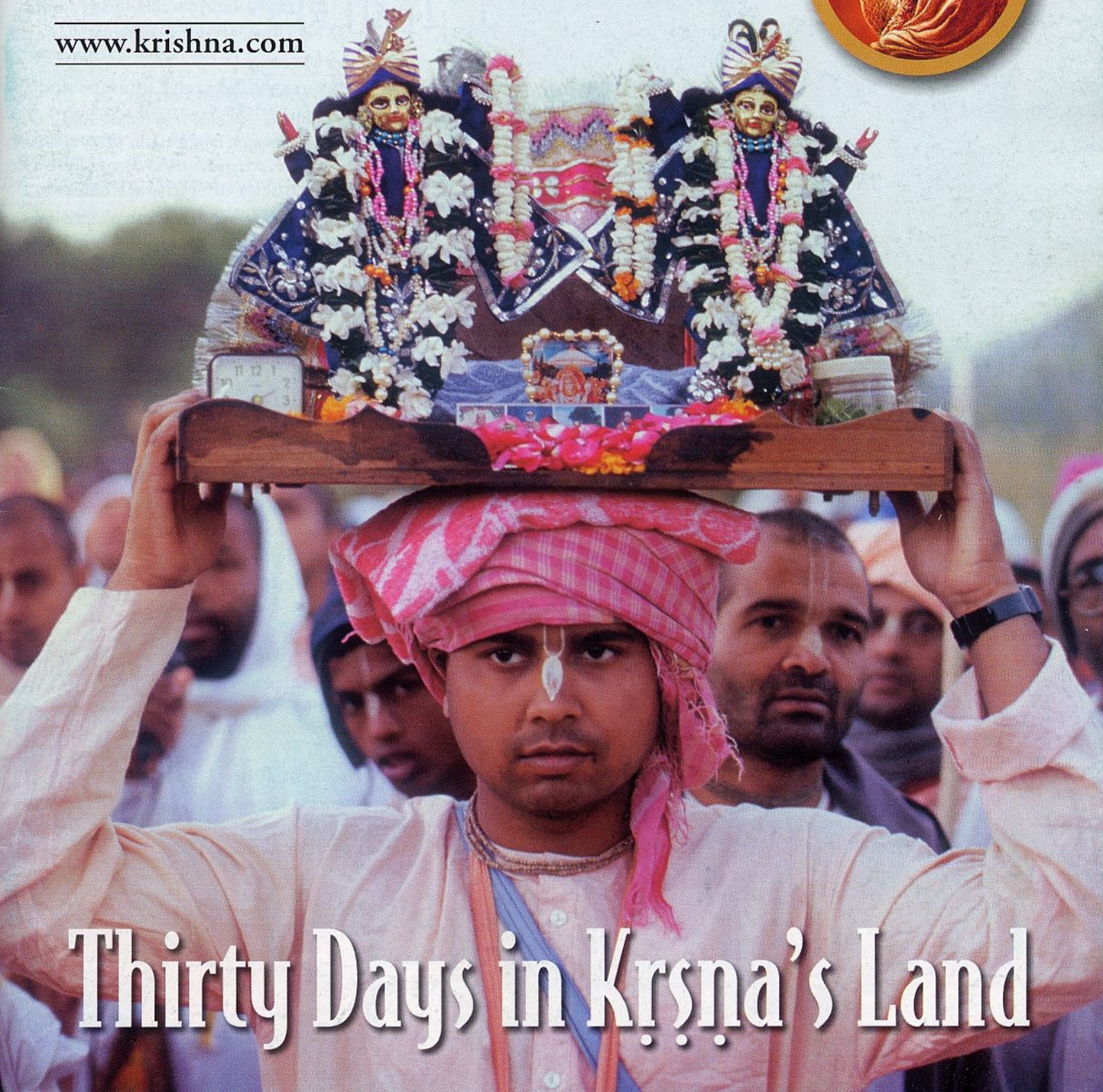


Godhead is light. Nescience is darkness. Where there is Godhead there is no nescience.



The Magazine of the Hare Krishna Movement • Sept/Oct 2001 • \$4.00/£2.50

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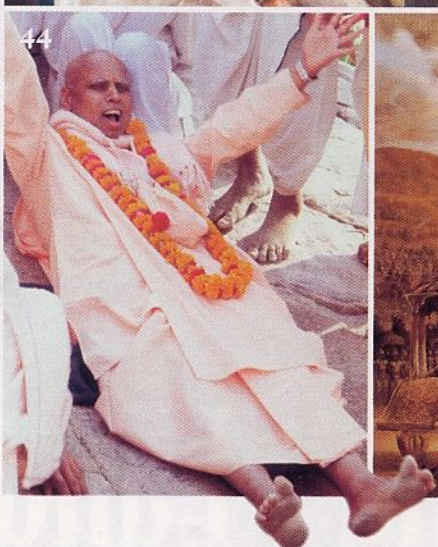
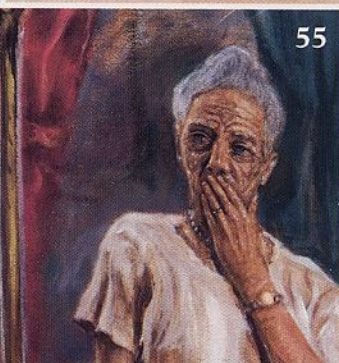
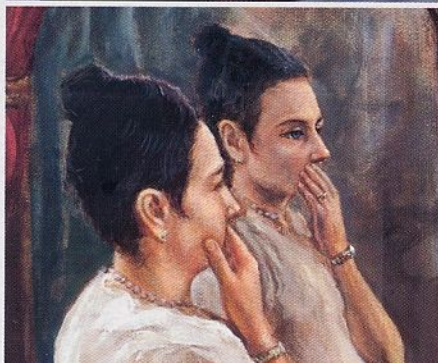
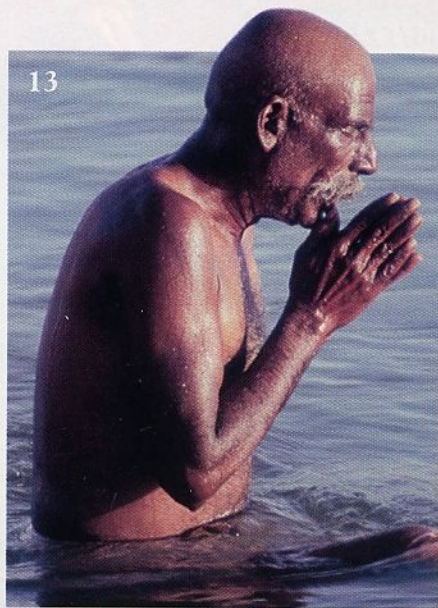


Thirty Days in Kṛṣṇa's Land

Assisting you in your quest for the Absolute Truth

Back to Godh

Founded 1944 • Vol. 35, No. 5 • September/October 2001



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COVER A pilgrim respectfully carries deities of Gaura-Nitāi (Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and Nityānanda Prabhu) during the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement’s annual pilgrimage throughout Vraja Maṇḍala, the land of Kṛṣṇa’s birth and pastimes. Please see the article beginning on page 44. (Photo by Nṛsimha Kavaca Dāsa.)

“People do not know all these things—how nature is working, how God is managing. They do not know God. This is the defect of modern society. They do not care what is the real nature of God.”—p. 33

WELCOME



IN THIS ISSUE, three articles have to do with pilgrimage. “The Authenticity of Spiritual Places” discusses the qualifications of holy sites and the proper mood for visiting them. The cover

story takes us to the holiest of holy places—Vraja Maṇḍala—where for the last fourteen years Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees from around the world have gathered during the month of Kārtika (October–November) to tour the sacred spots where Lord Kṛṣṇa sported fifty centuries ago. In contrast to the barefoot pilgrims walking miles a day around Vraja Maṇḍala, in “The Ride to Rama Giri” two pilgrims on motorcycles make their way to a holy site connected with Lord Rāmacandra.

Although the original places associated with Lord Kṛṣṇa and His incarnations are all in India, His devotees create new pilgrimage sites wherever they carry His message. Each summer, Indradyumna Swami and a group of devotees put on dozens of Kṛṣṇa festivals in Poland. Thousands of people attend, attracted by the spiritual culture of India. But not everyone welcomes a pilgrimage site in his homeland. “For the Gentle and the Ruffians” shows that devotees of the Lord sometimes have to face danger to deliver the message of Kṛṣṇa to lands far from His Vraja Maṇḍala home.

Hare Kṛṣṇa.—Nāgarāja Dāsa, Editor

OUR PURPOSES

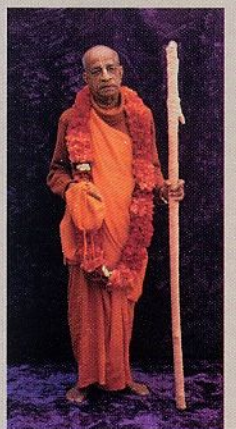
- To help all people discern reality from illusion, spirit from matter, the eternal from the temporary.
- To expose the faults of materialism.
- To offer guidance in the Vedic techniques of spiritual life.
- To preserve and spread the Vedic culture.
- To celebrate the chanting of the holy names of God 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-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

BACK TO GODHEAD

The Magazine of the
Hare Krishna Movement

FOUNDER

(under the direction of His Divine Grace
Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda)
His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedānta
Swami Prabhupāda

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Letters

Religion and Science

BTG magazine is meant to enlighten its readers about their spiritual identity, about God, and about the spiritual world. It is also meant to give information about the revealed scripture to first-time readers. It is not meant to confuse or put doubts in the minds of the innocent or doubtful readers with useless polemics. There is a flood of those in all the public media.

Sadāpūta Dāsa's article "Challenges Facing Science and Religion" in the March/April issue was one of such polemics. It is absurd to try to compare the revealed *śāstras* [scriptures] with mundane science. Vedic *śāstras*, being revealed by the Supreme Person, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself, are perfect. They are superior to earthly religions. Thus it automatically follows that they are far superior to the mental speculation of philosophers and the observations and experiments of mundane scientists, both of whom deal with this material creation only. To try to compare these is foolish, and the danger of such an attempt lies in its false, seeming objectivity. That is the intellectual plane only. The *śāstras* deal with the Absolute, and thus the incompatibility.

The suggestion that there is still much that religion does not know contradicts statements of *śāstra* and of the Lord Himself. He reveals to us in His *Bhagavad-gītā* (7.2): "I shall now declare unto you in full this knowledge, both phenomenal and numinous. This being known, nothing further shall remain for you [misguided humanity] to know." Yes, Vedic *śāstra* does know everything.

D.D.

Vancouver, B.C., Canada

SADĀPŪTA DĀSA REPLIES: The original source of the Vedic *śāstras* knows everything, but the Vedic texts available in human society do not contain all knowledge. Brahmā has

editions of the *śāstras* that are much more extensive than the texts we have, and these editions certainly contain more knowledge than is available to us. Śrīla Prabhupāda said of Śrīla Vyāsadeva, "He composed many millions of Sanskrit verses, and we are just trying to receive a fragmental knowledge out of them by our tiny efforts only."

Note that the *Bhāgavatam* in human society contains 18,000 verses, while the *Bhāgavatam* on the heavenly planets is much longer. It may be that there is nothing that religion does not know, but this is only true of religion as understood in the spiritual world. Human followers of religion should hesitate before claiming that they know everything by virtue of their religion. For this reason, religious preachers should take a humble position when discussing matters of knowledge.

One of the missions of *Back to Godhead* is to convey spiritual knowledge to people who regard modern science as their primary source of knowledge. Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted us to preach to these people, and he created the Bhaktivedānta Institute for this purpose. To reach scientifically inclined people, it is necessary to address questions that arise from apparent conflicts between scientific and religious teachings. If a person with limited religious knowledge claims to know everything and dismisses scientific knowledge out of hand, this will not create a good impression or result in successful preaching. It is better to take a humble attitude, realizing that there is much that one does not know about both religion and science.

Nectarean Benefits

I have always been in appreciation of the success of BTG right from Śrīla Prabhupāda's time. As a reader of BTG for several years now, I would like to express my heartfelt good wishes for this magazine to continue for many years more and benefit humanity as ever.

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 **ṛ** 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."

Thank you, and especially Bhayahārī Dāsa, for enlightening us on this modern saint.

Debjit Banerjee
Norco, California

Kṛṣṇa's Gentle Nudge

Your article on Jayānanda Prabhu was such a wonderful dose of inspiration for me, especially at a time when, admittedly, my faith in ISKCON has been slipping. I have been paying too much attention to the bad publicity lately and have let it affect my better judgment and have not listened to what my heart has been telling me all along. Thank the Lord for my BTG subscription!

When I read about Jayānanda, I could feel the gentle hand of Kṛṣṇa nudging me back. What a wonderful example of the simple devotion ISKCON can teach us to have. I finished the article in tears and have begun chanting my rounds again. Keep up the wonderful service.

Neal Carr
Portland, Oregon

Deep Philosophy Made Easy

I really enjoyed the July/August issue. The article "Rādhārāṇī, The Feminine Side of God" by Satyarāja Prabhu was one of the best articles I have ever read in BTG. I am always a fan of Satyarāja's writing, but this article truly blew me away. What is typically pretty deep philosophy, sometimes a bit difficult to follow and digest, was easily read and understood—having been written in a clever and personal way. Thanks!

Nitāi Priyā Devī Dāsī
Via the Internet ☸

Please write to us at: BTG, P.O. Box 430, Alachua, FL 32616, USA. Or: BTG, 33 Janki Kutir, Next to State Bank of Hyderabad, Juhu, Mumbai 400 049, India. [Phone: (022) 618-1718.] E-mail: editors@pamho.net

I was especially thankful to BTG when I was able to narrate the story of Madhu and Lord Alarnath (May/June 2000) to our relatives when we went to India. They loved to hear the story and have promised to express their love for the Lord as did little Madhu.

As a resident in the restricted countries of the Middle East, where getting BTG (or any other books for that matter) is not possible through mail, we receive the issues a little late when people from India bring them. We all look forward to receiving them as early as possible to derive their nectarean benefits. Thanks for the wonderful articles.

Rādhā Rati Devī Dāsī
Via the Internet

Pebbles of Service

I just wanted to thank you for another excellent issue (May/June 2001). I always look forward to receiving my issues (through BBT membership). I was particularly touched by the article on Jayānanda Dāsa and his engaging drunks in Kṛṣṇa's service. Such honest and simple preaching is an inspiration. As a new devotee, and shy as well, preaching and even really talking about Kṛṣṇa is intimidating to me. I hope that someday I can begin to follow in Jayānanda Dāsa's footsteps and learn how to engage people in such a sweet and sincere way, on their own level. People may not be able to lift giant boulders as Hanumān did, but perhaps they can be like the spider and bring pebbles of devotional service to Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet.

Bhaktin Christi
North Carolina

Ignoring the Lure

The article "A Modern Saint" was excellent reading. It is truly unbelievable that even in this Kali-yuga there are people from common walks of life who are strong enough to ignore the lure of materialistic desires and spend their life in the service of Kṛṣṇa. Śrīmān Jayānanda Dāsa is truly a modern saint and an inspirational role model for us.



Gandharva

GOVINDA

The Original Person

If personal qualities were absent from the origin of everything, they would not be present in the material world.

by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

THE WORD *Govinda* refers to one who gives pleasure to the cows and the senses. There are many incarnations of Godhead, but Govinda [Kṛṣṇa] is the *ādi-puruṣa*, or the original person. As such He is not technically an incarnation of God but is God Himself, the source of incarnations. Govinda is not some impersonal effulgence or void but a person complete in every respect.

Unless the origin of everything is a person, how can so many persons or individual living entities—be they men, animals, demigods, trees, or plants—exist all over the universe? Every living entity is an individual spirit soul, and every individual spirit soul is a person. How, then, can the origin of everything be impersonal and nothing more? Personal qualities must be there in Him; otherwise they cannot be reflected in this material world. This, then, is the conclusion of Lord Brahmā in the verse *govindam ādi-puruṣam tam ahaṁ bhajāmi*. Lord Brahmā is the



original creature in this universe, and in *Brahma-saṁhitā* he states that his origin is also a person. “I worship that original person,” he states throughout *Brahma-saṁhitā*.

The whole world is laboring under the impersonal conception. No one actually knows anything, of course, but they have developed an impersonal philosophy by means of speculation. But how can this impersonalism stand? It is contradicted at every step of our experience, for every individual entity is a person, and the complete whole from which all entities emanate is also a person. *Ādi puruṣam*.

LORD BRAHMĀ'S KNOWLEDGE

This is the verdict of Lord Brahmā, who, having created the universe, knows well what is within this universe. We have very little knowledge of what is within this universe, and what is beyond

If it were possible to trace our origins back to the beginning of creation, we would find the original person whom Brahmā is praising.

• • •

is totally unknown to us. This is not the case with Lord Brahmā, however. Lord Brahmā is *ādi-kavaye*, which means that he is the original learned person, the creator of this universe. *Tene brahma hṛdā ya ādi-kavaye muhyanti yat sūrayaḥ* [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.1.1]. The origin of everything, the Absolute, the *summum bonum*, cannot be impersonal, for He is the origin of the person Brahmā. We have no experience of a person coming from something impersonal; because my father is a person, I am also a person. If we trace back through our family trees, we will find that one person comes from another person, and somehow, if it were possible to trace our origins back to the beginning of creation, we would find the original person whom Brahmā is praising. The origin of the universe is not void, nor is it some primeval muck, but the origin is a learned person.

Brahmā, being the first creature, received his knowledge from the original person, and that is described in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. The word *brahma* means *jñāna*, or knowledge. One may question how Brahmā could learn from another person if he is the original creature in the universe. Who was the spiritual master who imparted knowledge to him?

In *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* it is indicated that that knowledge came from within the heart of Brahmā. God is situated in everyone's heart, and although Brahmā was the first and only creature at the time, the other person, the *ādi-puruṣa*, was within his heart. It is also stated in *Bhagavad-gītā* (18.61) that *īśvara*, the Supreme Lord, is situated within everyone's heart and is giving directions to everyone.

*īśvaraḥ sarva-bhūtānām
hṛd-deśe 'rjuna tiṣṭhati
bhrāmayan sarva-bhūtāni
yantrārūḍhāni māyayā*

“The Supreme Lord is situated in everyone's heart, O Arjuna, and is directing the wanderings of all living entities, who are seated as on a machine, made of the material energy.”

Those who are not devotees cannot understand how it is that Kṛṣṇa or God is giving instructions within the heart, but those who are devotees can understand. The devotees therefore are trying to hear the Lord from within, but in order to hear properly, this special qualification is needed. One must be at a certain stage of spiritual advancement. In *Bhagavad-gītā* (10.10) Kṛṣṇa indicates that to those who are devoted to Him, He gives the means whereby they can understand Him:

*teṣāṁ satata-yuktānām
bhajatām prīti-pūrvakam
dadāmi buddhi-yogaṁ taṁ
yena mām upayānti te*

“To those who are constantly devoted to serving Me with love, I give the understanding by which they can come to Me.”

The words *teṣāṁ satata-yuktānām* mean “to be engaged.” The devotees of Kṛṣṇa engage full time in devotional service out of love (*prīti-pūrvakam*). The devotees always enjoy thinking, “Here is an opportunity to serve Kṛṣṇa.” The more they engage in service, the more they are pleased and the faster they make advancement in spiritual life. There is no question of retirement. When we perform some material service, we get tired and think, “Oh, I have worked so much. Now let me take a vacation.” However, when one performs spiritual service, he actually gets more energy and says, “Let me serve more.” To such a sincere devotee, the Lord, sitting within the heart, gives instructions: “Do this, and you will very soon come to Me.”

He also gives different instructions

to others who do not want to turn to Him. “You want to do this? Here is your opportunity then. If you want to steal, then go ahead.” If we wish not to turn to Kṛṣṇa, if we wish to forget Him completely, He will give us that facility, for He is always satisfying our desires.

Consequently it is stated in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (15.15) that He gives us remembrance of Himself and also allows us to forget, if that is our desire.

*sarvasya cāhaṁ hṛdi sanniviṣṭo
mattaḥ smṛtir jñānam apohanam ca
vedaiś ca sarvair aham eva vedyo
vedānta-kṛd veda-vid eva cāham*

“I am seated in everyone's heart, and from Me come remembrance, knowledge, and forgetfulness. By all the *Vedas* I am to be known; indeed I am the compiler of Vedānta, and I am the knower of the *Vedas*.”

NOT A PERSON LIKE US

Ordinary persons cannot understand how God can be a person because they think, “God must be a person like me.” Therefore in some of the scriptures a personality is denied, for as soon as the foolish accept a personality, they think, “God is a person like me.” Therefore it is said, “God is not a person,” and in some religions, like the Judaic religion, even images of God in the form of pictures or statues are not allowed. But this is not to say that God is not a person at all. When it is said that God is not a person, we should understand that He is not a person like us. In actuality, He is a person, but He is a different kind of person. *Īśvaraḥ paramaḥ kṛṣṇaḥ saccid-ānanda-vigrahaḥ*: His personality is eternal; His body does not die like ours. His body is full of bliss, whereas our body is full of misery. His body is full

of knowledge, whereas ours is full of ignorance. And He is *īśvara*, the controller, whereas we are the controlled. How, then, can God be a person like us?

Because we are incapable of understanding how the Absolute Truth can be a person, we have to take lessons from Brahmā, the supreme poet and sage of the universe who is the first created person. We are in the Brahmā-sampradāya, or the disciplic succession starting from Lord Brahmā; therefore we accept Brahmā's statements and worship *ādi-puruṣam*, Govinda.

We may not know that *ādi-puruṣa*, but if we follow in the footsteps of the *ācāryas*, great spiritual teachers, we will not have difficulty. Govinda gives Brahmā instructions from within his heart, and Brahmā gives instructions to his disciple Nārada, and Nārada gives instructions to his disciple Vyāsa. Vyāsa's disciple Madhvācārya repeats the same message, then Īśvara Purī, and then his disciple Caitanya Mahāprabhu, then the Gosvāmīs, and so on. In this way knowledge is received by *paramparā*, step by step in the disciplic succession. When the same message is repeated without deviation, the knowledge is transmitted perfectly.

INCARNATIONS OF GODHEAD

From the *śāstras*, or scriptures, we learn that the *ādi-puruṣa*, or original person, expands Himself in many incarnations. These incarnations are diverse, and their activities are described in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. On one occasion Lord Kṛṣṇa incarnated as a boar, Varāha, and lifted the world up when it was merged within the waters of the Garbhodaka Ocean. The demon Hiraṇyākṣa pushed the earth within the watery half of the universe, and Lord Kṛṣṇa, in the shape of a boar, not only delivered the planet but annihilated the demon. On another occasion the Lord appeared as a small fish in a water pot, and as time elapsed this fish got bigger and had to be taken to a reservoir.

The fish kept increasing in size, and when He was quite huge He informed Manu, "Devastation is coming. Take all the *Vedas* and put them in a boat, and I

shall protect them."

Therefore Jayadeva Gosvāmī sings in his prayer, "My Lord, in the shape of a fish You saved the *Vedas* when there was devastation."

The incarnations of Godhead are described in prayers offered by Jayadeva Gosvāmī, a Vaiṣṇava poet who appeared about seven hundred years before Lord Caitanya. Jayadeva was a great devotee, and he wrote a very famous song about the Lord called *Gīta-govinda*. He offers another prayer to the tortoise incarnation. Once the demons and demigods were using a great hill as a churning rod and were churning the ocean with it. The resting place of the churning rod was the shell of the tortoise incarnation.

Jayadeva therefore prayed: "You appeared as a tortoise just to be a resting place for the churning rod. Your back itched, and You accepted this hill as a rod to scratch the itch."

In another incarnation, Nṛsimhadeva, the Lord appeared in order to save Prahlāda Mahārāja, a five-year-old boy who was being tortured by his atheistic father. The Lord appeared from a pillar of the father's palace as a half-man, half-lion. Prahlāda's father, Hiraṇyakaśipu, had received a benediction from Lord Brahmā that assured him that he would not be killed by any man or animal, so the Lord appeared neither as man nor an animal. We often think that we can thus cheat the Lord by our intelligence, but the Lord is more intelligent than we.

