again. Similarly, if we have no rest in the spiritual effulgence, we are sure to come back down again. The reason

At left: In his prayers to Lord Kṛṣṇa, Brahmā, empowered by the Lord to create the universe, says that the Lord can be conquered by anyone who submissively hears about Him from authoritative sources.

If you engage yourself in the business of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, naturally you'll be always thinking of Kṛṣṇa.



is that we, as living entities, are part and parcel of the Supreme. Like the Supreme, we are *sac-cid-ānanda*, eternal and full of bliss and knowledge. We want pleasure. The impersonal feature of the Supreme does not give us the pleasure we want. That pleasure is available in the spiritual planets. If you enter any of the spiritual planets, then you can attain spiritual happiness and the exchange of pleasure. Therefore Lord Kṛṣṇa says, *ananya-cetāḥ satatam yo mām smarati nityaśaḥ*.

Ananya-cetāḥ means “without deviation.” That means without any consideration of *jñāna*, yoga, or any other process—simply the devotional process, the process of surrender: “My Lord, I am Your eternal servant. Please give me Your service. Let me engage in Your service.” That is called *ananya-cetāḥ*.

Ananya-cetāḥ satatam. Satatam means always, twenty-four hours a day, cent percent, without any deviation. That is Kṛṣṇa consciousness. If anyone is engaged in such Kṛṣṇa consciousness—twenty-four hours and cent percent—then he always remembers Kṛṣṇa: *yo mām smarati nityaśaḥ*. Suppose you are engaged in some work. Naturally you'll be thinking of that particular work. When you go to your office and work, you have to think always of the office business. That is quite natural. Similarly, if you engage yourself in the business of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, naturally you'll be always thinking of Kṛṣṇa.

Therefore it is said, *yo mām smarati nityaśaḥ*: “Always remembering Me.” *Tasyāham sulabhaḥ pārtha*: “My dear Pārtha, Arjuna, for such a person I am very cheap.” *Sulabhaḥ* means “very easily available.”

God, Kṛṣṇa, is called Ajita. Ajita means that nobody can conquer God. God is unlimited, and His functions

and activities are unlimited. According to His activities, His names are also unlimited. So this is one of the names: Ajita. Ajita means “the person who is never conquered.” Nobody can conquer God; therefore His name is Ajita.

There is a very nice verse in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* [10.14.3]:

*jñāne prayāsam udapāsyā namanta eva
jīvanti san-mukharitām bhavadiya-
vārtām
sthāne sthitāḥ śruti-gatām tanu-vān-
manobhir
ye prāyaśo 'jita jito 'py asi tais tri-
lokyām*

“My dear Lord, those devotees who have thrown away the impersonal conception of the Absolute Truth and have therefore abandoned discussing empirical philosophical truths should hear from self-realized devotees about Your holy name, form, pastimes, and qualities. They should completely follow the principles of devotional service and remain free from illicit sex, gambling, intoxication, and animal slaughter. Surrendering themselves fully with body, words, and mind, they can live in any *āśrama* or social status. Indeed, You are conquered by such persons, although You are unconquerable.”

Brahmā is praying to Lord Kṛṣṇa. He says, “Giving up the futile endeavor to understand the Supreme by one's limited knowledge . . .” The theosophists and philosophers are asking year after year, life after life, “What is God? What is God? What is the Absolute Truth?” For example, we throw satellites into space and ask, “What is the length and breadth of space?” This is frog philosophy, as I have often explained. A frog is trying to measure the length and breadth of Atlantic Ocean. You see? A frog, whose life is within

the well of three cubic feet, is trying to measure the length and breadth of Atlantic and Pacific oceans. Similarly, our attempt to measure outer space is just as futile. And what to speak of this space. With our limited knowledge, our attempt to know the long and short of God is futile. It is not possible.

So the *Bhāgavatam* recommends, *jñāne prayāsam udapāsyā*: “Just give up this nonsense habit of trying to measure the Supreme.” It is not possible. A person is intelligent who has determined, “It is futile. It is useless to try to understand God by my limited knowledge.”

Brahmā then says, *namanta eva*: “Just become submissive. Try to understand your position: You are a very insignificant segment of the creation. Give up this endeavor to understand the Supreme by your limited knowledge and just become submissive.”

FROM KRṢṆA'S LIPS

Then what is the process? *San-mukharitām bhavadiya-vārtām*: “Just try to understand the Supreme from a reliable source.” *Mukharita* means “from the lips of realized souls.” For example, Arjuna is learning about God directly from Kṛṣṇa, from the lips of Kṛṣṇa. That is the process. Similarly, we must learn about God through the lips of Arjuna or his bona fide representative.

Sthāne sthitāḥ: Never mind what one is. Whether Indian or European or American or Japanese or Hindu or Muslim—never mind. *Sthāne sthitāḥ*: “Just be situated in your place. That doesn't matter.” *Śruti-gatām*: “Just try to understand through your ears, by aural reception.” *Śruti* means reception through the ear.

Then just try to practice what you hear. *Tanu-vān-manobhir ye prāyaśaḥ*

ajita: “My dear Lord, You are unconquerable, but by such a person You become conquered, simply by hearing.” It is such a nice process. God is not conquerable, but He becomes conquerable. He is conquered by a devotee who gives up the nonsense process of understanding Him by his limited knowledge and becomes submissive. Just try to hear from the right source and apply it in your life. Then you become a conqueror of the Supreme.

Similarly, Lord Kṛṣṇa says *tasyāhaṁ sulabhaḥ*. *Sulabhaḥ* means “I am easily available.” God is not easily available. He is very difficult to attain. “But for a person who is constantly in Kṛṣṇa consciousness,” the Lord says Himself, “for him I am easily available.”

So why don't you take up this process? There is a nice verse in *Brahma-saṁhitā*. The purport is that a person who tries to understand God by his sensual process will be unsuccessful. The sensual process is called *āroha-panthā*. *Āroha-panthā* means trying to ascend. There are two ways to acquire knowledge. One is *āroha-panthā*, the ascending process, and the other is *avaroha-panthā*, the descending process. *Āroha-panthā* means “I shall understand God by my own knowledge. I don't care for any authority, any books. I'll understand. I'll meditate, I'll think, I'll philosophize, and I'll understand God.” *Avaroha-panthā*, on the other hand, means getting knowledge from authority.

In relation to one who is trying to understand the Supreme by his own limited knowledge, *Brahma-saṁhitā* [5.34] states:

*panthās tu koṭi-śata-vatsara-sampragamyo
vāyor athāpi manaso muni-puṅgavānām
so 'py asti yat prapada-simny avicintyattatve
govindam ādi-puruṣaṁ tam ahaṁ bhajāmi*

“I worship Govinda, the primeval Lord, only the tip of the toe of whose lotus feet is approached by the yogis who aspire after the transcendental and betake themselves to *prāṇāyāma* by drilling the respiration, or by the

jñānis who try to find out the non-differentiated Brahman by the process of elimination of the mundane, extending over thousands of millions of years.”

You know the speed of mind. You are sitting here, and you can think of thousands and thousands of miles away immediately. Just see the speed of mind. Similarly, the velocity of air is thousands of miles in a second. So the example is given here that if the greatest thinker—*muni puṅgavānām*—goes on searching for millions of years at the speed of mind or the speed of air, still he will find that the subject matter remains inconceivable.

But here is definite information. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* we learn that for one who thinks always of Kṛṣṇa, “I am very easily available.” *Tasyāhaṁ sulabhaḥ pārtha*. “Why? Why do You become so cheap to this person?” Because *nītya-yuktasya yoginaḥ*: “Oh, because he is constantly—twenty-four hours—engaged in My service. I cannot forget him.”

That is the process. Just become submissive and attract the attention of God. Then you'll be successful. My Guru Mahārāja used to say, “Don't try to see God, but work in such a way that God will see you. God will take care of you. Don't try to see God.” That is the process.

We should not think, “I want to see God. O God, please come and stand before me,” as if God were my servant. God is no one's servant. You have to oblige Him by your love, by your service. That is the process.

Here it is said, *tasyāhaṁ sulabhaḥ pārtha*. Anyone engaged in that way, in that submissive way, always, constantly, without any deviation, in Kṛṣṇa consciousness—oh, for him, God is very cheap, although He is unconquerable.

EASY PROCESS

So take this process, Kṛṣṇa consciousness. It is very easy. This process is given to humanity by Lord Caitanya, and Rūpa Gosvāmī, the first disciple of Lord Caitanya, appreciated it. Rūpa Gosvāmī was a minister in the service of the Muhammadan government of Bengal, and he become a disciple of

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Lord Caitanya. When he first met Him, he offered himself with this verse:

*namo mahā-vadānyāya
kṛṣṇa-prema-pradāya te
kṛṣṇāya kṛṣṇa-caitanya-
nāmne gaura-tviṣe namaḥ*

“My dear Lord Caitanya, You are the most munificent personality, the highest charitable person.” Why? “You are delivering Kṛṣṇa very cheaply. Therefore no one is comparable to You in giving charity.”

We want Kṛṣṇa. We are hankering after Kṛṣṇa—the most attractive, the most beautiful, the most opulent, the most powerful, the most learned. That is our hankering. We are hankering after the beautiful, the powerful, the learned. *Raso vai saḥ*: Kṛṣṇa is the reservoir of everything. Just turn your at-

tention to Kṛṣṇa. You’ll get everything, whatever you want. Whatever your heart’s desire, it will be fulfilled by Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

This Kṛṣṇa consciousness was given by Lord Caitanya. Therefore Rūpa Gosvāmī said, “You are the most powerful, charitable personality. Nobody has given such a thing—Kṛṣṇa.” We are all in want of Kṛṣṇa. The process to attain Him is given by Kṛṣṇa Himself as Lord Caitanya. And here Kṛṣṇa says, *tasyāham sulabhaḥ pārtha*: “I become very cheap to him.” To whom? “To one who is constantly engaged in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.”

The impersonalists transfer themselves to the spiritual world and merge into the impersonal effulgence. But if you remain twenty-four hours a day in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then you’ll enter the planet where Kṛṣṇa is. Then what

is the benefit? The benefit is stated in the next verse:

*mām upetya punar janma
duḥkhālayam aśāsvatam
nāpnuvanti mahātmānaḥ
saṁsiddhiṁ paramāṁ gatāḥ*

“My dear Arjuna, if anyone comes to Me by this process, by Kṛṣṇa consciousness, he does not return to the material world, which is full of miseries.” The material world is certified by the Supreme Lord, the creator, as *duḥkhālayam*. *Duḥkhālayam* means “the place of miseries.” How can you make it comfortable? By your so-called advancement of science? No. It is not possible. But we do not know what is *duḥkha*, suffering. Real suffering is birth, death, old age, and disease, but we have set these aside. Because we cannot solve these things, we don’t care for them. We are after satellites and atomic bombs. That is our scientific advancement. Why don’t you solve these important things, which are always giving you suffering? You have no power to solve them.

So here is the solution. Kṛṣṇa says, *mām upetya punar janma . . .*: “If anyone attains My platform, he does not come back again.” Come back where? *Duḥkhālayam aśāsvatam*: “To this place, which is full of miseries.”

Just try to understand that this place is full of miseries. In the mode of ignorance we cannot understand. The cats and dogs and hogs cannot understand their miserable condition of life. A human being is called a rational animal. Human beings are animals, but they have rationality. But that rationality is being used for animal propensities. That rationality is not being used for getting liberated from this miserable condition. That is a misuse of rationality.

Here is the solution. Kṛṣṇa says, “If anyone remains in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, twenty-four hours a day, without any deviation, he comes to Me. And if he once comes to Me, he does not get rebirth in this miserable life.” Why? *Mahātmānaḥ saṁsiddhiṁ paramāṁ gatāḥ*: “They are great souls, and they have achieved the highest goal of life.”

Thank you very much. ☸



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Glossary

- Ācārya**—a spiritual master who teaches by example.
- Balarāma**—Lord Kṛṣṇa's first expansion, who acts in the role of Lord Kṛṣṇa's elder brother.
- Battle of Kurukshetra**—an epic battle for rule of the world, fought five thousand years ago.
- Bhagavad-gītā**—the sacred book in which Lord Kṛṣṇa gives the essence of knowledge to His friend and disciple Arjuna.
- Bhakti**—devotional service to the Supreme Lord.
- Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura**—the spiritual master of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda.
- Bhakti-yoga**—linking with the Supreme Lord through devotional service.
- Caitanya Mahāprabhu**—the incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa who appeared five hundred years ago to teach the chanting of the names of God as the religion for the present age.
- Dharma**—(1) ordained duties or religious principles; (2) one's eternal, natural occupation (i.e., devotional service to the Lord).
- Godhead**—the Absolute Truth, the Supreme Reality, progressively realized first as the impersonal all-pervasive oneness, more fully as the Supersoul within the heart of every living being, and ultimately as the all-opulent Supreme Person.
- Gurukula**—a school where children learn the philosophy and practices of Kṛṣṇa consciousness along with regular academic subjects (literally "the place of the guru").
- Hare Kṛṣṇa**—the great mantra Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.
- ISKCON**—the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.
- Japa**—individual chanting of names of God, usually while counting on beads.
- Kali-yuga**—in the endlessly repeated cycle of four cosmic ages, the present and worst age, the Age of Quarrel, of which 5,000 of 432,000 years have passed.
- Karma**—material action; its inevitable reaction; or the law by which such action and reaction are governed.
- Kirtana**—congregational singing of names of God, usually accompanied by cymbals (*karatālas*) and drums (*mṛdaṅgas*).
- Kṛṣṇa**—the Supreme Personality of Godhead in His original transcendental form (see "Godhead").
- Mahābhārata**—the epic history of ancient India, a history in which the *Bhagavad-gītā* appears as the most important and well-known text.
- Māyā**—illusion; the energy of the Supreme Lord that deludes living entities into forgetting their spiritual nature and forgetting God.
- Māyāvādī**—one who regards the Absolute Truth as ultimately impersonal.
- Modes of nature**—the three qualities (goodness, passion, and ignorance) that hold sway over all action in the material world.
- Nityānanda**—the incarnation of Lord Balarāma who appeared with Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu.
- Prasādam**—vegetarian food that has been prepared for the Lord and offered to Him with devotion (literally "mercy").
- Purāṇas**—Vedic histories.
- Rādhārāṇī**—Lord Kṛṣṇa's consort and pleasure potency.
- Rathayātrā**—"chariot festival": a festival in which the form of Kṛṣṇa is borne in procession on a large canopy-topped chariot or float, especially the festival originating in Puri, India, for Jagannātha (Lord Kṛṣṇa, "the Lord of the universe").
- Sannyāsa**—the renounced life of a man who relinquishes home to dedicate himself fully to the Supreme.
- Śrī**—an honorific meaning "opulent" (similarly: Śrīla, Śrīmad, Śrīmān, Śrīmatī).
- Śrīla Prabhupāda**—His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the founder-*ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.
- Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam**—the most important of the eighteen *Purāṇas*, which tells of the nature and pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa and His devotees.
- Supersoul**—the form of the Lord who resides in every heart along with the individual soul.
- Upaniṣads**—the 108 essential philosophical treatises that appear within the *Vedas*.
- Varṇāśrama**—the Vedic social system. It organizes society into four occupational and four spiritual divisions (*varṇas* and *āśramas*). The members of the four *varṇas* are the *brāhmaṇas* (intellectuals and priests), the *kṣatriyas* (administrators and soldiers), the *vaiśyas* (farmers and businessmen), and the *śūdras* (laborers and artisans). The members of the four *āśramas* are the *brahmacārīs* (celibate students), *gṛhasthas* (married people), *vānaprasthas* (retired people), and *sannyāsīs* (renunciants).
- Vṛndāvana**—the transcendental abode of Lord Kṛṣṇa, mirrored on earth as the town in India where Kṛṣṇa appeared five thousand years ago.
- Vaiṣṇava**—a devotee of the Supreme Lord (from the word *Viṣṇu*).
- Vedas**—the hymns of knowledge revealed by the Lord Himself at the beginning of creation.
- Vedic**—pertaining to the culture in which the *Vedas* and related scriptures guide all aspects of human life.
- Viṣṇu**—any form of the Personality of Godhead (see "Godhead"); the forms the Lord manifests to create and sustain the material world.

PRACTICE LOVING KṚṢṆA

*Through bhakti-yoga
we can finally reunite
with the person we've
wanted all along.*

by Śrīdhara Swami

*A lecture given on December 12, 2000,
at 26 Second Avenue in New York City,
ISKCON's first temple.*

WE'LL READ TONIGHT from the Sixth Chapter of *Bhagavad-gītā*, which discusses *dhyāna-yoga*, or meditative yoga. Texts 13–14 say: “One should hold one’s body, neck, and head erect in a straight line and stare steadily at the tip of the nose. Thus, with an unagitated, subdued mind, devoid of fear, completely free from sex life, one should meditate upon Me within the heart and make Me the ultimate goal of life.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda’s purport to these verses begins, “The goal of life is to know Kṛṣṇa, who is situated within the heart of every living being as Param-ātmā, the four-handed Viṣṇu form.”

The same form of Viṣṇu or Nārāyaṇa is existing within the heart of every living being as the soul of all souls, and He is directing the wanderings of all living being throughout the cosmic creation. There are two souls: the individual soul, the person looking out from the eyes; and the Supersoul, the Supreme Lord who resides within the heart of each of us.

Self-help advocates say, “I have to get in touch with my real self.” They’re thinking on the physical plane. “My real self is not a doctor but a lawyer, and as

soon as I discover I’m a lawyer I’ll be happy.”

But it’s much, much deeper than that. The real self is *aja*, “unborn,” and *nitya*, “eternal.” The real self does not die when the body dies. The real self is hankering after a relationship with the Supreme Person, but we’re looking in the wrong place. All of us are looking for friendship, love, guidance, and knowledge, but we’re looking for these within the phenomenal world, and this is a mistake because our very best friend is within our own heart.

It is difficult to see the nose, which is right in front of you. Similarly, it is difficult for us to see is Supersoul, who is there within us. He is *īśvara*, the supreme controller, and not a blade of grass moves without His sanction. He’s controlling all the universes, gravity, time, but He makes Himself available. Have you ever worked for someone who doesn’t have time for you? Kṛṣṇa is the controller of everything, but He has all the time in the universe for you. And not only for you but for me too. That’s the beauty of Kṛṣṇa. He is with all of us individually.

The goal of yoga is to help us get in touch with the person who resides within our hearts. Yoga is the matchmaker, you could say.

Not more than a few hundred yards from this place a yoga class is going on. Most people think yoga is either a means to lose weight so that they can have good sex or to merge with Brahman and lose all individuality, which amounts to spiritual suicide. But they’re wrong about the goal, and they’re wrong about the practice. One has to practice sitting postures to breathe properly, but that is not the



goal. Real yoga is *aṣṭāṅga-yoga*, the eight-fold process. It starts with *yama* and *niyama*, rules and regulations that require one to be a strict vegetarian and practice celibacy.

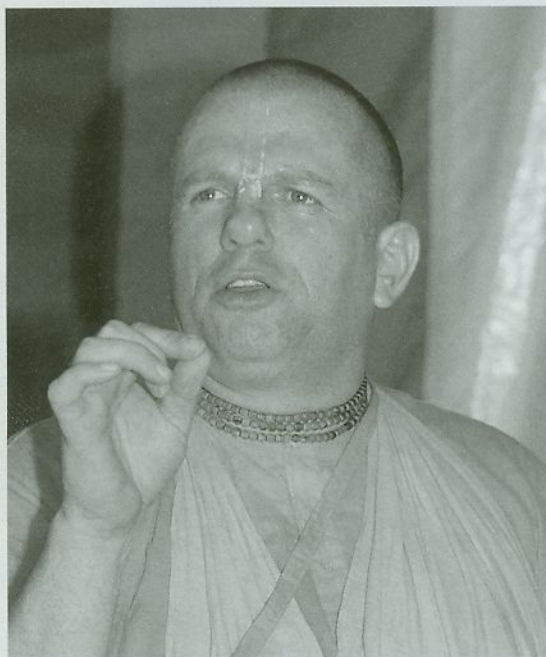
Sex is the highest material pleasure, and love of God is the highest spiritual pleasure. For some people it's disheartening to learn that they have to make a choice. The real thing to understand is that the pleasure of sex life has a heavy downside. There's an old saying that if you pick up one end of the stick you pick up the other end of the stick too. If you want sense pleasure, then you have to take sense pain—*sukha* and *duḥkha*, happiness and distress.

Some of us have been to the school of hard knocks and have gotten a little realization. I'm not perfect in my understanding of it, but in my heart of hearts I know that when I'm free from lust, anger, greed, envy, that kind of purity will bring me happiness beyond compare. I want that. And I'm prepared to be patient, determined, and enthusiastic to achieve it, because I've seen that in this world, practically speaking, there is only suffering. You can say something brings less suffering and therefore it's enjoyable. But I want a pleasure that is ever increasing. That pleasure exists, but it requires effort to attain. By the process of *saṅkīrtana*—by chanting and taking spiritual food and living a simple life and associating with other devotees and practicing sincerely—you can attain the perfection of pleasure.

