

"Science of Self-Realization" by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.

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Foreword

From the very start, I knew that His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada was the most extraordinary person I had ever met. The first meeting occurred in the summer of 1966, in New York City. A friend had invited me to hear a lecture by "an old Indian svami" on lower Manhattan's Bowery. Overwhelmed with curiosity about a svami lecturing on skid row, I went there and felt my way up a pitch-black staircase. A bell-like, rhythmic sound got louder and clearer as I climbed higher. Finally I reached the fourth floor and opened the door, and there he was.

About fifty feet away from where I stood, at the other end of a long, dark room, he sat on a small dais, his face and saffron robes radiant under a small light. He was elderly, perhaps sixty or so, I thought, and he sat cross-legged in an erect, stately posture. His head was shaven, and his powerful face and reddish horn-rimmed glasses gave him the look of a monk who had spent most of his life absorbed in study. His eyes were closed, and he softly chanted a simple Sanskrit prayer while playing a hand drum. The small audience joined in at intervals, in call-and-response fashion. A few played hand cymbals, which accounted for the bell-like sounds I'd heard. Fascinated, I sat down quietly at the back, tried to participate in the chanting, and waited.

After a few moments the svami began lecturing in English, apparently from a huge Sanskrit volume that lay open before him. Occasionally he would quote from the book, but more often from memory.

The sound of the language was beautiful, and he followed each passage with meticulously detailed explanations.

He sounded like a scholar, his vocabulary intricately laced with philosophical terms and phrases. Elegant hand gestures and animated facial expressions added considerable impact to his delivery. The subject matter was the most weighty I had ever encountered: "I am not this body. I am not an Indian.... You are not Americans.... We are all spirit souls...."

After the lecture someone gave me a pamphlet printed in India. A photo showed the svami handing three of his books to Indian prime minister Lal Bahadur Shastri. The caption quoted Mr. Shastri as saying that all Indian government libraries should order the books. "His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta swami Prabhupada is doing great work," the prime minister said in another small tract, "and his books are significant contributions to the salvation of mankind." I purchased copies of the books, which I learned the svami had brought over from India. After reading the jacket flaps, the small pamphlet, and various other literature, I began to realize that I had just met one of India's most respected spiritual leaders.

But I could not understand why a gentleman of such distinction was residing and lecturing in the Bowery, of all places. He was certainly well educated and, by all appearances, born of an aristocratic Indian family. Why was he living in such poverty? What in the world had brought him here? one afternoon several days later, I stopped in to visit him and find out.

To my surprise, Srila Prabhupada (as I later came to call him) was not too busy to talk with me. In fact, it seemed that he was prepared to talk all day. He was warm and friendly and explained that he had accepted the renounced order of life in India in 1959, and that he was not allowed to carry or earn money for his personal needs. He had completed his studies at the University of Calcutta many years ago and had raised a family, and then he had left his eldest sons in charge of family and business affairs, as the age-old vedic culture prescribes. After accepting the renounced order, he had arranged a free passage on an Indian freighter (Scindia Steamship Company's Jaiaduta) through mutual friends. In September 1965, he had sailed from Bombay to Boston, armed with only seven dollars' worth of rupees, a trunk of books, and a few clothes. His spiritual master, His Divine Grace Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura, had entrusted him with delivering India's vedic teachings to the English-speaking world. And this was why, at age sixty-nine, he had come to America. He told me he wanted to teach Americans about Indian music, cooking, languages, and various other arts. I was mildly amazed.

I saw that Srila Prabhupada slept on a small mattress and that his clothes hung on lines at the back of the room, where they were drying in the summer afternoon heat. He washed them himself and cooked his own food on an ingenious utensil he had fashioned with his own hands in India. In this four-layer apparatus he cooked four preparations at once. Stacked all around him and his ancient-looking portable typewriter in another section of the room were seemingly endless manuscripts. He spent almost all of his waking hours--about twenty in twenty-four, I learned--typing the sequels to the three volumes I had purchased. It was a projected sixty-volume set called the Srimad-Bhagavatam, and virtually it was the encyclopedia of spiritual life. I wished him luck with the

publishing, and he invited me back for Sanskrit classes on Saturdays and for his evening lectures on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. I accepted, thanked him, and left, marveling at his incredible determination.

A few weeks later--it was July 1966--I had the privilege of helping Srila Prabhupada relocate in a somewhat more respectable neighborhood, on Second Avenue. Some friends and I pitched in and rented a ground-floor storefront and a second-floor apartment, to the rear of a little courtyard, in the same building. The lectures and chanting continued, and within two weeks a rapidly growing congregation was providing for the storefront (by this time a temple) and the apartment. By now Srila Prabhupada was instructing his followers to print and distribute leaflets, and the owner of a record company had invited him to record an LP of the Hare Krsna chant. He did, and it was a huge success. In his new location he was teaching chanting, vedic philosophy, music, japa meditation, fine art, and cooking. At first he cooked--he always taught by example. The results were the most wonderful vegetarian meals I had ever experienced. (Srila Prabhupada would even serve everything out himself!) The meals usually consisted of a rice preparation, a vegetable dish, capatis (tortilla-like whole-wheat patties), and dal (a zestfully spiced mung bean or split pea soup). The spicing, the cooking medium--ghee, or clarified butter--and the close attention paid to the cooking temperature and other details all combined to produce taste treats totally unknown to me. Others' opinions of the food, called prasadam ("the Lord's mercy"), agreed emphatically with mine. A Peace Corps worker who was also a Chinese-language scholar was learning from Srila Prabhupada how to paint in the classical Indian style. I was startled at the high quality of his first canvases.

In philosophical debate and logic Srila Prabhupada was undefeatable and indefatigable. He would interrupt his translating work for discussions that would last up to eight hours. Sometimes seven or eight people jammed into the small, immaculately clean room where he worked, ate, and slept on a two-inch-thick foam cushion. Srila Prabhupada constantly emphasized and exemplified what he called "plain living and high thinking." He stressed that spiritual life was a science provable through reason and logic, not a matter of mere sentiment or blind faith. He began a monthly magazine, and in the autumn of 1966 The New York Times published a favorable picture story about him and his followers. Shortly thereafter, television crews came out and did a feature news story.

Srila Prabhupada was an exciting person to know. Whether it was out of my desire for the personal benefits of yoga and chanting or just out of raw fascination, I knew I wanted to follow his progress every step of the way. His plans for expansion were daring and unpredictable--except for the fact that they always seemed to succeed gloriously. He was seventyish and a stranger to America, and he had arrived with practically nothing, yet now, within a few months, he had singlehandedly started a movement! It was mind-boggling.

One August morning at the Second Avenue storefront temple, Srila Prabhupada told us, "Today is Lord Krsna's appearance day." We would observe a twenty-four-hour fast and stay inside the temple. That evening some visitors from India happened along. One of them--practically in tears--described his unbounded rapture at finding this little piece of authentic India on the other side of the world. Never in his wildest dreams could he have imagined such a thing. He offered Srila Prabhupada

eloquent praise and deep thanks, left a donation, and bowed at his feet. Everyone was deeply moved. Later, Srila Prabhupada conversed with the gentleman in Hindi, and since what he was saying was unintelligible to me, I was able to observe how his every expression and gesture communicated to the very core of the human soul.

Later that year, while in San Francisco, I sent Srila Prabhupada his first airline ticket, and he flew out from New York. A sizable group of us greeted him at the terminal by chanting the Hare Krsna mantra. Then we drove him to the eastern edge of Golden Gate Park, to a newly rented apartment and storefront temple--an arrangement very similar to that in New York. We had established a pattern. Srila Prabhupada was ecstatic.

A few weeks later the first mrdanga (a long clay drum with a playing head on each end) arrived in San Francisco from India. When I went up to Srila Prabhupada's apartment and informed him, his eyes opened wide, and in an excited voice he told me to go down quickly and open the crate. I took the elevator, got out on the ground floor, and was walking toward the front door when Srila Prabhupada appeared. So eager was he to see the mrdanga that he had taken the stairway and had beaten the elevator. He asked us to open the crate, he tore off a piece of the saffron cloth he was wearing, and, leaving only the playing heads exposed, he wrapped the drum with the cloth. Then he said, "This must never come off," and he began giving detailed instructions on how to play and care for the instrument.

Also in San Francisco, in 1967, Srila Prabhupada inaugurated Ratha-yatra, the Festival of the Chariots, one of several festivals that, thanks to him, people all over the world now observe. Ratha-yatra has taken place in India's Jagannatha Puri each year for two thousand years, and by 1975 the festival had become so popular with San Franciscans that the mayor issued a formal proclamation--"Ratha-yatra Day in San Francisco."

By late 1966 Srila Prabhupada had begun accepting disciples. He was quick to point out to everyone that they should think of him not as God but as God's servant, and he criticized self-styled gurus who let their disciples worship them as God. "These `gods' are very cheap," he used to say. One day, after someone had asked, "Are you God?" Srila Prabhupada replied, "No, I am not God--I am a servant of God." Then he reflected a moment and went on. "Actually, I am not a servant of God. I am trying to be a servant of God. A servant of God is no ordinary thing."

In the mid-seventies Srila Prabhupada's translating and publishing intensified dramatically. Scholars all over the world showered favorable reviews on his books, and practically all the universities and colleges in America accepted them as standard texts. Altogether he produced some eighty books, which his disciples have translated into twenty-five languages and distributed to the tune of fifty-five million copies. He established one hundred eight temples worldwide, and he has some ten thousand initiated disciples and a congregational following in the millions. Srila Prabhupada was writing and translating up to the last days of his eighty-one-year stay on earth.

Srila Prabhupada was not just another oriental scholar, guru, mystic, yoga teacher, or meditation instructor. He was the embodiment of a whole culture, and he implanted that culture in the West. To me and many others he was first and foremost someone who truly cared, who completely sacrificed his own comfort to work for the good of others. He

had no private life, but lived only for others. He taught spiritual science, philosophy, common sense, the arts, languages, the vedic way of life--hygiene, nutrition, medicine, etiquette, family living, farming, social organization, schooling, economics--and many more things to many people. To me he was a master, a father, and my dearest friend.

I am deeply indebted to Srila Prabhupada, and it is a debt I shall never be able to repay. But I can at least show some gratitude by joining with his other followers in fulfilling his innermost desire--publishing and distributing his books.

"I shall never die," Srila Prabhupada once said. "I shall live forever in my books." He passed away from this world on November 14, 1977, but surely he will live forever.

Michael Grant
(Mukunda dasa)

Introduction

"Who is Srila Prabhupada?" people often ask, and it is always a hard question to answer. For Srila Prabhupada always eclipsed conventional designations. At various times people have called him a scholar, a philosopher, a cultural ambassador, a prolific author, a religious leader, a spiritual teacher, a social critic, and a holy man. In truth, he was all these things and more. Certainly no one could ever have confused him with the modern entrepreneurial "gurus" who come to the West with slickly packaged, watered-down versions of Eastern spirituality (to satisfy our urge for instant well-being and exploit our well-documented spiritual naivete.) Srila Prabhupada was, rather, a true holy man (sadhu) of deep intellectual and spiritual sensitivity--he had deep concern and compassion for a society which, to such a large degree, lacks real spiritual dimension.

For the enlightenment of human society, Srila Prabhupada produced some eighty volumes of translations and summary studies of India's great spiritual classics, and his work has seen print both in English and in many foreign languages. Also, in 1944 Srila Prabhupada singlehandedly launched a magazine called Back to Godhead, which today has a monthly circulation of more than half a million copies in English alone. Nearly all the interviews, lectures, essays, and letters chosen for The Science of Self Realization first appeared in Back to Godhead.

In these pages Srila Prabhupada presents the same message that the great sage Vyasadeva recorded thousands of years ago, the message of ancient India's vedic literatures. As we shall see, he quotes freely and often from the Bhagavad-gita, the Srimad-Bhagavatam, and other classic vedic texts. He transmits in modern English the same timeless knowledge that other great self-realized teachers have spoken for millennia--knowledge that opens up the secrets of the self within us, nature and the universe, and the Supreme Self within and without. Srila Prabhupada speaks with startling clarity and a kind of convincing, simple eloquence and proves just how relevant the science of self-realization is to our modern world and our own lives.

Among the thirty-six selections chosen for this special book, we hear Srila Prabhupada's moving poem upon his arrival in America, his exchange with a noted cardiologist on "soul research," his revelations to London Broadcasting Company on reincarnation, his telling remarks to the London Times on real and false gurus, his dialogue with a German Benedictine monk on Krsna and Christ, his insights on superconsciousness and the law of karma, his conversation with a leading Russian scholar on spiritual communism, and his intimate talk with his disciples on the sham of modern science.

Read the selections in order, if you like, or start with the ones that first catch your interest. (The glossary at the back will explain unfamiliar words and names.) The Science of Self-Realization will challenge you and bring you inspiration and enlightenment.

--The Publishers

Chapter One

Learning the Science of the Self

Discovering the Self

Who are you?... Are you your body? Or your mind? Or are you something higher? Do you know who you are, or do you merely think you know? And does it really matter? Our materialistic society, with its unenlightened leadership, has made it virtually taboo to inquire into our real, higher self. Instead we use our valuable time maintaining, decorating, and pampering the body for its own sake. Might there be an alternative?

This very important Krsna consciousness movement is meant to save human society from spiritual death. At present human society is being misled by leaders who are blind, for they do not know the aim and objective of human life, which is self-realization and the reestablishment of our lost relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. That is the missing point. The Krsna consciousness movement is trying to enlighten human society in this important matter.

According to Vedic civilization, the perfection of life is to realize one's relationship with Krsna, or God. In the Bhagavad-gita, which is accepted by all authorities in transcendental science as the basis of all Vedic knowledge, we understand that not only human beings but all living entities are parts and parcels of God. The parts are meant for serving the whole, just as the legs, hands, fingers, and ears are meant for serving the total body. We living entities, being parts and parcels of God, are duty-bound to serve Him.

Actually our position is that we are always rendering service to someone, either to our family, country, or society. If we have no one to serve, sometimes we keep a pet cat or dog and render service to it. All these factors prove that we are constitutionally meant to render service, yet in spite of serving to the best of our ability, we are not satisfied. Nor is the person to whom we are rendering that service satisfied. On the material platform, everyone is frustrated. The reason for this is that the service being rendered is not properly directed.

For example, if we want to render service to a tree, we must water the root. If we pour water on the leaves, branches, and twigs, there is little benefit. If the Supreme Personality of Godhead is served, all other parts and parcels will be automatically satisfied. Consequently all welfare activities as well as service to society, family, and nation are realized by serving the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

It is the duty of every human being to understand his constitutional position with God and to act accordingly. If this is possible, then our lives become successful. Sometimes, however, we feel challenging and say, "There is no God," or "I am God," or even, "I don't care for God." But in actuality this challenging spirit will not save us. God is there, and we can see Him at every moment. If we refuse to see God in our life, then He will be present before us as cruel death. If we do not choose to see Him in one feature, we will see Him in another. There are different features of the Supreme Personality of Godhead because He is the original root of the entire cosmic manifestation. In one sense, it is not possible for us to escape Him.

This Krsna consciousness movement is not blind religious fanaticism, nor is it a revolt by some recent upstart; rather, it is an authorized, scientific approach to the matter of our eternal necessity in relation with the Absolute Personality of Godhead, the Supreme Enjoyer. Krsna consciousness simply deals with our eternal relationship with Him and the process of discharging our relative duties to Him. Thus, Krsna consciousness enables us to achieve the highest perfection of life attainable in the present human form of existence.

We must always remember that this particular form of human life is attained after an evolution of many millions of years in the cycle of transmigration of the spirit soul. In this particular form of life, the economic question is more easily solved than in the lower, animal forms. There are swine, dogs, camels, asses, and so on, whose economic necessities are just as important as ours, but the economic questions of these animals and others are solved under primitive conditions, whereas the human being is given all the facilities for leading a comfortable life by the laws of nature.

Why is a man given a better chance to live than swine or other animals? Why is a highly posted government officer given better facilities for a comfortable life than an ordinary clerk? The answer is very simple: the important officer has to discharge duties of a more responsible nature than those of an ordinary clerk. Similarly, the human being has to discharge higher duties than the animals, who are always busy with filling their hungry stomachs. But by the laws of nature, the modern animalistic standard of civilization has only increased the problems of filling the stomach. When we approach some of these polished animals for spiritual life, they say that they only want to work for the satisfaction of their stomachs and that there is no necessity of inquiring about the Godhead. Yet despite their eagerness to work hard, there is always the question of unemployment and so many other impediments incurred by the laws of nature. Despite this, they still denounce the necessity of acknowledging the Godhead.

We are given this human form of life not just to work hard like the swine or dog, but to attain the highest perfection of life. If we do not want that perfection, then we will have to work very hard, for we will be forced to by the laws of nature. In the closing days of Kali-yuga (this present age) men will have to work hard like asses for only a

scrap of bread. This process has already begun, and every year the necessity for harder work for lesser wages will increase. Yet human beings are not meant to work hard like animals, and if a man fails to discharge his duties as a human being, he is forced to transmigrate to the lower species of life by the laws of nature. The Bhagavad-gita very vividly describes how a spirit soul, by the laws of nature, takes his birth and gets a suitable body and sense organs for enjoying matter in the material world.

In the Bhagavad-gita it is also stated that those who attempt but do not complete the path of approaching God--in other words, those who have failed to achieve complete success in Krsna consciousness--are given the chance to appear in the families of the spiritually advanced or in financially well-to-do mercantile families. If the unsuccessful spiritual aspirants are offered such chances of noble parentage, what of those who have actually attained the required success? Therefore an attempt to go back to Godhead, even if half finished, guarantees a good birth in the next life. Both the spiritual and the financially well-to-do families are beneficial for spiritual progress because in both families one can get a good chance to make further progress from the point where he stopped in his previous birth. In spiritual realization the atmosphere generated by a good family is favorable for the cultivation of spiritual knowledge. The Bhagavad-gita reminds such fortunate well-born persons that their good fortune is due to their past devotional activities. Unfortunately, the children of these families do not consult the Bhagavad-gita, being misguided by maya (illusion).

Birth in a well-to-do family solves the problem of having to find sufficient food from the beginning of life, and later a comparatively easier and more comfortable way of life can be led. Being so situated, one has a good chance to make progress in spiritual realization, but as ill luck would have it, due to the influence of the present iron age (which is full of machines and mechanical people) the sons of the wealthy are misguided for sense enjoyment, and they forget the good chance they have for spiritual enlightenment. Therefore nature, by her laws, is setting fires in these golden homes. It was the golden city of Lanka, under the regime of the demoniac Ravana, that was burned to ashes. That is the law of nature.

The Bhagavad-gita is the preliminary study of the transcendental science of Krsna consciousness, and it is the duty of all responsible heads of state to chalk out their economic and other programs by referring to the Bhagavad-gita. We are not meant to solve economic questions of life by balancing on a tottering platform; rather, we are meant to solve the ultimate problems of life which arise due to the laws of nature. Civilization is static unless there is spiritual movement. The soul moves the body, and the living body moves the world. We are concerned about the body, but we have no knowledge of the spirit that is moving that body. Without the spirit, the body is motionless, or dead.

The human body is an excellent vehicle by which we can reach eternal life. It is a rare and very important boat for crossing over the ocean of nescience which is material existence. On this boat there is the service of an expert boatman, the spiritual master. By divine grace, the boat plies the water in a favorable wind. With all these auspicious factors, who would not take the opportunity to cross over the ocean of nescience? If one neglects this good chance, it should be known that he is simply committing suicide.

There is certainly a great deal of comfort in the first-class coach of a train, but if the train does not move toward its destination, what is the benefit of an air-conditioned compartment? Contemporary civilization is much too concerned with making the material body comfortable. No one has information of the real destination of life, which is to go back to Godhead. We must not just remain seated in a comfortable compartment; we should see whether or not our vehicle is moving toward its real destination. There is no ultimate benefit in making the material body comfortable at the expense of forgetting the prime necessity of life, which is to regain our lost spiritual identity. The boat of human life is constructed in such a way that it must move toward a spiritual destination. Unfortunately this body is anchored to mundane consciousness by five strong chains, which are: (1) attachment to the material body due to ignorance of spiritual facts, (2) attachment to kinsmen due to bodily relations, (3) attachment to the land of birth and to material possessions such as house, furniture, estates, property, business papers, etc., (4) attachment to material science, which always remains mysterious for want of spiritual light, and (5) attachment to religious forms and holy rituals without knowing the Personality of Godhead or His devotees, who make them holy. These attachments, which anchor the boat of the human body, are explained in detail in the Fifteenth Chapter of the Bhagavad-gita. There they are compared to a deeply rooted banyan tree which is ever increasing its hold on the earth. It is very difficult to uproot such a strong banyan tree, but the Lord recommends the following process: "The real form of this tree cannot be perceived in this world. No one can understand where it ends, where it begins, or where its foundation is. But with determination one must cut down this tree with the weapon of detachment. So doing, one must seek that place from which, having once gone, one never returns, and there surrender to that Supreme Personality of Godhead from whom everything has begun and in whom everything is abiding since time immemorial." (Bg. 15.3-4)

Neither the scientists nor speculative philosophers have yet arrived at any conclusion concerning the cosmic situation. All they have done is posit different theories about it. Some of them say that the material world is real, others say that it is a dream, and yet others say that it is ever existing. In this way different views are held by mundane scholars, but the fact is that no mundane scientist or speculative philosopher has ever discovered the beginning of the cosmos or its limitations. No one can say when it began or how it floats in space. They theoretically propose some laws, like the law of gravitation, but actually they cannot put this law to practical use. For want of actual knowledge of the truth, everyone is anxious to promote his own theory to gain certain fame, but the actual fact is that this material world is full of miseries and that no one can overcome them simply by promoting some theories about the subject. The Personality of Godhead, who is fully cognizant of everything in His creation, informs us that it is in our best interest that we desire to get out of this miserable existence. We must detach ourselves from everything material. To make the best use of a bad bargain, our material existence must be one-hundred-percent spiritualized. Iron is not fire, but it can be turned into fire by constant association with fire. Similarly, detachment from material activities can be effected by spiritual activities, not by material inertia. Material inertia is the negative

side of material action, but spiritual activity is not only the negation of material action but the activation of our real life. We must be anxious to search out eternal life, or spiritual existence in Brahman, the Absolute. The eternal kingdom of Brahman is described in the Bhagavad-gita as that eternal country from which no one returns. That is the kingdom of God.

The beginning of our present material life cannot be traced, nor is it necessary for us to know how we became conditioned in material existence. We have to be satisfied with the understanding that somehow or other this material life has been going on since time immemorial and now our duty is to surrender unto the Supreme Lord, who is the original cause of all causes. The preliminary qualification for going back to Godhead is given in the Bhagavad-gita (15.5): "One who is free from illusion, false prestige, and false association, who understands the eternal, who is done with material lust and is free from the duality of happiness and distress, and who knows how to surrender unto the Supreme Person attains that eternal kingdom."

One who is convinced of his spiritual identity and is freed from the material conception of existence, who is free from illusion and is transcendental to the modes of material nature, who constantly engages in understanding spiritual knowledge and who has completely severed himself from sense enjoyment can go back to Godhead. Such a person is called *amudha*, as distinguished from *mudha*, or the foolish and ignorant, for he is freed from the duality of happiness and distress.

And what is the nature of the kingdom of God? It is described in the Bhagavad-gita (15.6) as follows: "That abode of Mine is not illumined by the sun or moon, nor by electricity. One who reaches it never returns to this material world."

Although every place in the creation is within the kingdom of God because the Lord is the supreme proprietor of all planets, there is still the Lord's personal abode, which is completely different from the universe in which we are now living. And this abode is called *paramam*, or the supreme abode. Even on this earth there are countries where the standard of living is high and countries where the standard of living is low. Besides this earth, there are innumerable other planets distributed all over the universe, and some are considered superior places and some inferior places. In any case, all planets within the jurisdiction of the external energy, material nature, require the rays of a sun or the light of fire for their existence, because the material universe is a region of darkness. Beyond this region, however, is a spiritual realm, which is described as functioning under the superior nature of God. That realm is described in the Upanisads thus: "There is no need of sun, moon, or stars, nor is that abode illumined by electricity or any form of fire. All these material universes are illumined by a reflection of that spiritual light, and because that superior nature is always self-luminous, we can experience a glow of light even in the densest darkness of night." In the Hari-vamsa the spiritual nature is explained by the Supreme Lord Himself as follows: "The glaring effulgence of the impersonal Brahman [the impersonal Absolute] illuminates all existences, both material and spiritual. But, O Bharata, you must understand that this Brahman illumination is the effulgence of My body." In the Brahma-samhita this conclusion is also confirmed. We should not think that we can attain that abode by any material means such as spaceships, but we should know for certain that one who can attain that spiritual abode of

Krsna can enjoy eternal, spiritual bliss without interruption. As fallible living entities, we have two phases of existence. One is called material existence, which is full of the miseries of birth, death, old age, and disease, and the other is called spiritual existence, in which there is an incessant spiritual life of eternity, bliss, and knowledge. In material existence we are ruled by the material conception of the body and the mind, but in spiritual existence we can always relish the happy, transcendental contact of the Personality of Godhead. In spiritual existence, the Lord is never lost to us.

The Krsna consciousness movement is trying to bring that spiritual existence to humanity at large. In our present material consciousness, we are attached to the sensual material conception of life, but this conception can be removed at once by devotional service to Krsna, or Krsna consciousness. If we adopt the principles of devotional service, we can become transcendental to the material conceptions of life and be liberated from the modes of goodness, passion, and ignorance, even in the midst of various material engagements. Everyone who is engaged in material affairs can derive the highest benefit from the pages of Back to Godhead and the other literatures of this Krsna consciousness movement. These literatures help all people sever the roots of the indefatigable banyan tree of material existence. These literatures are authorized to train us to renounce everything related to the material conception of life and to relish spiritual nectar in every object. This stage is obtainable only by devotional service and nothing else. By rendering such service, one can at once get liberation (mukti) even during this present life. Most spiritual endeavors are tinged with the colors of materialism, but pure devotional service is transcendental to all material pollution. Those who desire to go back to Godhead need only adopt the principles of this Krsna consciousness movement and simply aim their consciousness at the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord, the Personality of Godhead, Krsna.

What Is Krsna Consciousness?

The following interview with freelance reporter Sandy Nixon took place in July 1975, in Srila Prabhupada's quarters at the Krsna center in Philadelphia. This discussion serves as a superb introduction to Krsna consciousness and covers such basic topics as the Hare Krsna mantra, the relationship between the spiritual master and God, the difference between genuine and fake gurus, the role of women in Krsna consciousness, the Indian caste system, and the relationship between Christ consciousness and Krsna consciousness.

Ms. Nixon: My first question is very basic. What is Krsna consciousness?

Srila Prabhupada: Krsna means God. We are all intimately connected with Him because He is our original father. But we have forgotten this connection. When we become interested in knowing, "What is my connection with God? What is the aim of life?" then we are called Krsna conscious.

Ms. Nixon: How does Krsna consciousness develop in the practitioner?

Srila Prabhupada: Krsna consciousness is already there in the core of everyone's heart. But because of our materially conditioned life, we have forgotten it. The process of chanting the Hare Krsna maha-mantra-- Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare--revives the Krsna consciousness we already have. For example, a few months ago these American and European boys and girls did not know about Krsna, but just yesterday we saw how they were chanting Hare Krsna and dancing in ecstasy throughout the whole Ratha-

yatra procession [an annual festival sponsored by the Krsna consciousness movement in cities around the world]. Do you think that was artificial? No. Artificially, nobody can chant and dance for hours together. They have actually awakened their Krsna consciousness by following a bona fide process. This is explained in the Caitanya-caritamrta (Madhya 22. 107):

nitya-siddha krsna-prema `sadhya' kabhu naya
sravanadi-suddha-citte karaye udaya

Krsna consciousness is dormant in everyone's heart, and when one comes in contact with devotees, it is awakened. Krsna consciousness is not artificial. Just as a young boy awakens his natural attraction for a young girl in her association, similarly, if one hears about Krsna in the association of devotees, he awakens his dormant Krsna consciousness. Ms. Nixon: What is the difference between Krsna consciousness and Christ consciousness?

Srila Prabhupada: Christ consciousness is also Krsna consciousness, but because at present people do not follow the rules and regulations of Christianity--the commandments of Jesus Christ--they do not come to the standard of God consciousness.

Ms. Nixon: What is unique about Krsna consciousness among all religions?

Srila Prabhupada: Primarily, religion means to know God and to love Him. That is religion. Nowadays, because of a lack of training, nobody knows God, what to speak of loving Him. People are satisfied simply going to church and praying, "O God, give us our daily bread." In the Srimad-Bhagavatam this is called a cheating religion, because the aim is not to know and love God but to gain some personal profit. In other words, if I profess to follow some religion but I do not know who God is or how to love Him, I am practicing a cheating religion. As far as the Christian religion is concerned, ample opportunity is given to understand God, but no one is taking it. For example, the Bible contains the commandment "Thou shall not kill," but Christians have built the world's best slaughterhouses. How can they become God conscious if they disobey the commandments of Lord Jesus Christ? And this is going on not just in the Christian religion, but in every religion. The title "Hindu," "Muslim," or "Christian" is simply a rubber stamp. None of them knows who God is and how to love Him.

Ms. Nixon: How can one tell a bona fide spiritual master from a fake?

Srila Prabhupada: Whoever teaches how to know God and how to love Him--he is a spiritual master. Sometimes bogus rascals mislead people. "I am God," they claim, and people who do not know what God is believe them. You must be a serious student to understand who God is and how to love Him. Otherwise, you will simply waste your time. So the difference between others and us is that we are the only movement that can actually teach one how to know God and how to love Him. We are presenting the science of how one can know Krsna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, by practicing the teachings of the Bhagavad-gita and the Srimad-Bhagavatam. They teach us that our only business is to love God. Our business is not to ask God for our necessities. God gives necessities to everyone--even to one who has no religion. For example, cats and dogs have no religion, yet Krsna supplies them with the necessities of life. So why should we bother Krsna for our daily bread? He is already

supplying it. Real religion means to learn how to love Him. The Srimad-Bhagavatam (1.2.6) says,

sa vai pumsam paro dharmo
yato bhaktir adhoksaje
ahaituky apratihata
yayatma suprasidati

First-class religion teaches one how to love God without any motive. If I serve God for some profit, that is business--not love. Real love of God is ahaituky apratihata: it cannot be checked by any material cause. It is unconditional. If one actually wants to love God, there is no impediment. One can love Him whether one is poor or rich, young or old, black or white.

Ms. Nixon: Do all paths lead to the same end?

Srila Prabhupada: No. There are four classes of men--the karmis, the jnanis, the yogis, and the bhaktas--and each achieves a different goal. The karmis work for some material profit. For example, in the city, many people work hard day and night, and their purpose is to get some money. Thus, they are fruitive workers, or karmis. A jnani is a person who thinks, "Why am I working so hard? The birds, bees, elephants, and other creatures have no profession, yet they are also eating. So why should I unnecessarily work so hard? Rather, let me try to solve the problems of life--birth, death, old age, and disease." Jnanis try to become immortal. They think that if they merge into God's existence, then they will become immune to birth, death, old age, and disease. And yogis try to acquire some mystic power to exhibit a wonderful show. For instance, a yogi can become very small: if you put him into a locked room, he can come out through any little space. By showing this kind of magic, the yogi is immediately accepted as a very wonderful man. Of course, modern yogis simply show some gymnastics--they have no real power. But a real yogi has some power, which is not spiritual but material. So the yogi wants mystic power, the jnani wants salvation from the miseries of life, and the karmi wants material profit. But the bhakta--the devotee--doesn't want anything for himself. He simply wants to serve God out of love, just as a mother serves her child. There is no question of profit in a mother's service to her child. Out of pure affection and love, she cares for him.

When you come to this stage of loving God, that is perfection. Neither the karmi, the jnani, nor the yogi can know God--only the bhakta. As Krsna says in the Bhagavad-gita (18.55), bhaktya mam abhijanati: "Only through the process of bhakti can one understand God." Krsna never says one can understand Him by other processes. No. Only through bhakti. If you are interested in knowing God and loving Him, then you must accept the devotional process. No other process will help you.

Ms. Nixon: What transformation does one undergo on the path...

Srila Prabhupada: No transformation--your original consciousness is Krsna consciousness. Now your consciousness is covered with so much rubbish. You have to cleanse it, and then--Krsna consciousness. Our consciousness is like water. Water is by nature clear and transparent, but sometimes it becomes muddy. If you filter all the mud out of the water, it again comes to its original clear, transparent state.

Ms. Nixon: Can one function better in society by becoming Krsna conscious?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, you can see that my disciples are not drunkards or meat-eaters, and from a physiological point of view they are very clean--they'll never be attacked by serious diseases. Actually, giving up meat-eating is not a question of Krsna consciousness but of civilized human life. God has given human society so many things to eat--nice fruits, vegetables, grain, and first-class milk. From milk one can prepare hundreds of nutritious foods, but no one knows the art. Instead, people maintain big slaughterhouses and eat meat. They are not even civilized. When man is uncivilized, he kills poor animals and eats them.

Civilized men know the art of preparing nutritious foods from milk. For instance, on our New Vrndavana farm in West Virginia, we make hundreds of first-class preparations from milk. Whenever visitors come, they are astonished that from milk such nice foods can be prepared. The blood of the cow is very nutritious, but civilized men utilize it in the form of milk. Milk is nothing but cow's blood transformed. You can make milk into so many things--yogurt, curd, ghee (clarified butter), and so on--and by combining these milk products with grains, fruits, and vegetables, you can make hundreds of preparations. This is civilized life--not directly killing an animal and eating its flesh. The innocent cow is simply eating grass given by God and supplying milk, which you can live on. Do you think cutting the cow's throat and eating its flesh is civilized?

Ms. Nixon: No, I agree with you one hundred percent.... One thing I'm very curious about: can the Vedas be taken symbolically as well as literally?

Srila Prabhupada: No. They must be taken as they are, not symbolically. That is why we are presenting the Bhagavad-gita As It Is.

Ms. Nixon: Are you attempting to revive the ancient Indian caste system in the West? The Gita mentions the caste system...

Srila Prabhupada: Where does the Bhagavad-gita mention the caste system? Krsna says, *catur-varnyam maya srstam guna-karma-vibhagasah*: "I created four divisions of men according to their quality and work." (Bg. 4.13) For instance, you can understand that there are engineers as well as medical practitioners in society. Do you say they belong to different castes--that one is in the engineer caste and the other is in the medical caste? No. If a man has qualified himself in medical school, you accept him as a doctor; and if another man has a degree in engineering, you accept him as an engineer. Similarly, the Bhagavad-gita defines four classes of men in society: a class of highly intelligent men, a class of administrators, a class of productive men, and ordinary workers. These divisions are natural. For example, one class of men is very intelligent. But to actually meet the qualifications of first-class men as described in the Bhagavad-gita, they need to be trained, just as an intelligent boy requires training in a college to become a qualified doctor. So in the Krsna consciousness movement we are training the intelligent men how to control their minds, how to control their senses, how to become truthful, how to become clean internally and externally, how to become wise, how to apply their knowledge in practical life, and how to become God conscious. All these boys [gestures toward seated disciples] have first-class intelligence, and now we are training them to use it properly.

We are not introducing the caste system, in which any rascal born in a brahmana family is automatically a brahmana. He may have the habits of a fifth-class man, but he is accepted as first class because of his birth in a brahmana family. We don't accept that. We recognize a man as first class who is trained as a brahmana. It doesn't matter whether he is Indian, European, or American; lowborn or highborn--it doesn't matter. Any intelligent man can be trained to adopt first-class habits. We want to stop the nonsensical idea that we are imposing the Indian caste system on our disciples. We are simply picking out men with first-class intelligence and training them how to become first class in every respect.

Ms. Nixon: How do you feel about women's liberation?

Srila Prabhupada: So-called equal rights for women means that the men cheat the women. Suppose a woman and a man meet, they become lovers, they have sex, the woman becomes pregnant, and the man goes away. The woman has to take charge of the child and beg alms from the government, or else she kills the child by having an abortion. This is the woman's independence. In India, although a woman may be poverty-stricken, she stays under the care of her husband, and he takes responsibility for her. When she becomes pregnant, she is not forced to kill the child or maintain him by begging. So, which is real independence--to remain under the care of the husband or to be enjoyed by everyone?

Ms. Nixon: How about in spiritual life--can women also succeed in Krsna consciousness?

Srila Prabhupada: We make no distinction on the basis of sex. We give Krsna consciousness to both men and women equally. We welcome women, men, the poor, the rich--everyone. Krsna says in the Bhagavad-gita (5.18):

vidya-vinaya-sampanne
brahmane ga vi hastini
suni caiva svapake ca
panditah sama-darsinah

"The humble sage, by virtue of true knowledge, sees with equal vision a learned and gentle brahmana, a cow, an elephant, a dog, and a dog-eater."

Ms. Nixon: Could you explain the meaning of the Hare Krsna mantra?

Srila Prabhupada: It is very simple. Hare means, "O energy of the Lord," and Krsna means, "O Lord Krsna." Just as there are males and females in the material world, similarly, God is the original male (purusa), and His energy (prakrti) is the original female. So, when we chant Hare Krsna, we are saying, "O Lord Krsna, O energy of Krsna, kindly engage me in Your service."

Ms. Nixon: Could you please tell me a little bit about your life and how you knew that you were the spiritual master of the Krsna consciousness movement?

Srila Prabhupada: My life is simple. I was a householder with a wife and children--now I have grandsons--when my spiritual master ordered me to go to the Western countries and preach the cult of Krsna consciousness. So I left everything on the order of my spiritual master, and now I am trying to execute his order and the orders of Krsna.

Ms. Nixon: How old were you when he told you to go to the West?

Srila Prabhupada: At our first meeting, he ordered me to preach Krsna consciousness in the West. I was then twenty-five years old, a married man with two children. I tried my best to carry out his orders and started managing Back to Godhead magazine in 1944, when I was still in household life. I started writing books in 1959 after retiring from family life, and in 1965 I came to the United States.

Ms. Nixon: You have said that you are not God, and yet it appears to me, as an outsider, that your devotees treat you as if you were God.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, that is their duty. Because the spiritual master is executing God's order, he should be respected as much as God, just as a government officer should be respected as much as the government because he executes the government's order. Even if an ordinary policeman comes, you have to respect him because he is a government man. But that does not mean he is the government. Saksad-dhari-tvena samastasastrair/uktas tatha bhavyata eva sadbhih: "The spiritual master is to be honored as much as the Supreme Lord because he is the most confidential servitor of the Lord. This is acknowledged in all revealed scriptures and followed by all authorities."

Ms. Nixon: I also wonder about the many beautiful material things that the devotees bring you. For instance, you left the airport in a beautiful, fancy car. I wonder about this because...

Srila Prabhupada: That teaches the disciples how to regard the spiritual master as good as God. If you respect the government representative as much as you respect the government, then you must treat him opulently. If you respect the spiritual master as much as God, then you must offer him the same facilities you would offer to God. God travels in a golden car. If the disciples offer the spiritual master an ordinary motorcar, it would not be sufficient, because the spiritual master has to be treated like God. If God comes to your home, will you bring him an ordinary motorcar--or will you arrange for a golden car?

Ms. Nixon: One of the most difficult aspects of Krsna consciousness for an outsider to accept is the Deity in the temple--how it represents Krsna. Could you talk a little bit about that?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. At the present moment, because you have not been trained to see Krsna, He kindly appears before you so you can see Him. You can see wood and stone, but you cannot see what is spiritual. Suppose your father is in the hospital, and he dies. You are crying by his bedside, "Now my father is gone!" But why do you say he is gone? What is that thing which is gone?

Ms. Nixon: Well, his spirit is gone.

Srila Prabhupada: And have you seen that spirit?

Ms. Nixon: No.

Srila Prabhupada: So you cannot see spirit, and God is the Supreme Spirit. Actually, He is everything--spirit and matter--but you cannot see Him in His spiritual identity. Therefore, to show kindness toward you, He appears out of His unbounded mercy in the form of a wooden or stone Deity so that you can see Him.

Ms. Nixon: Thank you very much.

Srila Prabhupada: Hare Krsna!

A Definition of God

Modern man's concepts of God are many and varied. Children tend to imagine an old man with a white beard. Many adults regard God as an invisible force or a mental concept or as all humanity, the universe, or

even oneself. In this lecture, Srila Prabhupada describes in detail the Krsna consciousness concept--a surprisingly intimate view of God.

Ladies and gentlemen, I thank you very much for kindly participating in this Krsna consciousness movement. When this society was registered in 1966 in New York, a friend suggested that it be named the Society for God Consciousness. He thought that the name Krsna was sectarian. The dictionary also says that Krsna is a Hindu god's name. But in actuality, if any name can be attributed to God, it is "Krsna."

Actually God has no particular name. By saying He has no name, we mean that no one knows how many names He has. Since God is unlimited, His names also must be unlimited. Therefore we cannot settle on one name. For instance, Krsna is sometimes called Yasoda-nandana, the son of mother Yasoda; or Devaki-nandana, the son of Devaki; or Vasudeva-nandana, the son of Vasudeva; or Nandanandana, the son of Nanda. Sometimes He is called Parthasarathi, indicating that He acted as the charioteer of Arjuna, who is sometimes called Partha, the son of Prtha.

God has many dealings with His many devotees, and according to those dealings, He is called certain names. Since He has innumerable devotees and innumerable relations with them, He also has innumerable names. We cannot hit on any one name. But the name Krsna means "all-attractive." God attracts everyone; that is the definition of God. We have seen many pictures of Krsna, and we see that He attracts the cows, calves, birds, beasts, trees, plants, and even the water in Vrndavana. He is attractive to the cowherd boys, to the gopis, to Nanda Maharaja, to the Pandavas, and to all human society. Therefore if any particular name can be given to God, that name is "Krsna."

Parasara Muni, a great sage and the father of Vyasadeva, who compiled all the Vedic literatures, gave the following definition of God:

aisvaryasya samagrasya
virasya yasadah sriyah
jnana-vairagyayos caiva
sannam bhaga itingana
(Visnu Purana 6.5.47)

Bhagavan, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is thus defined by Parasara Muni as one who is full in six opulences--who has full strength, fame, wealth, knowledge, beauty, and renunciation.

Bhagavan, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is the proprietor of all riches. There are many rich men in the world, but no one can claim that he possesses all the wealth. Nor can anyone claim that no one is richer than he. We understand from the Srimad-Bhagavatam, however, that when Krsna was present on this earth He had 16,108 wives, and each wife lived in a palace made of marble and bedecked with jewels. The rooms were filled with furniture made of ivory and gold, and there was great opulence everywhere. These descriptions are all given vividly in the Srimad-Bhagavatam. In the history of human society we cannot find anyone who had sixteen thousand wives or sixteen thousand palaces. Nor did Krsna go to one wife one day and another wife another day. No, He was personally present in every palace at the same time. This means that He expanded Himself in 16,108 forms. This is impossible for an ordinary man, but it is not very difficult for God. If God is unlimited, He can expand Himself in unlimited forms, otherwise there is no meaning to the

word unlimited. God is omnipotent; He can maintain not only sixteen thousand wives but sixteen million and still encounter no difficulty, otherwise there is no meaning to the word omnipotent.

These are all attractive features. We experience in this material world that if a man is very rich, he is attractive. In America, for instance, Rockefeller and Ford are very attractive because of their riches. They are attractive even though they do not possess all the wealth of the world. How much more attractive, then, is God, who is the possessor of all riches.

Similarly, Krsna has unlimited strength. His strength was present from the moment of His birth. When Krsna was only three months old, the Putana demon attempted to kill Him, but instead she was killed by Krsna. That is God. God is God from the beginning. He does not become God by some meditation or mystic power. Krsna is not that type of God. Krsna was God from the very beginning of His appearance.

Krsna also has unlimited fame. Of course, we are devotees of Krsna and know of Him and glorify Him, but apart from us, many millions in the world are aware of the fame of the Bhagavad-gita. In all countries all over the world the Bhagavad-gita is read by philosophers, psychologists, and religionists. We are also finding very good sales with our Bhagavad-gita As It Is. This is because the commodity is pure gold. There are many editions of the Bhagavad-gita, but they are not pure. Ours is selling more because we are presenting the Bhagavad-gita as it is. The fame of the Bhagavad-gita is Krsna's fame.

Beauty, another opulence, is possessed unlimitedly by Krsna. Krsna Himself is very beautiful, as are all His associates. Those who were pious in a previous life receive an opportunity in this material world to take birth in good families and good nations. The American people are very rich and beautiful, and these opulences are a result of pious activities. All over the world people are attracted to the Americans because they are advanced in scientific knowledge, riches, beauty, and so on. This planet is an insignificant planet within the universe, yet within this planet, one country--America--has so many attractive features. We can just imagine, then, how many attractive features must be possessed by God, who is the creator of the entire cosmic manifestation. How beautiful He must be--He who has created all beauty.

A person is attractive not only because of his beauty, but also because of his knowledge. A scientist or philosopher may be attractive because of his knowledge, but what knowledge is more sublime than that given by Krsna in the Bhagavad-gita? There is no comparison in the world to such knowledge. At the same time, Krsna possesses full renunciation (vairagya). So many things are working under Krsna's direction in this material world, but actually Krsna is not present here. A big factory may continue to work, although the owner may not be present. Similarly, Krsna's potencies are working under the direction of His assistants, the demigods. Thus Krsna Himself is aloof from the material world. This is all described in the revealed scriptures.

God, therefore, has many names according to His activities, but because He possesses so many opulences, and because with these opulences He attracts everyone, He is called Krsna. The Vedic literature asserts that God has many names, but "Krsna" is the principal name.

The purpose of this Krsna consciousness movement is to propagate God's name, God's glories, God's activities, God's beauty, and God's love. There are many things within this material world, and all of them

are within Krsna. The most prominent feature of this material world is sex, and that also is present in Krsna. We are worshiping Radha and Krsna, and attraction exists between them, but material attraction and spiritual attraction are not the same. In Krsna, sex is real, but here in the material world it is unreal. Everything we deal with here is present in the spiritual world, but here it has no real value. It is only a reflection. In store windows we see many mannequins, but no one cares about them, because everyone knows they are false. A mannequin may be very beautiful, but still it is false. When people see a beautiful woman, however, they are attracted because they think she is real. In actuality, the so-called living are also dead, because this body is simply a lump of matter; as soon as the soul leaves the body, no one would care to see the so-called beautiful body of the woman. The real factor, the real attracting force, is the spiritual soul.

In the material world everything is made of dead matter; therefore it is simply an imitation. The reality of things exists in the spiritual world. Those who have read the Bhagavad-gita can understand what the spiritual world is like, for there it is described:

paras tasmāt tu bhavo 'nyo
'vyakto 'vyaktat sanatunah
yah sa sarvesu bhutesu
nasyatsu na vinasyati

"Yet there is another nature, which is eternal and is transcendental to this manifested and unmanifested matter. It is supreme and is never annihilated. When all in this world is annihilated, that part remains as it is." (Bhagavad-gita 8.20)

Scientists are attempting to calculate the length and breadth of this material world, but they cannot begin. It will take them thousands of years simply to travel to the nearest star. And what to speak of the spiritual world? Since we cannot know the material world, how can we know what is beyond it? The point is that we must know from authoritative sources.

The most authoritative source is Krsna, for He is the reservoir of all knowledge. No one is wiser or more knowledgeable than Krsna. Krsna informs us that beyond this material world is a spiritual sky, which is filled with innumerable planets. That sky is far, far greater than material space, which constitutes only one fourth of the entire creation. Similarly, the living entities within the material world are but a small portion of the living entities throughout the creation. This material world is compared to a prison, and just as prisoners represent only a small percentage of the total population, so the living entities within the material world constitute but a fragmental portion of all living entities.

Those who have revolted against God--who are criminal--are placed in this material world. Sometimes criminals say that they don't care for the government, but nonetheless they are arrested and punished. Similarly, living entities who declare their defiance of God are placed in the material world.

Originally the living entities are all part and parcel of God and are related to Him just as sons are related to their father. Christians also consider God the supreme father. Christians go to church and pray,

"Our Father, who art in heaven.', The conception of God as father is also in the Bhagavad-gita (14.4):

sarva-yonisu kaunteya
murtayah sambha vanti yah
tasam brahma mahad yonir
aham bija-pradah pita

"It should be understood that all the species of life, O son of Kunti, are made possible by birth in this material nature, and that I am the seed-giving father."

There are 8,400,000 species of life--including aquatics, plants, birds, beasts, insects, and human beings. Of the human species, most are uncivilized, and out of the few civilized species only a small number of human beings take to religious life. Out of many so-called religionists, most identify themselves by designations, claiming, "I am Hindu," "I am Muslim," "I am Christian," and so on. Some engage in philanthropic work, some give to the poor, and open schools and hospitals. This altruistic process is called karma-kanda. Out of millions of these karma-kandis, there may be one jnani ("one who knows"). Out of millions of jnanis, one may be liberated, and out of billions of liberated souls, one may be able to understand Krsna. This, then, is the position of Krsna. As Krsna Himself says in the Bhaga vad-gita (7.3):

manusyanam sahasresu
kascid yatati siddhaye
yatutam api siddhanam
kascin mam vetti tattvatah

"Out of many thousands among men, one may endeavor for perfection, and of those who have achieved perfection, hardly one knows Me in truth."

Understanding Krsna, then, is very difficult. But although the understanding of God is a difficult subject, God explains Himself in the Bhagavad-gita. He says, "I am like this, and I am like this. The material nature is like this, and the spiritual nature is like that. The living entities are like this, and the Supreme Soul is like that." Thus everything is completely described in the Bhagavad-gita. Although understanding God is very difficult, it is not difficult when God Himself gives us His own knowledge. Actually that is the only process by which we can understand God. To understand God by our own speculation is not possible, for God is unlimited and we are limited. Our knowledge and perception are both very limited, so how can we understand the unlimited? If we simply accept the version of the unlimited, we can come to understand Him. That understanding is our perfection.

Speculative knowledge of God will lead us nowhere. If a boy wants to know who his father is, the simple process is to ask his mother. The mother will then say, "This is your father." This is the way of perfect knowledge. Of course, one may speculate about one's father, wondering if this is the man or if that is the man, and one may wander over the whole city, asking, "Are you my father? Are you my father?" The knowledge derived from such a process, however, will always remain imperfect. One will never find his father in this way. The simple process is to take the knowledge from an authority--in this case, the mother. She simply

says, "My dear boy, here is your father." In this way our knowledge is perfect. Transcendental knowledge is similar. I was just previously speaking of a spiritual world. This spiritual world is not subject to our speculation. God says, "There is a spiritual world, and that is My headquarters." In this way we receive knowledge from Krsna, the best authority. We may not be perfect, but our knowledge is perfect because it is received from the perfect source.

The Krsna consciousness movement is meant to give perfect knowledge to human society. By such knowledge one can understand who he is, who God is, what the material world is, why we have come here, why we must undergo so much tribulation and misery, and why we have to die. Of course, no one wants to die, but death will come. No one wants to become an old man, but still old age comes. No one wants to suffer from disease, but surely enough, disease comes. These are the real problems of human life, and they are yet to be solved. Civilization attempts to improve eating, sleeping, mating, and defense, but these are not the real problems. A man sleeps, and a dog sleeps. A man is not more advanced simply because he has a nice apartment. In both cases, the business is the same--sleeping. Man has discovered atomic weapons for defense, but the dog also has teeth and claws and can also defend himself. In both cases, defense is there. Man cannot say that because he has the atomic bomb he can conquer the entire world or the entire universe. That is not possible. Man may possess an elaborate method for defense, or a gorgeous method for eating, sleeping, or mating, but that does not make him advanced. We may call his advancement polished animalism, and that is all.

Real advancement means knowing God. If we are lacking knowledge of God, we are not actually advanced. Many rascals deny the existence of God because if there is no God they can continue their sinful activities. It may be very nice for them to think that there is no God, but God will not die simply because we deny Him. God is there, and His administration is there. By His orders the sun is rising, the moon is rising, the water flows, and the ocean abides by the tide. Thus everything functions under His order. Since everything is going on very nicely, how can one realistically think that God is dead? If there is mismanagement, we may say that there is no government, but if there is good management, how can we say that there is no government? Just because people do not know God, they say that God is dead, that there is no God, or that God has no form. But we are firmly convinced that there is God and that Krsna is God. Therefore we are worshiping Him. That is the process of Krsna consciousness. Try to understand it. Thank you very much.

Reincarnation and Beyond

In August of 1976, Srila Prabhupada spent a few weeks at Bhaktivedantu Manor, fifteen miles north of London. During that time Mike Robinson of London Broadcasting Company interviewed him in his quarters. In their conversation, which was broadcast shortly afterward, Srila Prabhupada revealed that Krsna consciousness is "not some ritualistic ceremony of 'I believe, you believe,' " but a profound philosophical system in which the science of reincarnation is explained clearly and concisely.

Mike Robinson: Can you tell me what you believe--what the philosophy of the Hare Krsna movement is?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. Krsna consciousness is not a question of belief; it is a science. The first step is to know the difference between a

living body and a dead body. What is the difference? The difference is that when someone dies, the spirit soul, or the living force, leaves the body. And therefore the body is called "dead." So, there are two things: one, this body; and the other, the living force within the body. We speak of the living force within the body. That is the difference between the science of Krsna consciousness, which is spiritual, and ordinary material science. As such, in the beginning it is very, very difficult for an ordinary man to appreciate our movement. One must first understand that he is a soul, or something other than his body.

Mike Robinson: And when will we understand that?

Srila Prabhupada: You can understand at any moment, but it requires a little intelligence. For example, as a child grows, he becomes a boy, the boy becomes a young man, the young man becomes an adult, and the adult becomes an old man. Throughout all this time, although his body is changing from a child to an old man, he still feels himself to be the same person, with the same identity. Just see: the body is changing, but the occupier of the body, the soul, is remaining the same. So we should logically conclude that when our present body dies, we get another body. This is called transmigration of the soul.

Mike Robinson: So when people die it is just the physical body that dies?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. That is explained very elaborately in the Bhagavad-gita (2.20): na jayate mriyate va kadacin... na hanyate hanyamane sarire.

Mike Robinson: Do you often quote references?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, we quote many references. Krsna consciousness is a serious education, not an ordinary religion. [To a devotee:] Find that verse in the Bhagavad-gita.

Disciple:

na jayate mriyate va kadacin
nayam bhutva bhavita va na bhuyah
ajo nityah sasvato 'yam purano
na hanyate hanyamane sarire

"For the soul, there is never birth nor death. Nor, having once been, does he ever cease to be. He is unborn, eternal, ever-existing, undying, and primeval. He is not slain when the body is slain."

Mike Robinson: Thank you very much for reading that. So can you explain to me just a bit more? If the soul is undying, does everybody's soul go to be with God when they die?

Srila Prabhupada: Not necessarily. If one is qualified--if he qualifies himself in this life to go back home, back to Godhead--then he can go. If he does not qualify himself, then he gets another material body. And there are 8,400,000 different bodily forms. According to his desires and karma, the laws of nature give him a suitable body. It is just like when a man contracts some disease and then develops that disease. Is that difficult to understand?

Mike Robinson: It's very difficult to understand all of it.

Srila Prabhupada: Suppose somebody has contracted smallpox. So, after seven days he develops the symptoms. What is that period called?

Mike Robinson: Incubation?

Srila Prabhupada: Incubation. So you cannot avoid it. If you have contracted some disease it will develop, by nature's law. Similarly,

during this life you associate with various modes of material nature, and that association will decide what kind of body you are going to get in the next life. That is strictly under the laws of nature. Everyone is controlled by the laws of nature--they're completely dependent--but out of ignorance people think that they are free. They're not free; they're imagining that they're free, but they are completely under the laws of nature. So, your next birth will be decided according to your activities--sinful or pious, as the case may be.

Mike Robinson: Your Grace, could you go back over that just for a minute? You said that nobody is free. Are you saying that if we live a good life, we in some way determine a good future for ourselves?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes.

Mike Robinson: So we are free to choose what we believe to be important? Religion is important, because if we believe in God and lead a good life...

Srila Prabhupada: It is not a question of belief. Do not bring in this question of belief. It is law. For instance, there is a government. You may believe or not believe, but if you break the law, you'll be punished by the government. Similarly, whether you believe or don't believe, there is a God. If you don't believe in God and you independently do whatever you like, then you'll be punished by the laws of nature.

Mike Robinson: I see. Does it matter what religion you believe? Would it matter if one was a devotee of Krsna?

Srila Prabhupada: It is not a question of religion. It is a question of science. You are a spiritual being, but because you are materially conditioned, you are under the laws of material nature. So you may believe in the Christian religion, and I may believe in the Hindu religion, but that does not mean that you are going to become an old man and I am not. We're talking of the science of growing old. This is natural law. It is not that because you are Christian you are becoming old or because I am Hindu I am not becoming old. Everyone is becoming old. So, similarly, all the laws of nature are applicable to everyone. Whether you believe this religion or that religion, it doesn't matter.

Mike Robinson: So, you're saying that there's only one God controlling all of us?

Srila Prabhupada: There's one God, and one nature's law, and we are all under that nature's law. We are controlled by the Supreme. So if we think that we are free or that we can do anything we like, that is our foolishness.

Mike Robinson: I see. Can you explain to me what difference it makes, being a member of the Hare Krsna movement?

Srila Prabhupada: The Hare Krsna movement is meant for those who are serious about understanding this science. There's no question of our being some sectarian group. No. Anyone can join. Students in college can be admitted. You may be a Christian, you may be a Hindu, you may be a Muhammadan--it doesn't matter. The Krsna consciousness movement admits anyone who wants to understand the science of God.

Mike Robinson: And what difference would it make to someone--being taught how to be a Hare Krsna person?

Srila Prabhupada: His real education would begin. The first thing is to understand that you are a spirit soul. And because you are a spirit soul, you are changing your body. This is the ABC of spiritual understanding. So, when your body is finished, annihilated, you are not finished. You get another body, just as you may change your coat and

shirt. If you come to see me tomorrow wearing a different shirt and a different coat, does that mean you are a different person? No.

Similarly, each time you die you change bodies, but you, the spirit soul within the body, remain the same. This point has to be understood; then one can make further progress in the science of Krsna consciousness.

Mike Robinson: I am beginning to understand, but what I'm finding difficult is how this ties in with the large numbers of your people we see handing out Hare Krsna literature on Oxford Street.

Srila Prabhupada: This literature is meant to convince people about the need for spiritual life.

Mike Robinson: And you're really not concerned whether or not they join the Hare Krsna movement?

Srila Prabhupada: it doesn't matter. Our mission is to educate them. People are in ignorance; they are living in a fool's paradise, thinking that when their body is finished, everything is finished. That is foolishness.

Mike Robinson: And you are basically just concerned to tell them that there is a spiritual dimension to life?

Srila Prabhupada: Our first concern is to tell you that you are not this body, that the body is your covering (your shirt and coat) and that within the body you are living.

Mike Robinson: Yes, I think I've got that now. If we could go on from there--you said that how you lived made a difference in your life after death, that there are natural laws that determine your next life. How does the process of transmigration work?

Srila Prabhupada: The process is very subtle. The spirit soul is invisible to our material eyes. It is atomic in size. After the destruction of the gross body, which is made up of the senses, blood, bone, fat, and so forth, the subtle body of mind, intelligence, and ego goes on working. So at the time of death this subtle body carries the small spirit soul to another gross body. The process is just like air carrying a fragrance. Nobody can see where this rose fragrance is coming from, but we know that it is being carried by the air. You cannot see how, but it is being done. Similarly, the process of transmigration of the soul is very subtle. According to the condition of the mind at the time of death, the minute spirit soul enters into the womb of a particular mother through the semen of a father, and then the soul develops a particular type of body given by the mother. It may be a human being, it may be a cat, a dog, or anything.

Mike Robinson: Are you saying that we were something else before this life?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes.

Mike Robinson: And we keep coming back as something else the next time?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, because you are eternal. According to your work, you are simply changing bodies. Therefore, you should want to know how to stop this business, how you can remain in your original, spiritual body. That is Krsna consciousness.

Mike Robinson: I see. So if I become Krsna conscious, I wouldn't risk coming back as a dog?

Srila Prabhupada: No. [To a devotee:] Find this verse: janma karma ca me divyam...

Disciple:

janma karma ca me divyam

evam yo vetti tattvatah
tyaktva deham punar janma
naiti mam eti so 'rjuna

"One who knows the transcendental nature of My appearance and activities does not, upon leaving the body, take his birth again in this material world, but attains My eternal abode, O Arjuna." (Bg. 4.9)

Srila Prabhupada: God is saying, "Anyone who understands Me is free from birth and death." But one cannot understand God by materialistic speculation. That is not possible. One must first come to the spiritual platform. Then he gets the intelligence required to understand God. And when he understands God, he does not get any more material bodies. He goes back home, back to Godhead. He lives eternally; no more change of body.

Mike Robinson: I see. Now, you've read twice from your scriptures. Where do these scriptures come from? Can you briefly explain that?

Srila Prabhupada: Our scriptures are coming from Vedic literature, which has existed from the beginning of creation. Whenever there is some new material creation--like this microphone, for instance--there is also some literature explaining how to deal with it. Isn't that so?

Mike Robinson: Yes, that's right, there is.

Srila Prabhupada: And that literature comes along with the creation of the microphone.

Mike Robinson: That's right, yes.

Srila Prabhupada: So, similarly, the Vedic literature comes along with the cosmic creation, to explain how to deal with it.

Mike Robinson: I see. So, these scriptures have been in existence since the beginning of creation. Now, if we could move on to something I believe you feel very strongly about. What is the main difference between Krsna consciousness and the other Eastern disciplines being taught in the West?

Srila Prabhupada: The difference is that we are following the original literature, and they are manufacturing their own literature. That is the difference. When there is some question on spiritual matters, you must consult the original literature, not some literature issued by a bogus man.

Mike Robinson: What about the chanting of Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna...

Srila Prabhupada: Chanting Hare Krsna is the easiest process by which to become purified, especially in this age, when people are so dull that they cannot very easily understand spiritual knowledge. If one chants Hare Krsna, then his intelligence becomes purified, and he can understand spiritual things.

Mike Robinson: Can you tell me how you are guided in what you do?

Srila Prabhupada: We take guidance from the Vedic literature.

Mike Robinson: From the scriptures you quoted?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, it's all in the literatures. We're explaining them in English. But we're not manufacturing anything. If we were to manufacture knowledge, then everything would be spoiled. The Vedic literature is something like the literature that explains how to set up this microphone. It says, "Do it like this: some of the screws should be on this side, around the metal." You cannot make any change; then everything would be spoiled. Similarly, because we are not manufacturing anything, one simply has to read one of our books, and he receives real spiritual knowledge.

Mike Robinson: How can the philosophy of Krsna consciousness affect the way people live?

Srila Prabhupada: It can relieve people's suffering. People are suffering because they are misunderstanding themselves to be the body. If you think that you are your coat and shirt, and you very carefully wash the coat and shirt but you forget to eat, will you be happy?

Mike Robinson: No, I wouldn't.

Srila Prabhupada: Similarly, everyone is simply washing the "coat and shirt" of the body, but forgetting about the soul within the body. They have no information about what is within the "coat and shirt" of the body. Ask anybody what he is, and he will say, "Yes, I am an Englishman," or "I am an Indian." And if we say, "I can see you have an English or an Indian body, but what are you?"--that he cannot say.

Mike Robinson: I see.

Srila Prabhupada: The whole modern civilization is operating on the misunderstanding that the body is the self (dehatma-buddhi). This is the mentality of the cats and dogs. Suppose I try to enter England, and you stop me at the border: "I am an Englishman," you say, "but you are Indian. Why have you come here?" And the dog barks, "Rau, rau, why are you coming?" So what is the difference in mentality? The dog is thinking he's a dog and I'm a stranger, and you are thinking you are an Englishman and I am an Indian. There's no difference in mentality. So if you keep people in the darkness of a dog's mentality and declare that you are advancing in civilization, you are most misguided.