In another incarnation the Lord appeared as Vāmana, a dwarf. Lord Vāmana appeared before Bali Mahārāja, who had conquered all the universal planets and had thus disturbed the demigods.

Vāmana said, "I am a *brāhmaṇa*, and I have come to beg from you."

Bali Mahārāja said, "Yes, I'll give You what You want."

The dwarf asked for only three feet of land, and Bali Mahārāja granted His wish. Vāmanadeva then took one step and covered half the universe, and then He took another step and covered the other half.

Bali Mahārāja then said, "There is no place for You to take the third step, so please place Your foot on my head."

In another incarnation, as Paraśu-

BACK TO GODHEAD

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In Bhagavad-gītā there are instructions teaching us how we can gradually understand God and see Him personally, face to face.

• • •

rāma, the Lord killed all of the *kṣatriya* kings twenty-one times because of the kings' dishonesty. From the history of the *Mahābhārata*, it can be understood that at that time some of the *kṣatriyas* fled and took shelter in Europe, and consequently modern Europeans are descendants of those *kṣatriyas*.

As Lord Rāma, the Lord fought with Rāvaṇa, a demon with ten heads, and ruled the earth as an ideal king.

As Balarāma, the elder brother of Kṛṣṇa and the incarnation of Saṅkar-ṣaṇa, the Lord was very beautiful, white in complexion, and He wore blue garments. Once He became angry with the Yamuna River, and He threatened to dry it up. Out of fear of Balarāma, the Yamuna agreed to cooperate with Him.

As Lord Buddha, the Lord destroyed the Vedic principles with flawless logic and is therefore considered an atheist. Lord Buddha, however, was an incarnation of Kṛṣṇa, and he denied the *Vedas* in order to save animals that were being sacrificed according to the injunctions of the *Vedas*. In the name of Vedic sacrifice, people were improperly killing animals, and the Lord, as Lord Buddha, appeared to preach nonviolence.

At the end of this age, Kali-yuga, the Lord will appear as Kalki. According to the *Vedas*, Kalki will appear 427,000 years from now, and His mission will simply be to kill. Lord Kṛṣṇa gave instructions in the form of *Bhagavad-gītā*, but Lord Kalki will not give any instructions. At the end of Kali-yuga people will be so degraded that they will not be able to understand any instructions; therefore the only recourse will be to kill them. One who is killed by the Lord attains salvation. This is one of the Lord's all-merciful qualities; whether He protects or kills the result is the same. Thus Kalki will appear at the last stage of Kali-yuga and annihilate everything, and after

that time, Satya-yuga (the Golden Age) will begin again.

In this way we can see that God is not only a person as the *ādi-puruṣa*, the original person, but that He manifests Himself throughout the universe in innumerable incarnations and expansions that are also personal in quality.

SEEING GOD

Despite all this, we often challenge the Lord and say, "There is no God," or "I am God," or even "I don't care for God." Despite this attitude, which is typical of this age, God is there, and we can see Him at every moment. If we deny God's personality, then He will be present before us as cruel death. In *Bhagavad-gītā* there are instructions teaching us how we can gradually understand God and see Him personally, face to face. In *Bhagavad-gītā* the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself states, "I am the taste of water, I am the sunlight, I am the moonlight, I am the vibration of sound in the sky, and amongst great personalities I am the greatest." If anyone is actually serious about understanding God, or the science of God, he can follow the injunctions given in *Bhagavad-gītā* and realize God in so many ways. Everyone is tasting water daily, so if we remember that God is the taste of water, then God realization begins. Who has not seen the moon or the sun? And who has not heard sound vibrating in the air? In so many ways we can see, feel, and hear God. Everyone sees God at every moment, but the atheists claim they do not see Him because He does not exist.

Without God consciousness, or without Kṛṣṇa consciousness, there cannot be any peace. Everyone is hankering after peace, but no one knows how to achieve it. Therefore this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is promoting the greatest welfare work in the world.

The process of understanding this science of Kṛṣṇa is made very easy in this age by Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu through the chanting of the holy names of God: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. In the *Vedas* it is stated that in this age people are so fallen that they cannot realize God by any of the prescribed methods; therefore it is recommended that by chanting the holy names of God in this age one can get all the benefits derived in previous ages from meditation, temple worship, and sacrifice.

Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who is Kṛṣṇa Himself, instructs us that the holy name of God is nondifferent from the Supreme Lord; therefore all the energy that God has is also there in His holy name. On the absolute platform there is no difference between the holy name of God and God Himself.

Caitanya Mahāprabhu said that there are no hard and fast rules for chanting the name of God, and therefore the names can be chanted anywhere and everywhere. In this age the blind are following the blind, for no one knows the aim and objective of human society or the perfection of human life. Life is perfected through self-realization and the reestablishment of our lost relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. This Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is attempting to enlighten human society on this important point. According to Vedic civilization, the perfection of life is to realize one's relationship with Kṛṣṇa. From *Bhagavad-gītā* we can understand that all living entities—not only human beings, but animals and lower life forms—are parts and parcels of God. The parts of anything are meant to serve the whole, just as the hands are meant to serve the body. Similarly, as living entities that are part of God, we are duty bound to serve Him.

(please turn to page 42)

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.

Kīrtana—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 *brahmacāris* (celibate students), *gṛhasthas* (married people), *vānaprasthas* (retired people), and *sannyāsīs* (renunciants).

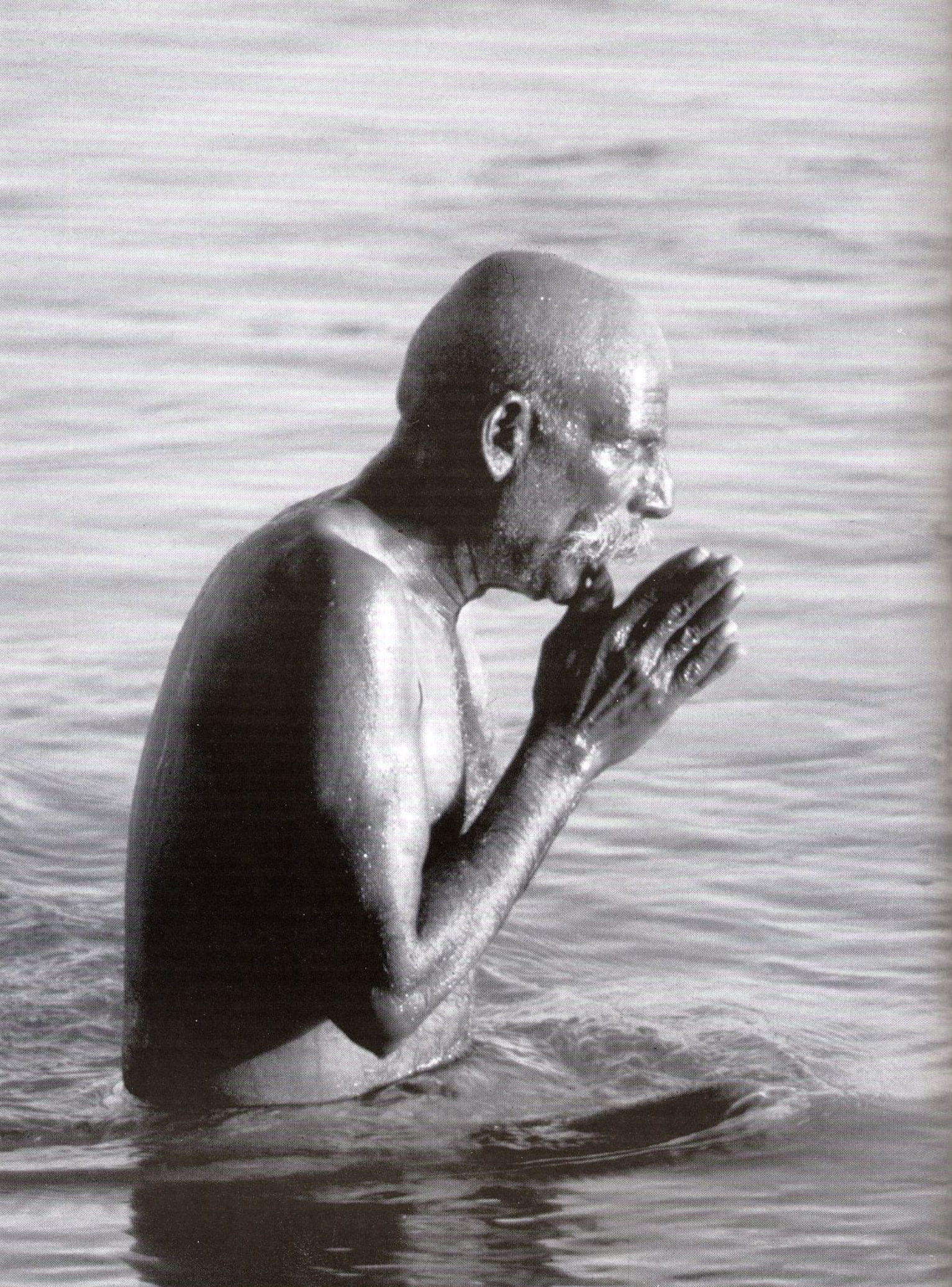
Vṛndāvana—the transcendental abode of Lord Kṛṣṇa, mirrored on earth as the town in India where Kṛṣṇa appeared five thousand years ago.

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.



THE AUTHENTICITY OF SPIRITUAL PLACES

*Pilgrimages can enhance our devotion
to the Lord, provided we go to authorized
holy places, and in the proper mood.*

by Satsvarūpa Dāsa Goswami

WHEN ŚRĪ CAITANYA Mahāprabhu—Kṛṣṇa Himself in the role of His own devotee—was present on earth five hundred years ago, He sometimes traveled to holy places, or *tīrthas*. Not only did He tour South India, but He traveled to Vṛndāvana, Lord Kṛṣṇa's eternal abode on earth. When Lord Caitanya was about to leave for Vṛndāvana, King Pratāparudra ordered his servants and soldiers to accompany the Lord, to make His path easier and especially to erect monuments at each place the Lord stopped. It is said that anyone who visits places where Lord Caitanya stopped even briefly will receive great benefit from such *tīrthas*.

Wherever the Lord went, tremendous crowds of pious people followed Him to get a glimpse of Him and receive His blessings. He was always merciful to the people, but sometimes He would escape without their knowledge and go on to the next place.

Rāghava Paṇḍita, seeing the great crowds following the Lord, took the Lord away to his house. The Lord stayed at Rāghava Paṇḍita's place for one day. The next morning He went to Kumārahaṭṭa. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes:

From Kumārahaṭṭa, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu went to Kāñcana-palli (also known as Kāñcaḍāpāḍā), where Śivānanda Sena lived. After staying two days at Śivānanda's house, the Lord went to the house of Vāsudeva Datta. From there He went to the western side of Navadvīpa, to the village called Vidyānagara. From Vidyānagara He went to Kuliya-grāma and stayed at Mādhava Dāsa's house. He stayed there one week and excused the offenses of Devānanda and others. Due to Kavirāja Gosvāmī's mentioning the name of Śāntipurācārya, some people think that Kuliya is a village near Kāñcaḍāpāḍā. Due to this mistaken idea, they invented another place known as New Kuliyāra

Even when a holy place is established as authentic, the question still must be raised as to our own eligibility to understand its mood.

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Pāṭa. Actually such a place does not exist. Leaving the house of Vāsudeva Datta, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu went to the house of Advaita Ācārya. From there He went to the western side of Navadvīpa, to Vidyānagara, and stayed at the house of Vidyāvācaspati. These accounts are given in the *Caitanya-bhāgavata*, *Caitanya-maṅgala*, *Caitanya-candrodaya-nāṭaka*, and *Caitanya-carita-kāvya*. Śrīla Kavirāja Gosvāmī has not vividly described this entire tour; therefore, on the basis of *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, some unscrupulous people have invented a place called Kuliyāra Pāṭa near Kāncāḍāpāḍā. (Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, *Madhya* 16.205, Purport)

From this information we can understand that some so-called holy places are not authentic. What, then, constitutes an actual holy place?

Before Śrīla Prabhupāda's arrival in the West, we knew very little of holy places. We knew that a church or synagogue was meant to be a holy place, and we may have had a conception that the heart was meant to be a holy place, the seat of God. We may have even known of what is called the Holy Land in the Middle East. But we certainly knew nothing of the holy places in India, or of the details that made a place holy in the first place.

Often it is difficult to ascertain the exact location of a *tīrtha*. It is too easy, especially with the influx of comparatively naive Western pilgrims to India, for people to create a holy place to bring in money. Vaiṣṇavas and others, however, usually contest the authenticity of such places.

QUALIFICATIONS OF A HOLY PLACE

The main qualification for a place to become holy is that the Lord or His

pure devotee appeared or had pastimes there. For Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, followers of Lord Caitanya, Vṛndāvana and Māyāpur are the main *tīrthas*. In the present age, Kali-yuga, holy places tend to become covered by the material energy, so it is sometimes difficult to understand the mood of such places.

Even when a holy place is established as authentic, the question still must be raised as to our own eligibility to understand its mood. A holy place must be approached with the proper spiritual attitude and humility if we are to gain anything by visiting it.

Nowadays, devotees in the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement are more concerned with the question of how to define holy places because they are living in places established by Śrīla Prabhupāda, not only in India but in the West. Are ISKCON temples holy places? Most of the land now owned by ISKCON was once owned by persons with no intention of its becoming a *tīrtha*. We usually cannot claim that the site of a temple has historical integrity as a *tīrtha*. Its claim to holy place status must be based on something else.

Several things constitute a *tīrtha*:

1. Devotees must have performed (or be performing) spiritual activities in the place, and the *tīrtha* must be visited by sadhus, saintly persons. In fact, the Vedic scriptures state that a person who visits even the historically bona fide places of pilgrimage only to take bath is no better than a cow or an ass. Visiting a *tīrtha* means associating with the saintly persons in attendance. Cāṅkya Paṇḍita warns that we should avoid a place devoid of saintly persons. And a place bereft of talk of Kṛṣṇa, or God, and service to Him cannot claim holy place status.

2. By visiting a *tīrtha* we should feel enlivened in our Kṛṣṇa consciousness;

the *tīrtha* should carry that potency.

3. The chanting of the holy names must be present as a prominent feature of the *tīrtha*. Concurrent with that should be deity worship. Śrīla Prabhupāda told us that as he established the various deities around the world, he worried that his disciples would begin to feel the worship as a "burden in the neck." But if the deity worship is going on uninterrupted and the devotees in the area are taking shelter of the deity, then that place is holy.

4. Prabhupāda defined a holy place as wherever the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* was being honored. That might be in a large temple or under a tree, and it may be in India or elsewhere, but wherever there is respectful and repeated reading of the *Bhāgavatam*, that place becomes holy.

OBSTACLES TO PILGRIMAGE

Devotees sometimes wonder if there are ever any reasons not to visit a particular holy place. Of course, travel is always inconvenient. One inconvenience may be political. Holy places may suddenly be subject to political division, which can make them difficult or even impossible to visit. What was once part of India later became part of East Pakistan, then Bangladesh. If there is political dispute between the two countries, we may not be able to cross borders in the name of spiritual pilgrimage. Political divisions can also cause a holy place to become lost. Just as the Ganges sometimes shifts her course, so tracts of land upon which the Lord performed pastimes can become lost to our sight. Perhaps generations from now, the Lord or His pure devotees will again uncover them and pilgrims will be able to visit them for purification.

(please turn to page 42)

“The People Are Rascals—and They Have Elected Another Rascal”

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 Divine Grace, how do you feel about Mao Tse-tung? In China he's the ideal man, although, of course, he's a communist.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: His ideal is all right. His ideal—the communist idea that everyone should be happy—that is a good idea. But the communists do not know how to make everyone happy. For instance, they are taking care of the human beings as citizens of the state, but they are sending the poor animals to the slaughterhouse.

Because the communists are godless, they do not know that not only is the human a living being—so, also, is the animal. They think that for the satisfaction of the tongue of the human being, the animal's throat should be cut. That is modern society's defect.

Paṇḍitāḥ sama-darśinaḥ: one who is learned is equal toward everyone. That is the meaning of being learned. “I take care of my brother and I kill you”—that is not right. But that is going on, everywhere. Consider this so-called nationalism. “National” should apply to anyone who has taken birth in a particular nation or land. But the poor animals—because they cannot make any protest, send them to the slaughterhouse.

If the world had ideal men, they would have protested. “Oh, why are you doing this? Let the animals live, also. You should live in peace,

as well. Just produce food grains. The animals can eat them, and you can also eat them. Why should you eat the animals?” That way of living is recommended in the *Bhagavad-gītā*.

Director: But where the winters are long, people have to kill animals to have something to eat over the winter.

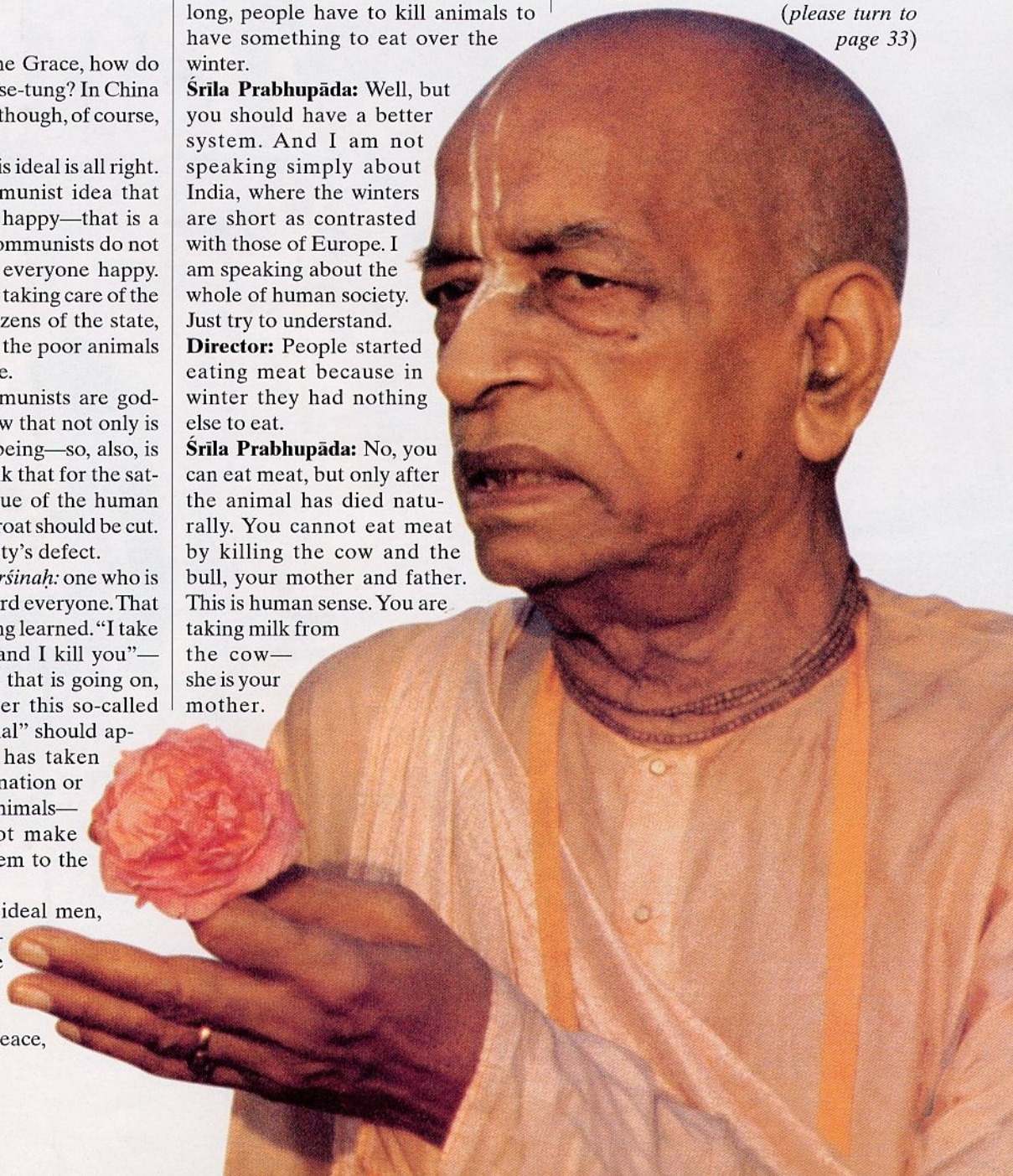
Śrīla Prabhupāda: Well, but you should have a better system. And I am not speaking simply about India, where the winters are short as contrasted with those of Europe. I am speaking about the whole of human society. Just try to understand.

Director: People started eating meat because in winter they had nothing else to eat.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: No, you can eat meat, but only after the animal has died naturally. You cannot eat meat by killing the cow and the bull, your mother and father. This is human sense. You are taking milk from the cow—she is your mother.

For instance, in Australia the cows produce so much milk, butter, and everything. But after the Australians have taken all these milk products, then they cut the cow's throat and make business, selling her carcass to other countries.

(please turn to page 33)



SPIRITUAL PLACES

The Ride to Rama Giri

An American disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda and his Indian Sikh friend ride their classic motorcycles to an ancient hilltop shrine.

Text and photos by Patita Pāvana Dāsa Adhikārī





I FIRST SAW Rama Giri before you were born," I say, boasting to my young Sikh friend Anukaran, trying to stir his interest in visiting the hill (*giri*) of Lord Rāmacandra with me.

"I've never been there," he replies, "although I was born just thirty miles away in Nagpur."

"So why don't we ride up there tomorrow? We can take the Enfields."

"Let's get an early start," he says, accepting the invitation. "I can leave at nine."

Anukaran Singh was born in a wealthy Indian family, descendants of proud Punjabi Sikh warriors who generation



The fort at Rama Giri dates back many centuries. Although the British took it from the ruling Bhonsles in the early 1800s, the brāhmaṇas forbade their new European rulers from entering the temples within the fort. Inset: Anukaran Singh.



after generation have laid down their lives against successive waves of tyrannical invaders. Despite his involvement with his family's business, Anukaran is frank about wanting to reestablish his link with India's ancient heritage, the birthright of anyone born in this vast and diverse land.

"In the 70s, it was the fashion to be ignorant of our civilization and culture," Anukaran jokes. "For my present generation, it is the fashion to know more about our actual heritage."

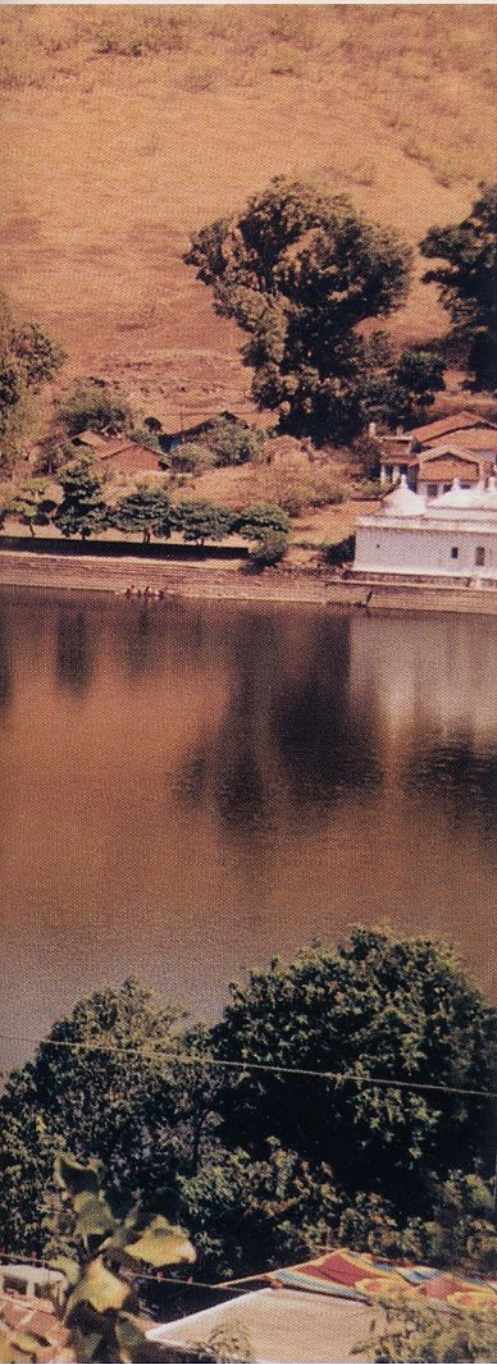
Anukaran is a founding member of the Nagpur Royal Enfield Club, a group of motorcycle riders dedicated to promoting bike safety in a country largely dependent on two-wheeled transport. Everything has its service, and the real use for everything is service to Kṛṣṇa. So tomorrow Anukaran and I will use our classic Enfields in the service of *tīrtha-yātrā*, traveling to holy places.