Kṛṣṇa says, "Of all yogis, he who in faith worships Me is the highest of all." Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Person, the Supreme Lord. He is the speaker of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, and He is telling us that of all yogas—*jñāna-yoga*, *dhyāna-yoga*, *aṣṭāṅga-yoga*, *kriyā-yoga*, this yoga, that yoga—the highest yoga, the way to reach Him, is *bhakti-yoga*. After *jñāna*, or knowledge, comes love. After many, many lifetimes of analyzing the material world, one will realize *vāsadevaḥ sarvaṃ iti*: there's nothing more than Kṛṣṇa. He's the goal. To love Kṛṣṇa, to be loved by Kṛṣṇa, to finally come back to Him after such a long

time, to finally reunite with the person we've wanted all along, and to never be parted from Him ever again—that is beautiful. And that can be achieved through *bhakti-yoga*.

Bhakti-yoga is the process by which we come to love Kṛṣṇa. In verse seventeen of this chapter Kṛṣṇa says, "He who is regulated in his habits of eating, sleeping, recreation, and work can mitigate all material pains by practicing the yoga system." Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "Extravagance in the matter of eating, sleeping, defending, and mating—which are demands of the body—can block advancement in the



practice of yoga. As far as eating is concerned, it can be regulated only when one is practiced to take and accept *prasādam*, sanctified food." We eat vegetarian food, but we are not vegetarians. We're "Kṛṣṇatarians." Rabbits are vegetarian, elephants are vegetarian. So what? Kṛṣṇa says, "If all you can offer is a leaf, flower, or fruit, offer it with love. And take the remnants, the *prasādam*. What I want is your devotion."

Not only is vegetarian Indian cuisine delectable, but there's just something about Kṛṣṇa *prasādam* that is indescribably delicious. I may get distracted by thoughts of illicit sex, intoxication (hardly but maybe), gambling (we speculate sometimes). But meat-eating—forget it. I never even think of it. Because we have literally

developed a higher taste for Kṛṣṇa-*prasādam*. We regulate our activities by taking Kṛṣṇa *prasādam*.

As for sleeping, any unnecessary time spent sleeping is considered a great loss. A devotee uses every moment of the day to pursue his goal. None of us here has any contract that guarantees we have a hundred years to live. We could be gone very quickly. We don't know. So it's important to be serious in spiritual life. A Kṛṣṇa-conscious person cannot bear to pass a minute of life without being engaged in service to the Lord. Therefore, sleeping is kept to a minimum. The Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana ate, slept, bathed—everything—within half an hour or an hour. They were that engrossed in spiritual life. We may never reach that stage, but we can find a level of service that fulfills us every day of the year. During our sleep we'll have nice dreams of Kṛṣṇa and His devotees, and we'll rise and begin our service and our hearts will be bright.

Because the Kṛṣṇa-conscious person is regulated in his work, speech, sleep, wakefulness, and other bodily activities, he or she experiences no misery. This is practical. If someone undergoes some sort of stress, a friend might say, "Just take your mind off it; get engrossed in your work." People do that as a kind of therapy. Here the *Gītā* recommends we go on permanent therapy. Work for Kṛṣṇa. You'll get so absorbed that you won't fear even death. Steadiness comes from being constantly engaged in serving guru and Kṛṣṇa. In the spiritual world the *gopīs* compete to serve Kṛṣṇa. There is so much work to do for Kṛṣṇa that you can be totally carried away. Love is both a verb and a noun. To feel perfect satisfaction, you have to practice loving Kṛṣṇa. You have to serve Him. ☀

His Holiness Śrīdhara Swami, a senior disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda, accepted sannyāsa, the renounced order of life, in 1975. Originally from Canada, he spent many years teaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness in India. He is an emeritus member of ISKCON's governing body commission.

“Let There Be One Ideal Person”

Here we continue an exchange between His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda and Australia’s director of research for the Department of Social Welfare. It took place at the Melbourne ISKCON center on May 21, 1975.

Director: Your Grace, your society’s charitable work sounds impressive to me personally, but I don’t come here just as a person. I’m representing my department.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: No, whatever it may be . . .

Director: The fact that you convince me personally or not may not be relevant. I can only say that we’re dealing with very poor people. I can tell the head of my department what you’re doing, and perhaps some cooperation between us can be arranged. Or I can say to the department head that the possibility of cooperation has emerged, and it may go on from there over some period of time. And I can go back to my other duties.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Then your department can give us some contribution per capita for taking care of people. Then we can invite them. We can increase our ability to accommodate people. Now we are doing our best, but we have no business, no income. We are simply selling our books. So our income is limited. Still, we invite everyone, “Come.” But if the government encourages us, then we can in-

crease the program.

Director: Of course, this would be a political decision. I can only recommend . . .

Śrīla Prabhupāda: It is above politics.

Director: From your point of view. But we in the department depend on political decisions. We’re just an instrument for the public will. The minister is elected according to the public will.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: So since your department is one of social welfare, why not help our welfare work? Why would the members of your department bring in politics? If actually there is social-welfare work going on in our institution, why should they not support it?

Director: Yeah. Well, you’re right. But in our society, a minister is elected to carry out certain policies—not what he wants but what the people have voted for and what they are taxed to pay for.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: If your policy is social welfare . . .

Director: Yes. To look after those who are in trouble.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Well, everyone is in trouble. At the present moment, even the ministers are in trouble.

Director: Yes, everybody’s in trouble. [Laughter.] But fixing everyone’s trouble is not what our function is.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: “Physician, heal thyself.” You see? The ministers say they are working for

other people’s welfare. But how can the ministers do that when they themselves are drunkards, woman hunters, flesh-eaters, and gamblers? That’s all. The ministers themselves require to be rectified.

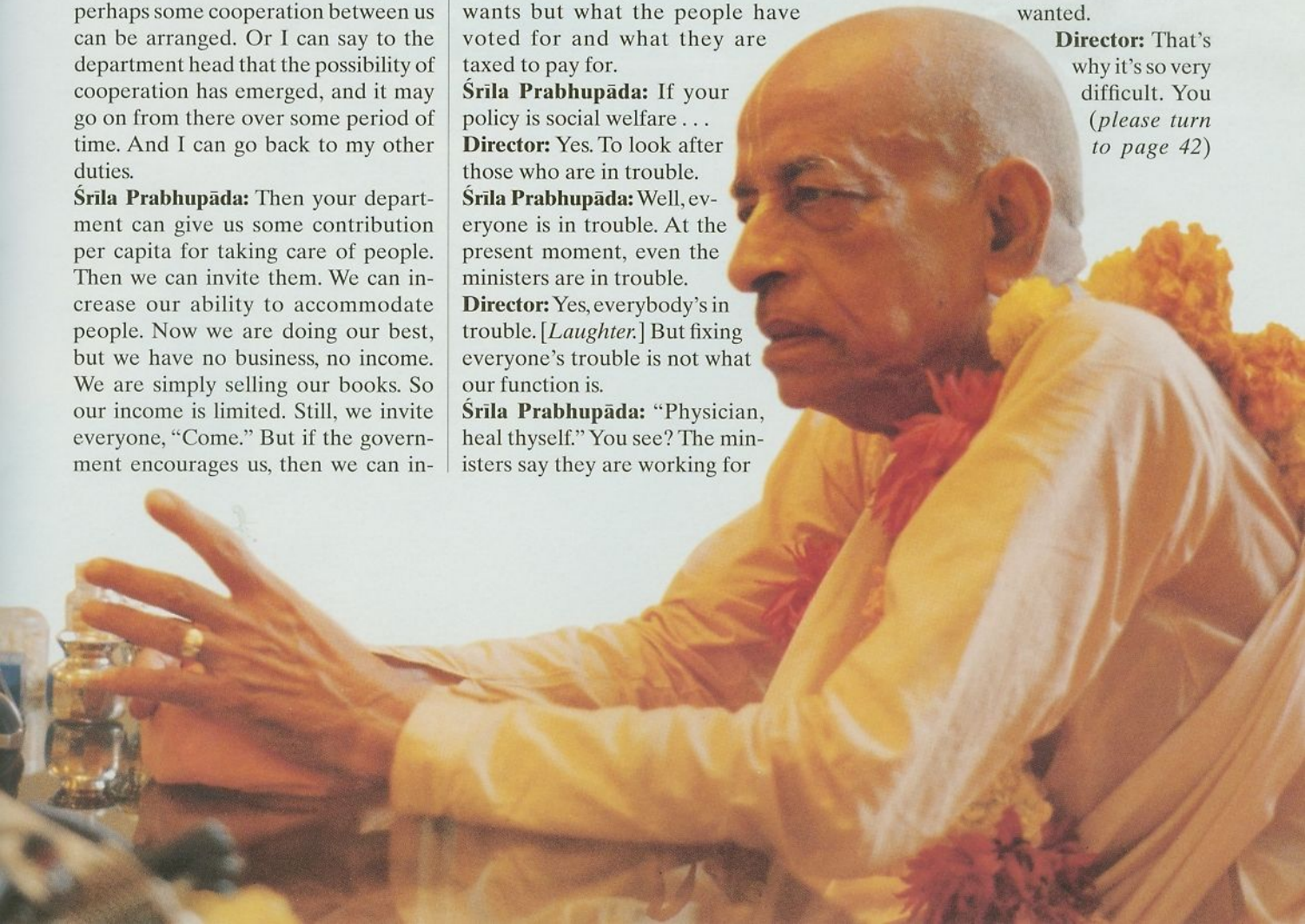
Director: But you or I can’t help that. Our ministers have to go out and do their best to change society. But then society often tells us to act differently.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: No, no. Unless you positively change society, how can you achieve social welfare? If you keep society as it is, then where is the question of welfare?

Director: You may be giving a different interpretation to the expression “social welfare.”

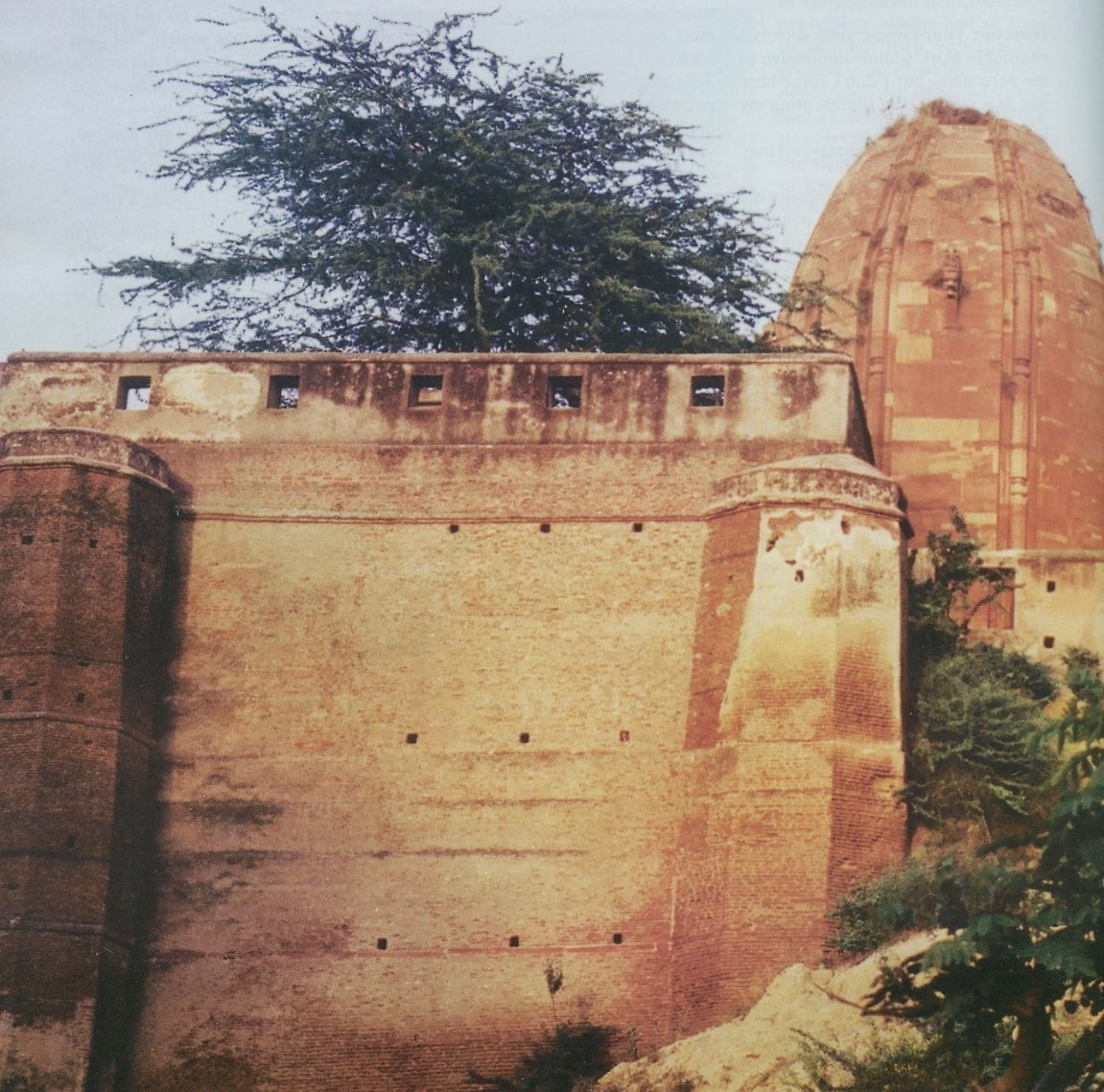
Śrīla Prabhupāda: Basically, one must be a first-class, ideal man. That is wanted.

Director: That’s why it’s so very difficult. You
(please turn to page 42)



Temple of the Supreme Enchanter

The temple of Śrī Rādhā-Madana-Mohana was the first of many Vṛndāvana temples built by the followers of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.



by Vṛndāvanī Devī Dāsī

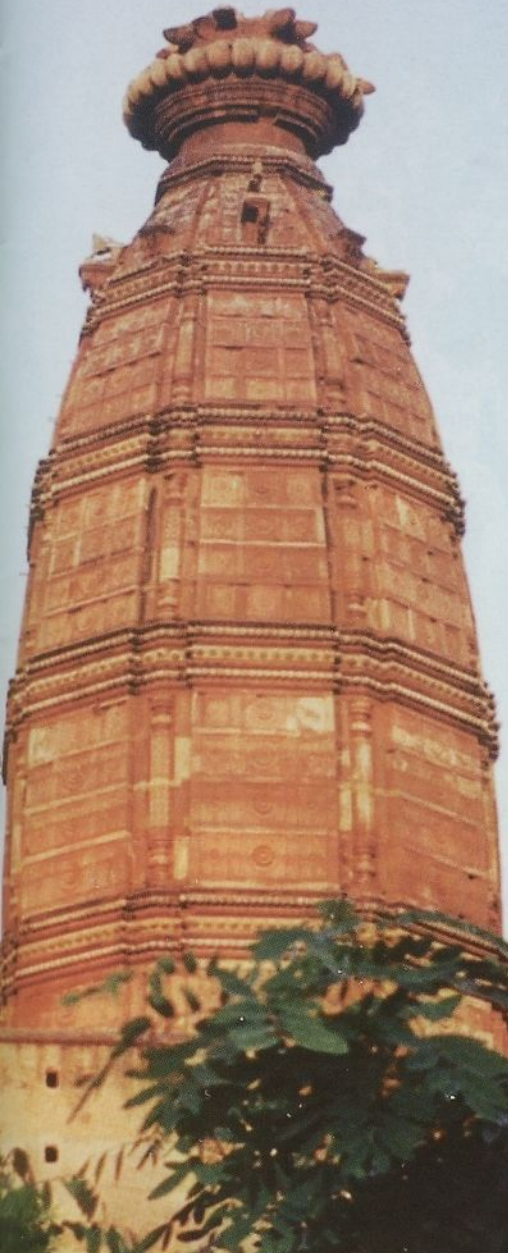
“Glory to the all-merciful Rādhā and Madana-Mohana! I am lame and ill-advised, yet They are my directors, and Their lotus feet are everything to me.”
—Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī

IN 1515 Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu sent Rūpa Gosvāmī and Sanātana Gosvāmī, two of his foremost disciples, to Vṛndāvana with four tasks: to write devotional books, to teach and spread the rules of devotional service, to uncover the lost places of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes, and to build temples and establish deity worship. The Gosvāmīs accomplished all of these assignments.

The first temple to be built was that of Śrī Rādhā-Madana-Mohana (Rādhā

with Kṛṣṇa, “the attractor [*mohana*] of Cupid [*madana*].”) Like many other temples in Vṛndāvana, the original temple was attacked during a Mogul invasion in 1670. Part of the old temple remains today atop Dvadashaditya Hill. A new temple was built near the old one. Today two of my children and I are going to visit both temples.

Many of Vṛndāvana’s roads are old and too narrow for a car, so we make our way by ricksha. Our driver, Vijay, comes from Māyāpur, West Bengal, the birthplace of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Vijay takes on the role of guide, pointing out holy places along the route. As we pass local people, they call out “Rādhē! Rādhē!” and encourage my children to repeat this lovely





glorification of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. When my children respond, the people smile.

We arrive outside the new temple, and Vijay stops the ricksha and confirms: “Rādhā-Madana-Mohana.”

As we enter the compound, a surge of excitement rushes through me. The temple courtyard is one of the largest in Vṛndāvana, and last time I came here I was with several hundred devotees holding tumultuous *kīrtana*. Today it’s just the three of us, and the temple is quiet. We make our way to the altar to see the beautiful deities, who have been decorated with intricate sandal-paste designs.

Attending the deities today is Brajesh Goswami, who is about fourteen years old. His family members, custodians of the temple, are in the disciplic line coming from Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī. They worship the deities according to strict rules. Brajesh asks

where we are from and offers us some *caraṇāmṛta* (water that has bathed the deities).

Some children sitting near the altar lead us to the temple garden. In an area dotted with plants, they point to one of Sanātana Gosvāmī’s *bhajana kutirs*, huts where he would sit to chant, sing, and meditate. Nearby stands a well said to have been dug by Madana-Mohana Himself with His flute. Before we leave, the children remind us to visit the old temple and point in its direction.

MADANA GOPĀLA

Madana-Mohana, Govindajī, and Gopinātha are known as the presiding deities of Vṛndāvana. The spiritual masters in the line of Lord Caitanya divide devotional service into three parts: establishing our relationship with Kṛṣṇa, acting in that relationship, and attaining pure love for Kṛṣṇa. Madana-

Mohana oversees the first division: He helps new devotees reestablish their lost relationship with Him, especially by attracting them. Kṛṣṇa’s name *Madana-Mohana* means that He’s so attractive that He even attracts Cupid, who attracts everyone in this world. By worshiping Madana-Mohana we can overcome affection for Cupid (or sensual enjoyment) and become attached to Kṛṣṇa.

Five hundred years ago, the deity Madana-Mohana was known as Madana Gopāla. Advaita Ācārya, an intimate associate of Lord Caitanya, discovered the deity at a place near the Yamuna River now known as Advaita Vata. When Advaita Ācārya returned to Bengal, he left the deity in the care of a *brāhmaṇa* in nearby Mathura named Purushottama Chobey. Purushottama had many children, and out of his intense love for Madana Gopāla he treated the deity like one of



Tanuja Shukla

Devotees visiting from Mumbai fill the courtyard of the new Madana-Mohana temple (above). On the temple altar, Madana-Mohana (above, right) and Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī (right) are dressed and ornamented for a festival. Their sandalwood-decorated faces attracting the eyes and minds of worshipers.

his own children.

One day Sanātana Gosvāmī, while walking along the bank of the Yamuna, saw Madana Gopāla in His form as a cowherd boy playing with His friends. Madana Gopāla stopped playing when He saw Sanātana Gosvāmī, overwhelmed by the devotional activities of His great devotee.

That night Madana Gopāla appeared to Sanātana in a dream.

“Because of your great love for Me,” the Lord told him, “I have become attracted to you and want to come live with you in Vṛndāvana. I am living in the house of Purushottama Chobey in Mathura. Go there tomorrow for alms and bring Me back to Vṛndāvana with you.”

Sanātana replied that because he was poor he didn’t know how he could serve the deity nicely. But Madana Gopāla assured him He would make all the arrangements for His own service.

That night Purushottama also dreamt of Madana Gopāla, who told him, “You have many children, but Sanātana has none. When he comes to your home tomorrow, give Me to him.”



Rupa Raghunātha Dāsa



Rupa Raghunātha Dāsa

The next day Purushottama gave the deity to Sanātana Gosvāmī, who made an altar out of branches and leaves next to his own thatched cottage.

THE OLD TEMPLE

Vijay pedals us to the base of Dva-dashaditya Hill, and we climb the steps leading to the original temple. The temple opened in 1580. Because of its historical significance, it is under the care of the Indian government. The main dome, a Vṛndāvana landmark, is shaped like a gigantic bottle and carved with auspicious symbols.

The temple stands where Sanātana Gosvāmī lived with Madana-Mohana. Constantly writing and performing other devotional practices, Sanātana was absorbed in spiritual happiness. Understanding the mind of His great devotee, Madana-Mohana would accept Sanātana’s humble offerings of dry *chapatis* (flatbreads).

But one day Madana-Mohana asked Sanātana, “Could you at least add some salt to My *chapatis*?”

When Sanātana replied that he was unable to supply the salt, Madana-Mohana made His own arrangements. That day a wealthy merchant named Ramdas Kapoor was taking a large cargo down the river to Agra when his boat got stuck on a sandbar near Dva-dashaditya Hill, putting Ramdas in great anxiety. Taking the form of a cowherd boy, Madana-Mohana went to advise Ramdas. He informed him that on top of the nearby hill lived a great saint named Sanātana Gosvāmī who would certainly be able to help. Ramdas climbed the hill and asked Sanātana what to do about the boat.

gave Sanātana Gosvāmī money to build a temple. He also gave food supplies and beautiful clothes and jewelry for Madana-Mohana.