Mike Robinson: Now, moving on to another point, I gather the Hare Krsna movement has some concern for areas of the world where there is suffering.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, we have the only concern. Others are simply avoiding the main problems: birth, old age, disease, and death. Others have no solutions to these problems; they are simply talking all kinds of nonsense. People are being misguided. They are being kept in darkness. Let us start to give them some light.

Mike Robinson: Yes, but apart from giving spiritual enlightenment, are you also concerned for people's physical well-being?

Srila Prabhupada: Physical well-being automatically follows spiritual well-being.

Mike Robinson: And how does that work?

Srila Prabhupada: Suppose you have a car. So, naturally, you take care of the car as well as yourself. But you don't identify yourself as the car. You don't say, "I am this car." That is nonsense. But this is what people are doing. They are taking too much care of the bodily "car," thinking that the car is the self. They forget that they are different from the car, that they are a spirit soul and have a different business. Just as no one can drink petrol and be satisfied, no one can be satisfied with bodily activities. One must find out the proper food for the soul. If a man thinks, "I am a car, and I must drink this petrol," he is considered insane. Similarly, one who thinks that he is this body, and who tries to become happy with bodily pleasures, is also insane.

Mike Robinson: There's a quote here that I'd like you to comment on. I was given this literature by your people before I came, and one of the things you say here is that "Religion without a rational basis is just sentiment." Can you explain that?

Srila Prabhupada: Most religious people say, "We believe..." But what is the value of this belief? You may believe something which is not

actually correct. For instance, some of the Christian people say, "We believe that animals have no soul." That is not correct. They believe animals have no soul because they want to eat the animals, but actually animals do have a soul.

Mike Robinson: How do you know that the animal has a soul?

Srila Prabhupada: You can know, also. Here is the scientific proof: the animal eats, you eat; the animal sleeps, you sleep; the animal has sex, you have sex; the animal also defends, you also defend. Then what is the difference between you and the animal? How can you say that you have a soul but the animal doesn't?

Mike Robinson: I can see that completely. But the Christian scriptures say...

Srila Prabhupada: Don't bring in any scriptures; this is a commonsense topic. Try to understand. The animal is eating, you are eating; the animal is sleeping, you are sleeping; the animal is defending, you are defending; the animal is having sex, you are having sex; the animals have children, you have children; they have a living place, you have a living place. If the animal's body is cut, there is blood; if your body is cut, there is blood. So, all these similarities are there. Now, why do you deny this one similarity, the presence of the soul? This is not logical. You have studied logic? In logic there is something called analogy. Analogy means drawing a conclusion by finding many points of similarity. If there are so many points of similarity between human beings and animals, why deny one similarity? That is not logic. That is not science.

Mike Robinson: But if you take that argument and use it the other way...

Srila Prabhupada: There is no other way. If you are not arguing on the basis of logic, then you are not rational.

Mike Robinson: Yes, OK, but let's start from another hypothesis. Suppose we assume that a human being has no soul...

Srila Prabhupada: Then you must explain the difference between a living body and a dead body. I have already explained this at the beginning. As soon as the living force, the soul, is gone from the body, even the most beautiful body has no value. No one cares for it; it's thrown away. But now, if I touch your hair, there will be a fight. That is the distinction between a living body and a dead body. In a living body the soul is there, and in a dead body the soul is not there. As soon as the soul leaves the body, the body has no value. It is useless. This is very simple to understand, but even the biggest so-called scientists and philosophers are too dullheaded to understand it. Modern society is in a very abominable condition. There is no man with a real brain.

Mike Robinson: Are you referring to all the scientists who fail to understand the spiritual dimension in life?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. Real science means full knowledge of everything, material and spiritual.

Mike Robinson: But you were a chemist in secular life, were you not?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, I was a chemist in my earlier life. But it doesn't require any great intelligence to become a chemist. Any commonsense man can do it.

Mike Robinson: But presumably you think that material science is also important, even if today's scientists are dullheaded.

Srila Prabhupada: Material science is important just so far. It is not all-important.

Mike Robinson: I see. Can I come back to a question I had from before? When we were differing a few minutes ago you were saying, "Don't bring the scriptures in; just use common sense." But what part do the scriptures play in your religion? How important are they?

Srila Prabhupada: Our religion is a science. When we say that a child grows into a boy, it is science. It is not religion. Every child grows into a boy. What is the question of religion? Every man dies. What is the question of religion? And when a man dies, the body becomes useless. What is the question of religion? It is science. Whether you're Christian or Hindu or Muslim, when you die your body becomes useless. This is science. When your relative dies, you cannot say, "We are Christian; we believe he has not died." No, he has died. Whether you are Christian or Hindu or Muslim, he has died. So when we speak, we speak on this basis: that the body is important only as long as the soul is in the body. When the soul is not there, it is useless. This science is applicable to everyone, and we are trying to educate people on this basis.

Mike Robinson: But if I understand you correctly, you seem to be educating people on a purely scientific basis. Where does religion come into it at all?

Srila Prabhupada: Religion also means science. People have wrongly taken religion to mean faith--"I believe." [To a devotee:] Look up the word religion in the dictionary.

Disciple: Under religion the dictionary says, "recognition of superhuman control or power, and especially of a personal God entitled to obedience, and effecting such recognition with the proper mental attitude."

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. Religion means learning how to obey the supreme controller. So, you may be Christian and I may be Hindu; it doesn't matter. We must both accept that there is a supreme controller. Everyone has to accept that; that is real religion. Not this "We believe animals have no soul." That is not religion. That is most unscientific. Religion means scientific understanding of the supreme controller: to understand the supreme controller and obey Him--that's all. In the state, the good citizen is he who understands the government and obeys the laws of the government, and the bad citizen is the one who doesn't care for the government. So, if you become a bad citizen by ignoring God's government, then you are irreligious. And if you are a good citizen, then you are religious.

Mike Robinson: I see. Can you tell me what you believe to be the meaning of life? Why do we exist in the first place?

Srila Prabhupada: The meaning of life is to enjoy. But now you are on a false platform of life, and therefore you are suffering instead of enjoying. Everywhere we see the struggle for existence. Everyone is struggling, but what is their enjoyment in the end? They are simply suffering and dying. Therefore, although life means enjoyment, at the present moment your life is not enjoyment. But if you come to the real, spiritual platform of life, then you'll enjoy.

Mike Robinson: Can you explain to me, finally, some of the stages you go through in spiritual life? What are the spiritual stages a new devotee of Krsna goes through?

Srila Prabhupada: The first stage is that you are inquisitive. "So," you say, "what is this Krsna consciousness movement? Let me study it." This is called sraddha, or faith. This is the beginning. Then, if you are

serious, you mix with those who are cultivating this knowledge. You try to understand how they are feeling. Then you'll feel, "Why not become one of them?" And when you become one of them, then all your misgivings soon go away. You become more faithful, and then you get a real taste for Krsna consciousness. Why aren't these boys going to see the cinema? Why don't they eat meat or go to the nightclub? Because their taste has changed. They hate all these things now. In this way, you make progress. First faith, then association with devotees, then removal of all misgivings, then firm faith, then taste, then God realization, and then love of God, the perfection. That is first-class religion. Not some ritualistic ceremony of "I believe, you believe." That is not religion. That is cheating. Real religion means to develop your love for God. That is the perfection of religion.

Mike Robinson: Thank you very much for talking with me. It's been a pleasure talking to you.

Srila Prabhupada: Hare Krsna.

Truth and Beauty

Srila Prabhupada first published this essay in India, in the old tubloid version of his then-fortnightly magazine Back to Godhead (November 20, 1958). It contains the unforgettable story of "liquid beauty," in which Srila Prabhupada dramatically exposes the underlying principle of human sexuality. This illuminating exposition on the nature of truth and beauty is timeless and startlingly relevant for those in search of the "inner self."

There may sometimes be arguments about whether "truth" and "beauty" are compatible terms. One would willingly agree to express the truth, one might say, but since truth is not always beautiful--indeed, it is frequently rather startling and unpleasant--how is one to express truth and beauty at the same time?

In reply, we may inform all concerned that "truth" and "beauty" are compatible terms. Indeed, we may emphatically assert that the actual truth, which is absolute, is always beautiful. The truth is so beautiful that it attracts everyone, including the truth itself. Truth is so beautiful that many sages, saints, and devotees have left everything for the sake of truth. Mahatma Gandhi, an idol of the modern world, dedicated his life to experimenting with truth, and all his activities were aimed toward truth only.

Why only Mahatma Gandhi? Every one of us has the urge to search for truth alone, for the truth is not only beautiful but also all-powerful, all-resourceful, all-famous, all-renounced, and all-knowledgeable.

Unfortunately, people have no information of the actual truth. Indeed, 99.9 percent of men in all walks of life are pursuing untruth only, in the name of truth. We are actually attracted by the beauty of truth, but since time immemorial we have been habituated to love of untruth appearing like truth. Therefore, to the mundaner "truth" and "beauty" are incompatible terms. The mundane truth and beauty may be explained as follows.

Once a man who was very powerful and strongly built but whose character was very doubtful fell in love with a beautiful girl. The girl was not only beautiful in appearance but also saintly in character, and as such she did not like the man's advances. The man, however, was insistent because of his lustful desires, and therefore the girl requested him to wait only seven days, and she set a time after that

when he could meet her. The man agreed, and with high expectations he began waiting for the appointed time.

The saintly girl, however, in order to manifest the real beauty of absolute truth, adopted a method very instructive. She took very strong doses of laxatives and purgatives, and for seven days she continually passed loose stool and vomited all that she ate. Moreover, she stored all the loose stool and vomit in suitable pots. As a result of the purgatives, the so-called beautiful girl became lean and thin like a skeleton, her complexion turned blackish, and her beautiful eyes sank into the sockets of her skull. Thus at the appointed hour she waited anxiously to receive the eager man.

The man appeared on the scene well dressed and well behaved and asked the ugly girl he found waiting there about the beautiful girl he was to meet. The man could not recognize the girl he saw as the same beautiful girl for whom he was asking; indeed, although she repeatedly asserted her identity, because of her pitiable condition he was unable to recognize her.

At last the girl told the powerful man that she had separated the ingredients of her beauty and stored them in pots. She also told him that he could enjoy those juices of beauty. When the mundane poetic man asked to see these juices of beauty, he was directed to the store of loose stool and liquid vomit, which were emanating an unbearably bad smell. Thus the whole story of the beauty-liquid was disclosed to him. Finally, by the grace of the saintly girl, this man of low character was able to distinguish between the shadow and the substance, and thus he came to his senses.

This man's position was similar to the position of every one of us who is attracted by false, material beauty. The girl mentioned above had a beautifully developed material body in accordance with the desires of her mind, but in fact she was apart from that temporary material body and mind. She was in fact a spiritual spark, and so also was the lover who was attracted by her false skin.

Mundane intellectuals and aestheticians, however, are deluded by the outward beauty and attraction of the relative truth and are unaware of the spiritual spark, which is both truth and beauty at the same time. The spiritual spark is so beautiful that when it leaves the so-called beautiful body, which in fact is full of stool and vomit, no one wants to touch that body, even if it is decorated with a costly costume.

We are all pursuing a false, relative truth, which is incompatible with real beauty. The actual truth, however, is permanently beautiful, retaining the same standard of beauty for innumerable years. That spiritual spark is indestructible. The beauty of the outer skin can be destroyed in only a few hours merely by a dose of a strong purgative, but the beauty of truth is indestructible and always the same. Unfortunately, mundane artists and intellectuals are ignorant of this beautiful spark of spirit. They are also ignorant of the whole fire which is the source of these spiritual sparks, and they are ignorant of the relationships between the sparks and the fire, which take the form of transcendental pastimes. When those pastimes are displayed here by the grace of the Almighty, foolish people who cannot see beyond their senses confuse those pastimes of truth and beauty with the manifestations of loose stool and vomit described above. Thus in despair they ask how truth and beauty can be accommodated at the same time.

Mundaners do not know that the whole spiritual entity is the beautiful person who attracts everything. They are unaware that He is the prime substance, the prime source and fountainhead of everything that be. The infinitesimal spiritual sparks, being parts and parcels of that whole spirit, are qualitatively the same in beauty and eternity. The only difference is that the whole is eternally the whole and the parts are eternally the parts. Both of them, however, are the ultimate truth, ultimate beauty, ultimate knowledge, ultimate energy, ultimate renunciation, and ultimate opulence.

Although written by the greatest mundane poet or intellectual, any literature which does not describe the ultimate truth and beauty is but a store of loose stool and vomit of the relative truth. Real literature is that which describes the ultimate truth and beauty of the Absolute.

The Art of Dying

Although the media are generally obsessed with violence and death, our perception of death and dying is superficial. Srila Prabhupada observes, "As long as a man is in the full vigor of life, he forgets the naked truth of death, which he has to meet." How can we effectively deal with our own death? In this essay (which first appeared in the old tabloid Back to Godhead, April 20, 1960) Srila Prabhupada explains how the ancient teachings of Srimad-Bhagavatam provide a practical answer.

A small child walking with his father goes on inquiring constantly. He asks his father so many odd things, and the father has to satisfy him with proper answers. When I was a young father in my householder life, I was overflooded with hundreds of questions from my second son, who was my constant companion. One day it so happened that a bridegroom's party was passing our tramcar, and the four-year-old boy, as usual, inquired what the big procession was. He was given all possible answers to his thousand and one questions regarding the marriage party, and finally he asked whether his own father was married! This question gave rise to loud laughter from all the elderly gentlemen present, although the boy was perplexed as to why we were laughing. Anyway, the boy was somehow satisfied by his married father.

The lesson from this incident is that since a human being is a rational animal, he is born to make inquiries. The greater the number of questions, the greater the advancement of knowledge and science. The whole of material civilization is based on this originally large volume of questions put by young men to their elders. When elderly persons give the proper answers to the questions of the youngsters, civilization makes progress, one step after another. The most intelligent man, however, inquires about what happens after death. The less intelligent make lesser inquiries, but the questions of those who are more intelligent go higher and still higher.

Among the most intelligent of men was Maharaja Pariksit, the great king of the entire world, who was accidentally cursed by a brahmana to meet death from the bite of a serpent within seven days. The brahmana who cursed him was only a boy, yet he was very powerful, and because he did not know the importance of the great king, the boy foolishly cursed him to meet death within seven days. This was later lamented by the boy's father, whom the king had offended. When the king was informed of the unfortunate curse, he at once left his palatial home and went to the bank of the Ganges, which was near his capital, to prepare for his impending death. Because he was a great king, almost all the great sages and learned scholars assembled at the place where the king was fasting

prior to leaving his mortal body. At last, Sukadeva Gosvami, the youngest contemporary saint, also arrived there, and he was unanimously accepted to preside at that meeting, although his great father was also present. The king respectfully offered Sukadeva Gosvami the principal seat of esteem and asked him relevant questions regarding his passing from the mortal world, which was to take place on the seventh day thenceforward. The great king, as a worthy descendant of the Pandavas, who were all great devotees, placed the following relevant inquiries before the great sage Sukadeva. "My dear sir, you are the greatest of the great transcendentalists, and therefore I submissively beg to ask you about my duties at this moment. I am just on the verge of my death. Therefore, what should I do at this critical hour? Please tell me, my lord--what should I hear, what should I worship, or whom should I remember now? A great sage like you does not stay at the home of a householder more than necessary, and therefore it is my good fortune that you have kindly come here at the time of my death. Please, therefore, give me your directions at this critical hour."

The great sage, having thus been pleasingly requested by the king, answered his questions authoritatively, for the sage was a great transcendental scholar and was also well equipped with godly qualities, since he was the worthy son of Badarayana, or Vyasadeva, the original compiler of the Vedic literature.

Sukadeva Gosvami said, "My dear king, your inquiry is very much relevant, and it is also beneficial for all people of all times. Such inquiries, which are the highest of all, are relevant because they are confirmed by the teachings of the vedanta-darsana, the conclusion of the Vedic knowledge, and are atmavit-sammatah; in other words, liberated souls, who have full knowledge of their spiritual identity, put forward such relevant inquiries in order to elucidate further information about the Transcendence."

The Srimad-Bhagavatam is the natural commentary upon the great Vedanta (or Sariraka) sutras, which were compiled by Srila Vyasadeva. The Vedantu-sutras are the topmost Vedic literature, and they contain the nucleus of basic inquiries about the transcendental subject of spiritual knowledge. Yet although Srila Vyasadeva compiled this great treatise, his mind was not satisfied. Then he happened to meet Sri Narada, his spiritual master, who advised him to describe the identity of the Personality of Godhead. Upon receiving this advice, Vyasadeva meditated on the principle of bhakti-yoga, which showed him distinctly what is the Absolute and what is the relativity, or maya. Having achieved perfect realization of these facts, he compiled the great narration of the Srimad-Bhagavatam, or beautiful Bhagavatam, which begins with actual historical facts concerning the life of Maharaja Pariksit.

The Vedantu-sutra begins with the key inquiry about the Transcendence, athato brahma-jijnasa: "One should now inquire about Brahman, or the Transcendence."

As long as a man is in the full vigor of life, he forgets the naked truth of death, which he has to meet. Thus a foolish man makes no relevant inquiry about the real problems of life. Everyone thinks that he will never die, although he sees evidence of death before his eyes at every second. Here is the distinction between animalism and humanity. An animal like a goat has no sense of its impending death. Although its brother goat is being slaughtered, the goat, being allured by the green

grass offered to it, will stand peacefully waiting to be slaughtered next. On the other hand, if a human being sees his fellow man being killed by an enemy, he either fights to save his brother or leaves, if possible, to save his own life. That is the difference between a man and a goat.

An intelligent man knows that death is born along with his own birth. He knows that he is dying at every second and that the final touch will be given as soon as his term of life is finished. He therefore prepares himself for the next life or for liberation from the disease of repeated birth and death.

A foolish man, however, does not know that this human form of life is obtained after a series of births and deaths imposed in the past by the laws of nature. He does not know that a living entity is an eternal being, who has no birth and death. Birth, death, old age, and disease are external impositions on a living entity and are due to his contact with material nature and to his forgetfulness of his eternal, godly nature and qualitative oneness with the Absolute Whole.

Human life provides the opportunity to know this eternal fact, or truth. Thus the very beginning of the Vedantu-sutra advises that because we have this valuable form of human life, it is our duty--now--to inquire, What is Brahman, the Absolute Truth?

A man who is not intelligent enough does not inquire about this transcendental life; instead, he inquires about many irrelevant matters which do not concern his eternal existence. From the very beginning of his life, he inquires from his mother, father, teachers, professors, books, and so many other sources, but he does not have the right type of information about his real life.

As mentioned before, Pariksit Maharaja was given a warning notice that he would meet death within seven days, and he at once left his palace to prepare himself for the next stage. The king had at least seven days at his disposal in which to prepare for death, but as far as we are concerned, although at least we know that our death is sure, we have no information of the date fixed for the occurrence. I do not know whether I am going to meet death at the next moment. Even such a great man as Mahatma Gandhi could not calculate that he was going to meet with death in the next five minutes, nor could his great associates guess his impending death. Nonetheless, all such gentlemen present themselves as great leaders of the people.

It is ignorance of death and life that distinguishes an animal from a man. A man, in the real sense of the term, inquires about himself and what he is. Wherefrom has he come into this life, and where is he going after death? Why is he put under the troubles of threefold miseries although he does not want them? Beginning from one's childhood, one goes on inquiring about so many things in his life, but he never inquires about the real essence of life. This is animalism. There is no difference between a man and an animal as far as the four principles of animal life are concerned, for every living being exists by eating, sleeping, fearing, and mating. But only the human life is meant for relevant inquiries into the facts about eternal life and the Transcendence. Human life is therefore meant for research into eternal life, and the Vedanta-sutra advises one to conduct this research now or never. If one fails to inquire now into these relevant matters about life, one is sure to go back again to the animal kingdom by the laws of nature. Therefore, even if a foolish man appears advanced in material

science--that is, in eating, sleeping, fearing, mating, and so on--he cannot get free from the cruel hands of death by the law of nature. The law of nature works under three modes--goodness, passion, and ignorance. Those who live under conditions of goodness are promoted to the higher, spiritual status of life, and those who live under conditions of passion remain stationed in the same place in the material world where they are now, but those who live under conditions of ignorance are sure to be degraded to the lower species.

The modern setup of human civilization is a risky one because it offers no education about relevant inquiries into the essential principles of life. Like animals, people do not know that they are going to be slaughtered by the laws of nature. They are satisfied with a bunch of green grass, or a so-called jolly life, like the waiting goat in a slaughterhouse. Considering such a condition of human life, we are just trying to make a humble attempt to save the human being by the message of Back to Godhead. This method is not fictitious. If there is at all to be an era of reality, this message of Back to Godhead is the beginning of that era.

According to Sri Sukadeva Gosvami, the real fact is that a grhamedhi, or a person who has tied himself, like the goat meant for slaughter, in the business of family, society, community, nation, or humanity at large in regard to the problems and necessities of animal life--namely eating, sleeping, fearing, and mating--and who has no knowledge of the Transcendence is no better than an animal. He may have inquired about physical, political, economic, cultural, educational, or similar other matters of temporary, material concern, but if he has not inquired about the principles of transcendental life, he should be regarded as a blind man driven ahead by uncontrolled senses and about to fall into a ditch. That is the description of the grhamedhi.

The opposite of the grha-medhi, however, is the grha-stha. The grhastha asrama, or the shelter of spiritual family life, is as good as the life of a sannyasi, a member of the renounced order. Regardless of whether one is a householder or a renunciate, the important point is that of relevant inquiries. A sannyasi is bogus if not interested in relevant inquiries, and a grhastha, or householder, is bona fide if he is inclined to put forward such inquiries. The grhamedhi, however, is simply interested in the animal necessities of life. By the laws of nature, the grhamedhi's life is full of calamities, whereas the life of the grhastha is full of happiness. But in the modern human civilization, the grhamedhis are posing as the grhasthas. We should therefore know who is what. A grhamedhi's life is full of vices, because he does not know how to live a family life. He does not know that beyond his control is a power who supervises and controls his activities, and he has no conception of his future life. The grhamedhi is blind to his future and has no aptitude for making relevant inquiries. His only qualification is that he is bound by the shackles of attachment to the false things he has contacted in his temporary existence.

At night such grhamedhis waste their valuable time by sleeping or by satisfying their different varieties of sexual urges by visiting cinema shows and attending clubs and gambling houses, where women and liquor are indulged in lavishly. And during the day, they waste their valuable life in accumulating money or, if they have sufficient money to spend, by adjusting the comforts of their family members. Their standard of living and their personal needs increase with their increase in

monetary income. Thus there is no limit to their expenses, and they are never satiated. Consequently there is unlimited competition in the field of economic development, and therefore there is no peace in any society of the human world.

Everyone is perplexed by the same questions about earning and spending, but ultimately one must depend on the mercy of mother nature. When there is a scarcity in production or there are disturbances caused by providence, the poor planmaking politician blames it on cruel nature but carefully avoids studying how and by whom the laws of nature are controlled. The Bhagavad-gita, however, explains that the laws of nature are controlled by the Absolute Personality of Godhead. God alone is the controller of nature and the natural laws. Ambitious materialists sometimes examine a fragment of the law of nature, but they never care to know the maker of these laws. Most of them do not believe in the existence of an absolute person or God who controls the laws of nature. Rather, they simply concern themselves with the principles by which different elements interact, but they make no reference to the ultimate direction which makes such interactions possible. They have no relevant questions or answers in this regard. The second of the Vedanta-sutras, however, answers the essential question about Brahman by asserting that the Supreme Brahman, the Supreme Transcendence, is He from whom everything is generated. Ultimately, He is the Supreme Person.

Not only is the foolish grhamedhi ignorant of the temporary nature of the particular type of body he has obtained, but he is also blind to the actual nature of what is happening before him in the daily affairs of his life. He may see his father die, his mother die, or a relative or neighbor die, yet he does not make the relevant inquiries about whether or not the other existing members of his family will die. Sometimes he thinks and knows that all the members of his family will die today or tomorrow and that he also will die. He may know that the whole family show--or, for that matter, the whole show of community, society, nation, and all such things--is but a temporary bubble in the air, having no permanent value. Yet he is mad after such temporary arrangements and does not concern himself with any relevant inquiries. He has no knowledge as to where he has to go after his death. He works very hard for the temporary arrangements of his family, society, or nation, but he never makes any future arrangement either for himself or for others who will pass away from this present phase of life.

In a public vehicle like a railway carriage, we meet and sit down together with some unknown friends and become members of the same vehicle for a short time, but in due course we separate, never to meet again. Similarly, in a long sojourn of life, we get a temporary sitting accommodation in a so-called family, country, or society, but when the time is up, we are unwillingly separated from one another, never to meet again. There are so many questions relevant to our temporary arrangements in life and our friends in these temporary arrangements, but a man who is a grhamedhi never inquires about things of a permanent nature. We are all busy making permanent plans in various degrees of leadership, without knowing the permanent nature of things as they are. Sripada Sankaracarya, who especially strove to remove this ignorance in society and who advocated the cult of spiritual knowledge in regard to the all-pervading impersonal Brahman, said in despair, "Children are engaged in playing, young boys are engaged in so-called love affairs with young girls, and the old are seriously thoughtful about adjusting a

baffled life of struggle. But, alas, no one is prepared to inquire relevantly into the science of Brahman, the Absolute Truth."

Sri Sukadeva Gosvami, who was asked for direction by Maharaja Pariksit, responded to the king's relevant inquiries by advising him as follows:

tasmad bharata sarvatma
bhagavan isvaro harih
srotavyah kirtituvyas ca
smarta vyas cecchatabhayam

"O descendant of Bharata, it is the duty of mortal men to inquire about, hear about, glorify, and meditate upon the Personality of Godhead, who is the most attractive person because of His fullness in opulence. He is called Hari because He alone can undo the conditional existence of a living being. If we at all want to be freed from conditional existence, we must make relevant inquiries about the Absolute Truth so that He may be pleased to bestow upon us perfect freedom in life." (Srimad-Bhagavatam 2.1.5)

Sri Sukadeva Gosvami has particularly used four words in regard to the Absolute Personality of Godhead. These words distinguish the Absolute Person, or Parabrahman, from other persons, who are qualitatively one with Him. The Absolute Personality of Godhead is addressed as sarvatma, or all-pervading, because no one is aloof from Him, although not everyone has this realization. The Personality of Godhead, by His plenary representation, resides in everyone's heart as Paramatma, the Supersoul, along with each individual soul. Therefore every individual soul has an intimate relationship with Him.

Forgetfulness of this eternally existing intimate relationship with Him is the cause of conditional life since time immemorial. But because He is Bhagavan, or the supreme personality, He can at once reciprocate the responsive call of a devotee. Moreover, because He is the perfect person, His beauty, opulence, fame, strength, knowledge, and renunciation are all unlimited sources of transcendental bliss for the individual soul. The individual soul becomes attracted by all these different opulences when they are imperfectly represented by other conditioned souls, but the individual soul is not satisfied by such imperfect representations, and therefore he perpetually seeks the perfect one. The Personality of Godhead's beauty has no comparison, nor do His knowledge and renunciation. But above all, He is isvara, or the supreme controller. We are at present being controlled by the police action of this great king. This police control is imposed upon us because of our disobedience of law. But because the Lord is Hari, He is able to cause the disappearance of our conditional life by giving us full freedom in spiritual existence. It is therefore the duty of every man to make relevant inquiries about Him and thus go back to Godhead.

Soul Research

In 1972, a distinguished panel met in Windsor, Ontario, and discussed "problems associated with attempts to define the exact moment of death." Panel members included world-famous heart surgeon Dr. Wilfred G. Bigelow, Mr. Justice Edson L. Haines of the Ontario Supreme Court, and J. Francis Leddy, president of the University of Windsor. Dr. Bigelow upheld the existence of the soul and urged systematic research to determine what the soul is and where it comes from. Dr. Bigelow's and

other panelists' comments were later published in the Montreal Gazette. When the article came to the attention of Srila Prabhupada, he wrote a letter to Dr. Bigelow offering substantial Vedic knowledge of the science of the soul and suggested a practical method for scientifically understanding it. The Gazette article and Srila Prabhupada's response follow.

Gazette Headline:

Heart surgeon Wants to Know What a Soul Is

WINDSOR--A world-famous Canadian heart surgeon says he believes the body has a soul which departs at death and theologians ought to try to find out more about it.

Dr. Wilfred G. Bigelow, head of the cardiovascular surgery unit at Toronto General Hospital, said that "as a person who believes there is a soul," he thought the time had come "to take the mystery out of this and find out what it is."

Bigelow was a member of a panel which appeared before the Essex County Medical-Legal Society to discuss problems associated with attempts to define the exact moment of death.

The question has become vital in the age of transplants of hearts and other organs in cases when the donors are inevitably dying.

The Canadian Medical Association has produced a widely accepted definition of death as the moment when the patient is in coma, responds to no stimulus of any kind, and brain waves recorded on a machine are flat.

The other members of the panel were Mr. Justice Edson L. Haines of the Ontario Supreme Court and J. Francis Leddy, president of the University of Windsor.

Bigelow, elaborating on points he had raised during the discussion, said in an interview later that his thirty-two years as a surgeon had left him no doubts that there is a soul.

"There are certain cases where you happen to be present at the moment when people pass from a living state to death, and some mysterious changes take place.

"One of the most noticeable is the sudden lack of life or luster to the eyes. They become opaque and literally lifeless.

"It's difficult to document what you observe. In fact, I don't think it can be documented very well."

Bigelow, who became world renowned for his pioneering work in the "deep freeze" surgical technique known as hypothermia and for his heart valve surgery, said "soul research" should be undertaken by theology and allied disciplines within the university.

During this discussion Leddy said that "if there is a soul, you are not going to see it. You are not going to find it."

"If there is a principle of vitality or life, what is it?" The problem was that "the soul doesn't exist anywhere specifically, geographically. It's everywhere and yet it's nowhere in the body."

It would "be nice to start experimenting, but I don't know how you are going to get on any of these things," Leddy said. He said the discussion reminded him of the Soviet cosmonaut who returned from space to report there was no God, because he didn't see Him up there.

Maybe so, said Bigelow, but in modern medicine when something was encountered that could not be explained, "the watchword is discover the answer, take it into the laboratory, take it somewhere where you can discover the truth."

The central question, said Bigelow, was "where is the soul and where does it come from?"

Srila Prabhupada Gives the Vedic Evidence

My dear Dr. Bigelow:

Please accept my greetings. Recently I have read an article in the Gazette by Rae Corelli entitled "Heart Surgeon Wants to Know What a Soul Is," and it was very interesting. Your comments show great insight, and so I thought to write you on this matter. Perhaps you may know that I am the founder-acarya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. I have several temples in Canada--Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver, and Hamilton. This Krsna consciousness movement is specifically meant to teach every soul his original, spiritual position.

Undoubtedly the soul is present in the heart of the living entity, and it is the source of all the energies for maintaining the body. The energy of the soul is spread all over the body, and this is known as consciousness. Since this consciousness spreads the energy of the soul all over the body, one can feel pains and pleasures in any part of the body. The soul is individual, and he is transmigrating from one body to another, just as a person transmigrates from babyhood to childhood, from childhood to boyhood, from boyhood to youth, and then to advanced old age. Then the change called death takes place when we change to a new body, just as we change our old dress to a new dress. This is called transmigration of the soul.

When a soul wants to enjoy this material world, forgetting his real home in the spiritual world, he takes this life of hard struggle for existence. This unnatural life of repeated birth, death, disease, and old age can be stopped when his consciousness is dovetailed with the supreme consciousness of God. That is the basic principle of our Krsna movement.

As far as heart transplant is concerned, there is no question of success unless the soul is there in the heart. So the presence of the soul has to be accepted. In sexual intercourse, if there is no soul, there is no conception, no pregnancy. Contraception deteriorates the womb so that it no longer is a good place for the soul. That is against the order of God. By the order of God, a soul is sent to a particular womb, but by this contraceptive he is denied that womb and has to be placed in another. That is disobedience to the Supreme. For example, take a man who is supposed to live in a particular apartment. If the situation there is so disturbed that he cannot enter the apartment, then he is put at a great disadvantage. That is illegal interference and is punishable.

The undertaking of "soul research" would certainly mark the advancement of science. But advancement of science will not be able to find the soul. The soul's presence can simply be accepted on circumstantial understanding. You will find in the Vedic literature that the dimension of the soul is one ten-thousandth the size of a point. The material scientist cannot measure the length and breadth of a point. Therefore it is not possible for the material scientist to capture the soul. You can simply accept the soul's existence by taking it from authority. What the greatest scientists are finding, we've explained long ago.

As soon as one understands the existence of the soul, he can immediately understand the existence of God. The difference between God and the soul is that God is a very great soul, and the living entity is

a very small soul; but qualitatively they are equal. Therefore God is all-pervading, and the living entity is localized. But the nature and quality are the same.

The central question, you say, is "Where is the soul, and where does it come from?" That is not difficult to understand. We have already discussed that the soul is residing in the heart of the living entity and that it takes shelter in another body after death. Originally the soul comes from God. Just as a spark comes from fire, and when the spark falls down it appears to be extinguished, the spark of soul originally comes from the spiritual world to the material world. In the material world he falls down into three different conditions, which are called the modes of nature. When a spark of fire falls on dry grass, the fiery quality continues; when the spark falls on the ground, it cannot display its fiery manifestation unless the ground is favorably situated; and when the spark falls on water, it becomes extinguished. As such, we find three kinds of living conditions. One living entity is completely forgetful of his spiritual nature; another is almost forgetful but still has an instinct of spiritual nature; and another is completely in search of spiritual perfection. There is a bona fide method for the attainment of spiritual perfection by the spiritual spark of soul, and if he is properly guided then he is very easily sent back home, back to Godhead, wherefrom he originally fell.

It will be a great contribution to human society if this authorized information from the Vedic literature is presented to the modern world on the basis of modern scientific understanding. The fact is already there. It simply has to be presented for modern understanding.

Yours sincerely,
A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami

Chapter Two

Choosing a Spiritual Master

What Is a Guru?

On hearing the word guru, we tend to envision a caricaturelike image: a bizarre-looking old fellow with a long, stringy beard and flowing robes, meditating on distant, esoteric truths. Or we think of a cosmic con man cashing in on young seekers' spiritual gullibility. But what really is a guru? What does he know that we don't? How does he enlighten us? In a talk given in England in 1973, Srila Prabhupada provides some enlightening answers.

om ajnana-timirandhasya
jnananjana-salakaya
caksur unmilitam yena
tasmai sri-gurave namah

"I was born in the darkest ignorance, and my guru, my spiritual master, opened my eyes with the torch of knowledge. I offer my respectful obeisances unto him."

The word ajnana means "ignorance" or "darkness." If all the lights in this room immediately went out, we would not be able to tell where we

or others are sitting. Everything would become confused. Similarly, we are all in darkness in this material world, which is a world of tamas. Tamas or timira means "darkness." This material world is dark, and therefore it needs sunlight or moonlight for illumination. However, there is another world, a spiritual world, that is beyond this darkness. That world is described by Sri Krsna in the Bhagavad-gita (15.6):

na tad bhasayate suryo
na sasanko na pavakah
yad gatva na nivartante
tad dhama paramam mama

"That abode of Mine is not illumined by the sun or moon, nor by electricity. One who reaches it never returns to this material world."

The guru's business is to bring his disciples from darkness to light. At present everyone is suffering due to ignorance, just as one contracts a disease out of ignorance. If one does not know hygienic principles, he will not know what will contaminate him. Therefore due to ignorance there is infection, and we suffer from disease. A criminal may say, "I did not know the law," but he will not be excused if he commits a crime. Ignorance is no excuse. Similarly, a child, not knowing that fire will burn, will touch the fire. The fire does not think, "This is a child, and he does not know I will burn." No, there is no excuse. Just as there are state laws, there are also stringent laws of nature, and these laws will act despite our ignorance of them. If we do something wrong out of ignorance, we must suffer. This is the law. Whether the law is a state law or a law of nature, we risk suffering if we break it.

The guru's business is to see that no human being suffers in this material world. No one can claim that he is not suffering. That is not possible. In this material world, there are three kinds of suffering: adhyatmika, adhibhautika, and adhidaivika. These are miseries arising from the material body and mind, from other living entities, and from the forces of nature. We may suffer mental anguish, or we may suffer from other living entities--from ants or mosquitos or flies--or we may suffer due to some superior power. There may be no rain, or there may be flood. There may be excessive heat or excessive cold. So many types of suffering are imposed by nature. Thus there are three types of miseries within the material world, and everyone is suffering from one, two, or three of them. No one can say that he is completely free from suffering.

We may then ask why the living entity is suffering. The answer is: out of ignorance. He does not think, "I am committing mistakes and am leading a sinful life; that is why I am suffering." Therefore the guru's first business is to rescue his disciple from this ignorance. We send our children to school to save them from suffering. If our children do not receive an education, we fear that they will suffer in the future. The guru sees that suffering is due to ignorance, which is compared to darkness. How can one in darkness be saved? By light. The guru takes the torchlight of knowledge and presents it before the living entity enveloped in darkness. That knowledge relieves him from the sufferings of the darkness of ignorance.

One may ask whether the guru is absolutely necessary. The Vedas inform us that he is:

tad-vijnanartham sa gurum evabhigacchet

samit-panih srotriyam brahma-nistham
(Mundaka Upanisad 1.2.12)

The Vedas enjoin us to seek out a guru; actually, they say to seek out the guru, not just a guru. The guru is one because he comes in disciplic succession. What Vyasadeva and Krsna taught five thousand years ago is also being taught now. There is no difference between the two instructions. Although hundreds and thousands of acaryas have come and gone, the message is one. The real guru cannot be two, for the real guru does not speak differently from his predecessors. Some spiritual teachers say, "In my opinion you should do this," but this is not a guru. Such so-called gurus are simply rascals. The genuine guru has only one opinion, and that is the opinion expressed by Krsna, Vyasadeva, Narada, Arjuna, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, and the Gosvamis. Five thousand years ago Lord Sri Krsna spoke the Bhagavad-gita, and Vyasadeva recorded it. Srila Vyasadeva did not say, "This is my opinion." Rather, he wrote, sri-bhagavan uvaca, that is, "The Supreme Personality of Godhead says." Whatever Vyasadeva wrote was originally spoken by the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Srila Vyasadeva did not give his own opinion.

Consequently, Srila Vyasadeva is a guru. He does not misinterpret the words of Krsna, but transmits them exactly as they were spoken. If we send a telegram, the person who delivers the telegram does not have to correct it, edit it, or add to it. He simply presents it. That is the guru's business. The guru may be this person or that, but the message is the same; therefore it is said that guru is one.

In the disciplic succession we simply find repetition of the same subject. In the Bhagavad-gita (9.34) Sri Krsna says:

man-mana bhava mad-bhakto
mad-yaji mam namaskuru
mam evaisyasi yuktvaivam
atmanam mat-parayanah

"Engage your mind always in thinking of Me, become My devotee, offer obeisances, and worship Me. Being completely absorbed in Me, surely you will come to Me." These very instructions were reiterated by all the acaryas, such as Ramanujacarya, Madhvacarya, and Caitanya Mahaprabhu. The six Gosvamis also transmitted the same message, and we are simply following in their footsteps. There is no difference. We do not interpret the words of Krsna by saying, "In my opinion, the Battlefield of Kuruksetra represents the human body." Such interpretations are set forth by rascals. In the world there are many rascal gurus who give their own opinion, but we can challenge any rascal. A rascal guru may say, "I am God," or, "We are all God." That is all right, but we should find out from the dictionary what the meaning of God is. Generally, a dictionary will tell us that the word God indicates the Supreme Being. Thus we may ask such a guru, "Are you the Supreme Being?" If he cannot understand this, then we should give the meaning of supreme. Any dictionary will inform us that supreme means "the greatest authority." We may then ask, "Are you the greatest authority?" Such a rascal guru, even though proclaiming himself to be God, cannot answer such a question. God is the Supreme Being and the highest authority. No one is equal to Him or greater than Him. Yet there are many guru-gods, many rascals who claim to be the Supreme. Such

rascals cannot help us escape the darkness of material existence. They cannot illumine our darkness with the torchlight of spiritual knowledge.

The bona fide guru will simply present what the supreme guru, God, says in bona fide scripture. A guru cannot change the message of the disciplic succession.

We must understand that we cannot carry out research to find the Absolute Truth. Caitanya Mahaprabhu Himself said, "My Guru Maharaja, My spiritual master, considered Me a great fool." He who remains a great fool before his guru is a guru himself. However, if one says, "I am so advanced that I can speak better than my guru," he is simply a rascal. In the Bhagavad-gita (4.2) Sri Krsna says:

evam parampara-praptam
imam rajarsayo viduh
sa kaleneha mahata
yogo nastah parantapa

"This supreme science was thus received through the chain of disciplic succession, and the saintly kings understood it in that way. But in course of time the succession was broken, and therefore the science as it is appears to be lost."

Taking on a guru is not simply a fashion. One who is serious about understanding spiritual life requires a guru. A guru is a question of necessity, for one must be very serious to understand spiritual life, God, proper action, and one's relationship with God. When we are very serious about understanding these subjects, we need a guru. We shouldn't go to a guru simply because a guru may be fashionable at the moment. Surrender must be there, for without surrender we cannot learn anything. If we go to a guru simply to challenge him, we will learn nothing. We must accept the guru just as Arjuna accepted his guru, Sri Krsna Himself:

karpanya-dosopahata-svabhavah
prcchami tvam dharma-sammudha-cetah
yac chreyah syan niscitam bruhi tan me
sisyas te 'ham sadhi mam tvam prapannam

"Now I am confused about my duty and have lost all composure because of weakness. In this condition I am asking You to tell me clearly what is best for me. Now I am Your disciple and a soul surrendered unto You. Please instruct me." (Bhagavad-gita 2.7)

This is the process for accepting a guru. The guru is Krsna's representative, the former acaryas' representative. Krsna says that all acaryas are His representatives; therefore the guru should be offered the same respect one would offer to God. As Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura says in his prayers to the spiritual master, yasya prasadah bhagavat-prasadah: " By the mercy of the spiritual master, one receives the benediction of Krsna." Thus, if we surrender to the bona fide guru, we surrender to God. God accepts our surrender to the guru.

In the Bhagavad-gita (18.66) Krsna instructs:

sarva-dharman parityajya
mam ekam saranam vraja
aham tvam sarva-papebhyo

moksayis yami ma sucah

"Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reaction. Do not fear." Someone may argue, "Where is Krsna? I shall surrender to Him." But no, the process is that we first surrender to Krsna's representative; then we surrender to Krsna. Therefore it is said, saksad-dharitvena samasta-sastraih: the guru is as good as God. When we offer respects to the guru, we are offering respects to God. Because we are trying to be God conscious, it is required that we learn how to offer respects to God through God's representative. In all the sastras the guru is described to be as good as God, but the guru never says, "I am God." The disciple's duty is to offer respect to the guru just as he offers respect to God, but the guru never thinks, "My disciples are offering me the same respect they offer to God; therefore I have become God." As soon as he thinks like this, he becomes a dog instead of God. Therefore Visvanatha Cakravarti says, kintu prabhor yah priya eva tasya. Because he is the most confidential servitor of God, the guru is offered the same respect that we offer God. God is always God, guru is always guru. As a matter of etiquette, God is the worshipable God, and guru is the worshiper God (sevaka-bhagavan). Therefore the guru is addressed as prabhupada. The word prabhu means "lord," and pada means "position." Thus prabhupada means "he who has taken the position of the Lord." This is the same as saksad-dharitvena samasta-sastraih.

Only if we are very serious about understanding the science of God is a guru required. We should not try to keep a guru as a matter of fashion. One who has accepted a guru speaks intelligently. He never speaks nonsense. That is the sign of having accepted a bona fide guru. We should certainly offer all respect to the spiritual master, but we should also remember how to carry out his orders. In the Bhagavad-gita (4.34) Sri Krsna Himself tells us the method of seeking out and approaching the guru:

tad viddhi pranipatena
pariprasnena sevaya-
upadeksyanti te jnanam
jnaninas tattva-darsinah

"Just try to learn the truth by approaching a spiritual master. Inquire from him submissively and render service unto him. The self-realized soul can impart knowledge unto you because he has seen the truth." The first process is that of surrender. We have to find an exalted person and willingly surrender before him. The sastras enjoin that before we take a guru we study him carefully to find out whether we can surrender to him. We should not accept a guru suddenly, out of fanaticism. That is very dangerous. The guru should also study the person who wants to become a disciple to see if he is fit. That is the way a relationship is established between the guru and disciple. Everything is provided, but we must take up the process seriously. Then we can be trained to become a bona fide disciple. First we must find a bona fide guru, establish our relationship with him, and act accordingly. Then our life will be successful, for the guru can enlighten the sincere disciple who is in darkness.

Everyone is born a rascal and a fool. If we are born learned, why do we need to go to school? If we do not cultivate knowledge, we are no better than animals. An animal may say that there is no need of books and that he has become a guru, but how can anyone obtain knowledge without the study of authoritative books on science and philosophy? Rascal gurus try to avoid these things. We must understand that we are all born rascals and fools and that we have to be enlightened. We have to receive knowledge to make our lives perfect. If we do not perfect our lives, we are defeated. What is this defeat? The struggle for existence. We are trying to obtain a better life, to attain a superior position, and for this we are struggling very hard. But we do not know what a superior position actually is.

Whatever position we have in this material world must be given up. We may have a good position or a bad position; in any case, we cannot remain here. We may earn millions of dollars and think, "Now I am in a good position," but a little dysentery or cholera will finish our position. If the bank fails, our position is gone. So actually there is no good position in this material world. It is a farce. Those who try to attain a better position in the material world are ultimately defeated, because there is no better position. The Bhagavad-gita (14.26) says what the better position is:

mam ca yo 'vyabhicarena
bhakti-yogena sevate
sa gunan samatityaitan
brahma-bhuyaya kaipate

"One who engages in the spiritual activities of unalloyed devotional service at once transcends the modes of material nature and is elevated to the spiritual platform."

Is there any science that gives us the knowledge by which we may become immortal? Yes, we may become immortal, but not in the material sense. We cannot receive this knowledge in so-called universities. However, there is knowledge contained in the Vedic scriptures by which we may become immortal. That immortality is our better position. No more birth, no more death, no more old age, no more disease. Thus the guru takes on a very great responsibility. He must guide his disciple and enable him to become an eligible candidate for the perfect position--immortality. The guru must be competent to lead his disciple back home, back to Godhead.

Saints and Swindlers

Every day the number of people interested in practicing yoga and meditation increases by the thousands. Unfortunately, a person looking for a suitable guide is likely to encounter a bewildering array of magicians, self-styled gurus, and self-proclaimed gods. In an interview with the London Times, Srila Prabhupada explains how a sincere seeker can tell the difference between a counterfeit and genuine spiritual guide.

Reporter: What frankly worries me is that since the arrival in Britain some time ago of an Indian yogi, who was the first "guru" that most people had ever heard of, a lot of "gurus" have suddenly appeared out of nowhere. Sometimes I get the feeling that not all of them are as genuine as they ought to be. Would it be right to warn people who are thinking

of taking up spiritual life that they should make sure that they have a genuine guru to teach them?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. Of course, to search out a guru is very nice, but if you want a cheap guru, or if you want to be cheated, then you will find many cheating gurus. But if you are sincere, you will find a sincere guru. Because people want everything very cheaply, they are cheated. We ask our students to refrain from illicit sex, meat-eating, gambling, and intoxication. People think that this is all very difficult--a botheration. But if someone else says, "You may do whatever nonsense you like, simply take my mantra," then people will like him. The point is that people want to be cheated, and therefore cheaters come. No one wants to undergo any austerity. Human life is meant for austerity, but no one is prepared to undergo austerity. Consequently, cheaters come and say, "No austerity. Whatever you like, you do. Simply pay me, and I'll give you some mantra, and you'll become God in six months." All this is going on. If you want to be cheated like this, the cheaters will come.

Reporter: What about the person who seriously wants to find spiritual life but who happens to finish up with the wrong guru?

Srila Prabhupada: If you simply want an ordinary education, you have to devote so much time, labor, and understanding to it. Similarly, if you are going to take to spiritual life, you must become serious. How is it that simply by some wonderful mantras, someone can become God in six months? Why do people want something like that? This means that they want to be cheated.

Reporter: How can a person tell he has a genuine guru?

Srila Prabhupada: Can any of my students answer this question?

Disciple: Once I remember John Lennon asked you, "How will I know who is the genuine guru?" And you answered, "Just find out the one who is most addicted to Krsna. He is genuine."

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. The genuine guru is God's representative, and he speaks about God and nothing else. The genuine guru is he who has no interest in materialistic life. He is after God, and God only. That is one of the tests of a genuine guru: brahma-nistham. He is absorbed in the Absolute Truth. In the Mundaka Upanisad it is stated, srotriyam brahma-nistham: "The genuine guru is well versed in the scriptures and Vedic knowledge, and he is completely dependent on Brahman." He should know what Brahman [spirit] is and how to become situated in Brahman. These signs are given in the Vedic literature. As I said before, the real guru is God's representative. He represents the Supreme Lord, just as a viceroy represents a king. The real guru will not manufacture anything. Everything he says is in accordance with the scriptures and the previous acaryas. He will not give you a mantra and tell you that you will become God in six months. This is not a guru's business. A guru's business is to canvass everyone to become a devotee of God. That is the sum and substance of a real guru's business. Indeed, he has no other business. He tells whomever he sees, "Please become God conscious." If he canvasses somehow or other on behalf of God and tries to get everyone to become a devotee of God, he is a genuine guru.

Reporter: What about a Christian priest?

Srila Prabhupada: Christian, Muhammadan, Hindu--it doesn't matter. If he is simply speaking on behalf of God, he is a guru. Lord Jesus Christ, for instance. He canvassed people, saying, "Just try to love God." Anyone--it doesn't matter who--be he Hindu, Muslim, or Christian, is a

guru if he convinces people to love God. That is the test. The guru never says, "I am God," or "I will make you God." The real guru says, "I am a servant of God, and I will make you a servant of God also." It doesn't matter how the guru is dressed. As Caitanya Mahaprabhu said, "Whoever can impart knowledge about Krsna is a spiritual master." A genuine spiritual master simply tries to get people to become devotees of Krsna, or God. He has no other business.

Reporter: But the bad gurus...

Srila Prabhupada: And what is a "bad" guru?

Reporter: A bad guru just wants some money or some fame.

Srila Prabhupada: Well, if he is bad, how can he become a guru?

[Laughter.] How can iron become gold? Actually, a guru cannot be bad, for if someone is bad, he cannot be a guru. You cannot say "bad guru." That is a contradiction. What you have to do is simply try to understand what a genuine guru is. The definition of a genuine guru is that he is simply talking about God--that's all. If he's talking about some other nonsense, then he is not a guru. A guru cannot be bad. There is no question of a bad guru, any more than a red guru or a white guru. Guru means "genuine guru." All we have to know is that the genuine guru is simply talking about God and trying to get people to become God's devotees. If he does this, he is genuine.

Reporter: If I wanted to be initiated into your society, what would I have to do?

Srila Prabhupada: First of all, you'd have to give up illicit sex life.

Reporter: Does that include all sex life? What is illicit sex life?

Srila Prabhupada: Illicit sex is sex outside of marriage. Animals have sex with no restrictions, but in human society there are restrictions. In every country and in every religion, there is some system of restricting sex life. You would also have to give up all intoxicants, including tea, cigarettes, alcohol, marijuana--anything that intoxicates.

Reporter: Anything else?

Srila Prabhupada: You'd also have to give up eating meat, eggs, and fish. And you'd have to give up gambling as well. Unless you gave up these four sinful activities, you could not be initiated.

Reporter: How many followers do you have throughout the world?

Srila Prabhupada: For anything genuine, the followers may be very few. For something rubbish, the followers may be many. Still, we have about five thousand initiated disciples.

Reporter: Is the Krsna consciousness movement growing all the time?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, it is growing--but slowly. This is because we have so many restrictions. People do not like restrictions.

Reporter: Where is your following the greatest?

Srila Prabhupada: In the United States, Europe, South America, and Australia. And, of course, in India there are millions who practice Krsna consciousness.

Reporter: Could you tell me what the goal of your movement is?

Srila Prabhupada: The purpose of this Krsna consciousness movement is to awaken man's original consciousness. At the present moment our consciousness is designated. Someone is thinking, "I am an Englishman," and another is thinking, "I am an American." Actually, we do not belong to any of these designations. We are all part and parcel of God; that is our real identity. If everyone simply comes to that consciousness, all the problems of the world will be solved. Then we shall come to know

that we are one--the same quality of spirit soul. The same quality of spirit soul is within everyone, although it may be in a different dress. This is the explanation given in the Bhagavad-gita.

Krsna consciousness is actually a purificatory process (sarvopadhi-vinirmuktam). Its purpose is to make people free from all designations (tat-paratvena nirmalam). When our consciousness becomes purified of all designations, the activities we carry out with our purified senses make us perfect. Eventually, we reach the ideal perfection of human life. Krsna consciousness is also a very simple process. It is not necessary to become a great philosopher, scientist, or whatever. We need only chant the holy name of the Lord, understanding that His personality, His name, and His qualities are all absolute.

Krsna consciousness is a great science. Unfortunately, in the universities there is no department for this science. Therefore we invite all serious men who are interested in the welfare of human society to understand this great movement and, if possible, take part in it and cooperate with us. The problems of the world will be solved. This is also the verdict of the Bhagavad-gita, the most important and authoritative book of spiritual knowledge. Many of you have heard of the Bhagavad-gita. Our movement is based on it. Our movement is approved by all great acaryas in India. Ramanujacarya, Madhvacarya, Lord Caitanya, and so many others. You are all representatives of newspapers, so I ask you to try to understand this movement as far as possible for the good of all human society.

Reporter: Do you think your movement is the only way to know God?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes.

Reporter: How are you assured of that?

Srila Prabhupada: From the authorities and from God, Krsna. Krsna says:

sarva-dharman parityajya
mam ekam saranam vraja
aham tvam sarva-papebhyo
moksaisyami ma sucah

"Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reaction. Do not fear." (Bhagavad-gita 18.66)

Reporter: Does "surrender" mean that someone would have to leave his family?

Srila Prabhupada: No.

Reporter: But suppose I were to become an initiate. Wouldn't I have to come and live in the temple?

Srila Prabhupada: Not necessarily.

Reporter: I can stay at home?

Srila Prabhupada: Oh, yes.

Reporter: What about work? Would I have to give up my job?

Srila Prabhupada: No, you'd simply have to give up your bad habits and chant the Hare Krsna mantra on these beads--that's all.

Reporter: Would I have to give any financial support?

Srila Prabhupada: No, that is your voluntary wish. If you give, that's all right. And if you don't, we don't mind. We do not depend on anyone's financial contribution. We depend on Krsna.

Reporter: I wouldn't have to give any money at all?

Srila Prabhupada: No.

Reporter: Is this one of the main things that distinguishes the genuine guru from the fake guru?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, a genuine guru is not a businessman. He is a representative of God. Whatever God says, the guru repeats. He does not speak otherwise.

Reporter: But would you expect to find a real guru, say, traveling in a Rolls Royce and staying in a penthouse suite in a classy hotel?

Srila Prabhupada: Sometimes people provide us with a room in a first-class hotel, but we generally stay in our own temples. We have some one hundred temples around the world, so we don't require to go to any hotels.

Reporter: I wasn't trying to make any accusations. I was merely trying to illustrate that I think your warning is a valid one. There are so many people interested in finding a spiritual life, and at the same time there are a lot of people interested in cashing in on the "guru business."

Srila Prabhupada: Are you under the impression that spiritual life means voluntarily accepting poverty?

Reporter: Well, I don't know.

Srila Prabhupada: A poverty-stricken man may be materialistic, and a wealthy man may be very spiritual. Spiritual life does not depend on either poverty or wealth. Spiritual life is transcendental. Consider Arjuna, for instance. Arjuna was a member of a royal family, yet he was a pure devotee of God. And in the Bhagavad-gita (4.2) Sri Krsna says, *evam parampara-praptam imam rajarsayo viduh*: "This supreme science was received through the chain of disciplic succession, and the saintly kings understood it in that way." In the past, all kings who were saintly understood spiritual science. Therefore, spiritual life does not depend on one's material condition. Whatever a person's material condition may be--he may be a king or a pauper--he can still understand spiritual life. Generally people do not know what spiritual life is, and therefore, they unnecessarily criticize us. If I asked you what spiritual life is, how would you answer?

Reporter: Well, I'm not sure.

Srila Prabhupada: Although you do not know what spiritual life is, you still say, "It is this," or "It is that." But first you should know what spiritual life is. Spiritual life begins when you understand that you are not your body. This is the real beginning of spiritual life. By seeing the difference between your self and your body, you come to understand that you are a spirit soul (*aham brahmasmi*).

Reporter: Do you think this knowledge should be a part of everyone's education?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. People should first be taught what they are. Are they their bodies, or something else? That is the beginning of education. Now everyone is educated to think he is his body. Because someone accidentally gets an American body, he thinks, "I am an American." This is just like thinking, "I am a red shirt," just because you are wearing a red shirt. You are not a red shirt; you are a human being. Similarly, this body is like a shirt or coat over the real person--the spirit soul. If we recognize ourselves simply by our bodily "shirt" or "coat," then we have no spiritual education.

Reporter: Do you think that such education should be given in schools?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes--in schools, colleges, and universities. There is an immense literature on this subject--an immense fund of knowledge.

What is actually required is that the leaders of society come forward to understand this movement.

Reporter: Have you ever had people come to you who had previously been involved with a fake guru?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, there are many.

Reporter: Were their spiritual lives in any way spoiled by the fake gurus?

Srila Prabhupada: No, they were genuinely seeking something spiritual, and that was their qualification. God is within everyone's heart, and as soon as someone genuinely seeks Him, He helps that person find a genuine guru.

Reporter: Have the real gurus like yourself ever tried to put a stop to the false gurus--that is, put pressure on them to put them out of business, so to speak?

Srila Prabhupada: No, that is not my purpose. I started my movement simply by chanting Hare Krsna. I chanted in New York in a place called Tompkins Square Park, and soon people began to come to me. In this way, the Krsna consciousness movement gradually developed. Many accepted, and many did not accept. Those who are fortunate have accepted.

Reporter: Don't you feel that people are suspicious because of their experience with fake gurus? If you went to a quack dentist and he broke your tooth, you might be suspicious about going to another dentist.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. Naturally, if you are cheated, you become suspicious. But this does not mean that if you are cheated once, you will always be cheated. You should find someone genuine. But to come to Krsna consciousness, you must be either very fortunate or well aware of this science. From the Bhagavad-gita we understand that the genuine seekers are very few: manusyanam sahasresu kascid yatati siddhaye. Out of many millions of people, there may be only one who is interested in spiritual life. Generally, people are interested in eating, sleeping, mating, and defending. So how can we expect to find many followers? It is not difficult to notice that people have lost their spiritual interest. And almost all those who are actually interested are being cheated by so-called spiritualists. You cannot judge a movement simply by the number of its followers. If one man is genuine, then the movement is successful. It is not a question of quantity, but quality.

Reporter: I wondered how many people you think might have been taken in by fake gurus.

Srila Prabhupada: Practically everyone. [Laughter.] There is no question of counting. Everyone.

Reporter: This would mean thousands of people, wouldn't it?

Srila Prabhupada: Millions. Millions have been cheated, because they want to be cheated. God is omniscient. He can understand your desires. He is within your heart, and if you want to be cheated, God sends you a cheater.

Reporter: Is it possible for everyone to attain the perfectional stage you spoke of previously?

Srila Prabhupada: Within a second. Anyone can attain perfection within a second--providing he is willing. The difficulty is that no one is willing. In the Bhagavad-gita (18.66) Krsna says, sarva-dharman parityajya mam ekam saranam vraja: "Simply surrender unto Me." But who is going to surrender to God? Everyone says, "Oh, why should I surrender to God? I will be independent." If you simply surrender, it is a

second's business. That's all. But no one is willing, and that is the difficulty.

Reporter: When you say that lots of people want to be cheated, do you mean that lots of people want to carry on with their worldly pleasures and at the same time, by chanting a mantra or by holding a flower, achieve spiritual life as well? Is this what you mean by wanting to be cheated?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, this is like a patient thinking, "I shall continue with my disease, and at the same time I shall become healthy." It is contradictory. The first requirement is that one become educated in spiritual life. Spiritual life is not something one can understand by a few minutes' talk. There are many philosophy and theology books, but people are not interested in them. That is the difficulty. For instance, the Srimad-Bhagavatam is a very long work, and if you try to read this book, it may take many days just to understand one line of it. The Bhagavatam describes God, the Absolute Truth, but people are not interested. And if, by chance, someone becomes a little interested in spiritual life, he wants something immediate and cheap. Therefore, he is cheated. Actually, human life is meant for austerity and penance. That is the way of Vedic civilization. In Vedic times they would train boys as brahmacaris; no sex life was allowed at all up to the age of twenty-five. Where is that education now? A brahmachari is a student who lives a life of complete celibacy and obeys the commands of his guru at the gurukula [school of the spiritual master]. Now schools and colleges are teaching sex from the very beginning, and twelve- or thirteen-year-old boys and girls are having sex. How can they have a spiritual life? Spiritual life means voluntarily accepting some austerities for the sake of God realization. That is why we insist on no illicit sex, meat-eating, gambling, or intoxication for our initiated students. Without these restrictions, any "yoga meditation" or so-called spiritual discipline cannot be genuine. It is simply a business deal between the cheaters and the cheated.

Reporter: Thank you very much.

Srila Prabhupada: Hare Krsna.

The Absolute Necessity of a Spiritual Master

In February 1936, in Bombay, India, the members of a reputed religious society, the Gaudiya Majha, were astonished by the powerful and eloquent words of a young member who spoke in honor of his spiritual master, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Gosvami. Three decades later, the young speaker would become the world-renowned founder and spiritual master of the Krsna consciousness movement. Srila Prabhupada's presentation is a memorable statement on the importance of the guru in spiritual life.

saksad-dharitvena samasta-sastrair
uktas tatha bhavyata eva sadbhih
kintu prabhor yah priya eva tasya
vande guroh sri-caranara vindam

"In the revealed scriptures it is declared that the spiritual master should be worshiped like the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and this injunction is obeyed by pure devotees of the Lord. The spiritual master is the most confidential servant of the Lord. Thus let us offer our respectful obeisances unto the lotus feet of our spiritual master."

Gentlemen, on behalf of the members of the Bombay branch of the Gaudiya Matha, let me welcome you all because you have so kindly joined us tonight in our congregational offerings of homage to the lotus feet of the world teacher, Acaryadeva, who is the founder of this Gaudiya Mission and is the president-acarya of Sri Sri Visva-vaisnava Rajasabha--I mean my eternal divine master, Paramahansa Parivrajakacarya Sri Srimad Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Gosvami Maharaja.

Sixty-two years ago, on this auspicious day, the Acaryadeva made his appearance by the call of Thakura Bhaktivinoda at Sri-ksetra Jagannatha-dhama at Puri.

Gentlemen, the offering of such an homage as has been arranged this evening to the Acaryadeva is not a sectarian concern, for when we speak of the fundamental principle of gurudeva, or acaryadeva, we speak of something that is of universal application. There does not arise any question of discriminating my guru from yours or anyone else's. There is only one guru, who appears in an infinity of forms to teach you, me, and all others.

The guru, or acaryadeva, as we learn from the bona fide scriptures, delivers the message of the absolute world, the transcendental abode of the Absolute Personality, where everything nondifferentially serves the Absolute Truth. We have heard so many times: mahajano yena gatah sa panthah ("Traverse the trail which your previous acarya has passed"), but we have hardly tried to understand the real purport of this sloka. If we scrutinizingly study this proposition, we understand that the mahajana is one, and the royal road to the transcendental world is also one. In the Mundaka Upanisad (1.2.12) it is said:

tad-vijnanartham sa gurum evabhigacchet
samit-panih srotriyam brahma-nistham

"In order to learn the transcendental science, one must approach the bona fide spiritual master in disciplic succession, who is fixed in the Absolute Truth."