It will be our privilege to journey to the sacred hill where the Personal-

ity of Godhead Lord Rāma, His wife and queen, Sītā Devī, and younger brother Lakṣmaṇa were received by the great ascetic Agastya Muni. Ever since that memorable hilltop meeting, the Agastya ashram has been honored by pilgrims as Rama Giri.

HISTORY OF RAMA GIRI

Millions of years ago in the age called Tretā-yuga, the Supreme Personality of Godhead Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa de-



Below Rama Giri lies
Ambala Kund, fed by the
waters of the underground
Patala Ganga.

scended as a king: Lord Rāma, or Rāmacandra. Lord Rāmacandra's adventures—His *līlās*—were written down by the *ādikavi* (“first poet”) Vālmīki Muni. *Vālmiki* literally means “he who comes from an anthill.” By meditating on Lord Rāma's transcendental *līlā*, Vālmīki became so steadfastly absorbed in the yoga of spiritual trance that huge jungle ants were able to build a hill all about him. After many years he emerged from the anthill to scribe the 24,000-verse Sanskrit scrip-

The Power of Rāma's Name

STRUCK BY THE serenity of Lord Rāma's temple on Rama Giri, I took advantage of the uplifted mood to hazard a few words.

“Anukaran,” I began, “the worship of Lord Rāma or Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa is universal and is not intended only for some particular sect or religion. Their names are imbued with the potency to deliver anyone, any living entity, from every misery into the unlimited world of transcendental bliss. The name of the Lord is nondifferent from the person of the Lord Himself. Although He is the master of the personal spiritual worlds, inhabited by liberated souls absorbed in His loving service, He descends to our world for our deliverance. His worship is performed best in the Kali-yuga by the chanting of His name, a means open to members of all races and religions. The *saṅkīrtana* movement Śrīla Prabhupāda introduced to the entire world is essentially the same as the melodic vibrations which we are savoring even now.

“Lord Rāma never fancied Himself to be some Hindu God. His is none other than the all-pervasive Viṣṇu, the Lord of the universe, and is accepted as such by sages like Agastya. See how Hanumān and his army of *vāṇaras* (monkeys), as well as jungle bears and even a squirrel, were impelled to offer their service unto Śrī Rāma, never considering any selfish rewards. You must be aware your fourth Sikh guru was named Guru Ramadas, ‘servant of Rāma.’

“Just as worship of Lord Rāma or Viṣṇu is uplifting and spiritually invigorating, so is the chanting of Their holy names. Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu often quoted the *Bṛhan-nāradya Purāna* verse *harer nāma harer nāma harer nāmaiva kevalam/ kalau nāsty eva nāsty eva nāsty eva gatir anyathā*: ‘The holy name! The holy name! The holy name! In this iron age called Kali-yuga there is no other way, no other way, no other way to reach the goal!’

“In fact, quite along these lines your *Guru Granth Sahib*, which I spent a week at Amritsar studying, plainly advises: ‘The name of the Lord Hari destroys all miseries and purifies sinners, O beloved. . . . Through service to Śrī Hari is the highest platform achieved. . . . The name of Śrī Hari is the highest benediction in Kali-yuga.’ (Raga Asa, Mahala IV, Ghar II.1-2)

“In Kali-yuga the name of Rāma is the boat that ferries the disciple. In this world and in the next the disciple of the guru lives in bliss by the grace of the name of Rāma.

“Guru Nanak advises, ‘Having heard the name of Lord Rāma, we have become absorbed with love of God. . . . The name of Rāma pleases the chanter's mind, and he achieves supreme happiness. He for whom the chanting of the name of Rāma is a constant companion, even when leaving this world he never goes to the world of Yamarāja. O brother, I meditate on Lord Rāma.’” (Raga Asa IV, Ghar I, Chant II, IX, 1, 2, 3)

ture *Rāmāyaṇa*, the world's oldest book.

The purpose of Lord Rāma's advent is to attract us conditioned souls to the timeless, transcendental path of *bhakti-yoga*, devotional service. By reading the Lord's pastimes in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* or *Śrī Rāmāyaṇa*, and by hearing of His exceptional prowess from the lips of pure devotees like Śrīla Prabhupāda, even the unsophisticated soul becomes drawn to the blissful security of genuine spiritual life. If a pilgrimage is undertaken in a spirit of remembrance of the Lord's *līlā*, then visiting the holy places connected with His pastimes—places like Vṛndāvana or Ayodhya, or in this case Rama Giri—can be purifying, uplifting, and helpful in the all-important quest for inner development.

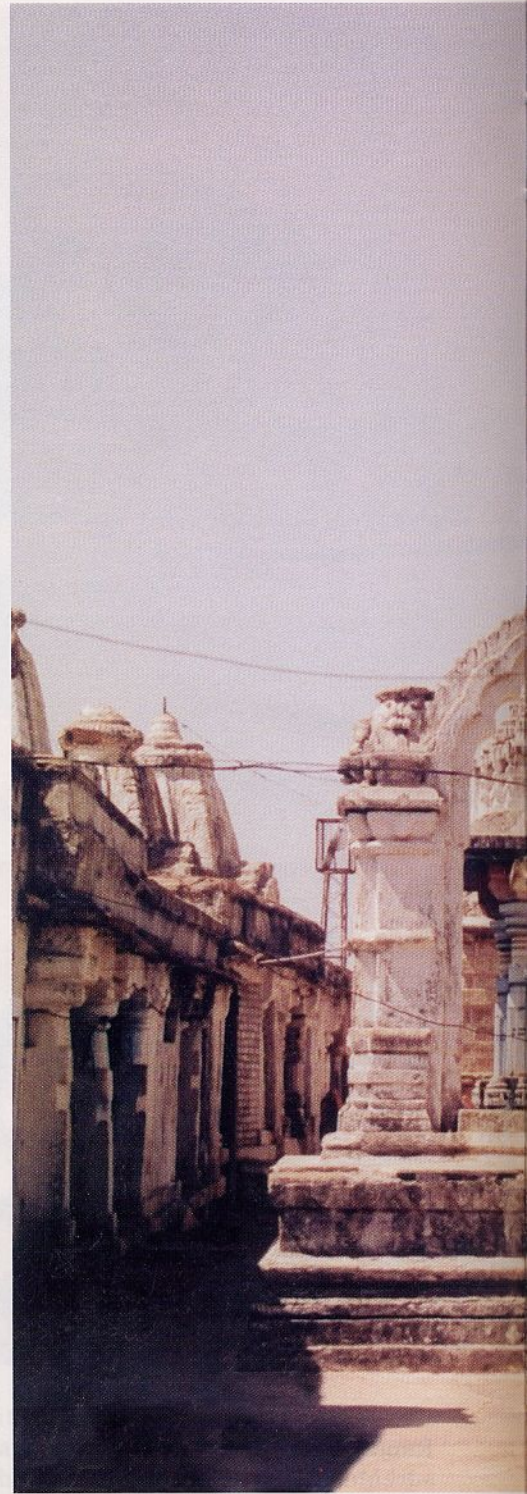
Since time immemorial each of us embodied *jīva* souls has been revolving through the grim cycle of rebirth—*saṁsāra*. To deliver His servants trapped in the net of *māyā*, God comes Himself or sends His avatar for our salvation from the delusion of material ignorance. Attraction to the lotus feet of the Lord, acceptance of His divine shelter, and the joyful singing of His name open the door for going back home, back to Godhead.

To this day, millions of years after the advent of Sītā-Rāma, their followers number in the hundreds of millions. The supreme royal couple is even worshiped outside India. In Thailand, for example, a quarter-mile stretch of the halls of the royal palace is artistically

painted with scenes from the *Rāmāyaṇa*. In the island of Bali in Indonesia, and also in Cambodia and Nepal, thousands more Rāma temples can be found. In every corner of India, from tiny village shrines to fabulous temple palaces like Hare Krishna Land at Juhu Beach, Mumbai, the transcendental form of Lord Rāma is worshiped, His all-liberating name sung by His devotees.

According to Vālmiki's *Rāmāyaṇa*, Śrī Rāma, on the order of His father, King Daśaratha, left His hometown of Ayodhya (in present-day Uttar Pradesh State) and embraced forest life. "As the full moon enters a cloud bank," Rāma, Sītā, and Lakṣmaṇa wandered south through the woods to the mountain Chitrakuta. From there they wended their way into Madhya Bharata (central India), hiking through the valleys of the holy Vindhya Hills and crossing the sacred Narmada River. Then they came to the vast Dandaka Forest, the abode of hermits. As Lord Śrī Rāma passed through Dandaka Forest, Śrīla Prabhupāda recalls in *The Nectar of Devotion*, many sages achieved perfection in yoga just by seeing Him. With their dormant love of Godhead awakened, these fortunate *ṛṣis* were later (in Dvāpara-yuga) reborn as *gopīs* (cowherd girls) in the *līlā* of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the original Supreme Personality of Godhead. (Śrīla Prabhupāda and Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī have drawn this information from the *Padma Purāṇa*.)

The divine threesome camped here



A large and rare deity of Lord Varāha (left) stands guard from atop Rama Giri. The cluster of temples within the Rama Giri fort (above) includes separate temples of Rāma, Sītā, Lakṣmaṇa, and Hanumān, as well as the ashram of the sage Agastya, where sacrificial fires have been burning for many thousands of years.





and there, bearing bravely the hardships of jungle life and finally arriving at the ashram of Agastya Muni, atop what is now called Rama Giri. As a king, a member of the *kṣatriya* class, Lord Rāma offered His respects to the *brāhmaṇa* Agastya Muni with sweet words. The Lord feels so grateful to His devotees that He bows before them,

just as Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa once bowed down to wash the feet of the poor *brāhmaṇa* Sudāmā.

The incomparable Agastya Muni was *tri-kāla-jñā*: He could see the three features of time—past, present, and future. Hence he was well aware that Śrī Rāma was none other than the almighty Viṣṇu Himself and that in the

very near future He would fight a great war with the enemies of dharma, the demons (*asuras*).

Many sages of the Dandaka Forest had already suffered grievous harassment at the hands of atheistic *asuras*, and many had fallen victim to their evil schemes. Yet try as they might, none of these *asuras* could trap the wily

Champion of the True and Righteous

In a poetic translation of Rāmāyaṇa, Sri Ramesh Candra Dutta, a nineteenth-century Vaiṣṇava poet from Bengal, described Rāvaṇa's last moments and the joy of victory of Lord Rāma's troops:

Pike and club and mace and trident
scaped from Ravan's vengeful hand,
Spear and arrows Rāma wielded,
and his bright and flaming brand!
Long and dubious battle lasted,
shook the ocean, hill and dale,
Winds were hushed in voiceless terror
and the livid sun was pale,
Still the dubious battle lasted,
until Rama in his ire
Wielded Brahma's deathful weapon
flaming with celestial fire!
Weapon which the Saint Agastya
had unto the hero given,
Winged as lightning dart of Indra,
fatal as the bolt of heaven,
Wrapped in smoke and flaming flashes,
speeding from the circled bow,
Pierced the iron heart of Ravan,
lain the lifeless hero low,
And a cry of pain and terror
from the Raksha ranks arose,
And a shout from joying Vanars
as they smote their fleeing foes!
Heavenly flowers in rain descended
on the red and gory plain,
And from unseen harps and timbrels
rose a soft celestial strain,
And the ocean heaved in gladness,
brighter shone the sunlit sky,
Soft and cool the gentle zephyrs
through the forest murmured by,
Sweetest scent and fragrant odours
wafted from celestial trees,
Fell upon the earth and ocean, rode
upon the laden breeze!
Voice of blessing from the bright sky
fell on Raghu's valiant son,
"Champion of the true and righteous!
Now thy noble task is done!"

Agastya. Through his unbreakable penance and high intelligence, the sage had even outwitted the evil duo Ilvala and Vātāpi. Ilvala, taking the form of a Sanskrit-speaking *brāhmaṇa*, would

The infuriated Ilvala sprang forward, rushing at Agastya, but one stern and fiery look from the powerful sage reduced him to ashes in an instant.

Agastya once requested the Vin-



invite different sages to share a meal. Then Vātāpi would assume the form of the meal. After dinner Ilvala would smile and say, "Come out, Vātāpi," and Vātāpi would suddenly burst forth, splitting the poor *ṛṣi's* belly.

Once Agastya, requested by the *devas* (demigods), accepted Ilvala's invitation to dine with him. After the meal, the grinning Ilvala called for his wicked brother to exit the sage's body.

But Agastya smiled and declared, "Your brother cannot come out now because he has already been sent to the abode of Yamaraāja [the Lord of death] by the fire of my digestion."

dhya Mountains to bow low, because their towering peaks were blocking the sun. Agastya promised the lord of the Vindhya that his rolling hills could rise up and become mountains again after Agastya returned from the south. To keep the Vindhya humble, Agastya never went north again. Instead he made his hermitage at Rama Giri, in the Deccan, south of the Vindhya. That is how the Vindhya Mountains became the Vindhya Hills, India's traditional line of North-South division.

Saint Agastya received Sītā, Rāma, and Lakṣmaṇa with customary offerings of fruit and flowers. Then he presented Lord Rāma with the Brahma-datta bow, which Lord Indra had earlier entrusted to his care. The bow had been inset with diamonds by its creator, Viśvakarmā, the engineer of the universe. Along with the bow, Agastya handed over to Śrī Rāma a quiver of arrows that included the undefeatable *brahmāstra* weapon. Lord Rāmacandra was also given a sword in a bejeweled scabbard.



An anthill like the one above, built by jungle ants near Ram Tek, covered the Rāmāyaṇa author Vālmīki while he meditated on the pastimes of Lord Rāma. At right: the deity of Agastya at Rama Giri.

In His talks with the sages of Dandaka Forest near and about Agastya's hilltop hermitage, Rāma took a vow to vanquish the trouble-making demons. When the Lord took His vow, Rama Giri shook.

By accepting the weapons from Agastya, the Lord displayed His intention of protecting His devotees. Today the village at the foot of Rama Giri is called Rama Tek, literally "Rāma's vow." In *Bhagavad-gītā* (4.7-8) Lord Kṛṣṇa explains His vow to shelter His devotees: "Whenever and wherever there is a decline in religious practice, O descendant of Bharata, and a predominant rise of irreligion—at that time I descend Myself. To deliver the pious and to annihilate the miscreants,

as well as to reestablish the principles of religion, I Myself appear, millennium after millennium."

Much later at Sri Lanka, during the battle with Rāvaṇa and his demonic hoard, Śrī Rāma's charioteer, Mātali, was to remind Rāma of the weapons presented by Agastya Muni. True to Agastya's vision and Rāma's promise, Rāma fired the arrow imbued with *brahmāstra* mantras into the heart of Rāvaṇa, where the demon had stored *amṛta*, nectar of deathlessness. [See the sidebar "Champion of the True and Righteous."]

Whether protecting Prahāda as Nṛsiṃha, the sages of Dandaka Forest as Rāma, Arjuna as Kṛṣṇa, or the Hare Kṛṣṇa *saṅkīrtana* party as Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the Lord defends His devotee in every age. That is His promise.

THE TRIP

At 9:00 the next morning, Anukaran pulled up and revved his engine

in front of the house of Baba, my brother-in-law, where I was staying as a guest. I rushed out and kick-started my Enfield Bullet.

"Let's get going," I advised him. "The auspicious time for departure lasts for only another fifteen minutes." Within seconds we were headed north to Rama Giri.

After an hour of country riding, sunburned and smiling, we saw the hill of Lord Rāma off to our right. Leaning east, we rode through Ram Tek village, with its unusual collection of shops, ashrams, *dharmshalas* (pilgrim's rest houses), and Buddhist Ayurvedic ashrams.

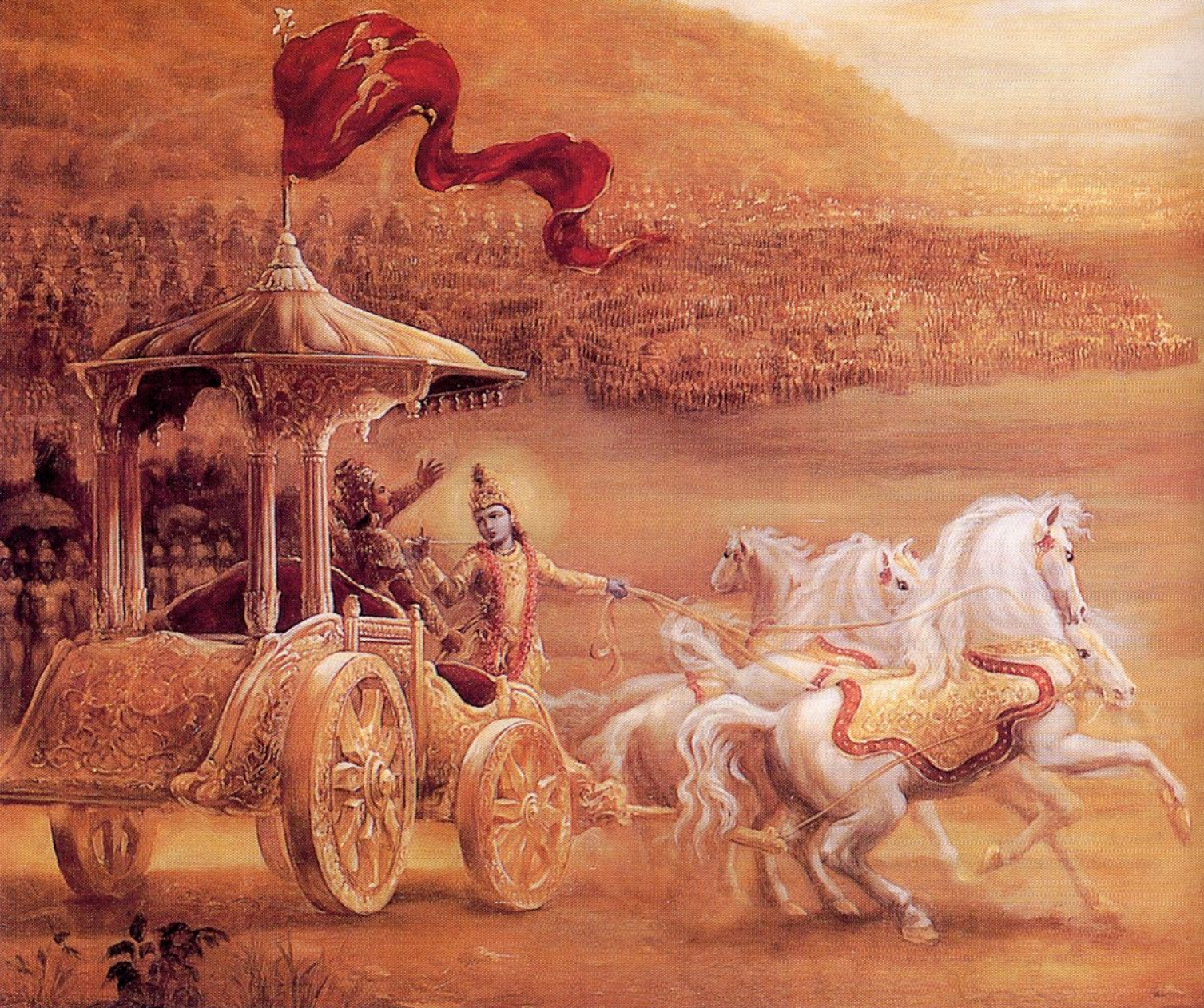
Riding through the narrow lanes of merchants and farm animals, we at last found ourselves on the twisting road up the hill to the peak of Rama Giri. About half way to the top, we slowed down to pass a group of several dozen *pāda-yātrīs*, "pilgrims who go by foot." Judging by the *dhōti*-like way the women tied their saris, I guessed they (please turn to page 40)

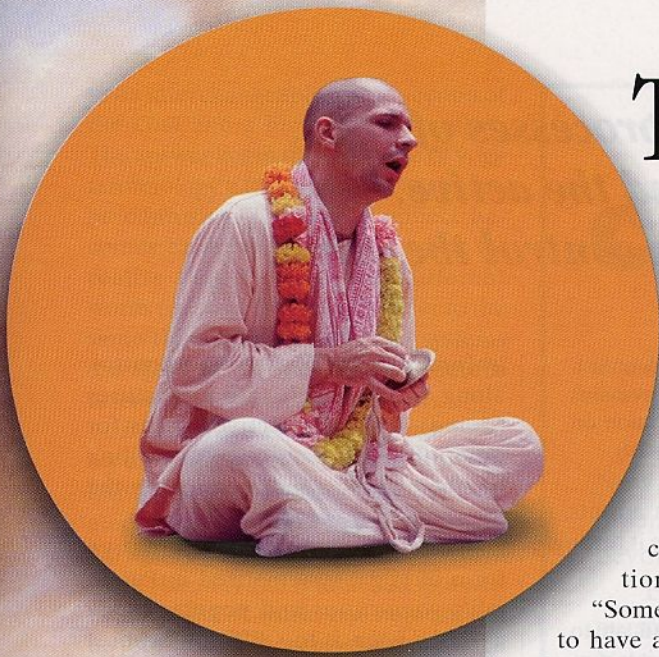


The Yoga of The Bhagavad-gītā

*Lord Kṛṣṇa discusses the major forms of yoga, setting up a hierarchy
and saying clearly which one belongs at the top.*

by Satyarāja Dāsa





THE APRIL 23 cover story of *Time* magazine highlighted the science of yoga. It reported that “fifteen million Americans include some form of yoga in their fitness regimen—twice as many as did five years ago.”

Yet one wonders if any of the fifteen million are getting out of yoga what they should. As supermodel Christy Turlington, pictured on the cover as an ardent practitioner, is quoted as saying, “Some of my friends simply want to have a yoga butt.” Patricia Walden, a prominent yoga teacher who has made a fortune producing instructional videos, responds to what many would consider a shallow approach to yoga: “If you start doing yoga for those reasons, fine. Most people get beyond that and see that it’s much, much more.”

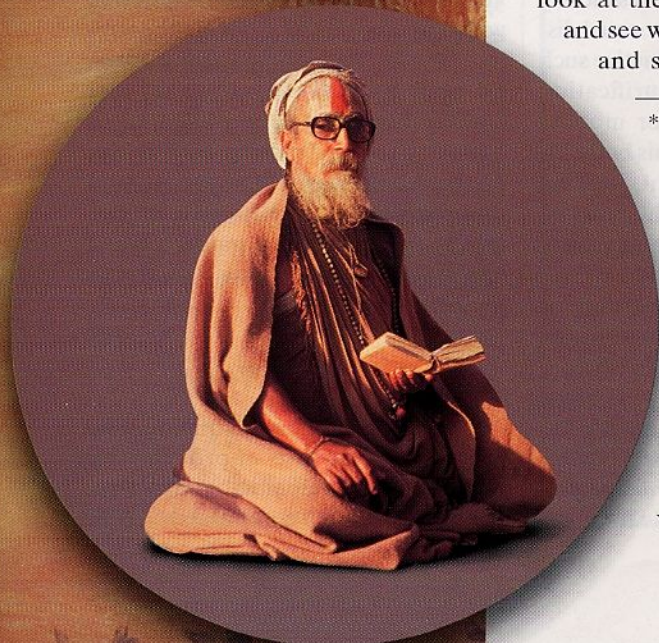
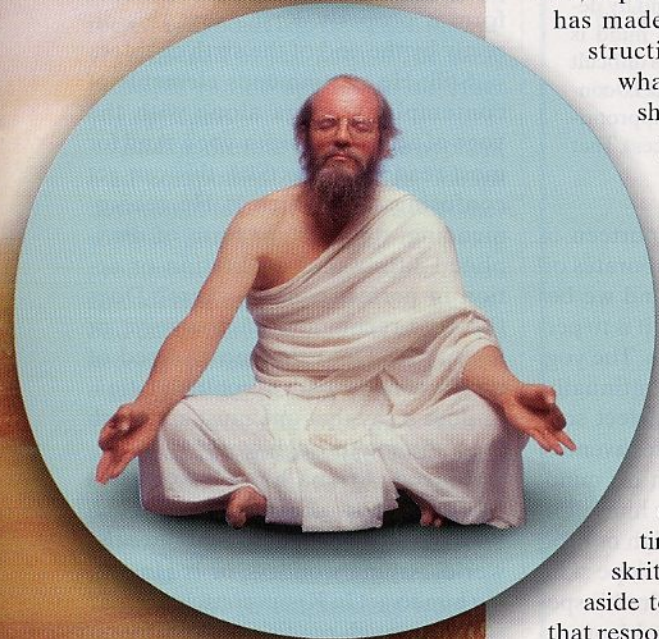
Or do they?