The temple's hilltop location provides a wonderful panoramic view of Vṛndāvana. I look down to see the Yamuna and Kaliya Ghat, where the cargo got stuck.

SANĀTANA GOŚVĀMĪ'S SAMĀDHI

Down a grassy bank behind the temple we visit the *samādhis* (memo-rials) of Sanātana Gosvāmī and several

saints eternally reside at their *samādhis* to bless those who seek their shelter. While green parrots dart around and disappear into the foliage of many trees, old sadhus sit near the *samādhis*, some chanting on beads, others talking quietly. They relish being in the spiritually surcharged area. I imagine that one of the sadhus might be Sanātana Gosvāmī himself, watching over everyone who comes here. This spot also contains a rare *grantha samādhi*, which contains some original scriptures written by the Gosvāmīs.

Sanātana Gosvāmī was the elder brother of Rūpa Gosvāmī, who re-



Vṛndāvanī Devī Dāśī

Sanātana told him to pray to Madana-Mohana, as only He could help.

Ramdas followed Sanātana's advice, and as he prayed heavy rain fell. The river soon rose, freeing the boat. Before leaving for Agra, the grateful merchant left a large chunk of salt from the cargo for Madana-Mohana.

When Ramdas returned to Vṛndāvana, having made a large profit, he

other devotees, including Lord Caitanya's associates Tapana Miśra and Candraśekhara Ācārya. After a long life of devotional service, Sanātana Gosvāmī departed from the world at Govardhana Hill. His body was brought here to be entombed near his beloved deities, Rādhā-Madana-Mohana.

In their spiritual forms, the great

spected Sanātana as his guru. A verse describes their good qualities: "Within Vṛndāvana, Rūpa and Sanātana Gosvāmīs were the reservoirs of natural love and mercy. They were foremost among the devotees, oceans of kindness, and friends of the poor. They possessed unflinching devotion to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Giving up all worldly pleasures, they always sang the glories of



Pilgrims to the Madana-Mohana temple can find tranquillity and spiritual inspiration at Sanātana Gosvāmī's shrine (left). Kept inside the shrine is an old painting of Sanātana Gosvāmī and Madana-Mohana, shown here (above) by Vraja Kishor Goswami, a temple attendant in the line of Sanātana Gosvāmī. Following custom, a dome-shaped form (right) represents Sanātana Gosvāmī in the shrine.



Courtesy of Rādhā-Dāmodara Temple

Vṛndāvana's groves and the lotus feet of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. Therefore, these two brothers are the gifts of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the ocean of mercy. In their absence I have become an orphan." (*Bhakti-ratnākara*)

Sitting beside Sanātana Gosvāmī's *samādhi*, I feel honored and appreciative of what he and his associates accomplished. In the modern era, his follower Śrīla Prabhupāda spread the message of Vṛndāvana to the West, and now everyone has an opportunity to visit the holy places and learn about devotional service. 🌸

Vṛndāvanī Devī Dāśī joined ISKCON in 1980. She lives with her family near Bhaktivedanta Manor in England. She would like to thank Vraja Kishor Goswami for his help in writing this article.

*The Vaiṣṇava understanding
of the Supreme Truth provides a
satisfying answer to the question
“Is God male or female?”*

by Satyarāja Dāsa

Essence of beauty and relationship,
Quintessence of bliss and compassion,
Embodiment of sweetness and brilliance,
Epitome of artfulness, graceful in love:
May my mind take refuge in Rādhā,
Quintessence of all essences.

—Prabodhānanda Sarasvatī

MY SISTER CAROL has become a radical feminist in recent years. I watched this develop. As she devoured book after book on the failures of patriarchy and male-made societies, she came to see me—her brother, who worships a “male” God—as a victim of sexist philosophers, duped by men with little regard for women. In other words, she knew that I worshiped Kṛṣṇa, who is clearly male, and this was enough to put me in league with those who belittled women. It confused her, though, to see that I was not full of macho double-talk, that despite my worship of a male God, I was fair and even-minded—I didn’t speak down to women. She decided I was bright enough to confront directly.

“Why do you worship that blue boy Kṛṣṇa?” she asked. “Why see God as male at all? Why not envision God as female?”

“Well,” I answered quickly and annoyed, as if a two-minute conversation can sum up a person’s theological perspective, “He’s God.” “And besides,” I added, “we don’t ‘envision’ God as we like. We learn about him from authoritative sources, the scriptures, whether the *Vedas*, from India, or the Western scriptures, like the Bible or the Koran.”

“But how do you know?” she asked. “Maybe those books are leading you on. I would say that God would have to be the ultimate female, with all the sensitivity and nurturing that implies.”

“But isn’t *that* sexism, coming from the opposite direction?”

I hoped the question would make her think twice.

“If God is ultimately the supreme female, wouldn’t that leave men out of the equation? Wouldn’t that be saying that the female form is better than the male form? You’d be guilty of the very thing you claim patriarchal religion is guilty of.”

After a pause, she replied, “But you still say that God is male . . .”

“First of all,” I broke in, “according to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, God is both male and female. Isn’t that a more egalitarian vision of God?”

“Well, maybe—if it’s true,” she said, still skeptical of a tradition (and a brother) she had all but trained herself to see as sexist.

Rādhā The Feminine



ārāṇī The Side of God



Painting by Ramanātha Dāsa

“Look,” I said, “Kṛṣṇa is described as God in the Vedic literature because He has all the qualifications of God. How do you know the President of the United States is the President? Because he has the qualifications of the President. He has certain credentials. It’s not that you can just ‘envision’ that somebody is the President and then—*puff!*—he’s the President. No. So if you study Kṛṣṇa closely, you’ll see that He is full in all opulences: strength, beauty, wealth, fame, knowledge, and renunciation. Anyone who has these qualities in full is God.”

She was getting restless. She had heard this definition of God from me before and felt I was getting off the subject of God as female.

“But Kṛṣṇa consciousness goes further,” I continued. “Rādhārāṇī is the female manifestation of God. She is the ultimate female. So we see God as both male and female.”

Carol smiled. She had something up her sleeve.

“If you acknowledge that God is both male and female, why does your central mantra—that prayer you’re chanting all the time—focus on Kṛṣṇa, the male form of God?”

THE “SHE” IN THE MAHĀ-MANTRA

What my dear sister didn’t know was that the *mahā-mantra* is a prayer to Rādhā first, and Kṛṣṇa second.

“Do you know the mantra I chant, the one you’re talking about?”

She recited it: “Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.”

I was pleased to hear she knew it.

“Do you know what *Hare* means?”

“No,” she admitted.

“It’s a strong request to Rādhā. By chanting ‘Hare,’ we beseech Mother Harā, another name for Rādhā. *Hare* is the vocative form of *Harā*. Basically, the mantra is asking Mother Harā, Rādhā, ‘Please engage me in the Lord’s service.’”

“You mean the Hare Kṛṣṇa chant is a prayer to the female form of God?”

“Absolutely.”

That got her attention.

“Tell me,” she said with growing curiosity, “what does the word *Rādhā* mean?”

“It means ‘She who worships Kṛṣṇa best.’”

“Aha!” my sister quipped. “Then Rādhā is *not* God. If She’s His best worshiper, then She is obviously distinct from Him!”

“That’s not true,” I said. “God is the person who does everything best. As Kṛṣṇa says in the *Gītā*, He’s the first and best in all fields. Of mountains He’s the Himalayas, of bodies of water He’s the ocean, and so on. So, of worshipers of Him, He’s also best. Who could worship Kṛṣṇa better than He Himself? No one. Therefore, He manifests as Rādhā, His female form, and shows that He is His own

Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are, in essence, a single entity—God—who manifests as two distinct individuals for the sake of interpersonal exchange.

Rādhā is acknowledged as the Supreme Goddess, because She controls Kṛṣṇa with Her love.

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best worshiper. As Rādhā He is God the worshiper, and as Kṛṣṇa He is God the worshiped. Both par excellence.”

“Hmm. Tell me more,” she said.

“OK, but this may get a little technical,” I said. “From the Vaiṣṇava, or Kṛṣṇa conscious, point of view, the divine feminine energy (*śakti*) implies a divine energetic source (*śaktimān*). So the goddess as she manifests in the various Vaiṣṇava traditions always has a male counterpart. Sītā relates to Rāma; Lakṣmī corresponds to Nārāyaṇa; Rādhā has Her Kṛṣṇa. As Kṛṣṇa is the source of all manifestations of God, Śrī Rādhā, His consort, is the source of all *śaktis*, or energies. She is thus the original Goddess.

“Vaiṣṇavism can be seen as a type of *śaktism*, wherein the *pūrṇa-śakti*, the most complete form of the divine feminine energy, is worshiped as the pre-eminent aspect of divinity, eclipsing even the male Godhead in certain respects. For example, in Śrīvaiṣṇavism, Lakṣmī (a primary expansion of Śrī Rādhā) is considered the divine mediator, without whom access to Nārāyaṇa is not possible. In our Kṛṣṇa conscious tradition, Rādhā is acknowledged as the Supreme Goddess, because She controls Kṛṣṇa with Her love. Perfect spiritual life is unattainable without Her grace.

“In traditional Vaiṣṇava literature, Kṛṣṇa is compared to the sun and Rādhā to the sunshine. Both exist simultaneously, but one is coming from the other. Still, to say that the sun exists prior to the sunshine is incorrect—as soon as there is a sun, there is sunshine. More important, the sun has no meaning without sunshine, without heat and light. And heat and light would not exist without the sun. So the sun and the sunshine co-exist, each equally important for the existence of the other. It may be said that they are simultaneously one and different.

“Likewise, the relationship between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa is that of inconceivable identity in difference. They are, in essence, a single entity—God—who manifests as two distinct individuals for the sake of interpersonal exchange.

“Let me read you something about this from the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* [Ādilīlā 4.95–98]: ‘Lord Kṛṣṇa enchants the world, but Śrī Rādhā enchants even Him. Therefore She is the supreme goddess of all. Śrī Rādhā is the full power, and Lord Kṛṣṇa is the possessor of full power. The two are not different, as evidenced by the revealed scriptures. They are indeed the same, just as musk and its scent are inseparable, or as fire and its heat are nondifferent. Thus, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are one, although They have taken two forms to enjoy a relationship.’”

“But Kṛṣṇa is still the source. He predominates.”

“Only in a sense,” I said. “In terms of *tattva*, or ‘philosophical truth,’ He predominates. But in terms of *līlā*, or ‘divine loving activity,’ Rādhā predominates over Him. And *līlā* is considered more important than *tattva*.”

Carol was enthralled.

“I had no idea,” she said.

“Few people do,” I told her. “That’s why devotees work hard to distribute Prabhupāda’s books—we want this knowledge to get out to people.”

Carol promised me she would start experimenting with the *mahā-mantra* and would never prematurely judge a religion again, especially Kṛṣṇa consciousness. In addition, she asked me for a prayer that focuses on Rādhārāṇī’s supreme position, something she could chant as a reminder that Kṛṣṇa consciousness recognizes—even emphasizes—a female form of God. I thought for a moment, and then I shared with her a *mantra* composed by Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, a great spiritual master from the early twentieth century:

Best of the Gopīs

ŚRĪ RĀDHĀ IS foremost of the *gopīs*, Lord Kṛṣṇa’s cowherd girlfriends. She is able to please Kṛṣṇa with little more than a glance. Yet Rādhā feels that Her love for Kṛṣṇa can always expand to greater heights, and therefore She manifests as the many *gopīs* of Vṛndāvana, who fulfill Kṛṣṇa’s desire for relationship (*rasa*) in a variety of ways.

The *gopīs* are considered the *kāya-vyūha* of Śrī Rādhā. There is no English equivalent for this term, but it can be explained as follows: If one person could simultaneously exist in more than one human form, those forms would be known as the *kāya* (“body”) *vyūha* (“multitude of”) of that particular individual. In other words, they are the identical person, but occupying different space and time, with different moods and emotions. As Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa’s sole purpose is loving exchange, the *gopīs* exist to assist Them in this love.

The *gopīs* are divided into five groups, the most important being the *parama-preṣṭha-sakhīs*, the eight primary *gopīs*: Lalitā, Viśākhā, Citrā, Indulekhā, Campakalātā, Tuṅga-vidyā, Raṅgadevī, and Sudevī. Many details of their lives and service—including each one’s age, mood, birthday, temperament, instrument, skin color, parents’ names, spouse’s name, favorite melody, closest girlfriends, and so on—are described in Vaiṣṇava scriptures. These elements form the substance of an inner meditation, or *sādhana*, designed to bring the devotee to the spiritual realm. Through this meditation one gradually develops *premā*, or love

*ātapa-rakita sūraja nāhi jāni
rādhā-virahita kṛṣṇa nāhi māni*

“Just as there is no such thing as sun without heat or light, I do not accept a Kṛṣṇa who is without Śrī Rādhā!” (*Gītāvalī, Rādhāṣṭaka* 8)

Carol was thrilled. She confided



The eight primary gopīs are Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's most intimate associates.

for Kṛṣṇa. This advanced form of contemplation, however, is only to be performed by accomplished devotees under the guidance of an acknowledged master. This level is rarely achieved. It is therefore recommended that one practice the chanting of the holy name and take to the regulated path of *vaidhi-bhakti*—or the practice of devotion under strict rules and regulations—as taught in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. This

will naturally lead to the highest level of spiritual attainment.

Clearly, the Vaiṣṇava tradition in the line of Lord Caitanya sees the love of the *gopīs* as transcendental love of the highest order, countering accusations of mundane sexuality with clearly defined distinctions between lust and love. Like the Bride-of-Christ concept in the Christian tradition and the Kabbalistic conception of the Feminine Divine in Jewish

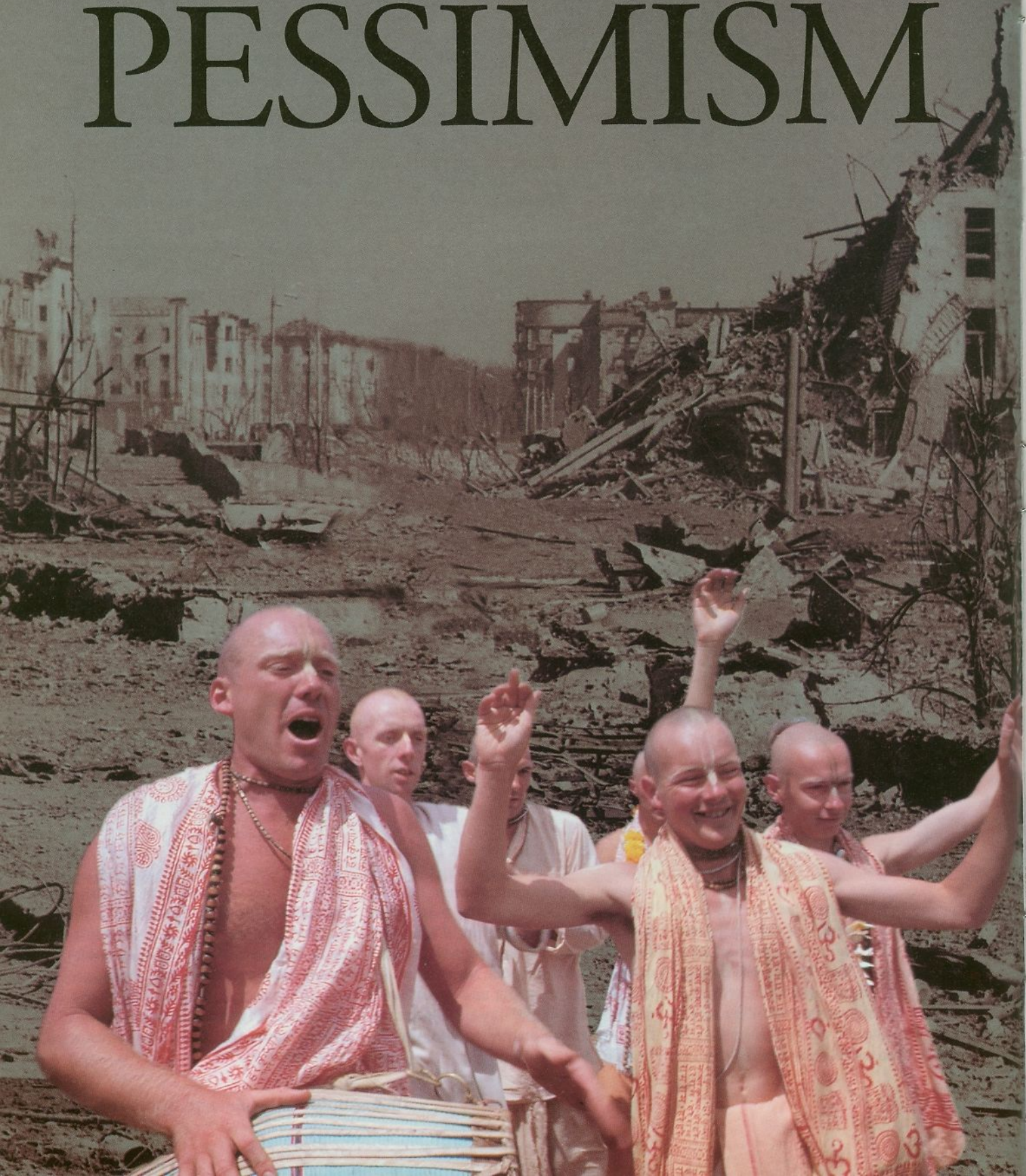
mysticism, the truth behind “*gopī*-love” is theologically profound and constitutes the zenith of spiritual awareness. *Gopī*-love represents the purest love a soul may have for its divine source; the only correlation this may have to mundane lust is in appearance, an appearance that falls short once one studies the texts left by the pure, self-realized authorities on these topics.

in me that she had long prayed for a religious tradition that was not sexist, one that recognized a feminine form of the Divine. Of course, she wasn't fully convinced that this was it, but she was now willing to listen, to give an open ear to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. She was willing to start

with some rudimentary practices, such as chanting and reading Śrīla Prabhupāda's books. Here was a tradition that definitely seemed to fit the bill, to address her needs as a feminist. Rādhārāṇī was my sister's dream come true—an answer to a feminist's prayer. ☸

Satyarāja Dāsa is a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda and a regular contributor to Back to Godhead. He has written several books on Kṛṣṇa consciousness, the latest of which is Gita on the Green: The Mystical Tradition Behind Bagger Vance. He and his wife live in New York City.

OPTIMISM PESSIMISM



*Although we accept that suffering in this world
is inevitable, there's still cause for hope.*

by Satsvarūpa Dāsa Goswami

OPTIMISM AND PESSIMISM appear to be opposite terms, but both states of mind can be used in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Although everyone is familiar with the meaning of these two terms, I would like to present their dictionary definitions:

Optimism: 1. A tendency to look on the more favorable side, or to expect the most favorable outcome of events or conditions. 2. The belief that good will ultimately triumph over evil and that virtue will be rewarded. 3. The doctrine that the existing world is the best of all possible worlds.

Pessimism: 1. The tendency to see only what is disadvantageous or gloomy, or to anticipate the worst outcome. 2. The doctrine that the existing world is the worst of all possible worlds, or that all things naturally tend toward evil. 3. The belief that the evil and pain in the world outweigh any goodness or happiness.

These meanings draw lines, and people tend to place themselves along them—as optimists or pessimists—or somewhere in between.

The phrase “the best of all possible worlds” was posited by the German philosopher Leibniz in the seventeenth century. Leibniz spoke about cause and effect and concluded that we live in the best of all possible worlds. His philosophy was most notably attacked by the writer and thinker Voltaire in his book *Candide*. I would like to use parts of Voltaire’s story to delineate the extremes of optimism.

CANDIDE’S TALE OF WOE

Candide is named for the book’s main character, a young man in a royal family who is not quite a legitimate heir. He is described as having “sound judgment combined with a great simplicity of mind,” but he falls in love with the baron’s daughter. When they act on that infatuation, Candide is forced to leave the castle, and so the story goes forward.

While he is yet at the castle, Candide and the baron’s daughter have a tutor, “the oracle of the household,” named Dr. Pangloss. Dr. Pangloss is a philosopher who teaches “metaphysico-theologo-cosmonigology,” and it is through this character that Voltaire mocks Leibniz. Candide “listened to [Dr. Pangloss’s] instructions with all the simplicity natural to his age and disposition. [Dr. Pangloss] proved admirably that there is no effect without a cause, and in this best of all possible worlds, the baron’s castle was the most magnificent of all possible castles and

At left: While devotees of Kṛṣṇa are pessimistic about the material world, filled as it is with uncountable miseries, they find—and deliver to others—optimism in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, especially through chanting the holy names of the Lord.

We have little power against the trials sent by material nature, but we can do small, yet significant, things for our own improvement.

• • •

Her Ladyship the best of all possible baronesses.”

Leibniz used his optimistic philosophy to hint at the presence of a Deity. Voltaire attacks that idea as he goes on in this story to show the real misery of human life.

After Candide leaves the castle, he wanders through the snow until he comes to a town. Some uniformed soldiers feed him, assuring him that it is the duty of one man to help another (something Dr. Pangloss had also taught him), and then ask him if he would drink to the king of the Bulgars. Candide agrees. They then tell him he will become the “support and upholder” of the Bulgars. The soldiers put him in leg irons and take him to their army camp. There he is forced to learn the drill, and is beaten with a cane for his mistakes. When he finally performs the drill without mistakes, they tell him he has become a hero. “Candide, utterly bewildered, could not make out very clearly how he was a hero.”