Thus it has been enjoined herewith that in order to receive that transcendental knowledge, one must approach the guru. Therefore, if the Absolute Truth is one, about which we think there is no difference of opinion, the guru also cannot be two. The Acaryadeva for whom we have assembled tonight to offer our humble homage is not the guru of a sectarian institution or one out of many differing exponents of the truth. On the contrary, he is the Jagad-guru, or the guru of all of us; the only difference is that some obey him wholeheartedly, while others do not obey him directly.

In the Srimad-Bhagavatam (11.17.27) it is said:

acaryam mam vijaniyan
na vamaneta karhicit
na martya-buddhyasuyeta
sarva-devamayo guruh

"One should understand the spiritual master to be as good as I am," said the Blessed Lord. "Nobody should be jealous of the spiritual master or think of him as an ordinary man, because the spiritual master is the sum total of all demigods." That is, the acarya has been identified with God Himself. He has nothing to do with the affairs of this mundane

world. He does not descend here to meddle with the affairs of temporary necessities, but to deliver the fallen, conditioned souls--the souls, or entities, who have come here to the material world with a motive of enjoyment by the mind and the five organs of sense perception. He appears before us to reveal the light of the Vedas and to bestow upon us the blessings of full-fledged freedom, after which we should hanker at every step of our life's journey.

The transcendental knowledge of the Vedas was first uttered by God to Brahma, the creator of this particular universe. From Brahma the knowledge descended to Narada, from Narada to Vyasadeva, from Vyasadeva to Madhva, and in this process of disciplic succession the transcendental knowledge was transmitted by one disciple to another till it reached Lord Gauranga, Sri Krsna Caitanya, who posed as the disciple and successor of Sri Isvara Puri. The present Acaryadeva is the tenth disciplic representative from Sri Rupa Gosvami, the original representative of Lord Caitanya who preached this transcendental tradition in its fullness. The knowledge that we receive from our Gurudeva is not different from that imparted by God Himself and the succession of the acaryas in the preceptorial line of Brahma. We adore this auspicious day as Sri Vyasa-puja-tithi, because the Acarya is the living representative of Vyasadeva, the divine compiler of the Vedas, the Puranas, the Bhagavad-gita, the Mahabharata, and the Srimad-Bhagavatam.

One who interprets the divine sound, or sabda-brahma, by his imperfect sense perception cannot be a real spiritual guru, because, in the absence of proper disciplinary training under the bona fide acarya, the interpreter is sure to differ from Vyasadeva (as the Mayavadis do). Srila Vyasadeva is the prime authority of Vedic revelation, and therefore such an irrelevant interpreter cannot be accepted as the guru, or acarya, howsoever equipped he may be with all the acquirements of material knowledge. As it is said in the Padma Purana:

sampradaya-vihina ye
mantras te nisphala matah

"Unless you are initiated by a bona fide spiritual master in the disciplic succession, the mantra that you might have received is without any effect."

On the other hand, one who has received the transcendental knowledge by aural reception from the bona fide preceptor in the disciplic chain, and who has sincere regard for the real acarya, must needs be enlightened with the revealed knowledge of the Vedas. But this knowledge is permanently sealed to the cognitive approach of the empiricists. As it is said in the Svetasvatara Upanisad (6.23):

yasya deve para bhaktir
yatha deve tatha gurau
tasyaite kathita hy arthah
prakasante mahatmanah

"Only unto those great souls who simultaneously have implicit faith in both the Lord and the spiritual master are all the imports of Vedic knowledge automatically revealed."

Gentlemen, our knowledge is so poor, our senses are so imperfect, and our sources are so limited that it is not possible for us to have even the slightest knowledge of the absolute region without surrendering ourselves at the lotus feet of Sri Vyasadeva or his bona fide representative. Every moment we are being deceived by the knowledge of our direct perception. It is all the creation or concoction of the mind, which is always deceiving, changing, and flickering. We cannot know anything of the transcendental region by our limited, perverted method of observation and experiment. But all of us can lend our eager ears for the aural reception of the transcendental sound transmitted from that region to this through the unadulterated medium of Sri Gurudeva or Sri Vyasadeva. Therefore, gentlemen, we should surrender ourselves today at the feet of the representative of Sri Vyasadeva for the elimination of all our differences bred by our unsubmissive attitude. It is accordingly said in Sri Gita (4.34):

tad viddhi pranipatena
pariprasnena sevaya
upadeksyanti te jnanam
jnaninas tattva-darsinah

"Just approach the wise and bona fide spiritual master. Surrender unto him first and try to understand him by inquiries and service. Such a wise spiritual master will enlighten you with transcendental knowledge, for he has already known the Absolute Truth."

To receive the transcendental knowledge we must completely surrender ourselves to the real acarya in a spirit of ardent inquiry and service. Actual performance of service to the Absolute under the guidance of the acarya is the only vehicle by which we can assimilate the transcendental knowledge. Today's meeting for offering our humble services and homage to the feet of the Acaryadeva will enable us to be favored with the capacity for assimilating the transcendental knowledge so kindly transmitted by him to all persons, without distinction.

Gentlemen, we are all more or less proud of our past Indian civilization, but we actually do not know the real nature of that civilization. We cannot be proud of our past material civilization, which is now a thousand times greater than in days gone by. It is said that we are passing through the age of darkness, the Kali-yuga. What is this darkness? The darkness cannot be due to backwardness in material knowledge, because we now have more of it than formerly. If not we ourselves, our neighbors, at any rate, have plenty of it. Therefore, we must conclude that the darkness of the present age is not due to a lack of material advancement, but that we have lost the clue to our spiritual advancement, which is the prime necessity of human life and the criterion of the highest type of human civilization. Throwing of bombs from airplanes is no advancement of civilization from the primitive, uncivilized practice of dropping big stones on the heads of enemies from the tops of hills. Improvement of the art of killing our neighbors by means of machine guns and poisonous gases is certainly no advancement from primitive barbarism, which prided itself on its art of killing by bows and arrows. Nor does the development of a sense of pampered selfishness prove anything more than intellectual animalism. True human civilization is very different from all these states, and therefore in the Katha Upanisad (1.3.14) there is the emphatic call:

uttisthata jagrata
prapya varan nibodhata
ksurasya dhara nisita duratyaya
durgam pathas tat kavayo vadanti

"Please wake up and try to understand the boon that you now have in this human form of life. The path of spiritual realization is very difficult; it is sharp like a razor's edge. That is the opinion of learned transcendental scholars."

Thus, while others were yet in the womb of historical oblivion, the sages of India had developed a different kind of civilization, which enabled them to know themselves. They had discovered that we are not at all material entities, but that we are all spiritual, permanent, and indestructible servants of the Absolute. But because we have, against our better judgment, chosen to completely identify ourselves with this present material existence, our sufferings have multiplied according to the inexorable law of birth and death, with its consequent diseases and anxieties. These sufferings cannot be really mitigated by any provision of material happiness, because matter and spirit are completely different elements. It is just as if you took an aquatic animal out of water and put it on the land, supplying all manner of happiness possible on land. The deadly sufferings of the animal are not capable of being relieved at all until it is taken out of its foreign environment. Spirit and matter are completely contradictory things. All of us are spiritual entities. We cannot have perfect happiness, which is our birthright, however much we may meddle with the affairs of mundane things. Perfect happiness can be ours only when we are restored to our natural state of spiritual existence. This is the distinctive message of our ancient Indian civilization, this is the message of the Gita, this is the message of the Vedas and the Puranas, and this is the message of all the real acaryas, including our present Acaryadeva, in the line of Lord Caitanya.

Gentlemen, although it is imperfectly that we have been enabled by his grace to understand the sublime messages of our Acaryadeva, Om Visnupada Paramahansa Parivrajakacarya Sri Srimad Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Gosvami Maharaja, we must admit that we have realized definitely that the divine message from his holy lips is the congenial thing for suffering humanity. All of us should hear him patiently. If we listen to the transcendental sound without unnecessary opposition, he will surely have mercy upon us. The Acarya's Message is to take us back to our original home, back to God. Let me repeat, therefore, that we should hear him patiently, follow him in the measure of our conviction, and bow down at his lotus feet for releasing us from our present causeless unwillingness for serving the Absolute and all souls.

From the Gita we learn that even after the destruction of the body, the atma, or the soul, is not destroyed; he is always the same, always new and fresh. Fire cannot burn him, water cannot dissolve him, the air cannot dry him up, and the sword cannot kill him. He is everlasting and eternal, and this is also confirmed in the Srimad-Bhagavatam (10.84.13):

yasyatma-buddhih kunape tri-dhatuke
sva-dhih kalatradisu bhauma ijya-dhih
yat-tirtha-buddhih salile na karhicij

janesv abhijnesu sa eva go-kharah

"Anyone who accepts this bodily bag of three elements [bile, mucus, and air] as his self, who has an affinity for an intimate relationship with his wife and children, who considers his land worshipable, who takes bath in the waters of the holy places of pilgrimage but never takes advantage of those persons who are in actual knowledge--he is no better than an ass or a cow."

Unfortunately, in these days we have all been turned foolish by neglecting our real comfort and identifying the material cage with ourselves. We have concentrated all our energies for the meaningless upkeep of the material cage for its own sake, completely neglecting the captive soul within. The cage is meant for the undoing of the bird; the bird is not meant for the welfare of the cage. Let us, therefore, deeply ponder this. All our activities are now turned toward the upkeep of the cage, and the most we do is try to give some food to the mind by art and literature. But we do not know that this mind is also material in a more subtle form. This is stated in the Gita (7.4):

bhumir apo 'nalo vayuh
kham mano buddhir eva ca
ahankara itiyam me
bhinna prakrtir astadha

"Earth, fire, water, air, sky, intelligence, mind, and ego are all My separated energies."

We have scarcely tried to give any food to the soul, which is distinct from the body and mind; therefore we are all committing suicide in the proper sense of the term. The message of the Acaryadeva is to give us a warning to halt such wrong activities. Let us therefore bow down at his lotus feet for the unalloyed mercy and kindness he has bestowed upon us.

Gentlemen, do not for a moment think that my Gurudeva wants to put a complete brake on the modern civilization--an impossible feat. But let us learn from him the art of making the best use of a bad bargain, and let us understand the importance of this human life, which is fit for the highest development of true consciousness. The best use of this rare human life should not be neglected. As it is said in the Srimad-Bhagavatam (11.9.29):

labdh va sudurlabham idam bahu-sambha vante
manusyam arthadam anityam apiha dhirah
turnam yateta na pated anu mrtyu yavan
nihsreyasaya visayah khalu sarvatah syat

"This human form of life is obtained after many, many births, and although it is not permanent, it can offer the highest benefits. Therefore a sober and intelligent man should immediately try to fulfill his mission and attain the highest profit in life before another death occurs. He should avoid sense gratification, which is available in all circumstances."

Let us not misuse this human life in the vain pursuit of material enjoyment, or, in other words, for the sake of only eating, sleeping,

fearing, and sensuous activities. The Acaryadeva's message is conveyed by the words of Sri Rupa Gosvami (Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu 1.2.255-256):

anasaktasya visayan
yatharham upayunjatah
nirbandhah krsna-sambandhe
yuktam vairagyam ucyate
prapancikataya buddhya
hari-sambandhi-vastunah
mumuksubhah parityago
vairagyam phalgu kathyate

"One is said to be situated in the fully renounced order of life if he lives in accordance with Krsna consciousness. He should be without attachment for sense gratification and should accept only what is necessary for the upkeep of the body. On the other hand, one who renounces things that could be used in the service of Krsna, under the pretext that such things are material, does not practice complete renunciation.

The purport of these slokas can only be realized by fully developing the rational portion of our life, not the animal portion. Sitting at the feet of the Acaryadeva, let us try to understand from this transcendental source of knowledge what we are, what is this universe, what is God, and what is our relationship with Him. The message of Lord Caitanya is the message for the living entities and the message of the living world. Lord Caitanya did not bother Himself for the upliftment of this dead world, which is suitably named Martyaloka, the world where everything is destined to die. He appeared before us four hundred fifty years ago to tell us something of the transcendental universe, where everything is permanent and everything is for the service of the Absolute. But recently Lord Caitanya has been misrepresented by some unscrupulous persons, and the highest philosophy of the Lord has been misinterpreted to be the cult of the lowest type of society. We are glad to announce tonight that our Acaryadeva, with his usual kindness, saved us from this horrible type of degradation, and therefore we bow down at his lotus feet with all humility.

Gentlemen, it has been a mania of the cultured (or uncultured) society of the present day to accredit the Personality of Godhead with merely impersonal features and to stultify Him by claiming that He has no senses, no form, no activity, no head, no legs, and no enjoyment. This has also been the pleasure of the modern scholars due to their sheer lack of proper guidance and true introspection in the spiritual realm. All these empiricists think alike: all the enjoyable things should be monopolized by the human society, or by a particular class only, and the impersonal God should be a mere order-supplier for their whimsical feats. We are happy that we have been relieved of this horrible type of malady by the mercy of His Divine Grace Paramahansa Parivrajakacarya Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Gosvami Maharaja. He is our eye-opener, our eternal father, our eternal preceptor, and our eternal guide. Let us therefore bow down at his lotus feet on this auspicious day.

Gentlemen, although we are like ignorant children in the knowledge of the Transcendence, still His Divine Grace, my Gurudeva, has kindled a small fire within us to dissipate the invincible darkness of empirical

knowledge. We are now so much on the safe side that no amount of philosophical argument by the empiric schools of thought can deviate us an inch from the position of our eternal dependence on the lotus feet of His Divine Grace. Furthermore, we are prepared to challenge the most erudite scholars of the Mayavada school and prove that the Personality of Godhead and His transcendental sports in Goloka alone constitute the sublime information of the Vedas. There are explicit indications of this in the Chandogya Upanisad (8.13.1):

syamac cha valam prapadye
sa valac chyamam prapadye

"For receiving the mercy of Krsna, I surrender unto His surrender unto Krsna." Also in the Rg Veda (1.22.20):

tad visnoh paramam padam sada pasyanti surayah
diviva caksur atatam
visnor yat paramam padam

"The lotus feet of Lord Visnu are the supreme objective of all the demigods. These lotus feet of the Lord are as enlightening as the sun in the sky."

The plain truth so vividly explained in the Gita, which is the central lesson of the Vedas, is not understood or even suspected by the most powerful scholars of the empiric schools. Herein lies the secret of Sri Vyasa-puja. When we meditate on the transcendental pastimes of the Absolute Godhead, we are proud to feel that we are His eternal servitors, and we become jubilant and dance with joy. All glory to my divine master, for it is he who has out of his unceasing flow of mercy stirred up within us such a movement of eternal existence. Let us bow down at his lotus feet.

Gentlemen, had he not appeared before us to deliver us from the thralldom of this gross worldly delusion, surely we should have remained for lives and ages in the darkness of helpless captivity. Had he not appeared before us, we would not have been able to understand the eternal truth of the sublime teaching of Lord Caitanya. Had he not appeared before us, we could not have been able to know the significance of the first sloka of the Brahma-samhita:

isvarah paramah krsnah
sac-cid-ananda- vigraha
anadir adir govindah
sarva-karana-karanam

"Krsna, who is known as Govinda, is the Supreme Godhead. He has an eternal, blissful, spiritual body. He is the origin of all. He has no other origin, and He is the prime cause of all causes."

Personally, I have no hope for any direct service for the coming crores of births of the sojourn of my life, but I am confident that some day or other I shall be delivered from this mire of delusion in which I am at present so deeply sunk. Therefore let me with all my earnestness pray at the lotus feet of my divine master to allow me to suffer the lot for which I am destined due to my past misdoings, but to let me have this power of recollection: that I am nothing but a tiny servant of the

Almighty Absolute Godhead, realized through the unflinching mercy of my divine master. Let me therefore bow down at his lotus feet with all the humility at my command.

"Science of Self-Realization" by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.

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Chapter Three

Discovering the Roots

The Immortal Nectar of the Bhagavad-gita
Through the centuries, India's greatest philosophers and spiritualists have praised the Bhagavad-gita as the distilled essence of the eternal Vedic wisdom. In his Meditations on the Bhagavad-gita, versified here, the renowned sixth-century philosopher Sankara glorifies the Gita and its divine author, Sri Krsna. Although universally celebrated as an impersonalist, here Sankara reveals his devotion to the original personalform of God, Lord Sri Krsna. And Srila Prabhupada elucidates.

--1--

O Bhagavad-gita,
Through Thy eighteen chapters
Thou showerest upon man
The immortal nectar
Of the wisdom of the Absolute.

O blessed Gita,
By Thee, Lord Krsna Himself
Enlightened Arjuna.
Afterward, the ancient sage Vyasa
Included Thee in the Mahabharata.
O loving mother,
Destroyer of man's rebirth
Into the darkness of this mortal world,
Upon Thee I meditate.

--2--

Salutations to thee, O Vyasa.
Thou art of mighty intellect,
And thine eyes
Are large as the petals
Of the full-blown lotus.
It was thou
Who brightened this lamp of wisdom,
Filling it with the oil
Of the Mahabharata.

Purport

Sripada Sankaracarya was an impersonalist from the materialistic point of view. But he never denied the spiritual form known as sac-cid-ananda-vigraha, or the eternal, all-blissful form of knowledge that existed before the material creation. When he spoke of Supreme Brahman as impersonal, he meant that the Lord's sac-cid-ananda form was not to be confused with a material conception of personality. In the very beginning of his commentary on the Gita, he maintains that Narayana, the Supreme Lord, is transcendental to the material creation. The Lord existed before the creation as the transcendental personality, and He has nothing to do with material personality. Lord Krsna is the same Supreme Personality, and He has no connection with a material body. He descends in His spiritual, eternal form, but foolish people mistake His body to be like ours. Sankara's preaching of impersonalism is especially meant for teaching foolish persons who consider Krsna to be an ordinary man composed of matter.

No one would care to read the Gita if it had been spoken by a material man, and certainly Vyasadeva would not have bothered to incorporate it into the history of the Mahabharata. According to the above verses, Mahabharata is the history of the ancient world, and Vyasadeva is the writer of this great epic. The Bhagavad-gita is identical with Krsna; and because Krsna is the Absolute Supreme Personality of Godhead, there is no difference between Krsna and His words. Therefore the Bhagavad-gita is as worshipable as Lord Krsna Himself, both being absolute. One who hears the Bhagavad-gita "as is" actually hears the words directly from the lotus lips of the Lord. But unfortunate persons say that the Gita is too antiquated for the modern man, who wants to find out God by speculation or meditation.

--3--

I salute Thee, O Krsna,
O Thou who art the refuge
Of ocean-born Laksmi

And all who take refuge
At Thy lotus feet.
Thou art indeed
The wish-fulfilling tree
For Thy devotee.
Thy one hand holds a staff
For driving cows,
And Thy other hand is raised--
The thumb touching the tip
Of Thy forefinger,
Indicating divine knowledge.
Salutations to Thee, O Supreme Lord,
For Thou art the milker
Of the ambrosia of the Gita.

Purport

Sripada Sankaracarya explicitly says, "You fools, just worship Govinda and that Bhagavad-gita spoken by Narayana Himself," yet foolish people still conduct their research work to find out Narayana; consequently they are wretched, and they waste their time for nothing. Narayana is never wretched nor daridra; rather, He is worshiped by the goddess of fortune, Laksmi, as well as by all living entities. Sankara declared himself to be "Brahman," but he admits Narayana, or Krsna, to be the Supreme Personality who is beyond the material creation. He offers his respects to Krsna as the Supreme Brahman, or Parabrahman, because He (Krsna) is worshipable by everyone. Only the fools and enemies of Krsna, who cannot understand what the Bhagavad-gita is (though they make commentaries on it), say, "It is not the personal Krsna to whom we have to surrender ourselves utterly, but the unborn, beginningless Eternal who speaks through Krsna." Fools rush in where angels fear to tread. Whereas Sankara, the greatest of the impersonalists, offers his due respects to Krsna and His book the Bhagavad-gita, the foolish say that "we need not surrender to the personal Krsna." Such unenlightened people do not know that Krsna is absolute and that there is no difference between His inside and outside. The difference of inside and outside is experienced in the dual, material world. In the absolute world there is no such difference, because in the absolute everything is spiritual (sac-cid-ananda), and Narayana, or Krsna, belongs to the absolute world. In the absolute world there is only the factual personality, and there is no distinction between body and soul.

--4--

The Upanisads
Are as a herd of cows,
Lord Krsna, son of a cowherd,
Is their milker,
Arjuna is the calf,
The supreme nectar of the Gita
Is the milk,
And the wise man
Of purified intellect
Is the drinker.

Purport

Unless one understands spiritual variegatedness, one cannot understand the transcendental pastimes of the Lord. In the Brahma-samhita it is said that Krsna's name, form, quality, pastimes, entourage, and paraphernalia are all ananda-cinmaya-rasa--in short, everything of His transcendental association is of the same composition of spiritual bliss, knowledge, and eternity. There is no end to His name, form, etc., unlike in the material world, where all things have their end. As stated in the Bhagavad-gita, only fools deride Him; whereas it is Sankara, the greatest impersonalist, who worships Him, His cows, and His pastimes as the son of Vasudeva and pleasure of Devaki.

--5--

Thou son of Vasudeva,
Destroyer of the demons Kamsa and Canura,
Thou supreme bliss of Mother Devaki,
O Thou, guru of the universe,
Teacher of the worlds,
Thee, O Krsna, I salute.

Purport

Sankara describes Him as the son of Vasudeva and Devaki. Does he mean thereby that he is worshiping an ordinary, material man? He worships Krsna because he knows that Krsna's birth and activities are all supernatural. As stated in the Bhagavad-gita (4.9), Krsna's birth and activities are mysterious and transcendental, and therefore only the devotees of Krsna can know them perfectly. Sankara was not such a fool that he would accept Krsna as an ordinary man and at the same time offer Him all devotional obeisances, knowing Him as the son of Devaki and Vasudeva. According to the Bhagavad-gita, only by knowing the transcendental birth and activities of Krsna can one attain liberation by acquiring a spiritual form like Krsna's. There are five different kinds of liberation. One who merges into the spiritual auras of Krsna, known as the impersonal Brahman effulgence, does not fully develop his spiritual body. But one who fully develops his spiritual existence becomes an associate of Narayana or Krsna in different spiritual abodes. One who enters into the abode of Narayana develops a spiritual form exactly like Narayana's (four-handed), and one who enters into the highest spiritual abode of Krsna, known as Goloka Vrndavana, develops a spiritual form of two hands like Krsna's. Sankara, as an incarnation of Lord Siva, knows all these spiritual existences, but he did not disclose them to his then Buddhist followers because it was impossible for them to know about the spiritual world. Lord Buddha preached that void is the ultimate goal, so how could his followers understand spiritual variegatedness? Therefore Sankara said, brahma satyam jagan mithya, or, material variegatedness is false but spiritual variegatedness is fact. In the Padma Purana Lord Siva has admitted that he had to preach the philosophy of maya, or illusion, in the Kali-yuga as another edition of the "void" philosophy of Buddha. He had to do this by the order of the Lord for specific reasons. He disclosed his real mind, however, by recommending that people worship Krsna, for no one can be saved simply

by mental speculations composed of word jugglery and grammatical maneuvers. Sankara further instructs:

bhaja govindam bhaja govindam
bhaja govindam mudha-mate
samprapte sannihite kale
na hi na hi raksati dukrn-karane

"You intellectual fools, just worship Govinda, just worship Govinda, just worship Govinda. Your grammatical knowledge and word jugglery will not save you at the time of death."

--6--

Of that terrifying river
Of the battlefield of Kuruksetra
Over which the Pandavas victoriously crossed,
Bhisma and Drona were as the high banks,
Jayadratha as the river's water,
The King of Gandhara the blue water-lily,
Salya the shark, Krpa the current,
Karna the mighty waves,
Asvatthama and Vikarna the dread alligators,
And Duryodhana the very whirlpool--
But Thou, O Krsna, wast the ferryman!

--7--

May the spotless lotus of the Mahabharata
That grows on the waters
Of the words of Vyasa
And of which the Bhagavad-gita
Is the irresistibly sweet fragrance
And its tales of heroes
The full-blown petals
Fully opened by the talk of Lord Hari,
Who destroys the sins
Of Kali-yuga,
And on which daily light
The nectar-seeking souls,
As so many bees
Swarming joyously--
May this lotus of the Mahabharata
Bestow on us the highest good.

--8--

Salutations to Lord Krsna
The embodiment of supreme bliss,
By whose grace and compassion
The dumb become eloquent
And the lame scale mountains--
Him I salute!

Purport

Foolish followers of foolish speculators cannot understand the meaning of offering salutations to Lord Krsna, the embodiment of bliss. Sankara himself offered his salutations to Lord Krsna so that some of his intelligent followers might understand the real fact by the example set by their great master, Sankara, the incarnation of Lord Siva. But there are many obstinate followers of Sankara who refuse to offer their salutations to Lord Krsna and instead mislead innocent persons by injecting materialism into the Bhagavad-gita and confusing innocent readers by their commentaries, and consequently the readers never have the opportunity to become blessed by offering salutations to Lord Krsna, the cause of all causes. The greatest disservice to humanity is to keep mankind in darkness about the science of Krsna, or Krsna consciousness, by distorting the sense of the Gita.

--9--

Salutations to that supreme shining one
Whom the creator Brahma, Varuna,
Indra, Rudra, Marut, and all divine beings
Praise with hymns,
Whose glories are sung
By the verses of the Vedas,
Of whom the singers of Sama sing
And of whose glories the Upanisads
Proclaim in full choir,
Whom the yogis see
With their minds absorbed
In perfect meditation,
And of whom all the hosts
Of gods and demons
Know not the limitations.
To Him, the Supreme God, Krsna, be all salutations--
Him we salute! Him we salute! Him we salute!

Purport

By recitation of the ninth verse of his meditation, quoted from the Srimad-Bhagavatam, Sankara has indicated that Lord Krsna is worshipable by one and all, including himself. He gives hints to materialists, impersonalists, mental speculators, "void" philosophers, and all other candidates subjected to the punishment of material miseries--just offer salutations to Lord Krsna, who is worshiped by Brahma, Siva, Varuna, Indra, and all other demigods. He has not mentioned, however, the name of Visnu, because Visnu is identical with Krsna. The Vedas and the Upanisads are meant for understanding the process by which one can surrender unto Krsna. The yogis try to see Him (Krsna) within themselves by meditation. In other words, it is for all the demigods and demons who do not know where the ultimate end is that Sankara teaches, and he especially instructs the demons and the fools to offer salutations to Krsna and His words, the Bhagavad-gita, by following in his footsteps. Only by such acts will the demons be benefited, not by misleading their innocent followers by so-called mental speculations or show-bottle meditations. Sankara directly offers salutations to Krsna, as if to show

the fools, who are searching after light, that here is light like the sun. But the fallen demons are like owls that will not open their eyes on account of their fear of the sunlight itself. These owls will never open their eyes to see the sublime light of Krsna and His words the Bhagavad-gita. They will, however, comment on the Gita with their closed owl-eyes to mislead their unfortunate readers and followers. Sankara, however, discloses the light to his less intelligent followers and shows that the Bhagavad-gita and Krsna are the only source of light. This is all to teach the sincere seekers of truth to offer salutation to Lord Krsna and thus surrender unto Him without misgivings. That is the highest perfection of life, and that is the highest teaching of Sankara, the great learned scholar whose teachings drove the voidist philosophy of Buddha out of India, the land of knowledge. Om tat sat.

The Scriptural Basis of Krsna Consciousness

On January 11, 1970, an article in the Los Angeles Times reported that faculty members at the University of California at Berkeley, including Dr. J. F. Staal, professor of philosophy and South Asian languages, had turned down a request to grant credit for an experimental course in Krsna consciousness to have been taught by Hans Kary, president of the Hare Krsna movement's Berkeley center. In rejecting the proposed course, Dr. Staal suggested that the devotees "spend too much time chanting to develop a philosophy." When the article came to the attention of Srila Prabhupada, the founder and spiritual master of the Hare Krsna movement, he initiated an unusual correspondence with the renowned professor.

Excerpt from the Los Angeles Times Article

"Dr. J. F. Staal, Professor of Philosophy and Near Eastern [sic] Languages at UC Berkeley and an instructor in Indian philosophy, believes that the Krsna sect is an authentic Indian religion and that its adherents are sincere. He attributes the Society's rapid increase in members to the tendency of today's younger generation to reject organized churchgoing while at the same time searching for fulfillment of a belief in mysticism.

"He points out, however, that persons who turn away from Christianity, Muhammadanism, and Judaism have usually lost faith with the personal god of those religions and are looking for a mystical religion without absolutes.

"`These people in the Krsna movement have turned to Hinduism, but, curiously, it is a cult that is highly personalistic,' Staal said. `They accept a personal god, Krsna, and Christianity has that. I feel that they have transferred some of their Christian background to a Hindu sect.'

"He also feels that they spend too much time chanting to develop a philosophy. On these grounds he and others on the faculty turned down the request to grant credit for an experimental course in Krsna consciousness that will be taught during the winter quarter by Hans Kary, president of the sect's Berkeley temple."

Srila Prabhupada's Letter to the Los Angeles Times

Editor Los Angeles Times

Dear Sir:

With reference to your article in the Los Angeles Times dated Sunday, January 11, 1970, under the heading "Krsna Chant," I beg to point out that the Hindu religion is perfectly based on the personal conception of God, or Visnu. The impersonal conception of God is a side issue, or one of the three features of God. The Absolute Truth is ultimately the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the Paramatma conception is the localized aspect of His omnipresence, and the impersonal conception is the aspect of His greatness and eternity. But all these combined together make the Complete Whole.

Dr. J. F. Staal's statement that the Krsna cult is a combination of Christian and Hindu religion, as if something manufactured by concoction, is not correct. If Christian, Muhammadan, or Buddhist religions are personal, that is quite welcome. But the Krsna religion has been personal from a time long, long ago when Christian, Muhammadan, and Buddhist religions had not yet come into existence. According to the Vedic conception, religion is basically made by the personal God as His laws. Religion cannot be manufactured by man or anyone except God superior to man. Religion is the law of God only.

Unfortunately, all the svamis who came before me in this country stressed the impersonal aspect of God, without sufficient knowledge of God's personal aspect. In the Bhagavad-gita, therefore, it is said that only less intelligent persons consider that God is originally impersonal but assumes a form when He incarnates. The Krsna philosophy, however, based on the authority of the Vedas, is that originally the Absolute Truth is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. His plenary expansion is present in everyone's heart in His localized aspect, and the impersonal Brahman effulgence is the transcendental light and heat distributed everywhere.

In the Bhagavad-gita it is clearly said that the aim of the Vedic way of searching out the Absolute Truth is to find the personal God. One who is satisfied only with the other aspects of the Absolute Truth, namely the Paramatma feature or the Brahman feature, is to be considered possessed of a poor fund of knowledge. Recently we have published our Sri Isopanisad, a Vedic literature, and in this small booklet we have thoroughly discussed this point.

As far as the Hindu religion is concerned, there are millions of Krsna temples in India, and there is not a single Hindu who does not worship Krsna. Therefore, this Krsna consciousness movement is not a concocted idea. We invite all scholars, philosophers, religionists, and members of the general public to understand this movement by critical study. And if one does so seriously, one will understand the sublime position of this great movement.

The chanting process is also authorized. Professor Staal's feeling of disgust in the matter of constant chanting of the holy name of Krsna is a definite proof of his lack of knowledge in this authorized movement of Krsna consciousness. Instead of turning down the request to give Kary's course credit, he and all other learned professors of the University of California at Berkeley should patiently hear about the truth of this authorized movement so much needed at present in godless society. [Credit for the course was later established.] This is the only movement which can save the confused younger generation. I shall invite all responsible guardians of this country to understand this transcendental movement and then give us all honest facilities to spread it for everyone's benefit.

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami
Spiritual Master of the Hare Krsna Movement

The Exchange Between Srila Prabhupada and Dr. Staal

Swami A. C. Bhaktivedanta

Dear Swamiji:

Thank you very much for sending me a copy of your letter to the Los Angeles Times, now also published in the Daily Californian. I think you will agree with me that apart from publicity, little is gained by discussing religious or philosophic issues through interviews and letters in the press; but allow me to make two brief observations.

First, I know that devotion to Krsna is old (though definitely not as old as the Vedas) and has never been influenced by Christianity, Islam, or Judaism (I never referred to Buddhism in this connection). The differences between the personal and impersonal are relatively vague, but adopting this distinction for simplicity, I expressed surprise at seeing people who have grown up in a Western culture which stresses the personal take to an Indian cult which does the same. I am less surprised when people who are dissatisfied with Western monotheism take to an Indian philosophy which stresses an impersonal absolute.

Second, I never expressed nor felt disgust at the chanting of the name of Krsna. I am not only not irritated at it (like some people), but I rather like it. But it is an indisputable fact that the Bhagavad-gita (not to mention the Vedas) does not require such constant chanting. The Gita deals with quite different subjects, which I treat at some length in my courses on the philosophies of India.

Thanking you,
Yours sincerely,
J. F. Staal

Professor of Philosophy and of South Asian Languages

J. F. Staal
Professor of Philosophy and of South Asian Languages
University of California
Berkeley, California

My dear Professor Staal:

I thank you very much for your kind letter dated January 23, 1970. In the last paragraph of your letter you have mentioned that you are not irritated at the chanting of the Hare Krsna mantra (like some people), but rather like it. This has given me much satisfaction, and I am sending herewith a copy of our magazine, Back to Godhead, issue number 28, in which you will find how the students [at a program at Ohio State University] liked this chanting of the Hare Krsna mantra, although all of them were neophytes to this cult of chanting. Actually this chanting is very pleasing to the heart and is the best means of infusing spiritual consciousness, or Krsna consciousness, into the hearts of people in general.

This is the easiest process of spiritual realization and is recommended in the Vedas. In the Brhan-naradiya Purana it is clearly stated that it is only chanting of the holy name of Hari [Krsna] that can save people from the problems of materialistic existence, and there

is no other alternative, no other alternative, no other alternative in this age of Kali.

Western culture is monotheistic, but Westerners are being misled by impersonal Indian speculation. The young people of the West are frustrated because they are not diligently taught about monotheism. They are not satisfied with this process of teaching and understanding. The Krsna consciousness movement is a boon to them, because they are being really trained to understand Western monotheism under the authoritative Vedic system. We do not simply theoretically discuss; rather, we learn by the prescribed method of Vedic regulations.

But I am surprised to see that in the last paragraph of your letter you say, "It is an indisputable fact that the Bhagavad-gita (not to mention the Vedas) does not require such constant chanting." I think that you have missed the following verse in the Bhagavad-gita, apart from many other similar verses:

satatam kirtayanto mam
yatantas ca drdha-vratah
namasyantas ca mam bhaktya
nitya-yukta upasate
(Bg. 9.14)

The engagement of the great souls, freed from delusion and perfect in their realization of God, is described here: satatam kirtayanto mam--they are always (satatam) chanting (kirtayantah) My glories and--nitya-yukta upasate--always worshiping Me (Krsna).

So I do not know how you can say "indisputable." And, if you want references from the Vedas, I can give you many. In the Vedas, the chief transcendental vibration omkara is also Krsna. Pranava omkara is the divine substance of the Vedas. Following the Vedas means chanting the Vedic mantras, and no Vedic mantra is complete without omkara. In the Mandukya Upanisad, omkara is stated to be the most auspicious sound representation of the Supreme Lord. This is also confirmed again in the Atharva Veda. Omkara is the sound representation of the Supreme Lord and is therefore the principal word in the Vedas. In this connection, the Supreme Lord, Krsna, says, pranavah sarva-vedesu: "I am the syllable om in all the Vedic mantras." (Bg. 7.8)

Furthermore, in Bhagavad-gita, Chapter Fifteen, verse 15, Krsna says, "I am seated in everyone's heart. By all the Vedas, I am to be known; I am the compiler of Vedanta, and I know Veda as it is." The Supreme Lord, seated in everyone's heart, is described in both the Mundaka and Svetasvatara Upanisads: dva suparna sayuja sakhaya... The Supreme Lord and the individual soul are sitting in the body like two friendly birds in a tree. One bird is eating the fruits of the tree, or reactions of material activities, and the other bird, the Supersoul, is witnessing.

The goal of Vedantic study, therefore, is to know the Supreme Lord, Krsna. This point is stressed in the Bhagavad-gita, Chapter Eight, verse 13, where it is stated that by the mystic yoga process, ultimately vibrating the sacred syllable om, one attains to His supreme spiritual planet. In the Vedanta-sutras, which you have certainly read, the Fourth Chapter, adhikarana 4, sutra 22, states positively, anavrttih sabdat: "By sound vibration one becomes liberated." By devotional service, by understanding well the Supreme Personality of Godhead, one can go to His

abode and never come back again to this material condition. How is it possible? The answer is, simply by chanting His name constantly.

This is accepted by the exemplary disciple, Arjuna, who has perfectly learned the conclusion of spiritual science from the yogesvara, the master of mystic knowledge, Krsna. Recognizing Krsna to be the Supreme Brahman, Arjuna addresses Him, sthane hrsikesa...: "The world becomes joyful hearing Your name, and thus do all become attached to You." (Bg. 11.36) The process of chanting is herein authorized as the direct means of contacting the Supreme Absolute Truth, the Personality of Godhead. Simply by chanting the holy name Krsna, the soul is attracted by the Supreme Person, Krsna, to go home, back to Godhead.

In the Narada-pancaratra it is stated that all the Vedic rituals, mantras, and understanding are compressed into the eight words Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna, Hare Hare. Similarly, in the Kali-santarana Upanisad it is stated that these sixteen words, Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare, are especially meant for counteracting the degrading and contaminating influence of this materialistic age of Kali.

All these points are elaborately presented in my book Teachings of Lord Caitanya.

The process of chanting is, therefore, not only the sublime method for practical perfection of life but the authorized Vedic principle inaugurated by the greatest Vedic scholar and devotee, Lord Caitanya (whom we consider an incarnation of Krsna). We are simply following in His authorized footsteps.

The scope of the Krsna consciousness movement is universal. The process for regaining one's original spiritual status of eternal life, full with bliss and knowledge, is not abstract, dry theorizing. Spiritual life is not described in the Vedas as theoretical, dry, or impersonal. The Vedas aim at the inculcation of pure love of God only, and this harmonious conclusion is practically realized by the Krsna consciousness movement, or by chanting the Hare Krsna mantra.

As the goal of spiritual realization is only one, love of God, so the Vedas stand as a single comprehensive whole in the matter of transcendental understanding. Only the incomplete views of various parties apart from the bona fide Vedic lines of teaching give a rapturous appearance to the Bhagavad-gita. The reconciliative factor adjusting all apparently diverse propositions of the Vedas is the essence of the Veda, or Krsna consciousness (love of God).

Thanking you once again,
Yours sincerely,
A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami

Swami A. C. Bhaktivedanta
Dear Swamiji:

Thank you very much for your kindness in sending me your long and interesting letter of January 30, together with the last issue of Back to Godhead. So far I have had a few discussions with members of your society here, but they were not entirely satisfactory from my point of view. But now I have your much more authoritative letter, whereby the discussion moves to a higher level.

And yet, I am afraid, you have not convinced me that all the scriptures you quote prescribe only chanting of the name of Krsna. Let me refer only to the most important ones.

In the Bhagavad-gita (9.14), kirtayantah need not mean chanting of the name of Krsna. It may mean glorifying, chanting, reciting, talking, and refer to songs, hymns, descriptions, or conversations. The commentators take it that way. Sankara in his commentary merely repeats the word, but Anandagiri in his vyakhya classes kirtana as vedanta-sravanam pranava-japas ca, "listening to the Vedanta and muttering om" (that the Vedic om is Krsna is said in the Bhagavad-gita, where Krsna is also identified with many other things, and which is smrti, but not in the Vedas, which are sruti). Another commentator, Hanuman, in his Paisaca-bhasya, says that kirtayantah merely means bhasamanah--"talking [about]."

More important, I think, than the precise meaning of this word, is that the entire verse does not require that everyone always engage in kirtana, but merely states that some great souls do so. This is obvious from the next verse, which states that anye, "others," engage in jnana: yajnena... yajanto mam, "worshiping me... with the worship of knowledge." The Bhagavad-gita is broad-minded and tolerant of a variety of religious approaches, although it also stresses one aspect above all others (i.e., sarva-phala-tyaga).

Finally, in the last sutra of the Vedanta-sutra, anavrttih sabdat..., sabda refers to the scripture or to the revelation of the Vedas, as is clear from the context and from the commentators. Sankara quotes a number of texts (ending with ity adi-sabdebhyah, "according to these sabdas") to support this, i.e., to support the statement that "according to the scripture there is no return." He also refers to sabda in this sutra by saying mantrartha-vadadi..., "mantras, descriptions, etc." Vacaspati Misra in the Bhamati supports this and clarifies it further by adding that a contrary view is sruti-smrti-virodhah, "in conflict with the smrti and the sruti."

Thanking you once again for your kind attention.

Yours very sincerely,

J. F. Staal

J. F. Staal

Professor of Philosophy and of South Asian Languages

My dear Dr. Staal:

I am very glad to receive your letter dated Sunday, February 8, 1970. I am very much pleased also to note the contents.

Regarding convincing you that all scriptures prescribe chanting of the name of Krsna, I can simply present the authority of Lord Caitanya. Lord Caitanya recommended, kirtanlyah sada harih ["Hari, Krsna, is constantly to be praised" (Siksastaka 3)]. Similarly, Madhvacarya quotes, vede ramayane caiva harih sarvatra glyate ["Hari is sung about everywhere in the Vedas and Ramayana"]. Similarly, in the Bhagavad-gita (15.15) the Lord says, vedais ca sarvair aham eva vedyah ["By all the Vedas, I am to be known"].

In this way we find all the scriptures aiming at the Supreme Person. In the Rg Veda (1.22.20) the mantra is om tad visnoh paramam padam sada pasyanti surayah ["The demigods are always looking to that supreme abode of Visnu"]. The whole Vedic process, therefore, is to

understand Lord Visnu, and any scripture is directly or indirectly chanting the glories of the Supreme Lord, Visnu.

Regarding the Bhagavad-gita, verse 9.14, kirtayantah certainly means glorifying, chanting, reciting, and talking, as you have said; but glorifying, chanting, or reciting about whom? It is certainly Krsna. The word used in this connection is mam ["Me"]. Therefore, we do not disagree when a person glorifies Krsna, as Sukadeva did in the Srimad-Bhagavatam. This is also kirtana. The highest among all Vedic literatures is the proper place for such glorification of the Supreme Lord, Krsna, and this is to be well understood from the verse:

nigama -kalpataror galitam phalam
suka-mukhad amrta-dra va-samyutam
pibata bhaga vatam rasam alayam
muhur aho rasika bhuvi bhavukah

"O expert and thoughtful men, relish Srimad-Bhagavatam, the mature fruit of the desire tree of Vedic literatures. It emanated from the lips of Sri Sukadeva Gosvami. Therefore this fruit has become even more tasteful, although its nectarean juice was already relishable for all, including liberated souls." (Srimad-Bhagavatam 1.1.3)

It is said that Maharaja Pariksit attained salvation simply by hearing, and similarly Sukadeva Gosvami attained salvation simply by chanting. In our devotional service there are nine different methods for achieving the same goal, love of Godhead, and the first process is hearing. This hearing process is called sruti. The next process is chanting. The chanting process is smrti. We accept both sruti and smrti simultaneously. We consider sruti the mother and smrti the sister, because a child hears from the mother and then again learns from the sister by description.

Sruti and smrti are two parallel lines. Srila Rupa Gosvami therefore says:

sruti-smrti-puranadi-
pancaratra-vidhim vina
aikantiki harer bhaktir
utpatayaiva kaipate

(Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu 1.2.101)

That is, without references to sruti, smrti, Puranas, and Pancaratras, unadulterated devotional service is never achieved. Therefore, anyone who shows a devotional ecstasy without reference to the sastras [Vedic scriptures] simply creates disturbances. On the other hand, if we simply stick to the srutis, then we become veda-vada-ratah, who are not very much appreciated in the Bhagavad-gita.

Therefore Bhagavad-gita, although smrti, is the essence of all Vedic scripture, sarvopanisado gavah. It is just like a cow which is delivering the milk, or the essence of all the Vedas and Upanisads, and all the acaryas, including Sankaracarya, accept the Bhagavad-gita as such. Therefore you cannot deny the authority of the Bhagavad-gita because it is smrti; that view is sruti-smrti-virodhah, "in conflict with the smrti and the sruti," as you have correctly said.

Regarding Anandagiri's quotation that kirtana means vedanta-sra vanam prana va japas ca ["listening to the Vedanta and muttering om"],

the knower of Vedanta is Krsna, and He is the compiler of Vedanta. He is veda-vit and vedanta-krt. So where is there a greater opportunity for vedanta-sravana than to hear it from Krsna?

Regarding the next verse, in which it is mentioned that jnana-yajnena... yajanto mam, the object of worship is Krsna, as indicated by mam ["Me"]. The process is described in the Isopanisad, mantra 11:

vidyam cavidyam ca yas
tad vedobhayam saha
avidyaya mrtyum tirtva
vidyayamrtam asnute

"Only one who can learn the process of nescience and that of transcendental knowledge side by side can transcend the influence of repeated birth and death and enjoy the full blessings of immortality."

The culture of vidya, or transcendental knowledge, is essential for the human being, otherwise the culture of avidya, or nescience, binds him to conditional existence on the material platform. Materialistic existence means the pursuit or culture of sense gratification, and this kind of knowledge of sense gratification (avdiya) means advancement of repeated birth and death. Those who are absorbed in such knowledge cannot learn any lesson from the laws of nature, and they do the same things over repeatedly, being enamored of the beauty of illusory things. Vidya, or factual knowledge, on the other hand, means to know thoroughly the process of nescient activities while at the same time culturing transcendental science and thereby undeviatingly following the path of liberation.

Liberation is the enjoyment of the full blessings of immortality. This immortality is enjoyed in the eternal kingdom of God (sambhuty-amrtam asnute), the region of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and is the result obtained by worshiping the Supreme Lord, the cause of all causes, sambhavat. So in this way real knowledge, vidya, means to worship the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krsna; that is jnana-yajnena, the worship of knowledge.

This jnana-yajnena... yajanto mam is the perfection of knowledge, as stated in the Bhagavad-gita (7.19):

bahunam janmanam ante
jnanavan mam prapadyate
vasudevah sarvam iti
sa mahatma sudurlabhah

"After many births and deaths, he who is actually in knowledge surrenders unto Me [Krsna], knowing Me to be the cause of all causes, and all that is. Such a great soul is very rare."

If one has not yet come to this conclusion of knowledge and simply indulges in dry speculation without Krsna, then his hard speculative labor is something like beating empty husks of grain. The unhulled rice and the empty husks of rice look very much the same. One who knows how to get the grain out of the unhulled rice is wise, but one who beats on the empty husk, thinking to get some result, is simply wasting his labor uselessly. Similarly, if one studies the Vedas without finding the goal of the Vedas, Krsna, he simply wastes his valuable time.

So to cultivate knowledge for worshipping Krsna culminates after many, many births and deaths when one actually becomes wise. When one becomes wise in this way, he surrenders to Krsna, recognizing Him at last to be the cause of all causes and all that is. That sort of great soul is very rare. So those who have surrendered to Krsna life and soul are rare sudurlabha mahatmas. They are not ordinary mahatmas.

By the grace of Lord Caitanya that highest perfectional status of life is being distributed very freely. The effect is also very encouraging; otherwise, how are boys and girls without any background of Vedic culture quickly occupying the posts of rare mahatmas simply by vibrating this transcendental sound, Hare Krsna? And simply on the basis of this chanting, the majority of them (those who are very sincere) are steady in devotional service and are not falling down to the four principles of material sinful life, namely (1) meat-eating, (2) illicit sexual connection, (3) taking of intoxicants, including coffee, tea, and tobacco, and (4) gambling. And that is the last sutra of the Vedanta-sutra, i.e., anavrttih sabdat ["By sound vibration one becomes liberated"].

One has to learn by the result (phalena pariclyate). Our students are ordered to act like this, and they are not falling down. That they are remaining on the platform of pure spiritual life without hankering to culture the above principles of avidya, or sense gratification, is the test of their proper understanding of the Vedas. They do not come back to the material platform, because they are relishing the nectarean fruit of love of God.

Sarva-phala-tyaga ["renunciation of all the fruits of one's work"] is explained in the Bhagavad-gita by the Lord Himself in the words sarva-dharman parityajya mam ekam saranam vraja: "Give up everything and simply surrender unto Me [Krsna]." The Hare Krsna mantra means "O Supreme Energy of Krsna and O Lord Krsna, please engage me in Your eternal service." So we have given up everything and are simply engaged in the service of the Lord. What Krsna orders us to do is our only engagement. We have given up all resultant actions of karma, jnana, and yoga; and that is the stage of pure devotional service, bhaktir uttama.

Yours sincerely,

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami

Swami A. C. Bhaktivedanta

Founder-Acarya

International Society for Krishna Consciousness

Dear Swamiji:

Thank you very much for your very interesting letter of February 15, 1970, with enclosure.

I am afraid that whenever you quote a passage purporting to show that only the chanting of the name Krsna is required, I can quote another one which requires something else, adding, yadi sloko 'pi pramanam, ayam api slokah pramanam bha vitum arhati: "If mere verses are authoritative, this verse also ought to be regarded as authoritative." And there may be no end to this in the foreseeable future, as Patanjali also says, mahan hi sabdasya prayoga-visayah: "For vast is the domain for the use of words."

Yours very sincerely,

J. F. Staal

Dear Dr. Staal:

I beg to thank you very much for your kind letter dated February 25, 1970. I am sorry that I could not reply to your letter earlier because I was a little busy in the matter of purchasing a new church estate at the above address. We have secured a very nice place for a separate temple, lecture room, my quarters, and the devotees' residential quarters, all together in a nice place with all the modern amenities.

I beg to request you to visit this place at your convenience, and if you kindly let me know a day before, my students will be very glad to receive you properly.

Regarding our correspondence, actually this quotation and counter-quotation cannot solve the problem. In a court both the learned lawyers quote from law books, but that is not the solution to the case. The determination of the case is the judgment of the presiding judge. So argument cannot bring us to a conclusion.

The scriptural quotations are sometimes contradictory, and every philosopher has a different opinion, because without putting forward a different thesis, no one can become a famous philosopher. It is therefore difficult to arrive at the right conclusion. The conclusion is, as above mentioned, to accept the judgment of authority. We follow the authority of Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu, who is nondifferent from Krsna, and His version according to Vedic scripture is that in this age this chanting is the only solution for all problems of life. And that is actually being shown by practical experience.

Recently there was a big procession of our students in Berkeley on the Advent Day of Lord Caitanya, and the public has remarked as follows: "This crowd of men is not like others, who assemble to break windows and create havoc." This is also confirmed by the police in the following words: "Members of the Krsna consciousness movement cooperated fully with the police, and their efforts to maintain peaceful order throughout the parade were so successful that only minimal police involvement was required."

Similarly, in Detroit there was a big peace march, and our men were appreciated as "angels" in the crowd. So this Krsna consciousness movement is actually needed at the present moment as the panacea for all kinds of problems in human society.

Other quotations will not act very appreciably at this time. In a drugstore there may be many medicines, and all may be genuine, but what is required is that an experienced physician prescribe medicine for a particular patient. We cannot say in this case, "This is also medicine, and this is also medicine." No. The medicine which is effective for a particular person is the medicine for him--phalena pariciate.

Yours very sincerely,

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami

Final Note by Srila Prabhupada

In a court of justice two lawyers put forward their respective relevant arguments taken from the authorized law books to decide a point, but it is up to the judge to decide the case in favor of one of the litigants. When the opposing lawyers put forward their arguments, both of them are legal and bona fide, but the judgment is given as to which argument is applicable to the particular case.

Lord Caitanya gives His judgment on the authority of sastras that the chanting of the holy names of the Lord is the only means to elevate

one to the transcendental platform, and actually we can see it is effective. Each and every one of our students who has seriously taken to this process may be examined individually, and any impartial judge will find it easy to see that they have advanced in their transcendental realization further than any philosophers, religionists, yogis, karmis, etc.

We have to accept everything favorable to the circumstances. Rejection of other methods in a particular circumstance does not mean that the rejected ones are not bona fide. But for the time being, taking into consideration the age, time, and object, methods are sometimes rejected even though bona fide. We have to test everything by its practical result. By such a test, in this age the constant chanting of the Hare Krsna maha-mantra undoubtedly proves very effective.

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami

Krsna Consciousness:

Hindu Cult or Divine Culture?

When attempting to place the Krsna consciousness movement within a convenient historical-cultural context, many people identify the movement with Hinduism. But this is misleading. Srila Prabhupada disavows connection with the pantheism, polytheism, and caste consciousness that pervades modern Hinduism. Although Krsna consciousness and modern Hinduism share a common historical root--India's ancient Vedic culture--Hinduism has become, along with the other "great religions," a sectarian establishment, whereas Krsna consciousness is universal and transcends relative, sectarian designations.

There is a misconception that the Krsna consciousness movement represents the Hindu religion. In fact, however, Krsna consciousness is in no way a faith or religion that seeks to defeat other faiths or religions. Rather, it is an essential cultural movement for the entire human society and does not consider any particular sectarian faith. This cultural movement is especially meant to educate people in how they can love God.

Sometimes Indians both inside and outside of India think that we are preaching the Hindu religion, but actually we are not. One will not find the word Hindu in the Bhagavad-gita. Indeed, there is no such word as Hindu in the entire Vedic literature. This word has been introduced by the Muslims from provinces next to India, such as Afghanistan, Baluchistan, and Persia. There is a river called Sindhu bordering the north western provinces of India, and since the Muslims there could not pronounce Sindhu properly, they instead called the river Hindu, and the inhabitants of this tract of land they called Hindus. In India, according to the Vedic language, the Europeans are called mlecchas or yavanas. Similarly, Hindu is a name given by the Muslims.

India's actual culture is described in the Bhagavad-gita, where it is stated that according to the different qualities or modes of nature there are different types of men, who are generally classified into four social orders and four spiritual orders. This system of social and spiritual division is known as varnasrama-dharma. The four varnas, or social orders, are brahmana, ksatria, vaisya, and sudra. The four asramas, or spiritual orders, are brahmacarya, grhastha, vanaprastha, and sannyasa. The varnasrama system is described in the Vedic scriptures known as the Puranas. The goal of this institution of Vedic culture is

to educate every man for advancement in knowledge of Krsna, or God. That is the entire Vedic program.

When Lord Caitanya talked with the great devotee Ramananda Raya, the Lord asked him, "What is the basic principle of human life?" Ramananda Raya answered that human civilization begins when varnasrama-dharma is accepted. Before coming to the standard of varnasrama-dharma there is no question of human civilization. Therefore, the Krsna consciousness movement is trying to establish this right system of human civilization, which is known as Krsna consciousness, or daiva-varnasrama--divine culture.

In India, the varnasrama system has now been taken in a perverted way, and thus a man born in the family of a brahmana (the highest social order) claims that he should be accepted as a brahmana. But this claim is not accepted by the sastra (scripture). One's forefather may have been a brahmana according to gotra, or the family hereditary order, but real varnasrama-dharma is based on the factual quality one has attained, regardless of birth or heredity. Therefore, we are not preaching the present-day system of the Hindus, especially those who are under the influence of Sankaracarya, for Sankaracarya taught that the Absolute Truth is impersonal, and thus he indirectly denied the existence of God.

Sankaracarya's mission was special; he appeared to reestablish the Vedic influence after the influence of Buddhism. Because Buddhism was patronized by Emperor Asoka, twenty-six hundred years ago the Buddhist religion practically pervaded all of India. According to the Vedic literature, Buddha was an incarnation of Krsna who had a special power and who appeared for a special purpose. His system of thought, or faith, was accepted widely, but Buddha rejected the authority of the Vedas. While Buddhism was spreading, the Vedic culture was stopped both in Indis and in other places. Therefore, since Sankaracarya's only aim was to drive away Buddha's system of philosophy, he introduced a system called Mayavada.

Strictly speaking, Mayavada philosophy is atheism, for it is a process in which one imagines that there is God. This Mayavada system of philosophy has been existing since time immemorial. The present Indian system of religion or culture is based on the Mayavada philosophy of Sankaracarya, which is a compromise with Buddhist philosophy. According to Mayavada philosophy there actually is no God, or if God exists, He is impersonal and all-pervading and can therefore be imagined in any form. This conclusion is not in accord with the Vedic literature. That literature names many demigods, who are worshiped for different purposes, but in every case the Supreme Lord, the Personality of Godhead, Visnu, is accepted as the supreme controller. That is real Vedic culture.

The philosophy of Krsna consciousness does not deny the existence of God and the demigods, but Mayavada philosophy denies both; it maintains that neither the demigods nor God exists. For the Mayavadis, ultimately all is zero. They say that one may imagine any authority--whether Visnu, Durga, Lord Siva, or the sun-god--because these are the demigods generally worshiped in society. But the Mayavada philosophy does not in fact accept the existence of any of them. The Mayavadis say that because one cannot concentrate one's mind on the impersonal Brahman, one may imagine any of these forms. This is a new system, called pancopasana. It was introduced by Sankaracarya, but the Bhagavad-

gita does not teach any such doctrines, and therefore they are not authoritative.

The Bhagavad-gita accepts the existence of the demigods. The demigods are described in the Vedas, and one cannot deny their existence, but they are not to be understood or worshiped according to the way of Sankaracarya. The worship of demigods is rejected in the Bhagavad-gita. The Gita (7.20) clearly states:

kamals tais tair hrta jnanah
prapadyante 'nya-devatah
tam tam niamam asthaya
prakrtya niatah svaya

"Those whose minds are distorted by material desires surrender unto demigods and follow the particular rules and regulations of worship according to their own natures." Furthermore, in the Bhagavad-gita (2.44), Lord Krsna states:

bhogaisvarya-prasaktanam
tayapahrta-cetasam
vyavasayatmika buddhih
samadhau na vidhiyate

"In the minds of those who are too attached to sense enjoyment and material opulence, and who are bewildered by such things, the resolute determination for devotional service does not take place." Those who are pursuing the various demigods have been described as hrta jnanah, which means "those who have lost their sense." That is also further explained in the Bhagavad-gita (7.23):

antavat tu phalam tesam
tad bha vaty aipa-medhasam
devan deva-yajo yanti
mad-bhakta yanti mam api

"Men of small intelligence worship the demigods, and their fruits are limited and temporary. Those who worship the demigods go to the planets of the demigods, but My devotees reach My supreme abode." The rewards given by the demigods are temporary, because any material facility must act in connection with the temporary body. Whatever material facilities one gets, whether by modern scientific methods or by deriving benedictions from the demigods, will be finished with the body. But spiritual advancement will never be finished.

People should not think that we are preaching a sectarian religion. No. We are simply preaching how to love God. There are many theories about the existence of God. The atheist, for example, will never believe in God. Atheists like Professor Jacques Monod, who won the Nobel prize, declare that everything is chance (a theory already put forward long ago by atheistic philosophers of India such as Carvaka). Then other philosophies, such as the karma-mimamsa philosophy, accept that if one goes on doing his work nicely and honestly, automatically the result will come, without need for one to refer to God. For evidence, the proponents of such theories cite the argument that if one is diseased with an infection and takes medicine to counteract it, the disease will

be neutralized. But our argument in this connection is that even if one gives a man the best medicine, he still may die. The results are not always predictable. Therefore, there is a higher authority, *daiva-netrena*, a supreme director. Otherwise, how is it that the son of a rich and pious man becomes a hippie in the street or that a man who works very hard and becomes rich is told by his doctor, "Now you may not eat any food, but only barley water"?

The karma-mimamsa theory holds that the world is going on without the supreme direction of God. Such philosophies say that everything takes place by lust (*kama-haitukam*). By lust a man becomes attracted to a woman, and by chance there is sex, and the woman becomes pregnant. There is actually no plan to make the woman pregnant, but by a natural sequence when a man and a woman unite, a result is produced. The atheistic theory, which is described in the Sixteenth Chapter of the *Bhagavad-gita* as *asuric*, or *demoniac*, is that actually everything is going on in this way, because of chance and resulting from natural attraction. This demoniac theory supports the idea that if one wants to avoid children, he may use a contraceptive method.

Actually, however, there is a great plan for everything--the Vedic plan. The Vedic literature gives directions regarding how men and women should unite, how they should beget children, and what the purpose of sex life is. Krsna says in the *Bhagavad-gita* that sex life sanctioned by the Vedic order, or sex life under the direction of the Vedic rules and regulations, is *bona fide* and is acceptable to Him. But chance sex life is not acceptable. If by chance one is sexually attracted and there are children, they are called *varna-sankara*, unwanted population. That is the way of the lower animals; it is not acceptable for humans. For humans, there is a plan. We cannot accept the theory that there is no plan for human life or that everything is born of chance and material necessity.

Sankaracarya's theory that there is no God and that one can go on with his work and imagine God in any form just to keep peace and tranquillity in society is also more or less based on this idea of chance and necessity. Our way, however, which is completely different, is based on authority. It is this divine *varnasrama-dharma* that Krsna recommends, not the caste system as it is understood today. This modern caste system is now condemned in India also, and it should be condemned, for the classification of different types of men according to birth is not the Vedic or divine caste system.

There are many classes of men in society--some men are engineers, some are medical practitioners, some are chemists, tradesmen, businessmen, and so on. These varieties of classes are not to be determined by birth, however, but by quality. No such thing as the caste-by-birth system is sanctioned by the Vedic literature, nor do we accept it. We have nothing to do with the caste system, which is also at present being rejected by the public in India. Rather, we give everyone the chance to become a brahmana and thus attain the highest status of life.

Because at the present moment there is a scarcity of brahmanas, spiritual guides, and ksatrias, administrative men, and because the entire world is being ruled by sudras, or men of the manual laborer class, there are many discrepancies in society. It is to mitigate all these discrepancies that we have taken to this Krsna consciousness movement. If the brahmana class is actually reestablished, the other

orders of social well-being will automatically follow, just as when the brain is perfectly in order, the other parts of the body, such as the arms, the belly, and the legs, all act very nicely.

The ultimate goal of this movement is to educate people in how to love God. Caitanya Mahaprabhu approves the conclusion that the highest perfection of human life is to learn how to love God. The Krsna consciousness movement has nothing to do with the Hindu religion or any system of religion. No Christian gentleman will be interested in changing his faith from Christian to Hindu. Similarly, no Hindu gentleman of culture will be ready to change to the Christian faith. Such changing is for men who have no particular social status. But everyone will be interested in understanding the philosophy and science of God and taking it seriously. One should clearly understand that the Krsna consciousness movement is not preaching the so-called Hindu religion. We are giving a spiritual culture that can solve all the problems of life, and therefore it is being accepted all over the world.

Chapter Four

Understanding Krsna and Christ

Krsna, Christos, Christ

In 1974, near ISKCON's center in Frankfurt am Main, West Germany, Srila Prabhupada and several of his disciples took a morning walk with father Emmanuel Jungclaussen, a Benedictine monk from Niederalteich Monastery. Noticing that Srila Prabhupada was carrying meditation beads similar to the rosary, Father Emmanuel explained that he also chanted a constant prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, be merciful unto us." The following conversation ensued.

Srila Prabhupada: What is the meaning of the word Christ?

Father Emmanuel: Christ comes from the Greek word Christos, meaning "the anointed one."

Srila Prabhupada: Christos is the Greek version of the word Krsna.

Father Emmanuel: This is very interesting.

Srila Prabhupada: When an Indian person calls on Krsna, he often says, "Krsta." Krsta is a Sanskrit word meaning "attraction." So when we address God as "Christ," "Krsta," or "Krsna," we indicate the same all-attractive Supreme Personality of Godhead. When Jesus said, "Our Father, who an in heaven, sanctified be Thy name," that name of God was "Krsta" or "Krsna." Do you agree?