The sad truth is that most people are not studying the *Bhagavad-gītā*, traditionally seen as a *yoga-sūtra*, a treatise on *yoga*. At least in Western countries, aspiring yogis, intimidated by the *Gītā*’s Sanskrit terminology, set the book aside to be studied later. Though that response is understandable, let’s look at the *Gītā*’s teachings on *yoga* and see why for centuries it has been, and still is, considered among

the most important textbooks on the subject.

It should be noted at the outset that the word *yoga* itself refers to “linking with God.” This implies that any genuine approach to *yoga* should involve the spiritual pursuit, however varied that pursuit may be. For example, in the first verses of the *Gītā*’s third chapter, Lord Kṛṣṇa introduces three forms of spirituality that might be identified with *yoga*: the contemplative life and the active one.* The people of India in the time of the *Gītā* were given to extreme acts of renunciation. Aspiring spiritualists of the age felt that only by shaking off the burden of active worldly life could one approach a life of the spirit. The *Gītā* seeks to correct this misconception. It takes the doctrine of *nivṛtti*, negation, so dominant in ancient India, and augments it with positive spiritual action. Thus, Kṛṣṇa (who is also known as *Yogeśvara*, or “the Master of Mystic Yoga”) teaches Arjuna not so much about renunciation of action, but about renunciation *in* action. In later Vaiṣṇava terminology, this is the preferred *yukta-vairāgya*, or “renouncing the world by acting for the Supreme.” Kṛṣṇa accepts both forms of renunciation, but He describes the active form as more practical and more effective as well.

Whichever form, or approach, one chooses, says Kṛṣṇa, detachment from sense objects is mandatory. The difference, then, lies only in one’s external involvement with the world. Kṛṣṇa asserts that contemplative, or inactive, *yoga* is difficult because the mind can become restless or distracted. He recommends the active form of *yoga*, which He calls *karma-yoga*. This is



*These two approaches to spirituality can be found in most major religious traditions. In Christianity, for example, one learns of *via activa* and *via contemplativa*, which manifest in the Roman Catholic Church as “active” communities and “contemplative” communities, though both share the same theological tenets.

Although Lord Kṛṣṇa describes several types of yoga, they all fall under the general categories of jñāna-yoga (philosophical speculation, bottom), dhyāna-yoga (meditation, center), and bhakti-yoga (devotional service, top). All forms of yoga should ultimately take one to bhakti, pure devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa, which is the soul’s original nature.

Painting by Rāmadāsa Abhirāma Dāsa. Photos, top to bottom: Yamarāja Dāsa, Puruṣārtha Dāsa, Nitya-trptā Devī Dāsi

Kṛṣṇa explains that both processes of yoga, the contemplative and the active, begin with learning how to control the mind.

• • •

safer, He says, because one still strives to focus the mind, using various techniques of meditation, but augments that with practical engagement in the material world.

Kṛṣṇa elaborates on how to perform *karma-yoga* in the sixth chapter, again emphasizing its superiority to mere renunciation and philosophy:

One who is unattached to the fruits of his work and who works as he is obligated is in the renounced order of life, and he is the true mystic, not he who lights no fire and performs no duty. What is called renunciation you should know to be the same as yoga, or linking oneself with the Supreme, O son of Pāṇḍu, for one can never become a yogi unless he renounces the desire for sense gratification. (6.1–2)

Kṛṣṇa's instruction here is especially useful for us today, living in the Western world. He is saying that we needn't go off to a forest to contemplate our navel. In fact, He says that such endeavors will most likely fail for most of us. Rather, we can achieve the goal of yoga by learning the art of "detached action," one of the *Gītā's* main teachings. Kṛṣṇa will explain that art to Arjuna and, by extenuation, to the rest of us. The *Gītā* teaches how we can, in modern terms, be in the world but not of it.

MEDITATION: RESTRAINING THE MIND

Kṛṣṇa explains that both processes of yoga, the contemplative and the active, begin with learning how to control the mind, which is essentially *dhyāna*, or meditation:

When the yogi, by practice of yoga, disciplines his mental activities and becomes situated in transcendence—devoid of all material desires—he is said to be well established in yoga. As a lamp in a windless place does

not waver, so the transcendentalist, whose mind is controlled, remains always steady in his meditation on the transcendent self. (6.18–19)

Such meditation, Kṛṣṇa admits, is difficult, but one can achieve it through arduous effort:

It is undoubtedly very difficult to curb the restless mind, but it is possible by suitable practice and by detachment. For one whose mind is unbridled, self-realization is difficult work. But he whose mind is controlled and who strives by appropriate means is assured of success. That is my opinion. (6.35–36)

In verses ten through fourteen of the sixth chapter, Kṛṣṇa elaborates on the "appropriate means," and we begin to see how truly difficult it is to perform this kind of meditation. The yogi must learn to meditate continually, without interruption, in perfect solitude. Free of wants and possessiveness, the yogi must fully restrain his mind. He must prepare a seat for himself in a clean place, neither too high nor too low, covered with cloth, antelope skin, and *kuśa* grass. He must sit in this special place, says the *Gītā*, and learn to make his mind one-pointed, restricting any extraneous thoughts or sensual distractions. The yogi should practice such meditation for his own purification only—without any ulterior motive. Firmly holding the base of his body, his neck, and his head straight, looking only at the tip of his nose, he must be serene, fearless, and above any lusty thought. He must sit in this way, restraining his mind, thinking only of God, Kṛṣṇa says, fully devoted to the Supreme.

Kṛṣṇa calls this method *rāja-yoga*, because it was practiced by great kings (*rāja*) in ancient times. The heart of this system is breath control (*prāṇāyāma*), which is meant to manipulate the ener-

gy (*prāṇa*) in the body. Breath control, along with intricate sitting postures (*āsana*), was an effective means for quieting one's passions, controlling bodily appetites, and focusing on the Supreme.

Nonetheless, this contemplative form of yoga, systematized in Patañjali's *yoga-sūtras* and popular today as *haṭha-yoga*, is too difficult for most people, at least if they are going to perform it properly. Kṛṣṇa says this directly by the end of the sixth chapter.

Still, He recommends elements of contemplative yoga along with the yoga of action, or *karma-yoga*. And for most readers of the *Gītā*, this can get confusing. Just which is He recommending—the austere form of disciplined sitting and meditation or action in perfect consciousness? Does the *Gītā* recommend *haṭha-yoga*, or doesn't it? Does this most sacred of texts accept the path of contemplation, or does it say that one must approach the Supreme through work?

Indeed, Arjuna himself expresses confusion in two chapters of the *Gītā*: Is Kṛṣṇa advising him to renounce the world, Arjuna wonders, or is He asking him to act in Kṛṣṇa consciousness?

A thorough reading of the *Gītā* reveals a hierarchy, a yoga ladder in which one begins by studying the subject of yoga with some serious interest—this is called *abhyāsa-yoga*—and ends up, if successful, by graduating to *bhakti-yoga*, or devotion for the Supreme. All the stages in between—and there are many—are quite complex, and at this point most modern Western practitioners become daunted in their study of the *Gītā*.

STAGES OF YOGA

The question may legitimately be raised why the two approaches to yoga—the contemplative and the active (and all their corollaries)—seem

to be interchangeable in one section of the *Gītā* and a hierarchy in another. The answer lies in the *Gītā*'s use of yoga terminology, a lexicon which, again, can be confusing. The whole subject becomes easier to understand when we realize that the *Gītā* uses different words for yoga that actually refer to the same thing: the various yoga systems are all forms of *bhakti-yoga*. The differences are mainly in emphasis.

Bhakti-yoga is called *karma-yoga*, for example, when, in the practitioner's mind, the first word in the hyphenated compound takes precedence. In *karma-yoga* one wants to perform work (karma) and is attached to a particular kind of work, but he wants to do it for Kṛṣṇa. Karma is primary, yoga secondary. But since the work is directed to God, it can be called *karma-yoga* instead of just karma. The same principle can be applied to all other yoga systems.

Bhakti, the first word in the hyphenated compound *bhakti-yoga*, means devotional love. In love, one becomes selfless, and thus, instead of giving prominence to one's own desire, one considers the beloved first. So the second part of the compound (yoga) also becomes prominent—linking with God takes precedence over what the individual wants. The first and second words of the hyphenated compound become one: Real love (*bhakti*) means full connection (yoga). This makes *bhakti-yoga* the perfection of the yoga process.

Karma-yoga emphasizes working (karma) for the Supreme, *jñāna-yoga* emphasizes focusing one's knowledge (*jñāna*) on the Supreme, *dhyāna-yoga* involves contemplating (*dhyāna*) the Supreme, *buddhi-yoga* is about directing the intellect (*buddhi*) toward the Supreme, and *bhakti-yoga*—the perfection of all yogas—occurs when devotion (*bhakti*) is emphasized in relation to the Supreme. The main principle of yoga, in whatever form, is to direct our activity toward linking with God.

CLIMBING THE LADDER

We may first of all, then, observe that the *Gītā* accepts all traditional

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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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forms of yoga as legitimate, asserting that they all focus on linking with the Supreme. Yet the *Gītā* also creates a hierarchy: First come study, understanding, and meditation (*dhyāna-yoga*). These lead to deep contemplation of philosophy and eventually wisdom that culminates in renunciation (*sannyāsa-yoga*). Renunciation leads to the proper use of intelligence

(*buddhi-yoga*), then *karma-yoga*, and finally *bhakti-yoga*.

All of this involves a complex inner development, beginning with an understanding of the temporary nature of the material world and of duality. Realizing that the world of matter will cease to exist and that birth all too quickly leads to death, the aspiring yogi begins to practice external renunciation and

gradually internal renunciation, which, ultimately, comprises giving up the desire for the fruit of one's work (*karma-phala-tyāga*) and performing the work itself as an offering to God (*bhagavad-artha-karma*). This method of detached action (*karma-yoga*) leads to the "perfection of inaction" (*naiṣkarmya-siddhi*), or freedom from the bondage of works. One becomes free from such bondage because one learns to work as an "agent" rather than as an "enjoyer"—one learns to work for God, on His behalf. This is the essential teaching of the *Gītā*, and in its pages Kṛṣṇa takes Arjuna (and each of us) through each step of the yoga process.

2002

Gaura Pūrṇimā Festival and MIHE*

(Māyāpur, West Bengal)

SCHEDULE

- January 6**—Beginning of the MIHE Bhakti-śāstri Course
February 13—Opening Ceremonies of the MIHE Semester
February 14—First Week of the MIHE Semester
February 19—Advaita Ācārya's Appearance Day
February 21—Second Week of the MIHE Semester
February 25—Lord Nityānanda's Appearance Day
February 28—Third Week of the MIHE Semester
March 1—GBC Meetings begin
March 3—Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura's Appearance Day
March 7—Fourth Week of the MIHE Semester
March 12—GBC Meetings end. Devotees arrive for the Festival. Bhakti-śāstri Course breaks until April 15
March 13—Festival Begins. Seminars. Fifth Week of the MIHE Semester
March 18—Parikramā leaves Māyāpur
March 24—Parikramā returns to Māyāpur
March 28—Gaura Pūrṇimā
April 15—Bhakti-śāstri Course Reconvenes
June 21—Bhakti-sastri Course ends

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As an experiment, the MIHE will offer the Bhakti-śāstri Course tuition free, relying on donations to cover operating expenses. Students are responsible to cover their expenses for room, board, and course materials.

*Mayapur Institute for Higher Education

THE TOP RUNG

The *Gītā*'s entire sixth chapter is about Arjuna's rejection of conventional yoga. He describes it as impractical and "too difficult to perform," as it certainly is in our current age of distraction and degradation (known as Kali-yuga). Since the goal of yoga is to re-connect with God, *bhakti-yoga* rises above all the rest. According to Kṛṣṇa, Arjuna is the best of yogis because he has devotion to the Supreme Lord. Kṛṣṇa tells His devotee directly, "Of all yogis, he who always abides in Me with great faith, worshiping Me in transcendental loving service, is most intimately united with Me in yoga and is the highest of all."

This brings us back to the basic definition of the word *yoga*. The word comes from the Sanskrit root *yuj*, which means "to link up with, to combine." It is similar in meaning to *religio*, the Latin root of the word *religion*, which means "to bind together." Religion and yoga, therefore, have the same end in mind: combining or linking with God. This, again, is the essential purpose of the yoga process, and the end to which the *Gītā* hopes to bring its readers. 🌀

Satya-rāja 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 near New York City.

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 MATERIAL & SPIRITUAL OPULENCE

*Devahūti, the mother of Kapiladeva,
an incarnation of Kṛṣṇa, becomes detached from her opulent
home by dint of her steadfast yoga practice.*

CANTO 3: CHAPTER 33

17 स्वच्छस्फटिककुड्येषु महामारकतेषु च
रत्नप्रदीपा आभान्ति ललनारत्नसंयुताः

*svaccha-sphaṭika-kudyēṣu
mahā-mārakateṣu ca
ratna-pradīpā ābhānti
lalanā ratna-saṁyutāḥ*

svaccha—pure; *sphaṭika*—marble; *kudyēṣu*—on the walls; *mahā-mārakateṣu*—decorated with valuable emeralds; *ca*—and; *ratna-pradīpāḥ*—jewel lamps; *ābhānti*—shine; *lalanāḥ*—women; *ratna*—with jewelry; *saṁyutāḥ*—decorated.

The walls of the house were made of first-class marble, decorated with valuable jewels. There was no need of light, for the household was illuminated by the rays of these jewels. The female members of the household were all amply decorated with jewelry.

PURPORT: It is understood from this statement that the opulences of household life were exhibited in valuable jew-

els, ivory, first-class marble, and furniture made of gold and jewels. The clothes are also mentioned as being decorated with golden filigree. Everything actually had some value. It was not like the furniture of the present day, which is cast in valueless plastic or base metal. The way of Vedic civilization is that whatever was used in household affairs had to be valuable. In case of need, such items of value could be exchanged immediately. Thus one's broken and unwanted furniture and paraphernalia would never be without value. This system is still followed by Indians in household affairs. They keep metal utensils and golden ornaments or silver plates and valuable silk garments with gold embroidery, and in case of need, they can have some money in exchange immediately. There are exchanges for the moneylenders and the householders.

18 गृहोद्यानं कुसुमितै रम्यं बह्वमरद्रुमैः
कूजद्विहङ्गमिथुनं गायन्मत्तमधुव्रतम्

*gṛhodyānaṁ kusumitai
ramyaṁ bahv-amara-drumaiḥ
kūjad-vihaṅga-mithunam
gāyan-matta-madhuvratam*

grha-udyānam—the household garden; *kusumitaiḥ*—with flowers and fruits; *ramyam*—beautiful; *bahu-amara-drumaiḥ*—with many celestial trees; *kūjat*—singing; *vihāṅga*—of birds; *mithunam*—with pairs; *gāyat*—humming; *matta*—intoxicated; *madhu-vratam*—with bees.

The compound of the main household was surrounded by beautiful gardens, with sweet, fragrant flowers and many trees which produced fresh fruit and were tall and beautiful. The attraction of such gardens was that singing birds would sit on the trees, and their chanting voices, as well as the humming sound of the bees, made the whole atmosphere as pleasing as possible.

19 यत्र प्रविष्टमात्मानं विबुधानुचरा जगुः वाप्यामुत्पलगन्धिन्यां कर्दमेनोपलालितम्

*yatra praviṣṭam ātmānam
vibudhānucarā jaguḥ
vāpyām utpala-gandhinyām
kardamenopalālitam*

yatra—where; *praviṣṭam*—entered; *ātmānam*—unto her; *vibudha-anucarāḥ*—the associates of the denizens of heaven; *jaguḥ*—sang; *vāpyām*—in the pond; *utpala*—of lotuses; *gandhinyām*—with the fragrance; *kardamena*—by Kardama; *upalālitam*—treated with great care.

When Devahūti would enter that lovely garden to take her bath in the pond filled with lotus flowers, the associates of the denizens of heaven, the Gandharvas, would sing about Kardama's glorious household life. Her great husband, Kardama, gave her all protection at all times.

PURPORT: The ideal husband-and-wife relationship is very nicely described in this statement. Kardama Muni gave Devahūti all sorts of comforts in his duty as a husband, but he was not at all attached to his wife. As soon as his son, Kapiladeva, was grown up, Kardama at once left all family connection. Similarly, Devahūti was the daughter of a great king, Svāyambhuva Manu, and was qualified and beautiful, but she was completely dependent on the protection of her husband. According to Manu, women, the fair sex, should not have independence at any stage of life. ❶ In childhood a woman must be under the protection of the parents, in youth she must be under the

protection of the husband, and in old age she must be under the protection of the grown children. Devahūti demonstrated all these statements of the *Manu-saṁhitā* in her life: as a child she was dependent on her father, later she was dependent on her husband, in spite of her opulence, and she was later on dependent on her son, Kapiladeva.

20 हित्वा तदीप्सिततममप्याखण्डलयोषिताम् किञ्चिच्चकार वदनं पुत्रविश्लेषणातुरा

*hitvā tad īpsitatamam
apy ākhaṇḍala-yoṣitām
kiñcic cakāra vadanam
putra-viśleṣaṇāturā*

hitvā—having given up; *tad*—that household; *īpsita-tamam*—most desirable; *api*—even; *ākhaṇḍala-yoṣitām*—by the wives of Lord Indra; *kiñcic cakāra vadanam*—she wore a sorry look on her face; *putra-viśleṣaṇa*—by separation from her son; *āturā*—afflicted.

Although her position was unique from all points of view, saintly Devahūti, in spite of all her possessions, which were envied even by the ladies of the heavenly planets, gave up all such comforts. She was only sorry that her great son was separated from her.

PURPORT: Devahūti was not at all sorry at giving up her material comforts, but she was very much aggrieved at the separation of her son. It may be questioned here that if Devahūti was not at all sorry to give up the material comforts of life, then why was she sorry about losing her son?

❷ Why was she so attached to her son? The answer is explained in the next verse. He was not an ordinary son. Her son was the Supreme Personality of Godhead. One can give up material attachment, therefore, only when one has attachment for the Supreme Person. This is explained in *Bhagavad-gītā. Param dṛṣṭvā nivartate.* ❸ Only when one actually has some taste for spiritual existence can he be reluctant to follow the materialistic way of life.

21 वनं प्रव्रजिते पत्यावपत्यविरहातुरा ज्ञाततत्त्वाप्यभून्नष्टे वत्से गौरिव वत्सला

*vanam pravrajite patyāv
apatya-virahāturā
jñāta-tattvāpy abhūn naṣṭe
vatse gaur iva vatsalā*

vanam—to the forest; *pravrajite patyau*—when her husband left home; *apatya-viraha*—by separation from her son; *āturā*—very sorry; *jñāta-tattvā*—knowing the truth; *api*—although; *abhūt*—she became; *naṣṭe vatse*—when her calf is lost; *gauḥ*—a cow; *iva*—like; *vatsalā*—affectionate.

(1) In what way should a woman be protected throughout her life?

(2) Why was Devahūti so attached to her son?

(3) How does one become reluctant to follow the materialistic way of life?

Devahūti's husband had already left home and accepted the renounced order of life, and then her only son, Kapila, left home. Although she knew all the truths of life and death, and although her heart was cleansed of all dirt, she was very aggrieved at the loss of her son, just as a cow is affected when her calf dies.

PURPORT: A woman whose husband is away from home or has taken the renounced order of life should not be very sorry, because she still has the presence of her husband's representative, her son. It is said in the Vedic scriptures, *ātmaiva putro jāyate*: the husband's body is represented by the son. Strictly speaking, a woman is never widowed if she has a grown son. Devahūti was not very much affected while Kapila Muni was there, but upon His departure she was very afflicted. She grieved not because of her worldly relationship with Kardama Muni but because of her sincere love for the Personality of Godhead.

The example given here is that Devahūti became just like a cow who has lost her calf. A cow bereft of her calf cries day and night. Similarly, Devahūti was aggrieved, and she always cried and requested her friends and relatives, "Please bring my son home so that I may live. Otherwise, I shall die." This intense affection for the Supreme Lord, although manifested as affection for one's son, is spiritually beneficial. ④ Attachment for a material son obliges one to remain in material existence, but the same attachment, when transferred to the Supreme Lord, brings one elevation to the spiritual world in the association of the Lord.

Every woman can qualify herself as much as Devahūti and then can also have the Supreme Godhead as her son. If the Supreme Personality of Godhead can appear as the son of Devahūti, He can also appear as the son of any other woman, provided that woman is qualified. If one gets the Supreme Lord as a son, one can have the benefit of bringing up a nice son in this world and at the same time get promotion to the spiritual world to become the face-to-face associate of the Personality of Godhead.

22 तमेव ध्यायती देवमपत्यं कपिलं हरिम्
बभूवाचिरतो वत्स निःस्पृहा तादृशे गृहे

*tam eva dhyāyatī devam
apatyam kapilam harim
babhūvācirato vatsa
niḥsprhā tādr̥ṣe gr̥he*

tam—upon Him; *eva*—certainly; *dhyāyatī*—meditating; *devam*—divine; *apatyam*—son; *kapilam*—Lord Kapila; *harim*—the Supreme Personality of Godhead; *babhūva*—became; *acirataḥ*—very soon; *vatsa*—O dear Vidura; *niḥsprhā*—unattached; *tādr̥ṣe gr̥he*—to such a home.

O Vidura, thus always meditating upon her son, the Supreme

Personality of Godhead Kapiladeva, she very soon became unattached to her nicely decorated home.

PURPORT: Here is a practical example of how one can elevate oneself in spiritual advancement by Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Kapiladeva is Kṛṣṇa, and He appeared as the son of Devahūti. After Kapiladeva left home, Devahūti was absorbed in thought of Him, and thus she was always Kṛṣṇa conscious. Her constant situation in Kṛṣṇa consciousness enabled her to be detached from hearth and home.

Unless we are able to transfer our attachment to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, there is no possibility of becoming freed from material attachment. The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, therefore, confirms that it is not possible for one to become liberated by cultivation of empiric philosophical speculation. Simply knowing that one is not matter but spirit soul, or Brahman, does not purify one's intelligence. ⑤ Even if the impersonalist reaches the highest platform of spiritual realization, he falls down again to material attachment because of not being situated in the transcendental loving service of the Supreme Lord.

The devotees adopt the devotional process, hearing about the Supreme Lord's pastimes and glorifying His activities and thereby always remembering His beautiful eternal form. By rendering service, becoming His friend or His servant and offering Him everything that one possesses, one is able to enter into the kingdom of God. As it is said in *Bhagavad-gītā*, *tato māṁ tattvato jñātvā*: after discharging pure devotional service, one can understand the Supreme Personality of Godhead in fact, and thus one becomes eligible to enter into His association in one of the spiritual planets.

23 ध्यायती भगवद्रूपं यदाह ध्यानगोचरम्
सुतः प्रसन्नवदनं समस्तव्यस्तचिन्तया

*dhyāyatī bhagavad-rūpaṁ
yad āha dhyāna-gocaram
sutaḥ prasanna-vadanam
samasta-vyasta-cintayā*

dhyāyatī—meditating; *bhagavat-rūpaṁ*—upon the form of the Supreme Personality of Godhead; *yad*—which; *āha*—He instructed; *dhyāna-gocaram*—the object of meditation; *sutaḥ*—her son; *prasanna-vadanam*—with a smiling face; *samasta*—on the whole; *vyasta*—on the parts; *cintayā*—with her mind.