PANGLOSS THE BEGGAR

After a few more adventures, Candide meets a “beggar covered with sores; his eyes were lifeless, the tip of his nose had been eaten away, his mouth was twisted, his teeth were black, his voice was hoarse, he was racked by a violent cough, and he spat out a tooth with every spasm.” Moved to compassion, Candide gives the beggar the money he himself had just received by begging. The beggar then throws his arms around Candide and tells him that he is Dr. Pangloss. The Baron’s castle has been destroyed, Dr. Pangloss tells Candide, and the royal family killed. Dr. Pangloss survived but suffers from a venereal disease.

Candide’s adventures get worse, but the story’s ending is significant.

Candide and Dr. Pangloss meet a man and his small family who live off the land, working and not depending upon others. Nor do they try to understand the larger events taking place in the world. Pangloss and Candide decide they want to live like this man. This is Voltaire’s understanding of something positive a person can do in a horrible world to escape the punishments of vice, boredom, and poverty. Voltaire describes manmade and natural disasters, such as an earthquake in Lisbon that killed thirty thousand people, and asks how one can continue to consider this the best of all possible worlds.

As Candide, Pangloss, and the other characters settled down to live a positive life, Pangloss now and then said to Candide, “All events are interconnected in this best of all possible worlds, for if you hadn’t been driven from a beautiful castle with hard kicks because of your love . . . if you hadn’t been seized by the Inquisition, if you hadn’t wandered over America on foot, if you hadn’t thrust your sword through the baron, and if you hadn’t lost all your sheep from the land of Eldorado, you wouldn’t be here eating candied citrons and pistachio nuts.

“ ‘Well said,’ replied Candide, ‘but we must cultivate our garden.’ ”

SELF-REFORM

This “cultivate your own garden” philosophy can be applied in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Whether we’re a “big” reformer or a “small” one, we must all cultivate self-reform.

I took the trouble to present so much material because it affirms what we can do in our own Kṛṣṇa conscious lives. Like Candide, we have little power against the trials sent by material nature, but we can do small, yet significant, things for our own improvement.

Often devotees in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, in an optimistic fervor, imagine themselves single-handedly making major changes in the world. But we are not likely to be able to make large changes on our own. Rather, our Kṛṣṇa conscious optimism can be directed more personally: we can create a reform of ourselves and our families (if we have them), and take time to cultivate our spiritual garden. What we plant we will eat. There is little use in philosophizing abstractly like Dr. Pangloss about cause and effect, but, rather, we can live practically and faithfully in the world.

SCHOPENHAUER’S VIEW

After Voltaire, another philosopher disagreed with Leibniz’s “best of all possible worlds” approach. That was Schopenhauer, also a German. He was the first Western philosopher to study the *Upaniṣads*. Schopenhauer especially liked the concept of *māyā*, and the philosophy he posited, after studying the *Upaniṣads*, was that we live in the *worst* of all possible worlds. He used his Vedic studies to support that idea.

And the *Vedas* do support that idea. The Vedic literature states that material life is full of suffering. It lists the threefold miseries (arising from our minds, from other living entities, and from natural calamities) and the fourfold miseries (birth, death, disease, and old age). No one escapes them. Does this mean that devotees should maintain a negative world view?

Upon hearing the Vedic literature’s sweeping condemnation of life in the material world, Albert Schweitzer termed the Vedic philosophy “world and life negating.” Western philosophers often end up with that misunderstanding, concluding that the highest

(please turn to page 36)

Referred to as “the ripe fruit of the tree of Vedic literature,” *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the most complete and authoritative exposition of Vedic knowledge. Five thousand years ago the great sage Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa composed this *purāṇa*, or history, to explain the essence of spiritual knowledge. Here we present *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in serialized form, with the original Sanskrit text, transliteration, word meanings, translation, and purports by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, founder-*ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

DEVAHŪTI'S YOGA PRACTICE

*Lord Kapila leaves home, and His mother,
Devahūti, begins practicing bhakti-yoga
as He has taught her.*

CANTO 3: CHAPTER 33

8 तं त्वामहं ब्रह्म परं पुमांसं
प्रत्यक्स्रोतस्यात्मनि संविभाव्यम्
स्वतेजसा ध्वस्तगुणप्रवाहं
वन्दे विष्णुं कपिलं वेदगर्भम्

*taṁ tvāṁ ahaṁ brahma paraṁ pumāṁsaṁ
pratyak-srotasy ātmani saṁvibhāvyaṁ
sva-tejasā dhvasta-guṇa-pravāhaṁ
vande viṣṇuṁ kapilaṁ veda-garbham*

tam—unto Him; *tvām*—You; *aham*—I; *brahma*—Brahman; *param*—supreme; *pumāṁsam*—the Supreme Personality of Godhead; *pratyak-srotasi*—turned inwards; *ātmani*—in the mind; *saṁvibhāvyaṁ*—meditated upon, perceived; *sva-tejasā*—by Your own potency; *dhvasta*—vanished; *guṇa-pravāham*—the influence of the modes of material nature; *vande*—I offer obeisances; *viṣṇum*—unto Lord Viṣṇu; *kapilaṁ*—named Kapila; *veda-garbham*—the repository of the Vedas.

I believe, my Lord, that You are Lord Viṣṇu Himself under the name of Kapila, and You are the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the Supreme Brahman! The saints and sages,

being freed from all the disturbances of the senses and mind, meditate upon You, for by Your mercy only can one become free from the clutches of the three modes of material nature. At the time of dissolution, all the Vedas are sustained in You only.

PURPORT: Devahūti, the mother of Kapila, instead of prolonging her prayers, summarized that Lord Kapila was none other than Viṣṇu and that since she was a woman it was not possible for her to worship Him properly simply by prayer. It was her intention that the Lord be satisfied. The word *pratyak* is significant. ❶ In yogic practice, the eight divisions are *yama*, *niyama*, *āsana*, *prāṇāyāma*, *pratyāhāra*, *dhāraṇā*, *dhyāna*, and *samādhi*. ❷ *Pratyāhāra* means to wind up the activities of the senses. The level of realization of the Supreme Lord evidenced by Devahūti is possible when one is able to withdraw the senses from material activities. When one is engaged in devotional service, there is no scope for his senses to be engaged otherwise. In such full Kṛṣṇa consciousness, one can understand the Supreme Lord as He is.

(1) What are the eight divisions of yoga practice?

(2) What is the meaning of *pratyāhāra*?

मैत्रेय उवाच

9 ईडितो भगवानेवं कपिलाख्यः परः पुमान्
वाचाविक्रवयेत्याह मातरं मातृवत्सलः

maitreya uvāca
īḍīto bhagavān evaṁ
kapilākhyah paraḥ pumān
vācāvīkṛvayetyāha
mātaraṁ mātr-vatsalāḥ

maitreyaḥ uvāca—Maitreya said; *īḍītaḥ*—praised; *bhagavān*—the Supreme Personality of Godhead; *evaṁ*—thus; *kapilā-ākhyah*—named Kapila; *paraḥ*—supreme; *pumān*—person; *vācā*—with words; *avīkṛvayā*—grave; *iti*—thus; *āha*—replied; *mātaram*—to His mother; *mātr-vatsalāḥ*—very affectionate to His mother.

Thus the Supreme Personality of Godhead Kapila, satisfied by the words of His mother, towards whom He was very affectionate, replied with gravity.

PURPORT: Since the Lord is all-perfect, His exhibition of affection for His mother was also complete. After hearing the words of His mother, He most respectfully, with due gravity and good manners, replied.

कपिल उवाच

10 मार्गेणानेन मातस्ते सुसेव्येनोदितेन मे
आस्थितेन परां काङ्क्षामचिरादवरोत्स्यसि

kapila uvāca
mārgeṇānena mātāste
susevyenoditena me
āsthītena parāṁ kāṣṭhām
acīrād avarotsyasi

kapilāḥ uvāca—Lord Kapila said; *mārgeṇa*—by the path; *anena*—this; *mātāḥ*—My dear mother; *te*—for you; *susevyena*—very easy to execute; *uditena*—instructed; *me*—by Me; *āsthītena*—being performed; *parāṁ*—supreme; *kāṣṭhām*—goal; *acīrāt*—very soon; *avarotsyasi*—you will attain.

(3) What is the meaning of *jīvan-mukta*?

(4) How is liberation defined in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*?

(5) What is the real identity of the living entity?

The Personality of Godhead said: My dear mother, the path of self-realization which I have already instructed to you is very easy. You can execute this system without difficulty, and by following it you shall very soon be liberated, even within your present body.

PURPORT: Devotional service is so perfect that simply by following the rules and regulations and executing them under the direction of the spiritual master, one is liberated, as it is said herein, from the clutches of *māyā*, even in this body. In other yogic processes, or in empiric philosophical speculation, one is never certain whether or not he is at the perfectional stage. But in the discharge of devotional service, if one has unflinching faith in the instruction of the bona fide spiritual master and follows the rules and regulations, he is sure to be liberated, even within this present body. *ṛīla Rūpa Gosvāmī*, in the *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, has also confirmed this. ❸ *Ihā yasya harer dāsyē*: regardless of where he is situated, anyone whose only aim is to serve the Supreme Lord under the direction of the spiritual master is called *jīvan-mukta*, or one who is liberated even with his material body.

Sometimes doubts arise in the minds of neophytes about whether or not the spiritual master is liberated, and sometimes neophytes are doubtful about the bodily affairs of the spiritual master. The point of liberation, however, is not to see the bodily symptoms of the spiritual master. One has to see the spiritual symptoms of the spiritual master. *Jīvan-mukta* means that even though one is in the material body (there are still some material necessities, since the body is material), because one is fully situated in the service of the Lord, he should be understood to be liberated. ❹ Liberation entails being situated in one's own position. That is the definition in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*: *muktir . . . svarūpeṇa vyavasthītiḥ*. The *svarūpa*, or actual identity of the living entity, is described by Lord Caitanya. ❺ *Jīvera 'svarūpa' haya—kṛṣṇera 'nitya-dāsa'*: the real identity of the living entity is that he is eternally a servitor of the Supreme Lord. If someone is one-hundred-percent engaged in the service of the Lord, he is to be understood as liberated. One must understand whether or not he is liberated by his activities in devotional service, not by other symptoms.

11 श्रद्धत्स्वैतन्मतं मह्यं जुष्टं यद्ब्रह्मवादिभिः
येन मामभयं याया मृत्युमृच्छन्त्यतद्विदः

śraddhatsvāitan mataṁ mahyaṁ
juṣṭam yad brahma-vādibhiḥ
yena mām abhayaṁ yāyā
mṛtyum ṛcchanty atad-vidāḥ

śraddhatsva—you may rest assured; *etat*—about this; *matam*—instruction; *mahyam*—My; *juṣṭam*—followed; *yat*—which; *brahma-vādibhiḥ*—by transcendentalists; *yena*—by

which; *mām*—unto Me; *abhayam*—without fear; *yāyāḥ*—you shall reach; *mṛtyum*—death; *ṛcchanti*—attain; *a-tat-vidah*—persons who are not conversant with this.

My dear mother, those who are actually transcendentalists certainly follow My instructions, as I have given them to you. You may rest assured that if you traverse this path of self-realization perfectly, surely you shall be freed from fearful material contamination and shall ultimately reach Me. Mother, persons who are not conversant with this method of devotional service certainly cannot get out of the cycle of birth and death.

PURPORT: Material existence is full of anxiety, and therefore it is fearful. One who gets out of this material existence automatically becomes free from all anxieties and fear. One who follows the path of devotional service enunciated by Lord Kapila is very easily liberated.

मैत्रेय उवाच

12 इति प्रदर्श्य भगवान् सर्ती तामात्मनो गतिम्
स्वमात्रा बह्ववादिन्या कपिलोऽनुमतो ययौ

maitreya uvāca
iti pradarśya bhagavān
satīm tām ātmano gatim
sva-mātrā brahma-vādinīyā
kapilo 'numato yayau

maitreyaḥ uvāca—Maitreya said; *iti*—thus; *pradarśya*—after instructing; *bhagavān*—the Supreme Personality of Godhead; *satīm*—venerable; *tām*—that; *ātmanaḥ*—of self-realization; *gatim*—path; *sva-mātrā*—from His mother; *brahma-vādinīyā*—self-realized; *kapilaḥ*—Lord Kapila; *anumataḥ*—took permission; *yayau*—left.

Śrī Maitreya said: The Supreme Personality of Godhead Kapila, after instructing His beloved mother, took permission from her and left His home, His mission having been fulfilled.

PURPORT: ⑥ The mission of the appearance of the Supreme Personality of Godhead in the form of Kapila was to distribute the transcendental knowledge of Sāṅkhya philosophy, which is full of devotional service. Having imparted that knowledge to His mother—and, through His mother, to the world—Kapiladeva had no more need to stay at home, so He took permission from His mother and left. Apparently He left home for spiritual realization, although He had nothing to realize spiritually because He Himself is the person to be spiritually realized.

⑦ Therefore this is an example set by the Supreme Personality of Godhead while acting like an ordinary human

being so that others might learn from Him. He could, of course, have stayed with His mother, but He indicated that there was no need to stay with the family. It is best to remain alone as a *brahmacārī*, *sannyāsī*, or *vānaprastha* and cultivate Kṛṣṇa consciousness throughout one's whole life. Those who are unable to remain alone are given license to live in household life with wife and children, not for sense gratification but for cultivation of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

13 सा चापि तनयोक्तेन योगादेशेन योगयुक्
तस्मिन्नाश्रम आपीडे सरस्वत्याः समाहिता

sā cāpi tanayoktena
yogādeśena yoga-yuk
tasminn āśrama āpīḍe
sarasvatyāḥ samāhitā

sā—she; *ca*—and; *apī*—also; *tanaya*—by her son; *uktena*—spoken; *yoga-ādeśena*—by the instruction on yoga; *yoga-yuk*—engaged in *bhakti-yoga*; *tasminn*—in that; *āśrame*—hermitage; *āpīḍe*—the flower crown; *sarasvatyāḥ*—of the Sarasvatī; *samāhitā*—fixed in *samādhi*.

As instructed by her son, Devahūti also began to practice bhakti-yoga in that very ashram. She practiced samādhi in the house of Kardama Muni, which was so beautifully decorated with flowers that it was considered the flower crown of the River Sarasvatī.

PURPORT: ⑧ Devahūti did not leave her house, because it is never recommended for a woman to leave her home. She is dependent. The very example of Devahūti was that when she was not married, she was under the care of her father, Svāyambhuva Manu, and then Svāyambhuva gave her to Kardama Muni in charity. She was under the care of her husband in her youth, and then her son, Kapila Muni, was born. As soon as her son grew up, her husband left home, and similarly the son, after discharging His duty towards His mother, also left. She could also have left home, but she did not. Rather, she remained at home and began to practice *bhakti-yoga* as instructed by her great son, Kapila, and because of her practice of *bhakti-yoga*, the entire home became just like a flower crown on the River Sarasvatī.

14 अभीक्ष्णावगाहकपिशान् जटिलान् कुटिलाककान्
आत्मानं चोग्रतपसा बिभ्रती चीरिणं कृशम्

- (6) What was the mission of Lord Kapila?
(7) Why did Lord Kapila leave home?
(8) Why did Devahūti not leave home?

abhīkṣṇāvagāha-kapiśān
jaṭilān kuṭilālakān
ātmānam cogra-tapasā
bibhratī cīriṇam kṛśam

abhīkṣṇa—again and again; *avagāha*—by bathing; *kapiśān*—gray; *jaṭilān*—matted; *kuṭila*—curled; *alakān*—hair; *ātmānam*—her body; *ca*—and; *ugra-tapasā*—by severe austerities; *bibhratī*—became; *cīriṇam*—clothed in rags; *kṛśam*—thin.

She began to bathe three times daily, and thus her curling black hair gradually became gray. Due to austerity, her body gradually became thin, and she wore old garments.

PURPORT: It is the practice of the yogi, *brahmacārī*, *vānaprastha*, and *sannyāsī* to bathe at least three times daily—early in the morning, during noontime, and in the evening. These principles are strictly followed even by some *gṛhasthas*, especially *brāhmaṇas*, who are elevated in spiritual consciousness. Devahūti was a king's daughter and almost a king's wife also. Although Kardama Muni was not a king, by his yogic mystic power he accommodated Devahūti very comfortably in a nice palace with maidservants and all opulence. 9 But since she had learned austerity even in the presence of her husband, there was no difficulty for her to be austere. Still, because her body underwent severe austerity after the departure of her husband and son, she became thin.

To be too fat is not very good for spiritually advanced life. Rather, one should reduce because if one becomes fat it is an impediment to progress in spiritual understanding. One should be careful not to eat too much, sleep too much or remain in a comfortable position. Voluntarily accepting some penances and difficulties, one should take less food and less sleep. These are the procedures for practicing any kind of yoga, whether *bhakti-yoga*, *jñāna-yoga*, or *haṭha-yoga*.

**15 प्रजापतेः कर्दमस्य तपोयोगविजृम्भितम्
स्वगार्हस्थ्यमनौपम्यं प्रार्थ्यं वैमानिकैरपि**

prajāpateḥ kardamasya
tapo-yoga-vijṛmbhitam
sva-gārhashtyam anaupamyam
prārthyam vaimānikair api

(9) Why was it not difficult for Devahūti to be austere?

prajā-pateḥ—of the progenitor of mankind; *kardamasya*—Kardama Muni; *tapah*—by austerity; *yoga*—by yoga; *vijṛmbhitam*—developed; *sva-gārhashtyam*—his home and household paraphernalia; *anaupamyam*—unequaled; *prārthyam*—enviable; *vaimānikaiḥ*—by the denizens of heaven; *api*—even.

The home and household paraphernalia of Kardama, who was one of the Prajāpatis, was developed in such a way, by dint of his mystic powers of austerity and yoga, that his opulence was sometimes envied by those who travel in outer space in airplanes.

PURPORT: The statement in this verse that Kardama Muni's household affairs were envied even by persons who travel in outer space refers to the denizens of heaven. Their airships are not like those we have invented in the modern age, which fly only from one country to another; their airplanes were capable of going from one planet to another. There are many such statements in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* from which we can understand that there were facilities to travel from one planet to another, especially in the higher planetary system, and who can say that they are not still traveling? The speed of our airplanes and space vehicles is very limited, but, as we have already studied, Kardama Muni traveled in outer space in an airplane which was like a city, and he journeyed to see all the different heavenly planets. That was not an ordinary airplane, nor was it ordinary space travel. Because Kardama Muni was such a powerful mystic yogī, his opulence was envied by the denizens of heaven.

**16 पयःफेननिभाः शय्या दान्ता रुक्मपरिच्छदाः
आसनानि च हैमानि सुस्पर्शास्तरणानि च**

payah-phena-nibhāḥ śayyā
dāntā rukma-paricchadāḥ
āsanāni ca haimāni
susparśāstaraṇāni ca

payah—of milk; *phena*—the foam; *nibhāḥ*—resembling; *śayyāḥ*—beds; *dāntāḥ*—made of ivory; *rukma*—golden; *paricchadāḥ*—with covers; *āsanāni*—chairs and benches; *ca*—and; *haimāni*—made of gold; *su-sparśa*—soft to the touch; *āstaraṇāni*—cushions; *ca*—and.

The opulence of the household of Kardama Muni is described herein. The bedsheets and mattresses were all as white as the foam of milk, the chairs and benches were made of ivory and were covered by cloths of lace with golden filigree, and the couches were made of gold and had very soft pillows.

(continued in the next issue)

A GYNOCOLOGIST FOR BHAKTIVEDANTA HOSPITAL

*Formerly one of India's leading abortionists,
he now campaigns to save the lives of the unborn.*

by Kālakaṅṭha Dāsa

MĀDHAVĀNANDA Dāsa, a physician and an administrator at the new Bhaktivedanta Hospital in suburban Mumbai, needed help. He sought physicians for the new multi-service hospital who were both highly competent and dedicated to the spiritual principles of the hospital's honored namesake, His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda.

In particular, Mādhavānanda knew that the hospital, built on principles of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, needed a gynecology director who would accept the sanctity of all life, including the unborn. Such a gynecologist would be a tough find in populous India, where for population control the government had for decades vigorously promoted abortion in medical colleges.

Mādhavānanda decided to start by determining the gynecology candidates' medical credentials. He invited Dr. Mahendra K. Patel, one of India's leading gynecologists, to assist him.

Dr. Patel, born and raised in Mumbai, had dedicated himself to gynecology early in life, when a young relative in his village died of complications from an abortion. Eventually Dr. Patel



Dr. Mahendra K. Patel

graduated first in his class of four hundred from medical school, assuring his posting to his chosen specialty.

While Dr. Patel was attending college, abortion was illegal in India. Still, many doctors in his college's gynecology department wanted to perform abortions to help mothers from large poor families who could not afford

more children. The doctors also sought to save prostitutes, who sometimes lost their lives trying to abort their babies. But the department head, a Catholic, refused to allow the procedure. Then, in 1971, just as Dr. Patel was graduating, the Indian government legalized abortion. The young doctors were free to offer the procedure up to the fifth month of pregnancy.

ABORTION SPECIALIST

Abortions performed up to the third month of pregnancy are simple to perform and relatively safe for the mother. But after the third month, the procedures required increase the danger to the mother. The young, vigorous Dr. Patel became a specialist in late-term abortions. His research resulted in improved, safer methods for late-term abortions that are still used in India and surrounding countries. In recognition of his work, Dr. Patel was eventually elected general secretary of the Federation of Obstetrics and Gynecology Societies of India (FOGSI). With 130 branches and over 16,000 participating doctors, FOGSI is India's largest such organization. During his quarter-century career, Dr. Patel performed

The solution to poverty and disease lies in spiritual education, not in abortion, a procedure laden with karma for all involved.



thirty thousand abortions and guided others in performing millions more.