Father Emmanuel: I think Jesus, as the son of God, has revealed to us the actual name of God: Christ. We can call God "Father," but if we want to address Him by His actual name, we have to say "Christ."

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. "Christ" is another way of saying Krsta, and "Krsta" is another way of pronouncing Krsna, the name of God. Jesus said that one should glorify the name of God, but yesterday I heard one theologian say that God has no name--that we can call Him only "Father." A son may call his father "Father," but the father also has a specific name. Similarly, "God" is the general name of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, whose specific name is Krsna. Therefore whether you call God "Christ," "Krsta," or "Krsna," ultimately you are addressing the same Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Father Emmanuel: Yes, if we speak of God's actual name, then we must say, "Christos." In our religion, we have the Trinity: the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. We believe we can know the name of God only by revelation from the Son of God. Jesus Christ revealed the name of the father, and therefore we take the name Christ as the revealed name of God.

Srila Prabhupada: Actually, it doesn't matter--Krsna or Christ--the name is the same. The main point is to follow the injunctions of the Vedic scriptures that recommend chanting the name of God in this age. The easiest way is to chant the maha-mantra: Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. Rama and Krsna are names of God, and Hare is the energy of God. So when we chant the maha-mantra, we address God together with His energy. This energy is of two kinds, the spiritual and the material. At present we are in the clutches of the material energy. Therefore we pray to Krsna that He may kindly deliver us from the service of the material energy and accept us into the service of the spiritual energy. That is our whole philosophy. Hare Krsna means, "O energy of God, O God [Krsna], please engage me in Your service." It is our nature to render service. Somehow or other we have come to the service of material things, but when this service is transformed into the service of the spiritual energy, then our life is perfect. To practice bhakti-yoga [loving service to God] means to become free from designations like "Hindu," "Muslim," "Christian," this or that, and simply to serve God. We have created Christian, Hindu, and Muhammadan religions, but when we come to a religion without designations, in which we don't think we are Hindus or Christians or Muhammadans, then we can speak of pure religion, or bhakti.

Father Emmanuel: Mukti?

Srila Prabhupada: No, bhakti. When we speak of bhakti, mukti [liberation from material miseries] is included. Without bhakti there is no mukti, but if we act on the platform of bhakti, then mukti is included. We learn this from the Bhagavad-gita (14.26):

mam ca yo 'vyabhicarena
bhakti-yogena sevate
sa gunan samatityaitan
brahma-bhuyaya kalpate

"One who engages in full devotional service, who does not fall down under any circumstance, at once transcends the modes of material nature and thus comes to the level of Brahman."

Father Emmanuel: Is Brahman Krsna?

Srila Prabhupada: Krsna is Parabrahman. Brahman is realized in three aspects: as impersonal Brahman, as localized Paramatma, and as personal Brahman. Krsna is personal, and He is the Supreme Brahman, for God is ultimately a person. In the Srimad-Bhagavatam (1.2.11), this is confirmed:

vadanti tat tattva-vidas
tattvam yajjnanam advayam
brahmeti paramatmeti
bhagavan iti sabdyate

"Learned transcendentalists who know the Absolute Truth call this nondual substance Brahman, Paramatma, or Bhagavan." The feature of the Supreme Personality is the ultimate realization of God. He has all six opulences in full: He is the strongest, the richest, the most beautiful, the most famous, the wisest, and the most renounced.

Father Emmanuel: Yes, I agree.

Srila Prabhupada: Because God is absolute, His name, His form, and His qualities are also absolute, and they are nondifferent from Him. Therefore to chant God's holy name means to associate directly with Him. When one associates with God, one acquires godly qualities, and when one is completely purified, one becomes an associate of the Supreme Lord.

Father Emmanuel: But our understanding of the name of God is limited.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, we are limited, but God is unlimited. And because He is unlimited, or absolute, He has unlimited names, each of which is God. We can understand His names as much as our spiritual understanding is developed.

Father Emmanuel: May I ask a question? We Christians also preach love of God, and we try to realize love of God and render service to Him with all our heart and all our soul. Now, what is the difference between your movement and ours? Why do you send your disciples to the Western countries to preach love of God when the gospel of Jesus Christ is propounding the same message?

Srila Prabhupada: The problem is that the Christians do not follow the commandments of God. Do you agree?

Father Emmanuel: Yes, to a large extent you're right.

Srila Prabhupada: Then what is the meaning of the Christians' love for God? If you do not follow the orders of God, then where is your love? Therefore we have come to teach what it means to love God: if you love Him, you cannot be disobedient to His orders. And if you're disobedient, your love is not true.

All over the world, people love not God but their dogs. The Krsna consciousness movement is therefore necessary to teach people how to revive their forgotten love for God. Not only the Christians, but also the Hindus, the Muhammadans, and all others are guilty. They have rubber-stamped themselves "Christian," "Hindu," or "Muhammadan," but they do not obey God. That is the problem. Visitor: Can you say in what way the Christians are disobedient?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. The first point is that they violate the commandment "Thou shalt not kill" by maintaining slaughterhouses. Do you agree that this commandment is being violated?

Father Emmanuel: Personally, I agree.

Srila Prabhupada: Good. So if the Christians want to love God, they must stop killing animals.

Father Emmanuel: But isn't the most important point--

Srila Prabhupada: If you miss one point, there is a mistake in your calculation. Regardless of what you add or subtract after that, the mistake is already in the calculation, and everything that follows will also be faulty. We cannot simply accept that part of the scripture we like, and reject what we don't like, and still expect to get the result. For example, a hen lays eggs with its back part and eats with its beak. A farmer may consider, "The front part of the hen is very expensive because I have to feed it. Better to cut it off." But if the head is missing there will be no eggs anymore, because the body is dead. Similarly, if we reject the difficult part of the scriptures and obey

the part we like, such an interpretation will not help us. We have to accept all the injunctions of the scripture as they are given, not only those that suit us. If you do not follow the first order, "Thou shalt not kill," then where is the question of love of God?

Visitor: Christians take this commandment to be applicable to human beings, not to animals.

Srila Prabhupada: That would mean that Christ was not intelligent enough to use the right word: murder. There is killing, and there is murder. Murder refers to human beings. Do you think Jesus was not intelligent enough to use the right word--murder--instead of the word killing? Killing means any kind of killing, and especially animal killing. If Jesus had meant simply the killing of humans, he would have used the word murder.

Father Emmanuel: But in the Old Testament the commandment "Thou shalt not kill" does refer to murder. And when Jesus said, "Thou shalt not kill," he extended this commandment to mean that a human being should not only refrain from killing another human being, but should also treat him with love. He never spoke about man's relationship with other living entities, but only about his relationship with other human beings. When he said, "Thou shalt not kill," he also meant in the mental and emotional sense--that you should not insult anyone or hurt him, treat him badly, and so on.

Srila Prabhupada: We are not concerned with this or that testament but only with the words used in the commandments. If you want to interpret these words, that is something else. We understand the direct meaning. "Thou shalt not kill" means, "The Christians should not kill." You may put forth interpretations in order to continue the present way of action, but we understand very clearly that there is no need for interpretation. Interpretation is necessary if things are not clear. But here the meaning is clear. "Thou shalt not kill" is a clear instruction. Why should we interpret it?

Father Emmanuel: Isn't the eating of plants also killing?

Srila Prabhupada: The Vaisnava philosophy teaches that we should not even kill plants unnecessarily. In the Bhagavad-gita (9.26) Krsna says:

patram puspam phalam toyam
yo me bhaktya prayacchati
tad aham bhakty-upahrtam
asnami prayatatmanah

"If someone offers Me with love and devotion a leaf, a flower, a fruit, or a little water, I will accept it." We offer Krsna only the kind of food He demands, and then we eat the remnants. If offering vegetarian food to Krsna were sinful, then it would be Krsna's sin, not ours. But God is apapa-viddha--sinful reactions are not applicable to Him. He is like the sun, which is so powerful that it can purify even urine--something impossible for us to do. Krsna is also like a king, who may order a murderer to be hanged but who himself is beyond punishment because he is very powerful. Eating food first offered to the Lord is also something like a soldier's killing during wartime. In a war, when the commander orders a man to attack, the obedient soldier who kills the enemy will get a medal. But if the same soldier kills someone on his own, he will be punished. Similarly, when we eat only prasada [the

remnants of food offered to Krsna], we do not commit any sin. This is confirmed in the Bhagavad-gita (3.13):

yajna-sistasinah santo
mucyante sarva-kilbisaih
bhunjate te tv agham papa
ye pacanty atma-karanat

"The devotees of the Lord are released from all kinds of sins because they eat food that is first offered for sacrifice. Others, who prepare food for personal sense enjoyment, verily eat only sin."

Father Emmanuel: Krsna cannot give permission to eat animals?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes--in the animal kingdom. But the civilized human being, the religious human being, is not meant to kill and eat animals. If you stop killing animals and chant the holy name Christ, everything will be perfect. I have not come to teach you, but only to request you to please chant the name of God. The Bible also demands this of you. So let's kindly cooperate and chant, and if you have a prejudice against chanting the name Krsna, then chant "Christos" or "Krsta"--there is no difference. Sri Caitanya said: namnam akari bahudha nija-sarva-saktih. "God has millions and millions of names, and because there is no difference between God's name and Himself, each one of these names has the same potency as God." Therefore, even if you accept designations like "Hindu," "Christian," or "Muhammadan," if you simply chant the name of God found in your own scriptures, you will attain the spiritual platform. Human life is meant for self-realization--to learn how to love God. That is the actual beauty of man. Whether you discharge this duty as a Hindu, a Christian, or a Muhammadan, it doesn't matter--but discharge it!

Father Emmanuel: I agree.

Srila Prabhupada [pointing to a string of 108 meditation beads]: We always have these beads, just as you have your rosary. You are chanting, but why don't the other Christians also chant? Why should they miss this opportunity as human beings? Cats and dogs cannot chant, but we can, because we have a human tongue. If we chant the holy names of God, we cannot lose anything; on the contrary, we gain greatly. My disciples practice chanting Hare Krsna constantly. They could also go to the cinema or do so many other things, but they have given everything up. They eat neither fish nor meat nor eggs, they don't take intoxicants, they don't drink, they don't smoke, they don't partake in gambling, they don't speculate, and they don't maintain illicit sexual connections. But they do chant the holy name of God. If you would like to cooperate with us, then go to the churches and chant, "Christ," "Krsta," or "Krsna." What could be the objection?

Father Emmanuel: There is none. For my part, I would be glad to join you.

Srila Prabhupada: No, we are speaking with you as a representative of the Christian church. Instead of keeping the churches closed, why not give them to us? We would chant the holy name of God there twenty-four hours a day. In many places we have bought churches that were practically closed because no one was going there. In London I saw hundreds of churches that were closed or used for mundane purposes. We bought one such church in Los Angeles. It was sold because no one came there, but if you visit this same church today, you will see thousands

of people. Any intelligent person can understand what God is in five minutes; it doesn't require five hours.

Father Emmanuel: I understand.

Srila Prabhupada: But the people do not. Their disease is that they don't want to understand.

Visitor: I think understanding God is not a question of intelligence, but a question of humility.

Srila Prabhupada: Humility means intelligence. The humble and meek own the kingdom of God. This is stated in the Bible, is it not? But the philosophy of the rascals is that everyone is God, and today this idea has become popular. Therefore no one is humble and meek. If everyone thinks that he is God, why should he be humble and meek? Therefore I teach my disciples how to become humble and meek. They always offer their respectful obeisances in the temple and to the spiritual master, and in this way they make advancement. The qualities of humbleness and meekness lead very quickly to spiritual realization. In the Vedic scriptures it is said, "To those who have firm faith in God and the spiritual master, who is His representative, the meaning of the Vedic scriptures is revealed."

Father Emmanuel: But shouldn't this humility be offered to everyone else, also?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, but there are two kinds of respect: special and ordinary. Sri Krsna Caitanya taught that we shouldn't expect honor for ourselves, but should always respect everyone else, even if he is disrespectful to us. But special respect should be given to God and His pure devotee.

Father Emmanuel: Yes, I agree.

Srila Prabhupada: I think the Christian priests should cooperate with the Krsna consciousness movement. They should chant the name Christ or Christos and should stop condoning the slaughter of animals. This program follows the teachings of the Bible; it is not my philosophy. Please act accordingly and you will see how the world situation will change.

Father Emmanuel: I thank you very much.

Srila Prabhupada: Hare Krsna.

Jesus Christ Was a Guru

The spiritual leader of the Hare Krsna movement here recognizes Lord Jesus Christ as "the son of God, the representative of God... our guru... our spiritual master," yet he has some sharp words for those who currently claim to be Christ's followers...

The Srimad-Bhagavatam states that any bona fide preacher of God consciousness must have the qualities of titiksa (tolerance) and karuna (compassion). In the character of Lord Jesus Christ we find both these qualities. He was so tolerant that even while he was being crucified, he didn't condemn anyone. And he was so compassionate that he prayed to God to forgive the very persons who were trying to kill him. (Of course, they could not actually kill him. But they were thinking that he could be killed, so they were committing a great offense.) As Christ was being crucified he prayed, "Father, forgive them. They know not what they are doing."

A preacher of God consciousness is a friend to all living beings. Lord Jesus Christ exemplified this by teaching, "Thou shalt not kill." But the Christians like to misinterpret this instruction. They think the animals have no soul, and therefore they think they can freely kill

billions of innocent animals in the slaughterhouses. So although there are many persons who profess to be Christians, it would be very difficult to find one who strictly follows the instructions of Lord Jesus Christ.

A Vaisnava is unhappy to see the suffering of others. Therefore, Lord Jesus Christ agreed to be crucified--to free others from their suffering. But his followers are so unfaithful that they have decided, "Let Christ suffer for us, and we'll go on committing sin." They love Christ so much that they think, "My dear Christ, we are very weak. We cannot give up our sinful activities. So you please suffer for us."

Jesus Christ taught, "Thou shalt not kill." But his followers have now decided, "Let us kill anyway," and they open big, modern, scientific slaughterhouses. "If there is any sin, Christ will suffer for us." This is a most abominable conclusion.

Christ can take the sufferings for the previous sins of his devotees. But first they have to be sane: "Why should I put Jesus Christ into suffering for my sins? Let me stop my sinful activities."

Suppose a man--the favorite son of his father--commits a murder. And suppose he thinks, "If there is any punishment coming, my father can suffer for me." Will the law allow it? When the murderer is arrested and says, "No, no. You can release me and arrest my father; I am his pet son," will the police officials comply with that fool's request? He committed the murder, but he thinks his father should suffer the punishment! Is that a sane proposal? "No. You have committed the murder; you must be hanged." Similarly, when you commit sinful activities, you must suffer--not Jesus Christ. This is God's law.

Jesus Christ was such a great personality--the son of God, the representative of God. He had no fault. Still, he was crucified. He wanted to deliver God consciousness, but in return they crucified him--they were so thankless. They could not appreciate his preaching. But we appreciate him and give him all honor as the representative of God.

Of course, the message that Christ preached was just according to his particular time, place, and country, and just suited for a particular group of people. But certainly he is the representative of God. Therefore we adore Lord Jesus Christ and offer our obeisances to him.

Once, in Melbourne, a group of Christian ministers came to visit me. They asked, "What is your idea of Jesus Christ?" I told them, "He is our guru. He is preaching God consciousness, so he is our spiritual master." The ministers very much appreciated that.

Actually, anyone who is preaching God's glories must be accepted as a guru. Jesus Christ is one such great personality. We should not think of him as an ordinary human being. The scriptures say that anyone who considers the spiritual master to be an ordinary man has a hellish mentality. If Jesus Christ were an ordinary man, then he could not have delivered God consciousness.

"Thou Shalt Not Kill" or "Thou Shalt Not Murder"?

At a monastic retreat near Paris, in July of 1973, Srila Prabhupada talked with Cardinal Jean Danielou: "... the Bible does not simply say, 'Do not kill the human being.' It says broadly, 'Thou shalt not kill.'... why do you interpret this to suit your own convenience?" Srila Prabhupada: Jesus Christ said, "Thou shalt not kill." So why is it that the Christian people are engaged in animal killing?

Cardinal Danielou: Certainly in Christianity it is forbidden to kill, but we believe that there is a difference between the life of a human being and the life of the beasts. The life of a human being is sacred because man is made in the image of God; therefore, to kill a human being is forbidden.

Srila Prabhupada: But the Bible does not simply say, "Do not kill the human being." It says broadly, "Thou shalt not kill."

Cardinal Danielou: We believe that only human life is sacred.

Srila Prabhupada: That is your interpretation. The commandment is "Thou shalt not kill."

Cardinal Danielou: It is necessary for man to kill animals in order to have food to eat.

Srila Prabhupada: No. Man can eat grains, vegetables, fruits, and milk.

Cardinal Danielou: No flesh?

Srila Prabhupada: No. Human beings are meant to eat vegetarian food. The tiger does not come to eat your fruits. His prescribed food is animal flesh. But man's food is vegetables, fruits, grains, and milk products. So how can you say that animal killing is not a sin?

Cardinal Danielou: We believe it is a question of motivation. If the killing of an animal is for giving food to the hungry, then it is justified.

Srila Prabhupada: But consider the cow: we drink her milk; therefore, she is our mother. Do you agree?

Cardinal Danielou: Yes, surely.

Srila Prabhupada: So if the cow is your mother, how can you support killing her? You take the milk from her, and when she's old and cannot give you milk, you cut her throat. Is that a very humane proposal? In India those who are meat-eaters are advised to kill some lower animals like goats, pigs, or even buffalo. But cow killing is the greatest sin. In preaching Krsna consciousness we ask people not to eat any kind of meat, and my disciples strictly follow this principle. But if, under certain circumstances, others are obliged to eat meat, then they should eat the flesh of some lower animal. Don't kill cows. It is the greatest sin. And as long as a man is sinful, he cannot understand God. The human being's main business is to understand God and to love Him. But if you remain sinful, you will never be able to understand God--what to speak of loving Him.

Cardinal Danielou: I think that perhaps this is not an essential point. The important thing is to love God. The practical commandments can vary from one religion to the next.

Srila Prabhupada: So, in the Bible God's practical commandment is that you cannot kill; therefore killing cows is a sin for you.

Cardinal Danielou: God says to the Indians that killing is not good, and he says to the Jews that...

Srila Prabhupada: No, no. Jesus Christ taught, "Thou shalt not kill." Why do you interpret this to suit your own convenience?

Cardinal Danielou: But Jesus allowed the sacrifice of the Paschal Lamb.

Srila Prabhupada: But he never maintained a slaughterhouse.

Cardinal Danielou: [Laughs.] No, but he did eat meat.

Srila Prabhupada: When there is no other food, someone may eat meat in order to keep from starving. That is another thing. But it is most sinful to regularly maintain slaughterhouses just to satisfy your tongue. Actually, you will not even have a human society until this cruel practice of maintaining slaughterhouses is stopped. And although

animal killing may sometimes be necessary for survival, at least the mother animal, the cow, should not be killed. That is simply human decency. In the Krsna consciousness movement our practice is that we don't allow the killing of any animals. Krsna says, *patram puspam phalam toyam yo me bhaktya-prayacchati*: "Vegetables, fruits, milk, and grains should be offered to Me in devotion." (Bhagavad-gita 9.26) We take only the remnants of Krsna's food (*prasadam*). The trees offer us many varieties of fruits, but the trees are not killed. Of course, one living entity is food for another living entity, but that does not mean you can kill your mother for food. Cows are innocent; they give us milk. You take their milk--and then kill them in the slaughterhouse. This is sinful.

Student: Srila Prabhupada, Christianity's sanction of meat-eating is based on the view that lower species of life do not have a soul like the human being's.

Srila Prabhupada: That is foolishness. First of all, we have to understand the evidence of the soul's presence within the body. Then we can see whether the human being has a soul and the cow does not. What are the different characteristics of the cow and the man? If we find a difference in characteristics, then we can say that in the animal there is no soul. But if we see that the animal and the human being have the same characteristics, then how can you say that the animal has no soul? The general symptoms are that the animal eats, you eat; the animal sleeps, you sleep; the animal mates, you mate; the animal defends, and you defend. Where is the difference?

Cardinal Danielou: We admit that in the animal there may be the same type of biological existence as in men, but there is no soul. We believe that the soul is a human soul.

Srila Prabhupada: Our Bhagavad-gita says *sarva-yonisu*, "In all species of life the soul exists." The body is like a suit of clothes. You have black clothes; I am dressed in saffron clothes. But within the dress you are a human being, and I am also a human being. Similarly, the bodies of the different species are just like different types of dress. There are soul, a part and parcel of God. Suppose a man has two sons, not equally meritorious. One may be a Supreme Court judge and the other may be a common laborer, but the father claims both as his sons. He does not make the distinction that the son who is a judge is very important and the worker-son is not important. And if the judge-son says, "My dear father, your other son is useless; let me cut him up and eat him," will the father allow this?

Cardinal Danielou: Certainly not, but the idea that all life is part of the life of God is difficult for us to admit. There is a great difference between human life and animal life.

Srila Prabhupada: That difference is due to the development of consciousness. In the human body there is developed consciousness. Even a tree has a soul, but a tree's consciousness is not very developed. If you cut a tree it does not resist. Actually, it does resist, but only to a very small degree. There is a scientist named Jagadish Chandra Bose who has made a machine which shows that trees and plants are able to feel pain when they are cut. And we can see directly that when someone comes to kill an animal, it resists, it cries, it makes a horrible sound. So it is a matter of the development of consciousness. But the soul is there within all living beings.

Cardinal Danielou: But metaphysically, the life of man is sacred. Human beings think on a higher platform than the animals do.

Srila Prabhupada: What is that higher platform? The animal eats to maintain his body, and you also eat in order to maintain your body. The cow eats grass in the field, and the human being eats meat from a huge slaughterhouse full of modern machines. But just because you have big machines and a ghastly scene, while the animal simply eats grass, this does not mean that you are so advanced that only within your body is there a soul and that there is not a soul within the body of the animal. That is illogical. We can see that the basic characteristics are the same in the animal and the human being.

Cardinal Danielou: But only in human beings do we find a metaphysical search for the meaning of life.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. So metaphysically search out why you believe that there is no soul within the animal--that is metaphysics. If you are thinking metaphysically, that's all right. But if you are thinking like an animal, then what is the use of your metaphysical study? Metaphysical means "above the physical" or, in other words, "spiritual." In the Bhagavad-gita Krsna says, sarva-yonisu kaunteya: "In every living being there is a spirit soul." That is metaphysical understanding. Now either you accept Krsna's teachings as metaphysical, or you'll have to take a third-class fool's opinion as metaphysical. Which do you accept?

Cardinal Danielou: But why does God create some animals who eat other animals? There is a fault in the creation, it seems.

Srila Prabhupada: It is not a fault. God is very kind. If you want to eat animals, then He'll give you full facility. God will give you the body of a tiger in your next life so that you can eat flesh very freely. "Why are you maintaining slaughterhouses? I'll give you fangs and claws. Now eat." So the meat-eaters are awaiting such punishment. The animal-eaters become tigers, wolves, cats, and dogs in their next life--to get more facility.

Chapter Five

Practicing Yoga in the Modern Age

Superconsciousness

The goals of modern-day Western yoga enthusiasts are dwarfed by the achievements of India's ancient yogis, who, according to historical accounts, could become smaller than atoms and lighter than air and who could travel, unaided, anywhere in the universe. Yet even these superachievements, says Srila Prabhupada, are "only a step forward." How the true pinnacle of human consciousness, superconsciousness, is obtainable--here and now--is disclosed by Srila Prabhupada in the following talk given in 1967.

Krsna consciousness is the highest yoga performance by trained devotional yogis. The yoga system, as is stated in the standard yoga practice formula given by Lord Krsna in the Bhagavad-gita, and as recommended in the Patanjali yoga discipline, is different from the nowadays practiced hatha-yoga as is generally understood in the Western countries.

Real yoga practice means to control the senses and, after such control is established, to concentrate the mind on the Narayana form of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Sri Krsna. Lord Krsna is the original Absolute Personality, the Godhead, and all the other Visnu forms--with four hands, decorated with conch, lotus, club, and wheel--are plenary expansions of Krsna.

In the Bhagavad-gita it is recommended that we should meditate upon the form of the Lord. For practicing concentration of the mind, one has to sit down in a secluded place sanctified by a sacred atmosphere, and the yogi should observe the rules and regulations of brahmacharya--to live a life of strict self-restraint and celibacy. No one can practice yoga in a congested city, living a life of extravagance, including unrestricted sex indulgence and adultery of the tongue.

We have already stated that yoga practice means controlling the senses, and the beginning of controlling the senses is to control the tongue. You cannot allow the tongue to take all kinds of forbidden food and drink, and at the same time improve in the practice of yoga. It is a very regrettable fact that many stray, unauthorized so-called yogis now come to the West and exploit the leaning of the people toward yoga. Such unauthorized yogis even dare to say publicly that one can indulge in drinking and at the same time practice meditation.

Five thousand years ago, in the Bhagavad-gita dialogue, Lord Krsna recommended the yoga practice to His disciple Arjuna, but Arjuna flatly expressed his inability to follow the stringent rules and regulations of yoga. One should be practical in every field of activity. One should not waste his valuable time simply in practicing some gymnastic feats in the name of yoga. Real yoga is to search out the four-handed Supersoul within one's heart and to see Him perpetually in meditation. Such continued meditation is called samadhi. If, however, one wants to meditate upon something void or impersonal, it will require a very long time to achieve anything by yoga practice. We cannot concentrate our mind on something void or impersonal. Real yoga practice is to fix the mind on the person of the four-handed Narayana who dwells in everyone's heart.

Sometimes it is said that by meditation one will understand that God is seated within one's heart always, even when one does not know it. God is seated within the heart of everyone. Not only is He seated in the heart of the human being, but He is also within the hearts of the cats and dogs. The Bhagavad-gita certifies this with the declaration that Isvara, the supreme controller of the world, is seated in the heart of everyone. He is present not only in everyone's heart, but also within the atoms. No place is vacant; no place is without the presence of the Lord.

The feature of the Lord by which He is present everywhere is called the Paramatma. Atma means the individual soul, and Paramatma means the individual Supersoul. Both atma and Paramatma are individual persons. The difference between them, however, is that the atma, or soul, is present only in one particular place, whereas the Paramatma is present everywhere.

In this connection, the example of the sun is very nice. An individual person may be situated in one place, but the sun, even though a specific individual entity, is present over the head of every individual person. In the Bhagavad-gita this is very nicely explained. Therefore, even though the qualities of all entities, including the

Lord, are equal, the Supersoul is different from the individual soul by quantity of expansion. The Lord, or Supersoul, can expand Himself into millions of different forms, while the individual soul cannot do so.

The Supersoul, being seated in everyone's heart, can witness everyone's activities, past, present, and future. In the Upanisads the Supersoul is said to be sitting with the individual soul as a friend and witness. As a friend He is always anxious to get the individual soul back home, back to Godhead. As a witness, He is the endower of all benedictions that result from the individual's actions. The Supersoul gives the individual soul all facility for achieving whatever he may desire. But He instructs His friend, so that he may ultimately give up all other engagements and simply surrender unto God for perpetual bliss and eternal life, full of knowledge. This is the last instruction of the Bhagavad-gita, the most authorized and widely read book on all forms of yoga.

The last word of the Bhagavad-gita, as stated above, is the last word in the matter of perfecting the yoga system. It is further stated in the Bhagavad-gita that a person who is always absorbed in Krsna consciousness is the topmost yogi. What is this Krsna consciousness?

Just as the individual soul is present by his consciousness throughout the whole body, so the Supersoul, or Paramatma, is present throughout the whole creation by His superconsciousness. This superconsciousness cannot be imitated by the individual soul, who has limited awareness: I can understand what is going on within my limited body, but I cannot feel what is going on in another's body. I am present all over my body by my consciousness, but I am not present in any other's body by my consciousness. However, the Supersoul, or Paramatma, being present within everyone, situated everywhere, is conscious of every existence. The theory that the soul and the Supersoul are one is not acceptable, because the individual soul's consciousness cannot act in superconsciousness. This superconsciousness can only be achieved by dovetailing individual consciousness with the superconsciousness; and this dovetailing process is called surrender, or Krsna consciousness.

From the teachings of the Bhagavad-gita we learn very clearly that Arjuna in the beginning did not want to fight with his relatives, but after understanding the Bhagavad-gita, when he dovetailed his consciousness with the superconsciousness of Krsna, his consciousness was Krsna consciousness. A person in full Krsna consciousness acts by the dictation of Krsna, and so Arjuna agreed to fight the Battle of Kuruksetra.

In the beginning of Krsna consciousness this dictation of the Lord is received through the transparent medium of the spiritual master. When one is sufficiently trained and acts with submissive faith and love for Krsna, under the direction of the bona fide spiritual master, the dovetailing process becomes more firm and accurate. At this stage Krsna dictates from within. From without, the devotee is helped by the spiritual master, the bona fide representative of Krsna, and from within the Lord helps the devotee as caitya-guru, being seated within the heart of everyone.

Simply to understand that God is seated in everyone's heart is not perfection. One has to be acquainted with God from within and without and thus act in Krsna consciousness. This is the highest perfectional stage for the human form of life, and the topmost stage in all yoga systems.

For a perfect yogi there are eight kinds of superachievements:

1. One can become smaller than an atom.
2. One can become bigger than a mountain.
3. One can become lighter than the air.
4. One can become heavier than any metal.
5. One can achieve any material effect he likes (create a planet, for example).
6. One can control others like the Lord can.
7. One can freely travel anywhere within (or beyond) the universe.
8. One can choose his own time and place of death, and take rebirth wherever he may desire.

But when one rises to the perfectional stage of receiving dictation from the Lord, one is above the stage of the material achievements above mentioned.

The breathing exercise of the yoga system that is generally practiced is just the beginning of the system. Meditation on the Supersoul is just a step forward. Achievement of wonderful material success is also only a step forward. But to attain direct contact with the Supersoul and to take dictation from Him is the highest perfectional stage.

The breathing exercises and meditational practices of yoga are very difficult in this age. They were difficult even five thousand years ago, or else Arjuna would not have rejected the proposal of Krsna. This age of Kali is called a fallen age. At the present moment, people in general are short-living and very slow in understanding self-realization, or spiritual life. They are mostly unfortunate, and as such, if someone is a little bit interested in self-realization, he is misguided by so many frauds. The only actual way to realization of the perfect stage of yoga is to follow the principles of the Bhagavad-gita as they were practiced by Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu. This is the simplest and highest perfection of yoga practice.

Lord Caitanya practically demonstrated Krsna consciousness yoga simply by chanting the holy names of Krsna, as they are mentioned in the Vedanta, the Srimad-Bhagavatam, and many important Puranas. The largest number of Indians follow this yoga practice, and in the United States and other countries also it is gradually growing in many cities. It is very easy and practical for this age, especially for those who are serious about success in yoga. No other process can be successful in this age.

The meditational process in right earnest was possible in the Golden Age, Satya-yuga, because the people at that time lived for a hundred thousand years on the average.

In the present age, however, if you want success in practical yoga, take to the chanting of Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare, and feel for yourself how you are making progress. One should know for himself how much he is progressing in yoga practice.

In the Bhagavad-gita this practice of Krsna consciousness is described as raja-vidya, the king of all erudition; raja-guhyam, the most confidential system of spiritual realization; pavitram, the purest of all that is pure; susukham, very happily performed; and avyayam, inexhaustible.

Those who have taken to this most sublime bhakti-yoga system, this practice of devotional service in transcendental love of Krsna, can

testify to how they are nicely enjoying its happy and easy execution. Yoga means controlling the senses, and bhakti-yoga means purifying the senses. When the senses are purified, they are also, automatically, controlled. You cannot stop the activities of the senses by artificial means, but if you purify the senses, not only are they kept back from rubbish engagement, but also they become positively engaged in transcendental service to the Lord.

Krsna consciousness is not manufactured by us through mental speculation. It is prescribed in the Bhagavad-gita, which says that when we think in Krsna, chant in Krsna, live in Krsna, eat in Krsna, talk in Krsna, hope in Krsna, and sustain in Krsna, we return to Krsna, without any doubt. And this is the substance of Krsna consciousness.

The Appearance of Lord Caitanya

Only five hundred years ago Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu, a great saint and mystic, prophesied that the Hare Krsna mantra would resound throughout every town and village in the world. At a time when Western man was directing his exploratory spirit toward studying the physical universe and circumnavigating the globe, in India Sri Caitanya was inaugurating and masterminding a revolution directed inward. His movement swept the subcontinent, gained millions of followers, and profoundly influenced the future of religious and philosophical thinking, both in India and the West. In the following talk, presented in November 1969 at London's Conway Hall, Srila Prabhupada describes the divine appearance of Sri Caitanya.

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, the golden avatara, appeared in India nearly five hundred years ago. It is the custom in India that when a child is born, an astrologer is called for. When Lord Krsna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, appeared five thousand years ago, Gargamuni was called by His father, and he said, "This child formerly incarnated in three complexions, such as red and golden, and now He has appeared in blackish color." Krsna's color is described in the scriptures as blackish, just like the color of a cloud. Lord Caitanya is understood to be Krsna appearing in golden complexion.

There is much evidence in Vedic literature that Caitanya Mahaprabhu is an incarnation of Krsna, and this is confirmed by scholars and devotees. In the Srimad-Bhagavatam it is confirmed that the incarnation of Krsna, or God, in this present age, Kali-yuga, will always engage in describing Krsna. He is Krsna, but as a devotee of Krsna He describes Himself. And in this age His bodily complexion will not be blackish. This means that it may be white, it may be red, or it may be yellow, because these four colors--white, red, yellow, and black--are the colors assumed by the incarnations for the different ages. Therefore, since the red, white, and blackish colors were already taken by former incarnations, the remaining color, golden, is assumed by Caitanya Mahaprabhu. His complexion is not blackish, but He is Krsna.

Another feature of this avatara is that He is always accompanied by His associates. In the picture of Caitanya Mahaprabhu one will find that He is always followed by many devotees chanting. Whenever God incarnates He has two missions, as stated in the Bhagavad-gita. There Krsna says, "Whenever I appear, My mission is to deliver the pious devotees and to annihilate the demons." When Krsna appeared, He had to kill many demons. If we see a picture of Visnu we will notice that He has a conchshell, lotus flower, club, and disc. These last two items are meant for killing demons. Within this world there are two classes of men--the demons and

the devotees. The devotees are called demigods; they are almost like God because they have godly qualities. Those who are devotees are called godly persons, and those who are nondevotees, atheists, are called demons. So Krsna, or God, comes with two missions: to give protection to the devotees and to destroy the demons. In this age Caitanya Mahaprabhu's mission is also like that: to deliver the devotees and to annihilate the nondevotees, the demons. But in this age He has a different weapon. That weapon is not a club or disc or lethal weapon-- His weapon is the sankirtana movement. He killed the demoniac mentality of the people by introducing the sankirtana movement. That is the specific significance of Lord Caitanya. In this age people are already killing themselves. They have discovered atomic weapons with which to kill themselves, so there is no need for God to kill them. But He appeared to kill their demonic mentality. That is possible by this Krsna consciousness movement.

Therefore, in the Srimad-Bhagavatam it is said that this is the incarnation of God in this age. And who worships Him? The process is very simple. Just keep a picture of Lord Caitanya with His associates. Lord Caitanya is in the middle, accompanied by His principal associates--Nityananda, Advaita, Gadadhara, and Srivasa. One simply has to keep this picture. One can keep it anywhere. It is not that one has to come to us to see this picture. Anyone can have this picture in his home, chant this Hare Krsna mantra, and thus worship Lord Caitanya. That is the simple method. But who will capture this simple method? Those who have good brains. Without much bother, if one simply keeps a picture of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu at home and chants Hare Krsna, then one will realize God. Anyone can adopt this simple method. There is no expenditure, there is no tax, nor is there any need to build a very big church or temple. Anyone, anywhere, can sit down on the road or beneath a tree and chant the Hare Krsna mantra and worship God. Therefore it is a great opportunity. For example, in business or political life one sometimes finds a great opportunity. Those who are intelligent politicians take a good opportunity and make a success of it the first time it comes. Similarly, in this age, those who have sufficient intelligence take to this sankirtana movement, and they advance very quickly.

Lord Caitanya is called "the golden avatara." Avatara means "descending, coming down." Just as one may come down from the fifth story or the one-hundredth story of a building, an avatara comes down from the spiritual planets in the spiritual sky. The sky we see with our naked eyes or with a telescope is only the material sky. But beyond this there is another sky, which is not possible to see with our eyes or instruments. That information is in the Bhagavad-gita; it is not imagination. Krsna says that beyond the material sky is another sky, the spiritual sky.

We have to take Krsna's word as it is. For example, we teach small children that beyond England there are other places, called Germany, India, etc., and the child has to learn about these places from the version of the teacher because they are beyond his sphere. Similarly, beyond this material sky there is another sky. One cannot experiment to find it, any more than a small child can experiment to find Germany or India. That is not possible. If we want to get knowledge, then we have to accept authority. Similarly, if we want to know what is beyond the material world then we have to accept the Vedic authority, otherwise

there is no possibility of knowing. It is beyond material knowledge. One cannot go to the far planets in this universe, what to speak of going beyond this universe. The estimation is that in order to go to the highest planet of this universe with modern machinery one would have to travel for forty thousand light-years. So we cannot even travel within this material sky. Our lifetime and means are so limited that we cannot have proper knowledge of even this material world.

In the Bhagavad-gita, when Arjuna asked Krsna, "Will you kindly explain the extent to which Your energies are working?" the Supreme Lord gave him so many instances, and at the end He finally said, "My dear Arjuna, what shall I explain about My energies? It is not actually possible for you to understand. But you can just imagine the expansion of My energies: this material world, which consists of millions of universes, is a display of only one fourth of My creation." We cannot estimate the position of even one universe, and there are millions of universes. Then beyond that is the spiritual sky, and there are millions of spiritual planets. All this information is available from the Vedic literature. If one accepts Vedic literature, then he can get this knowledge. If one doesn't accept it, there is no other means. That is our choice. Therefore, according to Vedic civilization, whenever an acarya speaks he immediately gives references from the Vedic literature. Then others will accept it: "Yes, it is correct." In a law court the lawyer gives references from past judgments of the court, and if his case is tight, the judge accepts. Similarly, if one can give evidence from the Vedas, then it is understood that his position is factual.

The avatara for this age, Lord Caitanya, is described in Vedic literature. We cannot accept anyone as an avatara unless he has the symptoms described in the scriptures. We do not whimsically accept Lord Caitanya as an avatara on the basis of votes. Nowadays it has become a fashion that any man can come and say that he is God or an incarnation of God, and some fools and rascals will accept it: "Oh, he is God." We do not accept an avatara like that. We take evidence from the Vedas. An avatara must conform to descriptions in the Vedas. Then we accept him; otherwise no. For each avatara there is a description in the Vedas: He will appear at such and such a place, in such and such a form, and He will act like this. That is the nature of Vedic evidence.

In the Srimad-Bhagavatam there is a list of the avatars, and there is mention of Lord Buddha's name. This Srimad-Bhagavatam was written five thousand years ago, and it mentions different names for future times. It says that in the future the Lord would appear as Lord Buddha, his mother's name would be Anjana, and he would appear in Gaya. So Buddha appeared twenty-six hundred years ago, and the Srimad-Bhagavatam, which was written five thousand years ago, mentioned that in the future he would appear. Similarly, there is mention of Lord Caitanya, and similarly the last avatara of this Kali-yuga is also mentioned in the Bhagavatam. It is mentioned that the last incarnation in this age is Kalki. He will appear as the son of a brahmana whose name is Visnu-yasa, in a place called Sambhala. There is a place in India with that name, so perhaps it is there that the Lord will appear.

So an avatara must conform to the descriptions in the Upanisads, Srimad-Bhagavatam, Mahabharata, and other Vedic literatures. And on the authority of Vedic literature and the commentary of great, stalwart gosvamis like Jiva Gosvami, who was the greatest scholar and philosopher in the world, we can accept Lord Caitanya as an incarnation of Krsna.

Why did Lord Caitanya appear? In the Bhagavad-gita Lord Krsna says, "Give up all other engagements and simply engage in My service. I will give you protection from all results of sinful actions." In this material world, in conditional life, we are simply creating sinful reactions. That's all. And because of sinful reactions, we have received this body. If our sinful reactions stopped we would not have to take a material body; we should get a spiritual body.

What is a spiritual body? A spiritual body is a body which is free from death, birth, disease, and old age. It is an eternal body, full of knowledge and bliss. Different bodies are created by different desires. As long as we have desires for different kinds of enjoyment, we have to accept different kinds of material bodies. Krsna, God, is so kind that He awards whatever we want. If we want a tiger's body, with tigerlike strength and teeth with which to capture animals and suck fresh blood, then Krsna will give us the opportunity. And if we want the body of a saintly person, a devotee engaged only in the service of the Lord, then He will give us that body. This is stated in the Bhagavad-gita.

If a person engaged in yoga, the process of self-realization, somehow or other fails to complete the process, he is given another chance; he is given birth in a family of a pure brahmana or a rich man. If one is fortunate enough to take birth in such a family, he gets all facilities to understand the importance of self-realization. From the very beginning of life our Krsna conscious children are getting the opportunity to learn how to chant and dance, so when they are grown up they will not change, but instead will automatically make progress. They are very fortunate. Regardless of whether he is born in America or Europe, a child will advance if his father and mother are devotees. He gets this opportunity. If a child takes birth in a family of devotees, this means that in his last life he had already taken to the yoga process, but somehow or other he could not finish it. Therefore the child is given another opportunity to make progress under the care of a good father and mother so that he will again advance. In this way, as soon as one completes his development of God consciousness, then he no longer has to take birth in this material world, but returns to the spiritual world.

Krsna says in the Bhagavad-gita: "My dear Arjuna, if one understands My appearance, disappearance, and activities, simply because of this understanding he is given the opportunity to take birth in the spiritual world after giving up this body." One has to give up this body--today, tomorrow, or maybe the day after that. One has to. But a person who has understood Krsna will not have to take another material body. He goes directly to the spiritual world and takes birth in one of the spiritual planets. So Krsna says that as soon as one gets this body--it doesn't matter if it is from India or the moon or the sun or Brahmaloaka or anywhere within this material world--one should know that it is due to his sinful activities. There are degrees of sinful activities, so according to the degree of sinfulness, one takes a material body. Therefore our real problem is not how to eat, sleep, mate, and defend--our real problem is how to get a body that is not material but spiritual. That is the ultimate solution to all problems. So Krsna guarantees that if one surrenders unto Him, if one becomes fully Krsna conscious, then He will give one protection from all reactions to sinful life.

This assurance was given by Krsna in the Bhagavad-gita, but there were many fools who could not understand Krsna. In the Bhagavad-gita they are described as mudhas. Mudha means "rascal," and Krsna says in the Gita, "They do not know what I actually am." So many people misunderstood Krsna. Although Krsna gave us this message of the Bhagavad-gita so that we could understand Him, many people missed the opportunity. Therefore Krsna, out of His compassion, came again, as a devotee, and showed us how to surrender unto Krsna. Krsna Himself came to teach us how to surrender. His last instruction in the Bhagavad-gita is to surrender, but people--mudhas, rascals--said, "Why should I surrender?" Therefore, although Caitanya Mahaprabhu is Krsna Himself, this time He teaches us practically how to execute the mission of the Bhagavad-gita. That's all. Caitanya Mahaprabhu is teaching nothing extraordinary, nothing beyond the process of surrendering to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, which was already taught in the Bhagavad-gita. There is no other teaching, but the same teaching is presented in different ways so that different kinds of people may take it and take the opportunity to approach God.

Caitanya Mahaprabhu gives us the opportunity to reach God directly. When Rupa Gosvami, the principal disciple of Lord Caitanya, first saw Caitanya Mahaprabhu, he was a minister in the government of Bengal but wanted to join Caitanya Mahaprabhu's movement. So he gave up his position as a minister, and after joining, when he surrendered, he offered a nice prayer to Lord Caitanya. This prayer says:

namo maha-vadanyaya
krsna-prema-pradaya te
krsnaya krsna-caitanya-
namne gaura-tvise namah

"My dear Lord, You are the most munificent of all the incarnations." Why? Krsna-prema-pradaya te: "You are directly giving love of God. You have no other purpose. Your process is so nice that one can immediately learn to love God. Therefore You are the most munificent of all incarnations. And it is not possible for any personality other than Krsna Himself to deliver this benediction; therefore I say that You are Krsna." Krsnaya krsna-caitanya-namne: "You are Krsna, but You have assumed the name Krsna Caitanya. I surrender unto You."

So this is the process. Caitanya Mahaprabhu is Krsna Himself, and He is teaching how to develop love of God by a very simple method. He says simply to chant Hare Krsna.

harer nama harer nama
harer namaiva kevalam
kalau nasty eva nasty eva
nasty eva gatir anyatha

"In this age, simply go on chanting the Hare Krsna mantra. There is no other alternative." People are embarrassed by so many methods of realization. They cannot take to the actual ritualistic processes of meditation or yoga; it is not possible. Therefore Lord Caitanya says that if one takes up this process of chanting, then immediately he can reach the platform of realization.

The chanting process offered by Lord Caitanya for achieving love of God is called sankirtana. Sankirtana is a Sanskrit word. Sam means samyak--"complete." And kirtana means "glorifying" or "describing." So complete description means complete glorification of the Supreme, or the Supreme Complete Whole. It is not that one can describe anything or glorify anything and that will be kirtana. From the grammatical point of view that may be kirtana, but according to the Vedic system, kirtana means describing the supreme authority, the Absolute Truth, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. That is called kirtana.

This devotional service begins with the method of sravana. Sravana means "hearing," and kirtana means "describing." One should describe, and another should hear. Or the same man himself can both describe and hear. He does not need anyone else's help. When we chant Hare Krsna, we chant and hear. This is complete. This is a complete method. But what is that chanting and hearing? One must chant and hear about Visnu, Krsna. Not of anything else. Sravanam kirtanam visnoh: one can understand Visnu, the all-pervading Absolute Truth, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, by the method of hearing.

We have to hear; if one simply hears, that is the beginning. One does not need any education or development of material knowledge. Just like a child: as soon as he hears, immediately he can respond and dance. So by nature God has given us these nice instruments--ears--so that we can hear. But we must hear from the right source. That is stated in the Srimad-Bhagavatam. One must hear from those who are devoted to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. They are called satam. If one hears from the right source, from a realized soul, then it will act. And these words of God, or Krsna, are very relishable. If one is intelligent enough, he will listen to what is spoken by the realized soul. Then very soon he will be released from material entanglements.

This human life is meant for advancing on the path of liberation. That is called apavarga, freedom from entanglement. We are all entangled. Our acceptance of this material body means that we are already entangled. But we should not progress in the process of entanglement. That process is called karma. As long as the mind is absorbed in karma, we will have to accept a material body. At the time of death, our mind may be thinking, "Oh, I could not complete this work. Oh, I am dying! I have to do this. I have to do that." This means that Krsna will give us another chance to do it, and so we will have to accept another body. He will give us the chance: "All right. You could not do it. Now do it. Take this body." Therefore the Srimad-Bhagavatam says, "These rascals have become madly intoxicated; because of intoxication they are doing something they should not have done." What are they doing? Maharaja Dhrtarastra is a very good example. Maharaja Dhrtarastra was cunningly planning to kill the Pandavas in order to favor his own sons, so Krsna sent His uncle, Akrura, to advise him not to do that. Dhrtarastra understood Akrura's instructions, but he said, "My dear Akrura, what you are saying is quite right, but it does not stand in my heart, so I cannot change my policy. I have to follow this policy and let whatever happens take place."

So when men want to satisfy their senses, they become mad, and in this madness they'll do anything and everything. For example, there have been many instances in material life where someone has become mad after something and has committed a criminal act such as murder. The person could not check himself. Similarly, we are accustomed to sense

gratification. We are mad, and therefore our minds are fully absorbed in karma. This is very unfortunate, because our body, although temporary, is the reservoir of all misfortunes and miseries; it is always giving us trouble. These matters are to be studied. We should not be mad. Human life is not meant for that. The defect of the present civilization is that people are mad after sense gratification. That is all. They do not know the real value of life, and therefore they are neglecting the most valuable form of life, this human form.

When this body is finished there is no guarantee what kind of body one will take next. Suppose in my next life I by chance get the body of a tree. For thousands of years I will have to stand up. But people are not very serious. They even say, "What is that? Even if I have to stand up, I shall forget." The lower species of life are situated in forgetfulness. If a tree were not forgetful it would be impossible for it to live. Suppose we were told, "You stand up for three days here!" Because we are not forgetful, we would become mad. So, by nature's law, all these lower species of life are forgetful. Their consciousness is not developed. A tree has life, but even if someone cuts it, because its consciousness is not developed, it does not respond. So we should be very careful to utilize this human form of life properly. The Krsna consciousness movement is meant for achieving perfection in life. It is not a bluff or exploitation, but unfortunately people are accustomed to being bluffed. There is a verse by an Indian poet: "If one speaks nice things, people will quarrel with him: 'Oh, what nonsense you are speaking.' But if he bluffs them and cheats them, they will be very glad." So if a bluffer says, "Just do this, give me my fee, and within six months you will become God," then they will agree: "Yes, take this fee, and I shall become God within six months." No. These cheating processes will not solve our problem. If one actually wants to solve the problems of life in this age, then he has to take to this process of kirtana. That is the recommended process.

harer nama harer nama
harer namaiva kevalam
kalau nasty eva nasty eva
nasty eva gatir anyatha

In this age, Kali-yuga, one cannot execute any process of self-realization or perfection of life other than kirtana. Kirtana is essential in this age.

In all Vedic literatures it is confirmed that one must meditate on the Supreme Absolute Truth, Visnu, not on anything else. But there are different processes of meditation recommended for different ages. The process of mystic yogic meditation was possible in Satya-yuga, when men lived for many thousands of years. Now people will not believe this, but in a previous age there were people who lived for one hundred thousand years. That age was called Satya-yuga, and the meditation of mystic yoga was possible at that time. In that age the great yogi Valmiki Muni meditated for sixty thousand years. So that is a long-term process, which is not possible to execute in this age. If one wishes to conduct a farce, that is another matter. But if one actually wants to practice such meditation, it takes an extremely long time to perfect. In the next age, Treta-yuga, the process of realization was to perform the various ritualistic sacrifices recommended in the Vedas. In the next age,

Dvapara-yuga, the process was temple worship. In this present age the same result can be achieved by the process of hari-kirtana, glorification of Hari, Krsna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

No other kirtana is recommended. This hari-kirtana was started five hundred years ago in Bengal by Lord Caitanya. In Bengal there is competition between the Vaisnavas and the saktas. The saktas have introduced a certain type of kirtana called kali-kirtana. But in the Vedic scriptures there is no recommendation of kali-kirtana. Kirtana means hari-kirtana. One cannot say, "Oh, you are Vaisnava. You can perform hari-kirtana. I shall perform siva-kirtana or devi-kirtana or ganesa-kirtana." No. The Vedic scriptures do not authorize any kirtana other than hari-kirtana. Kirtana means hari-kirtana, the glorification of Krsna.

So this process of hari-kirtana is very simple: Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. Actually there are only three words: Hare, Krsna, and Rama. But they are very nicely arranged for chanting so that everyone can take the mantra and chant Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna, Hare Hare. Since we have started this movement in the Western countries, Europeans, Americans, Africans, Egyptians, and Japanese are all chanting. There is no difficulty. They are chanting very gladly, and they are getting the results. What is the difficulty? We are distributing this chanting free of charge, and it is very simple. Simply by chanting, one can have self-realization, God realization, and when there is God realization, then nature realization is included also. For example, if one learns one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, and zero, then he has studied the entirety of mathematics, because mathematics means simply changing the places of these ten figures. That's all. Similarly, if one simply studies Krsna, then all his knowledge is perfect. And Krsna is easily understood simply by chanting this mantra, Hare Krsna. So why not take this opportunity?

Take this opportunity that is being offered to human society. It is very ancient and scientific. It is not that it is a concoction that will last for only three or four years. No. In the Bhagavad-gita Krsna Himself says, "This philosophy is inexhaustible and indestructible. It is never lost or destroyed." It may be covered for the time being, but it is never destroyed. Therefore it is called avyayam. Vyaya means "exhaustion." For example, one may have a hundred dollars, and if they are spent one after another, the next day it will come to zero. That is vyaya, exhaustible. But Krsna consciousness is not like that. If you cultivate this knowledge of Krsna consciousness, then it will increase. That is certified by Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu. Anandam-budhi-varadhanam. Ananda means "pleasure," "transcendental bliss," and ambudhi means "ocean." In the material world we see that the ocean does not increase. But if one cultivates Krsna consciousness, then his transcendental bliss will simply increase. Anandambudhi-varadhanam. And I shall always remind everyone that the process is very simple. Anyone can chant, anywhere, without taxation or loss, but the gain is very great.

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu has explained this kirtana movement in His Siksastaka. Siksa means "instruction," and astaka means "eight." He has given us eight verses to help us understand this Krsna consciousness movement, and I shall explain the first of these instructions. The Lord says, ceto-darpana-marjanam: one should cleanse the heart. I have explained this several times, but it does not become monotonous. It is

just like the chanting of Hare Krsna; it does not become tiresome. Our students can chant the Hare Krsna mantra twenty-four hours a day, and they will never get tired. They will continue to dance and chant. And anyone can try it; because it is not material, one will never get tired of chanting Hare Krsna. In the material world, if one chants anything, any favorite name, for three, four, or ten times, he will get tired of it. That is a fact. But because Hare Krsna is not material, if one chants this mantra, he will never get tired. The more one chants, the more his heart will be cleansed of material dirt and the more the problems of his life within this material world will be solved.

What is the problem of our lives? That we do not know. Modern education never gives enlightenment about the real problem of life. That is indicated in the Bhagavad-gita. Those who are educated and are advancing in knowledge should know what is the problem of life. This problem is stated in the Bhagavad-gita: one should always see the inconveniences of birth, death, old age, and disease. Unfortunately no one pays attention to these problems. When a man is diseased he thinks, "All right. Let me go to the doctor. He will give me some medicine, and I will be cured." But he does not consider the problem very seriously. "I did not want this disease. Why is there disease? Is it not possible to become free from disease?" He never thinks that way. This is because his intelligence is very low-grade, just like that of an animal. An animal suffers, but it has no sense. If an animal is brought to a slaughterhouse and sees that the animal before him is being slaughtered, he will still stand there contentedly eating the grass. This is animal life. He does not know that next time it will be his turn and he will be slaughtered. I have seen it. In a Kali temple I have seen that a goat was standing there ready to be sacrificed and another goat was very happily eating the grass.

Similarly, Maharaja Yudhisthira was asked by Yamaraja, "What is the most wonderful thing in this world? Can you explain?" So Maharaja Yudhisthira answered, "Yes. The most wonderful thing is that at every moment one can see that his friends, his fathers, and his relatives have died, but he is thinking, 'I shall live forever.'" He never thinks that he will die, just as an animal never thinks that at the next moment he may be slaughtered. He is satisfied with the grass, that's all. He is satisfied with the sense gratification. He does not know that he is also going to die.

My father has died, my mother has died, he has died, she has died. So I will also have to die. Then what is after death? I do not know. This is the problem. People do not take this problem seriously, but the Bhagavad-gita indicates that that is real education. Real education is to inquire why, although we do not want to die, death comes. That is real inquiry. We do not want to become old men. Why does old age come upon us? We have many problems, but this is the sum and substance of all of them.

In order to solve this problem, Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu prescribes the chanting of Hare Krsna. As soon as our heart is cleansed by chanting this Hare Krsna mantra, the blazing fire of our problematic material existence is extinguished. How is it extinguished? When we cleanse our heart we will realize that we do not belong to this material world. Because people are identifying with this material world, they are thinking, "I am an Indian, I am an Englishman, I am this, I am that." But if one chants the Hare Krsna mantra, he will realize that he is not

this material body. "I do not belong to this material body or this material world. I am a spirit soul, part and parcel of the Supreme. I am eternally related with Him, and I have nothing to do with the material world." This is called liberation, knowledge. If I don't have anything to do with this material world, then I am liberated. And that knowledge is called brahma-bhuta.

A person with this realization has no duty to perform. Because we are now identifying our existence with this material world, we have so many duties. The Srimad-Bhagavatam says that as long as there is no self-realization, we have so many duties and debts. We are indebted to the demigods. The demigods are not merely fictitious. They are real. There are demigods controlling the sun, the moon, and the air. Just as there are directors of government departments, so for the heating department there is the sun-god, for the air department there is Varuna, and similarly there are other departmental demigods. In the Vedas they are described as controlling deities, so we cannot neglect them. Also, there are great sages and philosophers who have given us knowledge, and we are indebted to them. So as soon as we take birth we are indebted to so many living entities, but it is impossible to liquidate all these debts. Therefore the Vedic literature recommends that one take shelter of the lotus feet of Krsna. And Krsna says, "If one takes shelter of Me, then he doesn't have to take shelter of anyone else."

Therefore those who are Krsna conscious devotees have taken shelter of Krsna, and the beginning is hearing and chanting. Sravanam kirtanam visnoh. So our fervent, humble request to everyone is to please accept this chanting. This movement of Krsna consciousness was introduced by Lord Caitanya five hundred years ago in Bengal, and now all over India and especially in Bengal there are millions of followers of Caitanya Mahaprabhu. Now this movement is starting in the Western countries, so just be very serious in understanding it. We do not criticize any other religion. Don't take it in that way. We have no business criticizing any other process of religion. Krsna consciousness is giving people the most sublime religion--love of God. That's all. We are teaching to love God. Everyone is already loving, but that love is misplaced. We love this boy or this girl or this country or that society or even the cats and dogs, but we are not satisfied. So we must place our love in God. If one places one's love in God, he will be happy.

Don't think that this Krsna consciousness movement is a new type of religion. Where is the religion which does not recognize God? One may call God "Allah" or "Krsna" or something else, but where is that religion which does not recognize God? We are teaching that one should simply try to love God. We are attracted by so many things, but if our love is reposed in God, then we will be happy. We don't have to learn to love anything else; everything else is automatically included. Just try to love God. Don't try to love just trees or plants or insects. This will never satisfy. Learn to love God. That is Caitanya Mahaprabhu's mission; that is our mission.

Chanting the Hare Krsna Mantra

Although "Hare Krsna" has become a household word, practically nobody knows what it means. Is it merely a repetitious incantation designed to hypnotize its practitioners? Is it a form of escapism? Or is it a genuine meditation that can actually summon higher a wareness? In this short essay, recorded on his first LP in late 1966, Srila Prabhupada illuminates the inner meaning of the Hare Krsna mantra.

The transcendental vibration established by the chanting of Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare is the sublime method for reviving our transcendental consciousness. As living spiritual souls, we are all originally Krsna conscious entities, but due to our association with matter from time immemorial, our consciousness is now adulterated by the material atmosphere. The material atmosphere, in which we are now living, is called maya, or illusion. Maya means "that which is not." And what is this illusion? The illusion is that we are all trying to be lords of material nature, while actually we are under the grip of her stringent laws. When a servant artificially tries to imitate the all-powerful master, he is said to be in illusion. We are trying to exploit the resources of material nature, but actually we are becoming more and more entangled in her complexities. Therefore, although we are engaged in a hard struggle to conquer nature, we are ever more dependent on her. This illusory struggle against material nature can be stopped at once by revival of our eternal Krsna consciousness.

Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna, Hare Hare is the transcendental process for reviving this original, pure consciousness. By chanting this transcendental vibration, we can cleanse away all misgivings within our hearts. The basic principle of all such misgivings is the false consciousness that I am the lord of all I survey.

Krsna consciousness is not an artificial imposition on the mind. This consciousness is the original, natural energy of the living entity. When we hear this transcendental vibration, this consciousness is revived. This simplest method of meditation is recommended for this age. By practical experience also, one can perceive that by chanting this maha-mantra, or the Great Chanting for Deliverance, one can at once feel a transcendental ecstasy coming through from the spiritual stratum. In the material concept of life we are busy in the matter of sense gratification, as if we were in the lower, animal stage. A little elevated from this status of sense gratification, one is engaged in mental speculation for the purpose of getting out of the material clutches. A little elevated from this speculative status, when one is intelligent enough, one tries to find out the supreme cause of all causes--within and without. And when one is factually on the plane of spiritual understanding, surpassing the stages of sense, mind, and intelligence, he is then on the transcendental plane. This chanting of the Hare Krsna mantra is enacted from the spiritual platform, and thus this sound vibration surpasses all lower strata of consciousness--namely sensual, mental, and intellectual. There is no need, therefore, to understand the language of the mantra, nor is there any need for mental speculation nor any intellectual adjustment for chanting this maha-mantra. It is automatic, from the spiritual platform, and as such, anyone can take part in the chanting without any previous qualification. In a more advanced stage, of course, one is not expected to commit offenses on the grounds of spiritual understanding.

In the beginning, there may not be the presence of all transcendental ecstasies, which are eight in number. These are: (1) being stopped as though dumb, (2) perspiration, (3) standing up of hairs on the body, (4) dislocation of voice, (5) trembling, (6) fading of the body, (7) crying in ecstasy, and (8) trance. But there is no doubt that chanting for a while takes one immediately to the spiritual platform, and one shows the first symptom of this in the urge to dance along with

the chanting of the mantra. We have seen this practically. Even a child can take part in the chanting and dancing. Of course, for one who is too entangled in material life, it takes a little more time to come to the standard point, but even such a materially engrossed man is raised to the spiritual platform very quickly. When the mantra is chanted by a pure devotee of the Lord in love, it has the greatest efficacy on hearers, and as such this chanting should be heard from the lips of a pure devotee of the Lord, so that immediate effects can be achieved. As far as possible, chanting from the lips of nondevotees should be avoided. Milk touched by the lips of a serpent has poisonous effects.

The word Hara is the form of addressing the energy of the Lord, and the words Krsna and Rama are forms of addressing the Lord Himself. Both Krsna and Rama mean "the supreme pleasure," and Hara is the supreme pleasure energy of the Lord, changed to Hare in the vocative. The supreme pleasure energy of the Lord helps us to reach the Lord.

The material energy, called maya, is also one of the multienergies of the Lord. And we, the living entities, are also the energy, marginal energy, of the Lord. The living entities are described as superior to material energy. When the superior energy is in contact with the inferior energy, an incompatible situation arises; but when the superior marginal energy is in contact with the superior energy, Hara, it is established in its happy, normal condition.

These three words, namely Hare, Krsna, and Rama, are the transcendental seeds of the maha-mantra. The chanting is a spiritual call for the Lord and His energy, to give protection to the conditioned soul. This chanting is exactly like the genuine cry of a child for its mother's presence. Mother Hara helps the devotee achieve the Lord Father's grace, and the Lord reveals Himself to the devotee who chants this mantra sincerely.

No other means of spiritual realization is as effective in this age of quarrel and hypocrisy as the chanting of the maha-mantra: Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare.

Krsna Consciousness--the Yoga for the Modern Age

Nowadays, we find yoga being taught in numerous courses and touted in mass-market books as a means to achieve health, lose weight, develop mental powers over others, achieve success in making money, or increase sexual potency. But real yoga is something entirely different. Here, Srila Prabhupada lets us in on some ancient secrets about the real thing.

ceto-darpana-marjanam bhava-mahadavagni-nirvapanam
sreyah-kairava-candrika-vitaranam vidya-vadhu-jivanam
anandambudhi-varadhanam pratipadam purnamrtasvadanam
sarvatma-snapanam param vijayate sri-krsna-sankirtanam

All glories to the sankirtana movement. Param vijayate sri-krsna-sankirtanam. Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu, when He was only a sixteen-year-old boy, introduced this sankirtana movement five hundred years ago in Navadvipa, India. It was not that He manufactured some religious system, just as nowadays so many religious systems are being manufactured. Actually, religion cannot be manufactured. Dharmam-tu saksad bhagavat-pranitam. Religion means the codes of God, the laws of God, that's all. Certainly we cannot live without obeying the state laws, and similarly

we cannot live without obeying the laws of God. And in the Bhagavad-gita (4.7) the Lord says that whenever there are discrepancies in the prosecution of religious activities (yada yada hi dharmasya glanir bhavati bharata) and there is a predominance of irreligious activities (abhyutthanam adharmasya), at that time I (Krsna) appear (tadatmanam srjamy aham). And in the material world we can see the same principle demonstrated, for whenever there is disobedience of state laws, there is the advent of some particular state officer or policeman to "set things right."

Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu is worshiped by the Gosvamis. There were six Gosvamis: Rupa Gosvami, Sanatana Gosvami, Raghunatha Bhatta Gosvami, Jiva Gosvami, Gopala Bhatta Gosvami, and Sri Raghunatha dasa Gosvami. There are three meanings of go. Go means "land," go means "cow," and go means "senses." And svami means "master." So gosvami means that they were masters of the senses. When one becomes master of the senses, or gosvami, he can make progress in spiritual life. That is the real meaning of svami. Svami means that one is not servant of the senses, but master of them.

One of these six Gosvamis, Rupa Gosvami, was the head, and he compiled a nice verse in honor of Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu. He says:

anarpita-carim cirat karunayavatirnah kalau
samarpayitum unnatojjvala-rasam sva-bhakti-sriyam
harih purata-sundara-dyuti-kadamba-sandipitah
sada hrdaya-kandare sphuratu vah saci-nandanah
(Caitanya-caritamrta, Adi 1.4)

Kalau means this age, this age of Kali, the Iron Age, which is very much contaminated, an age of quarrel and disagreement. Rupa Gosvami says that in this age of Kali, when everything is disagreement and quarrel, "You have descended to offer the highest love of God." Samarpayitum unnatojjvala-rasam: and not only the topmost, but a very brilliant rasa, or transcendental humor. Purata-sundara-dyuti: Your complexion is just like gold, like the luster of gold. "You are so kind that I bless everyone [the Gosvamis can bless because they are masters of the senses] that this form of the Lord, Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu, may always remain dancing in everyone's heart."

When Rupa Gosvami first met Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu at Prayaga, Lord Caitanya was chanting and dancing in the street, "Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna." At that time also Rupa Gosvami offered one prayer. Namoh maha-vadanyaya krsna-prema-pradaya te: "Oh, You are the most munificent of all incarnations because You are distributing love of Godhead." Krsna-prema-pradaya te/ krsnaya krsna-caitanya-namne gaura-tvise namah: "You are Krsna Himself, because if You were not Krsna You could not distribute krsna-prema, or love of God, for love of Krsna is not so easily acquired. But You are distributing this love freely to everyone."

In this way the sankirtana movement was inaugurated in Bengal, India, in Navadvipa. In this sense, the Bengalis are very fortunate that in their country this movement was inaugurated by Lord Caitanya, who predicted:

prthivite ache yata nagaradi grama
sarvatra pracara haibe mora nama

"In all the villages and towns all over the world, everywhere, this sankirtana movement will be preached." That is His prediction.

So by the grace of Lord Caitanya, this movement is already introduced in the Western countries, beginning from New York. Our sankirtana movement was first introduced in New York in 1966. At that time I came and began to chant this Hare Krsna mantra in Tompkins Square. I was chanting there for three hours with a small mrdanga (drum), and these American boys assembled and gradually joined, and so it is increasing. First of all it was started in a New York storefront, 26 Second Avenue, then we started our branches in San Francisco, Montreal, Boston, Los Angeles, Buffalo, Columbus. We now [1970] have twenty-four branches, including one in London and one in Hamburg. In London they are all American boys and girls, and they are preaching. They are not sannyasis, nor are they Vedantists, nor Hindus, nor Indians, but they have taken this movement very seriously. Even in the London Times there was an article headlined, "Krsna Chant Startles London." So we have many in the movement now. All my disciples, at least in this country, are Americans and Europeans. They are chanting, dancing, and distributing a magazine, Back to Godhead. Now we have published many books--the Srimad-Bhaga vatam, Bhagavad-gita As It Is, Teachings of Lord Caitanya, and Isopanisad. It is not that this movement is simply a sentimental movement. Don't think that these boys are dancing out of some religious sentiment or fanaticism. No. We have the highest philosophical and theosophical background.

As an illustration, let us consider Caitanya Mahaprabhu. While He was preaching, He went to Benares, the seat of Mayavadi sannyasis. The followers of Sankaracarya are mostly seen in Benares. When Caitanya Mahaprabhu was there, He was chanting and dancing. Some of the people very much appreciated this, and so He quickly became famous. One prominent sannyasi, Prakasananda Sarasvati, leader of many thousands of Mayavadi sannyasis, was informed: "Oh, from Bengal one young sannyasi has come. He is so nicely chanting and dancing." Prakasananda Sarasvati was a great Vedantist, and he did not like the idea. He said, "Oh, he is a pseudo sannyasi. He is chanting and dancing, and this is not the business of a sannyasi. A sannyasi should always engage himself in the study of philosophy and the Vedanta."

Then one of the devotees who did not like the remarks of Prakasananda Sarasvati came back and informed Lord Caitanya that He was being criticized. So the devotee arranged a meeting of all the sannyasis, and there was a philosophical discussion on the Vedanta between Prakasananda Sarasvati and Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu. These accounts and philosophical discussions are given in our Teachings of Lord Caitanya. It is remarkable that Prakasananda himself with all his disciples became Vaisnavas.

Similarly, Caitanya Mahaprabhu had a great discussion with Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya, the greatest logician of that time, who was also Mayavadi, impersonalist, and he was also converted. So Caitanya Mahaprabhu's movement is not mere sentimentalism. There is a very rich background if one wants to understand this sankirtana movement through philosophy and logic. There is ample opportunity, for this movement is based on science and on the authority of the Vedas. But it is all simplified. That is the beauty of this movement. Whether one is a great scholar or philosopher or a child, he can take part without any difficulty. Other systems of self-realization, the jnana process or yoga

process, are also recognized, but it is not possible to practice them in this age. That is the verdict of the Vedas:

krte yad dhyayato visnum
tretayam yajato makhaih
dvapare paricaryayam.
kalau tad dhari-kirtanat
(Srimad-Bhagavatam 12.3.52)

In the Satya-yuga, the Golden Age, it was possible to execute the meditation process. For instance, Valmiki Muni meditated for sixty thousand years to get perfection. But where is our old age? Besides that, for the meditation process, as described in the Bhagavad-gita, one has to select a secluded place, he has to execute it alone, he has to sit down in a rigid posture, he has to lead a life of complete celibacy, and so on. There are many rules and regulations. Thus astanga-yoga meditation is not possible. If one is satisfied by imitating, that is a different thing, but if one wants perfection, then he has to execute all the eight stages of astanga-yoga. If this is not possible, then it is a waste of time.

What is the ultimate goal of the yoga process or meditation? Contact with the Supreme, the Supersoul, the Supreme Lord, is the aim and object of all yoga processes. Similarly, philosophical research, the jnana process, also aims at understanding the Supreme Brahman. These are recognized processes, undoubtedly, but according to authoritative description, they are not practical in this Iron Age of Kali. Therefore one has to take to this process of hari-kirtana. Anyone can practice without prequalification. One doesn't have to study philosophy or Vedanta. This was the purport of Lord Caitanya's meeting with Prakasananda Sarasvati.

When the Vedanta philosophy was thoroughly discussed between Lord Caitanya and Prakasananda Sarasvati, Prakasananda Sarasvati first of all asked Caitanya Mahaprabhu, "I understand that You were a very good scholar in Your early life. [Lord Caitanya was actually a very great scholar. His name was Nimai Pandita, and at the age of sixteen He defeated a great scholar from Kashmir, Kesava Kasmiri.] And I understand that You are a great Sanskrit scholar, and that especially in logic You are a very learned scholar. You were also born in a brahmana family, and now You are a sannyasi. How is it that You are chanting and dancing and not reading the Vedanta?" This was the first question asked by Prakasananda Sarasvati, and Lord Caitanya replied, "Yes, the reason is that when I was initiated by My spiritual master, he said that I am fool number one. 'You don't discuss the Vedanta,' he told Me. 'You will simply spoil Your time. Just take to this chanting of Hare Krsna, and You will be successful.' " That was his reply. Of course, Caitanya Mahaprabhu was not a fool, and certainly the Vedanta is not for fools. One needs sufficient education, and one must attain a certain status before he can understand the Vedanta. In each and every word there are volumes of meanings, and there are many commentaries by Sankaracarya and Ramanujacarya, huge volumes in Sanskrit. But how can we understand Vedanta? It is not possible. It may be possible for one person or two persons to understand, but for the mass of people it is not possible. Nor is it possible to practice yoga. Therefore, if one takes to Caitanya Mahaprabhu's method, chanting Hare Krsna, the first installment of gain

will be ceto-darpana-marjanam: all the dirty things will be cleansed from the heart simply by chanting. Chant. There is no expenditure and there is no loss. If one simply chants for one week, he will see how much he will progress in spiritual knowledge.

We are attracting many students simply by chanting, and they are understanding the entire philosophy and becoming purified. This Society's movement started only four years ago, in 1966, and we have so many branches already. The American boys and girls are taking it very seriously, and they are happy. Ask any one of them. Ceto-darpana-marjanam. They are cleansing the dirty things from the heart, simply by chanting Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare.

The next point is bhava-mahadavagni-nirvapanam: as soon as the heart is cleansed of all dirty things, then all the problems of material existence are immediately solved. This world has been compared to davagni, which means a blazing fire in the forest. In this material existence no one wants unhappiness, but it comes by force. That is the law of material nature. No one wants fire, but wherever we go in a city the fire brigade is always active. There is always fire. Similarly, there are many things that no one wants. No one wants death--there is death. No one wants disease--there is disease. No one wants old age--there is old age. They are there, against our will, against our desire.

Thus we should consider the state of this material existence. This human form of life is meant for understanding, not for wasting valuable life like animals by eating, sleeping, mating, and defending. That is not advancement of civilization. The Bhagavatam says that this body is not meant for working hard simply for sense gratification.

nayam deho deha-bhajam nr-loke
kastan kaman arhate vid-bhujam ye
(SB. 5.5.1)

To work very hard and satisfy oneself by sense gratification is the business of hogs, not human beings. The human being should learn tapasya. Especially in India, so many great sages, so many great kings, and so many brahmacaris and sannyasis have passed their lives in great tapasya in order not to go further to sleep. Lord Buddha was a prince who gave up everything and engaged himself in tapasya. This is life. When King Bharata, under whose name India was named Bharata-varsa, was twenty-four years old, he gave up his kingdom, his young wife, and young children and went away for tapasya. When Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu was only twenty-four, He gave up His young wife, mother, everything. There are many, many examples. India is the land of tapasya, but we are forgetting that. Now we are making it the land of technology. It is surprising that India is now no longer propagating this tapasya, for India is the land of dharma: dharma-ksetre kuru-ksetre.

But it is not only in India; everywhere in this age of iron everything is degraded, degraded in this sense: prayenalpayusah sabhya kalav asmin yuge janah (SB. 1.1.10). In this age of Kali the duration of life is diminished, and men are not moved to understand self-realization, and if they are, they are invariably misled by so many deceitful leaders. The age is very corrupt. Therefore Caitanya Mahaprabhu's process of chanting Hare Krsna is the best and the simplest method.

harer nama harer nama
harer namaiva kevalam
kalau nasty eva nasty eva
nasty eva gatir anyatha

"In this age of Kali there is no other religion than glorifying the Lord by utterance of His holy name, and that is the injunction of all the revealed scriptures. There is no other way, there is no other way, there is no other way." This verse appears in the Brhan-naradiya Purana. Harer nama harer nama harer namaiva kevalam. Simply chant Hare Krsna. There is no other alternative. Kalau nasty eva nasty eva nasty eva gatir anyatha. In this age, Kali, there is no other alternative for self-realization. So we have to accept it.

There is another similar verse in the Srimad-Bhagavatam. In the Twelfth Canto, Third Chapter, Pariksit Maharaja was informed by Sukadeva Gosvami of the faults of this age, and now all the symptoms of the age of Kali are apparent. In the conclusive portion, however, Sukadeva Gosvami said, kaler dosa-nidhe rajann asti hy eko mahan gunah: "My dear king, this age, Kali, is full of faulty things, but there is one good opportunity." What is that? Kirtanad eva krsnasya mukta-sangah param vrajet: "Simply by chanting this Hare Krsna mantra one can become liberated and go back to Godhead."

This is practical and authorized, and one can also test himself to see how he is advancing simply by chanting. This Krsna consciousness movement is not something new, something that we have introduced or manufactured. It is authorized on the Vedic principles, authorized by acaryas like Caitanya Mahaprabhu and others. And the method is very simple; there is no loss. We are not charging anything, we are not asking for fees and giving the people some secret mantra and promising them that within six months they will become God. No. This is open for everyone--children, women, girls, boys, old people--everyone can chant and see the results.

To further this end we not only are establishing New Vrndavana, our farm project in West Virginia, but are establishing other spiritual communities, such as New Navadvipa and New Jagannatha Puri. We have already started New Jagannatha Puri in San Francisco, and the Ratha-yatra festival is going on. This year there will be a great ceremony of Ratha-yatra in London also. There will be three cars, for Jagannatha, Subhadra, and Balarama, and they will be taken to the River Thames. And America has imported New England and New York, so why not New Vrndavana? We should especially establish this New Vrndavana, because Lord Caitanya recommended, aradhyo bhagavan vrajesa-tanayas tad-dhama vrndavanam: "Krsna, the son of Nanda Maharaja, in the Vrndavana-dhama of Vrajabhumi, is the supreme worshipable Deity, and His place Vrndavana is also worshipable." The Western boys and girls are taking to Krsna consciousness, and they should have a place like Vrndavana. Swami Kirtanananda, who went to Vrndavana with me two years ago, knows what Vrndavana is like, so I have instructed him to construct at least seven temples. In Vrndavana, there are five thousand temples of Radha-Krsna, but the most important temples are seven, established by the Gosvamis. Our program is to live in New Vrndavana, depend on agriculture and cows as an economic solution, and peacefully execute Krsna consciousness, chant Hare Krsna--that is the Vrndavana scheme. Yuktahara-viharasya...

yogo bhavati dukkha-ha (Bhagavad-gita 6.17). This human form of life isn't meant for increasing artificial needs. We should be satisfied just to maintain the body and soul together, and the rest of the time we should enhance our Krsna consciousness, so that after leaving this body we won't have to take another material body, but will be able to go back home, back to Godhead. That should be the motto of human life.

Material life means eating, sleeping, mating, and defending, and spiritual life means something more than this. This is also the difference between animal life and human life. In animal life, the common formula is eating, sleeping, mating, and defending. A dog eats, a man also eats. A man sleeps, and a dog also sleeps. A man has sex life, and the dog also has sex life. The dog defends in his own way, and man also defends in his own way, maybe by atomic bombs. These four principles are common to human beings and animals, and advancement of these four principles is not human civilization but animal civilization. Human civilization means athato brahma-jijnasa. In the Vedanta-sutra the first aphorism is athato brahma jijnasa: "Now is the time for inquiry about Brahman." That is human life. As long as one is not spiritually inquisitive, jijnasuh sreya uttamam, he is an animal, because he lives according to these four principles, that's all. He must be inquisitive to know what he is and why he is put into these miseries of birth, death, old age, and disease. Is there any remedy? These matters should be questioned. That is human life; that is spiritual life.

Spiritual life means human life, and material life means animal life. That's all. We have to make the adjustments that are recommended in the Bhagavad-gita. Yuktahara-viharasya. For instance, because I am going to be a spiritual man does not mean that I shall give up eating. Rather, my eating should be adjusted. The Bhagavad-gita describes what class of food is first class, in goodness, and what class of food is in passion, and third class, in ignorance. We have to raise ourselves to the sattvic (goodness) platform of human civilization, then revive our transcendental consciousness, or Krsna consciousness. Everything is there in the sastras. Unfortunately, we do not consult them.

evam prasanna-manaso
bhagavad-bhakti-yogatah
bhagavat-tattva-vijnanam
mukta-sangasya jayate
(SB. 1.2.20)

Unless one is liberated from the clutches of these three modes of material nature, he cannot understand God. Prasanna-manasah. One must be a Brahman-realized soul. Brahma-bhutam prasannatma na socati na kanksati (Bg. 18.54). These injunctions are there, so one should take advantage of these sastras and preach. That is the responsibility of intelligent men. The mass of people know that God is great, but they do not know how great God actually is. That we will find in the Vedic literature. That is our duty in this iron age. That is hari-kirtana, param vijayate sri-krsna-sankirtanam: glorification of the Supreme.

Meditation and the Self Within

Can meditation solve our everyday problems? Is there life after death? Can drugs help us achieve self-realization? During a visit to South Africa in 1976, Srila Prabhupada answered these and other questions for interviewer Bill Fail of the Durban Natal Mercury.

Srila Prabhupada: Krsna is a name for God that means "all-attractive." Unless one is all-attractive he cannot be God. So Krsna consciousness means God consciousness. All of us are small particles of God, equal in quality with Him. Our position as living entities is like that of a small particle of gold in relation to a large quantity of gold.

Mr. Faill: Are we something like sparks in a fire?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. Both the fire and the spark are fire, but one is big, and the other is very small. Unlike the relationship between the spark and the fire, however, our relationship with God is eternal, although at the present moment we have forgotten that relationship due to contact with the material energy. We are facing so many problems only because of this forgetfulness. If we can revive our original God consciousness, then we shall become happy. This is the sum and substance of Krsna consciousness. It is the best process by which to revive our original God consciousness. There are different processes of self-realization, but in the present age of Kali, people are very fallen, and they require the simple process of Krsna consciousness. Now they are thinking that so-called material advancement is the solution to their problems, but this is not a fact. The real solution is to get out of the material condition entirely by becoming Krsna conscious. Because God is eternal, we are also eternal, but in the material condition we are thinking, "I am this body," and therefore we must repeatedly change from body to body. This is due to ignorance. Actually we are not our bodies but spiritual sparks, parts and parcels of God.

Mr. Faill: Then the body is just like a vehicle for the soul?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. It is just like a motorcar. Just as you go from one place to another in a car, so due to mental concoction in the material condition of life, we are going from one position to another, trying to become happy. But nothing will make us happy unless we come to our real position, which is that we are all parts and parcels of God and that our real business is to associate with God and help all living entities by cooperating with Him. Civilized human life species of life. So if we don't take advantage of this civilized human life to understand who God is, who we are, and what our relationship is, but instead simply waste our life like cats and dogs, going here and there looking for sense gratification, then we will have missed a great opportunity. The Krsna consciousness movement is meant to teach people how to take full advantage of the human form of life by trying to understand God and our relationship with Him.

Mr. Faill: If we don't make the most of this life, do we get a second chance, in another life?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. According to your desires at the time of death, you get another body. That body is not guaranteed to be a human body, however. As I've already explained, there are 8,400,000 different forms of life. You can enter any of them, according to your mental condition at death. What we think of at the time of death depends on how we act during our life. As long as we are in material consciousness, our actions are under the control of the material nature, which is being conducted in three modes: goodness, passion, and ignorance. These modes are like the three basic colors--yellow, red, and blue. Just as one can mix red, yellow, and blue to produce millions of colors, the modes of nature are being mixed to produce many varieties of life. To stop the repetition of birth and death in different forms of life, we must transcend the covering of material nature and come to the platform of

pure consciousness. But if we do not learn the transcendental science of Krsna consciousness, then at death we must transfer to another body, either better or worse than our present one. If we cultivate the mode of goodness, then we are promoted to the higher planetary system, where there is a better standard of life. If we cultivate the mode of passion, then we will remain at the present stage. But if out of ignorance we commit sinful activities and violate nature's laws, then we will be degraded to animal or plant life. Then again we must evolve to the human form, a process that may take millions of years. Therefore a human being must be responsible. He must take advantage of the rare opportunity of human life by understanding his relationship with God and acting accordingly. Then he can get out of the cycle of birth and death in different forms of life and go back home, back to Godhead.

Mr. Faill: Do you think transcendental meditation is helping people?

Srila Prabhupada: They do not know what real meditation is. Their meditation is simply a farce--another cheating process by the so-called svamis and yogis. You're asking me if meditation is helping people, but do you know what meditation is?

Mr. Faill: A stilling of the mind--trying to sit in the center without swinging either way.

Srila Prabhupada: And what is the center?

Mr. Faill: I don't know.

Srila Prabhupada: So everyone is talking very much about meditation, but no one knows what meditation actually is. These bluffers use the word "meditation," but they do not know the proper subject for meditation. They're simply talking bogus propaganda.

Mr. Faill: Isn't meditation valuable just to get people thinking right?

Srila Prabhupada: No. Real meditation means to achieve a state in which the mind is saturated with God consciousness. But if you do not know what God is, how can you meditate? Besides, in this age people's minds are so agitated that they cannot concentrate. I have seen this so-called meditation; they are simply sleeping and snoring. Unfortunately, in the name of God consciousness or "self-realization," many bluffers are presenting nonstandard methods of meditation without referring to the authorized books of Vedic knowledge. They are simply practicing another type of exploitation.

Mr. Faill: What about some of the other teachers, like Ouspensky and Gurdjieff? In the past they brought to the West a message similar to yours.

Srila Prabhupada: We would have to study the particulars of their teachings to know whether they meet the Vedic standard. God consciousness is a science, just like medical science or any other science. It cannot be different because it is spoken by different men. Two plus two equals four everywhere, never five, or three. That is science.

Mr. Faill: Do you feel that others may have possibly taught the genuine method of God consciousness?

Srila Prabhupada: Unless I study their teachings in detail, it would be very difficult to say. There are so many bluffers.

Mr. Faill: Just doing it for money.

Srila Prabhupada: That's all. They have no standard method. Therefore we are presenting the Bhagavad-gita as it is, without any personal interpretation. This is standard.

Mr. Faill: Yes, if you begin dressing things up, you inevitably change them.

Srila Prabhupada: Krsna consciousness is not a new process. It is very, very old--and standard. It cannot be changed. As soon as you try to change it, then the potency is lost. This potency is just like electricity. If you want to generate electricity, you must follow the standard regulations, arranging all the negative and positive poles properly. You cannot construct the generator whimsically and still produce electricity. Similarly, there is a standard method of understanding Krsna conscious philosophy from proper authorities. If we follow their instructions, then the process will act. Unfortunately, one of the dangerous diseases of modern man is that everyone wants to do things according to his own whims. No one wants to follow the standard way. Therefore everyone is failing, both spiritually and materially.

Mr. Faill: Is the Krsna consciousness movement growing?

Srila Prabhupada: Oh, yes, very much. You may be surprised to know that we are selling books in the tens of thousands. We have about fifty books, and many librarians and college professors are very appreciative of them, because until their publication there was no such literature in existence. It is a new contribution to the world.

Mr. Faill: Krsna consciousness seems to involve shaving the head and wearing saffron robes. How can an ordinary man caught up in family life practice Krsna consciousness?

Srila Prabhupada: The saffron robes and the shaven head are not essential, although they create a good mental situation, just as when a military man is dressed properly he gets energy--he feels like a military man. Does that mean that unless he is in uniform he cannot fight? No. In the same way, God consciousness cannot be checked--it can be revived in any circumstances--but certain conditions are helpful. Therefore we prescribe that you live in a certain way, dress in a certain way, eat in a certain way, and so on. These things are helpful for practicing Krsna consciousness, but they are not essential.

Mr. Faill: Then one can be a student of Krsna consciousness while going about normal daily life?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes.

Mr. Faill: How about drugs? Can they help in the process of God realization?

Srila Prabhupada: If drugs could help God realization, then drugs would be more powerful than God. How can we accept that? Drugs are chemical substances, which are material. How can something material help one realize God, who is all-spiritual? It is impossible. What one experiences from taking drugs is simply a kind of intoxication or hallucination; it is not God realization.

Mr. Faill: Do you think the great mystics down through the ages have actually seen the spiritual spark you mentioned earlier?

Srila Prabhupada: What do you mean by "mystic"?

Mr. Faill: It's just a name given to people who have had an experience of another level of reality.

Srila Prabhupada: We don't use the word mystic. Our reality is God realization, which occurs when we come to the spiritual platform. As long as we have a bodily concept of life, our understanding is sense gratification, because the body is made of senses. When we progress from the bodily platform and we see the mind as the center of sense activity, we take the mind as the final stage of realization. That is the mental

platform. From the mental platform we may come to the intellectual platform, and from the intellectual platform we can rise to the transcendental platform. Finally we can rise above even the transcendental platform and come to the mature, spiritual platform. These are the stages of God realization. However, in this age, because people are so fallen, the sastras [scriptures] give the special recommendation that people come directly to the spiritual platform by chanting the holy names of God: Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. If we cultivate this practice on the spiritual platform, then immediately we can realize our spiritual identity. Then the process of God realization becomes successful very quickly.

Mr. Faill: Today a lot of people are saying that we must look inward for the truth rather than outward into the world of the senses.

Srila Prabhupada: Looking inward means knowing that you are a spirit soul. Unless you understand that you are not the body but a soul, there is no question of looking inward.

First we have to study, "Am I this body, or am I something within this body?" Unfortunately, this subject is not taught in any school, college, or university. Everyone is thinking, "I am this body." For example, in this country people everywhere are thinking, "I am South African, they are Indian, they are Greek," and so on. Actually, everyone in the whole world is in the bodily conception of life. Krsna consciousness starts when one is above this bodily conception.

Mr. Faill: So the recognition of the spiritual spark comes first?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. Recognizing the existence of the spirit soul within the body is the first step. Unless one understands this simple fact, there is no question of spiritual advancement.

Mr. Faill: Is it a question of just understanding it intellectually?

Srila Prabhupada: in the beginning, yes. There are two departments of knowledge: theoretical and practical. First one must learn spiritual science theoretically; then, by working on that spiritual platform, one comes to the point of practical realization.

Unfortunately, today almost everyone is in the darkness of the bodily conception of life. Therefore this movement is very important, because it can lift civilized men out of that darkness. As long as they are in the bodily conception of life, they are no better than animals. "I am a dog," "I am a cat," "I am a cow." Animals think like this. As soon as someone passes, a dog will bark, thinking, "I am a dog. I have been appointed here as watchdog." Similarly, if I adopt the dog's mentality and challenge foreigners--"Why have you come to this country? Why have you come to my jurisdiction?"--then what is the difference between the dog and me?

Mr. Faill: There is none. To change the subject a little, is it necessary to follow certain eating habits to practice spiritual life?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, the whole process is meant to purify us, and eating is part of that purification. I think you have a saying, "You are what you eat," and that's a fact. Our bodily constitution and mental atmosphere are determined according to how and what we eat. Therefore the sastras recommend that to become Krsna conscious, you should eat remnants of food left by Krsna. If a tuberculosis patient eats something and you eat the remnants, you will be infected with tuberculosis. Similarly, if you eat krsna-prasadam, then you will be infected with Krsna consciousness. Thus our process is that we don't eat anything

immediately. First we offer the food to Krsna, then we eat it. This helps us advance in Krsna consciousness.

Mr. Faill: You are all vegetarians?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, because Krsna is a vegetarian. Krsna can eat anything because He is God, but in the Bhagavad-gita (9.26) He says, "If one offers Me with love and devotion a leaf, a flower, fruit, or water, I will accept it." He never says, "Give Me meat and wine."

Mr. Faill: How about the tobacco question?

Srila Prabhupada: Tobacco is also an intoxicant. We are already intoxicated by being in the bodily conception of life, and if we increase the intoxication, then we are lost.

Mr. Faill: You mean things like meat, alcohol, and tobacco just reinforce bodily consciousness?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. Suppose you have a disease and you want to be cured. You have to follow the instructions of a physician. If he says, "Don't eat this; eat only this," you have to follow his prescription. Similarly, we also have a prescription for being cured of the bodily conception of life: chanting Hare Krsna, hearing about Krsna's activities, and eating krsna-prasadam. This treatment is the process of Krsna consciousness.

Chapter Six

Finding Spiritual Solutions to Material Problems

Crime: Why and What to Do?

Every year the world spends more money on crime prevention and control. Yet despite these efforts crime rates are soaring, and notably in American public schools, crime has reached almost uncontrollable levels. In this July 1975 discussion with Lieutenant David Mozee, media relations officer for the Chicago Police Department, Srila Prabhupada proposed an amazingly simple yet practical solution to the seemingly insurmountable problem of crime.

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

Srila Prabhupada: The difference between a pious man and a criminal is that one is pure in heart and the other is dirty. This dirt is like a disease in the form of uncontrollable lust and greed in the heart of the criminal. Today people in general are in this diseased condition, and thus crime is very widespread. When the people become purified of these dirty things, crime will disappear. The simplest process of purification is to assemble in congregation and chant the holy names of God. This is called sankirtana and is the basis of our Krsna consciousness movement. So, if you want to stop crime, then you must gather as many people as possible for mass sankirtana. This congregational chanting of the holy name of God will dissipate all the dirty things in everyone's heart. Then there will be no more crime.

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

Srila Prabhupada: What is your definition of crime?

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

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

Lieutenant Mozee: Yes.

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

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

Srila Prabhupada: No. Everywhere. The age we live in is called Kali-yuga, the age of forgetting God. It is an age of misunderstanding and quarrel, and the people's hearts are filled with dirty things. But God is so powerful that if we chant His holy name we become purified, just as my disciples have become purified of their bad habits. Our movement is based on this principle of chanting the holy name of God. We give everyone the opportunity, without any distinction. They can come to our temple, chant the Hare Krsna mantra, take a little prasadam as refreshment, and gradually become purified. So if the governmental authorities give us some facilities, then we can hold mass sankirtana. Then, without a doubt, the whole society will change.

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

Srila Prabhupada: Certainly. Without religious principles what is the difference between a dog and a man? Man can understand religion, but a dog cannot. That is the difference. So if human society remains on the level of dogs and cats, how can you expect a peaceful society? If you bring a dozen dogs and put them together in a room, will it be possible to keep them peaceful? Similarly, if human society is filled with men whose mentality is on the level of dogs, how can you expect peace?

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

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

dog tries to defend itself, and we also try to defend ourselves. These are the common factors. The only difference is that a dog cannot be instructed about his relationship with God, but a man can.

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

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

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

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, but it is due only to bad leadership. Otherwise, the vast majority of the Indian people are fully conscious of God, and they try to follow the laws of God. Here in the West, even big college professors do not believe in God or in life after death. But in India, even the poorest man believes in God and in a next life. He knows that if he commits sins he will suffer and if he acts piously he will enjoy. To this day, if there is a disagreement between two villagers, they will go to the temple to settle it, because everyone knows that the opposite parties will hesitate to speak lies before the Deities. So in most respects, India is still eighty-percent religious. That is the special privilege of taking birth in India, and the special responsibility also. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu has said,

bharata-bhumite haila manusya janma yara
janma sarthaka kari 'kara para-upakara
(Caitanya-caritamrta, Adi 9.41)

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

Lieutenant Mozee: Sir, there is a Christian parable that says it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to come before the throne of God. Do you think the wealth of the United States and other Western countries is a block to spiritual faith?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. Too much wealth is a block. Krsna states in the Bhagavad-gita (2.44):

bhogaisvarya-prasaktanam
tayapahrta-cetasam
vyavasayatmika buddhih
samadhau na vidhiyate

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

acquire money, and it is difficult for him to understand spiritual teachings.

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

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

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

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

Lieutenant Mozee: Would you want to start the program in an area of affluence or an area of poverty?

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

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

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

The difficulty is that the rich man thinks he's perfectly healthy, although he's the most diseased of all. But as a policeman, you well know that there's criminality among rich men and poor men alike. So our chanting process is for everyone, because it cleanses the heart, regardless of the man's opulence or poverty. The only way to permanently change the criminal habit is to change the heart of the criminal. As you well know, many thieves are arrested numerous times and put into jail. Although they know that if they commit theft they will go to jail, still they are forced to steal, because of their unclean hearts. Therefore without cleansing the heart of the criminal, you cannot stop crime simply by more stringent law enforcement. The thief and the murderer already know the law, yet they still commit violent crimes, due to their unclean hearts. So our process is to cleanse the heart. Then all the troubles of this material world will be solved.

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

Srila Prabhupada: It is not difficult. Simply invite everyone: "Come, chant Hare Krsna, dance, and take sumptuous prasadam." What is the difficulty? We are doing this at our centers, and people are coming. But because we have very little money, we can hold sankirtana only on a small scale. We invite everyone, and gradually people are coming to our centers and becoming devotees. If the government would give us a large facility, however, we could expand unlimitedly. And the problem is big; otherwise why are there national news articles asking what to do? No civil state wants this criminality. That's a fact. But the leaders do not know how to stop it. If they listen to us, however, we can give them the answer. Why crime? Because people are godless. And what to do? Chant Hare Krsna and take prasadam. If you like, you can adopt this process of sankirtana. Otherwise, we will continue conducting it on a small scale. We are just like a poor medical man with a small private practice who could open a big hospital if he were given the facility. The government is the executor. If they take our advice and adopt the process of sankirtana, then the problem of crime will be solved.

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

Srila Prabhupada: To speak frankly, I find it difficult to find even one real Christian. The so-called Christians do not abide by the Bible's order. One of the ten commandments in the Bible is, "Thou shalt not kill." But where is that Christian who does not kill by eating the flesh of the cow? The process of chanting the Lord's holy name and distributing prasadam will be effective if carried out by persons who are actually practicing religion. My disciples are trained to strictly follow religious principles, and therefore their chanting of the holy name of God is different from others'. Theirs is not simply a rubber-stamped position. They have realized the purifying power of the holy name through practice.

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

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

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

Srila Prabhupada: Thank you very much.

Human Society or Animal Society?

In an interview with India's Bhavan's Journal in August 1976, Srila Prabhupada asked, "How can there be happiness or peace in animal society? They want to keep people like animals, and they are making a United Nations.... simply a dog's race. The dog is running on four legs, and you are running on four wheels--that's all. And you think that the four-wheel race is advancement of civilization!"

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

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, religion is on the wane. This is predicted in the Srimad-Bhagavatam (12.2.1):

tatas canudinam dharmah
satyam saucam ksama daya
kalena balina rajan
nanksyaty ayur balam smrtih

"In the Kali-yuga [the present age of quarrel and hypocrisy] the following things will diminish: religion, truthfulness, cleanliness, mercy, duration of life, bodily strength, and memory."

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

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

Srila Prabhupada: Especially when there is no religion, it is simply animal life. Any common man can distinguish that the dog does not understand what religion is. The dog is also a living being, but he is not interested in understanding the Bhagavad-gita or the Srimad-Bhagavatam. He is not interested. That is the distinction between man and dog: the animal is not interested.

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

Interviewer: Do you see any hopeful signs?

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

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

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

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

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

Srila Prabhupada: These people have no conception of God, and they are preaching religion. What is religion? Dharmam tu saksad bhagavat-pranitam: "The path of religion is directly enunciated by the Supreme Lord." They have no conception of God--they do not know what God is--and they are professing some religion. How long can it go on artificially? It will deteriorate.

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

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

Srila Prabhupada: Outlaw--everyone is an outlaw, manufacturing his own concocted system of religion. That is going on.

Just ask--in any religious system, what is their conception of God? Can anyone tell clearly? No one can tell. But we shall immediately say,

venum kvanantam ara vinda-dalayataksam
barhavatamsam asitambuda-sundarangam
kandarpa-koti-kamaniya-visesa-sobham
govindam adi-purusam tam aham bhajami

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

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

Interviewer: I don't know.

Srila Prabhupada: It is bogus. People have no conception of God, and therefore they have no understanding of religion. That is the decline, and because religion is declining, the human beings are becoming more and more like animals.

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

Interviewer: Here's the second question: "The traditional charge against Vedic culture is that it is fatalistic, that it makes people slaves to the belief in predestination, and that it therefore inhibits progress. How far is this charge true?"

Srila Prabhupada: What is that progress? Is a dog's jumping progress? Is that progress? A dog is running here and there on four legs, and you are running here and there on the four wheels of the automobile. Is that progress? That is not the Vedic system. According to the Vedic system, the human being has a certain amount of energy, and since the human

being has better consciousness than the animals, the energy of the human beings is more valuable than the energy of the animals.

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

Srila Prabhupada: So human energy should be utilized for spiritual advancement, not that the energy should be employed to compete with the dog. The saintly person is not busy like the dog. Today people think that "dog-ness" is life, but actual life is spiritual progress.

Therefore, the Vedic literature says,

tasyaiva hetoh prayateta kovido
na labhyate yad bhramatam upary adhah
tal labhyate dukkha vad anyatah sukham
kalena sarvatra gabhira-ramhasa

"Persons who are actually intelligent and philosophically inclined should endeavor only for that purposeful end which is not obtainable even by wandering from the topmost planet [Brahmaloka] down to the lowest planet [Patala]. As far as happiness derived from sense enjoyment is concerned, it can be obtained automatically in the course of time, just as in the course of time we obtain miseries, even though we do not desire them." (Srimad-Bhagavatam 1.5.18)

Interviewer: Could you explain that a little further?

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

Interviewer: Which means?

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

Interviewer: I'm beginning to see.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, so these things should be stopped. Therefore, Prahlada Maharaja makes this statement:

sukham aindriyakam daitya
deha-yogena dehinam
sarvatra labhyate daivad
yatha dukkham ayatnatah

"My dear friends born of demoniac families, the happiness perceived with reference to the sense objects by contact with the body can be obtained in any form of life, according to one's past fruitive activities. Such happiness is automatically obtained without endeavor, just as we obtain distress." (SB. 7.6.3)

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

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

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

Interviewer: I doubt it.

Srila Prabhupada: Therefore, Prahlada Maharaja says that it is already stored up. The pleasure is basically the same, but a little different according to the body. The uncivilized man in the jungle is having the same thing.

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

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

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

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

Srila Prabhupada: The karmis, fruitive workers, have been described in the Bhagavad-gita as mudhas, asses. Why are they compared to the asses? Because the ass works very hard with loads on his back, and in return his master gives him only a little morsel of grass. He stands at the door of the washerman and eats grass while again the washerman loads his back. He doesn't have the sense to think, "If I go out of the cottage of the washerman, I can get grass anywhere. Why am I carrying so much?"

Interviewer: That brings to mind some people I know.

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

But Vedic civilization is different. The accusation is not correct--people in Vedic civilization are not at all lazy. They are busy for a higher subject matter. Prahlada Maharaja stresses that this busy-ness is so important that it should begin from one's very childhood. Kaumara acaret prajnah: one should not lose a second's time. That is Vedic civilization. The asses see, "These men are not working like I am"--like dogs and asses--and they consider that we are escaping. Yes, escaping your fruitless endeavor. The Vedic civilization is meant for self-realization.

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

Srila Prabhupada: The Vedic civilization begins from the varnasrama system. In the varnasrama system there is this arrangement: brahmanas [intellectuals, advisors], ksatriyas [administrators], vaisyas [merchants, farmers], sudras [workers], brahmacaris [celibate students], grhasthas [householders], vanaprasthas [retired married people], and sannyasis [renounced monks].

The ultimate goal is that Krsna, the Supreme Lord, should be worshiped. So if you worship Krsna, then you fulfill all your occupational duties, either as a brahmana, ksatriya, vaisya, sudra, brahmacari, anything. Take to it immediately--take to Krsna consciousness. This is so important.

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

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

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

Interviewer: How can you be so sure of that?

Srila Prabhupada: How shall I believe it? Because you get some distressful condition, although you do not want it. For instance, President Kennedy died by the hand of his own countryman. Who wanted it, and why did it come? He was a great man, he was protected by so many, and still he was destined to be killed. Who can protect you?

So if the distressful condition comes upon me by destiny, then the opposite position--happiness--will also come. Why shall I waste my time for this rectification? Let me use my energy for Krsna consciousness. That is intelligent. You cannot check your destiny. Everyone will experience a certain amount of happiness and a certain amount of distress. No one is enjoying uninterrupted happiness. That is not possible.

Just as you cannot check your distress, so you cannot check your happiness. It will come automatically. So don't waste your time for these things. Rather, you should utilize your time for advancing in Krsna consciousness.

Interviewer: Would a Krsna conscious person not try for progress?

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

Vedic civilization is meant for realization of God. That is the point. You'll still find in India that during important festivals many millions of people are coming to take bath in the Ganges, because they are interested in how to become liberated. They are not lazy. They are going thousands of miles, two thousand miles away to take bath in the Ganges. They are not lazy, but they are not busy in the dog's race. Rather, they are busy right from their childhood trying to become self-realized. Kaumara acaret prajno dharman bhagavatan iha. They are so busy that they want to begin the business from their very childhood. So it is the wrong conception to think that they are lazy.

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

Srila Prabhupada: No, the advantage is that you can train him spiritually. Therefore it is said, tasyaiva hetoh prayateta kovidah: you should engage your energy for self-realization. Ahaituky apratihata: devotional service, Krsna consciousness, cannot be checked. Just as material destiny cannot be checked, your advancement in spiritual life cannot be checked if you endeavor for it.

Actually, Krsna will change destiny--but only for His devotee. He says, aham tvam sarva-papebhyo moksaisyami: "I shall give you all protection from all reactions of sinful activities." (Bhagavad-gita 18.66)

For instance, if one is condemned by the law court to be hanged, no one can check it. Even the same judge who has given this verdict cannot check it. But if the defendant begs for the mercy of the king, who is above all the laws, then the king can check it.

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

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

Srila Prabhupada: Love of God--that is Krsna consciousness. If you have not learned to love God, then what is the meaning of your religion? When you are actually on the platform of love of God, you understand your relationship with God--"I am part and parcel of God." Then you extend your love to the animal, also. If you actually love God, then your love for the insect is also there. You understand, "This insect has a different body, but he is also part and parcel of my father; therefore, he is my brother." Then you cannot maintain a slaughterhouse. If you maintain a slaughterhouse and disobey the order of Christ, "Thou shalt not kill," and you proclaim yourself Christian or Hindu, that is not religion. Then it is simply a waste of time--because you do not

understand God; you have no love for God, and you are labeling yourself under some sect, but there is no real religion. That is going on all over the world.

Interviewer: How can we cure the situation?

Srila Prabhupada: Krsna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. If you do not accept that Krsna is the supreme entity, then try to understand.

That is education: there is someone supreme; Krsna is not Indian; He is God. The sun rises first in India, but that does not mean that the sun is Indian; similarly, although Krsna appeared in India, now He has come to the Western countries, through this Krsna consciousness movement.

Altruism: Temporary and Eternal

In 1972, the South Indian state of Andhra Pradesh was stricken by a severe drought that affected millions. Hoping that the International Society for Krishna Consciousness would provide assistance, T. L. Katidia, Secretary of the Andhra Pradesh Relief Fund Committee, wrote to Srila Prabhupada. Srila Prabhupada responded with this surprising and edifying letter.

Revered Swamiji,

The residents of the twin cities are happy to have this opportunity to meet you and your esteemed followers. You may be aware that due to inadequate rainfall during the last two years and its complete failure this year, more than half of our state [Andhra Pradesh, a state in southern India] is in the grip of a serious drought. With a view to supplement governmental efforts to combat this evil, a Central Voluntary Organization of citizens drawn from various walks of life has been set up. The members of this organization surveyed the areas affected by drought. The situation is pathetic. There are villages where drinking water is not available for miles. Due to scarcity of fodder, the cattle owners are parting with their cattle for a nominal price. Many of the stray cattle are dying away due to unavailability of fodder and water. The food problem is also very serious. Due to high prices of food grains on the open market, purchase of grains at market prices is beyond the reach of poor villagers, with the result that at least five to six million people are hardly having one meal a day. There are many who are on the verge of starvation. The entire situation is most pathetic and heartrending.

We therefore appeal to your revered self to consider how your Society could best come to the rescue of these millions of souls who are in unimaginable distress. The Committee would like to suggest that members of your Society appeal to the bhaktas [devotees] attending your discourses to contribute their mite to the Andhra Pradesh Relief Fund.

The Committee is prepared to send some of its representatives along with members of your Society wherever you wish to distribute prasada to the hungry millions in the state.

As manava-seva is madhava-seva ["Service to man is service to God"], the Committee is confident that even a little effort by your gracious Society will go a long way in mitigating the sufferings of hundreds and thousands of people.

Yours ever in the service of the Lord,

T. L. Katidia, Secretary

Andhra Pradesh Relief fund Committee

Hyderabad, India

My dear Mr. Katidia,

Please accept my greetings. With reference to your letter and your personal interview, I beg to inform you that without pleasing the Supreme Personality of Godhead, no one can become happy. Unfortunately people do not know who God is and how to make Him happy. Our Krsna consciousness movement is therefore meant to present the Supreme Personality of Godhead directly to the people. As stated in the Srimad-Bhaga vatam, Seventh Canto, Sixth Chapter: tuste ca tatra kim alabhyam ananta adye/ kim tair guna-vyatikarad iha ye sva-siddhah.

The idea stated in this verse is that by pleasing the Supreme Personality of Godhead, we please everyone, and there is no question of scarcity. Because people do not know this secret of success, they are making their own independent plans to be happy. However, it is not possible to achieve happiness in this way. On your letterhead I find many important men in this country who are interested in relieving the sufferings of the people, but they should know for certain that without pleasing the Supreme Personality of Godhead all their attempts will be futile. A diseased man cannot live simply on the strength of the help of an expert physician and medicine. If this were so, then no rich man would ever die. One must be favored by Krsna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Therefore if you want to perform relief work simply by collecting funds, I think that it will not be successful. You have to please the supreme authority, and that is the way to success. For example, due to the performance of sankirtana here, the rain has begun to fall after a drought of two years. The last time we performed a Hare Krsna Festival in Delhi, there was imminent danger of Pakistan's declaring war, and when a newspaper man approached me for my opinion, I said there must be fighting because the other party was aggressive. However, because of our sankirtana movement, India emerged victorious. Similarly, when we held a festival in Calcutta, the Naxalite [Communist] movement stopped. These are facts. Through the sankirtana movement we can not only get all facilities for living, but also at the end can go back home, back to Godhead. Those who are of a demoniac nature cannot understand this, but it is a fact.

I therefore request you, as leading members of society, to join this movement. There is no loss on anyone's part for chanting the Hare Krsna mantra, but the gain is great. According to Bhagavad-gita (3.21), what is accepted by leading men is also accepted by common men:

yad yad acarati sresthas
tat tad evetaro janah
sa yat pramanam kurute
lokas tad anuvartate

"Whatever action a great man performs, common men follow in his footsteps. And whatever standards he sets by exemplary acts, all the world pursues."

The sankirtana movement of Krsna consciousness is very important. Therefore, through you I wish to appeal to all the leading men of India to accept this movement very seriously and give us all facility to spread this movement throughout the world. Then there will be a very happy condition, not only in India but all over the world.

Hoping this will meet you in good health,
Your ever well-wisher,

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami

Declaring Our Dependence on God

For many, the American bicentennial was a great occasion for celebration. In March 1976, in Mayapur, India, the editors of Back to Godhead conducted a special interview with Srila Prabhupada, who took a hard look at American slogans such as "All men are created equal," "In God we trust," and "One nation under God."

Back to Godhead: Thomas Jefferson put the basic philosophy of the American Revolution into the Declaration of Independence. The important men of the day who signed this document agreed that there are certain very obvious or self-evident truths, the first of which is that all men are created equal. By this they meant that all men are equal before the law and have an equal opportunity to be protected by the law.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, in that sense men are, as you say, created equal.

BTG: Another point in the Declaration of Independence is that all men are endowed by God with certain natural rights that cannot be taken away from them. These are the rights of life, liberty, and...

Srila Prabhupada: But animals also have the right to life. Why don't animals also have the right to live? The rabbits, for instance, are living in their own way in the forest. Why does the government allow hunters to go and shoot them?

BTG: They were simply talking about human beings.

Srila Prabhupada: Then they have no real philosophy. The narrow idea that my family or my brother is good, and that I can kill all others, is criminal. Suppose that for my family's sake I kill your father. Is that philosophy? Real philosophy is suhrdam sarva-bhutanam: friendliness to all living entities. Certainly this applies to human beings, but even if you unnecessarily kill one animal, I shall immediately protest, "What nonsense are you doing?"

BTG: The founders of America said that another natural right is the right to liberty, or freedom--freedom in the sense that the government doesn't have the right to tell you what kind of job you have to do.

Srila Prabhupada: If the government is not perfect, it should not be allowed to tell people what to do. But if the government is perfect, then it can.

BTG: The third natural right they mentioned was that every human being has the right to pursue happiness.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. But your standard of happiness may be different from my standard. You may like to eat meat; I hate it. How can your standard of happiness be equal to mine?

BTG: So should everyone be free to try to achieve whatever standard of happiness he wants?

Srila Prabhupada: No, the standard of happiness should be prescribed according to the qualities of the person. You must divide the whole society into four groups: those with brahmana qualities, those with ksatriya qualities, those with vaisya qualities, and those with sudra qualities. Everyone should have good facility to work according to his natural qualities.

You cannot engage a bull in the business of a horse, nor can you engage a horse in the business of a bull. Today practically everyone is getting a college education. But what is taught at these colleges? Mostly technical knowledge, which is sudra education. Real higher education means learning Vedic wisdom. This is meant for the brahmanas. Alone, sudra education leads to a chaotic condition. Everyone should be

tested to find out which education he is suited for. Some sudras may be given technical education, but most sudras should work on the farms. Because everyone is coming to the cities to get an education, thinking, "We can get more money," the agriculture is being neglected. Now there is scarcity because no one is engaged in producing nice foodstuffs. All these anomalies have been caused by bad government. It is the duty of the government to see that everyone is engaged according to his natural qualities. Then people will be happy.

BTG: So if the government artificially puts all men into one class, then there can't be happiness.

Srila Prabhupada: No, that is unnatural and will cause chaos.

BTG: America's founding fathers didn't like classes, because they'd had such bad experience with them. Before the revolution, Americans had been ruled by monarchs, but the monarchs would always become tyrannical and unjust.

Srila Prabhupada: Because they weren't trained to be saintly monarchs. In Vedic civilization, boys were trained from the very beginning of life as first-class brahmacaris [celibate students]. They went to the gurukula, the school of the spiritual master, and learned self-control, cleanliness, truthfulness, and many other saintly qualities. The best of them were later fit to rule the country.

The American Revolution has no special significance. The point is that when people become unhappy, they revolt. That was done in America, that was done in France, and that was done in Russia.

BTG: The American revolutionaries said that if a government fails to rule the people properly, then the people have the right to dissolve that government.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. Just as in Nixon's case: they pulled him down. But if they replace Nixon with another Nixon, then what is the value? They must know how to replace Nixon with a saintly leader. Because people do not have that training and that culture, they will go on electing one Nixon after another and never become happy. People can be happy. The formula for happiness is there in the Bhagavad-gita. The first thing they must know is that the land belongs to God. Why do Americans claim that the land belongs to them? When the first settlers went to America, they said, "This land belongs to God; therefore we have a right to live here." So why are they now not allowing others to settle on the land? What is their philosophy? There are so many overpopulated countries. The American government should let those people go to America and should give them facility to cultivate the land and produce grains. Why are they not doing that? They have taken others' property by force, and by force they are checking others from going there. What is the philosophy behind this?

BTG: There is no philosophy.

Srila Prabhupada: Roguism is their philosophy. They take the property by force, and then they make a law that no one can take another's property by force. So they are thieves. They cannot restrict God's property from being occupied by God's sons. America and the other countries in the United Nations should agree that wherever there is enough land, it may be utilized by the human society for producing food. The government can say, "All right, you are overpopulated. Your people can come here. We will give them land, and they can produce food." We would see a wonderful result. But will they do that? No. Then what is their

philosophy? Roguism. "I will take the land by force, and then I won't allow others to come here."

BTG: One American motto is "One nation under God."

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, that is Krsna consciousness. There should be one nation under God, and one world government under God as well. Everything belongs to God, and we are all His sons. That philosophy is wanted.

BTG: But in America people are very much afraid of a central government because they think that whenever there's a strong government there will always be tyranny.

Srila Prabhupada: If the leaders are properly trained, there cannot be tyranny.

BTG: But one of the premises of the American system of government is that if a leader has too much power, he will inevitably become corrupt.

Srila Prabhupada: You have to train him in such a way that he cannot become corrupt!

BTG: What is that training process?

Srila Prabhupada: That training is the varnasrama-dharma. Divide the society according to quality and train people in the principle that everything belongs to God and should be used in the service of God. Then there really can be "one nation under God."

BTG: But if society is divided into different groups, won't there be envy?

Srila Prabhupada: No, no. Just as in my body there are different parts that work together, so the society can have different parts working for the same goal. My hand is different from my leg. But when I tell the hand, "Bring a glass of water," the leg will help. The leg is required, and the hand is required.

BTG: But in the Western world we have a working class and a capitalist class, and there is always warfare going on between the two.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. The capitalist class is required, and the working class is also required.

BTG: But they are fighting.

Srila Prabhupada: Because they are not trained up; they have no common cause. The hand and the leg work differently, but the common cause is to maintain the body. So if you find out the common cause for both the capitalists and the workers, then there will be no fighting. But if you do not know the common cause, then there will always be fighting.

BTG: Revolution?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes.

BTG: Then the most important thing is to find the common cause that people can unite on?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, just like in our Krsna conscious society you come to consult me about every activity, because I can give you the common cause. Otherwise, there will be fighting. The government should be very expert to know the aim of life--the common cause--and they should train the people to work for the common cause. Then they will be happy and peaceful. But if people simply elect rascals like Nixon, they will never find a common cause. Any rascal can secure votes by some arrangement, and then he becomes the head of the government. The candidates are bribing, they are cheating, they are making propaganda to win votes. Somehow or other they get votes and capture the prime post. This system is bad.

BTG: So if we don't choose our leaders by popular election, how will society be governed?

Srila Prabhupada: You require brahmanas, ksatriyas, vaisyas, and sudras. Just as when you want to construct a building, you require engineers. You don't want sweepers. Isn't that so? What will the sweeper do? No, there must be engineers. So if you follow the division of varnasrama, only ksatriyas are allowed to govern. And for the legislative assembly--the senators--only qualified brahmanas. Now the butcher is in the legislative assembly. What does he know about making laws? He is a butcher, but by winning votes he becomes a senator. At the present moment, by the principle of vox populi, a butcher goes to the legislature. So everything depends on training. In our Krsna conscious society, we're actually doing that, but in the case of politics, they forget it. There cannot be just one class. That is foolishness, because we have to engage different classes of men in different activities. If we do not know the art, then we will fail, because unless there is a division of work, there will be havoc. We have discussed all the responsibilities of the king in the Srimad-Bhagavatam. The different classes in society should cooperate exactly as the different parts of the body do. Although each part is meant for a different purpose, they all work for one cause: to maintain the body properly.

BTG: What is the actual duty of the government?

Srila Prabhupada: To understand what God wants and to see that society works toward that aim. Then people will be happy. But if the people work in the wrong direction, how can they be happy? The government's duty is to see that they are working in the right direction. The right direction is to know God and to act according to His instructions. But if the leaders themselves do not believe in the supremacy of God, and if they do not know what God wants to do, or what He wants us to do, then how can there be good government? The leaders are misled, and they are misleading others. That is the chaotic condition in the world today.

BTG: In the United States there has traditionally been the separation of church and state.

Srila Prabhupada: I am not talking about the church. Church or no church--that is not the point. The main thing is that the leaders have to accept that there is a supreme controller. How can they deny it? Everything in nature is going on under the Supreme Lord's control. The leaders cannot control nature, so why don't they accept a supreme controller? That is the defect in society. In every respect, the leaders are feeling that there must be a supreme controller, and yet they are still denying Him.

BTG: But suppose the government is atheistic...

Srila Prabhupada: Then there cannot be good government. The Americans say they trust in God. But without the science of God, that trust is simply fictitious. First take the science of God very seriously, then put your trust in Him. They do not know what God is, but we do. We actually trust in God.

They're manufacturing their own way of governing. And that is their defect. They will never be successful. They are imperfect, and if they go on manufacturing their own ways and means, they will remain imperfect. There will always be revolutions--one after another. There will be no peace.

BTG: Who determines the regulative principles of religion that people should follow?

Srila Prabhupada: God. God is perfect. He does that. According to the Vedic version, God is the leader of all living entities (nityo nityanam

cetanas cetananam). We are different from Him because He is all-perfect and we are not. We are very small. We have the qualities of God, but in very small quantity. Therefore we have only a little knowledge--that's airplane, but you cannot manufacture a mosquito. God has created the mosquito's body, which is also an "airplane." And that is the difference between God and us: we have knowledge, but it is not as perfect as God's. So the leaders of the government have to consult God; then they will rule perfectly.

BTG: Has God also devised the most perfect government?

Srila Prabhupada: Oh, yes. The ksatriyas ruled the government in Vedic times. When there was a war, the king was the first to fight. Just like your George Washington: he fought when there was a war. But what kind of president is ruling now? When there is a war, he sits very securely and telephones orders. He's not fit to be president. When there is war, the president should be the first to come forward and lead the battle.

BTG: But if man is small and imperfect, how can he execute God's perfect orders for a perfect government?

Srila Prabhupada: Although you may be imperfect, because you are carrying out my order, you're becoming perfect. You have accepted me as your leader, and I accept God as my leader. In this way society can be governed perfectly.

BTG: So good government means first of all to accept the Supreme Being as the real ruler of the government?

Srila Prabhupada: You cannot directly accept the Supreme Being. You must accept the servants of the Supreme Being--the brahmanas or Vaisnavas [devotees of the Lord]--as your guides. The government men are ksatriyas--the second class. The ksatriyas should take advice from the brahmanas or Vaisnavas and make laws accordingly. The vaisyas should carry out the ksatriyas' orders in practice. And the sudras should work under these three orders. Then society will be perfect.

The Peace Formula

Amid the antiwar protests of late 1966, Srila Prabhupada put out a mimeographed leaflet (among the very first of his publications in America) from his small storefront temple on New York's Second Avenue. Srila Prabhupada's followers and sympathizers handed this leaflet out by the thousands on the streets of New York, and later in San Francisco, Montreal, and other cities. His "Peace Formula" was an entirely new approach to the antiwar question, and for thousands of Americans, it provided the perfect solution.

The great mistake of modern civilization is to encroach upon others' property as though it were one's own and to thereby create an unnecessary disturbance of the laws of nature. These laws are very strong. No living entity can violate them. Only one who is Krsna conscious can easily overcome the stringency of the laws of nature and thus become happy and peaceful in the world.

As a state is protected by the department of law and order, so the state of Universe, of which this earth is only an insignificant fragment, is protected by the laws of nature. This material nature is one of the different potencies of God, who is the ultimate proprietor of everything that be. This earth is, therefore, the property of God, but we, the living entities, especially the so-called civilized human beings, are claiming God's property as our own, under both an individual and collective false conception. If you want peace, you have to remove this false conception from your mind and from the world. This false

claim of proprietorship by the human race on earth is partly or wholly the cause of all disturbances of peace on earth.

Foolish and so-called civilized men are claiming proprietary rights on the property of God because they have now become godless. You cannot be happy and peaceful in a godless society. In the Bhagavad-gita Lord Krsna says that He is the factual enjoyer of all activities of the living entities, that He is the Supreme Lord of all universes, and that He is the well-wishing friend of all beings. When the people of the world know this as the formula for peace, it is then and there that peace will prevail.

Therefore, if you want peace at all, you will have to change your consciousness into Krsna consciousness, both individually and collectively, by the simple process of chanting the holy name of God. This is a standard and recognized process for achieving peace in the world. We therefore recommend that everyone become Krsna conscious by chanting Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare.

This is practical, simple, and sublime. Four hundred and eighty years ago this formula was introduced in India by Lord Sri Caitanya, and now it is available in your country. Take to this simple process of chanting as above mentioned, realize your factual position by reading the Bhagavad-gita As It Is, and reestablish your lost relationship with Krsna, God. Peace and prosperity will be the immediate worldwide result.

Spiritual Communism

In 1971, during his historic visit to the Soviet Union, Srila Prabhupada was introduced to Professor Grigoriy Kotovsky, head of the India Department at the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences and chairman of the Indian studies department at the University of Moscow. As they sat informally in Dr. Kotovsky's office, the spiritual leader and the communist scholar vigorously discussed topics of mutual concern, and Srila Prabhupada proposed a radical reformation within modern communism. Srila Prabhupada: The other day I was reading the paper, Moscow News. There was a Communist congress, and the President declared, "We are ready to take others' experience to improve." So I think the Vedic concept of socialism or communism will much improve the idea of communism. For example, in a socialistic state the idea is that no one should starve; everyone must have his food. Similarly, in the Vedic concept of grhastha [householder] life it is recommended that a householder see that even a lizard or a snake living in his house should not starve. Even these lower creatures should be given food, and certainly all humans should. It is recommended that the grhastha, before taking his lunch, stand on the road and declare, "If anyone is still hungry, please come! Food is ready!" If there is no response, then the proprietor of the household takes his lunch. Modern society takes the people as a whole as the proprietor of a certain state, but the Vedic conception is isavasyam idam sarvam--everything is owned by isa, the supreme controller. Tena tyaktena bhunjithah--you may enjoy what is allotted to you by Him. Ma grdah kasya svid dhanam: but do not encroach upon others' property. This is the Isopanisad--Veda. The same idea is explained in the different Puranas. There are many good concepts in the Vedic literature about communism. So I thought that these ideas should be distributed to your most thoughtful men. Therefore I was anxious to speak.

Prof. Kotovsky: It is interesting that here in our country there is now great interest in the history of old, old thought. From this point of view, our Institute translated into Russian and published many literary monuments of great Indian culture. You will be interested to discover that we published some of the Puranas and parts of the Ramayana. There are volumes in Russian of Mahabharata and also a second edition of Mahabharata, translated in full. We have also published the full translation of Manu-smṛti with Sanskrit commentaries. Interest in these publications was so great that they sold out in a week. They are now completely out of stock. It was impossible to get them in the book market after a month. There is great interest among reading people here in Moscow and the U.S.S.R. toward ancient Vedic culture, and from this point of view we published many such books.

Srila Prabhupada: Among these Puranas, the Srimad-Bhagavatam is called the Maha-Purana.

Prof. Kotovsky: Maha-Purana.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. We have translated the full text--first we present the original Sanskrit text, its transliteration, the English equivalent for each word, then the translation, and then a purport, or explanation of the verse. In this way, there are eighteen thousand verses in Srimad-Bhagavatam. We are translating everything literally. You can see. Each and every verse is being done like that for the whole Bhagavata Purana. The opinion of the acaryas, the great saintly sages who are the preachers of the Bhagavata philosophy, is nigama-kaipataror galitam phalam: this is the ripened fruit of the Vedic desire tree (Srimad-Bhagavatam 1.1.3). It is accepted by all the Indian scholars, and Lord Caitanya especially preached this Bhagavatam. So we have the complete Bhagavatam in its English translation. If you want to see it, I can show you.

Prof. Kotovsky: It seems to me that in the Moscow and Leningrad libraries we have nearly all the major texts of ancient Indian culture, beginning from the Vedas, the original texts in Sanskrit. For instance, in the Leningrad branch of our Institute there are six or eight editions of Manu-smṛti. This Institute was founded in Imperial Russia in Leningrad, so in Leningrad we now have a branch of our Institute dealing mainly with the history of Asiatic culture. You will find here an account of what is being translated and what studies are being done on the history of Indian religion and also the state of Indian religion, Hinduism, in Hindu India today.

Srila Prabhupada: Hinduism is a very complex topic.

Prof. Kotovsky: Oh, yes. [They laugh.] Really, to my understanding, it is not a religion, from the European point of view; it is a way of life--religion, philosophy, a way of life, whatever you want.

Srila Prabhupada: This word Hindu is not a Sanskrit word. It was given by the Muhammadans. You know that there is a river, Indus, which in Sanskrit is called Sindhu. The Muhammadans pronounce s as h. Instead of Sindhu, they made it Hindu. So Hindu is a term that is not found in the Sanskrit dictionary, but it has come into use. But the real cultural institution is called varnasrama. There are four varnas (social divisions)--brahmana, ksatriya, vaisya, and sudra--and four asramas (spiritual divisions)--brahmacarya, grhastha, vanaprastha, and sannyasa. According to the Vedic concept of life, unless people take to this system or institution of four varnas and four asramas, actually they do not become civilized human beings. One has to take this process of four

divisions of social orders and four divisions of spiritual orders; that is called varnasrama. India's culture is based on this age-old Vedic system.