- (4) What are the respective results of attachment for one's son and attachment for the Supreme Lord?
(5) Why does the impersonalist fall from his platform of transcendental realization?

Thereafter, having heard with great eagerness and in all detail from her son, Kapiladeva, the eternally smiling Personality of Godhead, Devahūti began to meditate constantly upon the Viṣṇu form of the Supreme Lord.

- 24 भक्तिप्रवाहयोगेन वैराग्येण बलीयसा
युक्तानुष्ठानजातेन ज्ञानेन बह्वहेतुना
25 विशुद्धेन तदात्मानमात्मना विश्वतोमुखम्
स्वानुभूत्या तिरोभूतमायागुणविशेषणम्

*bhakti-pravāha-yogena
vairāgyeṇa baliyasā
yuktānuṣṭhāna-jātena
jñānena brahma-hetunā*

*viśuddhena tadātmānam
ātmanā viśvato-mukham
svānubhūtyā tirobhūta-
māyā-guṇa-viśeṣaṇam*

bhakti-pravāha-yogena—by continuous engagement in devotional service; *vairāgyeṇa*—by renunciation; *baliyasā*—very strong; *yukta-anuṣṭhāna*—by proper performance of duties; *jātena*—produced; *jñānena*—by knowledge; *brahma-hetunā*—due to realization of the Absolute Truth; *viśuddhena*—by purification; *tadā*—then; *ātmanā*—Supreme Personality of Godhead; *ātmanā*—with the mind; *viśvataḥ-mukham*—whose face is turned everywhere; *svānubhūtyā*—by self-realization; *tiraḥ-bhūta*—disappeared; *māyā-guṇa*—of the modes of material nature; *viśeṣaṇam*—distinctions.

She did so with serious engagement in devotional service. Because she was strong in renunciation, she accepted only the necessities of the body. She became situated in knowledge due to realization of the Absolute Truth, her heart became purified, she became fully absorbed in meditation upon the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and all misgivings due to the modes of material nature disappeared.

- 26 ब्रह्मण्यवस्थितमतिर्भगवत्यात्मसंश्रये
निवृत्तजीवापत्तिवात्क्षीणकूशासननिर्वृतिः

(6) Why is one who is engaged in devotional service to Kṛṣṇa understood to be already realized in the Brahman concept of life?

*brahmaṇy avasthita-matir
bhagavaty ātma-saṁśraye
nirvṛta-jīvāpattivāt
kṣīṇa-kleśāpta-nirvṛtiḥ*

brahmaṇi—in Brahman; *avasthita*—situated; *matih*—her mind; *bhagavati*—in the Supreme Personality of Godhead; *ātma-saṁśraye*—residing in all living entities; *nirvṛta*—freed; *jīva*—of the *jīva* soul; *āpattivāt*—from the unfortunate condition; *kṣīṇa*—disappeared; *kleśa*—material pang; *āpta*—attained; *nirvṛtiḥ*—transcendental bliss.

Her mind became completely engaged in the Supreme Lord, and she automatically realized the knowledge of the impersonal Brahman. As a Brahman-realized soul, she was freed from the designations of the materialistic concept of life. Thus all material pangs disappeared, and she attained transcendental bliss.

PURPORT: The previous verse states that Devahūti was already conversant with the Absolute Truth. It may be questioned why she was meditating. The explanation is that when one theoretically discusses the Absolute Truth, he becomes situated in the impersonal concept of the Absolute Truth. Similarly, when one seriously discusses the subject matter of the form, qualities, pastimes, and entourage of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, he becomes situated in meditation on Him. If one has complete knowledge of the Supreme Lord, then knowledge of the impersonal Brahman is automatically realized. The Absolute Truth is realized by the knower according to three different angles of vision, namely impersonal Brahman, localized Supersoul, and ultimately the Supreme Personality of Godhead. If one is situated, therefore, in knowledge of the Supreme Person, this implies that one is already situated in the concept of the Supersoul and impersonal Brahman.

In *Bhagavad-gītā* it is said, *brahma-bhūtaḥ prasannātmā* [Bg. 18.54]. This means that unless one is freed from the material entanglement and situated in Brahman, there is no question of entering into the understanding of devotional service or engaging in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. 6 One who is engaged in devotional service to Kṛṣṇa is understood to be already realized in the Brahman concept of life because transcendental knowledge of the Supreme Personality of Godhead includes knowledge of Brahman. This is confirmed in *Bhagavad-gītā*. *Brahmaṇo hi pratiṣṭhāham* [Bg. 14.27]; the concept of the Personality of Godhead does not depend on Brahman. The *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* also confirms that one who has taken shelter of the all-auspicious Supreme Lord is already situated in the understanding of Brahman. In other words, one who is a Vaiṣṇava is already a *brāhmaṇa*.

(continued in the next issue)

This is the defect of modern society. They do not care what is the real nature of God.

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THE PEOPLE ARE RASCALS (continued from page 15)

What is this nonsense? Is this humanity, do you think?

Director: Well, say two hundred years ago, people to survive the winter had to kill the—

Śrīla Prabhupāda: No, no. You take your mother's milk—and when your mother cannot supply milk, you kill her. What is this? Is this humanity?

And nature is so strong that for this injustice, for this sinfulness, you must suffer. You must be prepared to suffer. So there will be war, and people will be killed wholesale. Nature will not tolerate this.

People do not know all these things—how nature is working, how God is managing. They do not know God. This is the defect of modern society. They do not care what is the real nature of God. "We are scientists. We can do anything."

What can you do? Can you stop death? Nature says, "You must die. You may be Professor Einstein. That's all right. You must die."

Why have Einstein and other scientists not been able to discover the right medicine or process to stop death? They have never been able to declare, "No, no—we shall not die." They have no such power. So this is the defect of modern society: they are completely under the control of nature, and yet they are declaring "independence." Ignorance. Ignorance. So we want to reform this.

Director: Well, I certainly wish you luck.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Hmm. Thank you.

Director: As a public servant, I reform society as my life's work. To carry on as the instrument of . . .

Śrīla Prabhupāda: So kindly cooperate with us. Try to learn this philosophy, and you will be surprised how nice a philosophy it is.

Director: I'm quite sure.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes. So we don't care what percentage become reformed.

Let one person become an ideal man. Consider the same example as before: what is the percentage if we calculate one moon per many millions of stars? The percentage is practically nothing. But still, because we are talking about the moon, this one planet is more potent than all these stars. So produce a moon.

Director: Yes, but the moon in the sky is big and bright, and therefore, you can recognize it. But another man, to use your analogy, would probably appear like just another star.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: No, that's all right. Strictly speaking, you cannot make men as luminous as the moon, but it is possible if you make them ideal men.

Director: I know what you're saying, but a person would tell you, "You're just a man like me." You know. "You're not a moon. You're just a star. Whatever you say is just your opinion."

Śrīla Prabhupāda: No. If you approve this method, you can cooperate and illuminate the society in so many ways. First of all, you have to see what this nonsectarian method, this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, really is. About this method we are prepared to convince you—the first-class nature of this movement. Now, once you are convinced, try to cooperate. And induce other leaders. You are also one of the leaders. *Yad yad ācarati śreṣṭhas tat tad evetaro janaḥ*: if the leaders of the society become compassionate toward this movement, others will automatically follow. "Oh, our leaders, our minister—they are supporting this."

Director: Our minister considers himself a servant of the people, who can be kicked out by the people.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: That is the defect of modern society. The people are rascals—and they have elected another rascal. [Laughter.] That is the defect.

Director: But that's how it is.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: So what can be done? Then it is hopeless. But we are going on without depending on these rascals. We are going on. We are pub-

lishing our books; we are establishing our movement. We are honestly trying. That's all. That we are doing, all over the world.

Director: All we in government can do is allow you to convince the population that they should think and behave differently.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: We are doing that. Now, suppose we instruct the population, "Please do not have illicit sex—have sex only for procreation." Have you got any objection?

Director: Yes, I have. I like sex, and my wife likes sex. We just enjoy. We couldn't live without it. Our marriage is happier because we have sex.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Just see. [Chuckles.] This is the situation.

Director: This is the situation.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: So how have my disciples here accepted this principle of no illicit sex?

Director: I don't know. I don't know. But I couldn't. Our life is enjoying sex, and our marriage is happier with sex.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: No, we don't prohibit sex. We simply prohibit illicit sex.

Director: Well, we use the pill. Various contraceptives. We use all kinds of things.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Why do you use contraceptives?

Director: Because we don't want any more children.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Then why don't you stop sex?

Director: Because we like sex.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Just see. That is tantamount to your going to a physician and saying, "I want treatment, but still, I want to do whatever I like." That is the situation.

Director: I didn't come here for treatment. [Laughter.]

Śrīla Prabhupāda: [Chuckles.] No, no. You have come here for treatment, because with all your government activities, you have failed to control the society. Therefore, you have come here for treatment. But when I prescribe the proper medicine, you don't accept. ☸

For the Gentle and the Ruffians

At a festival in Poland, the Lord's holy names soothe souls to quell a threat.

by Indradyumna Swami

Each summer, His Holiness Indradyumna Swami heads up a group of devotees who put on dozens of Hare Kṛṣṇa festivals throughout Poland. Here he reports on two of this year's early festivals, revealing the challenges, the dangers, and the victories.

ON MAY 27, AS WE CHANTED through the streets of Thomaszow, a few antagonistic young men shouted obscenities at us. Others simply stood still as we passed by, their angry vision riveted on our *kīrtana* party. On top of that, I noticed that all the posters we had put up the night before (to cover those defaced earlier in the week) were again covered by a bright sticker: "Attention! Sect! Festival canceled!" It seemed a concerted effort was being made to stop our festival, and I sensed that the angry young men we encountered in the town were somehow connected with it.

As darkness descended on the festival that evening, the band was halfway through its repertoire. The kids loved it. Śrī Prahlaḍa and the musicians were in full form. Hundreds of youngsters were chanting and dancing, and many of us were thinking it was one of the band's best concerts ever. But just as they were starting their last song, suddenly chaos enveloped the scene.

I was standing beside the sound tent when I saw a big canister sail over the heads of the audience and land in the middle of the crowd in front of the stage. When it hit the ground, it exploded, spraying a huge cloud of pepper gas. All the kids started gagging. Within seconds, twenty young men dressed in black with big boots, and bandanas covering their faces, emerged from the darkness and attacked the crowd. Swinging baseball bats, iron bars, and chains, they beat devotees and guests indiscriminately. The first person they hit was a twelve-year-old girl. She fell to the ground,

Adapted from the unpublished *Diary of a Traveling Preacher*, Volume 3, Chapters 36 and 40. (Volumes 1 and 2 are available from the Hare Kṛṣṇa Bazaar. Please see page 66.)

Yamarāja Dāsa





bleeding from her head.

Before our security could respond, the neo-Nazi skinheads had injured many people as they swung their weapons in all directions. Premaharināma Dāsa, one of my disciples from Bosnia, was also one of the first to go down, with a heavy blow to his forehead. Blood gushed from the wound. Eka-nātha Dāsa was hit with a baseball bat in the face, and when he fell the skinheads kept beating him as he lay on the ground.

Guests were falling left and right as the skinheads, screaming right-wing political slogans, hit their victims with vicious blows. Vaikuṅṭhapaṭi, Rakṣana, and Śrī Bhāṣya, three members of our security force, descended on the attackers with a fury. Along with Vara-nayaka Dāsa, a number of guests also fought the skinheads with chairs and tables. In the midst of it all, male devotees were screaming to the women to run to the bus parked nearby.

Outside the melee, people called the police on their cell phones. As more people joined the fight, the skinheads retreated, only to reassemble and attack again. One of them jumped into our gift shop, where Taralakṣī Dāsī smashed him with a chair. Then, as suddenly as they had appeared, they were all gone, having escaped into the darkness.

Along with the five injured devotees, some injured guests were lying on the ground. There was blood everywhere. Ten minutes later an ambulance arrived and took the most seriously injured to the hospital. A long twenty minutes later the police finally arrived—although they had been only two blocks away. Strangely enough, they were not interested in making a report on the attack and said they couldn't offer us any protection for the rest of the night. They said they had only three men on duty in the entire town. We felt there might have been a connection between the police and the attackers. We even suspected that the local Church might be involved. All day long people were telling us that local priests had been calling to warn them not to come to the festival.

To my surprise, many people stayed and milled around the festival site after the attack. They were angry that

such a peaceful event had been so brutally disrupted. People were talking about religious intolerance and discrimination, a common subject at this time in Poland. But I was nervous that so many people remained. I was afraid the skinheads would return to finish off what they'd started. Vara-nayaka, himself injured in the fight, ordered that all the trucks, cars, tents, and paraphernalia be brought into the center of the field so we could protect them more easily.

After deliberating for some time, we decided to dismantle the festival and pack everything up. It was too risky to stay; our security force was not prepared to deal with so many well-armed

men. We had needed help from our guests to repulse the attackers. We decided to cancel the second day of the festival.

Nandinī Dāsī and Rādhā Sakhī Vṛnda Dāsī went to the hospital to check on the injured devotees. Their wounds required many stitches, but fortunately none of their injuries were serious.

We sent all the other women back to our base in the bus, while all the men stayed behind to protect the crew who were breaking down the festival site. Several carloads of skinheads arrived two hours later, but we made a show of force, and they retreated. We all arrived back at our base at 4:00 A.M.

A DANGEROUS CITY

About two weeks later, on June 12 we packed up after a successful festival in Gorzow Wielkopolski and headed south, back towards Lodz, to begin final preparations for our festival there. Gorzow Wielkopolski had been a picnic for the devotees. We were special guests in the city, and the authorities had made all the arrangements for our festival. Devotees were relaxed and had enjoyed the preaching, but the light mood gradually changed as we drove south.

The attack on our festival in Tomaszow, near Lodz, was still fresh in the devotees' minds, and word had spread among them that our professional security team (hired after the Tomaszow incident) felt that Lodz was the most dangerous city in Poland. Although we were well received when we chanted on the streets in Lodz before leaving for Gorzow Wielkopolski, the writing was literally on the walls in Lodz. The all-pervading graffiti in the city revealed the hate and frustration of many of the youth there: "Poland for Poles," "Death to Jews," and "Nazis Rule Here" are favored slogans on the sides of buildings everywhere. Lodz is an industrial town with lots of factories, but many people are out of work. Boredom and frustration give rise to the sentiments of xenophobia (extreme nationalism) that caused the attack on our festival in Tomaszow.

The further south we drove the worse the weather became. Big black clouds hovered overhead as we passed Lodz and neared our base.

After looking out the window, one devotee turned to me and said, "Mahārāja, some devotees feel we're asking for trouble by doing a festival in Lodz. They say the same people who attacked us in Tomaszow may come back."

"We shouldn't worry," I replied. "Devotees are not afraid to defend themselves if necessary."

I quoted from a class by Śrīla Prabhupāda in London in July 1973: "Vaiṣṇavas do not simply chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. If there is need, they can fight under the guidance of Viṣṇu and become victorious. . . . Generally, a Vaiṣṇava is nonviolent, [however] if

RECOMMENDED WEBSITES



www.Prabhupada.com
www.VedaBase.com

Founded in 1978, the Bhaktivedanta Archives is the official repository for the films, photographs, documents, manuscripts, correspondence, audio recordings, and other memorabilia of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, founder-ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

The Bhaktivedanta Archives site www.Prabhupada.com shows some of the work and holdings of the Archives, including rare photographs of Śrīla Prabhupāda and conversations between him and prominent people. The site offers two free email newsletters and is updated regularly with interesting and stimulating images, articles, and information about Śrīla Prabhupāda.

The Bhaktivedanta VedaBase© website www.VedaBase.com supports the searchable database of Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings. The site provides product information and instructions. The new "forum" feature allows visitors to ask questions and get answers from experienced users.

Two things weighed heavily on my mind: the frustrated youth of Lodz and the dark rain clouds that hung over the city.

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Kṛṣṇa wants we shall be prepared to become violent also.”

“But if there’s trouble,” I said, “we won’t do the fighting. We’re well protected by our hired security team for the entire three-day festival. Don’t worry, their very presence will act as a deterrent to anyone who would want to harm us. We must go ahead with the festival. Many interested people are expressing a desire to come. All the major local newspapers have written articles about the festival. If there’s anything we should worry about it’s those dark clouds above. They’re our most formidable enemy right now.”

Not wanting to worry the devotee, I didn’t share with him the advice our security firm’s manager had given me at a recent meeting.

“Despite all the security we’re offering you,” he had said, “there’s still one way your enemies can stop this festival for good.”

“What’s that?” I asked.

Looking at me intently, he said, “Take you out.”

Coming closer, he continued, “You have to take certain precautions from now on. From the attack in Tomaszow it’s obvious that some people will go to any extreme to try to stop your festival. Here’s a brochure describing different types of bulletproof vests. You’d be wise to place an order.”

Taken aback, I thought, “A bullet-proof vest! What would the *sannyāsīs* of yore think of that? They were carrying only a water pot and a staff, and here I’ll be wearing a bullet-proof vest and carrying a can of CS tear gas and a fighting stick tucked into my *dhoti!*”

I was going to reply that Kṛṣṇa protects His devotees, but I realized that Kṛṣṇa expects His devotees to use their intelligence as well.

“It’s your decision,” the security team manager continued, “but don’t underestimate your enemies.”

I pushed the brochure back across the table . . . and he pushed it back.

“We’re not playing games here,” he said. “Give me your measurements.”

CLOUDS AND SKINHEADS

When we arrived back at our base near Lodz, a letter was waiting for us from the police in Tomaszow investigating the attack on our festival. They discovered that on the day of our program a van had been rented by a priest in the town of Czestochowa, fifty kilometers south of Tomaszow, which had transported fifteen tough-looking young men to a parking lot not far from our program. Witnesses had seen the young men hurrying to the festival site near the end of our program, and twenty minutes later running back to the van and speeding off. Further evidence indicates that these young men may have been responsible for the havoc that night. The investigation is continuing, and legal action is to be taken at its completion.

The night before the first day of the Lodz festival, I tossed and turned in bed, unable to sleep. I was worried. I knew it could be a huge festival, if only because we had done more advertising for it than any festival before. We had distributed almost 50,000 invitations, put up more than 1,000 posters, and had been featured throughout the media. But two things weighed heavily on my mind: the frustrated youth of Lodz and the dark rain clouds that hung over the city.

When I woke up in the morning after a brief sleep, the first thing I did was look out the window. The clouds were darker than on the previous day, and I could feel the air thick with moisture. I asked a devotee to buy a newspaper, and when it came, my worst apprehensions were confirmed—the weather report predicted rain. But my eye

caught another concern, which hadn’t been brought to my attention: Not far from our outdoor festival, and at the same time, there was to be a major soccer match, a sure sign of trouble.

I worshiped my deities, Lakṣmī-Nṛsiṃhadeva, with all the devotion I could muster, ran through the whole morning program with the devotees, and after *prasādam* put everyone onto our buses to the festival site. Under ominous clouds, we worked for many hours setting everything up. At 4:30 P.M. we opened the festival to a small crowd. After an hour, the crowd had grown to only 2,000 people. We often get 10,000 or more, and I attributed the relatively poor attendance to the possibility of rain. But as time passed, the rain held off and things were going smoothly.

The fifteen men on the security team, however, appeared somewhat nervous, apparently knowing the nature of the youth in Lodz and the fact that any trouble at the nearby soccer match could easily spill into our festival. But I couldn’t see how these men had anything to worry about; each one of them was over six and a half feet tall and built like a fighting machine, with huge muscles, fierce eyes, and scowls on their faces. They were dressed in black and armed with various weapons.

HOLD THE PRASĀDAM

At one point, I approached the man in charge of security and asked if everything was all right. He replied that we didn’t have to worry but he did want to speak to me about one thing. I agreed and we sat down to talk.

“Mahārāja,” he said, “I don’t want my men eating your food anymore. During the last festivals your devotees have been giving them all kinds of things to eat from your restaurant.”

“Are you worried there may be

Some of the skinheads stood as if dazed, then slowly began repeating the words of the mantra.

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drugs in the food?" I asked.

"No," he replied, "I know your pure standards. The problem is that your food has a special effect on my men. It makes them become like all of you."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"It makes them smile all the time. It makes them soft and loving and compassionate. These men have to be tough to do this job. Your food is turning my lions into lambs! Just look over there."

I glanced over toward our restaurant and saw two of his men eating *samosās* while laughing and joking with the devotees in a relaxed manner.

"They were never like that before," he said. "It's the food, the singing, and the whole atmosphere!"

"OK," I consented, "when the festival season is over, we'll give them *prasādam* to take home."

I wandered over to the stage just as Śrī Prahlāda and the Village of Peace reggae band started to play. Darkness was setting in, but I could still see the security men dressed in black guarding the stage. As Śrī Prahlāda and the band broke into a number chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, I looked closely at the security men and saw the words of their chief come true: They were swaying slightly back and forth, chanting the holy names. I left it to the chief to tell them not to sing on the job. For me it was once again confirmation of the power of the holy names to turn hearts of steel into soft butter.

After days of worrying about the festival, I started to relax, seeing our preaching bear fruit.

ANOTHER GANG

Then I saw them coming. A big gang of young men appeared on the field. I recognized them by their attire—skinheads. Dressed in black boots, tight Levi's, and T-shirts, they moved slowly toward the crowd. Their faces showed the same hate and anger I'd seen on numerous occasions on the street, and

at the festival in Tomaszow in particular. The ominous words of the devotee I had spoken to a few days earlier came to mind: "Mahārāja, some devotees feel we're asking for trouble by doing a festival in Lodz. They say the same people who attacked us in Tomaszow may come back."

I looked to the left and right and saw our security men move in closer and brace themselves for trouble. The skinheads went slowly through the festival area, keeping in a big group, as they always do. As they moved around, people backed away. Some started to leave, fearing violence. I looked again toward the security men, who were meeting hastily, obviously planning a strategy if a fight broke out. The situation was tense, and my adrenaline was running. I touched my jacket to make sure my tear gas and fighting stick were still in my pocket.

The skinheads moved quickly into the crowd of young people dancing before the stage and stood there for a moment, as if waiting for a signal. The security men started moving toward them. Śrī Prahlāda and the band, oblivious of the danger, were singing another song with the *mahā-mantra*, chanting the holy names loudly while the drummer played a driving beat that had the kids dancing wildly. I jumped onto the stage, figuring it would be a vantage point if there was a fight.

Suddenly, to my amazement I saw a few of the skinheads start to tap their big black boots to the music. Then, as our powerful sound system carried the *mahā-mantra* far and wide, some of the skinheads stood as if dazed, then slowly began repeating the words of the mantra. After a few minutes, all of them were chanting and swaying back and forth—a little self-conscious at first, but as soon as the kids saw them chanting, they grabbed them and pulled them into the *kīrtana*, and they started dancing wildly. Eventually they were completely absorbed in the *kīr-*

tana, chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa at the top of their lungs and twirling and dancing with abandon. I sat down at the front of the stage in utter astonishment. The security men backed off to their original position, smiling to themselves.

"What's happening here?" I wondered. "How is it that these young men who came here intent on fighting are now laughing and dancing along with the devotees? How has this sudden change of heart come over them?"

I looked at Śrī Prahlāda, perspiring profusely as he chanted the holy names with deep faith and conviction from the stage, leaping and twirling through the air. I looked at the audience again and saw skinheads, teenagers, children, and adults all holding hands, dancing in a big circle. Lit by the stage lights, they looked like a huge firebrand being twirled around.

As the *kīrtana* went on, I sat there in amazement.

"This is what it must have been like during the time of Lord Caitanya," I thought. "The gentle and the ruffians chanting the holy names together in ecstasy by the unfathomable mercy of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu."

Knowing it to be one of those rare occasions we witness only once in a great while in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, I relished the moment.