When Mādhavānanda asked Dr. Patel to chair the committee to review gynecology candidates, Dr. Patel agreed. Besides his highly evolved medical knowledge, Dr. Patel had been studying the *Bhagavad-gītā* with followers of Śrīla Prabhupāda. So he was also conversant with the new hospital's spiritual principles.

Twenty-seven candidates applied for the post. As the interviews unfolded, each candidate expressed shock upon learning that the new hospital would not allow abortions. Mādhavānanda and other staff members patiently and frankly explained the Kṛṣṇa conscious view that life comes from God alone and to take it improperly is sinful. They said the solution to poverty and disease lies in spiritual education, not in abortion, a procedure laden with karma for all involved.

A CHANGE OF HEART

Dr. Patel was deeply impressed to see Mādhavānanda's firm insistence on principles often disregarded even in Catholic hospitals. After coming up with a short list of recommended candidates, Dr. Patel decided to approach Mādhavānanda with a different proposition.

"Why don't you ask me?" said Dr. Patel. "If you ask me, I will take the post."

Mādhavānanda and his staff were astonished. The post paid less and was far less prestigious than his current position. But Dr. Patel assured them he was sincere and would abide by the hospital's "no abortion and no contraception" policy in his practice both in and out of the hospital. Mādhavānanda gratefully agreed.

Now resigned from his position at FOGSI, Dr. Patel has successfully directed the Bhaktivedanta Hospital gynecology department for the past four years.

"At this stage of my career it is naturally difficult for me to admit it," says Dr. Patel, perhaps India's best known abortion practitioner, "but I can no longer tolerate the destruction of the unborn. Through Śrīla Prabhupāda's *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* I have come to understand that the eternal soul enters the womb to take a birth according to his past karma. Although temporary and full of suffering like other species, human life alone allows the soul a chance to understand God. One who aborts that precious birth shares in an enormous sin with those who cause the abortion to be performed.

"Given my background, I am quite blessed to serve at Bhaktivedanta Hospital. I wish to dedicate the rest of my life to promoting the teachings of the *Bhagavad-gītā* and discrediting the materialistic notion of sinless abortion."

To pursue this cause, Dr. Patel has counseled over four hundred abortion applicants at Bhaktivedanta Hospital to reconsider their decision. Many have decided to keep their babies, five of whom Dr. Patel delivered. "Five beautiful children," he declares with a smile.

ANTI-ABORTION CAMPAIGN

Dr. Patel has developed an anti-abortion presentation that he takes to educational institutions and service organizations such as the Rotary Club, the Lions Club, and Giants International. Given his national renown and background, audiences find Dr. Patel's presentation quite persuasive. "We cannot keep all the invitations,"

he says modestly.

Recently, Dr. Patel received this letter from Dr. K. C. Aneja, one of India's leading cardiologists and president of the Bharat Vikas Parishad, an organization with five hundred branches: "It is heartening that the hospital has started an anti-abortion campaign. Dr. Patel convinced us that life is the Lord's gift. On behalf of the members and myself, we thank you and wish you success in this project to motivate the people. We extend our full cooperation." Dr. Aneja and others have encouraged Dr. Patel to take up his campaign on a national scale.

In India more than 35,000 abortions take place every day, enough to replace the population of Australia every two years. Most major religions oppose abortion, yet it goes on widely in India and throughout the world. Why? Dr. Patel explains.

"People fear overpopulation," he says, "but if God gives birth, He has made provision. Besides, if a population burden justifies murdering children, why not kill old people, retarded children, or the chronically ill? Śrīla Prabhupāda says the earth can support many times more people than it does now. The real problem is unequal distribution of land and food. Leaders should address that problem rather than inducing people to kill their own children."

What about in cases of rape?

"Pregnancy in rape is terribly tragic," says Dr. Patel, "but does saving your shame justify sacrificing a life? Which is more important? Besides, the demand for adoption is high, even in India. On average twenty percent of married couples are infertile, including five percent who do not respond to medical help. This five percent corresponds to millions of childless couples

who would gladly adopt children.

“Abortion is patently unnatural. The concept of medically aided abortion is only a hundred years old—the product of unrestricted sex in a promiscuous age. A baby killed in the womb has been murdered. To demonstrate this point, our presentation includes a graphic, shocking depiction of a late-term abortion.

“The eternal soul enters and gives life to the body at the moment of conception, not at the age of three months,” Dr. Patel concludes. “Since medical science cannot duplicate the life in the body, medical science has no right to take it.

“From Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books I have learned that every child is a gift of God. Life must be respected,” he says. “And I have learned the hard way that abortion is murderous and leads to disaster and unhappiness. Abortion must stop.”

PLANS

In the coming months Dr. Patel will continue to give talks and conduct seminars at women’s organizations and youth forums. He has enlisted several doctors, nurses, medical students, and social workers as volunteers in a training program for counselors. They will spread the anti-abortion message in greater Mumbai.

Dr. Patel and his helpers are about to launch a media campaign that will include banners in city streets and colorful stickers in the crowded ladies compartments and station platforms of Mumbai’s suburban railway. Also to come are press articles in the national newspapers and magazines, debates on television and radio, and a video explaining the details and ill effects of abortion.

Says Dr. Patel as we part, “We have to take this message far out to cover the entire nation. It’s a mammoth job, and I’m seeking the blessings and help of all Vaiṣṇavas everywhere.” ❀

Kālakaṇṭha Dāsa (Carl Woodham), author of The Song Divine (a lyrical rendition of the Bhagavad-gītā), lives in Gainesville, Florida, with his wife and children. He is the resource development director for the Māyāpur Project.

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**“In this world there is nothing
so sublime and pure as
transcendental knowledge.”**

—Bhagavad-gītā 4.38

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OPTIMISM AND PESSIMISM (continued from page 28)

goal is to merge into Brahman and that everything else is illusion and suffering. We are meant only to escape through self-negation in Brahman realization.

But that's not the summation of our philosophy: there is something positive and optimistic.

To understand the difference between Dr. Pangloss's and Schopenhauer's versions of optimism and pessimism and the Kṛṣṇa conscious versions, we must face the *Vedas'* stated propose of human life. It is not our purpose to resign ourselves to a temporary and miserable world, either imagining it happy or understanding its misery, but to strive for permanent happiness. In the Vedic conception, a person negates life only when he identifies the illusory body with the self. Those who affirm the self accept the opportunity offered in the Vedic teachings to become victorious over death.

I will generalize and say that anyone who aspires to be a devotee in Kṛṣṇa consciousness is optimistic about the spiritual facts of life and pessimistic toward the opportunities offered by material life. To the degree that that's not true in us, our lack of advancement is revealed. If,

in the name of being a devotee, we remain attracted to material life and unhappy renouncing it for spiritual life, we can say that we are not really devotees.

I remember once walking with Śrīla Prabhupāda. At the end of the walk he turned and said, "If you have any idea that material life is happy, you cannot become Kṛṣṇa conscious." At other times he would say, "There is no happiness in the material world."

SPIRITUAL OPTIMISM

We're optimistic, but not about material life. I felt that balance between optimism and pessimism early in my own Kṛṣṇa conscious life. When I was a member of ISKCON's first temple, a storefront at 26 Second Avenue in New York City, I once arrived late to drive with Śrīla Prabhupāda to a lecture he would give at Dr. Mishra's Ananda Ashram outside the city. Another storefront attendee also arrived late. Suddenly, someone turned up with a jeep. We jumped in and drove out to the ashram. As we drove, we talked to one another simply as young men interested in the Swami (Śrīla Prabhupāda). We all thought the Swami was great, but we especially liked his philosophy: the self doesn't die; we are eternal. It gave us such hope.

Most people feel that same hope when they take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. That hope is the optimism of spiritual life. A devotee is jolly, Prabhupāda would say. He said that if we weren't feeling the happiness of spiritual life, we were in *māyā*.

MUKUNDA'S UNPARALLELED OPTIMISM

There is a wonderful expression of optimism in one of Lord Caitanya's pastimes. Although playing the role of a devotee and generally hiding His true identity, Lord Caitanya once revealed that He is Kṛṣṇa Himself. He then called each of His devotees forward one by one, told each devotee something about himself that only the devotee would know, revealed each devotee's eternal form, and offered each devotee a boon. As the day went on, however, it became clear to everyone that the Lord had not called Mukunda, a great *kirtana* singer loved by all the devotees.

Finally, the devotees approached Lord Caitanya and asked, "My Lord, are You going to call Mukunda?"

"Mukunda? Don't even mention his name. He's a good-for-nothing. He's a chameleon. Whoever he's with, he's like them. If he associates with Māyāvādīs, he becomes a Māyāvādī. If he comes here, he behaves like a devotee. Therefore, sometimes he offers Me a rose and sometimes he hits Me with a mallet."

The devotees were shocked. They knew Mukunda was a true Vaiṣṇava. They decided to intercede on his behalf.

But the Lord replied, "No! I will not see Mukunda for millions of lifetimes."

Upon hearing these words, Mukunda began to clap his hands and dance. "I will! I will! I will see the Lord again!" Mukunda is an example of a true spiritual optimist; he was not defeated by the Lord's rejection but instead chose to hang on one part of His sentence: "I will." The Lord had said, "I will *not* see Mukunda for millions of lifetimes," but Mukunda heard only "I will." At that, Lord Caitanya laughed and at once accepted him.

Optimism means we see the silver lining in the circumstances of our lives



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and understand that the silver lining is Kṛṣṇa's mercy to bring us closer to Him. Mukunda could have thought, "Who knows if I will ever be accepted again? After all, where will I be in millions of lifetimes?" Rather, he was optimistic.

NO MATERIAL HAPPINESS

Yet the *Bhāgavatam* hammers away at our material optimism in verse after verse. We cannot be happy in this world, and if we think we can, we are illusioned. Jaḍa Bharata explains this point concisely to Mahārāja Rahūgaṇa in the Fifth Canto of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, in the chapter entitled "The Forest of Enjoyment":

"Sometimes conditioned souls exchange money, but in due course of time, enmity arises because of cheating. Although there may be a tiny profit, the conditioned souls cease to be friends and become enemies." In the purport Śrīla Prabhupāda writes,

"Unless one is firmly fixed in the regulative principles, one may perform mischievous acts, even if one is a member of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement."

Jaḍa Bharata continues: "Sometimes, having no money, the conditioned soul does not get sufficient accommodations. Sometimes he does not even have a place to sit, nor does he have other necessities. In other words, he falls into scarcity, and at that time, when he is unable to secure the necessities by fair means, he decides to seize the property of others unfairly. When he cannot get the things he wants, he receives insults from others and becomes very morose.

"Although people may be enemies, in order to fulfill their desires again and again, they sometimes get married. Unfortunately, these marriages do not last very long, and the people involved are separated by divorce or other means."

In the purport Śrīla Prabhupāda

writes, "Due to the cheating propensity, people remain envious. Even in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, separation and enmity take place due to the prominence of material propensities. The conclusion is that no one can be happy in material life. One must take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness."

This basic understanding of optimism and pessimism must be there in any devotee wishing to advance in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. We may, however, express individual attitudes according to our psychophysical natures. Some of us may appear more optimistic or pessimistic than others. But the basis for real optimism is in the life of the spirit. There is no happiness in material life. ☸

Satsvarupa Dāsa Goswami, one of Śrīla Prabhupāda's first disciples, is a former editor of BTG and the author of many books on Kṛṣṇa consciousness, including a six-volume biography of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

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REAL HUMILITY

What is it? Do we want it? How do we get it?

by Ūrmilā Devī Dāsī

IN THE *Bhagavad-gītā* Lord Kṛṣṇa lists humility as the first item of knowledge. And Śrīla Prabhupāda writes that without humility we cannot gain knowledge. Until we know that we don't know, why should we want to learn? Lord Jesus taught that the meek will inherit the earth and those who put themselves last are first in the eyes of God.

Yet I fear humility. Are the humble full of self-loathing? Are they willing victims? Do opportunity and success pass them by?

If humility invites exploitation, why do scriptures praise it? Lord Caitanya says, "A person with all good qualities is bent down with humility, like a tree full of fruit."

So, I consider that maybe, just maybe, I should think about developing humility. The problem is, I'm not sure whether or not I really want it, I don't understand how I'll feel and act when I have it, and I haven't a notion of how to attain it. At least that's how I felt sometime ago when I decided simply to concentrate on serving Lord Kṛṣṇa and let this humility business take care of itself. Kṛṣṇa would find a way to help me to understand it and achieve it, I was sure.

Do we need humility? Śrīla Prabhupāda writes many times that persons who have seriously taken up the practices of Kṛṣṇa consciousness don't need to work separately at developing good

qualities. For example, they're automatically vegetarians and need not join a vegetarian society. Still, Kṛṣṇa's devotees carefully select food to make sure it's free from meat, fish, and eggs and suitable for the Lord's pleasure. The devotee *does*, therefore, make an effort to be a vegetarian as part of his or her service to the Lord.

Similarly, since we're offering ourselves to the Lord, we must examine ourselves to spot arrogance. Part of our spiritual advancement requires making sure our mind is pure, a fit temple for Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Once I was eating in the dark, watching a devotional video. The excellent banquet, however, contained some putrid fig chutney. I gagged when I tasted it and rejected the rest of the meal. Arrogance is putrid fig chutney. Despite a person's good qualities, when we detect conceit we recoil and keep our distance. Can I truly say to Kṛṣṇa, "Accept me, Lord, as your servant," when conceit covers and permeates all I do, say, and think?

I'm motivated to define and develop humility because Kṛṣṇa demands it, and because false pride is painful. Respect and adoration have a high price. Others envy us, or they praise us, but with ulterior motives. We may be respected for our qualities or accomplishments, but abhorred for our pride in them. We delight in the sweetness of respect, but suffer the

At right: Although in the role of Lord Kṛṣṇa's father, Vasudeva bows in humility before the sage Nārada to inquire from him about spiritual life.





Part of real humility is accepting the whole truth: I have this possession, or quality, or ability by the grace of God, Kṛṣṇa.



bitterness of insult. One who has received honor finds dishonor worse than death, Kṛṣṇa says.

So, I've come to the point of at least tentatively deciding I want to be humble. At least I understand that humility is a prerequisite for the unlimited, eternal happiness of love of God that I *do* want. But what exactly is humility?

HUMILITY IS HONESTY

I know that humility is not a lie, because another saintly quality Kṛṣṇa mentions is truthfulness. To say that I'm poor when I'm rich, ugly when I'm beautiful, would not be humility, nor would admitting I lack certain qualities—that's just a statement of fact. Giving others credit and acknowledgment and minimizing our own accomplishments and abilities, while within we long for respect and recognition, is not humility. This false humility (while often a social necessity) is a lie, and one the liar rarely believes. Those who hear it believe it less.

Part of real humility is accepting the whole truth: I have this possession, or quality, or ability by the grace of God, Kṛṣṇa. He can give and He can take away. Even if I say that He is simply administering the law of karma—giving me what I've earned by my past piety—still it is a gift. That I cannot hold on to my assets one moment longer than He desires proves I'm not the ultimate possessor.

If my assets are Kṛṣṇa's, then my pride should be for Him. I should be proud of His cleverness or wealth or talent, a part of which He is allowing me to exhibit on His behalf. (Of course, I have to actually be using it in His behalf to feel this way. I can't simply say it's His and then try to use it only for myself.) At every moment I should feel dependent on Kṛṣṇa to give me every-

thing I have, as well as my ability to think, feel, and act.

Kṛṣṇa supplies my knowledge, my memory, my attractiveness, my wealth, my ability to remember Him in times of trouble. My determination to keep my promises to Him comes by His grace. If He likes, He can easily test me beyond my limits, or remove my strength, whether physical, mental, emotional, or even moral and spiritual.

Kṛṣṇa's devotee Arjuna discovered that everything he was proud of was actually the Lord's. Arjuna, a prince and an unparalleled warrior, was the best archer in the world. He had single-handedly defeated entire armies. His bow was a gift from the greatest of the *devas*, Lord Śiva, and his quiver never emptied. By the grace of Indra, ruler of heaven, Arjuna had traveled to other planets. By the grace of Lord Kṛṣṇa he had journeyed beyond the material world. He was handsome, powerful, intelligent, and learned, and had wealth exceeding that of the richest man of modern times. His wife was like a goddess, his son a great hero.

Then Kṛṣṇa left the earth to return to His own kingdom, and Arjuna couldn't even string his famous bow. He used it like a club to pound his enemy. His quiver emptied, and the undefeated hero found himself the loser at the hands of untrained fighters. Arjuna concluded that the Lord had withdrawn abilities that had seemed an integral part of himself.

All I have is Kṛṣṇa's gift. I discover that this truth isn't a step to devotion, but an integral part of it. And it is sweet beyond either the false assertions of incompetence or false pride in borrowed ornaments.

HUMILITY IS GRATEFUL

Humility is more than an ongoing understanding that everything is the

Lord's. Saintly, pure devotees often speak of their unworthiness and even wretchedness. But my experience with "honest introspection" is as painful as my experience with pride, or more so. I see, meet, and shake hands with my faults, relive my mistakes, and have at least a glimpse of my irritations and worse from others' point of view. I feel some of the pain I have caused others. And I know my evil motives of lust, anger, greed, envy, and vengeance.

To stay in moods of self-assessment is difficult. When in them, we may approach friends, family, and the Lord to ask forgiveness. "Have mercy on me, a sinner!" When we're wracked with revulsion at ourselves, such humility can seem like torture in hell.

Yet those who are pure in loving devotion to Lord Kṛṣṇa are always joyful, living with a thrill at every moment. Just as real humility must be truthful, it must also be joyful. Clearly, torturous self-abnegation is also a pretense or shadow of humility.

The pain we feel when seeing our sinful nature comes from pride and self-love. We think we are great, but our faults shame us. Thomas Merton writes, "For the saints, when they remember their sins, do not remember the sins but the glory of God, and therefore even past evil is turned by them into a present cause of joy and serves to glorify God." In real humility, our sense of unworthiness is eclipsed by the wonder and happiness of understanding that Kṛṣṇa has blessed us despite our faults.

Although I knew something was brewing for my birthday last year, I expected only a cake at the home of my son and daughter-in-law. To my surprise, many devotees from the community where I live gathered to offer me gifts and share a feast. Their love was like many waves of pleasure, at least in part because I felt gratitude that it was far beyond what I deserved. How

little we feel such happiness when we think we deserve it! Rather, proud of our own qualifications, we may deprecate what we receive. But if we consider that we have no merit, then even the smallest thing done for us will bring great satisfaction.

In *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, we read of Mādhāi, who was born in an elevated *brāhmaṇa* family but became a criminal. He and his brother not only committed every imaginable crime, but they scorned religious people.

One day Nityānanda, the Lord Himself, came to ask the brothers to reform and to chant the name of Kṛṣṇa. In a drunken rage, Mādhāi tried to kill Nityānanda. Yet the Lord showed him mercy and forgiveness. Astonished, Mādhāi repented. When he fully accepted Lord Nityānanda's mercy and love, his pain of remembering his sins turned to ecstasy, the symptoms of his happiness obvious to everyone. That the Lord had mercy on such a person as himself gave him happiness in Kṛṣṇa, rather than shame born of wishing he were a great person.

Just as humble persons are always aware that all their assets are God's gifts, they also know that those gifts are given by God out of pure love, and not because they deserve them.

HUMILITY IS JOYFUL

Prabhupāda defined humility as not wanting respect from others. The humble person is ready to offer all respect to others and doesn't want any in return.

Full renunciation of the desire for respect, however, comes when we relinquish all sense of proprietorship over our "rights." The Christian writer C. S. Lewis states, "Men are not angered by mere misfortune but by misfortune conceived as injury. And the sense of injury depends on the feeling that a legitimate claim has been denied. The more claims on life, therefore, the more often one will feel injured and, as a result, ill-tempered."

Do we own the right to have others speak to us with deference? Do we own our time, so that we can claim that others impose on it? If we are dealt insults, if we're cheated, if our plans are ruined, our desires trampled, what will it mat-

ter if our time, body, possessions, and life itself belong to Kṛṣṇa? Ultimately He is in control of what happens to us. It is a matter of surrender to His will. And if we place our trust and shelter in Him, then the things that normally rile the ego will not touch us.

I had planned one day to write this very article. In fact, I had been planning for two weeks to have a Sunday free for writing—not an easy task with my schedule. Yet that morning I got an emergency call and so spent the day babysitting, cooking, cleaning, and washing clothes full of baby vomit. During the moments when I remembered, "My time and life are Yours, Lord. I'm just a lowly servant who is to follow Your will," then I found great joy in setting aside my plans—even my plans for devotional service—as He directed.

A humble person, reposing all feelings of kinship in Kṛṣṇa, takes little notice of how others should treat him or what he deserves. He is content and even joyful in all circumstances. The only right the humble insist upon is to be counted as Kṛṣṇa's servant, however insignificant.

After all, a humble servant feels honored to take trouble for the master. Do we respect someone willing only to serve the beloved in good times, or someone who vows faithfulness "for better or for worse"? If to serve the Lord He wills that I be treated unfairly or forced to undergo hardships, that should be my happiness.