Prof. Kotovsky: Varnasrama.

Srila Prabhupada: Varnasrama. And in the Bhagavad-gita--perhaps you have read the Bhagavad-gita?

Prof. Kotovsky: Yes.

Srila Prabhupada: There, in the Bhagavad-gita (4.13), is the statement *catur-varnyam maya srstam*: this system was created by Visnu [God]. So since varnasrama is a creation of the Supreme, it cannot be changed. It is prevalent everywhere. It is like the sun. The sun is a creation of the Supreme. The sunshine is there in America, in Russia, and in India--everywhere. Similarly, this varnasrama system is prevalent everywhere in some form or another. Take, for example, the brahmanas, the most intelligent class of men. They are the brains of the society. The ksatriyas are the administrative class; then the vaisyas are the productive class, and the sudras are the worker class. These four classes of men are prevalent everywhere under different names. Because it is created by the original creator, so it is prevalent everywhere, varnasrama-dharma.

Prof. Kotovsky: It is interesting that in the opinion of some European and old Russian scholars, this varnasrama system is a later creation, and if you would read the old texts of Vedic literature, you would find a much more simple and agrarian society. It is the opinion of these scholars that the varnasrama system was introduced in Indian society in the late age of the Vedic era but not from the beginning. And if you would analyze the old texts, you would find that in the old classical India it was not so prevalent.

Srila Prabhupada: As far as we are concerned, it is mentioned in the Bhagavad-gita. *Catur-varnyam maya srstam*. The Bhagavad-gita was spoken five thousand years ago, and in the Bhagavad-gita it is said, "This system of the Bhagavad-gita was spoken by Me to the sun-god." So if you take an estimation of that period, it comes to forty million years ago. Can the European scholars trace back history five thousand years? Can they go back forty million years? We have evidence that this varnasrama system has been current at least five thousand years. The varnasrama system is also mentioned in the Visnu Purana (3.8.9). *Varnasramacara-vata purusena parah puman*. That is stated in the Visnu Purana.

Varnasrama-dharma is not a phenomenon of a historical period calculated in the modern age. It is natural. In the Srimad-Bhagavatam the comparison is given that just as in the body there are four divisions--the brain division, the arms division, the belly division, and the leg division--so by nature's way these four divisions are existing in the social body. There exist a class of men who are considered the brain, a class of men who are considered the arms of the state, a class of men who are called the productive class, and so on. There is no need of tracing history; it is naturally existing from the day of creation.

Prof. Kotovsky: You have said that in any society there are four divisions, but they are not so easy to distinguish. For instance, one can group together different social classes and professional groups into four divisions in any society; there is no difficulty. The only difficulty is, for instance, in the socialistic society--in our country and other socialist societies--how you can distinguish the productive group from the workers.

Srila Prabhupada: For example, we belong to the intellectual class of men. This is a division.

Prof. Kotovsky: Intelligent class, brahmanas. And you can also put together all the intelligentsia in that department.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes.

Prof. Kotovsky: And then the administrative class.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes.

Prof. Kotovsky: But who are the vaisyas and sudras? That is the difficulty. Because all others are workers--factory workers, collective farm workers, and so on. So from this point of view there is a great distinction, in my opinion, between socialist society and all societies preceding socialism, because in modern Western society you can group all social and professional classes in these particular class divisions--brahmanas, ksatriyas, vaisyas, and sudras: intellectuals, productive class, owners of the productive system (factory owners, for instance), and menial workers. But here you have no vaisyas because you have administrative staffs in factories, and you can call them ksatriyas, and then there are the sudras, the workers themselves, but no intermediate class.

Srila Prabhupada: That is stated. Kalau sudra-sambha vah. In this age practically all men are sudras. But if there are simply sudras, the social order will be disturbed. In spite of your state of sudras, the brahmana is found here, and that is necessary. If you do not divide the social order in such a way, there will be chaos. That is the scientific estimation of the Vedas. You may belong to the sudra class, but to maintain social order you have to train some of the sudras to become brahmanas. Society cannot depend on sudras. Nor can you depend on the brahmanas. To fulfill the necessities of your body, there must be a brain, arms, a stomach, and legs. The legs, the brain, and the arms are all required for cooperation to fulfill the mission of the whole body. So in any society you can see that unless there are these four divisions, there will be chaos. It will not work properly. It will be maya, and there will be disturbances. The brain must be there, but at the present moment there is a scarcity of brains. I am not talking of your state or my state; I am taking the world as a whole. Formerly the Indian administration was a monarchy. For example, Maharaja Pariksit was a ksatriya king. Just before his death, he renounced his royal order. He came to the forest to hear about self-realization. If you want to maintain the peace and prosperity of the whole world society, you must create a very intelligent class of men, a class of men expert in administration, a class of men expert in production, and a class of men to work. That is required; you cannot avoid it. That is the Vedic conception, mukha-bahuru-pada jah (Srimad-Bhagavatam 11.17.13). Mukha means "the face," bahu means "the arms," uru means "the waist," and pada, "the legs." Whether you take this state or that state, unless there is a smooth, systematic establishment of these four orders of life, the state or society will not run very smoothly.

Prof. Kotovsky: Generally it seems to me that this whole varnasrama system to some extent created a natural division of labor in the ancient society. But now division of labor among people in any society is much more complicated and sophisticated. So it is very confusing to group them into four classes.

Srila Prabhupada: Confusion has come to exist because in India, at a later day, the son of a brahmana, without having the brahminical

qualifications, claimed to be a brahmana; and others, out of superstition or a traditional way, accepted him as a brahmana. Therefore the Indian social order was disrupted. But in our Krsna consciousness movement we are training brahmanas everywhere, because the world needs the brain of a brahmana. Although Maharaja Pariksit was a monarch, he had a body of brahmanas and learned sages to consult, an advisory body. It is not that the monarchs were independent. In history it is found that if some of the monarchs were not in order, they were dethroned by the brahminical advisory council. Although the brahmanas did not take part in politics, they would advise the monarch how to execute the royal function. This is not too far in the past. How long ago was Asoka?

Prof. Kotovsky: That would be equal to what we call, in our terminology, ancient and medieval India.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes.

Prof. Kotovsky: In old and feudal India--you are right--it was very open, and the major part of the high administrative staff in the legislative department were brahmanas. Even in the Mogul era there were brahmanas to advise the Muslim emperors and administrators.

Srila Prabhupada: That is a fact--the brahmanas were accepted. They formed the advisory committee of the king. For example, Candragupta, the Hindu king, was in the age of Alexander the Great. Just before Candragupta, Alexander the Great went from Greece into India and conquered a portion. When Candragupta became emperor, he had Canakya as his prime minister. Perhaps you have heard this name Canakya?

Prof. Kotovsky: Yes.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, he was a great brahmana politician, and it is by his name that the quarter of New Delhi where all the foreign embassies are grouped together is called Canakya Puri. Canakya Pandita was a great politician and brahmana. He was vastly learned. His moral instructions are still valuable. In India, schoolchildren are taught Canakya Pandita's instructions. Although he was the prime minister, Canakya Pandita maintained his brahmana spirit; he did not accept any salary. If a brahmana accepts a salary, it is understood that he has become a dog. That is stated in the Srimad-Bhagavatam. He can advise, but he cannot accept employment. So Canakya Pandita was living in a cottage, but he was actually the prime minister. This brahminical culture and the brahminical brain is the standard of Vedic civilization. The Manu-smṛti is an example of the standard of brahminical culture. You cannot trace out from history when the Manu-smṛti was written, but it is considered so perfect that it is the Hindu law. There is no need for the legislature to pass a new law daily to adjust social order. The law given by Manu is so perfect that it can be applicable for all time. It is stated in Sanskrit to be tri-kaladau, which means "good for the past, present, and future."

Prof. Kotovsky: I am sorry to interrupt you, but to my knowledge all of Indian society in the second half of the eighteenth century was, by order of the British administration, under a law divergent from Hindu law. There was a lot of change. The actual Hindu law that was used by the Hindus was quite different from the original Manu-smṛti.

Srila Prabhupada: They have now made changes. Even our late Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru introduced his own Hindu code. He introduced the right of divorce in marriage, but this was not in the Manu-samhita. There are so many things they have changed, but before this modern age the whole

human society was governed by the Manu-smṛti. Strictly speaking, modern Hindus are not strictly following the Hindu scriptures.

But our point is not to try to bring back the old type of Hindu society. That is impossible. Our idea is to take the best ideas from the original idea. For example, in the Srimad-Bhagavatam there is a description of the communist idea. It is described to Maharaja Yudhisthira. If there is something good, a good experience, why shouldn't you adopt it? That is our point of view. Besides that, modern civilization is missing one all-important point--the aim of human life. Scientifically, the aim of human life is self-realization, atma-tattva. It is said that unless the members of human society come to the point of self-realization, they are defeated in whatever they do. Actually it is happening in modern society, despite all economic advancement and other advancement: instead of keeping peace and tranquillity, they are fighting--individually, socially, politically, and nationally. If we think about it in a cool-headed way, we can see that in spite of much improvement in many branches of knowledge, we are keeping the same mentality that is visible in the lower animal society. Our conclusion, according to the Srimad-Bhagavatam, is that this human body is not meant for working hard for sense gratification. But people do not know anything beyond that. They do not know about the next life. There is no scientific department of knowledge to study what happens after this body is finished. That is a great department of knowledge.

In the Bhagavad-gīta (2.13) it is said, dehino 'smin yatha-dehe. Deha means "this body." Dehinah means "the one who owns this body." Dehino 'smin yatha dehe kaumaram yauvanamjara. The dehi, the owner of the body, is within, and the body is changing from one form to another. The child has a certain type of body that changes to another type when he is older. But the owner of the body still exists throughout. Similarly, when this body is completely changed, we accept another body. People do not understand this. We are accepting different bodies, even in this life, from babyhood to childhood to boyhood to youth. That is a fact--everyone knows it. I was a child, but that childhood body is no more. I have a different body now. What is the difficulty in understanding that when this body will be no more, then I will have to accept another body? It is a great science.

Prof. Kotovsky: As you know, there are two quite opposite approaches to this problem. The approach is slightly different according to different religions, but at the same time, any religion recognizes and searches for the change-of-place experience, or transmigration of spirit. In Christian religion, in Judaism, in...

Srila Prabhupada: I am not talking religions with you. I am talking science and philosophy. One religion may accept one way; that is not our concern. We are concerned with the point that if the owner of the body is permanent in spite of different changes of body, there should be no difficulty in understanding that when this body changes entirely, the owner of the body will have another body.

Prof. Kotovsky: Another approach is that there is no separation. There are no two phenomena--the body and the owner of the body are the same.

Srila Prabhupada [emphatically]: No.

Prof. Kotovsky: When the body dies, the owner also dies.

Srila Prabhupada: No, no. But why is there no department of knowledge in the university to study this fact scientifically? That is my proposition--they are lacking. It may be as you say or it may be as I

say, but there must be a department of knowledge to study this. Recently a cardiologist in Toronto, a doctor, has accepted that there is a soul. I had some correspondence with him, and he strongly believes that there is a soul. So there is another point of view, but our process is to accept knowledge from authority. We have Krsna's statement on this subject, and He is authoritative. Krsna is accepted as the authority by all the acaryas. The Bhagavad-gita is accepted by scholarly and philosophical circles all over the world. Krsna says:

dehino 'smin yatha dehe
kaumaram yau vanam jara
tatha dehantara-praptir
dhiras tatra na muhyati

"Just as the soul gives up the childhood body and comes to the boyhood body and then to youth, the soul also gives up this body and accepts another body." (Bg. 2.13) This statement is given by Krsna, the greatest authority according to our tradition of knowledge. We accept such a statement without argument. That is the way of Vedic understanding.

Prof. Kotovsky: The difficulty is that our approach is that we do not believe in anything without argument. We can believe only things based on argument.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, that is allowed. That is stated in the Bhagavad-gita (4.34). Tad viddhi pranipatena pariprasnena sevaya. Pariprasna, argument, is allowed--but not in the challenging spirit, but rather with the spirit to understand. Argument is not denied. But as far as Vedic statements are concerned, they are infallible, and the scholars of the Vedas accept them in that way. For example, cow dung is the stool of an animal. Now, the Vedic statement is that as soon as you touch the stool of any animal--even if you touch your own stool--you are impure and have to purify yourself by taking a bath. According to the Hindu system, after evacuating one has to take a bath.

Prof. Kotovsky: That is quite understandable hygienic knowledge.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes.

Prof. Kotovsky: Yes, that is right.

Srila Prabhupada: But in another place it is stated that cow dung, although the stool of an animal, is pure. Even if you apply it to an impure place, that place becomes purified. This is superficially contradictory. In one place it is said that the stool of an animal is impure and as soon as you touch it you have to be purified, and in another place it says that cow dung is pure. According to our knowledge, it is contradictory--but still it is accepted by those who are followers of the Vedas. And the fact is that if you analyze cow dung, you will find that it contains all antiseptic properties.

Prof. Kotovsky: This I don't know.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, one professor in a medical college analyzed it, and he found it full of antiseptic properties. So Vedic statements, even if found contradictory, if analyzed scrutinizingly will prove correct. There may be an exception. But it is accepted, and when scientifically analyzed and examined, it is found to be correct.

Prof. Kotovsky: Yes, if you analyze from the scientific point of view, that is right.

Srila Prabhupada: There are other instances--for example, the conchshell. The conchshell is the bone of an animal, and according to Vedic instruction if you touch the bone of an animal you become impure and have to take a bath. But this conchshell is kept in the Deity room, because it is accepted as pure by the Vedas. My point is that we accept Vedic laws without argument. That is the principle followed by scholars. If you can substantiate your statements by quotations from the Vedas, then they are accepted. You are not required to substantiate them in other ways. There are different kinds of pramanas, or evidences. Proof by Vedic quotation is called sruti-pramana. As in the legal court if you can give statements from the law book your statement is accepted, so all statements you give, if supported by sruti-pramanas, are accepted by scholars. I think you know the Vedas are known as srutis.

Prof. Kotovsky: Yes.

Srila Prabhupada:

sruti-smrti-puranadi-
pancaratra- vidhim vina
aikantiki harer bhaktir
utpatayaiva kaipate
(Brahma-yamala)

Any system we accept must be supported by evidences of sruti, smrti, the Puranas, and Pancaratra. That which is not proved by these pramanas is a disturbance.

Prof. Kotovsky: Could I just say one thing? What is in the Vedas could also have been proved in a scientific way. Today, suppose there is a scientific laboratory. What is said by that lab is true. That it is true you accept, without going into the propriety of it. Suppose you have a scientific workshop or institution; if this workshop or scientific institution says, "This is not good," the general body will take it for granted: "Yes. The scientific body has said so, so it is understood."

Srila Prabhupada: Similarly, Vedic authoritative statements are accepted by the acaryas [great teachers]. India is governed by the acaryas--Ramanujacarya, Madhvacarya, Sankaracarya. They accept the Vedas, and their followers accept them. The benefit is that I do not waste my time to research whether cow dung is pure or impure; rather, because it is stated in the Vedas to be pure, I accept it. I save my time by accepting the sruti-pramana. In that way there are different statements in the Vedas for sociology and politics or anything, for veda means "knowledge."

sarvasya caham hrdis sannivisto
mattah smrtirjnanam apohanam ca
vedais ca sarvair aham eva vedyo
vedanta-krd veda-vid eva caham
(Bg.15.15)

Prof. Kotovsky: May I put one question to you? Have you many branches of your society in the world?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes.

Prof. Kotovsky: Where is your main center, and where are the branches of the Krsna consciousness society?

Srila Prabhupada: Of course, I have over sixty-five branches. accepted the principles. Just like these boys. [Srila Prabhupada points to his two secretaries.]

Prof. Kotovsky: But does that mean that these students abstain from normal Western, European universities? For instance, can a normal student from one of the various universities who is attending lectures in the normal way also be initiated and admitted to your community?

Srila Prabhupada: If you want to live in our community and be initiated, we welcome you. If not, come try to understand our philosophy, read our books--there are so many books, magazines, questions, and answers. Try to understand the philosophy. It is not that all of a sudden a student comes and becomes our disciple. He first of all comes, associates, and tries to understand. We do not canvass. He voluntarily says that he wants to be a disciple.

Prof. Kotovsky: What happens if, for instance, one is not a student but a young worker or the young son of a farmer? Would he renounce his whole life and join your community in a given center? How would he maintain himself in his day-to-day life, in material life?

Srila Prabhupada: As I told you, this propaganda is meant for creating brahmanas all over the world, because the brahmana element is lacking. One who seriously comes to us has to become a brahmana, so he should adopt the occupation of a brahmana and give up the occupation of a ksatriya or sudra. But if one wants to keep his profession and also at the same time understand our movement, that is allowed. We have many professors following our movement. There is Howard Wheeler, a professor at Ohio State University. He is my disciple. He is continuing with his professorship, but almost all the money he is getting he is spending for this Krsna consciousness. Grhasthas, those who are in householder life outside, are expected to contribute fifty percent of their income for our society, keep twenty-five percent for family, and keep twenty-five percent for personal emergencies. But Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu teaches that it does not matter whether one is a grhastha (householder), or in the renounced order, or a brahmana, or a sudra. Lord Caitanya says, "Anyone who understands the science of Krsna becomes My spiritual master." The actual words in Bengali are kiba vipra, kiba nyasi, sudra kene naya. Do you understand a little Bengali?

Prof. Kotovsky: A little.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, as a vibration. Yei krsna-tattva-vetta, sei 'guru' haya. "Anyone who understands the science of Krsna can become a spiritual master." (Caitanya-caritamrta, Madhya 8.128)

Prof. Kotovsky: But by creating brahmanas from different social classes of society, you deny the old prescription of the Hindu scriptures.

Srila Prabhupada: No, I establish it.

Prof. Kotovsky: According to all scriptures--the Puranas, etc.--every member of one of these four classes of varnas has to be born within it.

Srila Prabhupada: No, no, no, no.

Prof. Kotovsky: That is the foundation of all the varnas...

Srila Prabhupada: No, no. I am sorry.

Prof. Kotovsky: The foundation of all the varnas...

Srila Prabhupada: You have spoken incorrectly. With great respect I beg to submit that you are not speaking correctly. In the Bhagavad-gita (4.13) it is stated, catur-varnyam maya-srstam guna-karma-vibhagasah. "These four orders of brahmanas, ksatriyas, vaisyas, and sudras were

created by Me according to quality and work." There is no mention of birth.

Prof. Kotovsky: I agree with you that this is the addition of later brahmanas who tried to perpetuate these qualities.

Srila Prabhupada: That has killed the Indian culture. Otherwise there would have been no necessity of the division of part of India into Pakistan. Not only that, but from the historical point of view this whole planet was Bharata-varsha, and it was controlled by one flag up to the time of Maharaja Pariksit. Then it gradually separated. This is history. Lately they have separated Pakistan. So Bharata-varsha is now crippled into a small piece of land. Otherwise, according to Vedic scripture, this whole planet is called Bharata-varsha. Formerly it was named Ilavrta-varsha. But since Emperor Bharata ruled this planet, it is called Bharata-varsha. So this culture, Krsna consciousness, was always existent. Consider any religion--Christian, Muhammadan, Jewish. They are at most two to three thousand years old. But you cannot trace out the beginning of this Vedic scripture. It is therefore called sanatana, eternal. This culture is for this whole human society. It is not a religious faith. Religious faith you can change, but real dharma you cannot change. Try to understand Krsna. In the Bhagavad-gita (18.66) He says, sarva-dharman parityajya mam ekam saranam vraja: "Give up all other forms of religion and just surrender to Me." That is real knowledge--to surrender to the Supreme. You or I--anyone--is surrendered to someone. That is a fact. Our life is by surrender, is it not? Do you disagree with this point?

Prof. Kotovsky: To some extent you surrender.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, to the full extent.

Prof. Kotovsky: You have to surrender to the society, for instance. To the whole people.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, to the whole people, or to the state or to the king or the government or whatever you say. This surrender must be there.

Prof. Kotovsky: The only difficulty is that we cannot half surrender to a government or a king. The principal difference is of surrender to a king, to a person, or to the society.

Srila Prabhupada: No, that is only a change of color. But the principle of surrender is there. Whether you surrender to monarchy, democracy, aristocracy, or dictatorship, you have to surrender; that is a fact. Without surrender there is no life. It is not possible. So we are educating people to surrender to the Supreme, wherefrom you get all protection, just as Krsna says (sarva-dharman parityajya mam ekam saranam vraja). No one can say, "No, I am not surrendered to anyone." Not a single person. The difference is where he surrenders. The ultimate surrendering object is Krsna. Therefore in the Bhagavad-gita (7.19) Krsna says, bahunam janmanam ante jnanavan mam prapadyate: "After surrendering to so many things birth after birth, when one is factually wise he surrenders unto Me." Vasudevah sarvam iti sa mahatma sudurlabhah: "Such a mahatma is very rare."

Prof. Kotovsky: But at the same time it seems to me that surrender is to be accompanied by revolt. The history of mankind has proved that mankind has developed only by revolt against some kind of surrender. In the medieval age there was the French Revolution. It was revolt against surrender. But this revolution itself was surrender to the rank and file of the people. You are agreed?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes.

Prof. Kotovsky: So it is not enough to come to a full stop. Surrender is to be accompanied with revolt against some and surrender to other people.

Srila Prabhupada: But the surrender will be fully stopped when it is surrender to Krsna.

Prof. Kotovsky: Ah, ah.

Srila Prabhupada: That is full stop--no more surrender. Any other surrender you have to change by revolution. But when you come to Krsna, then it is sufficient. You are satisfied. I'll give you an example: a child is crying, and people move him from one lap to another. Oh, he does not stop. But as soon as the baby comes to the lap of his mother...

Prof. Kotovsky: It stops.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, full satisfaction. So this surrender, these changes, will go on in different categories. But the sum total of all this surrender is surrender to maya. Therefore, in the Bhagavad-gita it is said that this surrender, neglecting Krsna, is all maya. Either you surrender to this or to that, but final surrender is surrender to Krsna; then you will be happy. The process of surrender is there, but surrender to Krsna keeps one quite satisfied, transcendently.

Prof. Kotovsky: Haven't you come across hostile attitudes to your teachings from orthodox Hindus or brahmanas in India?

Srila Prabhupada: We have subdued them.

Prof. Kotovsky: Ah.

Srila Prabhupada: Any orthodox Hindu may come and challenge, but we have our weapons--the Vedic literatures. So no one has come. Even Christian priests in America love me. They say, "These boys are American, Christian, Jewish, and now they are so much after God. But we could not deliver them." They are admitting it. Their fathers and their parents come to me, offer their obeisances, and say, "Swamiji, it is our great fortune that you have come here to teach God consciousness." So on the contrary, I have been well received. In India also, since you inquired of India, all other sects are admitting that before me many kinds of svamis went to the Western countries, but they could not convert even a single person to Krsna consciousness. They are admitting that. As far as I am concerned, I don't take any credit, but I am confident that because I am presenting the Vedic knowledge as it is, without adulteration, it is being effective. That is my confidence. If you have the right medicine and you administer it to a patient, you must be sure that he will be cured.

Prof. Kotovsky: How many out of your one thousand disciples do you have in India itself? How many of your community do you have in India?

Srila Prabhupada: In India?

Prof. Kotovsky: Yes.

Srila Prabhupada: In India there are many Krsna conscious persons--hundreds, thousands, millions. In India there is no question. There is not a single Hindu who is not Krsna conscious.

Prof. Kotovsky: Yes, I understand.

Srila Prabhupada: Vaisnavas. This is called the Vaisnava cult. You have been in India, so as it is commonly known, there are many millions of Vaisnavas. For example, this gentleman [an Indian gentleman present] is the commander of Air India airlines. He is not my disciple, but he is a Vaisnava, Krsna conscious. Similarly, in India there are millions of Krsna conscious persons. There are even Muhammadans who are Krsna

conscious. At Gorakhpur University there is a Muhammadan professor who is a great devotee of Lord Krsna. So this is natural. It is said in the Caitanya-caritamṛta that Krsna consciousness is everywhere, in everyone's heart. It simply has to be awakened by this process. That is all. It is there in your heart also. It is not that it is foreign to you. In everyone's heart there is Krsna consciousness. By this process we have to awaken it. It is just like the way the sun rises. It is not that all of a sudden the sun comes from nowhere. It is there, but it rises in the morning. Similarly, this Krsna consciousness is everywhere, but some way or another it is now covered. By this process it is reawakened and aroused by association.

Prof. Kotovsky: You came yesterday to Moscow. Have you seen something here in Moscow?

Srila Prabhupada: No, I am not very much interested in sight-seeing.

Prof. Kotovsky: But in any case, just to stay in an old-style hotel is not interesting--not many people to see. And you are leaving the day after tomorrow?

Srila Prabhupada: That is my program.

Prof. Kotovsky: You are leaving for the United States or for Europe?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, for Europe. Paris. And we have two very big ceremonies in London and San Francisco. They are making arrangements for the Ratha-yatra Car Festival. This car festival is observed in Jagannatha Puri. You have been to Jagannatha Puri?

Prof. Kotovsky: Yes, the car festival has been held from immemorial times. A very old tradition. Huge cars.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, and it has now been introduced in the Western countries in London and San Francisco, and gradually maybe we will introduce it in other countries also.

Prof. Kotovsky: In London there is a large Indian community.

Srila Prabhupada: No, no. This is organized by the Englishmen and Americans. The Indian communities in London and San Francisco are trying to become--you know the word? Sahib?

Prof. Kotovsky: [Laughs.] Westernized. [They both laugh.] A very great social anthropologist at the university has written something very interesting. He says there are two processes--the process of Westernization among brahmanas, mainly the upper class, and the process called Sanskritization, which is the process of adopting brahmana rituals, etc., by so-called lower classes, even untouchables. It is a very interesting process in India just now. But India's position, unfortunately, is problematic.

Srila Prabhupada: The difficulty is that India is nowhere. They are trying to imitate Western life, but from a materialistic or technical point of view, they are one hundred years back.

Prof. Kotovsky: Yes, that is right. But what to do for India?

Srila Prabhupada: There is one thing I am experiencing. If India's spiritual asset is distributed, that will increase India's honor. Because everywhere I go, people still adore Indian culture. If this treasure-house of India's spiritual knowledge is properly distributed, at least people outside of India will understand that they are getting something from India.

Prof. Kotovsky: Of course, you're right. The Indian cultural heritage is to be made known everywhere. But at the same time, in what way would this benefit the Indian masses themselves? They are sitting in India, and they have nothing to gain from the spreading of the Indian cultural

heritage all over the world. Indian villages have to have fertilizers, tractors, etc.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, we do not object to that.

Prof. Kotovsky: Yes, I don't think you can object, but at the same time, something has to be done in India. One may call it Westernization, but this introduction to an industrial technological revolution is needed in all fields of Indian life--agriculture, industry, etc.

Srila Prabhupada: Arjuna, before understanding the Bhagavad-gita, was a fighter, and after understanding the Bhagavad-gita he remained a fighter. So we don't want to change the position. For example, you are a respectable professor, a teacher. We don't say that you must change your position. We have come to convince you about our philosophy. That is all. Arjuna was refusing to fight. "Krsna, I don't want to kill my relatives. I do not want this kingdom." But he was taught the Bhagavad-gita, and at the end when Krsna inquired, "What is your decision now?" he said, *karisye vacanam ta va*--"Yes, I shall act as You say."

(Bg.18.72) That means that his consciousness changed. He was a fighter, and he remained a fighter, but he changed his consciousness. We want that. We don't want to disturb the present condition of society. We are not against technology. No, but we try to make one understand this Krsna consciousness. That is our program.

Prof. Kotovsky: Of course, at the same time the final goal of any consciousness is to change the society--to make it a better society.

Srila Prabhupada: That is automatic.

Prof. Kotovsky: I am not really so happy that the ultimate goal is not to disturb society, because in modern society there are many things to be changed through consciousness.

Srila Prabhupada: That preliminary change is to follow rules and regulations of austerity. For example, don't take intoxicants.

Prof. Kotovsky: No indulging in intoxicants--simplicity, etc.

Srila Prabhupada: So if one takes to this process...

Prof. Kotovsky: Then the others will come automatically.

Srila Prabhupada: One's whole life will change, because these four things--illicit sex life, intoxicants, meat-eating and gambling--are very great impediments to social improvement.

Prof. Kotovsky: That will automatically make life simpler, because a person who does not indulge in illicit sex, intoxicants, and such other things has to lead a comparatively simple life.

Srila Prabhupada: The other day I was speaking in Bombay with a respectable gentleman. I was telling him that Krsna says:

mam hi partha vyapasritya
ye 'pi syuh papa-yonayah
striyo vaisyas tatha sudras
te 'pi yanti param gatim

"Even those who are lowborn [papa-yonayah]--stri, vaisyas, and sudras--are also included by accepting Me. By accepting My shelter they are also elevated to the transcendental position." (Bg. 9.32) Now why have the higher classes of Hindu society neglected this injunction of the Bhagavad-gita? Suppose one is papa-yonayah, lowborn. Krsna says that he can be "elevated to the transcendental position if he accepts Me." Why wasn't this message propagated by the higher class of people so that the so-called lowborn could be elevated? Why did they reject them? The

result was that instead of accepting the Muhammadans, the Indians rejected them, and now they are partitioned off. They have become eternal enemies of India. So for the first time we are trying to elevate persons to the higher position of Krsna consciousness, even if one is lowborn. Because the soul is pure. In the Vedas it is said that the soul is untouched by any material contamination; it is simply temporarily covered. This covering should be removed. Then one becomes pure. That is the mission of human life--to uncover ourselves from this material environment, come to spiritual understanding, and surrender to Krsna. Then life is perfect.

The Tiny World of Modern Science

In April 1973, during a long morning walk at Venice Beach, in Los Angeles, Srila Prabhupada turned to the subject of modern science and scientists. With philosophical rigor, profound common sense, and disarming frankness, he exposed the narrowmindedness and illogic behind the scientists' commonly accepted theories about the origin of life. The students on hand included Dr. Thoudam Singh, an organic chemist, who captured the dialogue on tape.

Srila Prabhupada: The whole world of science and technology is running on the false idea that life is born from matter. We cannot allow this nonsensical theory to go unchallenged. Life does not come from matter. Matter is generated from life. This is not theory; it is fact. Science is based on an incorrect theory; therefore all its calculations and conclusions are wrong, and people are suffering because of this. When all these mistaken modern scientific theories are corrected, people will become happy. So we must challenge the scientists and defeat them. Otherwise they will mislead the entire society.

Matter changes in six phases: birth, growth, maintenance, production of by-products, dwindling, and death. But the life within matter, the spirit soul, is eternal; it goes through no such changes. Life appears to be developing and decaying, but actually it is simply passing through each of these six phases until the material body can no longer be maintained. Then the old body dies, and the soul enters a new body. When our clothing is old and worn, we change it. Similarly, one day our bodies become old and useless, and we pass on to a new body.

As Krsna says in the Bhagavad-gita (2.13), *dehino 'smin yatha dehe kaumaram yau vanam jara/ tatha dehantara-praptih*: "As the embodied soul continually passes, in this body, from boyhood to youth to old age, the soul similarly passes into another body at death." And a little later (2.18): *antavanta ime deha nityasyoktah saririnah*. This means that only the material body of the indestructible and eternal entity is subject to destruction. This material body is perishable, but the life within the body is nitya, eternal.

According to the Vedas, the measurement of the soul within the body is one ten-thousandth part of the tip of a hair. This is very small; in fact, it is atomic. Yet because of that atomic spiritual energy, my body is working. Is it so difficult to understand? Suppose a man thinks himself very stout and strong. Why is he stout and strong? Only because within his body is a small spiritual spark. But as soon as the spiritual spark is gone, his body dies, and his strength and vigor become void. If scientists say that matter is the cause and origin of life, then let them bring just one dead man back to life by injecting him with chemicals. But this they cannot do.

Dr. Singh: Since scientists cannot see the spirit soul, they say its existence is very doubtful.

Srila Prabhupada: How can they see it? It is too small to see. Where is such seeing power?

Dr. Singh: Still, they want to sense it by some means.

Srila Prabhupada: If you inject just one grain of deadly poison into someone, he immediately dies. No one can see the poison or how it acts. But the poison is acting nevertheless. In the same way, the Vedas say that because the minute particle called the soul is within the body, the whole body is working nicely. If I pinch myself, I immediately feel it, because I am conscious all over my skin. But as soon as the soul is absent, which is the case when my body dies, you can take this same skin and cut it and chop it, and no one will protest. Why is this simple thing so hard to understand? Is this not detecting spirit?

Dr. Singh: That is the soul. But what about God?

Srila Prabhupada: First of all let us understand the soul. The soul is a small God. If you understand the sample, then you can understand the whole.

Now here is matter. [Srila Prabhupada points at a dead tree with his cane.] Formerly leaves and twigs were growing from this tree. Why are they not growing now? Can the scientists answer this question?

Karandhara dasa: They would say the chemical composition has changed.

Srila Prabhupada: All right, then if they are so advanced in knowledge of chemistry, they must supply the proper chemicals to make branches and leaves grow again.

Brahmananda Swami: Knowledge means that one must be able to demonstrate his theory. They should be able to show in their laboratories that life is caused by a combination of chemicals.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, the scientific method means first observation, then hypothesis, and then demonstration. But these scientists cannot demonstrate their hypothesis. They simply observe and then speak nonsense.

Scientists say that the chemicals are the cause of life. But all the chemicals that were there when the tree was living are still present. And life energy is also there. There are thousands of microbes in the tree, and they are all living entities. No one can claim that life energy is lacking in the body of this tree.

Dr. Singh: But what about the life energy of the tree itself?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, that is the difference. The living force is individual, and the particular individual living entity which was the tree has left. This must be the case, since all the chemicals that are necessary to support life are still there yet the tree is dead.

Here is another example: suppose I am living in an apartment, and then I leave it. I am gone, but many other living entities remain there--ants, spiders, and so forth. It is not true that simply because I have left the apartment, it can no longer accommodate life. Other living entities are still living there. It is simply that I--an individual living being--have left. The chemicals in the tree are like the apartment; they are simply the environment for the individual living force--the soul--to act through. Thus the scientists will never be able to produce life in the chemical laboratory.

The so-called scientists say that life begins from chemicals. But the real question is, "Where have the chemicals come from?" The chemicals come from life, and this means that life has mystic power. For

example, an orange tree contains many oranges, and each orange contains chemicals--citric acid and others. So where have these chemicals come from? Obviously they have come from the life within the tree. The scientists are missing the origin of the chemicals. They have started their investigation from the chemicals, but they cannot identify the origin of the chemicals. Chemicals come from the supreme life--God. Just as the living body of a man produces many chemicals, the supreme life (the Supreme Lord) is producing all the chemicals found in the atmosphere, in the water, in humans, in animals, and in the earth. And that is called mystic power. Unless the mystic power of the Supreme Lord is accepted, there is no solution to the problem of the origin of life. Dr. Singh: The scientists will reply that they cannot believe in mystic power.

Srila Prabhupada: But they must explain the origin of the chemicals. Anyone can see that an ordinary tree is producing many chemicals; they cannot deny it. But how does it produce them? Since they cannot answer this, they must accept that the living force has mystic power. I cannot explain how my fingernail is growing out of my finger; it is beyond the power of my brain. In other words, it is growing by inconceivable potency, or acintya-sakti. So if acintya-sakti exists in an ordinary being, imagine how much acintya-sakti God possesses.

The difference between God and me is that although I have the same potencies as God, I can produce only a small quantity of chemicals, whereas He can produce enormous quantities. I can produce a little water in the form of perspiration, but God can produce the seas. Analysis of one drop of seawater gives you the qualitative analysis of the sea, without any mistake. Similarly, the ordinary living being is part and parcel of God, so by analyzing the living beings we can begin to understand God. In God there is great mystic potency. God's mystic potency is working swiftly, exactly like an electric machine. Machines operate by certain energy, and they are so nicely made that all the work is done simply by pushing a button. Similarly, God said, "Let there be creation," and there was creation. Considered in this way, the workings of nature are not very difficult to understand. God has such wonderful potencies that the creation, on His order alone, immediately takes place.

Brahmananda Swami: Scientists don't accept God or acintya-sakti.

Srila Prabhupada: That is their rascaldom. God exists, and His acintya-sakti also exists.

Karandhara dasa: Scientists say that life was created biochemically.

Srila Prabhupada: And I say to them: "Why don't you create life? Your biology and chemistry are very advanced, so why don't you create life?"

Karandhara dasa: They say they will create life in the future.

Srila Prabhupada: When in the future? If the scientists know the creative process, why can't they create life now? If life has a biochemical origin, and if biologists and chemists are so advanced, then why can't they create life in their laboratories? When this crucial point is raised, they say, "We shall do it in the future." Why in the future? That is nonsense. Trust no future, however pleasant. What is the meaning of their advancement? They are talking nonsense.

Karandhara dasa: They say that they are right on the verge of creating life.

Srila Prabhupada: But that is also the future, in a different way. They must accept that they still do not know the truth about the origin of

life. Since they are expecting to be able to create life in the future, presently their knowledge must be imperfect. Their proposal is something like giving someone a postdated check. Suppose I owe you ten thousand dollars and I say, "Yes, I will pay you the entire sum with this postdated check. Is that all right?" If you are intelligent, you will see something tangible." Similarly, the scientists cannot produce even a single blade of grass by biochemistry, yet still they claim that life is produced from matter. What is this nonsense? Is no one questioning this? We can prove that life began from life. Here is the proof: when a father begets a child, the father is living, and the child is living. But where is the scientist's proof that life comes from matter? We can prove that life begins from life, and we can also prove that the original life is Krsna. But what evidence exists that a child is ever born out of a dead stone? The scientists cannot prove that life comes from matter. They are leaving that aside for the future.

Karandhara dasa: The basis of what the scientists call "scientific integrity" is that they talk only about what they can experience through their senses.

Srila Prabhupada: Then they are suffering from what we call "Doctor Frog's philosophy." There was once a frog who had lived all his life in a well. One day a friend visited him and informed him of the existence of the Atlantic Ocean.

"Oh, what is this Atlantic Ocean?" asked the frog in the well.

"It is a vast body of water," his friend replied.

"How vast? Is it double the size of this well?"

"Oh, no, much larger," his friend replied.

"How much larger? Ten times the size?"

In this way the frog went on calculating. But what was the possibility of his ever understanding the depths and fur reaches of the great ocean? Our faculties, experience, and powers of speculation are always limited. The frog was always thinking in terms relative to his well. He had no power to think otherwise. Similarly, the scientists are estimating the Absolute Truth, the cause of all causes, with their imperfect senses and minds, and thus they are bound to be bewildered. The essential fault of the so-called scientists is that they have adopted the inductive process to arrive at their conclusions. For example, if a scientist wants to determine whether or not man is mortal by the inductive process, he must study every man to try to discover if some or one of them may be immortal. The scientist says, "I cannot accept the proposition that all men are mortal. There may be some men who are immortal. I have not yet seen every man. Therefore how can I accept that man is mortal?" This is called the inductive process. And the deductive process means that your father, your teacher, or your guru says that man is mortal, and you accept it.

Dr. Singh: So there is an ascending process of gaining knowledge and a descending process?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. The ascending process will never be successful, because it relies on information gathered through the senses, and the senses are imperfect. So we accept the descending process.

God cannot be known by the inductive process. Therefore He is called *adhoksaja*, which means "unknowable by direct perception." The scientists say there is no God, because they are trying to understand by direct perception. But He is *adhoksaja*; therefore the scientists are ignorant of God because they are missing the method of knowing Him. In

order to understand transcendental science, one must approach a bona fide spiritual master, hear from him submissively, and render service to him. Lord Krsna explains this in the Bhagavad-gita (4.34): tad viddhi pranipatena pariprasnena sevaya.

Dr. Singh: There is a scientific journal called Nature. It contains articles concerning natural products like plants and animals, but it does not mention God--only nature.

Srila Prabhupada: We may correctly observe that plants are being produced by nature, but we must ask, "What has produced nature?" To ask this question is intelligence.

Dr. Singh: The scientists don't think about that. Srila Prabhupada: So they are fools. As soon as we speak of nature, the next question should be, "Whose nature?" For instance, I speak of my nature, and you speak of your nature. Therefore, as soon as nature is mentioned, the next inquiry should be, "Whose nature?"

Nature means energy, and as soon as you speak of energy, you must accept that there is a source of that energy. For example, the source of electric energy is the electric powerhouse. Electricity is not produced automatically. We must install a powerhouse and a generator. Similarly, in the Vedas it is said that material nature is working under Krsna's direction.

Dr. Singh: So do you mean to say that science has started from an intermediate point--not from the original point?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, that is it exactly. They are ignorant of the origin. The scientists start from one point--but where does that point come from? That they do not know, in spite of vast research. One has to accept that the original source is God, who is full of all mystic powers and from whom everything emanates. He Himself says in the Bhagavad-gita (10.8): aham sarvasya prabhavo mattah sarvam pravartate, "I am the source of all spiritual and material worlds. Everything emanates from Me." Our conclusions are not based on blind faith; they are most scientific. Matter comes from life. In life--in the origin--there are unlimited material resources; that is the great mystery of creation.

Modern scientific research is just like Sankhya philosophy, which analyzes material elements. Sankhya means "to count." We are also Sankhya philosophers to some extent, because we count and analyze the material elements; this is land, this is water, this is air, this is sunshine, this is fire. Furthermore, I can count my mind, my intelligence, and my ego. Beyond my ego, however, I cannot count. But Krsna says that there is existence beyond the ego, and that existence is the living force--the spirit soul. This is what the scientists do not know. They think that life is merely a combination of material elements, but Krsna denies this in the Bhagavad-gita (7.5). Apareyam itas tv anyam prakrtim viddhi me param: "Besides this inferior nature there is a superior energy of Mine." The inferior energy is the material elements, and the superior energy is the living entity.

bhumir apo 'nalo vayuh
kham mano buddhir eva ca
ahankara itiyam me
bhinna prakrtir astadha

"Earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, intelligence, and false ego--all together these eight comprise My separated material energies." (Bg.

7.4) Krsna explains here in the Bhagavad-gita that vayu (gas) comes from Him, and that finer than the gases is kham (ether). Finer than ether is the mind, finer than the mind is intelligence, and finer than the intelligence is the soul. But the scientists do not know this. They can perceive only gross things. They mention vayu, but where does the vayu come from? Where does the gas come from?

Dr. Singh: That they cannot answer.

Srila Prabhupada: But we can answer. We have the knowledge that gas comes from kham, or ether, and ether comes from mind, mind comes from intelligence, and intelligence comes from Krsna's superior energy, the spirit soul.

Dr. Singh: Are both inferior and superior energies studied in Sankhya philosophy?

Srila Prabhupada: No. Sankhya philosophers do not know of superior energy. They simply analyze the material elements, just as the scientists do. Neither the scientists nor the Sankhya philosophers know anything of the spirit soul. They are simply analyzing Krsna's material energy.

Dr. Singh: They are analyzing the creative material elements?

Srila Prabhupada: Material elements are not creative! The soul is creative. No one can create life with only matter, and matter cannot create itself. You, a living entity, can mix hydrogen and oxygen to create water. But matter itself has no creative energy. If you place a bottle of hydrogen near a bottle of oxygen, will they automatically combine, without your help?

Dr. Singh: No. They must be mixed.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, the superior energy--the living entity--is required. Oxygen and hydrogen are inferior energy, but when the superior energy mixes them, then they can become water.

Inferior energy has no power unless superior energy is involved. This sea [indicating the Pacific Ocean] is calm and quiet. But when superior force--air--pushes it, high waves are created. The sea has no power without the superior force. Similarly, there is another force superior to the air, and another, and another, until we arrive at Krsna, the most superior force. This is real research. Suppose a railroad train is just starting to move. The engine pushes one car, which pushes another, and so on, until the entire train is moving. And the whole motion originates with the engineer, a living entity. Similarly, in the cosmic creation, Krsna gives the first push, and then, by means of many successive pushes, the entire cosmic manifestation comes into being. This is explained in the Bhagavad-gita (9.10): mayadhyaksena prakrtih suyate sa-caracaram. "This material nature is working under My direction, O son of Kunti, and is producing all moving and unmoving beings." And a little later:

sarva-yonisu kaunteya
murtayah sambha vanti yah
tasam brahma mahad yonir
aham bija-pradah pita

"All species of life are made possible by birth in material nature, and I am the seed-giving father." (Bg. 14.4) For example, if we sow a banyan seed, a huge tree eventually grows up and produces millions of new seeds. Each of these seeds, in turn, produces another tree with

millions of new seeds, and so on. So Krsna is the original seed-giving father.

Unfortunately, the scientists only observe the immediate cause; they do not perceive the remote cause. There are two causes--the immediate cause and the remote cause. Krsna is described in the Vedas as sarva-karana-karanam, the cause of all causes. If you understand the cause of all causes, then you understand everything. Yasmin vijnate sarvam evam vijnatam bhavati: "If you know the original cause, the later, subordinate causes are automatically known." Although the scientists are searching after the original cause, when the Vedas, which contain perfect knowledge, give the original cause, they won't accept. They keep to their partial, imperfect knowledge.

Dr. Singh: Scientists are worried about energy sources, and now they are working to utilize solar energy for cooking, lighting, and various other purposes. They are hoping that when they exhaust all other energy sources, they will be able to use solar energy.

Srila Prabhupada: This is not a very new theory. Everyone knows that because the roots of trees store the sun's energy, it is possible to get fire from a tree. These scientists are tiny creatures, but they are very proud. We don't give them credit, because they are simply stating what everyone knows. As soon as you cut a tree, you cannot get fire from it. It has to be dried in the sun. When the energy is gathered from the sun, the tree can be utilized for fire. Actually everything is being maintained by the sun's energy, but the scientists don't know where the sun's energy comes from. In the Bhagavad-gita (15.12) Krsna says:

yad aditya-gatam tejo
jagad bhasayate 'khilam
yac candramasi yac cagnau
tat tejo viddhi mamakam

"The splendor of the sun, which dissipates the darkness of this whole world, comes from Me. And the splendor of the moon and the splendor of fire are also from Me."

Again, Krsna says, jyotisam ra vir amsuman: "Of lights I am the radiant sun." (Bg. 10.21) Also, in the Eleventh Chapter of the Bhagavad-gita Arjuna tells Krsna, sasi-surya-netram: "The sun and moon are among Your great, unlimited eyes." This knowledge is contained in the Bhagavad-gita, but scientists cannot attain this knowledge by their speculation. Can they?

Dr. Singh: It is not possible.

Srila Prabhupada: And what is their knowledge? The scriptures say that even if you counted all the grains of sand on earth, you still would not be able to understand God. All this material counting does not mean that you have the capacity to understand the unlimited. But it is even beyond their capacity to count all the material things. Why are the scientists so proud of their energy and capacities? They do not even know of the material things, and what to speak of the spiritual. As far as scientists and other living entities are concerned, their knowledge is limited. But this is not so for Krsna. If we receive knowledge from Krsna, that knowledge is perfect. In the scriptures we receive information that there are nine hundred thousand species of life existing within the ocean. The information given in the scriptures is exact, because it comes from Krsna, and as Krsna Himself says: "As the

Supreme Personality of Godhead, I know everything that has happened in the past, all that is happening in the present, and all things that are yet to come." (Bg. 7.26)

Dr. Singh: We have to take knowledge from the supreme knower.

Srila Prabhupada: for perfect knowledge we have to approach a superior person, a guru. One may try to learn a subject by reading books at home, but he can learn much better by going to college and approaching a professor. In the same way, we have to approach a guru. Of course, if we encounter a false guru, our knowledge is false. But if our guru is perfect, our knowledge is perfect. We accept Krsna as our guru. If He is perfect in knowledge, our knowledge is also perfect. As far as we're concerned, we do not have to be perfect in ourselves, but if we receive knowledge from the perfect, our knowledge is perfect. We cannot say that we understand that there are nine hundred thousand species of life in the ocean because we have studied the entire ocean. Rather, we say that we take this information from scriptures, and therefore it is perfect. This is the Vedic process.

Scientists may carry out much research work, but however great a scientist may be, his senses are imperfect. Therefore he cannot have perfect knowledge. What is the value of our eyes? We cannot see without sunlight, nor can we see small things without a microscope. Our eyes are imperfect, and the instruments our eyes have discovered are also imperfect. How, then, is it possible to get perfect knowledge? Because the living entity is limited, his knowledge is limited. A child may know that two plus two equals four, but when he speaks of higher mathematics, we do not take him seriously. The senses through which a scientist acquires knowledge are limited and imperfect; therefore his knowledge is limited and imperfect. In his ignorance he may claim to know everything, but that is simply nonsense.

A blind man may lead another blind man, but what does it avail them when they both fall into a ditch? The laws of nature bind us hand and foot, yet we think we are free to speculate. This is illusion. Although conditioned by so many of nature's laws, the rascals think they are free. Yet if there is a cloud, they cannot see the sun. What power have we to see? Only when nature's laws give us some facility are we able to see. Indeed, we can only experiment under certain conditions, and if the conditions are not favorable, our experiments fail. Why then are we so proud of experimental knowledge?

Why experiment? Things are already there. The sun's energy is there, given by God for us to use. What else is there to know? So many apples fall from trees. What further need is there to explain the law of gravity? Actually the scientists are lacking in common sense. They are simply concerned with "scientific" explanations. They say the law of gravity works only under certain conditions, but who has made these conditions? When Krsna appeared as Lord Ramacandra, He threw stones on the water, and the stones floated. The law of gravity did not work in that case. Therefore the law of gravity works only under the direction of the Supreme Lord. The law in itself is not final. A king may give a law, but he can change that law immediately. The ultimate law-giver is Krsna, and a law will only work by His will. Scientists try to explain God's will in so many ways, but because they are conditioned by maya, illusion, they can only talk like a person haunted by ghosts. Tell me, what is the scientific explanation that accounts for all the varieties of trees?

Karandhara dasa: They say that nature mutates and makes these varieties.

Srila Prabhupada: Then it must be nature's will. And what is that will? Does the land have any will?

Karandhara dasa: Well, they are very vague on that point.

Srila Prabhupada: That means that they do not have perfect knowledge. They do not know that behind nature is the will of Krsna.

Dr. Singh: They explain that the chemical composition of these different plants is different.

Srila Prabhupada: That's all right, but who made these chemical compositions? As soon as you say "chemical composition," you immediately require a God.

Karandhara dasa: They say there is no need for a God, because if you mix two chemicals together...

Srila Prabhupada: God or not, there must be some will. There must be some consciousness. Two chemicals mix and produce such and such. Who mixes them? Consciousness is there. Well, that consciousness is Krsna. There is consciousness everywhere, and as soon as you accept that consciousness, you must accept consciousness as a person. Therefore, we speak of Krsna consciousness. In the Bhagavad-gita it is stated that consciousness is all-pervading. You may have consciousness, and I may have consciousness, but there is another consciousness, which is all-pervading. My consciousness is limited to my body, and your consciousness is limited to yours, but there is another consciousness, which is within you, me, and everyone. That is Krsna consciousness.

Actually everything in the world is relative. That is a scientific fact. Our bodies, lives, intelligence, and everything else are all relative. To us an ant may seem to have a very short life, but for the ant his life is about a hundred years in duration. That hundred years is relative to the body. Similarly, Brahma, who lives fantastically long from our point of view, only lives a hundred years from his point of view. This is relativity.

Karandhara dasa: Then the relativity is based upon our individual situation.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. Therefore it is said that what is food for one is poison for another. People are thinking that because they cannot survive on the moon, no other living entities can. Everyone thinks of things in a relative way, in his own terms. This is the meaning of "frog philosophy." The frog is always thinking of things in relation to his well. He has no power to conceive of the Atlantic Ocean, because his well is his only experience. God is great, but we are thinking of God's greatness in our own terms, in terms of relative greatness. Some insects are born at night; they grow at night, have their children at night, and die at night. They never see the sun; therefore they conclude that there is no such thing as day. If you asked the insect about the morning, he would say, "There cannot be any morning." Similarly, when people hear of Brahma's long duration of life from the scriptures, they do not believe it. They say, "How can anyone live for such a long time?" In the Bhagavad-gita (8.17) Krsna states:

sahasra-yuga-paryantam
ahar yad brahmano viduh
ratrim yuga-sahasrantam
te 'ho-ratra-vido janah

"By human calculation, a thousand ages taken together is the duration of Brahma's one day. And such also is the duration of his night."

Thus Brahma, by these calculations, lives for so many millions and trillions of years. We cannot believe this, although evidence is given in the scriptures. In other words, we conclude that Krsna talks nonsensically, while we speak as authorities. Even great scholars say that these scriptural statements are all mental speculations. Although these men are nothing but rascals, they pass for reputable scholars. They place themselves above God's position by attempting to refute or deny the statements of God in the revealed scriptures. In this way so many fools in the guise of scholars, scientists, and philosophers are misguiding the whole world.

Dr. Singh: Of course, so much is being written about Darwin's theory. In any library there are hundreds of books on his theories.

Srila Prabhupada: Do they accept or reject them?

Dr. Singh: Generally they accept him, but there are some who are very critical.

Srila Prabhupada: Darwin speaks about the evolution of the species of life, but he has no real information about spiritual evolution. He knows nothing about the progress of the spirit soul from lower forms of life to higher forms. He claims that man has evolved from monkeys, but we can see that the monkey is not extinct. If the monkey is the immediate forefather of man, why is the monkey still existing?

Dr. Singh: Darwin says that the species are not created independently but are descended from one another.

Srila Prabhupada: If there is no question of independence, how can he abruptly begin with a certain species? He must explain how the original species came into existence.

Karandhara dasa: Scientists claim that the earth was created by biological chemistry, and they refuse to teach that God created the earth, because they think everyone will consider them fools.

Srila Prabhupada: If their biology and chemistry are so advanced, why don't they create something? They claim they may be able to create life in the future, but why in the future? Life is already created. Is science based on the future? We should trust no future, however pleasant we may think it will be. Everyone is thinking the future will be very pleasant, but what assurance do we have of this? They have to accept that they do not know what the truth actually is. They cannot even produce a spear of grass through their biological or chemical experiments. Nonetheless they are claiming that the creation is produced by some chemical or biological method. Why does no one question all this nonsense?

Dr. Singh: In the ultimate analysis, when they consider the origin of life, they say that everything started from matter. In other words, living matter comes from nonliving matter.

Srila Prabhupada: From where is this living matter coming now? Did it come from nonliving matter in the past and not at the present? How is the ant coming? Is it materializing from dirt? Even an ant does not come from inert matter. What proof do they have of such a theory? Darwin claims that in the distant past no really intelligent man existed, that man simply evolved from the apes. If there was no intelligent brain in the past, how is it that these Vedic scriptures were written thousands and thousands of years ago? How do they explain a sage like Vyasadeva?

Dr. Singh: They have no explanation. They simply say these are unknown forest sages.

Srila Prabhupada: Vyasadeva may be unknown to them, but nonetheless he was there. How is it he got such a brain? He may be unknown to you or to me, but nonetheless his brain-work is there, his philosophy is there, his language, linguistics, poetic arrangements, and verbal strength. You may not know the person, but you can understand the brain.

Dr. Singh: Weren't all the varieties of animals existing from the beginning?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. Simultaneous creation is verified by the Bhagavad-gita. All the varieties of animals and men as well as demigods were existing from the beginning. A living entity wants a certain type of body, and Krsna gives it to him. Because he desires things in a certain way, he associates with certain qualities of nature in matter. According to his association, he receives a particular type of body. The psychological forces, the mind, thinking, feeling, and willing determine the particular type of situation and body the living entity receives. The evolutionary process is there, but it is not an evolution of species. It is not that one species of life develops from another, for, as Krsna states:

avyaktad vyaktayah sarvah
prabha vanty ahar-agame
ratry-agame praliyante
tatraivavyakta-samjnake

"When Brahma's day is manifest, this multitude of living entities comes into being, and at the arrival of Brahma's night they are all annihilated." (Bg. 8.18)

The evolution is the spiritual evolution of the individual living entity through the various species of life. If one enters into the body of a fish, he has to undergo the evolutionary process step by step. If one is on the top of the stairs and somehow falls down, he again has to go up the evolutionary staircase step by step. Of course, the scientists are busy making so much research that they cannot understand this. If you tell them they are going to be trees in their next life, they think you are speaking nonsense. After all, what can we learn by research? When the cause of all causes is known, then everything knowable becomes known, and nothing remains unknown. As the Vedas state: yasmin vijñate sarvam evam vijñatam bhavati. If we know the Absolute Truth, all other truths become known, but if we don't know the Absolute Truth, we are in ignorance. One may not be an official scientist or philosopher, but he may challenge anyone and talk boldly if he only knows one thing--Krsna.

This contemporary civilization is so proud of its independence, but actually it is so much dependent on oil. If the oil supply is stopped, then what will these rascal scientists do? They cannot do anything. Let them try to manufacture oil in their test tubes, enough oil to run their civilization on. At present there is a scarcity of water in India. What can the scientists do about this? They may know the chemical composition of water, but they cannot produce it when there is a great scarcity. They require the help of clouds, and all that is God's manipulation. Actually they cannot do anything. They have gone to the moon, but for all their labor they have simply taken away some dust and rocks. The rascal government exacts taxes and spends money unnecessarily. This is

their intelligence. It is a state of asses, that's all. The politicians have no sympathy or compassion. They do not consider that the hard-earned money is coming from the public and that they are spending it by shooting big rockets off to other planets. All they do is promise to bring back more dust. First they may get a handful of dust, then they promise to bring back tons of dust. What is the meaning of all this?

Karandhara dasa: They believe that there may be life on Mars.

Srila Prabhupada: They may believe or not believe--what is the gain? What we do know is that life is here. They know this, yet they are engaged in fighting and in killing life. Here is life. Here is a human being. Life is here undoubtedly. But they are busy trying to destroy it with their big bombs. This is their scientific advancement.

Dr. Singh: They are very curious to know what is going on, on other planets.

Srila Prabhupada: That means that for their childish curiosity they are spending so much money. They can spend so much to satisfy their curiosity, but when so many poverty-stricken countries ask them for help, they say there is no money. They are very proud to go to the moon, but why don't they take information how to go to Krsna's Goloka Vrndavana? If they go there, all their curiosity will be satisfied. They will learn that beyond this inferior energy there is indeed a superior, spiritual energy. This material energy cannot work independently. The spiritual energy has to join it. Material elements are not created of themselves. It is the soul that is creative. We may try to make something with matter, but matter does not create itself. Hydrogen and oxygen will come in contact only when moved by the superior energy. Only fools can expect the entire cosmic manifestation, which is only matter, to come into being automatically. We may have a nice car, but if there is no driver, what is its use? Unless a man knows how to work a machine, unless a man pushes a button, the machine does not work. Similarly, without the superior energy, the material energy cannot act. Behind this wonderful cosmic manifestation is the direction of a superior energy. All this information is given in the scriptures, but still people will not believe it.

Actually everything is God's property, but people are claiming this property to be theirs or their country's. Now they are talking about the problem of overpopulation, but the fact is that God has supplied enough. Actually there is enough land and enough food if it is properly used. People are artificially creating problems, and the scientists are helping them by giving them so many destructive devices. They simply encourage the rascals and rogues who are trying to use up God's property. If you help a murderer or a thief, you also become a criminal. Is that not so? There is so much trouble in the world because the scientists are helping all the thieves and rogues. Thus they are all criminals. Stena eva sah. One who does not recognize the proprietorship of the Supreme Lord is a thief.

Our mission is to bring these rascals to their senses. Now one must find out the means to do this. The rascals are suffering, but because they are sons of God they should not suffer. They do not know that there is God or that there is happiness. They know nothing of bliss or of eternal life. They are carrying on so much research and living for fifty, sixty, or seventy years. After that they do not know what is going to happen. They have no knowledge that life is eternal. Actually their position is like that of an animal. An animal does not know what

is after death, nor does he actually contemplate death. He does not know why he is here, nor does he know the value of life. Under the influence of maya, the animal simply goes on eating, sleeping, defending, mating, and dying. That's all. People are endeavoring so hard, but for what purpose? They say that they are struggling so hard to make provisions for the next generation, but what are the provisions for? They cannot reply to that. This Krsna consciousness movement is meant to give real purpose to life by establishing Krsna, God, as the center of everything. It is therefore to the scientist's benefit to understand this important movement.

"Science of Self-Realization" by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.

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Chapter Seven

Exploring the Spiritual Frontier

Srila Prabhupada Arrives in America

Several years after Srila Prabhupada first arrived in America, a disciple discovered the diary he had kept during his passage from India on the steamship Jaladuta. Inside was a poem, handwritten in Bengali, that Srila Prabhupada had written on board the ship just after it had arrived in Boston harbor. The poem beautifully captures Srila Prabhupada's first impressions of Western civilization and reveals his heartfelt determination to change the consciousness of America.

My dear Lord Krsna, You are so kind upon this useless soul, but I do not know why You have brought me here. Now You can do whatever You like with me.

But I guess You have some business here, otherwise why would You bring me to this terrible place?

Most of the population here is covered by the material modes of ignorance and passion. Absorbed in material life, they think themselves very happy and satisfied, and therefore they have no taste for the transcendental message of Vasudeva. I do not know how they will be able to understand it.

But I know Your causeless mercy can make everything possible, because You are the most expert mystic.

How will they understand the mellows of devotional service? O Lord, I am simply praying for Your mercy so that I will be able to convince them about Your message.

All living entities have become under the control of the illusory energy by Your will, and therefore, if You like, by Your will they can also be released from the clutches of illusion.

I wish that You may deliver them. Therefore if You so desire their deliverance, then only will they be able to understand Your message.

The words of the Srimad-Bhagavatam are Your incarnation, and if a sober person repeatedly receives them with submissive aural reception, then he will be able to understand Your message.

It is said in the Srimad-Bhagavatam (1.2.17-21): "Sri Krsna, the Personality of Godhead, who is the Paramatma [supersoul] in everyone's heart and the benefactor of the truthful devotee, cleanses desire for material enjoyment from the heart of the devotee who relishes His messages, which are in themselves virtuous when properly heard and chanted. By regularly hearing the Bhagavatam and rendering service unto the pure devotee, all that is troublesome to the heart is practically destroyed, and loving service unto the glorious Lord, who is praised with transcendental songs, is established as an irrevocable fact. At the time loving service is established in the heart, the modes of passion [rajas] and ignorance [tamas], and lust and desire [kama] disappear from the heart. Then the devotee is established in goodness and he becomes happy. Thus established in the mode of goodness, the man rejuvenated by loving service to the Lord gains liberation from material association [mukti] and comes to know scientifically of the Personality of Godhead. Thus the knots of the heart and all misgivings are cut to pieces. The chain of fruitive actions [karma] is terminated when one sees the self as master."

He will become liberated from the influence of the modes of ignorance and passion and thus all inauspicious things accumulated in the core of the heart will disappear.

How will I make them understand this message of Krsna consciousness? I am very unfortunate, unqualified, and the most fallen. Therefore I am seeking Your benediction so that I can convince them, for I am powerless to do so on my own.

Somehow or other, O Lord, You have brought me here to speak about You. Now, my Lord, it is up to You to make me a success or failure as You like.

O spiritual master of all the worlds! I can simply repeat Your message, so if You like You can make my power of speaking suitable for their understanding.

Only by Your causeless mercy will my words become pure. I am sure that when this transcendental message penetrates their hearts they will certainly feel englanded and thus become liberated from all unhappy conditions of life.

O Lord, I am just like a puppet in Your hands. So if You have brought me here to dance, then make me dance, make me dance. O Lord, make me dance as You like.

I have no devotion, nor do I have any knowledge, but I have strong faith in the holy name of Krsna. I have been designated as Bhaktivedanta, and now, if You like, You can fulfill the real purport of Bhaktivedanta.