Then suddenly the band stopped and the *kīrtana* was over. The skinheads, laughing and enjoying themselves, turned around and walked out of the festival grounds. In a few minutes they were gone—although you could still hear them from a distance, singing Hare Kṛṣṇa. ☸

Indradyumna Swami, a senior disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda, accepted sannyāsa, the renounced order of life, in 1979. Readers interested in receiving chapters of Diary of a Traveling Preacher by email as they come out can write to indradyumna.swami@pamho.net.

Gatherings

The people listed here hold Kṛṣṇa conscious gatherings regularly in their homes—or they'd like to start. You're invited. Just give a call to find out when and where. If you hold Kṛṣṇa conscious gatherings and you'd like to be added to the list, please send your name, city, and phone number to Gatherings, BTG, P. O. Box 430, Alachua, FL 32616, USA.

USA

ARKANSAS: Fayetteville — Hlādini Śakti Dāsa & Manmohini Devī Dāsī, (501) 443-4723

CALIFORNIA: To find out about programs in **Anaheim Hills, Buena Park, Cerritos, Corona, Diamond Bar, Granada Hills, Laguna Niguel, Long Beach, Redlands, Santa Ana, Simi Valley**, and other southern California locations, call Svayambhuva Dāsa at (310) 837-2430; **Alpine** — Rādhānātha Dāsa, (619) 659-5728; **Burlingame** — Vaiṣeṣika Dāsa & Nirākula Devī Dāsī, (650) 344-2446; **Ojai** — Urvaśī Devī Dāsī, (805) 646-7572; **Penn Valley** — Rick & Judy Gross, (530) 432-0854; **Placentia** — Sri Rādhā Raman Temple, (714) 996-7262; **Redwood Valley** — Prasanna Yoga Ashram (Īkṣvāku Dāsa), (707) 485-5592; ***Sacramento** — Gaṇapati Dāsa & Mālatī Devī Dāsī, (916) 929-4557; **San Jose/Santa Cruz** — Akrūranātha Dāsa & Jagarīṇī Devī Dāsī, (408) 353-9099

FLORIDA: Coral Springs — Institute for Gaudiya Vaishnavism, (954) 345-3456; **Orlando** — ISKCON Sunday Program, Shanti Mandir, [call Dīpa: (407) 788-7009]; ***Jaya Śīla Dāsa**, (407) 290-1956; **West Palm Beach** — Śreṣṭha Devī Dāsī, (561) 712-8470

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IOWA: Iowa City — Dan & Sylvia Lindberg, (319) 351-0801

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BRAZIL: Curitiba — Gaura-Natarāja Dāsa, +55 (041) 263-4163

BRITISH ISLES (Jersey): St. Helier — Jean Nicolle, (01534) 610081

CANADA: Edmonton, Alberta — Omkāra Dāsa and Jadurāṇī Devī Dāsī (Om & Jyoti Sharma), (403) 434-7343; **London, Ontario** — Rādhika Parbhoo, (519) 474-2153; **Markham, Ontario** — Prabhupāda Dāsa (V. B. Sharma), (416) 294-9431; **Salmon Arm, B.C.** — Mukunda Mādhava Dāsa & Yaśodā Priyā Devī Dāsī, 6191 Trans-Canada Hwy. NW, Salmon Arm, B.C. V1E 4M2 (no phone); **Toronto** — Rāmānanda Rāya Dāsa & Viśākhā Devī Dāsī, (416) 297-6131

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GERMANY: Hamburg — Jayagaura Dāsa, +49 (40) 410-2848 or +49 (4105) 12347; Vedic Cultural Mission, (040) 655 23 72; **Weimar** — Katharina Rauch, Am Jakobsfriedhof 1, D-99423

GREECE: Greater Patras Area — Pānagādi-tīrtha Dāsa, (06) 963-2930

HUNGARY: Līter — Torok Zoltan, Bajcsy Zs. u. 56, Līter 8196

ITALY: Belforte del Chienti — Centro Culturale Govinda Bhavan, Mahāvākya Dāsa & Divya Kathā Devī Dāsī, (0733) 951102

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*New or revised listing.

THE RIDE TO RAMA GIRI

(continued from page 23)

were a group of Maharastrian villagers. Some walked barefoot, not for want of shoes, but for the higher merit accrued for the austerity.

As the last curve of the road widened to the top, we found ourselves before the steep rock wall of Rama Giri fort. I was to learn that the fort was built several centuries ago by kings of the Bhonsle clan. Rama Giri was chosen as the fort's site for two reasons: (1) strategically, the hill offers a 360-degree view of the surrounding area, which it was the kings' duty to protect, and (2) Vedic kings, even as late as the eighteenth century, were impelled by their burning religious convictions to guard holy areas.

In 1827, however, after the Bhonsle warriors suffered defeat at the hands of British invaders at the Battle of Sitalbuldi, their reign over the area rapidly deteriorated. Today the fort with its old tanks and temples is a protected

monument, a historical oddity frozen in time.

After parking the Enfields, we paid our obeisances to the huge, rare deity of Lord Viṣṇu-Varāha who overlooks the valley and the fort. This is one of two giant Varāha deities weighing several tons that I know of. There are two Varāha temples in Mathura, ancient ones visited by Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, as documented by "the king of poets" Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja in his most inspiring *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. There is also a beautiful white marble deity of Lord Varāha worshiped in a fine temple along the shores of Pushkar Lake in Rajasthan. But the only other deity of Lord Varāha of this immense size is the *svayambhū* ("self-manifested") Śrī Viṣṇu-Varāhajī of Majholi, Madhya Pradesh. I was unable to ascertain the ancient history of the Ram Giri Varāhajī, probably one of the two largest in all of India. After garlanding Lord Varāha and receiving *prasādam* from the

priest, Anukaran and I entered the ashram of Agastya Muni.

Lavishly preserved in marble and carefully maintained by a group of devoted sadhus, the hermitage has been developed as a pilgrims' destination of much importance. Even the *yajñasālā*, the holy place of fire sacrifice where the *ṛṣi* received Lord Rāma, has been continuously maintained since Tretā-yuga. An iron door has been installed over Agastya's deep cave of meditation; only select yogis are allowed entrance into the chamber, called Hatiphor. The ashram's astute crew of ascetics display extreme care in the upkeep and worship of Saint Agastya's shrine. Their devotion reveals that they have correctly understood the place's Purāṇic significance.

Beyond Agastya Muni's peaceful cave is a large group of temples, the first of which is dedicated to Lakṣmaṇa, who led the way to Rama Giri, announcing to the sages the arrival of his brother and sister-in-law. This explains

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why the Lakṣmaṇa Mandir is first. The other temples are separately dedicated to Lord Rāma, Goddess Sītā, and Bhakta Hanumān.

The local history of the deities is noteworthy. In 1736 King Raghu Bhonsle visited Rama Giri only to discover that just the *pādukas*—or wooden sandals—of Lord Rāma were being worshiped. The deities were no longer present. The king vowed to commission Jaipur deities for the temple. But once the sacred *mūrtis* were prepared for temple installation—*prāṇa-pratiṣṭha*—the king had a dream in which Lord Rāma told him to search under the waters of the River Sur a few miles north. Finally, in 1753, the original deities were discovered and re-installed atop Rama Giri amidst much festivity and celebration. The Jaipur deities are privately cared for in a reserved area.

Anukaran and I lingered at each temple, offering whatever rupees we had to spare. After *darśana*, we climbed up the steps to the top of the fortress wall to view the vast valley of farmland, lakes, and tiny villages encircling Rama Giri. Gently at first, the sound of *kīrtana*, the *yuga-dharma* of chanting of the Lord's holy name, wafted up from the temple room, accompanied by the ringing of *karatālas* (hand cymbals). The *pāda-yātri* pilgrims we had passed on the road were now sitting peacefully before Lord Rāma's deity, singing His

holy names. Now every face within earshot reflected blissful meditation upon God. [See the sidebar "The Power of Rāma's Name."]

MORE ENFIELDS TO RAMA GIRI

We fell into silence as our attention now drifted to the pristine beauty of the sacred lake below, Ambala Kund. Around the still waters of the lake, temples and shade trees dot the shore. The lake is said to have been named for King Amba, who was cured of a terrible disease after his bath in these waters, which originate from an underground river called Patala Ganga.

In the eighteenth century King Raghu Bhonsle had the lake and many of

the shore temples renovated with fine stone work. These temples include those of Jagannātha, Pañcamukhī Mahādeva ("five-faced Śiva"), and Sūrya Nārāyaṇa (the Sun incarnation of Viṣṇu).

Carried more by spiritual energy than reason at this point, Anukaran and I found ourselves in the saddles of the Enfields, riding downhill toward Ambala Kund. Finding a shady spot, we pulled over. The noonday sun overhead told me it was time for my Gāyatrī meditation. After a dip and prayers, the silence was broken when Anukaran mused, "I've ridden by Rama Giri many times with the Enfield Club, but somehow the beauty and meaning of the place were never before revealed to me."

I'm back in San Francisco now, catching up on bills and household concerns. The trip to India, like so many I've taken there, now seems almost like a dream. Yesterday I checked my email and got this message: "The other members of the Enfield Club are eager to visit Rama Giri on our next ride. Hare Krishna. Anukaran." ❁

Patita Pāvana Dāsa was initiated by Śrīla Prabhupāda in 1968. He has written three books on Kṛṣṇa conscious astrology (available from Sagar Publications in India) and a guidebook to Vṛndāvana (available, as is Shri Pushpanjali, from The Hare Kṛṣṇa Bazaar.)

NOTE: Devotee-pilgrims who would like to visit Ram Tek and Rama Giri may make arrangements with the devotees at ISKCON Nagpur's Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Mādhava Temple.

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 59.)

SPIRITUAL PLACES

(continued from page 14)

Another inconvenience may be our own inability to travel. Another may be our sense of personal disqualification to enter the mood of a *tīrtha*. Lord Caitanya's devotees never visited the temples on Govardhana Hill, and it's questionable whether Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī ever bathed in Radha-kunda. Many of Lord Caitanya's Navadvīpa followers never went to Vṛndāvana.

Visiting a *tīrtha* requires qualification. Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura indicates this in his *Navadvīpa-bhāva-taraṅga*. After mentioning Īśodyāna, which he calls "the Lord's garden," he writes that if anyone visits this place in Navadvīpa, he will find only thorns. Still, those with qualified vision will be able to see the Lord's garden through his descriptions of it. No holy place can actually be "seen" without qualified vision.

While holy places maintain an actual physical integrity, they also maintain an integrity in the descriptions found in devotional literature. During Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta's time, a conflict ended in Indians killing a British officer and the British lining up their cannons and destroying a temple. Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī noted that although the British thought they had smashed Kṛṣṇa, they had done nothing more than destroy a temple.

If a *tīrtha* disappears from our vision because of politics or time, we can remember it and see it by submissively reading the scriptures. A *tīrtha* is revealed by the mercy of a pure devotee and is seen through the ears.

The scriptures also tell us that we are not required to travel the world visiting holy places. There is always the tendency for pilgrimage to turn into wanderlust, which results only in a superficial sightseeing. Although some devotees can sustain a feeling of Kṛṣṇa conscious intensity when on pilgrimage, others are better able to meditate on Kṛṣṇa and His *tīrthas* while serving in the place assigned to them by their spiritual master. We have limited energy in this lifetime; visiting *tīrthas* can become an entire service in itself if it is done frequently. Often, our spiritual master has assigned us a service other than pilgrimage, and we make more advancement by following his order than by going to *tīrthas*.

Narottama Dāsa Ṭhākura has assured us that we can visit all the holy places simply by visiting Vṛndāvana or Māyāpur. He also says that in Kali-yuga, pilgrimage is as much a source of bewilderment as of enlightenment. The real service to a holy place is to meditate upon the event that took place there, and it is just as potent to compose ourselves in our own place, meditate on the significance of the particular place, and to then allow the

mood of that place to imbue our service with new life.

Every holy place has an internal reality. We are not always qualified to see it, especially if we remain outsiders to the mood. That is not only true of places like Vṛndāvana and Māyāpur, but in ISKCON temples too. If we wish to really take advantage of the spiritual and historical authenticity of a particular place, we must learn to see with eyes of devotion. When Arjuna and his brothers were being taught archery, only Arjuna was able to see nothing but the eye of the target bird. Only he was successful at hitting the target.

Similarly, we must learn to see to the heart of a place and not focus only on the externals, the apparent faults or shortcomings according to our estimations. We must see the saintly people living there and see a little of their purpose in serving their holy place. If we wish to find the spiritual essence of any holy place, we must learn to appreciate both the service and the mood with which it is offered there. Without that vision, we will always remain outsiders, even in the most spiritually authentic place. ❁

Satsvarūpa 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.

GOVINDA (continued from page 10)

Actually our position is that we are always rendering service to someone. We are always serving our bodies and the extensions of our bodies in the form of family, society, country, and so on. If a person has no one to serve, he sometimes keeps a pet cat or dog and renders service unto it. Constitutionally we are made to render service to the Supreme Person, but when we deny that person we are forced to render service to something else. In any case, the rendering of service will be there, and that rendering of service is called *sanātana-dharma*, or the eternal activity or occupation of the living entity.

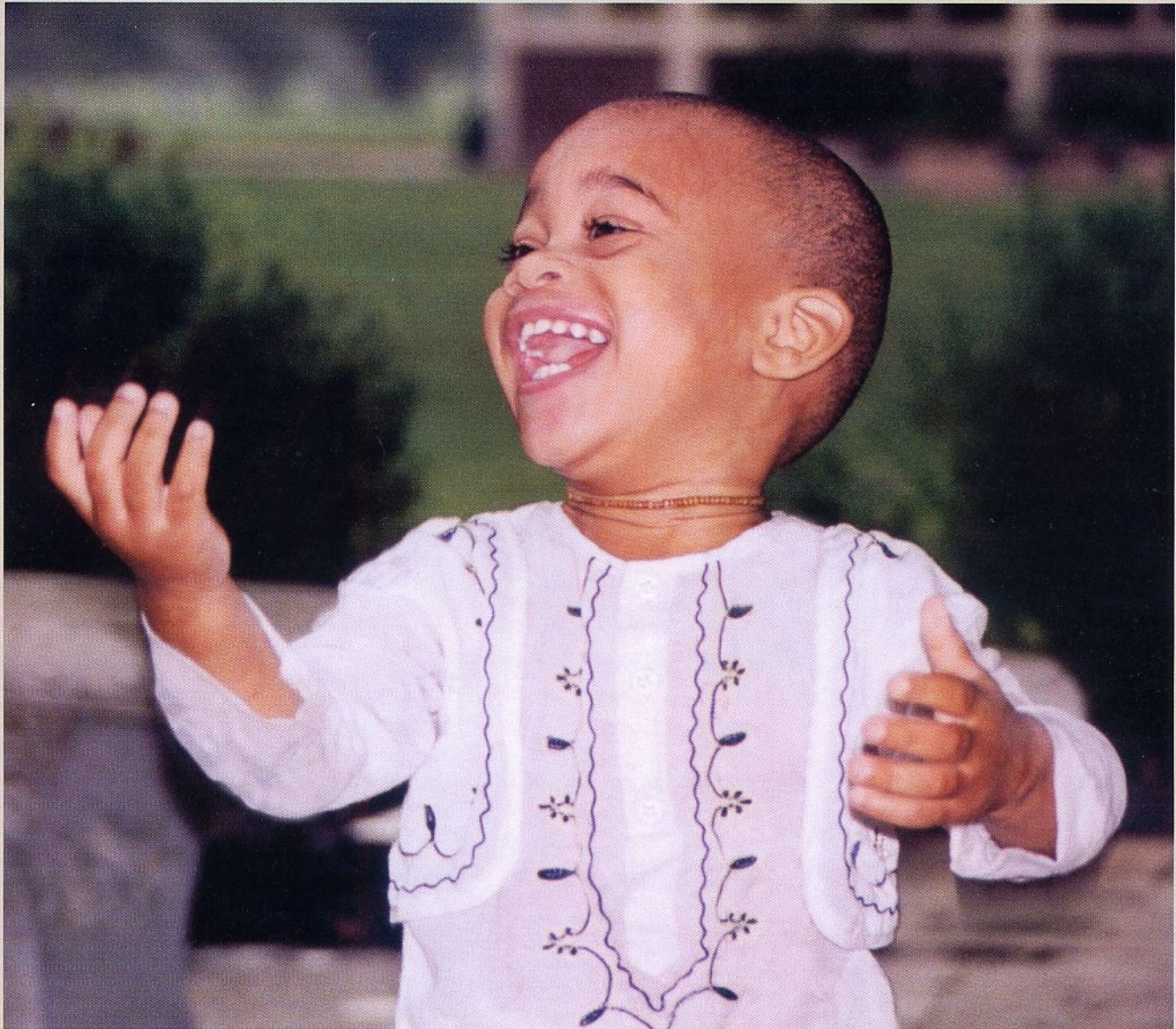
On the material platform, despite rendering service to our best capacity,

we are never satisfied. In the material conception, everyone is frustrated, because the service rendered is not properly directed. If we want to render service to a tree, we must water its roots, not just its branches and leaves. Similarly, if the stomach is given food, all the other parts of the body are nourished. We should understand therefore that if the Supreme Personality of Godhead is served, all His parts and parcels will be satisfied also. Therefore all welfare activities, including all service to society, family, and nation, are perfected by serving the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

In a conversation with his disciple Nārada Muni, Lord Brahmā made the following statement: "The Vedic literatures are made by and are meant

for the Supreme Lord. The demigods are also meant to serve the Lord as parts of the body, the different planets are also meant for the sake of the Lord, and different sacrifices are performed just to please Him. All different types of meditation or mysticism are meant to realize Him. All austerities are aimed at achieving Him. Culture of transcendental knowledge is for getting a glimpse of Him, and ultimately salvation is in entering His kingdom." (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.5.15-16) By following in the footsteps of Lord Brahmā, we can attain that ultimate salvation and glimpse that Supreme Person worshiped by Lord Brahmā and all other demigods in the universe.

Thank you very much. ❁



Nārada Muni Dāsa, Alachua, Florida

HARE KṚṢṆA, HARE KṚṢṆA
KṚṢṆA KṚṢṆA, HARE HARE
HARE RĀMA, HARE RĀMA
RĀMA RĀMA, HARE HARE

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



Painting by Muralidhara Dāsa

Thirty Days In Kṛṣṇa's L

In remote corners of Vṛndāvana, pilgrims find little known places of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes and get a clearer view into their own hearts.

by Lokanāth Swami

Photos by Nṛsiṃha Kavaca Dāsa

THE VRAJA Maṇḍala Parikramā* is a walking pilgrimage throughout the land of Vraja, or Mathura, the district in North India where Lord Kṛṣṇa appeared five thousand years ago. Devotees walk the entire *parikramā* path, stopping at the places where Kṛṣṇa performed His pastimes. Vraja Maṇḍala Parikramā can be considered *pāda-sevanam* (serving Śrī Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet), one of the nine forms of devotional service.

Within Mathura, the Yamuna River and the twelve forests of Vṛndāvana form the stage for the divine play of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's transcendental pastimes. Lord Kṛṣṇa presides over the seven forests on the Yamuna's western bank: Madhuvan, Talavan, Kumudavan, Bahulavan, Vṛndāvana, Kamyavan, Khadiravan. And Lord Balarāma rules the five forests decorating the eastern bank: Bhadravan, Bhandiravan, Bilvavan, Lohavan, and Mahavan. These twelve beautiful forests are the most important places of pilgrimage.

*Vraja Maṇḍala: the greater Vṛndāvana area; Parikramā: "circumambulation."

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself, set an example by touring Vṛndāvana's twelve forests. While Lord Caitanya was performing the *parikramā*, the residents said:

Who says He is a *sannyāsi*? He is Kṛṣṇa Himself appearing in this dress and form. Just see the proof. Different birds are all coming for His *darśana* [audience]. The cuckoos and parrots are happily addressing Him as Kṛṣṇa, and the peacocks are dancing in jubilation. See the wonderful blooming of the trees! O brother, just see the creepers showering flowers on this person, who is disguised as a *sannyāsi*. The deer are coming near Him and staring undivertedly towards His face. All the cows are coming running from all sides with raised tails, and they also look at His face. By the tears of ecstasy falling from the eyes of these creatures, we can understand that they are meeting Him after a long period of time.

—From the book *Mathurā Maṇḍala Parikramā*, based on Śrīla Narahari Cakravartī Ṭhākura's *Bhakti Ratnākara*

The six Gosvāmīs and other associates of Lord Caitanya, as well as thousands of faithful in His line (Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas) throughout the centuries, have enthusiastically executed Vraja Maṇḍala Parikramā, a blissful form of devotional service. In October 1932, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, the spiritual master of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda, led a group of more than a thousand disciples and other pilgrims on a month-long *parikramā* of the sacred places of Vṛndāvana. It was one of the largest *parikramās* ever seen in Vṛndāvana. Śrīla Prabhupāda, then a married man living in Allahabad, traveled to Vṛndāvana intent on seeing Bhakti-

and



siddhānta Sarasvatī and hoping to join the *parikramā* party.

“I was not initiated at the time of the *parikramā*,” Śrīla Prabhupāda recalled, “but I had very good admiration for these Gaudiya Math people. They were very kind to me, so I thought, ‘What are these people doing in this *parikramā*? Let me go.’ So I met them at Kosi.”

Today dozens of groups of devotees from different parts of India still perform the *padayātrā* (walking festival) of Vraja Maṇḍala to see and hear about the places of Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes. Every year during the month of Kārtika (Oct.–Nov.), Kṛṣṇa devotees taste the ecstasy of circumambulating Śrī Vṛndāvana Dhāma. Besides being a wonderful way to see and serve Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s transcendental land, Vraja Maṇḍala Parikramā purifies one’s consciousness.

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has described

When Lord Caitanya visited Vṛndāvana five centuries ago (far left), the deer recognized Him as their beloved Kṛṣṇa. A pilgrim makes creative use of a leaf plate (below) to protect her from Vraja’s intense sun. Background: a temple near Govardhana Hill.





Vraja: "I remember the Lord standing by the banks of the Yamuna River, so beautiful amid the *kadamba* trees, where many birds are chirping in the gardens. And these impressions are always giving me transcendental realization of beauty and bliss." Even non-devotees can feel the bliss described by Rūpa Gosvāmī. The places in the eighty-four-square-mile district of Mathura and Vṛndāvana are so beautifully situated on the banks of the river Yamuna that anyone who goes there will never want to return to this material world.