Young men and women willingly risk life and health to serve their coun-

try in the military. Wounds, capture, lifelong disfigurement or handicaps, make them feel proud to have taken the trouble to repay their country. Such "pride" is the happiness of the humble.

One who shuns all respect, therefore, is not without the happiness that comes from material honor. Rather, he or she gets many times that satisfaction from the pride of being the Lord's servant, in however menial or difficult a situation. The satisfaction is so great that in comparison the positive or negative dealings of the world are of no consequence. Those caught up in the ownership of many "rights" in this world cannot understand the inner happiness of a pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa.

ACHIEVING HUMILITY

After some research and contemplation, I feel I have a better idea what humility is. It is honest: Everything belongs to Kṛṣṇa, so He gets the credit for what I have and what I do. It is grateful: Whatever He gives me is as great as I am unworthy. It is joyful: Being Kṛṣṇa's servant is so wonderful that I'm happy to do whatever will please Him, even if a materialist sees me as unfortunate or exploited.

How do we get this grateful joy of true humility? We begin by submitting ourselves to a spiritual master. To claim that we are God's servant is easy; the test is whether or not we can serve a servant of God. The bona fide spiritual master instructs us in accordance with

(please turn to page 50)

You're Invited! The Sunday Feast

Most Hare Kṛṣṇa centers around the world put on a special festival every Sunday—for regulars as well as newcomers. You're invited to join in the festival of music, dance, and spiritual discourse and then share hearty plates of savories, sweets, and vegetable extravaganzas. Come by and relish the taste of the world's oldest cultural tradition. Call your nearest center to find out the schedule for the Sunday Feast. (See "Centers," page 57.)

ONE IDEAL PERSON

(continued from page 15)

have the freedom to work on your own program, but we have to try to please all the people.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: No, no. “Our own program.” Our program is not *vox populi*—doing what pleases the most people, as you are doing. We simply follow the Lord’s program for becoming first-class, as He gives it in the scriptures. So tell us what is our fault. Find what is our fault. Then you can disagree. But when you see everything here is nice, how will you not accept it? Unless you are biased.

Director: Of course, I’m biased—I’ve been brought up differently. Just as you’re biased against my life.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: No, we are not biased. We are not biased. We are broad-minded. Simply we say that if you want to be a first-class man, then you must not commit sinful, disturbing activities. That is our propaganda.

Director: But I, as a public servant—I’m not here to change society.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: But we are also part of the public. We belong to the public. You must become our servant, also.

Director: What?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: We are members of the public. So you should become our servant, also, if you are a public servant. [Laughter.]

Director: A public servant is . . . in our philosophy . . . is a man who serves because he is elected by the people, and in this way he serves the public. And whatever the public decides, he should behave accordingly.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Therefore, to begin with, we are reforming the public, so that they behave according to the Lord’s directions in the scriptures.

Director: That’s what I mean. When you attempt to reform the public, you cannot expect them to start behaving differently.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Oh? So if you keep the public in a sinful, disturbed frame of mind, the public selects a president—Nixon—and then they become still more disturbed and drag him down. This is going on.

Director: Yes. But that is how society works. If someone is going to be able to change you, you must want to change. You, the member of the public, must decide to change. So, therefore, as a government minister, I just do what I’m asked to do. Otherwise, I would lose my job.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: No. If you actually want to do some social-welfare work, you must accept the Lord’s standard formula. If you manufacture your own way, that will never be successful.

Director: I might agree with you that for society’s welfare, all of us should

be Kṛṣṇa conscious.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Not all at once, of course. Gradually. We don’t expect that at once, all people . . .

Director: But anyway, if that became our goal, then we would be . . . then social welfare would mean something different.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Now, let us look at what we are proposing here. Actually, I am not proposing—Kṛṣṇa says. First, Kṛṣṇa says one must be peaceful. So how to become peaceful? And if a person’s mind is always disturbed, how can he become peaceful?

Director: You’re quite right.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: So that is the secret of success. You want to make the people peaceful, but you do not know how to make them peaceful. So, therefore, you have to adopt this process that the Lord gives.

Director: Yes, people are without peace because society is far too competitive.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Anyway, we say, “You chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, eat sumptuous food offered to Kṛṣṇa, live comfortably, and become peaceful.” It is guaranteed. If anyone, even a madman, agrees to these three principles—chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra, taking nice spiritual food, and living comfortably—he will be peaceful.

Director: Your Divine Grace, what’s your answer as to why such a small percentage of the population accept this philosophy that you’re presenting?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes, those who accept Kṛṣṇa’s plan may be just a tiny percentage. But for instance, there are so many millions of stars in the sky and there is just one moon. In terms of percentage, the moon is nothing. If we consider just percentage, the moon is nothing. But the moon is more important than all these nonsense stars. [Laughter.] Again, if you simply consider percentage, the moon has no percentage of the vote. But because he is the moon, he is more important than all these rascal stars. This is a nice example. What is the use of considering the stars’ percentage in the presence of the moon? Let there be one moon—that is sufficient. There is no question of percentage. And let there be one ideal person. For instance, one ideal person like Lord Jesus Christ. ☸

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CALENDAR

This calendar is calculated for Mayapur, West Bengal, India. The dates, derived from a lunar calendar, may vary by one day for other locations. Consult your local Hare Kṛṣṇa temple for the exact dates for your area.

Because the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement comes in disciplic line from Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the calendar includes not only dates relevant to all followers of the Vedic tradition but also dates relating to Lord Caitanya's associates and prominent spiritual masters in His disciplic succession.

Month of Vāmana

(June 7–July 5)

JULY

1—Śayanā Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans.

5—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī, one of the six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana. First month of Cāturmāsya begins (fasting from green leafy vegetables).

Month of Śrīdhara

(July 6–August 4)

11—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, one of the six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana.

14—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Lokanātha Gosvāmī, a great devotee of Lord Caitanya.

15—Anniversary of the incorporation of ISKCON, in New York City, 1966.

17—Kāmikā Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans.

30—Jhulana Yātrā (swing festival) of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda begins.

31—Vyañjulī Mahā-dvādaśī, fasting from grains and beans for Pavitropānā Ekādaśī. Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, one of the six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana. Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Gauridāsa Paṇḍita, an associate of Lord Caitanya.

AUGUST

4—Jhulana Yātrā ends. Appearance anniversary of Lord Balarāma. Fasting till noon, followed by feasting. Second month of Cāturmāsya begins (fasting from yogurt).

Month of Hr̥ṣikeśa

(August 5–September 2)

5—Anniversary of the departure of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda to the United States in 1965.

12—Śrī Kṛṣṇa Janmāṣṭamī, appearance anniversary of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Fasting till midnight, followed by a break-fast of Ekādaśī *prasādam* (no grains or beans). Feasting tomorrow. Call your local Hare Kṛṣṇa temple for a schedule of events.

13—Appearance anniversary of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. Fasting till noon, followed by feasting.

14—Annadā Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans.

23—Appearance anniversary of Śrīmatī Sītā Devī, the consort of Śrīla Advaita Ācārya.

26—Śrī Rādhāṣṭamī, appearance anniversary of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, Lord Kṛṣṇa's eternal consort. Fasting till noon, followed by feasting.

29—Parśvā Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans.

30—Śrī Vāmana-dvādaśī, appearance anniversary of Lord Vāmana-deva, Lord Kṛṣṇa's incarnation as a dwarf *brāhmaṇa*. Fasting till noon. Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, one of the six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana.

31—Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, father of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura (Śrīla Prabhupāda's spiritual master), and a pioneer in spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness in English.

SEPTEMBER

1—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura, foremost teacher of chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa.

2—Anniversary of Śrīla Prabhupāda's accepting *sannyāsa*, the renounced order of life. Third month of Cāturmāsya begins (fasting from milk).

Month of Padmanābha

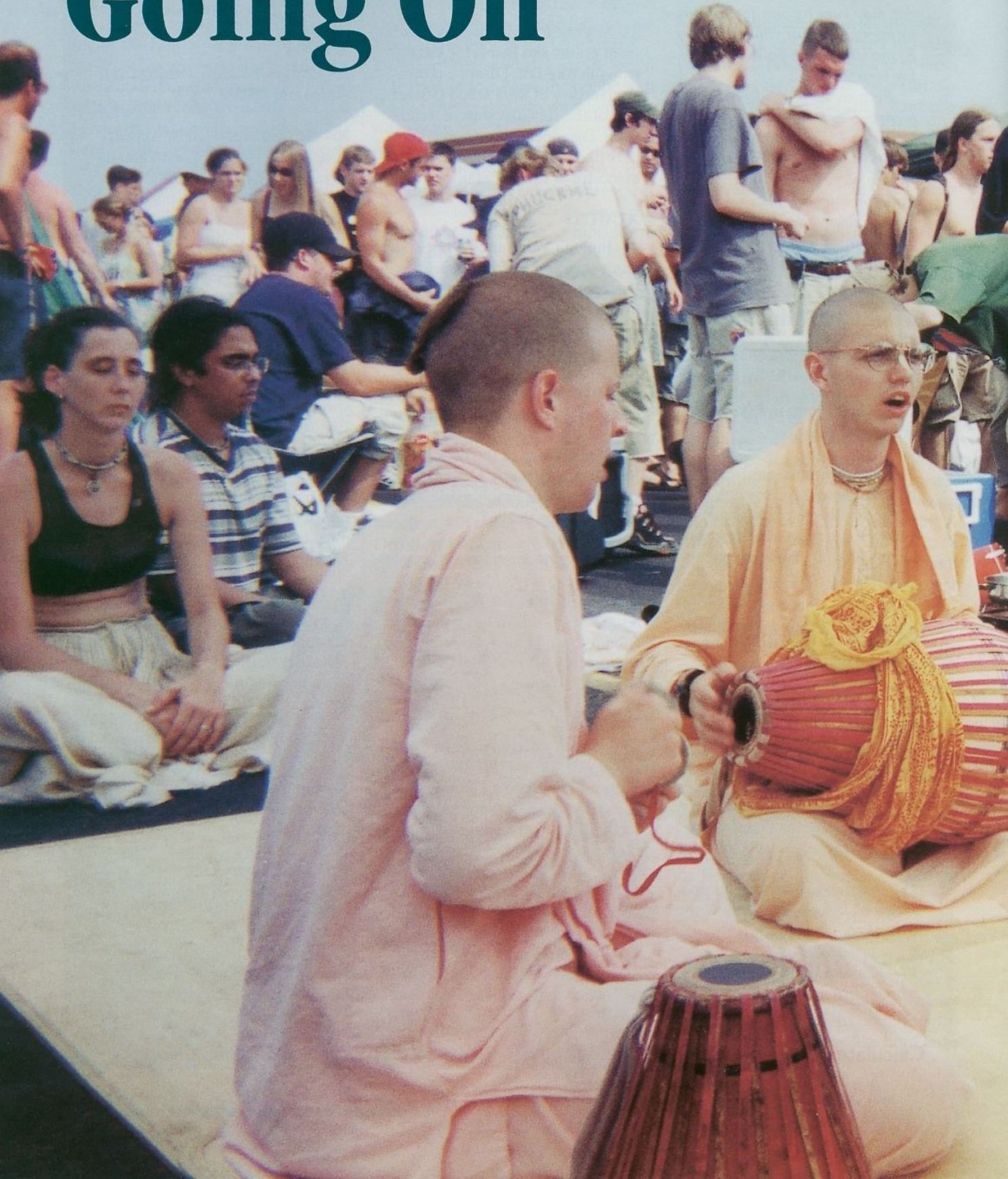
(September 3–17, October 17–November 1 [September 18–October 16 is Puruṣottama-adhika month.])

10—Anniversary of Śrīla Prabhupāda's arrival in the United States.

14—Trispr̥ṣā Mahā-dvādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans for Indirā Ekādaśī.

Calculate your own calendar for your area! Visit www.krsna.com to download software.

Something Phishy Going On



The festive atmosphere surrounding a rock group's tour proves ideal for presenting Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

by Aīśvarya Dāsa





EVEN THOUGH SPOKEN many centuries ago, the timeless wisdom of the *Vedas* remains current in this new millennium. I realize this while traveling with a handful of other Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees to rock concerts in North America. We're following a concert tour by a band named Phish. Like the famous but now disbanded Grateful Dead, Phish attracts a following of people who try their best to live a peaceful, holistic life. Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees have been introducing Vedic culture and philosophy at these concerts for years and have subsequently become a familiar and welcome sight.

Today we're in Hartford, Connecticut. In the morning before the concert begins, we erect three booths in the amphitheater's parking lot, as we do at all the other shows. At the booths, we'll display Kṛṣṇa conscious books and tapes, distribute *prasādam*, and chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* accompanied by traditional Indian instruments.

Vendors set up a line of shops beside us and sell all kinds of parapher-

nalia to concertgoers to support themselves while touring. Many of the vendors, who see us often, like to hear us chant, and several come by this morning to ask me when we're going to begin.

Once the chanting starts, some people sing along or smile at us, while others ask what it all means. Śrīla Prabhupāda coined the term "simple living, high thinking," and tasteful, melodious chanting of Kṛṣṇa's holy names helps to inspire positive thoughts in all who hear it.

RELEVANT INQUIRIES

Every generation asks itself some perennial questions about life, and young people today are no exception. Steve walks up to Puruṣa-Sūkta Dāsa at our book booth and buys two books before deeply pondering and formulating the question he has wanted to ask for some time.

"I understand that there is unity and a sense of oneness between all of us," Steve finally says, "but I feel we have a

responsibility to express our individuality, since it also has a great significance. I know that as spiritualists we're all united, but how am I supposed to express my individuality without falling short of this sense of unity?"

Puruṣa-Sūkta explains to our philosophical friend the concept of *acintya-bhedābheda-tattva* ("inconceivable oneness and difference," as enunciated by Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu) and relates an example Śrīla Prabhupāda gives: The sun is the same as, but different from, the sun's rays.

Steve likes the analogy.

"That's a great explanation," he says. "I feel good about your answer."

Steve says that after seeing us at another concert he felt we were the right people to inquire from about spirituality.

As Justin takes a book from the display at the book table, he tells Puruṣa-Sūkta he's gotten a couple of Śrīla Prabhupāda's translations before. While leaving with a *Bhagavad-gītā* and two tapes, Justin echoes Śrīla Prabhupāda's words by mentioning

that Kṛṣṇa consciousness has dialectically helped him form a deeper connection with God from within his own Catholic faith.

A young man sits and listens intently to the devotees chanting. Just as he leaves, he meets Vijaya Dāsa and heartily receives a *Bhagavad-gītā*. The young man will later give the book to a friend, who will pass it on to the young, mysterious looking woman I find perusing our bookstall for more information on spirituality. She tells me the *Gītā* seems to have come to her mystically—she was looking for a book just like it.

Chris is a courteous, spiritually minded graduate student from Rutgers University near New York City. He comes by the book table after seeing the devotees chanting in another area. He asks Puruṣa-Sūkta to explain what “Hare Kṛṣṇa” means. They discuss the holy names of the Lord for a while, until Chris has to leave for the concert. But he has become so captivated by the concept of chanting that he soon decidedly backtracks to the book table to find out more. He gets there just as the chanting party arrives, and he spontaneously joins the blissful devotees, thoroughly enjoying chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* and dancing.

Ekacakra Dāsa, who has brought the chanting party from New York, tells me of a friendship between the devotees and a woman who comes along to chant at every concert. One time she brought a refreshing gift of fruits and good quality organic juices. Ekacakra showed her the art of spiritualizing food by first offering it to the Lord. She’s so fascinated by all the new cultural and spiritual activities she’s learning that she has asked the devotees to have a gathering in her house.

One young man makes his way through many rows of cars to where the devotees are chanting.

“It’s great to see you out here again,” he tells Ekacakra. “You’re always tearing it up. I love it when you do this.”

Many others encourage the devotees, including Star, who has been to every Grateful Dead and Phish concert ever. He tells us how much he always likes to see the devotees’ happy, smiling faces.

While walking about, I meet Christie and Adam, who have driven up in their pickup truck.

I show them Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books, but before taking one they give me a stern warning: “If you’re not really a monk, then you’re going to suffer for what you’re doing here.”

I convince them of my sincere attempt at monk status, after which Adam looks deep into my eyes and conveys to me his latest realization.

“As a landscaper, I have to work in all weathers,” Adam explains. “Sometimes I work in the rain, and I hate it, because I get wet, muddy, and miserable. But if I’m sitting peacefully in my garden and it begins to rain, then I love it. It’s the best thing. Rain makes the plants and trees grow. It gives life. So the same rain can either give me pleasure or make me miserable.”

Adam pauses to see what I have to say.

I agree with him, and I mention that to understand all he has said is to understand something of what consciousness is. I tell him we’re all striving to see things from the perspective of higher consciousness.

We talk a little more, and before we part, Adam thanks me for being “out and about doing the Lord’s work.”

MAKING FRIENDS

When the concert is over, everyone quickly exits the amphitheater in a scramble to get home. Numerous people stop by the rows of vendors to get something to eat. Savyasācī Dāsa, who directs ISKCON’s longest running *prasādam*-distribution program, at the University of Florida in Gainesville, is ready with pots and trays filled with *prasādam*. Many people pick up a plate or two and stop by the chanting party to watch and listen as they eat.

I’ve met many University of Florida alumni who are extremely thankful to the devotees for feeding them on campus throughout their penniless university years. Similarly, many fans of *prasādam* at Phish shows value the devotees’ coming on tour again and again.

This is just a glimpse of the good times we have sharing Kṛṣṇa consciousness at Phish shows. I’m thankful to be here again, out and about doing some semblance of the Lord’s work, and seeing people respond with appreciation and friendship. ☸

Aiśvarya Dāsa joined the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement in 1989 in Christchurch, New Zealand. He is a disciple of His Holiness Hridayānanda Dāsa Goswami and is based in San Diego, California.

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Ashes in the

PARAM BRAHMA'S last words, spoken to his wife, were, "We'll wake up early tomorrow to perform penance and austerities."

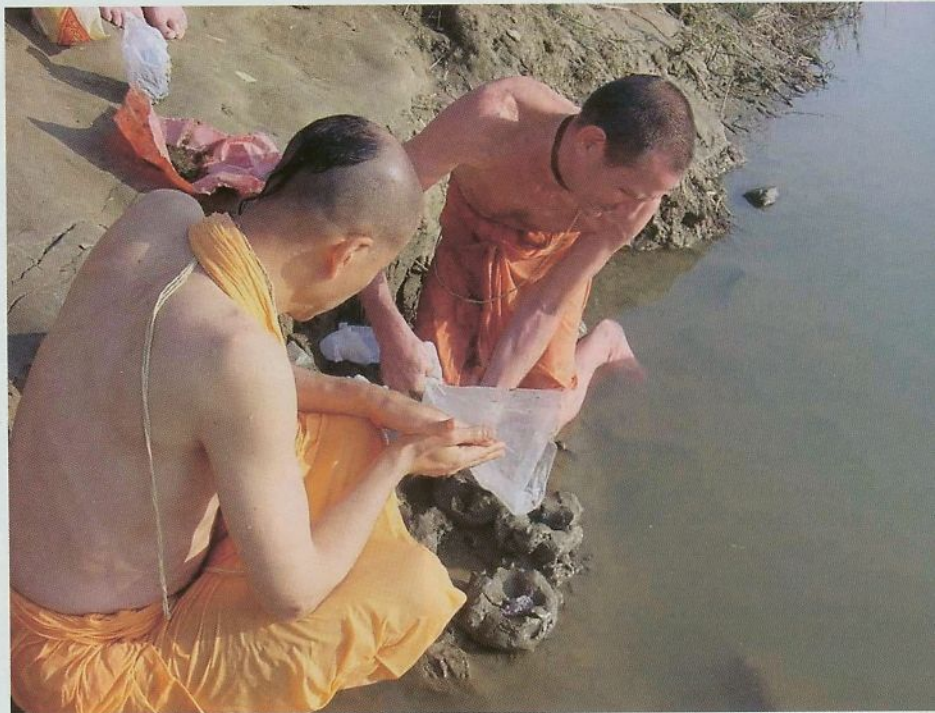
In his usual lighthearted way, PB, as everyone called him, was referring to the next day's temple services. His wife found him the next morning dead of a massive heart attack in his sleep. He was forty-nine.

No one knows Gopa Gopēśvara's last words, but they may well have been, "Hello, Sir, here's a book for you."

Two years earlier, while working as an engineer, he decided he missed distributing Śrīla Prabhupāda's books as he had done as a young devotee in the 1970s. As a simple-living single man, the transition from professional to devotional life was easy—and left him thoroughly enlivened. Strapping and healthy, he resumed book distribution with gusto, yet retained his humble, gracious charm. He died at forty-eight of a sudden cerebral hemorrhage while distributing books, just a few months after PB.

Devotees of Kṛṣṇa regularly read the *Bhagavad-gītā's* lessons about the soul: It is eternal, part of God yet distinct. The soul reincarnates life after life until resuming a loving relationship with Kṛṣṇa. The self-realized person approaches death knowing that the body alone dies. Such a wise person doesn't put stock in transient material pleasures, since death will eventually steal them. "A philosopher," Śrīla Prabhupāda told us, "keeps death in his front."