Signed--the most unfortunate, insignificant beggar

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami,

on board the ship Jaladuta, Commonwealth Pier,

Boston, Massachusetts, U.S.A.

Build Your Nation on the Spiritual Platform

Asked to speak at the University of Nairobi in September 1972, Srila Prabhupada addressed an overflow crowd of students and government officials at the campus's Taifla (Independence) Hall. In his lecture he advised citizens of the developing nation of Kenya, "... please develop spiritually, for spiritual development is sound development. Don't imitate the Americans and Europeans, who are living like cats and dogs. The atomic bomb is already there, and as soon as the next war breaks out, all their skyscrapers and everything else will be finished...."

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much for kindly coming here to participate in this meeting for spreading Krsna consciousness. The Krsna consciousness movement is trying to bring human society to the point where everyone's life can become successful. The subject today is the real meaning of human life. We are trying to instruct the entire world about this meaning.

Human life is attained after many, many millions of years species of life according to the Padma Purana. Life began with the aquatics, for we can understand from Vedic literature that at the beginning of creation the entire planet was merged in water. This material world is composed of five gross elements--earth, water, fire, air, and ether. Besides these there are three subtle elements--mind, intelligence, and ego. Behind these curtains is the spirit soul, which is covered by these eight elements. This information is given in the Bhagavad-gita.

Human beings are not the only living entities to have a spirit soul. We are all spirit souls--beasts, birds, reptiles, insects, trees, plants, aquatics, and so on. The spirit soul is simply covered by different dresses, just as some of you are dressed in white clothes, some in green, some in red, etc. But we are not concerned with the dress; we are concerned with you as spirit soul. Thus it is said in the Bhagavad-gita (5.18):

vidya-vinaya-sampanne
brahmane ga vi hastini
suni caiva svapake ca
panditah sama-darsinah

"The humble sage, by virtue of true knowledge, sees with equal vision a learned and gentle brahmana, a cow, an elephant, a dog, and a dog-eater."

The sage does not make any distinction on the basis of color, intelligence, or species. He sees every living entity as a small particle of spirit soul. It is stated:

kesagra-sata-bhagasya
satamsah sadrsatmakah
jivah suksma-svarupo 'yam
sankhyatito hi cit-kanah

"There are innumerable particles of spiritual atoms, which are measured as one ten-thousandth of the upper portion of a hair." Because we have no instrument to measure the dimensions of the spirit soul, the small particle of spirit soul is measured in this way. In other words, the soul is so small that it is smaller than an atom. That small particle is within you, within me, within the elephant, within gigantic animals, in all men, in the ant, in the tree, everywhere. However, scientific knowledge cannot estimate the dimensions of the soul, nor can a doctor locate the soul within the body. Consequently material scientists conclude that there is no soul, but that is not a fact. There is a soul. The presence of the soul makes a difference between a living body and a dead body. As soon as the soul departs from the body, the body dies. It has no value. However great a scientist or a philosopher one may be, he must admit that as soon as the soul departs from the body, the body dies. It then has no value and has to be thrown away. We should try to understand this; the soul is valuable, not the body. The fact that the soul is transmigrating is explained in the Bhagavad-gita (2.22):

vasamsi jirnani yatha vihaya
na vani grhnati naro 'parani
tatha sarirani vihaya jirnany
anyani samyati na vani dehi

"As a person puts on new garments, giving up old ones, similarly, the soul accepts new material bodies, giving up the old and useless ones."

When a suit becomes old, we give it up and accept another suit; similarly the soul is changing dresses according to desire. Because the soul is part and parcel of God, it has godly qualities. God is the supreme will, the supreme power, the supreme independent one, and we, being part and parcel of Him, have all these qualities in minute quantity. We have willing, thinking, feeling, and desiring. In the Vedas it is stated that God is the supreme living force among all living forces (cetasas cetananam). He is also supplying the necessities of all living entities.

We living entities are innumerable; there is no limit to our number. God, however, is one. He is also living, as we are but we are minute particles of that living force. For example, a particle of gold is the same in quality as a gold mine. If we chemically analyze the ingredients in a small drop of water, we will find all of the ingredients that are to be found in the vast ocean. In a similar way, we are one with God, being His part and parcel. This godly particle, the soul, or the living force, is transmigrating from aquatics to trees and plants and then from trees and plants to insect life, then to reptile

life, then to the bodies of birds and beasts. Darwin's theory of evolution is but a partial explanation of the transmigration of the soul. Darwin has simply taken information from Vedic literature, but he has no conception of the soul. The difference is that the soul is transmigrating from aquatic life to plants and trees, then to insect life, then to bird life, then animal life, then human life, and within human life he moves from uncivilized life to civilized life, etc. The civilized life of a human being represents the culmination of evolution. Here is a junction: from this point we can again slide down into the cyclic process of evolution, or we can elevate ourselves to a godly life. The choice is up to us. This is indicated in the Bhagavad-gita.

This human form of life actually means developed consciousness; therefore we should not waste our lives like cats, dogs, and hogs. That is the injunction. Although this body is perishable like a dog's or cat's body, it is different in that one can attain the highest perfection in this life. We are part and parcel of God, but somehow or other we have fallen into this material existence; now we have to evolve in such a way that we can go back home, back to Godhead. That is the highest perfection.

There is actually another world, a spiritual world. As stated in the Bhagavad-gita (8.20):

paras tasmāt tu bhavo 'nyo
'vyakto 'vyaktat sanatanah
yah sa sarvesu bhutesu
nasyatsu na vinasyati

"Yet there is another nature, which is eternal and is transcendental to this manifested and unmanifested matter. It is supreme and is never annihilated. When all in this world is annihilated, that part remains as it is."

In this material nature, everything is created, it stays for some time, produces some by-products, dwindles, and finally vanishes. Our bodies are created at a certain moment by sexual intercourse. The semen of the father emulsifies and takes a pea form, and the living entity, or soul, takes shelter in that form, and because it takes shelter, it develops hands, legs, eyes, etc. This development is complete in the seventh month, and in the ninth month the human being comes out of the womb. It is because the soul is present that the child develops. If the soul is not present, there is no development, and the child is born dead. We can take this dead body and preserve it in chemicals, but it will not develop. Development means change of body. All of us have had baby bodies, but those bodies are no longer existing. The body of a baby develops into the body of a child, and that body develops into the body of a boy, and that body develops into a youth's body, which eventually turns into an old man's body. Finally the body completely vanishes. The whole cosmic manifestation, the gigantic form of this material world, is also working according to this same process. It is created at a certain point, it develops, it is maintained, and at a certain stage it is dissolved. That is the nature of the material world. It is manifest at a certain interval, and again it vanishes (bhutva bhutva praliyate).

The word bhava means "nature." There is another nature, which never dissolves, which is eternal. As jivas, spirit souls, we are also eternal. This is verified in the Bhagavad-gita (2.20):

na jayate mriyate va kadacin
nayam bhutva bhavita va na bhuyah
ajo nityah sasvato 'yam purano
na hanyate hanyamane sarire

"For the soul there is neither birth nor death. Nor, having once been, does he ever cease to be. He is unborn, eternal, ever-existing, undying, and primeval. He is not slain when the body is slain."

Just as God has no birth or death, we spirit souls can have neither birth nor death, but because we think, "I am this body," we consider that we are born and that we die. Such thinking is called maya, or illusion, and as soon as we get out of this illusion of identifying the soul with the body, we attain the stage called brahma-bhuta. When one realizes aham-brahmasmi, "I am not this body; I am spirit soul, part and parcel of the Supreme Brahman," he attains what is called Brahman realization. As soon as Brahman realization is attained, one becomes happy.

Is this not a fact? If you understand clearly that you have no birth and death, that you are eternal, will you not become happy? Yes, certainly. Thus when one is Brahman realized, spiritually realized, he has no more to do with hankering or lamentation. The whole world is simply hankering and lamenting. You African people are now hankering to be like Europeans and Americans, but the Europeans have lost their empire, and now they are lamenting. So in this way one party is hankering and another is lamenting. Similarly, this material life is simply a combination of hankering and lamenting. We are hankering for those things which we do not possess, and we are lamenting for those things which we have lost. That is our material business. If we realize, however, that we are part and parcel of the Supreme Personality of Godhead (Parabrahman) and that we are Brahman, then we will transcend this hankering and lamenting.

The so-called universal brotherhood or unity that the United Nations is trying to achieve is possible only when you come to the spiritual platform, or Brahman realization. Brahman realization is the aim of human life. One should not work like cats, dogs, and hogs. The hog is always very busy day and night trying to find stool, and when he finds it, he eats it and becomes sexually agitated and has sex without discrimination. A hog will have sex with its mother or sister or anyone else, and this is a hog's life. However, the scriptures indicate that the human form of life is not meant for working hard for sense gratification like cats, dogs, and hogs. It is meant for realizing, "I do not belong to this material world. I am spirit soul and am eternal, but somehow or other I have fallen into this conditional life of birth, old age, disease, and death." This human form of life is meant for making a solution to these four material miseries--birth, old age, disease, and death. That is the aim of human life. Just try to understand that human life is not meant for working very hard like hogs and then having some sense gratification and then all of a sudden dying.

People who do not believe in the soul are in a most unfortunate condition. They do not know where they came from nor where they are going. Knowledge of the soul is the most important knowledge, but it is not discussed in any university. But what is the constitution of this body? What is the distinction between a dead body and a living body? Why

is the body living? What is the condition of the body, and what is its value? No one is presently studying these questions, but by this Krsna consciousness movement we are trying to educate people so that they can understand that they are not these bodies but are spirit souls. The business of human life is different from the business of cats and dogs. That is our message.

As far as the soul is concerned, the evolutionary process is going on, and we are struggling for existence, struggling to come to the point of eternal life. That eternal life is possible. If you try your best in this human form of life, in your next life you can get a spiritual body. Your spiritual body is already within you, and it will develop as soon as you become free from the contamination of this material existence. That is the aim of human life. People do not know what actual self-interest is; it is to realize oneself, to realize, "I am part and parcel of God, and I have to return to the kingdom of God to join with God."

Just as we have a social life here, God has a social life in the spiritual kingdom. You can join Him there. It is not that after this body is finished you become void. No. That is a wrong conception. In the Bhagavad-gita (2.12), Krsna told Arjuna on the Battlefield of Kuruksetra:

na tu evahamjatu nasam
na tvam nemejanadhipah
na caiva na bhavisyamah
sarve vayam atah param

"Never was there a time when I did not exist, nor you, nor all these kings; nor in the future shall any of us cease to be."

The process for attaining eternal life is very easy, and yet at the same time very difficult. It is difficult because people in the beginning do not believe in the existence of transmigration of the soul. However, if we simply take knowledge from the authorities, the process becomes very simple. Our process of Krsna consciousness is to take knowledge from Krsna, the most perfect being, and not from an ordinary being conditioned by the laws of material nature. Knowledge taken from a conditioned being is sure to be defective.

What are the defects of the conditioned soul? He is sure to commit mistakes, sure to be illusioned, sure to cheat others, and sure to have imperfect senses. We cannot attain knowledge perfectly, because we want to cheat others and our senses are imperfect. Although our senses are imperfect, we are very proud of our eyes, and we want to see everything. Therefore someone says, "Can you show me God?" Actually the answer is yes. Why can't you see God at every moment? Krsna says, raso 'ham apsu kaunteya: "I am the taste of water." Everyone drinks water, and the taste is there--so if we think of this taste as God, we begin the process of God realization. Krsna also says, prabhasmi sasi-suryayoh: "I am the sunshine, and I am the moonshine." We all see the sunshine and moonshine every day, and if we think of how it is that the sun and moon are emanating light, we will ultimately reach God. There are so many similar instances. If you want to be God conscious and realize God yourself, it is not very difficult. You have simply to follow the prescribed methods. As stated in the Bhagavad-gita (18.55), tato mam-tattvato jnatva. We must simply try to understand God in truth and try to understand His appearance, disappearance, and functions. When we

understand Him in truth, we immediately enter the kingdom of God. After quitting this body, the person who understands God, or Krsna, does not come back again to accept another material body. Krsna says, mam eti: "He comes to Me." That is our aim.

Therefore we should not waste our time living like cats and dogs. We should live comfortably, but at the same time we should be Krsna conscious, or God conscious. That will help us become happy. Without understanding God and without becoming God conscious, there is no possibility of peace and happiness. The way of peace and happiness is outlined in the Bhagavad-gita.

If you really want to understand God, He is very easy to understand. God is the proprietor of everything. Isavasyam idam sarvam. Unfortunately we are thinking, "I am the proprietor." In your country, for instance, the British have sometimes claimed to be proprietors, and now you are claiming to be the proprietors--so who knows what will happen in the future? Actually no one knows who the real proprietor is. The land is there, and it is the property of God, but we are simply thinking, "I am the proprietor. I own this, and I own that." Actually, America existed before the Europeans came, but now the Americans are thinking, "We are the proprietors." Similarly, before them the Red Indians were thinking, "We are the proprietors." The fact is that no man is an actual proprietor; the proprietor is God.

isavasyam idam sarvam
yat kim ca jagatyam jagat
tena tyaktena bhunjitha-
ma grdhah kasya svid dhanam

"Everything animate or inanimate that is within the universe is controlled and owned by the Lord. One should therefore accept only those things necessary for himself, which are set aside as his quota, and one should not accept other things, knowing well to whom they belong."
(Isopanisad 1)

This realization is wanting. Krsna claims proprietorship over all forms--including American forms, African forms, cat forms, dog forms, tree forms, etc.--for in actuality He is the proprietor and the supreme father. If we simply realize this, we attain God realization. Actually, if we realize God as prescribed in the authorized books and Vedic literatures, we will find that there will no longer be quarrels between this party and that party. Everything will be peaceful.

Everyone has the right to use God's property, just as a son has the right to live at the cost of his father. It is stated in the scriptures that even a small animal in the home must be given some food. That is spiritual communism. No one should remain hungry, not even a serpent. We are always afraid of serpents, but if we find a serpent to be living in our house, it is our duty to see that the serpent is also fed. This is the conception of God consciousness, or Krsna consciousness: samah sarvesu bhutesu. One who is transcendently situated is equally disposed to every living entity. Thus the Bhagavad-gita points out that when one sees everyone equally, as part and parcel of the Supreme Lord, one actually begins his devotional life. This Krsna consciousness movement is trying in an authoritative way to make everyone understand what he is and what the aim of life is. This process of purification of the heart is very easily accomplished. One simply has to chant this

maha-mantra--Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. It can actually be seen that in this movement there are boys and girls from different countries and different religions, but no one is concerned with any particular section, country, or religious body. We are simply concerned about knowing ourselves and our relationship with God.

God is the supreme proprietor, and we are all His sons, or servitors. Therefore let us engage ourselves in the service of the Lord, as recommended in the Bhagavad-gita. As soon as we understand that God is the proprietor of everything, then all the troubles of the world will immediately be solved. This may take some time. It is not expected that everyone will understand this high philosophy, but if the intelligent people in every country try to understand it, that will be sufficient. In the Bhagavad-gita (3.21) it is stated:

yad yad acarati sresthas
tat tad evetaro janah
sa yat pramanam kurute
lokas tad anuvartate

"Whatever action a great man performs, common men follow in his footsteps. And whatever standards he sets by exemplary acts, all the world pursues."

We therefore invite the most intelligent men in the world to understand this Krsna conscious philosophy and try to distribute it all over the world. We have now come to these African countries, and I invite all intelligent Africans to come and understand this philosophy and distribute it. You are trying to develop yourselves, so please develop spiritually, for spiritual development is sound development. Don't imitate the Americans and Europeans, who are living like cats and dogs. Such civilizations built on the consciousness of sense gratification cannot stand. The atomic bomb is already there, and as soon as the next war breaks out, all their skyscrapers and everything else will be finished. Try to understand this from the real viewpoint of human life, the spiritual viewpoint. This is what this Krsna consciousness movement is about. We therefore request you to try to understand this philosophy. Thank you very much.

Saintly Compassion

Every religion has its own saints, but all saints share one transcendent spiritual quality: compassion. Srila Prabhupada explains....

Today I shall speak to you about the glorification of the holy name of God. This was discussed between Maharaja Pariksit and Sukadeva Gosvami in connection with a brahmana who was very fallen and addicted to all kinds of sinful activities but was saved simply by chanting the holy name. This is found in the Sixth Canto of the Srimad-Bhagavatam.

The universal planetary systems are very nicely explained in the fifth Canto of the Srimad-Bhagavatam. Within the universe there are some planets which are hellish. Actually, not only the Bhagavatam but all religious scriptures contain descriptions of hell and heaven. In the Srimad-Bhagavatam you can find out where those hellish planets are and how distant they are from this planet, just as you can obtain information from modern astronomy. Astronomers have calculated how far the moon is from here and what the distance is between this planet and

the sun; similarly, the Bhagavatam contains descriptions of the hellish planets.

We have experience of different atmospheric conditions even on this planet. In the Western countries near the North Pole, the climate is different than in India, which is near the equator. Just as there are differences in atmosphere and living conditions on this planet, similarly there are many planets which have different atmospheres and conditions of life.

After hearing a description of the hellish planets from Sukadeva Gosvami, Pariksit Maharaja said,

adhuneha maha-bhaga
yathaiva narakan narah
nanogra-yatanan neyat
tan me vyakhyatum arhasi

"Sir, I have heard from you about the hellish planets. Men who are very sinful are sent to those planets." (Srimad-Bhagavatam 6.1.6) Pariksit Maharaja is a Vaisnava [devotee], and a Vaisnava always feels compassion for others' distress. He is very afflicted by the miseries of others. When Lord Jesus Christ presented himself, for instance, he was greatly afflicted by the miserable conditions of the people. Regardless of which country or sect they belong to, all Vaisnavas, or devotees--any people who are God conscious, or Krsna conscious--are thus compassionate. Therefore to blaspheme a Vaisnava, a preacher of God's glories, is a great offense.

Krsna, God, is never tolerant of offenses committed at the lotus feet of a Vaisnava. Krpambudhi: a Vaisnava is an ocean of mercy. Vancha-kalpa-taru: everyone has desires, but a Vaisnava can fulfill all desires. Kalpa-taru means "desire tree." There is a tree in the spiritual world which is called a desire tree. In this material world, you get a particular type of fruit from a particular type of tree, but in Krsnaloka as well as in all the Vaikuntha planets, all the trees are spiritual and will fulfill all your desires. That is described in the Brahma-samhita: cintamani-prakara-sadmasu kalpa-vrksa.

A Vaisnava is addressed as maha-bhaga, which means "fortunate." One who becomes a Vaisnava and is God conscious is understood to be greatly fortunate.

Caitanya Mahaprabhu has explained that the living entities are rotating in different species of life, in different planetary systems all over the universe. A living entity can go anywhere--to hell or heaven--as he likes and as he prepares himself. There are many heavenly planets, many hellish species of life. The living entity is rotating, wandering through these species and creating bodies according to his mentality in the present life. As you sow, so shall you reap.

Caitanya Mahaprabhu says that out of all these numberless living entities who are traveling in the material world, one is fortunate, not everyone. If everyone were fortunate, they would all have taken to Krsna consciousness. It is being distributed freely everywhere. But why are people not taking it? Because they are unfortunate. Therefore Caitanya Mahaprabhu says that only those who are fortunate take to this Krsna consciousness, and they get hopeful life, pleasant life, blissful life, a life of knowledge.

It is the duty of a Vaisnava to go door to door to make the unfortunate people fortunate. A Vaisnava thinks, "How can these people be delivered from their hellish life?" That was Pariksit Maharaja's inquiry. "Sir," he said, "you have described that on account of one's sinful activities one is put into a hellish condition of life or in a hellish planetary system. Now, what are the countermethods by which such persons can be saved?" This is the question. When a Vaisnava comes, when God Himself comes, or when God's son or His very confidential devotees come, their only mission is to save the sinful men who are suffering. They have knowledge of how to do this.

When Prahlada Maharaja met Nrsimhadeva, he said:

naivodvije para duratyaya vaitaranyas
tvad-virya-gayana-mahamrta-magna-cittah
soce tato vimukha-cetasa indriyarthamaya-sukhaya bharam udvahato vimudhan

"My dear Lord," Prahlada says, "I am not very anxious for my own deliverance." (SB. 7.9.43) Mayavadi philosophers are very careful that their personal salvation is not interrupted. They think, "If I go to preach in association with others, I may fall down, and my realization will be finished." Therefore they do not come. Only the Vaisnavas come, at the risk of falldown--but they do not fall down. They may even go to hell to deliver the conditioned souls. This is Prahlada Maharaja's mission. He says, naivodvije: "I am not very anxious about living in this material world."

Prahlada Maharaja says further, "I have no anxiety for myself, because somehow or other I have been trained to be always Krsna conscious." Because he is Krsna conscious, he is confident that in his next life he is going to Krsna. It is stated in the Bhagavad-gita that if one executes the Krsna conscious regulative principles carefully, it is certain that he will reach the supreme destination in his next life.

Prahlada Maharaja continues: "There is only one source of anxiety for me." Just see--although he had no anxiety for himself, he still had anxiety. He says, soce tato vimukha-cetasah: "I am anxious for those persons who are not Krsna conscious. That is my anxiety. for myself I have no anxiety, but I am thinking of those who are not Krsna conscious." Why aren't they Krsna conscious? Maya-sukhaya bharam udvahato vimudhan. These rascals have created a humbug civilization for temporary happiness.

Maya-sukhaya. Actually this is a fact. We have a humbug civilization. So many cars are being manufactured every year, and for that purpose so many roads have to be excavated and prepared. This creates problem after problem. Therefore it is maya-sukhaya, illusory happiness, and yet we are trying to be happy in this way. We are trying to manufacture some way to be happy, but this only creates other problems.

In your country you have the greatest number of cars, but that does not solve any problems. You have manufactured cars to help solve the problems of life, but I have experienced that this also creates more problems. When my disciple Dayananda wanted to take me to a doctor in Los Angeles, I had to take the trouble to travel thirty miles before I could even consult the doctor. Once you create cars, then you must travel thirty or forty miles to meet your friends.

You can fly from New York to Boston in one hour, but it takes even longer than that just to get to the airport. This situation is called maya-sukhaya. Maya means "false," "illusory." We are trying to create some very comfortable situation, but we have created another uncomfortable situation. This is the way of the material world; if we are not satisfied by the natural comforts offered by God and nature and we want to create artificial comforts, then we have to create some discomfort also. Most people do not know that. They think that they are creating a very comfortable situation, but actually they are traveling fifty miles to go to the office to earn a livelihood and fifty miles to come back. Because of such conditions, Prahlada Maharaja says that these vimudhans--these materialistic persons, these rascals--have created an unnecessary burden on themselves simply for temporary happiness. Vimudhan, maya-sukhaya bharam udvahato. Therefore, in Vedic civilization it is recommended that one free himself from material life, take sannyasa, the renounced order of life, and prosecute spiritual life with absolutely no anxiety.

If one can execute Krsna consciousness in family life, that is very good. Bhaktivinoda Thakura was a family man, a magistrate. and still he executed devotional service so nicely. Dhruva Maharaja and Prahlada Maharaja were grhasthas, householders, but they trained themselves in such a way that even as householders they were faced with no interruption in their service. Therefore, Prahlada Maharaja says, "I have learned the art of always remaining in Krsna consciousness." What is that art? Tvad-virya-gayana-mahamrta-magna-cittah. Simply glorifying the victorious activities and pastimes of the Lord. Virya means "very heroic."

Krsna's activities are heroic. You can read about them in Krsna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Krsna's name, His fame, His activities, His associates, and all other things related to Him are heroic. Prahlada Maharaja says in this connection, "I am certain that wherever I go, I can glorify Your heroic activities and be safe. There is no question of my falling down. But I am simply anxious for these persons who have created a type of civilization in which they are always busy working hard. I am thinking of them."

Prahlada says further:

prayena deva munayah sva-vimukti-kama
maunam caranti vijane na parartha-nisthah
naitan vihaya krpanan vimumuksa eko
nanyam tvad asya saranam bhramato 'nupasye

"My dear Lord, there are many saintly persons and sages who are very interested in their own liberation." (SB. 7.9.44) Munayah means "saintly persons" or "philosophers." Prayena deva munayah sva-vimukti-kamah: they are very interested in their own liberation. They try to live in solitary places like the Himalaya Mountains. They do not talk to anyone, and they are always afraid of mixing with ordinary people in the city and becoming disturbed or maybe even falling down. They think, "Better let me save myself."

Prahlada Maharaja regrets that these great saintly persons do not come to the city, where people have manufactured a civilization of very hard work all day and night. Such saints are not very compassionate. He

says, "I am anxious for these fallen people who are unnecessarily working so hard simply for sense gratification."

Even if there were some point in working that hard, such people do not know what it is. All they know is sex. Either they go to a naked dance or to a naked club or to this or that. Prahlada Maharaja says, naitan vihaya krpanan vimumuksa ekah: "My Lord, I do not need salvation alone. Unless I take all these fools with me, I shall not go." He refuses to go to the kingdom of God without taking all these fallen souls with him. This is a Vaisnava. Nanyam tvad asya saranam bhramato 'nupasye: "I simply want to teach them how to surrender unto You. That's all. That is my goal."

The Vaisnava knows that as soon as one surrenders, one's path is clear. Naivodviye para duratyaya-vaitaranyas tvad-virya-gayana-mahamrta-magna-cittah: ``Somehow or other, let them bow down before Krsna." This is a simple method. All you have to do is bow down before Krsna with faith and say, "My Lord Krsna, I was forgetful of You for so long, for so many lives. Now I have come to consciousness; please accept me." That's all. If one simply learns this technique and sincerely surrenders himself to the Lord, his path is immediately open. These are the philosophical thoughts of a Vaisnava. A Vaisnava is always thinking about how the fallen conditioned souls can be delivered. He is always involved in making plans in that way, just like the Gosvamis. What was the business of the six Gosvamis of Vrndavana, Lord Caitanya's direct disciples? That is stated by Srinivasa Acarya:

nana-sastra-vicaranaika-nipunau sad-dharma-samsthapakau
lokanam hita-karinau tribhuvane manyau saranyakarau
radha-krsna-padara vinda-bhajanandena mattalikai
vande rupa-sanatanau raghu-yugau sri-jiva-gopalakau

"The six Gosvamis, namely, Sri Sanatana Gosvami, Sri Rupa Gosvami, Sri Raghunatha Bhatta Gosvami, Sri Raghunatha dasa Gosvami, Sri Jiva Gosvami, and Sri Gopala Bhatta Gosvami, are very expert in scrutinizingly studying the revealed scriptures with the aim of establishing eternal religious principles for the benefit of all human beings. They are always absorbed in the mood of the gopis and are engaged in the transcendental loving service of Radha and Krsna." (Sad-gosvamy-astaka 2)

With similar Vaisnava compassion, Pariksit Maharaja says to Sukadeva Gosvami: "You have described the different types of hellish conditions of life. Now, tell me how those who are suffering can be delivered. Kindly explain this to me."

adhuneha maha-bhaga
yathaiva narakan narah
nanogra-yatanan neyat
tan me vyakhyatum arhasi

Nara means human beings, those who are fallen. Narakan narah/nanogra-yatanan neyat tan me: "How can they be delivered from their fierce miseries and horrible pains?" That is a Vaisnava heart. Maharaja Pariksit says, "Somehow or other they have fallen down to this hellish life. But that does not mean that they should remain in that condition."

There must be some means by which they can be delivered, so kindly explain that."

Sukadeva Gosvami replied:

na ced ihaivapacitim yathamhasah
krtasya kuryan mana-ukta-panibhih
dhruvam sa vai pretya narakan upaiti
ye kirtita me bhavatas tigma-yatanah

"Yes, I've already described the different types of hellish conditions and very severe painful life, but one has to counteract it." (SB. 6.1.7)

How can this be done? Sinful activities are committed in various ways. We can commit sinful activity or thus make a plan, thinking, "I shall kill that man." Either way, it is sinful. When the mind is thinking, feeling, and willing, then there is action.

The other day I was reading in a book that if someone's dog barks at you when you are passing on the road, then that is an offense on the part of the dog-owner, according to law. No one should have to be scared by dogs barking, so one should take care of his dog. I read this. It is a law in your country. The dog is simply barking, but it is sinful. The dog is not responsible, because it is an animal, but because the owner of the animal has made the dog his best friend, he is responsible by law. If an outside dog enters your house, it may not be killed, but the owners of the dog may be prosecuted.

Just as the barking of the dog is unlawful, so when you speak something offensive to others, that is also sinful. That is just like barking. Therefore sinful activities are committed in so many ways. Whether we think of sinful activities, or we speak something sinful, or we actually commit a sinful activity, they are all considered sinful activities. Dhruvam sa vai pretya narakan upaiti. One has to suffer punishment for such sinful activities.

People do not believe in a next life, because they want to avoid this botheration. But we cannot avoid it. We must act according to the law, or we will be punished. Similarly, I cannot avoid God's law. That is not possible. I can cheat others, commit theft, and hide myself, thereby saving myself from the punishment of the state law, but I cannot save myself from the superior law, the law of nature. It is very difficult. There are so many witnesses. The daylight is witness, the moonlight is witness, and Krsna is the supreme witness. You cannot say, "I am committing this sin, but no one can see me."

Krsna is the supreme witness sitting within your heart. He notes down what you are thinking and what you are doing. He also gives facility. If you want to do something to satisfy your senses, Krsna gives the facility for that action. That is stated in the Bhagavad-gita. Sarvasya caham hrdis sannivistah: "I am sitting in everyone's heart." Mattah smrtir jnanam apohanam ca: "From Me come remembrance, knowledge, and forgetfulness."

In this way Krsna gives us a chance. If you want Krsna, then He will give you a chance to have Him, and if you don't want Krsna, then He will give you a chance to forget Him. If you want to enjoy life forgetting Krsna, forgetting God, then Krsna will give you all facility so that you can forget, and if you want to enjoy life with Krsna

consciousness, then Krsna will give you the chance to make progress in Krsna consciousness. That is up to you.

If you think that you can be happy without Krsna consciousness, Krsna does not object to that. *Yatheccchasi tatha kuru*. After advising Arjuna, He simply said, "Now I have explained everything to you. Whatever you desire you can do." Arjuna replied immediately, *karisyevacanam tava*: "Now I shall execute Your order." That is Krsna consciousness.

God does not interfere with your little independence. If you want to act according to the order of God, then God will help you. Even if you fall down sometimes, if you become sincere--"From this time on I shall remain Krsna conscious and execute His orders"--then Krsna will help you. In all respects, even if you fall down, He will excuse you and give you more intelligence. This intelligence will say, "Don't do this. Now go on with your duty." But if you want to forget Krsna, if you want to become happy without Krsna, He will give you so many chances that you will forget Krsna life after life.

Pariksit Maharaja says here, "It is not that if I say there is no God then there will be no God or I will not be responsible for what I do." That is the atheistic theory. Atheists do not want God, because they are always sinful--if they thought that there were God, then they would be forced to shudder at the thought of punishment. Therefore they deny the existence of God. That is their process. They think that if they do not accept God then there is no punishment and they can do whatever they like.

When rabbits are being attacked by bigger animals, they close their eyes and think, "I am not going to be killed." But they are killed anyway. Similarly, we may deny the existence of God and the law of God, but still God and His law are there. In the high court you may say, "I don't care for the law of the government," but you will be forced to accept the government law. If you deny the state law, then you will be put into prison and be caused to suffer. Similarly, you may foolishly deny the existence of God--"There is no God" or "I am God"--but nevertheless you are responsible for all your actions, both good and bad.

There are two kinds of activities--good and bad. If you act nicely and perform pious activities, then you get good fortune, and if you act sinfully, then you have to suffer. Therefore Sukadeva Gosvami says:

*tasmat puraivasv iha papa-niskrtau
yateta mrtyor a vipadyatatmana
dosasya drstva guru-lagha vam yatha
bhisak cikitseta rujam nidana-vit
(SB. 6.1.8)*

There are different kinds of atonement. If you commit some sin and counteract it by something else, that is atonement. There are examples of this in the Christian Bible. Sukadeva Gosvami says, "You should know that you are responsible, and according to the gravity of sinful life, you should accept some type of atonement as described in the sastras, the scriptures."

Actually, just as when one is diseased he must go to a doctor and pay doctor bills as a form of atonement, according to the Vedic way of

life there is a class of brahmanas to whom one should go for the prescribed atonement according to the sins one commits.

Sukadeva Gosvami says that one has to execute the prescribed atonement according to the gravity of one's sinful life. He continues the example: *dosasya drstva guru-lagha vam yatha bhisak cikitseta rujam nidana-vit*. When you consult a physician, he prescribes an inexpensive medicine or a costly medicine, according to the gravity of the disease. If you simply have a headache, he may prescribe an aspirin, but if you have something very severe, he immediately prescribes a surgical operation that will cost a thousand dollars. Similarly, sinful life is a diseased condition, so one must follow the prescribed cure to become healthy.

Acceptance of the chain of birth and death is a diseased condition of the soul. The soul has no birth and death and no disease, because it is spirit. Krsna says in the Bhagavad-gita (2.20): *najayate*, the soul has no birth, and *mriyate*, it has no death. *Nityah sasvato 'yam purano/na hanyate hanyamane sarire*. The soul is eternal and everlasting. It is not lost with the dissolution of this body. *Na hanyate hanyamane sarire*. *Na hanyate* means that it is not killed or destroyed, even after the destruction of this body.

The missing point of modern civilization is that there is no educational system to instruct people on what happens after death. Thus we have the most defective education, because without this knowledge of what happens after death, one dies like an animal. The animal does not know that he is going to have another body; he has no such knowledge.

Human life is not meant for becoming an animal. One should not simply be interested in eating, sleeping, sex life, and defense. You may have a very nice arrangement for eating, or many nice buildings for sleeping, or a very good arrangement for sex life, or a very good defense force to protect you, but that does not mean that you are a human being. That type of civilization is animal life. Animals are also interested in eating, sleeping, and sex life, and according to their own methods they defend also. Where, then, is the distinction between human life and animal life if you simply engage in these four principles of bodily nature?

The distinction is made when a human being is inquisitive--"Why have I been put into this miserable condition? Is there any remedy for it? Is there any perpetual, eternal life? I do not want to die. I want to live very happily and peacefully. Is there a chance of this? What is that method? What is that science?" When these inquiries are there and steps are taken to answer these questions, that is human civilization; otherwise it is doggish civilization, animal civilization.

Animals are satisfied if they can eat, sleep, have some sex life, and have some defense. Actually there is no defense, because no one can protect himself from the hands of cruel death. *Hiranyakasipu*, for instance, wanted to live forever, and so he underwent severe austerities. So-called scientists are now saying that we shall stop death by scientific methods. This is also another crazy utterance. That is not possible. You may make great advancement in scientific knowledge, but there is no scientific solution to these four problems--birth, death, old age, and disease.

One who is intelligent will be eager to solve these four prime problems. No one wants to die. But there is no remedy. I have to die. Everyone is very anxious to stop the increase of population by employing

so many contraceptive methods, but still, birth is going on. So there is no stoppage or birth. You may invent up-to-date medicines by your scientific methods, but you cannot stop disease. It is not possible just to take a tablet to put an end to disease.

In the Bhagavad-gita it is said, janma-mrtyu jara-vyadhi-duhkha-dosanudarsanam: one might think that he has solved all the problems of his life, but where is the solution to these four problems of birth, death, old age, and disease? That solution is Krsna consciousness.

Krsna also says in the same book,

janma karma ca me divyam
evam yo vetti tattvatah
tyaktva deham punar janma
naiti mam eti so 'rjuna
(Bg. 4.9)

Every one of us is giving up our body at every moment. The last phase of giving up this body is called death. But Krsna says, "If anyone understands My appearance and disappearance and My activities--not superficially, but in truth--after giving up this body he never again accepts a material body."

What happens to such a person? Mam eti--he returns to Krsna. If you are to go to Krsna, then you have to prepare your spiritual body. That is Krsna consciousness. If you keep yourself in Krsna consciousness, then gradually you prepare your next body, a spiritual body, which will carry you immediately to Krsnaloka, the abode of Krsna, and you will become happy. You will live there perpetually and blissfully.

Protecting Oneself from Illusion

In 1973 Srila Prabhupada received an unusual letter from a woman in California who had encountered two of his young disciples. She complained that they had "a very negative outlook toward the people they meet." Moved by her genuine concern, Srila Prabhupada took time out from his busy schedule to write her this thoughtful letter.

Your Grace:

Please accept this letter with Love... K-Mart; San Fernando. We have talked with two of your boys at different times. Both had a very negative outlook toward the people they meet.

Do not believe this is in any way as it should be.

These boys happen to represent God. This comes from within. Their outlook must have mercy. We realize this; therefore handpick these little peaces [sic] of heaven to place in the middle of these people. Or else it will defeat your purpose.

Love Is. Let it be as it is; with Love or not at all.

My prayers be with you... and I beg yours with me.

Yours in God, Blessed Be,

Lynne Ludwig

My dear Lynne Ludwig,

Please accept my blessings. I beg to acknowledge receipt of your letter from California, and I have noted the contents carefully, although due to extensively traveling and preaching in a tour in India I have not had the opportunity to reply to you at length until now. Your complaint is that you have met two of my young disciples in California and they appeared to you to have "a very negative outlook toward the people they meet." Of course, I do not know the case and what the

circumstances are, but kindly forgive my beloved disciples for any unkindness or indiscretion on their part. After all, to give up one's life completely for serving the Lord is not an easy thing, and maya, or the illusory, material energy, tries especially hard to again entrap those who have left her service to become devotees. Therefore, in order to withstand the attack of maya and remain strong under all conditions of temptation, young or inexperienced devotees in the neophyte stage of devotional service will sometimes adopt an attitude against those things or persons which may possibly be harmful or threatening to their tender devotional creepers. They may even overindulge in such feelings just to protect themselves, and thus they will appear to some nondevotees, who are perhaps themselves still very much enamored by the material energy of maya, to be negative or pessimistic.

But the actual fact is that this material world is a miserable, negative place, full of danger at every step; it is dukkhalayam asasvatam, a temporary abode of death, birth, disease, and old age, a home of suffering and pain only. To come to the platform of understanding these things as they are is not very common, and therefore persons who attain to it are described as "great souls."

mam upetya punarjanma
dukkhalayam asasvatam
napnu vanti mahatmanah
samsiddhim paramam gatah

This means that those who have understood that the material worlds are places of misery and temporality (dukkhalayam asasvatam) never return here again, and because they are mahatmanah, the great souls, Krsna keeps them with Him because they have qualified themselves to escape this nasty place by becoming His pure devotees. This verse is spoken by Krsna, or God Himself, in the Bhagavad-gita (8.15). Who can be a more final authority? The point is that to make advancement in spiritual life, one must view everything material with a pessimistic eye unless it is utilized to serve and please Krsna. We are not very much hopeful for any lasting pleasure or satisfaction for our deepest cravings within this realm of gross matter.

You refer to the word "love" several times in your letter, but the actual fact is that there is no love in this material world. That is false propaganda. What they call love here is lust only, or desire for personal sense gratification:

kama esa krodha esa
rajo-guna-samudbha vah
mahasano maha-papma
viddhy enam iha vairinam

Krsna tells Arjuna, His disciple, that "It is lust only... which is the all-devouring, sinful enemy of this world." (Bg. 3.37) In the Vedic language there is no word for materialistic "love," as we call it in the present day. The word kama describes lust or material desire, not love, but the word that we find in the Vedas for actual love is prema, meaning one's love of God only. Outside of loving God there is no possibility of loving. Rather, there is lusty desire only. Within this atmosphere of matter, the entire range of human activities--and not only every activity of human beings but all living entities--is based upon, given

impetus and thus polluted by sex desire, the attraction between male and female. For that sex life, the whole universe is spinning around--and suffering! That is the harsh truth. So-called love here means that "you gratify my senses, I'll gratify your senses," and as soon as that gratification stops, immediately there is divorce, separation, quarrel, and hatred. So many things are going on under this false conception of love. Actual love means love of God, Krsna.

Everyone wants to repose his loving tendency in some object which is in his opinion worthy. But the question is one of ignorance only, because people have a poor fund of knowledge about where to find that supreme lovable object who is actually worthy to accept and reciprocate their love. People simply do not know. There is no proper information. As soon as you have some attachment for anything material, it will kick you upon the face, deteriorate, and disappoint you. It's bound to dissatisfy and frustrate you. That's a fact. But these young boys in your country, and all over the world, are accepting, "Yes, that is a fact," and they are getting the right information from Krsna:

bahunam janmanam ante
jnana van mam prapadyate
vasudevah sarvam iti
sa mahatma sudurlabhah

"After many births and deaths, he who is actually wise surrenders unto Me, knowing Me to be the cause of all causes and all that is. Such a great soul is very rare." (Bg. 7.19) Again Krsna uses that word mahatma, great soul. Therefore our devotees that you have met are not ordinary boys and girls. No. They are to be considered actually wise, great souls because they have experienced in many births the miserable disease of material life and have become disgusted. Therefore they are seeking higher knowledge--they are seeking something better--and when they find Krsna and surrender unto Him, they become mahatmas, who are actually situated in knowledge. This material world is just like a prison house; it is a punishing place meant to bring us to that point of becoming disgusted, surrendering at last to Krsna, and going back to our original nature of eternal life in bliss and complete knowledge. Therefore it is to the credit of these devotees that they have done what is sudurlabhah, very rare among all men in human society.

By surrendering to Krsna one will find the final object in which to invest his love: God. Love of God is present in everyone, just like fire in an unlit match, but it is covered over. But if one somehow or other develops his dormant love of God, and Krsna becomes his supreme adorable object, supreme friend, supreme master, or supreme lover, than he shall never again become disappointed or unhappy. Rather, because his loving propensity is rightfully placed:

mac-citta mad-gata-prana
bodhayantah parasparam
kathayantas ca mam nityam
tusyanti ca ramanti ca
(Bg. 10.9)

I he devotee whose life is surrendered to Krsna is always enjoying "great satisfaction and bliss," and he is constantly enlightened, always

positive, not negative, as you say. The advanced devotee is the friend of everyone. The yoga-yukto visuddhatma, purified soul engaged in loving devotional service to Krsna, is sarva-bhutatma-bhutatma, dear to everyone, and everyone is dear to him. In another place Krsna claims that yo mad-bhaktah sa me priyah, His devotee, who is very dear to Him, advesta sarva-bhutanam maitrah karuna eva ca, is not envious but is a kind friend to all living entities. The devotee is supposed to be, furthermore, equal to everyone (panditah sama-darsinah). He never discriminates, saying, "This one is good, this one is bad." No.

These are descriptions of the more advanced stages of Krsna consciousness that devotees get by development of mature knowledge. At present many of our students are young boys. They are learning gradually, and the process is so effective, certain, and authorized that if they stick to it they will come to the right point, as you say, of loving. But that love is not material, so it should not be judged on the false, sentimental platform of ordinary, mundane dealings. That is our point. Therefore to say they are not loving may be true from the materialists' point of view. They have given up affection for family, friends, wife, country, race, and so on, which is all based upon the bodily concept of life, or flickering sense gratification. They have become a little detached from maya's love, or lust, and they want Krsna's love, or endless, fully rewarding love, but they have not yet developed to that point, that's all. We cannot expect that all of a sudden your countrymen, who are addicted to so many bad habits, will give up eating flesh, taking intoxicants, having illicit sex life, and so many other nasty things, and overnight become great, self-realized souls. That is not possible. That is utopian. But just being initiated as Krsna's devotee puts one in the topmost category of human society. Sa buddhiman manusyesu sa yuktah krtsna-karma-krt: "He is intelligent in human society. He is in the transcendental position, although engaged in all sorts of activities." And although such a devotee may not yet have advanced to the highest level of spiritual understanding, still he is to be considered the most exalted personality, regardless of any temporary frailties.

api cet suduracaro
bhajate mam ananya-bhak
sadhur eva sa mantavyah
samyag vyavasito hi sah

"Even if a devotee commits the most abominable actions, he is to be considered saintly because he is properly situated." (Bg. 9.30) As you will say, "To err is human." Therefore in the neophyte stage we may always expect some discrepancies. Kindly see the thing in this light and forgive their small mistakes. The big thing is that they have given everything, even their lives, to Krsna--and that is never a mistake.

Your ever well-wisher,

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami

An Awareness of What Is Best and Most Beautiful

During May 1974, the noted Irish poet Desmond James Bernard O 'Grady visited Srila Prabhupada at his quarters in Rome, and the two had a lengthy and lively discussion. Among other things, the spiritual leader and the poet discussed personal identity and individual duty, putting an

end to war, modern education and its problems, life beyond time, and the essential nature of love.

Mr. O'Grady: Your edition of the Bhagavad-gita is very nice.

Srila Prabhupada: It is the fifth edition in two years.

Mr. O'Grady: In which country has the Hare Krsna movement been the most successful?

Srila Prabhupada: Everywhere. In Africa, America, Canada, Japan, China. But actually it has been most successful in America. Many Americans have taken to Krsna consciousness.

Mr. O'Grady: What about here in Rome? Have you had problems with the police?

Srila Prabhupada: We have problems everywhere. Police sometimes harass us, but usually they become tired and eventually don't do anything.

[Laughter.]

Mr. O'Grady: The system give up? That's marvelous. I feel very tired of the system myself. Something is wrong with the present state of affairs. Maybe you can give me some advice on how to beat the system.

Srila Prabhupada: You Irish people! You are never tired of fighting.

Mr. O'Grady: No. [Laughter.] It's inside us.

Srila Prabhupada: Actually, the fighting has been going on constantly.

Mr. O'Grady: Well, what do you suggest we do about it? I mean, is it morally correct for me to be sitting here...

Srila Prabhupada: As long as we remain illusioned by the bodily conception of life, thinking we are these bodies, one man thinking "I am Irish," another thinking "I am Italian," "... American," "... Indian," and so on--as long as this goes on, the fighting will go on. You cannot stop fighting between dogs and cats. Why do they fight? The dog simply thinks, "I am a big dog." And the cat thinks, "I am a big cat." In the same way, if we think, "I am an Irishman" or "I am an Englishman," then we are no better than the cats and dogs. As long as people remain in a bodily conception of life, there will be fighting.

Mr. O'Grady: What was Mahatma Gandhi fighting in the House of Commons?

Srila Prabhupada: That was another dog-ism. There is no difference. A dog thinks, "I am a dog," because he has the body of a dog. If I am thinking that I am Indian because this body was born on Indian soil, then how am I different from the dog? The bodily conception of life is simply animalism. When we understand that we are not these bodies but are spirit souls, there will be peace. There cannot be any peace otherwise. Sa eva go-kharah. The Vedic literatures state that a person in the bodily concept of life is exactly like a cow or an ass. People have to transcend this inferior conception of the self. How is that done?

mam ca yo 'vyabhicarena
bhakti-yogena se vate
sa gunan samatityaitan
brahma-bhuyaya kalpate

"One who engages in the spiritual activities of unalloyed devotional service at once transcends the modes of material nature and is elevated to the spiritual platform." (Bhagavad-gita 14.25)

In our society, there are many Mexicans, Canadians, Indians, Jews, and Muslims, but they no longer consider themselves Muslims, Christians,

Jews, or whatever. They are all servants of Krsna. That is Brahman realization.

Mr. O'Grady: That's giving it a name also.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, a name must be there. But although, for example, your name is different from that of another Irishman, you nonetheless all feel that you are Irish. One's name may be different, but that doesn't matter. The quality should be one. That is required. When we acquire Krsna's quality, then, despite different names, there will be peace. That is called so 'ham. The names of different people in a nation may be different, but all the people feel the same nationality. Varieties may exist, but if the quality is the same, that is oneness, brahma-bhuta.

brahma-bhuta prasannatma
na socati na kanksati
samah sarvesu bhutesu
mad-bhaktim labhate param

"One who is thus transcendently situated at once realizes the Supreme Brahman. He never laments nor desires to have anything; he is equally disposed to every living entity. In that state he attains pure devotional service unto Me." (Bg. 18.54)

This world is miserable for the materially infected person, but for the devotee, the entire world is as good as Vaikuntha. For the impersonalist, achieving the Brahman stage, becoming one with the Absolute, is the last word.

Mr. O'Grady: Is the Absolute external or internal?

Srila Prabhupada: There is no external or internal. The Absolute is without duality.

Mr. O'Grady: OK, but on an individual level...

Srila Prabhupada: We are not absolute. When we are situated on the absolute platform, we are absolute. However, now we are in the relative world. The Absolute Truth is here also, but our senses are not sufficiently elevated to understand that Absolute Truth. As long as we are under the control of time, there is no question of becoming absolute.

Mr. O'Grady: So "absolute" means life beyond time?

Srila Prabhupada: That is stated in the Bhagavad-gita (4.9):

janma karma ca me divyam
evam yo vetti tattvatah
tyaktva deham punar janma
naiti mam eti so 'rjuna

"One who knows the transcendental nature of My appearance and activities does not, upon leaving the body, take his birth again in this material world, but attains My eternal abode, O Arjuna."

That is absolute--going back home, back to Godhead. As long as one is in the material world and identifies with this body, he transmigrates from one body to another. That is not absolute. This is clearly stated here. When one goes back to the spiritual world, he attains the absolute position.

Mr. O'Grady: All right, but this is my question: Is it sufficient for us to sit here--you sitting there and we as friends sitting with you engaging in the gentle art of conversation, while across the ocean...

Srila Prabhupada: The point you have missed is that although you are sitting in one place and I am sitting in a different place, this difference does not affect our actual existence. We are both human beings. The conceptions of "Irishman," "Englishman," "Protestant," "Catholic," and so on are but different dresses. One has to become free from these designations. When one is thus free, he becomes purified.

sarvopadhi-vinirmuktam
tat-paratvena nirmalam
hrsikena hrsikesa-
sevanam bhaktir ucyate
(Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu 1.1.12)

When you have purified your senses and engaged those purified senses in the service of the master of the senses, Krsna, you have perfected your life. That is nonduality, and that is absolute.

Mr. O'Grady: But the system insists that you think yourself American or Indian or African or whatever.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. Materialistic society means duality.

Mr. O'Grady: But that is unavoidable. How can you avoid material existence?

Srila Prabhupada: That is possible in Krsna consciousness. The lotus lives in the water but never touches the water.

Mr. O'Grady: I don't think you can explain situations in one area with metaphors from another. How can you argue political problems in terms of vague spiritual concepts? Their nature is completely different.

Srila Prabhupada: Sometimes a variety of examples helps us to understand or appreciate the problem better. In the vase there is a variety of flowers, and that variety helps us better appreciate the idea of flowers. From any point of view, Krsna can resolve all problems. Why just the problems of Irishmen or Englishmen? All problems. That is called unity in diversity. Our students come from different backgrounds, but because they are all in Krsna consciousness, they are unified.

Mr. O'Grady: Very good. Yes, I accept that. I would like to know, though, that when you say "Krsna consciousness," is there any difference between that and Christ consciousness? Prabhupada: No, there is no difference. Christ came to preach the message of God. If you actually become Christ conscious, you become Krsna conscious.

Mr. O'Grady: And does becoming Krsna conscious or God conscious mean becoming self-conscious? That is, conscious of who we really are?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, God consciousness includes self-consciousness, but self-consciousness is not necessarily God consciousness.

Mr. O'Grady: But it may be?

Srila Prabhupada: No. Mr. O'Grady: One may achieve consciousness of the God that is within.

Srila Prabhupada: That means he is God conscious. You are now in the sunlight, and consciousness of the sun includes your ability to see yourself. In the darkness you cannot see yourself. At night you can't even see your own hands or legs, but if you come before the sun, you see the sun and yourself also. Without sunlight, without God consciousness,

self-consciousness is incomplete. However, God consciousness makes self-consciousness very clear.

Mr. O'Grady: We meet a lot of young people in our teaching profession, and we don't try to teach them any kind of didactic salvation. We do try to direct them toward an awareness of what is best and what is most beautiful and what is most spiritually nourishing in the world about them--that is, insofar as the system allows us. Very frequently the students are not neutral enough to be in a spiritual condition; they are more in an emotional one. What we are faced with often is the basic question of "Who am I?" or, "What is it all about?"

Srila Prabhupada: Yes.

Mr. O'Grady: Or they ask, "Why am I here?"

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, very good.

Mr. O'Grady: We are asked, "Why should I be here? Who are you, teacher, and what gives you the right to tell us what to think or what to be or what not to be? Why should I read Shakespeare? Why should I listen to Mozart? I prefer Bob Dylan." These kind of questions seem to emanate from a very disillusioned state of mind, and insecurity, and uncertainty, and a lack of credibility in the total structure of things as they are. Frequently we have to answer these questions in a cataclysmic sort of way. Rather than presenting direct answers, we must answer indirectly, taking account of the conditioning that prompted students to ask these questions in the first place. Do you think that we should try to reach them more directly?

Srila Prabhupada: You are talking about the problem of...

Mr. O'Grady: Modern education.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. So many questions are there, but they are not answered by modern education. "Why have I come here? What is the purpose?" These questions should be answered perfectly. Therefore the Vedas enjoin: tad-vijnanartham sa gurum evabhigacchet. To find answers to all these questions, one must approach a bona fide spiritual master.

Mr. O'Grady: What if you have none? What if we are told that Mr. Nixon is the bona fide spiritual master? What do we do?

Srila Prabhupada: No, no. [Laughter.] There is a standard for bona fide spiritual masters. You have only heard one line of the verse. Who is the spiritual master? That is the next line: srotriyam brahma-nistham. The word srotriyam refers to one who has heard from another bona fide source. A spiritual master is he who has taken the message from another qualified spiritual master. This is just like a medical man who has taken the knowledge of medical science from another medical man. Similarly, the bona fide spiritual master must come in a line of successive spiritual masters. The original spiritual master is God.

Mr. O'Grady: Yes. Granted.

Srila Prabhupada: One who has heard from God explains the same message to his disciples. If the disciple doesn't change the message, he is a bona fide spiritual master. That is our process. We take lessons by hearing from Krsna, God, and from Him understand who is perfect. Or we hear from His representative, who does not contradict Krsna and who has realized His message. It is not that we speak one thing and do all nonsense. One who does so is not a spiritual master.

Mr. O'Grady: Now there's my poor old father, living west of Ireland. A simple old man, seventy-eight years now, your generation. He has gotten to the point at his age where he says, "They tell me, the priests, they tell me ultimately that it's God who knows. But I want to know who told

God." Then he comes to me and says, "You went to school, and you read books. Tell me, who told God?" So I have no answer. That is the difference between seventy-eight and thirty-nine years.

Srila Prabhupada: No, it is not a difference of age. The difference is knowledge. In the Brahma-sutra the question is raised: Who is God? First of all there is this question.

Mr. O'Grady: Who taught God?

Srila Prabhupada: No. First of all there is the question who is God. Then we shall ask who taught God. The Vedanta-sutra says, athato brahma jijnasa: now we should inquire who is God. Unless you know who God is, how can you raise the question of who instructed God? If you don't know God, the question does not arise who instructed God. Is this not so?

Mr. O'Grady: Yes.

Srila Prabhupada: Who God is, is explained in the Brahma-sutra. Janmady asya yatah: God is He from whom everything emanates. That is God--the Supreme Being from whom everything emanates. Now, what is the nature of that Supreme Being? Is He a dead stone or a living entity? That is also explained. Janmady asya yato 'nvayad itaratas carthesv abhijnah svarat (Srimnad-Bhagavatam 1.1.1): the Supreme Being is fully cognizant of everything, directly and indirectly. Unless He is fully cognizant of everything, He cannot be God. Then the question that you raised comes, Who taught God? And that is also answered. Svarat: He is fully independent. He does not need to take lessons from anyone. That is God. If one needs to take lessons from others, he is not God. Krsna spoke the Bhagavad-gita, and He did not have to learn it from anyone. I had to learn it from my spiritual master, but Krsna did not have to learn it from anyone. One who does not need to take lessons from others is God.

Mr. O'Grady: Where does human love come in?

Srila Prabhupada: Everything is coming from God. Being part and parcel of God, we manifest partial love because the original love is there in Him. Nothing can exist if it is not in God; therefore love is there in God.

Mr. O'Grady: And manifestations of love are manifestations of God?

Srila Prabhupada: Unless the loving propensity is there in God, how can we manifest it? A son born of a particular father has the symptoms of the father. Because the loving propensity is in God, we have that same propensity.

Mr. O'Grady: Maybe love is generated in you by the need.

Srila Prabhupada: No, there is no question of "maybe." We are defining God in absolute terms. Janmady asya yatah: God is He from whom everything has emanated. The fighting propensity is also there in God, but His fighting and His loving are absolute. In the material world we experience that fighting is just the opposite of loving, but in God the fighting propensity and the loving propensity are one and the same. That is the meaning of "absolute." We learn from the Vedic scriptures that when the so-called enemies of God are killed by God, they attain liberation.

Mr. O'Grady: Is it possible to arrive at this understanding of God alone?

Srila Prabhupada: No. Therefore we have cited this verse: tad-vijnanartham sa gurum evabhigacchet. The word abhigacchet means "must." It is not possible alone. In Sanskrit grammar this is called the vidhilin form of a verb, and this form is used when there is no choice. The word abhigacchet means that one must approach a guru. That is the

Vedic version. Therefore in the Bhagavad-gita you will find that Arjuna was talking to Krsna, but when he saw that things were not being resolved, he surrendered himself to Krsna and accepted Him as his guru.

karpanya-dosopahata-svabhavah
prcchami tvam dharma-sammudha-cetah
yac chreyah syan niscitam bruhi tan me
sisyas te 'ham sadhi mam tvam prapannam

"Now I am confused about my duty and have lost all composure because of weakness. In this condition I am asking You to tell me clearly what is best for me. Now I am Your disciple, and a soul surrendered unto You. Please instruct me." (Bg. 2.7) So here we can see that Arjuna is confused about his duty.

Mr. O'Grady: Is this duty to the self, to others, or to the state?

Srila Prabhupada: A soldier's duty is to fight with the enemy. Arjuna was a soldier, and Krsna advised him, "The opposite party is your enemy, and you are a soldier. Why are you trying to be nonviolent? This is not good." Then Arjuna said, "Actually, I am confused. In this confusion I cannot make the right decision. I therefore accept You as my spiritual master. Please give me the proper lesson." In a chaotic condition, in a confused state of life, one should approach another, who is in full knowledge of the matter. You go to a lawyer to solve legal problems, and you go to a physician to solve medical problems. Everyone in the material world is confused about spiritual identity. It is therefore our duty to approach a bona fide spiritual master, who can give us real knowledge.

Mr. O'Grady: I am very confused.

Srila Prabhupada: So you must approach a spiritual master.

Mr. O'Grady: And he makes a decision on how to help me stop this confusion?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, the spiritual master is one who solves all confusion. If the spiritual master cannot save his disciple from confusion, he is not a spiritual master. That is the test.

samsara-davanala-lidha-loka-
tranaya karunya-ghanaghanatvam
praptasya kalyana-gunarna vasya
vande guroh sri-caranara vindam

This whole confused world is just like a blazing forest fire. In a forest fire all the animals are confused. They do not know where to go to save their lives. In the blazing fire of the material world, everyone is confused. How can that blazing forest fire be extinguished? It is not possible to utilize your man-made fire brigade, nor is it possible to simply pour buckets of water. The solution comes when rain from the clouds falls on the forest fire. Only then can the fire be extinguished. That ability is not in your hands, but is in the mercy of God. So, human society is in a confused state, and it cannot find a solution. The spiritual master is one who has received the mercy of God, and he can deliver the solution to the confused man. One who has received the mercy of God can become a spiritual master and deliver that mercy to others.

Mr. O'Grady: The problem is to find this spiritual master.

Srila Prabhupada: That is not the problem. The problem is whether you are sincere. You have problems, but God is within your heart. Isvarah sarva-bhutanam. God is not far away. If you are sincere, God sends you a spiritual master. Therefore God is also called caitya-guru, the spiritual master within the heart. God helps from within and from without. Everything is thus described in the Bhagavad-gita. This material body is like a machine, but within the heart is the soul, and with the soul is the Supersoul, Krsna, who gives directions. The Lord says, "You wanted to do this; now here is the chance. Go and do it." If you are sincere, you say, "Now, God, I want You." Then He will give you directions. "Yes, now you come and get Me like this." This is His kindness. However, if we want something else, that is all right. We can have it. God is very kind. When I want something, He is in my heart directing me and telling me how to have it. So why should He not give directions on how to have a spiritual master? First of all we must again be eager to revive our God consciousness. Then God will give us a spiritual master.

Mr. O'Grady: Thank you very much.

Srila Prabhupada: Thank you very much. My request to you is this. You are a poet. Just describe God. You are expert in describing, and therefore I ask you to kindly describe God in your occupation. Then your life will be successful. And if one hears you, his life will also be successful. That is the injunction:

idam hi pumsas tapasah srutasya va
svistasya suktasya ca buddhi-dattayoh
avicyuto 'rthah kavibhir nirupito
yad uttamasloka-gunanu varnanam
(Srimad-Bhagavatam 1.5.22)

There are many leaders in society who are poets, scientists, religionists, philosophers, politicians, and so on. Those who are so expert are given this injunction: Your duty is to perfect your occupation by describing the glories of the Supreme Being.

Mr. O'Grady: My experience is that, for some extraordinary reason, one is chosen to do a particular thing.

Srila Prabhupada: That reason is given here. Avicyutah. The infallible choice is this: "Let them describe the glories of the Lord."

Mr. O'Grady: But you were saying that the spiritual master is chosen. The spiritual master, the poet, the priest, is chosen by God. This person is chosen to write poems or paint pictures or make music.

Srila Prabhupada: So when you compose music, compose music about God. That is your perfection.

Mr. O'Grady: When one works for God in his line, then his line becomes his perfection?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes.

Mr. O'Grady: Thank you very much.

Chapter Eight

Attaining Perfection

Knowing the Purpose of Life

Every thoughtful human being asks the fundamental question, "What is the purpose of life?" Unfortunately, our difficulty in finding ultimate meaning is compounded by the fact that thousands of conflicting philosophies, religions, and ideologies and their proponents compete for our loyalty. Here Srila Prabhupada provides some simple and enlightening guidance.

Today's subject matter is our relationship with God. That is self-realization. The sankirtana movement is the easiest process for self-realization because it cleanses the heart. Our misunderstanding of our identity is due to the dust covering the mirror of the mind. In a mirror that is covered with dust one cannot see himself. But if it is very clear, then one can see himself. So meditation is a process for cleansing the heart. Meditation means to try to understand one's relationship with the Supreme.

With everything with which we come in contact there is a relationship. Because I am now sitting on this cushion, the relationship is that I shall sit and the cushion will hold me. You have relationships. You are Englishmen or Indians, so there is a relationship with your society, with your family, with your friends. So what is our relationship with God?

If you ask everyone, very few people will be able to explain their relationship with God. They say, "What is God? God is dead. I don't believe in God, not to speak of a relationship." Because these dirty things are covering their hearts, they cannot see. We have a relationship with everything--why do we not try to understand our relationship with God? Is that very intelligent? No. That is ignorance. All the creatures in this material world are covered by the three modes of material nature. Therefore they cannot see God. They cannot understand God, nor do they try to understand Him. But God is there. In England in the morning there is mist, so you cannot see the sun behind the fog. But does this mean that there is no sun? You cannot see it because your eyes are covered. But if you send a telegram to another part of the world, they will say, "Yes, the sun is here. We can see it. It is very dazzling, full of light." So when you deny the existence of God or you cannot ascertain your relationship with God, that means that you are lacking in knowledge. It is not that there is no God. We are lacking. The sun is not covered. The sun cannot be covered. The fog or the cloud or the mist does not have the power to cover the sun. How big the sun is! It is so many times bigger than this earth. And the clouds can cover at most ten or twenty or a hundred miles. So how can the clouds cover the sun? No. The clouds cannot cover the sun. They cover your eyes. When an enemy comes and a rabbit cannot defend himself, the rabbit closes his eyes and thinks, "My enemy is now gone." Similarly, we are covered by the external energy of God and are thinking, "God is dead."