SIMPLE, SACRED LIFE

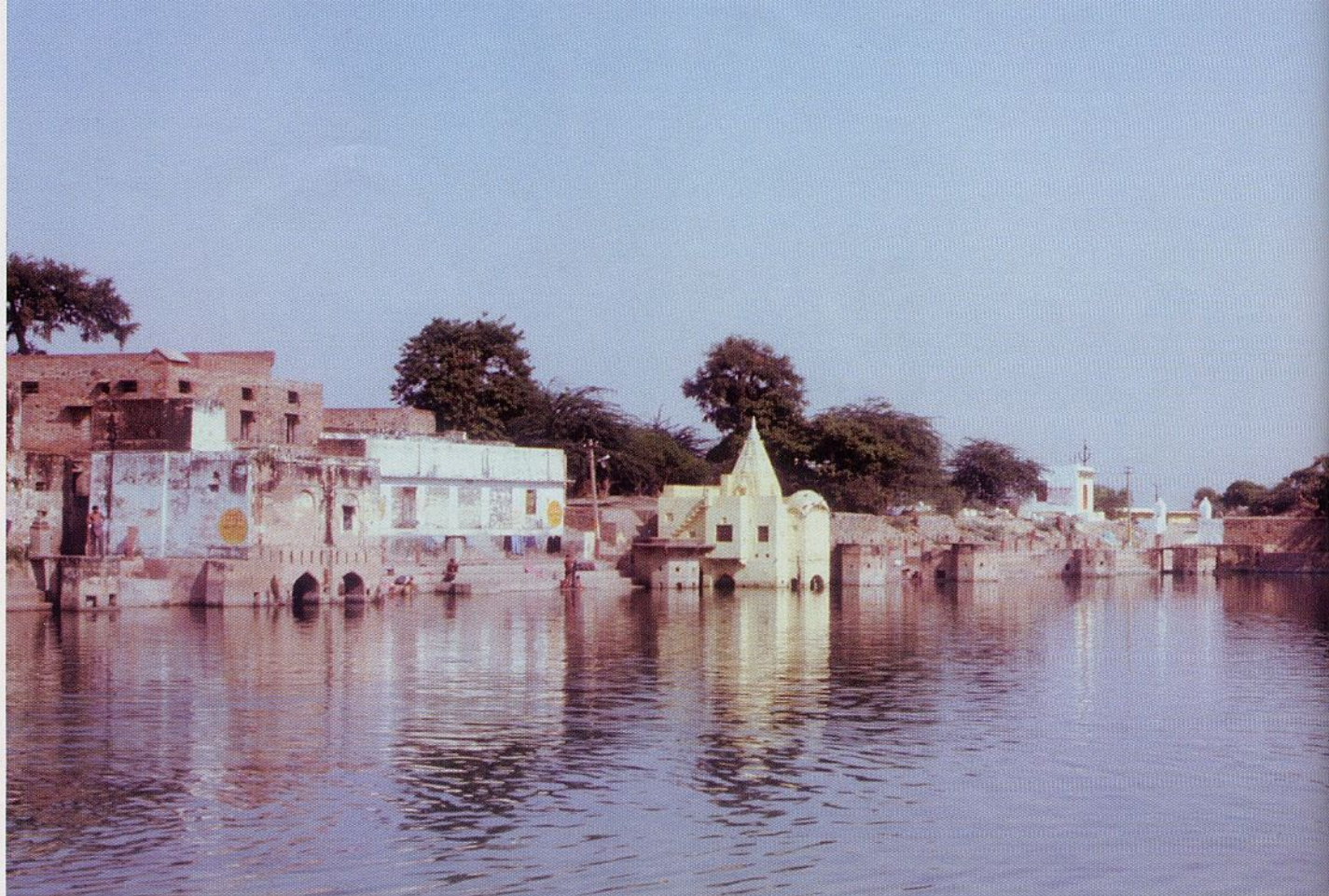
We rise before the sun and walk through hills and valleys, traveling deep into Vṛndāvana. Little remote villages dot our path. Village life is simple and austere, but the villagers are warm and generous. Whenever we stop they offer us fresh water, buttermilk, and steaming hot whole-wheat *rotis* (*chapatis*, or flatbreads).

As we cross cultivated fields, a team



On the road to Badrinath in Vraja (above), devotees flank and follow the Parikramā deities, borne on the head of His Holiness Gopāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami. Lord Kṛṣṇa's footprints in stone (left) bear witness to His incomparable flute-playing, which caused stones to melt in ecstasy. Following an age-old tradition, a village woman (right) spruces up her home with an antiseptic mixture of cow dung and mud.



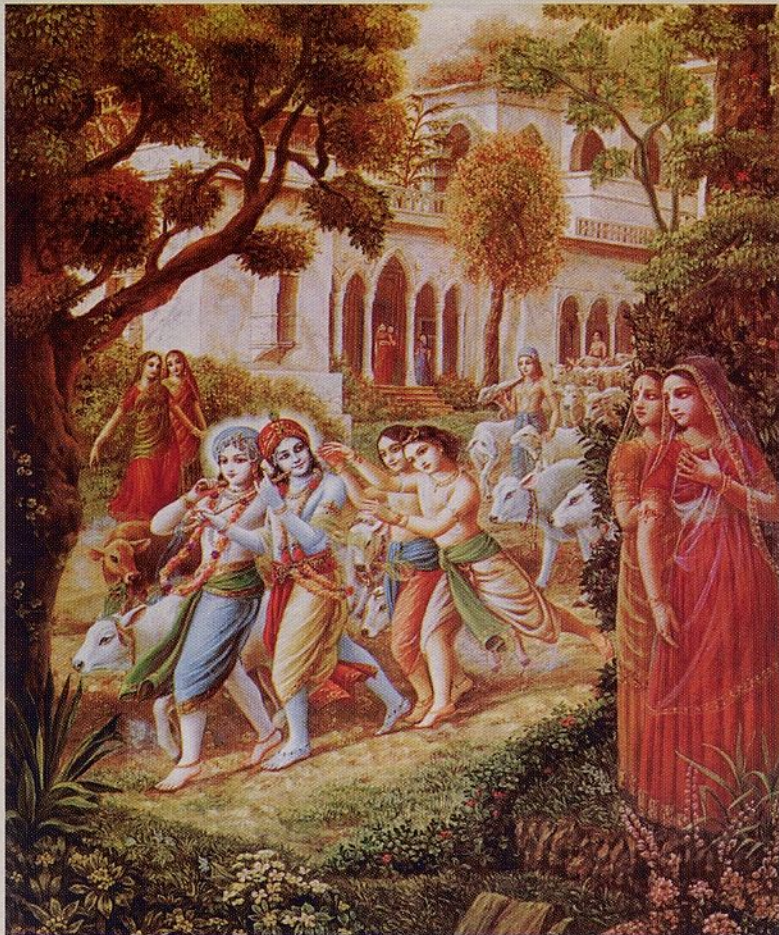


of oxen and a straw-laden donkey amble past rice paddies ornate with exotic birds. The sounds of the cuckoo bird, the mourning dove, and the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* mingle together. Some devotees keep to the back of the *kirtana* party, silently chanting *japa* on their beads. The morning is calm, and the soft sandy path is gentle on our feet.

As we enter Madhuban, children bounce beside us, their eyes twinkling with glee. The *kirtana* reverberates off the mud walls and through the narrow lanes. The village *brāhmaṇa* greets us, a wise old man with happy eyes and stubbly beard. He sprinkles holy water on us. The cow-dung homes smell fresh and clean. In a spotless courtyard, children carrying bows and arrows imitate Sītā, Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, and Hanumān. Villagers invite us into their homes for something to eat or drink.

While some devotees rest or read, others venture farther into the village to get a closer look at the life of the local residents (Vrajabasis). Some devotees take a refreshing bath in a pond, while others wash their laundry. Clustered around the village water pump,



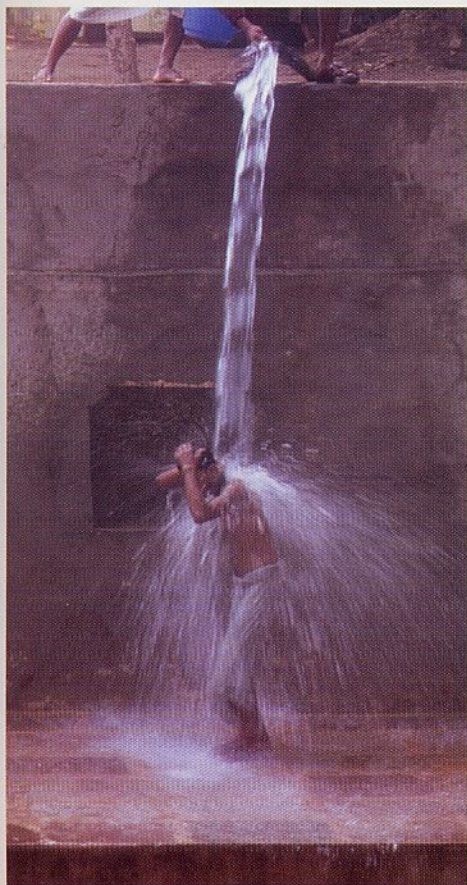


Replica of the Spiritual World

IN THE SPIRITUAL world of Vrindavana the buildings are made of touchstone, the cows are known as *surabhi* cows, givers of abundant milk, and the trees are known as wish-fulfilling trees, for they yield whatever one desires. In Vrindavana Kṛṣṇa herds the *surabhi* cows, and He is worshipped by hundreds and thousands of *gopīs*, cowherd girls, who are all goddesses of fortune. When Kṛṣṇa descends to the material world, this same Vrindavana

descends just as an entourage accompanies an important personage. Because when Kṛṣṇa comes His land also comes, Vrindavana is not considered to exist in the material world. Therefore devotees take shelter of the Vrindavana in India, for it is considered to be a replica of the original Vrindavana.

—Introduction to *Teachings of Lord Caitanya*, by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda



Vimal Kund (top) is one of many holy lakes where Lord Kṛṣṇa played with His friends in Vraja. Two local girls (far left) eagerly draw water for pilgrims from the village well. At left: bathing at Tapasya Kund.



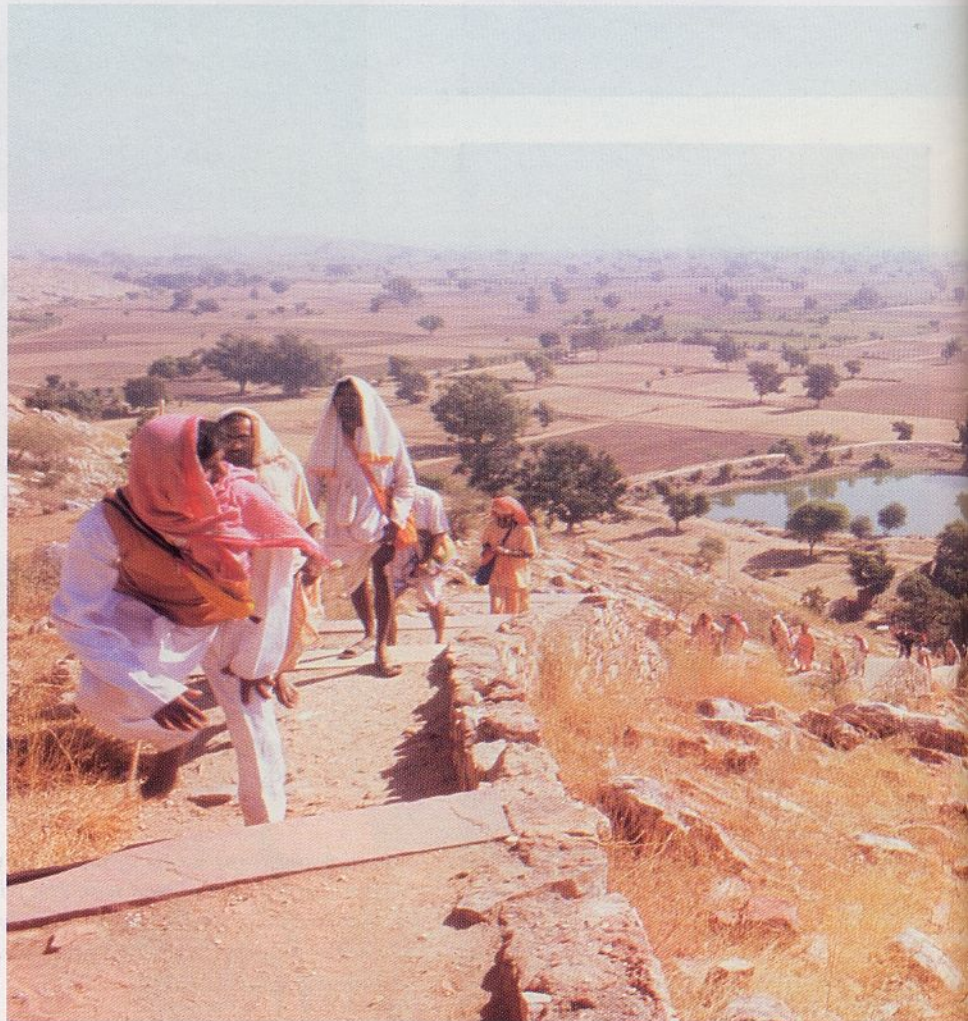
Life on parikramā (left) means no washing machines, and drop-in visits from Kṛṣṇa's beloved cows. In Vraja even the goats (right) are special, because they're residents of Kṛṣṇa's eternal home. It's not the Himalayas, but a midday, 270-step climb to the top of Vraja's Kedar-nath (below) can challenge a pilgrim's endurance.



Instructions From Sage Nārada

NĀRADA SAYS to Dhruva:
 "My dear boy, I therefore wish
 all good fortune for you. You
 should go to the bank of the
 Yamunā, where there is a
 virtuous forest named Madhu-
 vana, and there be purified.
 Just by going there, one draws
 nearer to the Supreme Person-
 ality of Godhead, who always
 lives there."

—Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.8.42





we watch the children dexterously fill their waterpots. It is a crowded scene. Suddenly, a teenage boy and his mother approach the well. The boy pushes his way through the crowd and takes hold of the pump handle. We think he's angry that we're using "his" pump. But with an infectious smile, he begins to pump water for everyone.

TIME TO THINK

Most devotees who visit Vṛndāvana never experience Vraja like this. One devotee comments, "If you don't walk, you miss ninety per cent of Vraja." Normally in Vṛndāvana we tend to feel like transcendental tourists, catching buses to the holy places. But to see Vraja on foot allows one more time to think and to find one's real identity.

We visit Talavan forest, where Lord Balarāma killed Dhenukāsura. In the village of Etarsi, we visit the temple where breathtakingly beautiful deities of Balarāma and His eternal consort, Revatī, reside. A *tala* tree stands just inside the temple compound.

It is traditional to perform *parikramā* barefoot, and we try our best to follow the example of the saintly persons who have walked before us. Sometimes small thorns prick our feet, and we try to remember the austerities of Dhruva Mahārāja, compared to which ours are insignificant. Vraja Maṇḍala Parikramā strips one of all pretensions. We may have a big position in this world, but the thorns don't discriminate.

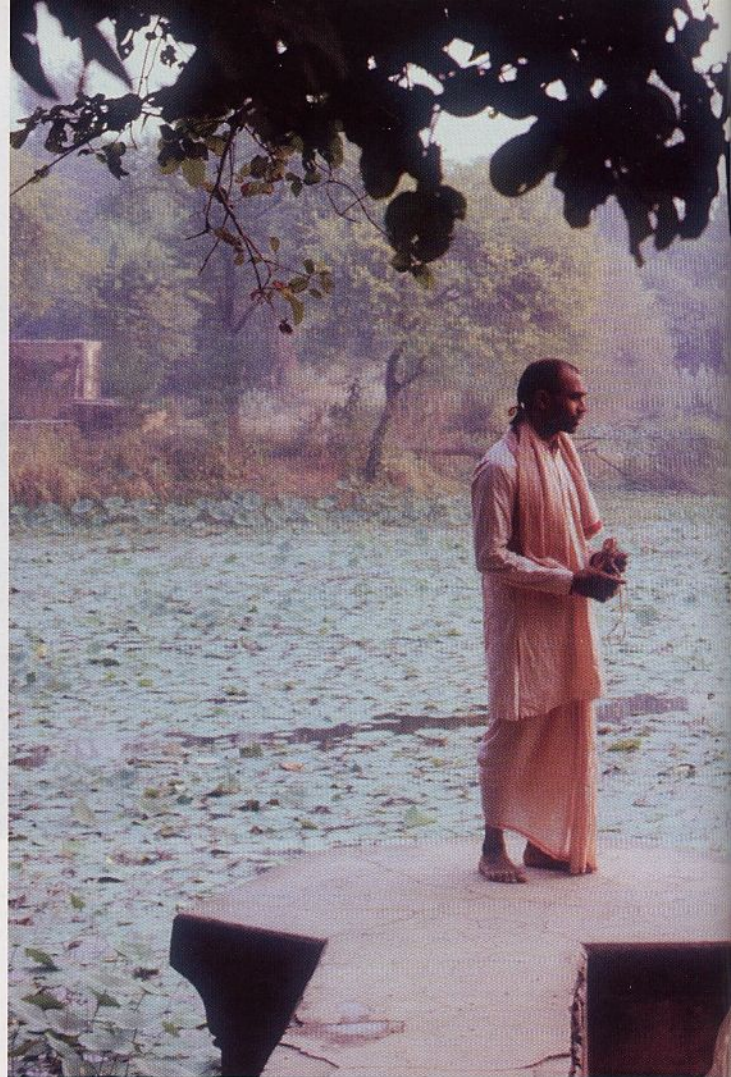
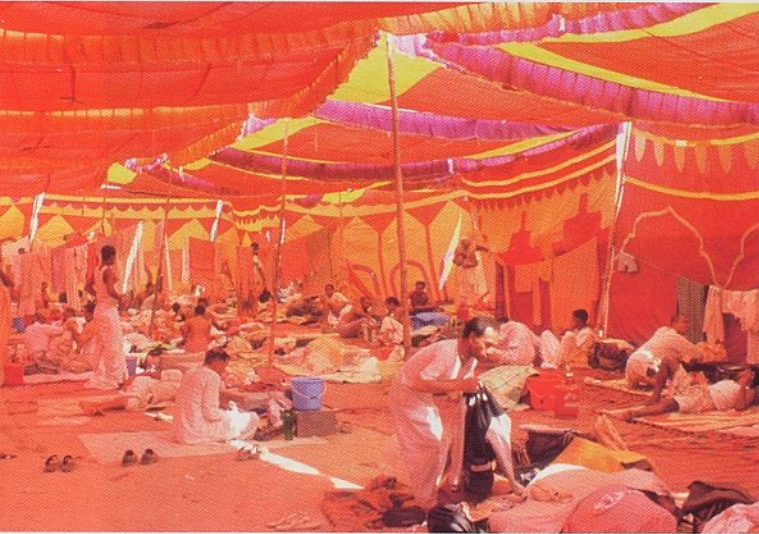
Before it gets too hot, we climb to the summit of Kedarnath Mountain. A stone staircase etched into the mountainside leads us up 270 steps to a temple of Lord Śiva. The temple is a natural cave, its overhang resembling the hoods of a multi-hooded snake. From atop the hill, we view the unique panoramic scene of the Vraja plains, stretched for about twenty kilometers all around us. As our gaze wanders out over the expanse of sacred land, we meditate on and hear about Kṛṣṇa's Vṛndāvana pastimes.

KṚṢṆA'S FOOTPRINTS

In the early afternoon we take to tarred road on a seemingly endless



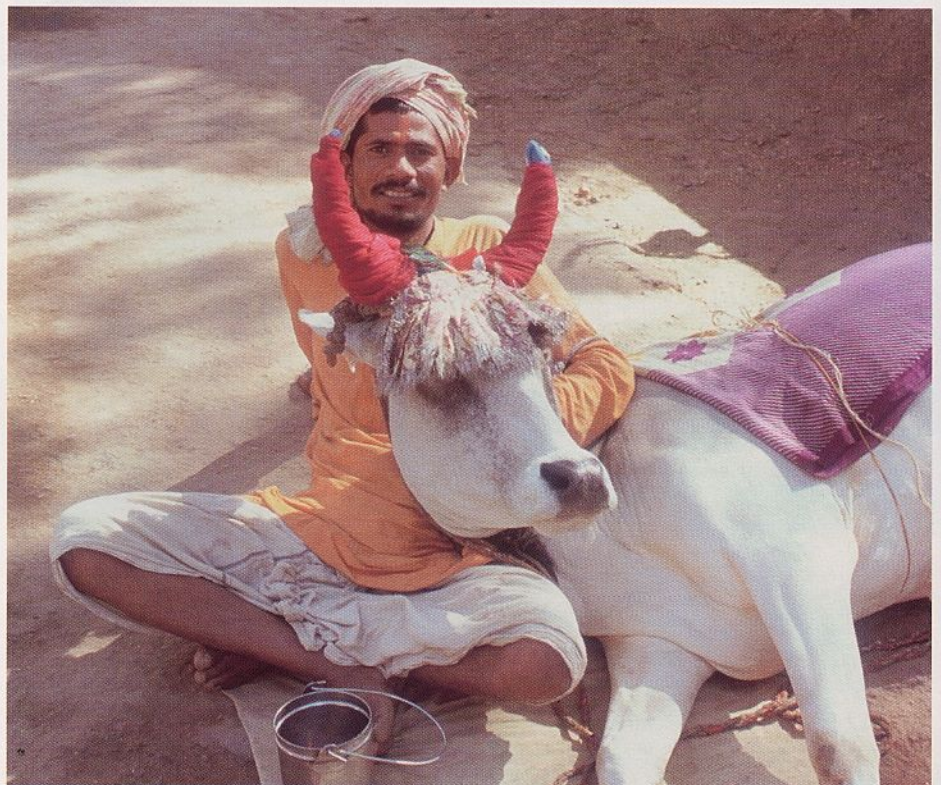
Surabhi Kund (right) commemorates the spot where Airāvata, the elephant of Indra, bathed Lord Kṛṣṇa with celestial Ganges water. Parikramā organizers provide colorful tents (below) to house devotees during the month-long pilgrimage. Near Govardhana Hill (below), a sadhu caresses a decorated cow, who is free to wander at will. Parikramā leader His Holiness Lokanāth Swami (below, right) tries out a rock slide used by Kṛṣṇa and His friends.



walk to Caran Pahari. Here, Kṛṣṇa would play His flute and melt the rocks with a touching melody. The rocks captured Kṛṣṇa's footprints. We eagerly rush to see them and smear on our heads the dust from these five-thousand-year-old footprints. We pray that our stonelike hearts may also melt in response to Kṛṣṇa's call.

We bathe in ponds where Kṛṣṇa played His water sports and submerge ourselves in the Yamuna River, where He performed unlimited pastimes. We feel like we are following Him around Vraja. If we stay on His trail, we'll turn the last corner of material attachment and catch up with Him. On *parikramā* we get a glimpse of the mood of separation from Kṛṣṇa as we wander through the forests of Vṛndāvana. *Parikramā* instills appreciation for devotional sentiments even within the heart of a neophyte devotee.

Finally we see the city of Mathura rise from the plains of Vraja like an ancient medieval kingdom. We've

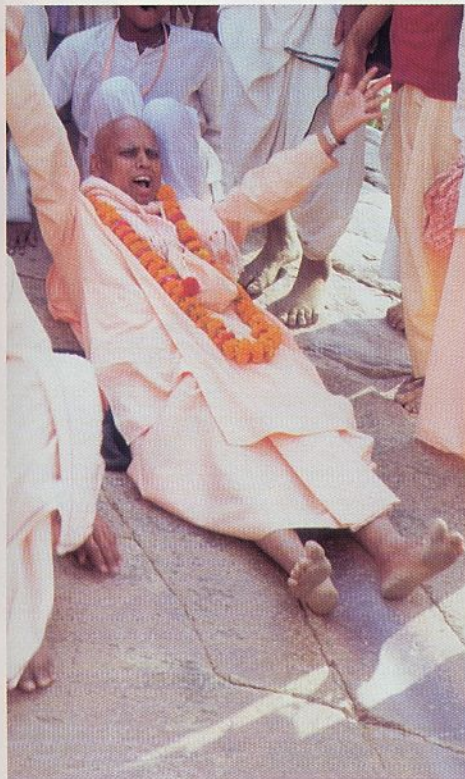




made it! One hundred sixty-eight miles in thirty days. A tremendous feeling of accomplishment and exhilaration rises in our hearts. Our Vraja Maṇḍala Parikramā is almost over, and our walk on the path back to Godhead has shortened.

A tall bridge leads us across the Yamuna back to Mathura. The *kīrtana* resounds through the crowded back streets of the city. We take our final bath at Vishram Ghat. Vraja Maṇḍala Parikramā is a perfect test for one's spiritual health. In the pure atmosphere of the Lord's land, our impurities stand out clearly, like black spots on a white sheet. Out here we see how far we have come in spiritual life and how far we have to go. Yet, this is encouraging; it increases our desire for purification, so that one day we may become qualified to reside eternally in Vṛndāvana. ❁

Lokanāth Swami is the director of ISKCON Padayātrās ("walking pilgrimages") worldwide and the author of the recently published book Kumbha: The Festival of Immortality. He has been coordinating Vraja Maṇḍala Parikramā since 1987.



Acquiring Spiritual Flavors in Vṛndavāna

ŚRĪLA BHAKTISIDDHĀNTA Sarasvatī Ṭhākura states that the business of the tongue is to gratify itself with the varieties of flavor, but by wandering in the twelve holy forests of Vraja-maṇḍala (Vṛndāvana), one can be freed from the twelve flavors of material sense gratification. The five principal divisions of material relationships are neutral admiration, servitude, friendship, parental affection, and conjugal love; the seven subordinate features of material relationships are material humor, astonishment, chivalry, compassion, anger, dread, and ghastliness. Originally, these twelve *rasas*, or flavors of relationships, are

exchanged between the Supreme Personality of Godhead and the living entity in the spiritual world; and by wandering in the twelve forests of Vṛndāvana one can re-spiritualize the twelve flavors of personal existence. Thus one will become a liberated soul, free from all material desires. If one artificially tries to give up sense gratification, especially that of the tongue, the attempt will fail, and in fact one's desire for sense gratification will increase as a result of artificial deprivation. Only by experiencing real, spiritual pleasure in relationship with Kṛṣṇa can one give up material desires.