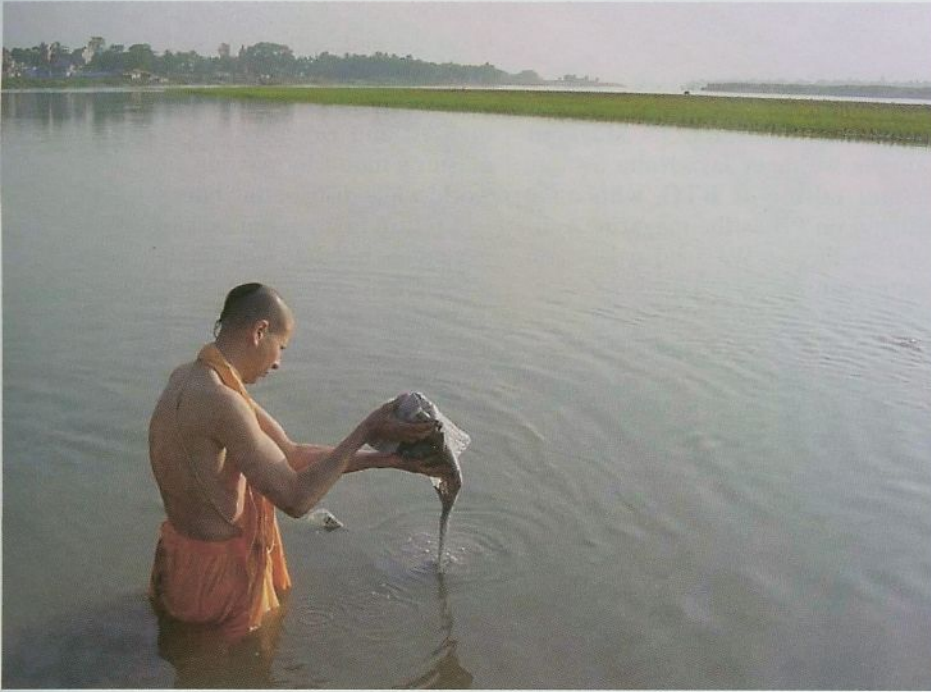
Śrīla Prabhupāda taught by example how a devotee faces death. He endured physical meltdown without complaint and without compromise in his service to Kṛṣṇa. After studying Śrīla Prabhupāda's final months—and



Ganga

A devotee gets a second chance to say good-bye to two dear friends.

by Kālakaṅṭha Dāsa



In Vaiṣṇava society, loved ones customarily cremate the deceased in a public ceremony on the banks of a sacred river. The elder son lights the pyre and helps the corpse burn efficiently. Watching the flames consume the body sobers the audience. The Sanskrit phrase *śmaśāna vairāgya* (“renunciation at the burning ghat”) refers to the philosophical frame of mind that grips the cremation witnesses.

Besides releasing the soul from attachment to its former body, public cremation offers the additional benefit of helping the loved ones close out their relationship with the departed. Cremations are one of the *saṁskāras*, or rites of passage, for a religious person.

Unfortunately, in America, where my two friends died, public cremations are illegal. Instead, cremations take place in closed ovens in funeral homes. I’m sure my friends would have preferred to die in a sacred place in India and be cremated at the Ganga. As things stood, I felt confident they would appreciate my efforts as the best alternative.

THE RITUAL

Before leaving, a friend tells me that carrying a person’s ashes to the Ganga insures the carrier’s protection while traveling. If nothing else, it’s a comforting thought. At the airport the counter agent tells me my bags are overweight. I explain my mission and mention that my cargo is in a heavy metal urn, which I could carry on the plane if he preferred. He declines and waves me on. The blessing seems to be working. I imagine PB chuckling.

In Māyāpur, the Hare Kṛṣṇa world spiritual headquarters, I’m fortunate to gain the aid of two respected priests for the ceremony. Jananivāsa Dāsa, the

subsequently watching other devotees display incredible strength and realization as they died of excruciating diseases—I thought I knew death. Yet coming as they did less than a year apart, the abrupt deaths of these two close friends shocked me. We had no chance to say good-bye or to spend an afternoon to-gether relaxing or reading. I could not encourage them or gain strength from their courage. Then, shortly after each memorial service, the rush of life caught me up so quickly that I felt I couldn’t digest the loss. What could I do?

With a trip to India coming up, and in keeping with Vaiṣṇava tradition, I offered to take my friends’ ashes to the sacred Ganga (Ganges). PB’s widow, Mankumārī Devī Dāsī, quickly agreed. After some deliberation, Gopa Gopeśvara’s parents and brother accepted as well. They thanked me, and I thanked them for entrusting the task to me.

“I’m sure my friends would have preferred to die in a sacred place in India and be cremated at the Ganga.”

senior priest in Māyāpur, joins Rādhānātha Swami, an ISKCON leader and close friend of PB's. Together we gather several devotees and proceed to the Ganga.

Somehow I expected we would take a boat to the center of the river and perform the ritual there, but Jananivāsa directs us instead to the bank of a long island. We cross a small inlet in a low wooden boat and walk to a secluded spot on the island's far side. Jananivāsa and Rādhānātha Swami put on *gamchas* (waistcloths) and wade into the river while the rest of us perform *kīrtana* on the bank.

In preparation, one of the devotees has gathered the necessary ingredients: honey and several products of the cow. Jananivāsa calls for these items and mixes them with the ashes and sacred Ganga soil. He creates for each set of ashes a bowl out of the riverbank mud and places the mixture inside. Then he leads Rādhānātha Swami in reciting mantras and prayers. The rest of us sing songs for departed Vaiṣṇavas and watch intently.

After a few minutes the rite is complete. The priests throw the ashes as far into the river as they can. The bags drift down the river, as does the heavy metal urn, displacing enough water to reveal several inches of its shiny rim

and its dark open mouth. It floats out of sight.

We all chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and offer our final respects. Then we again board the shallow boat and return to the shore. Jananivāsa mentions that Śrīla Prabhupāda was more explicit about the importance of devotees' distributing a feast on the occasion of a Vaiṣṇava's departure than about the rites connected with the ashes. Nonetheless, we all feel satisfied and fulfilled by the experience.

REFLECTIONS

Back on the ISKCON Māyāpur campus, we meet Jayādvaita Swami, former editor of BTG, who once brought on PB as the magazine's circulation director. We stand in the warm winter sun and discuss the two departed Godbrothers.

Rādhānātha Swami describes PB as the "General" of the New Vrindavan *brahmacārī* ashram, where in the early seventies Rādhānātha Swami got his basic Kṛṣṇa conscious training. Even in the midst of the muddy farm environment, he said, PB always seemed to keep an immaculate *dhoti*. He was the first one out for service each day and always kept the others inspired.

I recall PB quoting Śrīla Prabhu-

pāda as saying, "Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and be happy."

"That was an order, not a blessing," PB would say.

And he made that his mission: to be happy always. And that's how we remember PB—always smiling, upbeat and encouraging to others.

Although Gopa Gopeśvara is less known to this group, everyone appreciates the remarkable determination reflected in his life and service. We remember Śrīla Prabhupāda, quite ill toward the end of his life, asking to be allowed to "die on the battlefield." We all agree that Gopa Gopeśvara was blessed and reflected his spiritual master's mood by passing from this world while distributing books.

I return to my room satisfied that I have done my duty. For me there was no epiphany at the Ganga, only a sense of doing what I knew my friends would want. When I give up this body—an eventuality that suddenly seems more real—may Kṛṣṇa inspire someone to kindly do the same for me. ☀

Kālakaṅṭha Dāsa, author of The Song Divine (a lyrical rendition of the Bhagavad-gītā), lives in Gainesville, Florida, with his wife and children. He is the resource development director for the Māyāpur Project.

REAL HUMILITY

(continued from page 41)

the scriptures and other saintly persons. He also lives in obedience to his own spiritual master. And his orders are founded in love of Kṛṣṇa as well as love for his disciples.

When serving our spiritual master, we should be ready to do any humble work without compensation or recognition, while seeking the mercy of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Our only prayer should be, "What is Your will, O Lord Kṛṣṇa? Give me the strength to serve Your will. Let me love You and have You in my thoughts always."

Regrettably, we might still pray for other things and try to bargain with Kṛṣṇa, as if we were His equals or He our servant, but at least we can know the goal and practice to achieve it.

The Lord lets us know His will from

within our hearts and through our spiritual master, the instructions of the scriptures, and the examples of many saintly people. According to our desire to do so, He gives us the determination to work in line with His will.

Our prayer for that determination is as simple as calling on Kṛṣṇa's names in a mood of helpless surrender, like a small child calling for its mother. The *mahā-mantra*—Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare—is simply the names of God and His energy. Yet Prabhupāda explains that the mantra is a prayer asking the Lord and His energy to be engaged in His service.

This use of our will to subjugate it totally to Kṛṣṇa's is the development of our natural, spiritual humility. In material affairs, such subjugation would be foolish. One who humbles

himself to a material master is quickly exploited. But Kṛṣṇa wants not robots, or slaves, but sons, friends, and lovers. He wants a deep and meaningful exchange of love with devotees who give of themselves happily and willingly. And Kṛṣṇa also gives Himself to His devotee. He takes the form and relationship the devotee desires. Surrender to Kṛṣṇa means giving nothing—What have we to give?—and gaining everything. We will surrender only pain and the false pride that causes it. Surrender to Kṛṣṇa is a humble surrender to peace, satisfaction, and unlimited pleasure. ☀

Ūrmilā Devī Dāsī and her family run a school in North Carolina. She is a frequent contributor to BTG and the major author and compiler of Vaiṣṇava Children, a guide to Kṛṣṇa conscious education for children.



Gainesville, Florida

HARE KṚṢṂA, HARE KṚṢṂA
KṚṢṂA KṚṢṂA, HARE HARE
HARE RĀMA, HARE RĀMA
RĀMA RĀMA, HARE HARE

PRONUNCIATION: *ha-ray, krish-na, ra-ma* (rhymes with “drama”)

5: Arcanam

Deity Worship

*God is a person, and out of His infinite kindness
He allows us—even in our present condition—
to render Him personal service.*

by Dvārakādhīśa Devī Dāsī

In the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, the devotee Prahlāda Mahārāja, a great spiritual authority, says, “Hearing and chanting about the transcendental holy name, form, qualities, paraphernalia, and pastimes of Lord Viṣṇu [Kṛṣṇa], remembering them, serving the lotus feet of the Lord, offering the Lord respectful worship . . . , offering prayers to the Lord, becoming His servant, considering the Lord one’s best friend, and surrendering everything unto Him (in other words, serving Him with the body, mind, and words)—these nine processes are accepted as pure devotional service. One who has dedicated his life to the service of Kṛṣṇa through these nine methods should be understood to be the most learned person, for he has acquired complete knowledge.” Here we continue our series on the nine processes of bhakti-yoga, or devotional service to the Lord.

FEW experiences are more beautiful and sacred than the early morning ceremony, *maṅgala-ārati*. Worshipers gather in the stillness that precedes dawn to sing devotional songs in praise of the Supreme Lord. The focus of the ceremony is the deity form of the Lord, a physical manifestation of God Himself. During *maṅgala-ārati*, the soft glow of the deities dispels the night’s darkness, as a *pūjārī* [priest] offers before them a succession of auspicious objects, such as incense and flowers. Voices blend in ancient melody, accompanied by small cymbals and the heartbeat of a drum.

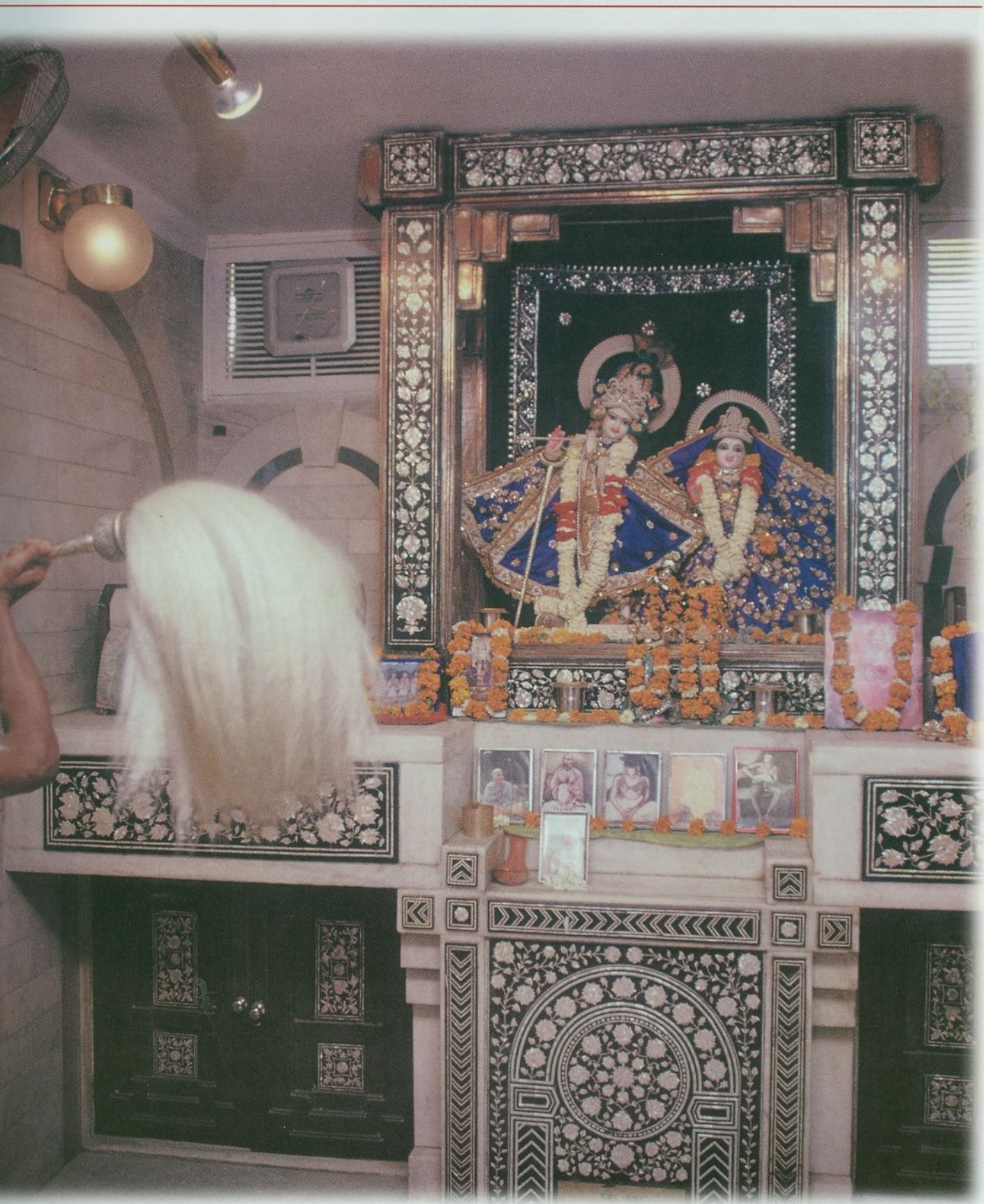
Arcanam, worship of the Lord in His deity form, may be an alien concept to persons raised in the West. Although strands of deity worship can be found in Catholicism and Orthodox churches, most Westerners suspect that reverential treatment should

never be offered to “objects,” that God is spirit and cannot be contained within marble or brass. Often when visitors to a temple first see the deities, they struggle for words, calling them “dolls” or “statues,” reluctant to acknowledge any divinity in physical form. The practice of deity worship, familiar to even the smallest of households throughout India, contributes to the Western perception of Kṛṣṇa consciousness as a cult.

So why do we worship God in this way? Vedic scriptures prescribe worship of the deity as a means to develop a relationship with the God as a person. While it is true that God is spirit, it is also true that, as spirit, God permeates all matter, including marble and brass. God cannot be separated from His creation, and so to worship His form, even if constructed of physical materials, is certainly to worship Him. Scriptures mention a variety of



Punjabi Bhaga, New Delhi, India





The Āratī Ceremony

ĀRATĪ IS AN offering of respect, welcome, or worship to an exalted person, such as a king or a *brāhmaṇa*. Since the greatest exalted person is the Supreme Lord, it is most appropriate to offer *āratī* to Him.

Āratī is one aspect of *arcanam*. In temples it is the only function of *arcanam* the public can view. All other worship is conducted behind closed doors. The Lord kindly comes out in public to see everyone while receiving the worship of *āratī*.

In *The Nectar of Devotion* (Chapter 9), Śrīla Prabhupāda emphasizes the benefit of seeing the *āratī* performed. “In the *Skanda Purāṇa* there is the following description of the result of seeing *āratī* (worship) of the Deity: ‘If someone sees the face of

the Lord while *āratī* is going on, he can be relieved of all sinful reactions coming from many, many thousands and millions of years past. He is even excused from the killing of a *brāhmaṇa* or similar prohibited activities.’”

During *āratī*, auspicious items are waved before the deity to offer protection by dispelling inauspicious influences. Although the Lord doesn’t need protection, the devotee, in the mood of His servant, acts to please and protect Him. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “Precautions should always be taken so that demons and atheists cannot harm the body of the Lord.” (*Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Madhya* 24.334, Purport)

Guidelines

Āratīs can be short or long, according to the temple’s standards, the time of day, or the resources available. And time, place, and circumstance also

dictate how many *āratīs* are offered each day. Whatever standard is set should be maintained. Temples with full deity worship usually have at least five *āratīs*, while someone’s home worship might be one short *āratī* a day, or one full *āratī* a week.

In a full *āratī*, incense, a flame (ghee lamp), a conch shell with water, a cloth, flowers, a *cāmara* (yak-tail fan), and a peacock fan are waved before the deity. While doing so, the devotee chants mantras appropriate for each article and rings a bell with the left hand. In a short *āratī*, one or more of the articles used in the full *āratī* may be offered.

In the temple, generally only devotees who have received second initiation (Gāyātrī) from a bona fide spiritual master can go into the deity’s private quarters to offer *āratī*

or perform other *arcanam* services. Anyone may worship the deity at home.

Explanation of Articles

The *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*, a guide-book for devotees written by Sanātana Gosvāmī, one of Lord Caitanya's main disciples, says that the articles of *ārati* represent the material elements in their pure form and correspond to the sense objects. In other words, the *ārati* articles are satisfying to the senses and represent our offering all the elements in the Lord's creation back to the Lord for His satisfaction.

The conch shell blown at the beginning and end of each *ārati* drives away inauspicious elements. The sound of the bell is dear to the Lord and embodies all music. Flowers and incense provide beautiful aromas for the Lord's pleasure. The ghee lamp represents lighting someone's way. Offering water in the conch shell represents offering *arghya*, a mixture of auspicious items offered above or touched to the head of an honored guest as part of reception. It is a way to welcome the Lord and make Him feel at home. The handkerchief represents offering new cloth.

The yak-tail *cāmara* and the peacock fan are both aspects of kingly service. The *cāmara* keeps flies away, while the peacock fan provides a cooling breeze.

The Music

Āratīs must be accompanied by the singing of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra. Śrīla Prabhupāda taught that chanting was the most important part of deity worship. Worshipers attending the *ārati* may sing, or the devotee offering the *ārati* may sing or play a tape.

Ārati sets and chanting tapes are available from the Hare Kṛṣṇa Bazaar (p. 66). For detailed directions on how to conduct *arcanam* or perform *ārati*, visit www.krsna.com.

—Prāṇadā Devī Dāsī

materials that may be used to create the deity, including earth, sand, and the mind.

The Western observer may also be confounded by the variety of deities in the temple. Often an altar will have many deities, all beautifully dressed and garlanded with flowers. Which one is God? To many people, the plurality of deities implies a primitive religion with no one Supreme Being. How is deity worship different from allegiance to the gods and goddesses of Greek mythology? Within India itself, different personalities, such as Lord Viṣṇu and Lord Śiva, are elaborately worshipped in deity form. Some Hindus will

consciously movement, our most beloved deity is Lord Kṛṣṇa. Our founder-*ācārya*, Śrīla Prabhupāda, explained with numerous references to Vedic scripture that the form of Kṛṣṇa is the original form of God, with full power. Just as many candles may be lit from one lamp, and all of the candles may burn with equal brightness, there is nonetheless one original flame. That flame is Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

The deity of Lord Kṛṣṇa is never seen alone. And one of the most asked questions of visitors to Hare Kṛṣṇa temples is "Who is that girl with Kṛṣṇa?" The quick answer is that She is Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, Kṛṣṇa's beloved

A Day of Service to the Deity

IN TEMPLES around the world, *arcanam* is elaborately performed according to strict guidelines. The Lord is wakened early in the morning; then He receives a meal and His *maṅgala-ārati*. Afterwards, He is massaged with oil, bathed with water, dried, dressed, and ornamented with jewelry, flowers, flower garlands, and *tulasī* leaves. Then the Lord receives breakfast and His next *ārati*. At noon He is offered lunch and an *ārati*, after which

He takes a nap. On awakening, He receives a snack and another *ārati*. In the evening He receives His evening meal and another *ārati*. Then He is dressed in His night clothes, offered another *ārati*, and laid to rest in His bed. Each function requires many prayers and mantras, and everything is done following detailed procedures. The functions help the worshiper remember himself as the servant of the Lord.

—Prāṇadā Devī Dāsī

even say, "All of them are God." And yet Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the worship of one God, Lord Kṛṣṇa. Why, then, are there so many deities, even in Hare Kṛṣṇa temples?

There is one God, yet He manifests in many forms. As the Supreme Lord, He enjoys relationships with all living beings, each relationship intimate and unique. In His form of Lord Rāmacandra, the Lord enjoys the role of king and faithful husband. In His form of Lord Nṛsiṃha, He is the ferocious protector. In His form as child Kṛṣṇa, He is playful and mischievous. All of these roles are manifestations of His supreme personality, and thus all of these divine persons may be worshiped in deity form.