The Lord has three kinds of energies. In the Visnu Purana there are descriptions of the energy of the Supreme Lord. And in the Vedas also, in the Upanisads, there are descriptions of the energies of the Supreme Lord. Parasya saktir vividhaiva sruyate (Svetasvatara Upanisad 6.8). Sakti means "energy." The Lord has multienergies. The Vedas say, "God has nothing to do." We have to work because we have no other means to exist--we have to eat, we wish to enjoy this, that--but why should God work? God does not have to work. Then how can we say that God created

this universe? Is that not work? No. Then how did it happen? His multifarious energies are so strong that they are acting naturally and are full of knowledge. We can see how a flower blooms and grows and systematically displays multicolors: one side a little spot, another side a little spot, white on one side, more white on the other side. The butterfly also exhibits such artistic symmetry. So this is all being painted, but in such a perfect way and so swiftly that we cannot see how. We cannot understand how it is being done, but it is being done by the energy of the Lord.

It is due to a lack of knowledge that people say that God is dead, that there is no God, and that we have no relationship with God. These thoughts have been compared to the thoughts of a man haunted by a ghost. Just as a haunted man speaks all nonsense, when we become covered by the illusory energy of God we say that God is dead. But this is not a fact. Therefore, we need this chanting process to cleanse our heart. Take to this simple process of chanting the Hare Krsna mantra. In that way, in your family life, in your club, in your home, on the road--everywhere--chant Hare Krsna, and this darkness covering your heart, covering your real position, will be removed. Then you'll understand your real constitutional position.

Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu recommended: ceto-darpana-marjanam. Marjanam means "cleanse," and darpanam means "mirror." The heart is a mirror. It is like a camera. Just as a camera takes all kinds of pictures of days and nights, so also our heart takes pictures and keeps them in an unconscious state. Psychologists know this. The heart takes so many pictures, and therefore it becomes covered. We do not know when it has begun, but it is a fact that because there is material contact, our real identity is covered. Therefore ceto-darpana-marjanam: one has to cleanse his heart. There are different processes to cleanse the heart--the jnana process, the yoga process, the meditation process, pious activities. Karma also cleanses the heart. If one acts very piously, his heart will gradually be cleansed. But although these processes are recommended for cleansing the heart, in this age they are all difficult. To follow the path of philosophical knowledge one must become a very learned scholar, one must read so many books, one must go to learned professors and scholars and speculate. One must search out a person who has seen the light. So these are all philosophical processes. Meditation is also a recommended process. One should question, "What am I?" Just consider: Am I this body? No. Am I this finger? No, this is my finger. If you contemplate your leg, you will see, "Oh, this is my leg." Similarly, you will find everything to be "mine." And where is that "I"? Everything is mine, but where is that "I"? When one is searching for that "I," that is meditation. Real meditation means concentrating all the senses in that way. But that meditation process is very difficult. One must control the senses. The senses are dragging one outward, and one has to bring them inward for introspection. Therefore there are eight processes in the yoga system. The first is controlling the senses by regulative principles. Then sitting postures--that will help to concentrate the mind. If one sits leaning over, that will not help; if one sits up straight, that will help. Then controlling the breathing, then meditation, then samadhi. But today these are very, very difficult processes. No one can immediately perform them. The so-called yoga processes are fragmental--only the sitting postures and a few breathing exercises are practiced. But that cannot bring one to the perfectional

stage. The actual yoga process, although a recommended Vedic process, is very difficult in this age. Similarly one can try to get knowledge by the speculative philosophical process: "This is Brahman, this is not Brahman, so what is Brahman? What is spirit soul?" Such empiric philosophical discussion is also recommended, but it is useless in this age.

Therefore Caitanya Mahaprabhu--not only Caitanya Mahaprabhu but also the Vedic literature--says:

harer nama harer nama
harer namaiva kevalam
kalau nasty eva nasty eva
nasty eva gatir anyatha

Kalau means "in this age." Nasty eva, nasty eva, nasty eva--three times nasty eva. Eva means "certainly," and nasti means "not." "Certainly not, certainly not, certainly not." What is that "certainly not"? One cannot realize oneself by karma. That is the first "certainly not." One cannot realize oneself by jnana. That is the second "certainly not." One cannot realize oneself by yoga. Certainly not. Kalau. Kalau means "in this age." Kalau nasty eva nasty eva nasty eva gatir anyatha. In this age one certainly cannot achieve success by any of these three methods. Then what is the recommended process? Harer nama harer nama harer namaiva kevalam. Simply chant the Hare Krsna mantra. Kevalam means "only." Simply chant Hare Krsna. It is the easiest and most sublime process. This is recommended, practical, and authorized. So take it. Accept it in any condition of life. Chant. There is no expenditure, there is no loss. We are not chanting a secret. No. It is open. And by chanting you will cleanse your heart.

In this material world no one wants misery, but it comes. Unexpectedly, like a forest fire that starts without anyone's striking a match, it comes. No one wants a war, but war is fought. No one wants famine, but famine comes. No one wants pestilence, but it comes. No one wants fighting, but there is fighting. No one wants misunderstanding, but there is. Why? This is like a blazing fire in the forest. And it cannot be extinguished by fire engines. This blazing fire of problems cannot be extinguished by our so-called advancement of knowledge. No. That is not possible, Just as one cannot extinguish a forest fire by sending a fire engine or by bringing some water, the problems of our life cannot be solved by material processes.

There are many examples. Prahlada Maharaja says, "My dear Lord, the father and mother are not actually the protectors of the children." The father and mother take care of their children; that is their duty. But they are not the ultimate protectors. When nature's law calls the child, the father and mother cannot protect him. Therefore although generally it is considered a fact that the father and mother are the protectors of the child, actually it is not a fact. If someone is sailing the ocean and he thinks he has a very nice seat, will that protect him? No. Still he may drown. A nice airplane is flying in the sky, everyone is safe, but all of a sudden it crashes. Nothing material can protect us. Suppose someone is diseased. He may engage a good physician who gives good medicine, but that will not guarantee that he will live. Then what is the ultimate guarantee? Prahlada Maharaja says, "My dear Lord, if You neglect someone, nothing can protect him."

This is our practical experience. We can invent so many methods to solve the problems presented by the laws of material nature, but they are not sufficient. They will never solve all the problems, nor will they give actual relief. This is the fact. Therefore Krsna says in the Bhagavad-gita, "Maya, this external energy, is very, very strong. No one can surpass it. It is almost impossible." Then how can one get free from this material nature? Krsna says, "Simply by surrendering unto Me one can get relief from the onslaught of material nature." That is a fact. So we have to cleanse the heart to learn what is our relationship with God.

In the Katha Upanisad it is stated, nityo nityanam cetanas cetananam. The Supreme Absolute Personality of Godhead, or the Absolute Truth, is eternal. God is eternal, and we are also eternal. But the Vedas indicate that He is the supreme living creature. He is not dead. If He is not living, how is this world working? In the Bhagavad-gita Krsna says, "Under My supervision things are going on." In the Bible also it is said, "God created." That is a fact. Not that at one time there was a chunk and then this happened and then that. No. The Vedas tell us the actual facts, but we have to open our eyes to see. Ceto-darpana-marjanam. That is the process of cleansing our hearts. When we cleanse our hearts, then we will be able to understand what Krsna and the Vedas say. We need to be purified. If a man is suffering from jaundice and you give him a piece of sugar candy, he will say that it is very bitter. But is sugar candy bitter? No, it is very sweet. And the medicine for jaundice is that sugar. Modern science prescribes this, and it is prescribed in the Vedic literature also. So if we take a great quantity of this sugar candy, then we will be relieved from jaundice. And when there is relief, then one says, "Oh, this is very sweet." So the modern jaundice of a godless civilization can be cured by this chanting of Hare Krsna. In the beginning it may appear bitter, but when one advances, then he will see how pleasing it is.

As soon as one understands his identity, his relationship with God, then immediately he becomes happy. We are so full of miseries because we have identified ourselves with the material world. Therefore we are unhappy. Anxieties and fearfulness are due to our misidentifying with the material world. The other day I was explaining that one who identifies with this bag of bones and skin is like an animal. So by chanting Hare Krsna this misunderstanding will be cleansed. Cleansing of the heart means that one will understand that he does not belong to this material world. Aham brahmasmi: I am spirit soul. As long as one identifies oneself with England, with India, or with America, this is ignorance. Today you are an Englishman because you were born in England, but in your next life you may not take your birth in England; it may be in China or Russia or some other country. Or you may not get this human form of body. Today you are a nationalist, you are a very great follower of your country, but tomorrow if you stay in your country you may be a cow being taken to the slaughterhouse.

So we have to thoroughly know our identity. Caitanya Mahaprabhu says that the actual identity of every living creature is that he is the eternal servant of God. If one thinks like that--"I am no one else's servant; my business is to serve God"--then he is liberated. His heart is immediately cleansed, and he is liberated. And after one has reached that, then all one's cares and anxieties in this world are over because one knows, "I am a servant of God. God will give me protection. Why

should I worry about anything?" It is just like a child. A child knows that his mother and father will take care of him. He is free. If he should go to touch fire, his mother will take care of him: "Oh, my dear child, don't touch." The mother is always looking after him. So why don't you put your trust in God? Actually, you are under the protection of God.

People go to church and say, "God, give us our daily bread." Actually, if He did not give it to us, we would not be able to live. That is a fact. The Vedas also say that the one Supreme Personality supplies all the necessities of every other living creature. God is supplying food for everyone. We human beings have our economic problem, but what economic problem is there in societies other than human society? The bird society has no economic problem. The species of life, and out of that, human society is very, very small. So they have created problems--what to eat, where to sleep, how to mate, how to defend. These are a problem to us, but the majority of creatures--the aquatics, the fish, the plants, the insects, the birds, the beasts, and the many millions upon millions of other living creatures--do not have such a problem. They are also living creatures. Don't think that they are different from us. It is not true that we human beings are the only living creatures and that all others are dead. No. And who is providing their food and shelter? It is God. The plants and animals are not going to the office. They are not going to the university to get technological education to earn money. So how are they eating? God is supplying. The elephant eats hundreds of pounds of food. Who is supplying? Are you making arrangements for the elephant? There are millions of elephants. Who is supplying?

So the process of acknowledging that God is supplying is better than thinking, "God is dead. Why should we go to church and pray to God for bread?" In the Bhagavad-gita it is said, "Four kinds of people come to Krsna: the distressed, those who are in need of money, the wise, and the inquisitive." One who is inquisitive, one who is wise, one who is distressed, and one who is in need of money--these four classes of men approach God. "My dear God, I am very hungry. Give me my daily bread." That's nice. Those who approach God in this way are recommended as sukrtinah. Sukrti means "pious." They are pious. Although they are asking for money, for food, they are considered pious because they are approaching God. And others are just the opposite. They are duskrtinah, impious. Krti means "very meritorious," but the word duskrti indicates that their energy is being misused to create havoc. Just like the man who invented atomic weapons. He has a brain, but it has been misused. He has created something that is dreadful. Create something that will insure that man will no longer have to die. What is the use of creating something so that millions of people will immediately die? They will die today or tomorrow or after a hundred years. So what have the scientists done? Create something so that man will not die immediately, so that there will be no more disease, so that there will be no more old age. Then you will have done something. But the duskrtinas never go to God. They never try to understand God. Therefore their energy is misdirected.

The gross materialists who ignore their relationship with God are described in the Bhagavad-gita as mudhas. Mudha means "ass," "donkey." Those who are working very, very hard to earn money are compared to the donkey. They will eat the same four capatis [whole-wheat bread-patties] daily, but they are unnecessarily working to earn thousands of dollars.

And others are described as naradhama. Naradhama means "the lowest of mankind." The human form of life is meant for God realization. It is the right of man to try to realize God. One who understands Brahman, God, is a brahmana, not others. So that is the duty of this human form of life. In every human society there is some system that is called "religion" and by which one may try to understand God. It doesn't matter whether it is the Christian religion, the Muhammadan religion, or the Hindu religion. It doesn't matter. The system is to understand God and our relationship with Him. That's all. This is the duty of the human beings, and if this duty is ignored in human society, then it is animal society. Animals have no power to understand what is God and their relationship with God. Their only interests are eating, sleeping, mating, and defending. If we are only concerned with these things, then what are we? We are animals. Therefore the Bhagavad-gita says that those who ignore this opportunity are the "lowest of mankind." They got births and yet did not utilize it for God realization but simply for the animal propensities. Therefore they are naradhama, the lowest of mankind. And there are other persons who are very proud of their knowledge. But what is that knowledge? "There is no God. I am God." Their actual knowledge has been taken away by maya. If they are God, then how have they become dog? There are so many arguments against them, but they simply defy God. Atheism. Because they have taken to the process of atheism, their actual knowledge is stolen away. Actual knowledge means to know what is God and our relationship with God. If one does not know this, then it is to be understood that his knowledge has been taken away by maya.

So in this way, if we try to understand our relationship with God, there are ways and means. There are books, and there is knowledge, so why not take advantage of them? Everyone should take advantage of this knowledge. Try to understand that in the Bhagavad-gita and other Vedic literatures, everywhere, it is said that God is great and that although we are qualitatively one with God, we are minute. The ocean and the minute particle of water have the same quality, but the quantity of salt in the drop of water and the quantity of salt in the ocean are different. They are qualitatively one but quantitatively different. Similarly, God is all-powerful, and we have some power. God creates everything, and we can create a small machine to fly, just like the small machines with which children play. But God can create millions of planets flying in the air. That is the qualification of God. You cannot create any planets. Even if you can create a planet, what is the benefit of that? There are millions of planets created by God. But you also have the creative power. God has power, and you have power. But His is so great that yours cannot compare to it. If you say, "I am God," that is foolishness. You can claim that you are God, but what acts have you performed so extraordinary that you can claim that you are God? This is ignorance. The knowledge of one who thinks himself God has been taken away by the spell of maya. So our relationship is that God is great and we are minute. In the Bhagavad-gita Krsna clearly says, "All living entities are My parts and parcels. Qualitatively they are one with Me, but quantitatively they are different." So we are simultaneously one with and different from God. That is our relationship. We are one because we have the same qualities as God. But if we study ourselves minutely, we will find that although we have some great qualities, God has them all in greater quantities.

We cannot have anything that is not in God. That is not possible. Therefore in the Vedanta-sutra it is said that everything that we have is also found in God. It is emanating from God. So our relationship is that because we are small, because we are minute, we are the eternal servitors of God. In this material world also, in ordinary behavior, we see that a man goes to serve another man because the other man is greater than he and can pay him a nice salary. So naturally the conclusion is that if we are small, our duty is to serve God. We have no other business. We are all different parts and parcels of the original entity.

A screw that is connected with a machine is valuable because it is working with the whole machine. And if the screw is taken away from the machine, or if it is faulty, it is worthless. My finger is worth millions of dollars as long as it is attached to this body and is serving the body. And if it is cut off from this body, then what is it worth? Nothing. Similarly, our relationship is that we are very small particles of God; therefore our duty is to dovetail our energies with Him and cooperate with Him. That is our relationship. Otherwise we are worthless. We are cut off. When the finger becomes useless the doctor says, "Oh, amputate this finger. Otherwise the body will be poisoned." Similarly, when we become godless we are cut off from our relationship with God and suffer in this material world. If we try to join again with the Supreme Lord, then our relationship is revived.

The Highest Love

"LOVE." Singers croon about it, poets exult in it, novelists weave complex tales about it. Movies and television are saturated with it. But is it real? In this lucid essay, Srila Prabhupada argues that the love we experience in this material world is based upon an illusion and is, like everything else here, temporary. Yet there is a "higher love"--one that is never imagined by mundane romanticists.

If one protects the tender creeper of devotional service nicely, then gradually it will produce the fruit of unalloyed love for God. Unalloyed love for God means love that is not tinged by desire for material benefit, for mere philosophical understanding, nor for fruitive results. Unalloyed love is to know, "God is great, I am His part and parcel, and therefore He is my supreme lovable object." This consciousness is the highest perfection of human life and the ultimate aim of all methods of self-realization. If one reaches this point--God is my only beloved, Krsna is the only lovable object--then one's life is perfect. And when one tastes that transcendental relationship with Krsna, then one feels real happiness. The devotional creeper will then be so strongly protected that just by catching hold of it, one will be able to reach the supreme destination. If one climbs steadily up a tree, one eventually comes to the very top. Similarly, if one can achieve love of Godhead by catching that devotional creeper, there is no doubt that one will reach the transcendental abode of Krsna and will associate with Him personally, just as we are associating here, face to face.

God is not fictional or imaginary. He is as real as we are. (Actually, we are under illusion; we are living as if this body were our factual self, although this body is not at all reality, but only a temporary manifestation.) We dare to presume that there is no God or that He has no form. This mental speculation is due to a poor fund of knowledge. Lord Krsna and His abode exist, and one can go there, reach Him, and associate with Him. That is a fact. Spiritual life means to be

in association with the Supreme Lord and to exist in bliss and knowledge eternally. Such eternal association means to play with Krsna, to dance with and love Krsna. Or Krsna can become your child--whatever you like.

There are five primary relationships with Krsna: as a passive devotee, as a servant, as a friend, as a parent, and as a lover. The cows in Krsna's abode are also liberated souls. They are called surabhi cows. There are many popular pictures showing how Krsna loves the cows, how He embraces and kisses them. That passive relationship with Krsna is called santa. Their perfect happiness is achieved when Krsna comes and simply touches them.

Other devotees are inclined to actually give service. They think, "Krsna wants to sit down. I will arrange a place for Him. Krsna wants to eat. I will get Him some nice food." And they actually make these arrangements. Other devotees play with Krsna as friends on equal terms. They do not know that Krsna is God; to them, Krsna is their lovable friend, and they cannot forget Him for a moment. All day and all night, they think of Krsna. At night, when they are sleeping they think, "Oh, in the morning I shall go and play with Krsna." And in the morning they go to Krsna's house and stand by while Krsna is decorated by His mother before going out to play with His friends in the fields. There is no other activity in Krsnaloka (Krsna's abode). There is no industry, no rushing to the office, or any such nonsense. There is sufficient milk and butter, and everyone eats plentifully. Krsna is very fond of His friends, and sometimes He enjoys stealing butter for them. One can actually live this way, and that is the perfection of existence. We should hanker for that perfectional stage of life. Krsna consciousness is the process to attain it.

But as long as one has even a slight attachment for this material world, one has to remain here. Krsna is very strict. He does not allow anyone to enter into His association who has any tinge of the material conception of life. Bhakti must be free from material contamination. Do not think, "I am a very learned scholar. I shall find out what is the Absolute Truth by mental speculation." That is nonsense; one can go on and on speculating and will never find the source of all sources. It is said in the Brahma-samhita, "One can go on speculating about the Absolute Truth for millions and millions of years, and still it will not be revealed." One can rot in this material world as he is and can go on speculating, but that is not the right process. Here is the process--bhakti-yoga.

Lord Caitanya says that to render devotional service to Krsna is the highest perfectional stage of life, and compared to this, other things for which people are hankering in this material world are like bubbles in the ocean. Generally, people are after rewards, and therefore they become religious. They say, "I am a Hindu," "I am a Christian," "I am a Jew," "I am Muhammadan," "I am this, I am that, and therefore I cannot change my religion. I cannot accept Krsna." This is called religiosity, dharma. With such a materialistic, sectarian idea of religion, they will rot in this material world, stuck to rituals and faith. They are under the impression that if they follow their religious principles, they will get material prosperity. Of course, if one sticks to any kind of religious faith, he will get facilities for material life.

Why do people want this material prosperity? For sense gratification. They are thinking, "I shall have a very nice wife. I

shall have very good children. I shall have a very good post. I shall become president. I shall become prime minister." This is sense gratification. And when one is frustrated and has seen that to be rich or to attain the presidency cannot give him happiness, after squeezing out all the taste of sex life, when he is completely frustrated, then perhaps he takes to LSD and tries to become one with the void. But this nonsense cannot give happiness. Here is happiness: one must approach Krsna. Otherwise, it will end in LSD confusion and roaming in impersonal void concepts. People are frustrated. They must be frustrated if they do not have genuine spiritual life, because a person is spiritual by nature.

How can anyone be happy without Krsna? Suppose one is thrown into the ocean. How can he be happy there? That is not for us. One may be a very good swimmer, but how long will he be able to swim? He eventually becomes tired and drowns. Similarly, we are spiritual by nature. How can we be happy in this material world? It is not possible. But men are trying to remain here, making so many temporary adjustments for survival. This patchwork is not happiness. If one really wants happiness, here is the process: one must attain love of Godhead. Unless one can love Krsna, unless one finishes with love for cats, dogs, country, nation, and society and instead concentrates his love on Krsna, there is no question of happiness. Rupa Gosvami has given a very nice example in this regard: there are many drugs that saturate one with ideas or hallucinations. But Rupa Gosvami says that unless one tastes that final drug of love of Godhead, krsna-prema, he will have to be captivated by meditation, impersonal monism, and so many other distractions.

Caitanya Mahaprabhu describes that to attain unalloyed love of Krsna one has to execute devotional service, or Krsna consciousness. One has to engage oneself exclusively in serving Krsna. The highest perfectional stage of unalloyed devotion is to be free from all material desires, all mental speculation, and all fruitive activities. The basic principle of unalloyed devotion is that one cannot maintain any desire other than to become fully Krsna conscious. Even if one knows that all other forms of God are also Krsna, one should not worship any other form, but should concentrate on the Krsna form. Krsna has many forms, but one only has to worship Krsna in His form with the flute, as in the Radha-Krsna Deity. Simply concentrate on that form, and all mental speculation and fruitive activities will fall away. One has to cultivate Krsna consciousness favorably, and that means to execute service by which Krsna becomes satisfied. Krsna consciousness is not attained by manufacturing one's own way. I may think that I am doing something in Krsna consciousness, but who has sanctioned it? For instance, in the Bhagavad-gita, Arjuna hesitated to fight, for certain moral reasons, but he was viewing the situation from the platform of fruitive activities, on which one has to enjoy or suffer the results. He was considering that if he killed his family members, he would then be subjected to many reactions. This conclusion, however, was not sanctioned by Krsna. The law of action and reaction in the material world is called karma, but devotional service transcends karma.

Unalloyed love must be free of all tinges of fruitive activities (karma) and all tinges of mental speculation and material desire. That unalloyed devotional service should be favorably fixed on Krsna. "Favorably" means in accordance with what He desires. Krsna desired that

the Battle of Kuruksetra take place; it was all arranged by Him. Arjuna was told, "You are thinking in your own way, but even if you do not fight, rest assured that because it has been arranged by Me, none of these warriors who are assembled here are going back to their homes. They will be killed here. It has already been arranged." God's desire is such that one cannot change it. Krsna has two qualities: He can protect, and He can also kill. If He wants to kill someone, there is no power in the world that can protect him, and if He protects someone, there is no power in the world that can kill him. Krsna's desire is supreme. Therefore, we have to dovetail our desires with Krsna's. Whatever Krsna desires, no one can make null and void because He is the Supreme Lord. Therefore, our duty is to dovetail our acts with Krsna's desire, not to manufacture an action and then declare: "I am doing this action in Krsna consciousness." We have to be very careful to ascertain whether Krsna actually wants it. Such authorized knowledge is instructed by the representative of Krsna. In our prayers of praise to the spiritual master we are singing daily, "If the spiritual master is satisfied, then God will be satisfied. And if one dissatisfies his spiritual master, then there is no way for him to please God."

Therefore, as far as possible, one has to execute the order of one's spiritual master. That will enable one to progress. That is the essence of the favorable execution of Krsna consciousness. In my old age, I have come to America, and I am trying to teach Krsna consciousness, because my spiritual master gave me an order that I must do it. It is my duty. I do not know whether I shall be a success or failure. It doesn't matter; my duty is completed if I can present before you whatever I have heard from my spiritual master. This is called the favorable execution of Krsna consciousness. Those who are actually serious should take the order of Krsna through the representative of Krsna as their entire life and soul. One who sticks to this principle is sure to progress. Caitanya Mahaprabhu spoke in that way, and my spiritual master used to say, "The spiritual master is the transparent via medium." For example, I can see the letters of this book very nicely through these transparent eyeglasses, without which I cannot see because my eyes are defective. Similarly, our senses are all defective. We cannot see God with these eyes, we cannot hear Hare Krsna with these ears, we cannot do anything without the via medium of the spiritual master. Just as a defective eye cannot see without the via medium of spectacles, so one cannot approach the Supreme Lord without the transparent via medium of the spiritual master. "Transparent" means that the via medium must be free of contamination. If it is transparent, one can see through it.

In unalloyed love of Godhead we have to engage our senses--sarvendriya, all the senses. This means that sex is also to be engaged in Krsna consciousness. The conception of God as a father or mother does not allow the engagement of one's sex in the service of the Lord because there is no sexual relationship with the father and mother. But in the conception of God as a lover, there is sexual engagement also. Therefore, Caitanya Mahaprabhu gave the most perfect information of our engagement with the Supreme Lord. In other religious conceptions of life, God is at the utmost taken as the father or mother. Many worshipers in India take goddess Kali to be the representation of God. Of course, that is not sanctioned, but the belief is there, and also in the Christian religion the conception of God is as a father. But

Caitanya Mahaprabhu informs us that one can even have sexual engagement with the Lord. This information is Caitanya Mahaprabhu's unique contribution. In this material world, sexual engagement is considered to be the highest engagement, the greatest pleasure, although it exists only in a perverted form. No one, however, has conceived that there can be sexual engagement in the spiritual world. There is not a single instance of such theology anywhere in the entire world. This information is given for the first time by Caitanya Mahaprabhu: one can have the Supreme Personality of Godhead as one's husband, as one's lover. This is possible in the worship of Radha and Krsna, but no one, especially the impersonalists, can understand Radha-Krsna. The impersonalists have no idea; they cannot even conceive that God has form. But Caitanya Mahaprabhu says that not only does God have form, but He has sex life also. This is the highest contribution of Caitanya Mahaprabhu.

One can serve the Supreme Lord in various relationships, but in the material world those relationships exist only as perverted reflections. What is our engagement in relationship to this material world? What are our ideas of society, friendship, and love? They are all based on the material conception of life. In our society, someone is engaged as a father or mother to a son, and others are engaged as husband and wife, lover and beloved. There are other rasas (relationships) also, such as to be engaged with another as an enemy. There are twelve different relationships, out of which five are predominant. The other seven are indirect relationships, such as, for example, to be someone's enemy. There is usually a relationship between enemies, even between a murderer and the one he murders. As far as our relationship with Krsna is concerned, however, even if one establishes a relationship as His enemy, then his life is successful. Therefore, when one engages his senses with Krsna, a relationship can be established in one of twelve different varieties, of which five varieties are direct and seven are indirect.

When Krsna appeared in the arena of Kamsa, there were many big wrestlers prepared to kill Him. In fact, He was invited there to be killed. His enemy Kamsa thought, "Soon the boys will come. We have tried for sixteen years to kill them, but that boy Krsna could not be killed. But now I have invited Him as a guest, and when He arrives He will fight with these wrestlers, and they will kill Him." The demoniac or atheistic people are always thinking of Krsna, or God, in terms of killing Him. Therefore they present their theories that God is dead. They think that if God becomes dead, then they will be free to act however they please. But as far as their actual activities are concerned, God may be dead or alive, but God's agent, the material energy, is so strong that no one can freely do any wrong. As soon as anyone does something wrong, there is immediate punishment. It does not require the presence of God. God may be dead or alive, but the material energy is sufficient to punish anyone who violates the material laws, even to the slightest degree. God has set these conditions, but foolish people do not understand.

Lord Caitanya, however, speaks of favorably engaging all the senses in the service of Krsna in pure devotional life. One should favorably engage one's senses and should do whatever Krsna wants. Yet even if one engages one's senses against the will of Krsna but still thinks of Krsna, that is also advantageous. The demon Putana, for example, thought of killing Krsna. Just as the occupation of godly persons is to serve God, so the demons and atheists are always prepared to kill God. Putana thought, "I shall kill Krsna. He is only a child." This is another

mistake of the demoniac. They think Krsna, or God, to be an ordinary child or man. So in this way Putana was thinking: "Let me smear my breast with poison, and when the child goes to suck my milk, He will die." As we study this, we see that she approached Krsna as His enemy, and yet He accepted her as a friend because He is so merciful. He did not take the demoniac portion of her mentality, but He accepted her. Every living entity is conditioned, but Krsna is not. A doctor or psychiatrist treats madmen, but he does not become mad. Sometimes a patient may become angry with him or call him ill names, but the doctor is sober and simply treats him. Similarly, if someone regards Krsna as his enemy, Krsna does not become his enemy.

Putana came to poison Krsna, but He took it otherwise. He thought, "I have sucked her breast milk. Therefore she has become My mother." Krsna treated her as His mother, and therefore she became liberated to the same position as Krsna's real mother, Yasoda. The conclusion is that the highest perfection is to establish a favorable relationship with Krsna, but even if one engages himself unfavorably, Krsna is so merciful that He at least gives one salvation. All the enemies killed by Krsna were immediately liberated.

Two classes of men may merge into the impersonal brahmajyoti: those who are intentionally aspiring to merge into the impersonal brahmajyoti may enter, and those who are enemies of Krsna and are killed by Him may also do so. Therefore, the devotee concludes, Why should I accept a condition that is offered even to God's enemies?

Caitanya Mahaprabhu recommends pure devotional service. There should be no desire to fulfill one's own material desires, there should be no attempt to understand Krsna by experimental philosophy, and there should be no fruitive activities to derive material benefits from Krsna. The only desire should be to serve Him favorably, as He desires. If Krsna wants something, then we should do it. Suppose I were to ask a disciple, "My dear student, please give me a glass of water." It is then his duty to give me a glass of water. If he thinks, "Prabhupada wants a glass of water, but why not give him something better? Why not a glass of hot milk?" that is not service. In his consideration, hot milk is very palatable and is better than water, yet because I have asked for water, he has to give me water, not milk. That is favorable service. One has to understand what Krsna wants. When there is that intimate relationship, then one can serve Krsna most favorably. And as long as there is not that intimate relationship, one must take information of what Krsna wants through the transparent medium of the spiritual master.

A Vaisnava never thinks that he has a direct relationship with Krsna. Lord Caitanya says, "I am the servant of the servant of the servant of the servant--a hundred times the servant of the servant--of Krsna." We have to agree to be. come the servant of the servant of the servant. This is the process of disciplic succession, and if one wants real, transcendental love of God, then he has to adopt this process. Because people do not accept this process, they do not develop real love of God. They speak of God, but actually they do not love God; because there is no cultivation of pure devotional service, they love dog.

We may say, "love of God," but unless we adopt this principle, then we will have to love dog, not God. That is the mistake. Caitanya Mahaprabhu says that if one really wants love of God, then one has to follow the process of pure devotional service. It is not that Caitanya Mahaprabhu is speaking out of His own mental concoction; His statements

are confirmed in Vedic scriptures such as the Narada-pancaratra and the Srimad-Bhagavatam. These two books, and the Bhagavad-gita, are very authentic scriptures meant for devotees. Caitanya Mahaprabhu quotes from a verse in the Narada-pancaratra: hrsikena hrsikesa-sevanam bhaktir ucyate. This is the definition of pure devotional service. Hrsikena hrsikesa-sevanam. Hrsikena means "by one's senses." We have to engage our senses; it is not that we engage only our minds. If someone says, "I am always thinking of Krsna," that is not pure devotional service. Meditation is thinking, but no one thinks of Krsna; they think of void or something impersonal. If someone is thinking of Krsna or Narayana or Visnu, as prescribed in the Vedic scriptures, that is real yoga; yoga meditation means to focus one's mind upon the Supersoul. The Supersoul is the representation of Krsna in the form of four-handed Narayana. Even Patanjali, an authority on the yoga system, prescribes meditation on Visnu. But just as people are manufacturing bogus religious processes, the so-called yogis of today have manufactured their own way of thinking of something void.

But the Narada-pancaratra says, hrsikena hrsikesa-seva-nam: one must engage not only one's mind but one's senses. Engage the senses in the service of the master of the senses. These three Sanskrit words are very significant. Hrsikesa means "the Lord of the senses." So bhakti-yoga means to serve with the senses the Lord of the senses. The Lord of the senses is Krsna. We should always remember that we have our senses because we wanted to enjoy this material world, and therefore the Lord has given us a particular set of senses for our enjoyment. The hog has a particular type of body and senses because he wanted to enjoy eating stool. Similarly, a man has a particular type of body and senses because he wanted to enjoy something else. We have a particular set of conditioned senses with which to enjoy this material world, and this is what we have to purify. Our senses are original, but now they are covered by material desires. We have to cure ourselves and become free from such desires. When one's senses are no longer inclined toward material sense gratification, one's status is called pure devotion.

From this verse of the Narada-pancaratra, we can understand that the spirit soul has original senses. However small a body it may have entered, the spirit soul is not impersonal; it has senses. Perhaps one may find a bug on one's book. It is so small, smaller than a pinpoint, but still it moves; it has all the senses. The small bacteria also move, and they have their senses. Originally, all living entities have senses. It is not that the senses have developed under certain material conditions. The atheistic theory is that under material conditions we have developed senses, that in the spiritual condition there are no senses, and that we are impersonal. By logic and reason, however, that cannot be so. A minute particle of spiritual force, even if it is smaller in size than an atom, has its senses. These senses, being covered by material elements, manifest themselves in a perverted way. We have to purify the senses, and when the senses are purified, we can engage them for the pleasure of the master of the senses. Krsna is the master and proprietor of the senses. Therefore, because we are part and parcel of the Supreme Lord, our senses are borrowed from Him; they are on rental. The best thing is to use the senses for His sense satisfaction, and not for our own. This is the process of pure Krsna consciousness.

From the Srimnad-Bhagavatam, Lord Caitanya gives an example of pure devotion: it is said in the Bhagavatam that Krsna is situated in everyone's heart. Therefore, just as rivers flow and their natural tendency is to reach the sea, so as soon as one hears the glories of the Lord, his soul is at once attracted toward the Supreme Lord. This is the beginning of pure devotional service. As soon as there is the chanting vibration, Hare Krsna, immediately Krsna's paraphernalia, Krsna's name, Krsna's fame, Krsna's abode, Krsna's associates--everything--all of a sudden become manifested within because He is present. This is the beginning of one's Krsna consciousness. To remember by reference to a context means that as soon as one hears a code word, one at once remembers all the information behind that code. Similarly, when our minds are attracted to Krsna and everything about Krsna simply by hearing a little glorification of His qualities, that is the beginning of pure Krsna consciousness. Then there is no more gati, or movement of the mind.

It was just that way with the gopis: as soon as they heard the sound of Krsna's flute, they gave up everything. Some of them were lying down, some were working in their family affairs, some were taking care of their children, but as soon as they heard Krsna's flute, they forgot everything and rushed to Him. Their husbands, their brothers, and their fathers said, "Why are you going and leaving your duty?" But they did not care--they simply left. There is no impediment and no stumbling block in that merge of the mind with Krsna. This is the beginning of pure devotion.

Purusottama means Krsna. The word purusa means "enjoyer." The conditioned living entities are false enjoyers, imitation enjoyers. Here in this material world, all living entities are acting as purusas. The more exact meaning of purusa is "male." The male is considered to be the enjoyer, and the female is considered to be the enjoyed. In the material world, whether one has a male or a female body, everyone has the propensity to enjoy, and therefore everyone is called purusa. But actually the only purusa is the Supreme Lord. We living entities are His energy, and He is the supreme enjoyer. We are not purusa. Energies are employed for enjoyment, and we are energies, instruments of the Supreme Person. Therefore Purusottama is the supreme transcendental person, Krsna. When our pure devotion for the Supreme Personality of Godhead is employed and there are no impediments or stumbling blocks, that is the symptom of pure Krsna consciousness.

There is no ambition or motive in pure Krsna consciousness. Every other transcendental function or mode of worship is backed by a motive: someone wants salvation, someone wants material prosperity, someone wants to go to a higher planet, someone wants to go to Krsnaloka. These ambitions should not be there. A pure devotee has no such ambitions. A pure devotee does not even desire to go to the supreme abode of Krsna. Of course, he goes, but he has no desire. He simply wants to engage himself fully in Krsna's service.

There are different kinds of salvation. There is salokya liberation, to live on the same planet as the Supreme Lord. The residents of the Vaikuntha planets live on the same planet as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Sarsti liberation means to have almost the same opulence as Narayana. The liberated individual soul can appear just like Narayana, with four hands, the four emblems, almost the same bodily features, the same opulence, the same ornaments, the same

buildings, everything. Sarupya means to have the same form or features. Samipya means never to be far away but always to be associated with the Supreme Lord. For example, just as we are sitting together, so one can associate with the Lord. This is called samipya-mukti, the liberation of being nearer. Pure devotees, however, do not accept these various forms of liberation. They only want to be engaged in Krsna's service. They are not concerned with any kind of liberation. Those who are actually Krsna conscious achieve the association of the Supreme Lord, but they do not desire it; their only ambition is to be engaged in the transcendental loving service of the Lord. The highest perfection of devotional service, or Krsna consciousness, is exhibited when a devotee refuses to accept any benediction or profit from the Supreme Lord. Prahlada Maharaja was offered whatever he liked, he had only to ask for it, but he said, "My Lord, I am Your eternal servant. It is my duty to serve You, so how can I accept any benefit from it? Then I would not be Your servant; I would be a merchant." He replied in that way, and that is the sign of a pure person. Krsna is so kind that He fulfills all the desires of a devotee, even if he wants material benedictions. If at the bottom of the devotee's heart there is some desire, He also fulfills that. He is so kind. But the sublime position of bhakti-yoga, or devotional service, is that a pure devotee refuses to accept the various kinds of liberation, even if offered by the Supreme Lord.

If one has material desires or motives within himself, and for fulfillment of such desires he engages himself in devotional service, the result will be that he will never get pure love of God. If one is thinking, "I am engaged in Krsna consciousness, in Krsna's devotional service, because I want such and such an opulence," that desire may be fulfilled, but he will never get such unalloyed love of Krsna as the gopis had. If one has a motive, even though he discharges his devotional duty, he still will not be able to reach the stage of pure love of Godhead. In a verse from the Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu, Rupa Gosvami says, "As long as one desires some material benefit [bhukti], or even if he wants salvation [mukti], then he must take those ghostly representations." As long as that maya exists within one's heart, how can one enjoy the spiritual bliss derived from pure love of Godhead? In other words, if one has material desires, or even a desire for salvation, he cannot attain pure love of Godhead. Pure devotion is devoid of all desires--it is simply to render loving service for its own sake.

There is a nice example in the life of Rupa Gosvami. Rupa Gosvami and his brother Sanatana Gosvami were living separately in Vrndavana and going on with their bhajana, devotional service. Rupa was living in the forest, and there was no facility for cooking nice food or begging from the village for a capati to eat. Rupa Gosvami was the younger brother, and he thought, "If I could get some foodstuffs, then I could prepare nice dishes and offer them to Krsna and invite my elder brother." He had that desire. The next moment, a nice girl about twelve years old came and delivered an abundance of foodstuffs--milk, flour, ghee, etc. That is the Vedic system; sometimes householders present foodstuffs to mendicants and sages in the renounced order of life. Rupa Gosvami was very glad that Krsna had sent so many things and that he could now prepare a feast. He prepared a feast and then invited his elder brother.

When Sanatana Gosvami came, he was astonished. "How have you secured such things? You have prepared such a nice feast in this forest. How is it possible?"

So Rupa Gosvami explained, "In the morning I desired for it, and by chance Krsna sent me all these things. A nice girl came, and she offered it to me." He was describing the girl: "A very nice girl."

Then Sanatana said, "This nice girl is Radharani. You have taken service from Radharani, the Lord's eternal consort. It is a great blunder." That is their philosophy. They would not accept service from the Lord. They simply wanted to render service. But Krsna is so clever that He also wants to serve His devotee. He looks for an opportunity to serve His devotee. This is spiritual competition. A pure devotee does not want anything from Krsna; he simply wants to serve Him. And Krsna also looks for the opportunity to serve His devotee. Krsna is always as anxious to please His devotee as the devotee is to please Him.

This is the transcendental world. On the absolute plane, there is no exploitation. Everyone wants to serve; no one wants to take service. In the transcendental world, everyone wants to give service. You want to give service to me, and I want to give service to you. This is such a nice attitude. This material world means that I want to pickpocket you, and you want to pickpocket me. That's all. This is the material world. We should try to understand it. In the material world, everyone wants to exploit his friend, his father, his mother, everyone. But in the transcendental world, everyone wants to serve. Everyone has Krsna as the central point of serving, and all the devotees, either as friends or servants or parents or lovers of Krsna, all want to serve Him. And at the same time, Krsna also wants to serve them. This is a transcendental relationship; the main function is service, although there is no necessity of service, for everyone is full. There is no hunger, there is no necessity of eating, but still everyone offers nice things to eat. This is the transcendental world. Unless we attain the stage of simply serving Krsna or His devotee, we cannot relish the transcendental pleasure of service. If we have any motive, then that sense will never be awakened. Without a motive, without desire for personal sense gratification, service should be rendered to the Supreme Lord and His devotees.

The Perfection of Self-realization

In this concluding chapter, Srila Prabhupada discusses the ultimate goal of the science of self-realization--full realization of the Supreme Self, Krsna. The development of self-realization begins with the understanding that the self is not material--not a physical body--but pure spiritual energy. Next, one realizes that the pure, spiritual self is eternally a part of the Supreme Self, Krsna. Finally one learns how to live fully in that eternal, blissful, transcendental relationship. One who has attained this state has attained life's supreme perfection.

When Krsna was on this earth, all the residents of Vrndavana loved Him. Indeed, they knew nothing but Krsna. They did not know whether Krsna is God or not God, nor were they disturbed by such thoughts as, "I shall love Krsna if He is God." Their attitude was one of pure love, and they thought, "He may or may not be God--it doesn't matter. We love Krsna, that's all." This then is the platform of real, unalloyed love. When one thinks, "If Krsna is God, I shall love Him," it should be known that this is not the platform of pure love but of conditional love. While on earth, Krsna exhibited extraordinary powers, and the vraja-

vasis, the residents of Vrndavana, often thought, "Oh, Krsna is such a wonderful child. Maybe He is some demigod." They thought in this way because people were generally under the impression that the demigods were all-powerful. Within the material world the demigods are powerful, but people are not aware that Krsna is above all of them. The highest of the demigods, Brahma, gave his opinion of this matter in the verse isvarah paramah krsnah sac-cid-ananda-vigrahah: "Krsna is the supreme controller, and His body is full of knowledge, bliss, and eternality." Little did the residents of Vrndavana know of Krsna's power as the ultimate controller and master of all the demigods. What is noteworthy is that their love for Him was not subject to such considerations.

As the residents of Vrndavana loved Krsna unconditionally, similarly Krsna loved them unconditionally. Vraja-jana-vallabha, giri-vara-dhari. When the inhabitants of Vrndavana stopped performing sacrifices to Lord Indra, the chief demigod of the heavens, they placed themselves in a very dangerous position. Indra became very angry and sent powerful clouds that rained over Vrndavana incessantly for seven days. The whole area began to flood, and the inhabitants became very disturbed. Although He was only seven years old, Krsna saved the inhabitants of Vrndavana by lifting Govardhana Hill and holding it up as an umbrella to shield the village. Lord Krsna thus taught the demigod Indra that his disturbances could be stopped simply by His little finger. Seeing this, Lord Indra bowed down before Krsna.

Thus Krsna also became known as Gopijana-vallabha, which indicates that His only business is to protect the gopijana. This Krsna consciousness movement aims at teaching people how to become gopijanas, or pure lovers of Krsna. When we reach that stage of pure love of God, the Lord will save us from any danger, even if it means His lifting a hill or a mountain. Krsna did not have to practice some yoga system in order to lift Govardhana Hill. As God, He is all-powerful, even as a child. He played like a child and dealt with others like a child, but when there was need, He manifested Himself as God Almighty. That is the nature of Krsna, or God: He does not have to practice meditation or follow some system of yoga in order to become God. He is not a manufactured type of God, but is God eternally.

Although He is God, He enjoys loving relationships with His devotees, and in order to satisfy His devotees, He often takes roles that appear to be subsidiary. Krsna often likes being the child of a devotee, and thus He became the beloved child of Yasoda, Yasoda-nandana. Because He is God and everyone worships Him, no one chastises Him. However, Krsna enjoys being chastised by His devotee father and mother, and because Krsna takes pleasure in being chastised, the devotees also take up the role, saying, "All right, I shall become Your father and chastise You." Similarly, when Krsna wants to fight, one of His devotees becomes the demon Hiranyakasipu and fights with Him. In this way, all Krsna's activities are carried out in connection with His devotees. If we aspire to become such associates of Krsna, we must develop Krsna consciousness, awareness of Krsna.

Yasoda-nandana vraja-jana-ranjana. Krsna's only business is satisfying the vraja-janas, and their only business is satisfying Krsna. This is the reciprocation of love. Yamuna-tiravana-cari: Krsna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, wanders on the banks of the Yamuna to please the gopis, the cowherd boys, the birds, the bees, and the cows and calves. These are not ordinary birds, bees, cows, calves, or men;

they have all reached the summit of self-realization and thus, after many, many lives, have attained a position whereby they can play with Krsna. This Krsna consciousness movement can enable everyone to go to Krsnaloka and become Krsna's associate as a friend, servant, father, or mother. Krsna is agreeable to take any of these positions in relation to His devotee. How He does so is all described in our book Teachings of Lord Caitanya. To realize our relationship with Krsna, we have but to follow in the footsteps of Lord Caitanya and His chief associates, the six Gosvamis--Sri Rupa, Sanatana, Sri Jiva, Gopala, Raghunatha dasa, and Raghunatha Bhatta. These Gosvamis were always engaged in chanting Hare Krsna and dancing in ecstasy. They taught that when one is merged in krsna-kirtana, or the chanting of the holy names of Krsna, he merges into the ocean of love of Krsna. As soon as the sound of Krsna's name is vibrated, one can immediately merge into the ocean of love. That is the sign of pure devotion. Thus at kirtanas the six Gosvamis would merge immediately into the ocean of love of Godhead.

The six Gosvamis were dear not only to the other devotees of Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu but to the nondevotees as well. A pure devotee's position is that he has no enemy because he is not envious. A pure devotee is always open to everyone, and he does not discriminate that this person can be allowed to chant Hare Krsna and that person should not be allowed. On the material platform, which is a platform of dualism, there are differences between high and low, man and woman, and this or that, but on the spiritual platform there are no such distinctions. The pure devotee, seeing everything with an equal mind, is therefore nonenvious. Because he is nonenvious, he is worshipable. Indeed, it may even be said that a person is worshipable simply if he is nonenvious, for it is only possible to be nonenvious on the spiritual platform. This is also the verdict of the Bhagavad-gita (5.18-19):

vidya-vinaya-sampanne
brahmane gavi hastini
suni caiva svapake ca
panditah sama-darsinah
ihaiva tairjitah sargo
yesam samye sthitam manah
nirdosam hi samam brahma
tasmad brahmani te sthitah

"The humble sage, by virtue of true knowledge, sees with equal vision a learned and gentle brahmana, a cow, an elephant, a dog, and a dog-eater. Those whose minds are established in sameness and equanimity have already conquered the conditions of birth and death. They are flawless like Brahman, and thus they are already situated in Brahman."

Such a position can be obtained by one who has acquired the mercy of Lord Caitanya. Upon obtaining His mercy, a person can deliver suffering humanity from material contamination. Because the six Gosvamis were such devotees, we offer our respectful obeisances unto them with the mantra: vande rupa-sanatanau raghu-yugau sri-jiva-gopalakau. The six Gosvamis were expert in scrutinizingly studying all the scriptures with the aim to establish real religion in the world. They left many books to guide us, the most famous of which is Sri Rupa Gosvami's Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu (The Nectar of Devotion), which gives the neophyte devotee initial direction. The Gosvamis always worked very hard, day and

night, and their business was simply writing books, chanting, and dancing. Indeed, they were practically released from the bodily necessities of eating, sleeping, mating, and defending themselves out of fear. There was no question of mating at all, nor was there any question of fearing or defending, for they were totally absorbed in Krsna. At most they used to sleep one and a half hours daily, and they ate practically nothing. Whenever they felt hungry, they would simply go to a householder's home and beg one or two pieces of bread.

The mission of such saintly persons is but to make suffering humanity happy by elevating everyone to spiritual consciousness. In the material world, everyone is trying to exploit one another--one nation is trying to exploit another nation, one society is trying to exploit another, one businessman is trying to exploit another, etc. This is called the struggle for existence, and out of it the people who are struggling have invented a law called "Might is right," but we can actually see that even the most powerful must struggle, just as in the current world situation. There is a great struggle going on between Russia, America, and China. Because of such struggle, everyone is suffering. Indeed, the very struggle for existence means suffering. The pure devotees of Krsna, however, are interested not in exploiting others but in helping people become happy, and therefore they are worshiped on all planets. Canakya Pandita even said that a rich man and a learned man cannot be compared, for a rich man may be honored in his own country or on his own planet, but a learned man, a devotee of God, is honored wherever he goes.

Nor for a devotee is there a distinction between heaven and hell, because Krsna is with him in both places. Where there is Krsna, there is no question of hell; every place is Vaikuntha. Haridasa Thakura, for instance, did not enter the Jagannatha temple at Puri, for he was born in a Muhammadan family, and the Hindus opposed the Muhammadans' entering the temple. Haridasa Thakura did not let this disturb him, however. He thought, "Oh, why should I go and disturb them? I shall chant here." Consequently Lord Caitanya, who is Lord Jagannatha Himself, came daily to see Haridasa. This is the power of a pure devotee: he doesn't have to go to Jagannatha; Jagannatha comes to him. Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu used to go see Haridasa Thakura daily when the Lord was going to bathe in the sea. The Lord would enter Haridasa's cottage and ask, "Haridasa, what are you doing?" and Haridasa would reply, "Please come in, my Lord." This then is the actual position of a devotee. Therefore Krsna says that worship of His devotee is even more valuable than worship of Himself. The devotee is actually able to deliver Krsna, for he knows the science of Krsna consciousness, the science of hearing Krsna's words, eating krsna-prasadam, and enjoying Krsna. The impersonalists and voidists may preach dry philosophical treatises on aham brahmasmi-- "I am spirit"-- but ultimately who will be attracted? What is the difference between someone who thinks, "I am a stone," and someone who thinks, "I am void"? Why should we become stone, wood, or void? Our actual position should be in reciprocating loving affairs with Krsna.

The spark of love for Krsna is struck by the spiritual master, the pure devotee. As for myself, my spiritual master, His Divine Grace Om Visnupada Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Gosvami Prabhupada, ordered me to take up the responsibility of spreading Krsna consciousness in the Western world. His Divine Grace had a great desire to preach Lord Caitanya's message in the West, and my success is both his grace and

pleasure. When I first met my spiritual master, I was a very young man in India, a nationalist, engaged in a very responsible office. But although I did not want to go, one of my friends, who is still living in Calcutta, forcibly took me to His Divine Grace. I was reluctant to see him because in our home our father used to receive many sannyasis and I was not very satisfied with their dealings. I thought that Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Gosvami Maharaja might be a similar man, and if he were, what business would I have in seeing him? But my friend took me forcibly. "Why not see him?" he asked. I finally relented and went with him, and I profited.

On my first visit, His Divine Grace said that it was necessary for educated boys like me to go to foreign countries and preach the gospel of Caitanya Mahaprabhu. I replied that India was a foreign-dominated nation and that no one would hear our messages. Actually, at the time foreigners considered Indians very insignificant because in the face of so many independent nations India was still dependent, being dominated by Britain. At the time there was one Bengali poet who actually lamented that even uncivilized nations were independent, whereas India was dependent on the British. His Divine Grace convinced me that dependence and independence are simply temporary conditions, and he pointed out that because we are concerned with the eternal benefit of humanity, we should take up this challenge of Caitanya Mahaprabhu. This meeting with His Divine Grace, my Guru Maharaja, took place in 1922, half a century ago.

I was officially initiated in 1933, just three years before the passing of Guru Maharaja from this mortal world. At the last moment, just a fortnight before his passing away, he wrote me a letter repeating his instructions. He specifically said that I should try to preach this gospel among English-speaking people. After receiving this letter, I sometimes dreamed that Guru Maharaja was calling me and that I was leaving home and following him. I was dreaming in this way and thinking, "I have to give up my home. My Guru Maharaja wants me to give up my home and take sannyasa." At the same time I thought, "This is horrible. How can I leave my home? My wife? My children?" This is called maya. Actually I did not want to give up my home life, but Guru Maharaja made me give it up. Following his orders, I left my home, including a few children, but now Guru Maharaja has given me many nice children all over the world. Thus by serving Krsna no one becomes a loser, and this is an example from my own practical experience.

When I left India alone in 1965, I feared that I would have a great deal of trouble. The Indian government would not allow me to take any money out of the country, so I came with only a few books and forty rupees. I arrived in New York City in such a condition, but it was all by the grace of Guru Maharaja and Krsna. Everything happens by the combined mercy of Krsna and the spiritual master. In the Caitanya-caritamrta it is stated that the mercy of Krsna and guru are combined. This is the secret of the success of this Krsna consciousness movement. Krsna is always within us, and consequently He knows everything about our purposes, and He gives us the opportunity to work as we decide. If we decide to enjoy this material world, Krsna gives us the intelligence to become a very shrewd businessman or a popular politician or a cunning man so that we can earn money and enjoy ourselves. According to the standards of material life, many people are becoming great. They begin as very poor men and soon, by good fortune, become millionaires. We

Should not think, however, that they are attaining such success by their own puny endeavors. Without intelligence, no one can improve, and that intelligence is given by Krsna. In the Bhagavad-gita Krsna states that He is seated in everyone's heart as the Supersoul and that by His will a man can remember, and by His will a man can forget. Krsna supplies forgetfulness and remembrance according to the living entity's desire. If we want to forget Krsna and enjoy the material world, He will give us the necessary intelligence so that we can forget Him for good.

Many people are thinking, "I can enjoy this material world very nicely. Everyone is having such a good time. There is no reason I can't enjoy myself as much as they." This idea is illusion because there is no real enjoyment in the material world. We may rise to a very high position like President Kennedy. We may be very good-looking, very famous, very intelligent, and well educated, very wealthy and very powerful, and we may have a very beautiful wife and children and hold the highest position in the country--but at any moment we are subject to be shot down. This is the nature of the material world: we have to face danger at every step. There is no question of having pleasure without impediments. Even when the pleasures are earned, they are earned after a great deal of struggle and sacrifice, and whatever pleasure may be acquired is temporary, for in the material world there is no pleasure that can give us constant and unending enjoyment. Only Krsna can give us that.

Therefore Krsna instructs in the Bhagavad-gita that it is the welfare of every living entity to give up this nonsensical material activity and just surrender unto Him. Unfortunately, in this age people are so attracted by the glitter of material nature, to illusion, or maya, that they are not very interested. Krsna even declares that if one surrenders unto Him, He will give all protection from all sinful reactions, but still people are so attached that they cannot do it. People always fear that by surrendering to Krsna they will lose something, just as I feared losing my family by going to the Western world and preaching. But Krsna is so kind that if He takes anything away, He will reward us a thousandfold.

The spiritual master is also kind in that he begs from door to door, country to country, town to town: "My dear ladies and gentlemen, my dear boys and girls, please take to Krsna consciousness." In this way he renders very confidential service to Krsna. Krsna is the Supreme Lord who gives the orders, and the spiritual master executes those orders; therefore the spiritual master is very dear to Krsna. Whether Krsna sends him to heaven or to hell makes no difference to him. For the spiritual master, a pure devotee, heaven and hell are both the same if there is no Krsna consciousness. In hell people are suffering in so many ways, and in heaven they are enjoying their senses in so many ways, but a devotee of the Lord can live any place where there is Krsna consciousness, and since he brings this consciousness with him, he is always self-satisfied. If he is sent to hell, he will be satisfied simply chanting Hare Krsna. In fact, he does not believe in hell but in Krsna. Similarly, if he were put in heaven, where there are so many opportunities for sense gratification, he would also remain aloof, for his senses are satisfied by Krsna Himself. Thus for the service of the Lord a devotee is prepared to go anywhere, and for this reason he is very dear to Krsna.

Renounced impersonalist philosophers say that this world is false and that the impersonal Brahman is truth. But if they are asked to go out into society where material sense gratification predominates, they will refuse for fear of being affected by those conditions. For a Krsna conscious person, however, there is no such difficulty. Because he is controlled and has taken shelter of Krsna, he is not afraid of going anywhere.

Consequently, when devotees meet in a place where there is no Krsna consciousness, there is no harm, for they take the opportunity to chant Hare Krsna and infuse the place with Krsna consciousness. This opportunity should always be taken. It is not that one should close himself up in a room and chant alone. The great sage Narada is a spaceman who travels all over the universe. Although he can dwell in the most elevated planets, he sometimes goes to hell and preaches there. That is the beauty of a servant of God--he is always acting out of love for Krsna and His parts and parcels.

The underlying principle of devotional service is unalloyed love for Krsna. Regardless of the position of a particular devotee--a friend, servant, parent, or lover of Krsna--his service is unconditional, for Krsna consciousness is not dependent on any material condition. It is transcendental and has nothing to do with the modes of material nature. A devotee is not afraid to go anywhere, and because of this he sees all material conditions as equal. In the world we may say that this is a good place to be and that is a bad place, but, as pointed out before, the devotee is not subject to these mental concoctions. For him the basic principle of material existence is bad, for material existence means forgetfulness of Krsna.

In the neutral stage of devotion one may give more importance to the impersonal effulgence of the Lord and to the Supersoul within the heart, but Krsna consciousness actually develops when one thinks, "Krsna is my very intimate master of intimate relationships." In the beginning, of course, impersonal realization and realization of the Supersoul are part of Krsna consciousness. The partial realization of God in His impersonal aspect or in His aspect as Supersoul enables one to develop veneration for the Lord, but when one has an intimate relationship with Krsna as a friend, master, son, or lover, then the veneration disappears.

This platform of personal relationship is certainly higher than the impersonal platform or the platform of Supersoul, or Paramatma, realization. In the neutral conception, one simply realizes that he and the Absolute Truth are one in quality, or he realizes that he is part and parcel of the Supreme. That is certainly knowledge, for when one develops a personal relationship with Krsna as servant, he begins to appreciate the full opulence of the Supreme Lord. One who realizes that God is full in six opulences actually begins rendering service. As soon as one becomes aware of the greatness of Krsna and understands Krsna's superiority, his service begins. The awareness of God's greatness increases when transcendental service is rendered. A person who serves the Lord in order to satisfy the senses of the Lord becomes satisfied, because Krsna is the Supersoul and the individual living entity is His part and parcel. If He is satisfied, then the living entity is satisfied. If the stomach is satisfied, then all the parts of the body are satisfied, for they receive nourishment through the stomach. When one of my Godbrothers began to fan my Guru Maharaja on a very hot day,

Guru Maharaja asked, "Why are you fanning me all of a sudden?" The boy replied, "Because if you are satisfied, we are all satisfied." This is the formula--we should not try to satisfy our senses separately, but should try to satisfy Krsna's senses. Then naturally we will become satisfied.

A Krsna conscious person is always trying to give satisfaction to Krsna, and this is the beginning of Krsna consciousness. Because in the impersonal conception there is no form of God, there is no opportunity to satisfy His senses. However, one who sees Krsna as master can render service. In the Bhagavad-gita Krsna is referred to as Hrsikesa, master of the senses. When it is understood that the Absolute Truth is the master of the senses, that our senses are products of His senses, and that they should therefore be utilized for the satisfaction of His senses, Krsna consciousness, which is dormant within everyone, begins to awaken. Once Caitanya Mahaprabhu asked, "What is the difference between the neutral position in relation to Krsna and the relationship of master and servant?" In both cases one can understand that Krsna is great, but in the neutral position there is no inclination for service. Therefore the master-servant relationship between Krsna and the living entity is more elevated. Then when one attains friendship with Krsna, another transcendental quality is added. There is the conception that God is great and that service must be rendered unto Him, but there is also an extra feeling: "Krsna is my friend. Therefore I must treat Him in such a way that He will be happy." With a friend we are not simply content with rendering service but in making him actually happy and satisfied. There is also equality in such a relationship, for Krsna and the devotee relate on equal terms. Thus devotees in this position actually forget Krsna's superiority. When Krsna's boyfriends used to ride on Krsna's shoulders playing games, they did not think that they were greater than Him. There is no question of sense gratification or self-glorification, for the relationship is based on pure love. The devotee's only desire is to give pleasure to Krsna, and Krsna also takes His friends on His shoulders to derive pleasure from them. Sometimes a person simply accepts the fact that his friend will slap his face--but there is no question of inferiority in such an action. When friendship and mutual pleasure are the basis of the relationship, there is no question of insult or inferiority.

The whole basis of Krsna consciousness and a relationship with Krsna is the pleasure potency of Krsna Himself. Srimati Radharani, the damsels of Vraja, and Krsna's cowherd boyfriends are all expansions of Krsna's pleasure potency. We all have a tendency toward pleasure, because the source from which we emanate is fully potent in pleasure. Impersonalists cannot think in these terms, for they deny the pleasure potency; therefore the impersonalist philosophy is incomplete and inferior. Those who are in Krsna consciousness recognize the pleasure potency in Krsna and in all His paraphernalia--His friends, servants, father, mother, and consort. All relationships with Krsna that aim at satisfying Krsna's senses are manifestations of Krsna's pleasure potency.

As far as the individual soul is concerned, it is originally a part and parcel of this pleasure potency, of the reservoir of pleasure Himself. However, due to contact with material nature, the soul has forgotten its actual position and has become trapped in the evolutionary process of transmigration from one body to another. Thus one struggles

hard for existence. Now we must extricate ourselves from the sufferings of the struggle, from the countless transmigrations that force us to suffer the miseries of birth, old age, disease, and death, and come to the point of our eternal life in Krsna consciousness. That eternal life is possible. If one tries his best in this human form of life, in his next life he will get a spiritual body. The spiritual body is already within the gross material body, but it will develop only as soon as one becomes free from the contamination of this material existence. That is the aim of human life and the actual self-interest of all people. Self-interest is actually realizing, "I am part and parcel of God. I have to return to the kingdom of God and join with Him." Just as we have a social life here, God has a social life in the spiritual kingdom, and we can join Him there. It is not that after finishing this body we become void. In the Bhagavad-gita (2.12) Krsna told Arjuna, "Never was there a time when I did not exist, nor you, nor all these kings, nor in the future shall any of us cease to be." Our existence is therefore eternal, and the changes of birth and death are simply the changes of the temporary material bodies.

The actual process for achieving eternal life is not at all difficult. This process of Krsna consciousness is based on knowledge received from Krsna, the most perfect being. Knowledge received from others is defective because the conditioned soul is certain to commit mistakes, certain to be illusioned, certain to cheat, and certain to have imperfect senses. The knowledge received from Krsna, however, actually enables us to see Krsna. Someone may challenge, "Can you show me God?" and our answer is, "Yes. God can be seen at every moment." Krsna says, raso 'ham apsu kaunteya: "I am the taste of water." We drink water every day, and the taste of water is there, so if we think of this taste as Krsna, we will have begun realizing God every day. In the Bhagavad-gita Krsna further says, prabhasmi sasi-suryayoh: "I am the light of the sun and the moon." Every day we receive sunlight, and in the evening there is moonshine, so if we think of the source of these emanations, we will ultimately become God conscious. There are so many similar instances given in the Bhagavad-gita, for Krsna is the beginning, middle, and end of all manifestations. If we want to become God conscious and realize our own essence, it is not very difficult. We only have to understand God in truth--how He appears, how He disappears, and what His functions are--then we can become eligible to enter into the kingdom of God. After quitting this material body, a person who understands God, Krsna, does not return again to earth to accept another material body. Where does he go? Krsna says, mam eti: "He comes to Me." That should be the aim of any intelligent human being.

"Science of Self-Realization" by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.

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