—*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*
11.8.20, Purport



A WRINKLE IN TIME

Why old age is a gift from God.

by Arcana-siddhī Devī Dāsī

WHenever I went to my best friend's house, her great-grandmother, Mrs. Werble, would be perched in the same spot, staring at the television. Delighted to have a visitor, Mrs. Werble would insist I sit with her, and she'd ramble on about her past. I was her captive audience, and I would feel sad on seeing the toll relentless time had taken upon her. The loose skin of her shriveled body hung off her bones; she looked out, vacant and lonely, from filmy eyes.

Being a compliant, unassertive child, I would politely sit and listen to Mrs. Werble until my friend came in to rescue me, pulling me up by the arm and leading me out of the room.

I was twelve years old, and old age frightened me. I had a youthful, developing body and felt attractive and energetic. Filled with adolescent desires to enjoy, I loved exerting myself in sports like tennis, skating, and swimming. But looking into the hollow eyes of Mrs. Werble sent chills down my spine. Someday in the distant future, my body would be in a similar condition. Was there any way to prevent such a fate? I thought of the tabloids in the supermarket and the aging faces of my favorite movie stars. With make-up and face-lifts they desperately tried to defeat the effects of time. But it was clearly a losing battle. Even with their millions

of dollars, they still withered away.

Having had little religious training, I didn't consider that perhaps God had a plan in such a design for our bodies. I could see only that aging didn't fit into my plan for enjoying in this world, and I couldn't see any redeeming quality in it. I concluded it was better to die young, before having to face the breakdown of the body. But thoughts of Mrs. Werble haunted me. My attempts to enjoy were often frustrated by remembering her body. Since enjoyment is temporary, what is the ultimate purpose of my short life? Why do we get old and die?

SEARCH THROUGH BOOKS

In college these questions led me to research systems of truth in philosophy, literature, and religion. I read such books as Thoreau's *Walden*, Herman Hesse's *Siddhartha* and *The Bead Game*, Camus's existential short stories, Thomas Merton's *Thoughts in Solitude*, the Bible, the Koran, and *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. Of all my readings, I found the teachings of the ancient Vedic literature the most appealing and persuasive.

In particular I was drawn to verses in the *Bhagavad-gītā* that describe how we are not the

material body but rather a spiritual spark with a spiritual body that never grows old, never gets sick, and is always filled with joy. The *Bhagavad-gītā* teaches that the process to realize our self is *bhakti-yoga*. I understood that I would still have to suffer disease and old age in this life, but perhaps—if I could take the process seriously—this would be the last time.

Ten years after my visits to Mrs. Werble's house, I enthusiastically took up the practices of *bhakti-yoga*, rising early every day to chant the Lord's holy names and study the Vedic scriptures. I have continued to add those practices into my busy life for the past twenty-five years.

I'm forty-seven now, and aging is still an undesirable part of my life. I

have felt the allure of trying to salvage youthfulness with hair dyes and skin creams. But I understand how aging can help us become more fixed and serious about ending our material journey. Old age is the signal that our time in this body is running out. When old age sets in, we should have had enough experiences to verify that material enjoyment doesn't give substantial pleasure. If we've had spiritual training, we can avoid retiring in comfort and wasting our final years playing games and watching TV. The Vedic literature teaches that death will come and snatch the unsuspecting soul from the body, and the mentality we've cultivated in life will propel us into the next body.



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AGING OF THE UNPREPARED

A few years ago, my parents retired after forty-five years of working nine-to-five, five days a week, to maintain their family. During their working years, their weekends were filled with sleeping late, cooking meals, cleaning the house, and shopping. Spiritual and religious practices consisted of two yearly trips to a synagogue to observe the high holidays. They exercised and were careful about their diets. Today, though in their seventies, they're in "good health." Yet there's no escaping the affects of time. Images of the youthful bodies captured in their marriage portraits and preserved under glass barely resemble the aging couple I see today. Thinning gray hair and slackening skin obscure their once attractive features.

Their friends are becoming mentally incompetent and physically handicapped and are dying one by one. All the money my parents saved over the years is now available for Mediterranean cruises and excursions to fancy resorts. Their days are filled with tennis, dancing, and dining in expensive restaurants.

I have a lot of affection for my parents, and although they were at first unhappy about my decision to pursue a spiritual life, they now approve of my practices and show respect for the choices I have made. Yet I feel saddened by their oblivion of the passing

***For spiritual practitioners,
aging subdues the senses and allows us to become
more peaceful and increase our internal life.***

• • •

of time. They seem so content in their stucco Florida home, like the little alligators bobbing up and down on wooden decoy ducks in the lake across the street.

I pray they may have some epiphany, vision, or near-death experience to pierce through the illusion of their material life. A few years ago my ninety-four-year-old grandfather died. Until his late eighties he was still working as a podiatrist, taking brisk walks in the evening, and living independently. After a stroke, he no longer recognized me. Once, when I visited him in the nursing home, I brought him a piece of cake. He sat and ate the cake. Within seconds of finishing, he looked at me and asked, "What happened to my cake?"

A REASONABLE CHOICE

Sometimes people who challenge my choice to be a devotee ask me, "What if you're wrong and there is no Kṛṣṇa?"

While my experiences over the years have convinced me that Kṛṣṇa exists, it's hard to prove His existence to a doubting Thomas. But I logically reply, "If I'm wrong, I've still had a peaceful, satisfying, and fulfilling life, so what's the loss? And what if I'm right and Kṛṣṇa exists? I'll gain eternal life in a spiritual body."

I then turn the question over to them: "What will you have lost by denying Kṛṣṇa?"

When I ask this question, I think of my grandfather. He had been a very successful man, but what was the final result?

Consider my grandfather's life in comparison to that of my spiritual father, Śrīla Prabhupāda. At the age of sixty-nine, Prabhupāda left the comfort of a holy place to journey to one of the world's most hellish cities, New

York. Out of deep compassion for suffering humanity, he traveled across the Atlantic, surviving two heart attacks. Undeterred by sickness, poverty, and lack of support, he repeated the message of his spiritual predecessors, giving hope and guidance to people like me grappling for understanding and truth in these confusing times. In Prabhupāda's last twelve years, he built a spiritual movement that brought the teachings and practices of *bhakti-yoga* to the West and revived it in the East. Till his last breath, Prabhupāda taught that the purpose of human life is to reawaken our loving relationship with the Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda's old age was given to the fulfillment of his spiritual master's vision.

THE OPPORTUNITY OF OLD AGE

Human life is a rare gift from God. It affords us the opportunity to progress on our spiritual journey. Kṛṣṇa has designed our bodies to assist us in this process. If we are on a spiritual path, aging helps us to let go of our attachment to our bodies. Our aging body tells us that death is fast approaching. For the spiritual practitioner, aging subdues the senses and allows us to become more peaceful and increase our internal life.

For a devotee, retirement years are an opportunity to take full advantage of devotional service. Free of responsibilities and obligations, we can use our full time and attention to develop our love for Kṛṣṇa. We can use our time studying the voluminous Vedic literature, which describes the Lord's activities and teachings. We can increase our meditation on chanting holy mantras and purifying our hearts with the spiritual sound. We can make beautiful clothes and jewelry to decorate the

deity form of the Lord. Whatever talents we may have—in art, music, writing, cooking, teaching—can be used to glorify the Lord.

We can travel, too. But rather than going to the Riviera to sunbathe, we can go to holy places where the Lord performed His pastimes on earth. Such pilgrimages purify us and help us feel closer to God by increasing our devotion. We can also travel to share with others our spiritual experiences and realizations.

I look forward to retiring and having more time for the things that enliven me, such as reading Prabhupāda's books, chanting the Lord's holy names, making jewelry for the deities, and writing and teaching my realizations for the benefit of others. In the mean time, by regularly reading the Vedic scriptures I become more aware of the shortcomings of life without spiritual practice. For a Kṛṣṇa devotee, every situation, even old age, can be instructive.

Had Mrs. Werble known about *bhakti-yoga*, she could have been sitting in that same room chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra absorbed in thoughts of her eternal life. Her eyes would have been filled with love and serenity. She would have been joyful in her last days, feeling the presence of her Lord at every moment. And when I came to the house, she would have shared her spiritual thoughts and visions with me and uplifted me from my own ignorance. Even though she didn't take up her spiritual life, I thank her for the role she did play in my spiritual awakening and pray she may find Kṛṣṇa during her own on-going journey. ☸

Arcana-Siddhi Devī Dāsī was initiated by Śrīla Prabhupāda in 1976. She lives with her husband and son in Baltimore, Maryland, where she works as a family therapist.

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 Hṛṣikeśa

(August 5–September 2)

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 [Continues after the Month of Puruṣottama-adhikā].)

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

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

Month of Puruṣottama-adhikā

(September 18–October 16)

28—Padminī Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans.

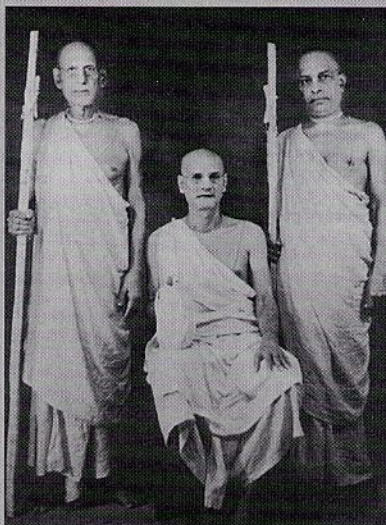
OCTOBER

13—Paramā Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans.

Padmanābha (continued)

(October 17–November 1)

26—Rāmacandra Vijayotsava, the anniversary of Lord Rāmacandra's victory over the demon Rāvaṇa. Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Madhvācārya, a Vaiṣṇava philosopher and spiritual master who appeared in the thirteenth century.



Śrīla Prabhupāda (right) accepts sannyāsa in September 1959, in Mathurā, India. Others, from left: Muni Mahārāja, Bhaktiprajñāna Keśava Mahārāja.

28—Vyañjuli Mahā-dvādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans for Pāśāṅkuśā Ekādaśī. Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī, Śrīla Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, and Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī, great associates and followers of Lord Caitanya.

NOVEMBER

1—Śrī Kṛṣṇa Śaradīyā Rāsa-yātrā. Disappearance anniversary of Śrī Murāri Gupta, an associate of Lord

Caitanya. Beginning of Dāmodara-vrata. Offering lamps for one month. Also, the fourth month of Cāturmāsya begins (fasting from *ūrad dāl*).

Month of Dāmodara

(November 2–November 30)

6—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Narottama Dāsa Ṭhākura, a great devotee of Kṛṣṇa known for his Bengali devotional songs.

11—Ramā Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans.

15—Diwali, the festival of illuminating Kṛṣṇa's temples with lamps. Call your local Hare Kṛṣṇa temple for details.

16—Govardhana Pūjā, the festival commemorating the worship of Govardhana Hill by the residents of Vṛndāvana and Kṛṣṇa's lifting the hill. Call your local Hare Kṛṣṇa temple for details.

19—Disappearance anniversary of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, Founder-*Acārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. Devotees observe this day with personal remembrances of Śrīla Prabhupāda, readings from his biography, and fasting till noon, followed by feasting.

23—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Śrīnivāsa Ācārya, a great follower of the six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana.

26—Utthānā Ekādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans. Also, the disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Gaurakiśora Dāsa Bābājī, the spiritual master of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, who was Śrīla Prabhupāda's spiritual master. Fasting till noon.

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness

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Founder-Acarya: His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

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★ New listing ◆ Temples with restaurants or dining ● Revised listing

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- ### AUSTRALIA
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 - **Murwillumbah (New Govardhana)** — Tyalgum Rd., Eungella (mail: P.O. Box 685), NSW 2484/ Tel. & fax: +61 (02) 6672-6579/ Fax: +61 (02) 6672-5498
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New Castle — Krishna's Vegetarian Cafe, 110 King Street, corner of King & Wolf Streets, NSW 2300
 Tel. +61 (02) 4929-6900
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 (mail: R.D. 2, Kumeu, Auckland)/ Tel. +64 (09) 412-8075/ Fax: +64 (09) 412-7130

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Suva, Fiji — Hare Krishna Vegetarian Restaurant, Opposite University of the South Pacific,
 Laucala Bay Rd./ Tel. +679 311683/ E-mail: vdas@govnet.gov.fj
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Emphasis on Living

NOT LONG AGO I gave a talk about the importance of preparing our consciousness for death. We have to face the fact that death is inevitable, I said, so we'd better be ready for it.

Several people in the audience were hearing about Kṛṣṇa consciousness for the first time. After the talk, one of them, Jerry, commented that my emphasis on death was a negative way of looking at life.

"I try to concentrate on living a full life," he said, "and not worry about death."

His comment made me think that I could have delivered my message differently. Maybe my talk had come across as rather negative.

"Actually, you're right," I said, trying to redeem myself. "If we live right, we *will* be ready for death. So let's concentrate on living right. That's what Kṛṣṇa consciousness is all about."

It's good to have a positive outlook on life, but I have to admit that the fear of death and of the test that comes with it is a significant part of my motivation to keep up my spiritual practices. Kṛṣṇa says that if we remember Him at the time of death we'll go to Him and if we don't remember Him we'll have to accept another material body. Along with each body come the miseries of birth, death, old age, and disease. I fear the alternative to going to Kṛṣṇa. Being somewhat (well, maybe more than somewhat) claustrophobic, the thought of being packed in a womb again helps me press on.

This type of negative motivation might not be the ideal, but Kṛṣṇa does mention it in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. He says that we should always be conscious of the miseries of birth, death, old age,

and disease. This vision is one of the items of real knowledge, woefully absent in modern times. "Material civilization," Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "is a patchwork of activities meant to cover the perpetual miseries of material existence." People absorb themselves in everyday life, trying to live with gusto and trying to forget that the material world is not a happy place.

I was giving my talk in Sarasota, Florida, a balmy, well-to-do city on the Gulf of Mexico. When speaking to an audience like this (people enjoying their good karma), I often have to remind them that although life may seem great to them right now, they can easily see how millions of people around the world are suffering tremendously from war, disease, poverty, starvation—on and on. And are they themselves really that well off? The citizens of Sarasota are not exempt from misery. It just comes in different flavors: stress, depression, bankruptcy, divorce.

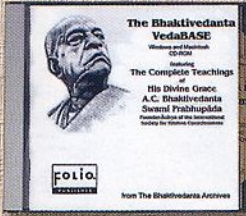
We have to step back from our "patchwork of activities" and see things as they are. Fortunately, the life of Kṛṣṇa consciousness that Śrīla Prabhupāda gave us includes both taking a hard look at material life and living a fully satisfying spiritual one. Devotees of Kṛṣṇa *do* concentrate on living, because, after all, real life is spiritual. Real life is the undying exchange between the soul and Kṛṣṇa.

Later, as Jerry and I spoke while enjoying a feast of Kṛṣṇa-*prasādam*, I had a chance to tell to him more about the well-rounded life of Kṛṣṇa's devotees.

"If this food is any indication," he said, "I'd say you live a great life!"—*Nāgarāja Dāsa*

Śrīla Prabhupāda

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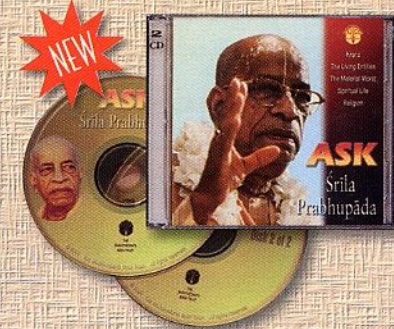


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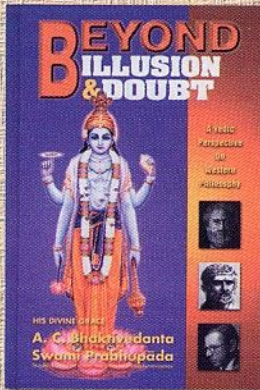
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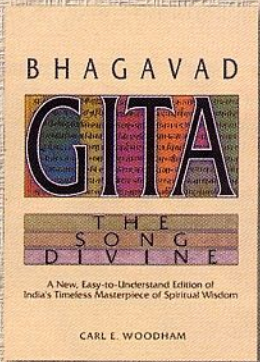
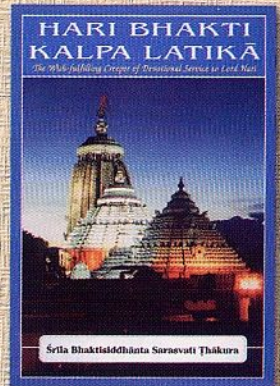


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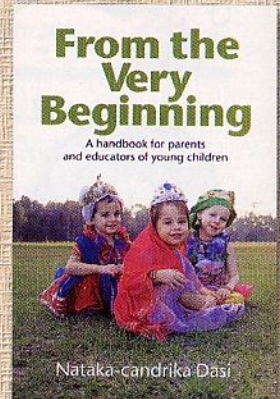
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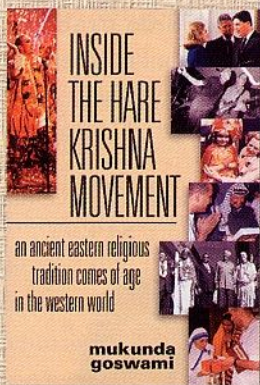


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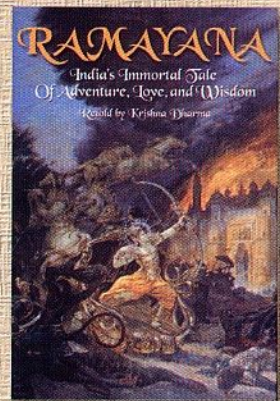
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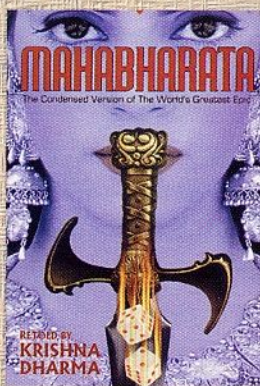
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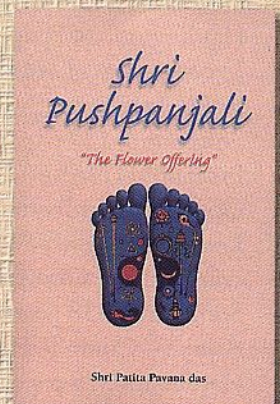
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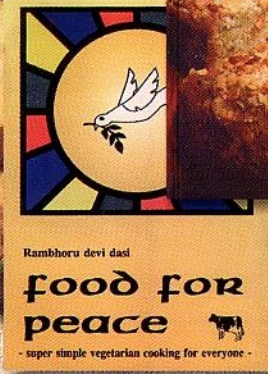
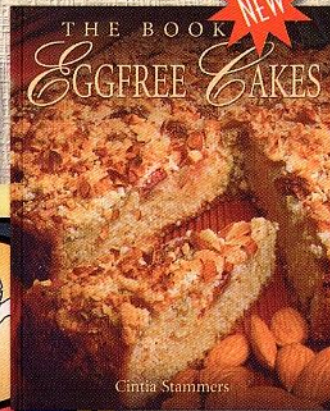
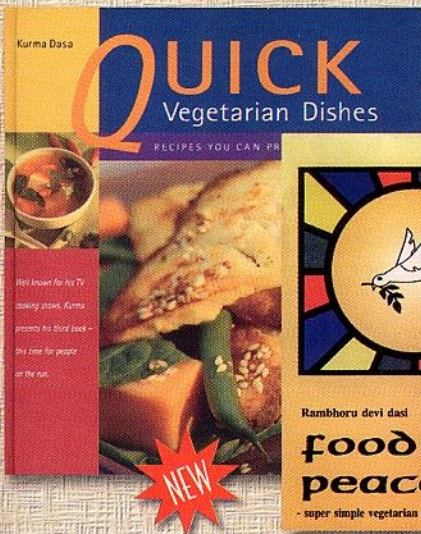
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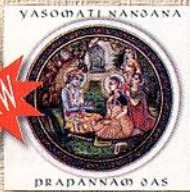
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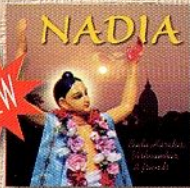
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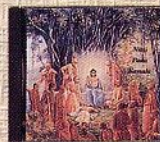


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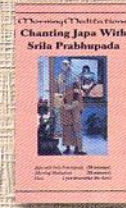
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Vedic Thoughts

The complete functional activities of a pure devotee are always engaged in the service of the Lord, and thus the pure devotees exchange feelings of ecstasy between themselves and relish transcendental bliss.

This transcendental bliss is experienced even in the stage of devotional practice (*sādhana-avasthā*), if properly undertaken under the guidance of a bona fide spiritual master. And in the mature stage the developed transcendental feeling culminates in realization of the particular relationship with the Lord by which a living entity is originally constituted.

His Divine Grace
A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.3.12, Purport

The Lord of Gokula, Kṛṣṇa, is the transcendental Supreme Godhead, the own Self of eternal ecstasies. He is the superior of all superiors. He is busily engaged in the enjoyments of the transcendental realm and has no association with His mundane potency.

Lord Brahmā
Brahma-saṁhitā 5.6

The one Supreme Personality of Godhead is eternally engaged in many, many transcendental forms in relationships with His unalloyed devotees.

Puruṣa-bodhinī Upaniṣad

Every day hundreds and millions of living entities go to the kingdom of death. Still, those who remain aspire for a permanent situation. What could be more wonderful than this?

Yudhiṣṭhira Mahārāja
Mahābhārata, Vana-parva 313.116

The blessed Lord Śiva becomes all the more blessed by bearing on his head the holy waters of the Ganges, which has its source in the water that has washed the Lord's [Viṣṇu's] lotus feet. The Lord's feet act like thunderbolts hurled to shatter the mountain of sin stored in the mind of the meditating devotee. One should therefore meditate on the lotus feet of the Lord for a long time.

Lord Kapila
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.28.22

The Absolute Truth is Govinda [Kṛṣṇa], who has an eternal form of bliss and knowledge and who is sitting beneath the shady trees of Vṛndāvana.

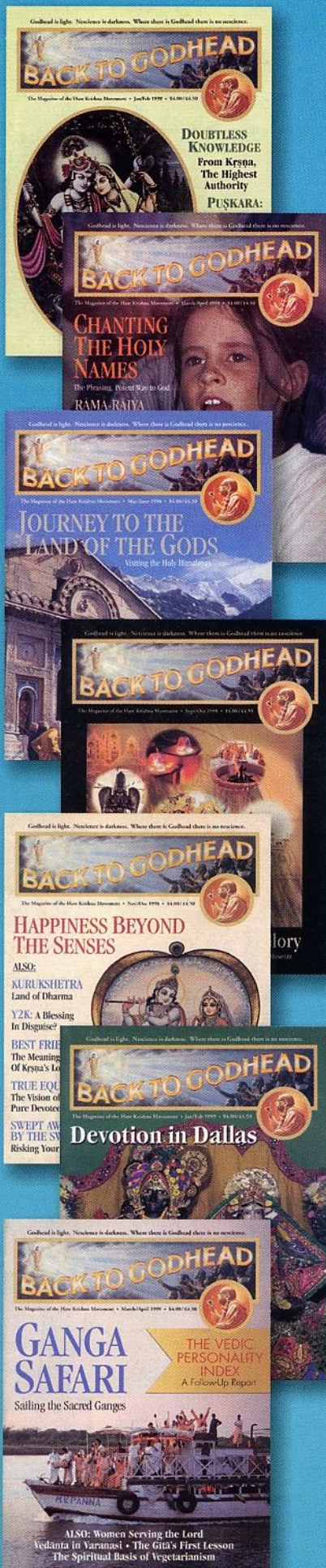
Gopāla-tāpanī Upaniṣad

One can overcome the path of birth and death only by understanding the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad 3.8

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