Although all of these forms are truly God, devotees may feel a strong attraction for a particular deity. In the Kṛṣṇa

girlfriend. That answer, of course, only raises further questions. How can God have a girlfriend? What makes Her so special?

Just as Kṛṣṇa Himself is both the charming cowherd boy and the incomprehensible Lord of the universe, Rādhārāṇī is both the shy young girl and the personification of *bhakti*, or love for the Supreme Lord. No one can approach God without the mercy of Rādhārāṇī, because Her love envelops Kṛṣṇa, protecting Him from the insincere. We cannot see Kṛṣṇa without Rādhārāṇī's help, just as we cannot experience the presence of God without a heart full of devotion.

Foremost among the deities usually found in Hare Kṛṣṇa temples are Lord Caitanya and Lord Nityānanda. Śrīla Prabhupāda initiated Their worship because it was Lord Caitanya who

widely spread the processes of devotional service so dear to us today, namely *śravaṇam* and *kīrtanam*, hearing and chanting the names of God. Lord Caitanya is especially compassionate to those approaching Kṛṣṇa in the turbulent age we live in, when pure religious aspirations are so mercilessly drowned in the cacophony of materialism. *Śravaṇam* and *kīrtanam* are main components of deity worship.

In ISKCON temples you might also see the smiling forms of Lord Jagannātha, Lord Balarāma, and Subhadrā Devī. These deities are perhaps the most compassionate of all of the Lord's forms, for they allow themselves to be removed from the confines of the temple once a year for Rathayātrā, or the cart festival, a joyous procession in the streets. In India thousands of people crowd the streets to see the Lord, elegantly displayed on a large, colorful cart pulled by long ropes. Under Śrīla Prabhupāda's inspiration, Rathayātrā is now held all over the world, from major cities such as New York and London to tiny communities. Although deity worship is generally restricted to the temple, on the special occasion of Rathayātrā anyone may see the Supreme Lord's beaming face. Whether one is a believer or not, one's heart is purified by the sight of the Lord, just as medicine effects the body whether one has faith in it or not.

Like all processes of devotional service, deity worship combines an external ritual with internal meditation. Deity worship in the temple is highly ritualized. The Lord must be awakened, bathed, dressed, and fed at the exact same times every day. Specific prayers are used for each aspect of worship. Worshipers must be clean and punctual. All of this attention to detail helps train the mind to understand that God is a person. If you know you are disappointing someone with your tardiness or carelessness, then you develop a heightened awareness of that person's needs. Likewise, when you please someone with your ardent attention, you bask in the pleasure of his or her delight. The details of deity worship become part of a sweet exchange with the Lord.

One can, however, become enamored by the rituals and lose the inter-

Bhakti on Two Tracks

THE NECTAR OF DEVOTION lists deity worship (*arcanam*) as one of the five most important of the sixty-four items of devotional service, along with hearing *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (*śravaṇam*), chanting the holy names (*kīrtanam*), associating with devotees, and living in a holy place. Three of the nine processes of *bhakti-yoga* are present among these five, namely *śravaṇam*, *kīrtanam*, and *arcanam*. And these three hold another special place in the practice of Kṛṣṇa consciousness today. Śrīla Prabhupāda said that the train of *bhakti*, or devotional service, runs on two tracks: *bhāgavat-vidhi* (the nine processes of devotional service) and *pāñcarātrika-vidhi* (temple worship). If one track is missing, *bhakti* cannot proceed properly for the neophyte. *Śravaṇam* and *kīrtanam*, or hearing and chanting, are *bhāgavat-vidhi*, and *arcanam*, or deity worship, is *pāñcarātrika-vidhi*.

When Śrīla Prabhupāda came to the West to teach Kṛṣṇa consciousness, he first introduced the religion of the age:

chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. By chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, one performs *śravaṇam* and *kīrtanam* in the most sublime form. Adding the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa to one's life is easy, as shown by the thousands of people who welcomed it into their lives when Prabhupāda gave it out.

After some time, Prabhupāda introduced *arcanam*. He explained that *arcanam* was a necessary part of our devotional service. Devotional service was creating the fabric of our lives, and *śravaṇam*, *kīrtanam*, and *arcanam* were the weave.

Prabhupāda introduced deity worship gradually, and over the years, ISKCON temples established more elaborate forms of deity worship. By introducing the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa first, then gradually teaching the elements of deity worship, Prabhupāda showed how any one of us, any where in the world, can begin our spiritual life. Immediately begin chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, and gradually allow your love for the Lord to flow by worshiping His transcendental form.

—Prāṇadā Devī Dāsī

nal devotion. In every church, mosque, and temple, piety is easily mimicked. But empty worship is an offense to the Lord. All of us come with impurities, doubts, and fears, and deity worship can surely relieve us of those burdens if that is our prayer. But to come before the Lord requesting His complicity in our material plans is hardly real worship. Similarly, even a beautiful ceremony such as *maṅgala-ārati* cannot be truly appreciated if it becomes a routine gathering, or an opportunity for business contact or social excitement. Heart must accompany actions, for God is never interested in facile oblations. The deepest element of worship is loving surrender, relinquishing the postures that make us the deity. There is but one God, and *arcanam* can help

us realize just how true this is.

Perhaps the most wonderful aspect of *arcanam* is that it employs the four processes of devotional service discussed so far: hearing about Kṛṣṇa, chanting His names, remembering Him, and serving His lotus feet. Deity worship always includes chanting, whether exuberant or subdued, and chanting allows for hearing. When standing in the Lord's presence, we naturally remember Him. And service to His lotus feet truly takes on meaning when we see them beautifully decorated with sandalwood and flowers. ❀

Dvārakādhiṣa Devī Dāsī is a frequent contributor to Back to Godhead. She lives with her husband and daughter in Gainesville, Florida.

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Serious Laughter

KṚṢṆA CONSCIOUSNESS is both serious business and great fun. Observers figure that anyone as earnest about spiritual life as Hare KṚṣṇa devotees seem to be (as evidenced by all the rules we follow) must not be enjoying life. Sometimes they ask, “What do you do for fun?”

I thought of that question this morning during the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* class in our temple. We’ve been blessed the past few weeks with a visit by His Holiness Mahā-Viṣṇu Swami, an elderly Indian *sannyāsī* from England who spices his learned lectures with humor and contagious belly laughs. He makes learning the serious lessons of the *Bhāgavatam* enjoyable.

This morning, Mahā-Viṣṇu Swami was saying that we must give up hypocrisy to advance in spiritual life. To illustrate, he told the story of a lawyer whose business was slow. When a man walked into his office one day, the lawyer, to impress his potential client, picked up the phone and pretended for some time to be talking to an important client. Finally, he hung up the phone and ask the man how he could help him.

“Oh, I’m from the phone company,” the man replied. “Your phone’s not working, and I came in to fix it.”

We all laughed. We got the point: Be a hypocrite and you’ll make a fool of yourself.

Part of the serious business of KṚṣṇa consciousness is laughing at the foolishness of material life. The material world is no doubt a fool’s paradise, filled with the folly of trying to ignore the unavoidable reality of miseries like old age, disease, and death.

As aspiring devotees of KṚṣṇa, we often laugh at ourselves too, at our childlike, fumbling at-

tempts to make it to the mature world of pure devotion to KṚṣṇa. But we know that if we persevere in our spiritual practices despite the trials of life, we’ll eventually win KṚṣṇa’s favor by our love. That thought can make everything look bright.

Even when things aren’t looking so bright, humor can help us remember an important point, such as our reluctance to hear good instructions:

A man was driving with a car full of penguins. A surprised police officer stopped him and ordered him to take them to the zoo. The next day, the officer saw the man again—still with the penguins.

“I told you to take them to the zoo!” the officer demanded.

“I did, officer,” said the man, smiling. “And we had so much fun, today I’m taking them to the beach!”

Śrīla Prabhupāda is giving me so many important instructions, I think. Am I really hearing him? Will I ever get rid of my penguins?

I once handed *Back to Godhead* to a young man in the street. He had seen the magazine before. He flipped it open to a photo of Śrīla Prabhupāda and asked, “Does this man ever smile?”

He certainly does. Photos of Prabhupāda often show his gravity, his no-nonsense attitude toward spiritual life. But he laughed too. Sally Agarwal, at whose home Prabhupāda stayed when he first arrived in America, described his laughter as “oceanic.”

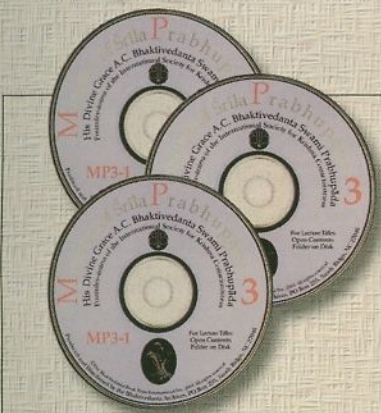
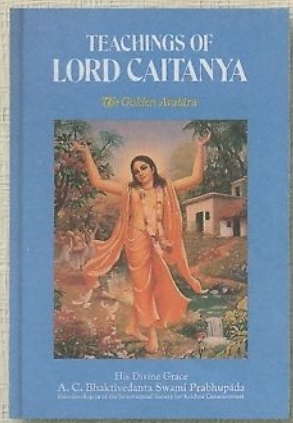
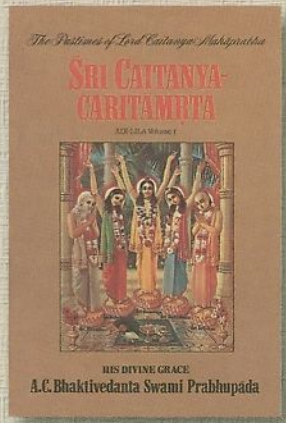
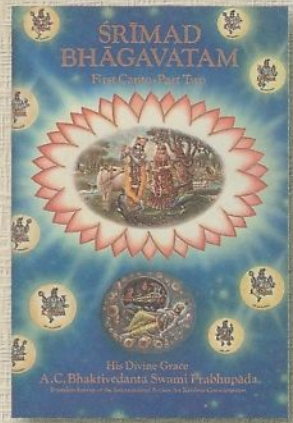
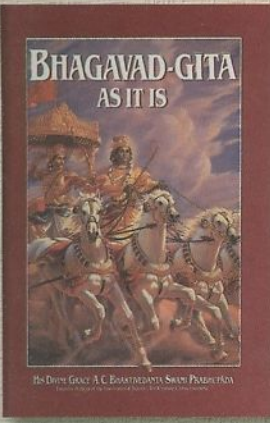
“He just seemed to take in the whole world when he laughed,” she said, “and he laughed a lot.”

Pure devotees see the whole world as a place for laughter in the joy of KṚṣṇa consciousness.

—Nāgarāja Dāsa

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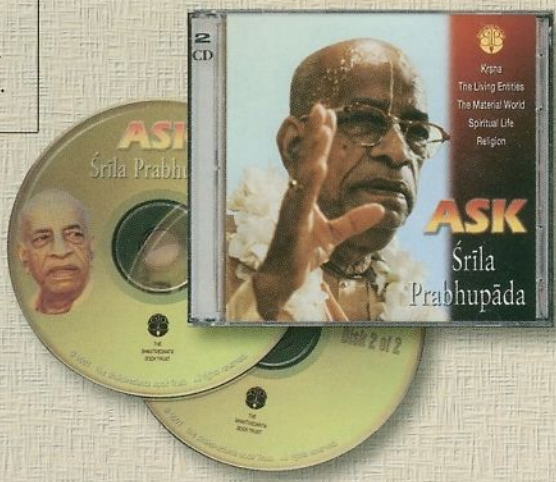


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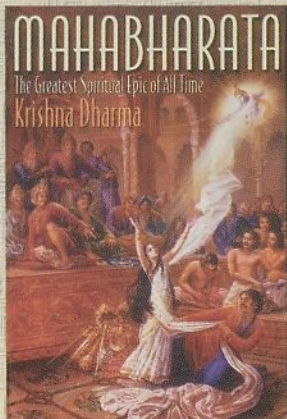
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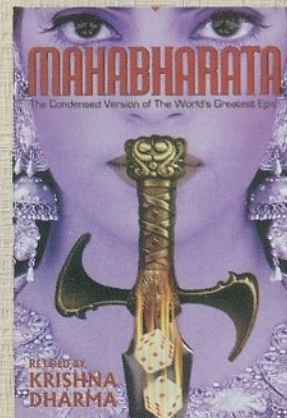
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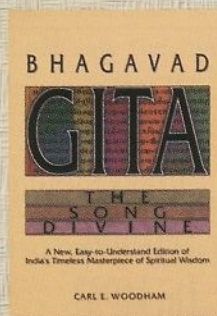


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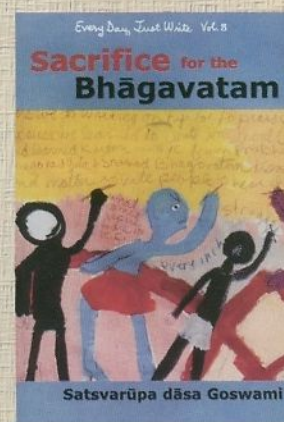
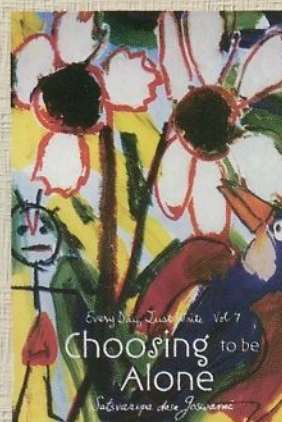
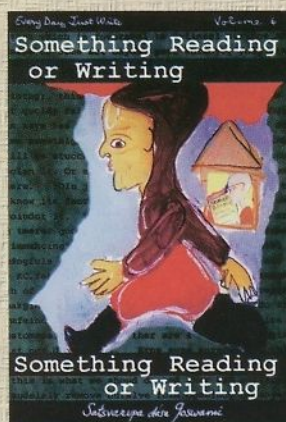
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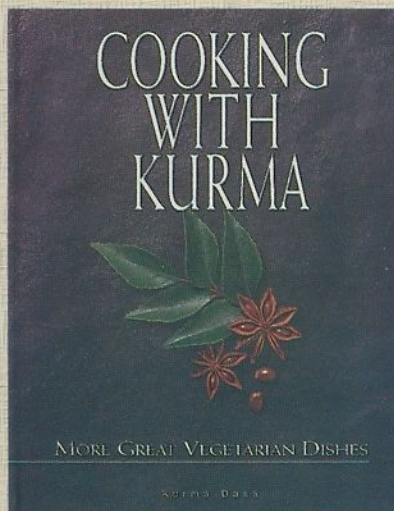
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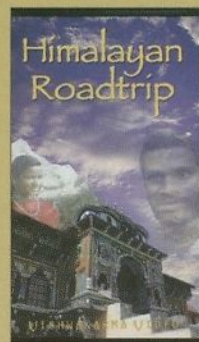
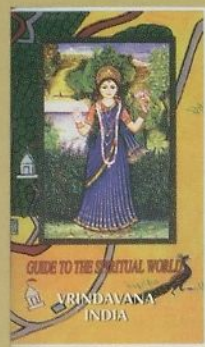
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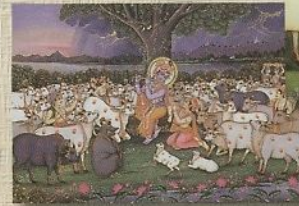
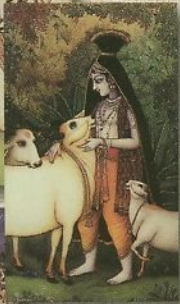
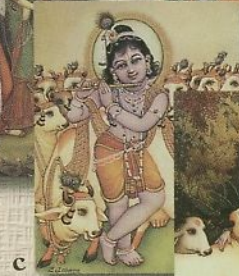
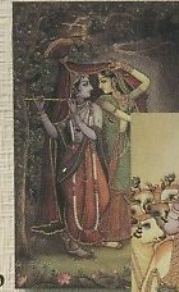
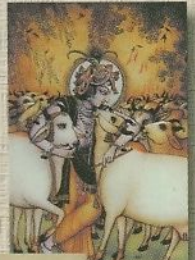
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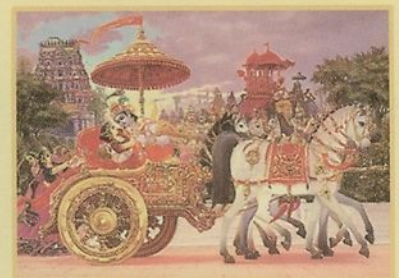
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The dust of Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet, which is the source of holiness for all places of pilgrimage, is worshiped by all the great demigods. The principal deities of all planets are engaged in His service, and they consider themselves most fortunate to take the dust of the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa on their crowns.

Great demigods like Lord Brahmā and Lord Śiva, and even the goddess of fortune and I, are simply parts of His spiritual identity, and we also carefully carry that dust on our heads. . . .

Lord Balarāma
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.68.37

One can attain the perfect stage of liberation from birth and death simply by knowing the Lord, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and there is no other way to achieve this perfection.

Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad 3.8

By performing congregational chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra, one can destroy the sinful condition of material existence, purify the unclean heart, and awaken all varieties of devotional service.

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu
Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, *Antya* 20.13

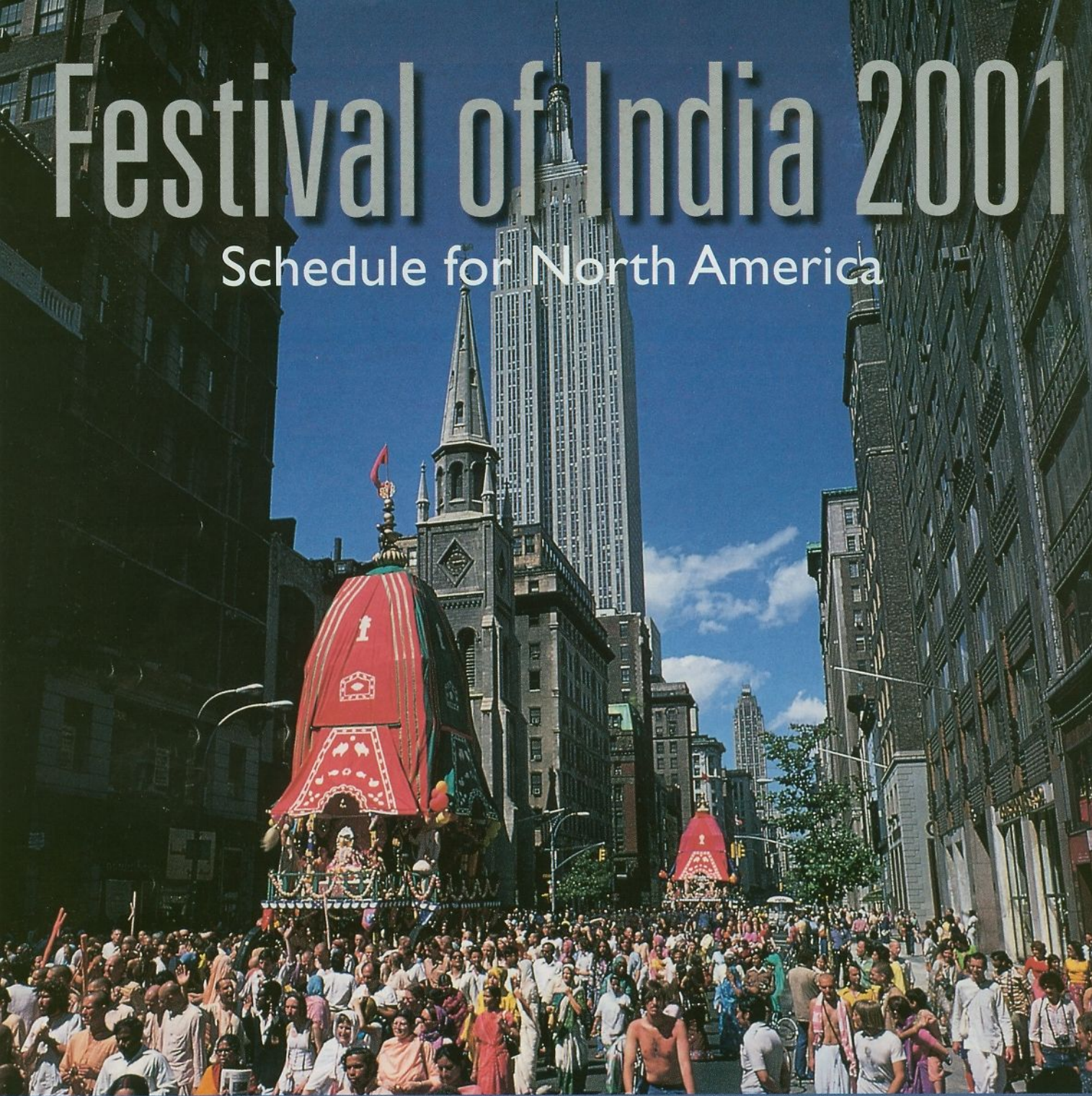
With devotion steeped in love and affection, the yogi should meditate within the core of his heart upon the laughter of Lord Viṣṇu. The laughter of Viṣṇu is so captivating that it can be easily meditated upon. When the Supreme Lord is laughing, one can see His small teeth, which resemble jasmine buds rendered rosy by the splendor of His lips. Once devoting his mind to this, the yogi should no longer desire to see anything else.

Lord Kapila
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.28.33

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