ON OUR COVER

is the Lord, Sri Krishna, in full battle array. As Creator of all that be, God is no stranger to violence. It too is His play—for He has the full knowledge of the eternal, indestructible nature of all living entities, and His warrior spirit is on the same plane as His loving attitude. Warrior or Lover, Krishna is Absolute.

God accepts men in whatever relationship they crave to have with Him. If, like the atheists, they wish for there to be no God, then Krishna hides Himself from them, and gives them proofs to uphold their sentiments. If one wants the Lord as his friend, however, he finds Krishna always with him, kind and loving and playful. And if, as so many do, you want Krishna as your father, He will supply you fully with all needs, as indeed He does anyway.

Again, if one seeks to be the enemy of God, he will find God neither impotent nor unwilling to join the contest. And, just as Krishna can be the dearest Friend, so can He also be the fiercest, most indomitable, most implacable Foe. He never turns from any proposition, for He is full in renunciation, and neither fears nor longs for anything. Furthermore, those who die by the Lord's hand directly attain to immediate salvation, which is so ardently sought after by others.
The above picture is reproduced from the front page of the Boston Globe, April 27, 1967. It shows Rayarama Das and Brahmananda Das holding Kirtan at the Franklin Park Zoo Bee-In of the previous day. This was Boston's first such gathering, and a great number of people joined in the chanting of Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare, Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. Such encouraging interest has added impetus to our hopes of establishing a center in that city.

Please forgive the late appearance of this issue, which is in fact out of sequence, as it carries Part II of Hayagriva Das' Krishna Consciousness In American Poetry, the third part of which appeared last issue. Back To Godhead has been undergoing considerable transformations; of which we'll speak at greater length shortly. Before that, here are some ISKCON bulletins:

* The Society's record album, KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS, has been selling wonderfully well wherever it has reached the public, and is already on sale as far away as London.

* The great Love Feast which the New York Temple was planning has come to nothing, but a different program of monthly --though more modest--feasts is still being considered.
The Rathayatra Chariot Festival will begin on July 9 with a parade through New York's streets to a beach—provided a suitable beach can be found.

The San Francisco Temple's Chariot Festival is all set; we'll publish details next issue.

As shown on our second page, New York's Tompkins Square Park on the Lower East Side at 7th Street and Avenue A will again resound with the chanting of the Maha Mantra on Sunday afternoons, beginning May 7, at 3 P.M.

This brings us back to Back To Godhead. Last issue we promised that, although the cover was about to be changed, the price was not. Now we feel like those politicians who've promised to do away with the taxes: once in office, they find things to be not what they had hoped for: Beginning with the May issue, No. 13, Back To Godhead will be offset printed from cover to cover, and will include considerably more pictorial material than it has in the past. Printing will greatly aid circulation, as many stores flatly refuse to carry mimeographed work. It will also, unfortunately, force us to raise the price of the magazine. This and future editions will contain more than double the present amount of material, and will appear monthly rather than semi-monthly. After reviewing the May Back To Godhead, why not write and tell us what you think of the change? We'll be hoping to hear from you.

Hare Krishna.

The Editors
Lord Krishna says, Although I am equal to everyone and no one is My enemy or my special friend, and there is no particular favor for anyone, still—and "still" here indicates that there is a special case—for anyone who is engaged in My service, so I am engaged in his service. In the Gita, God states that He also becomes a devotee to us. Love is not one-sided; it is reciprocal. Although God is great, He takes part in our lives. It is clearly stated in the Gita that He takes pleasure in serving the devotee.

Someone may say, If a devotee is engaged in the service of the Lord, but his behavior isn't up to standard, what happens to him? Of course, a devotee is in the process of developing the 26 saintly qualities—but the one all important qualification is that he be a devotee. If he lacks other qualifications but is unflinching in devotion, if his conduct is not good but still he does not divert his attention to demigods and others, fixing it only on Krishna—then the Lord says that he is to be reckoned as sadhu in view of his Krishna consciousness. Sadhu means honest, religious and pious. If I have a bad character but think Krishna consciousness is the right course of action and I take to it, then, even if I can't lose my bad habits, I am considered honest, pious and religious according to Krishna. One may now say, Although one may call him a sadhu, he's not a hundred percent so. But Krishna says, Yes, he is a hundred percent sadhu regardless of whatever else he may be, if he is devoted to Me.

We must not cling too tightly to the rules and regulations of Vedic culture. All people should be given a chance to develop Krishna consciousness. Rupa Goswami, a great Acharya, said, "The first business is to see that, somehow or other, people become Krishna conscious. As far as rules are concerned,
if one takes to the line, then regulations will follow, just as the servant follows his master." The Lord says that, because one has taken to Krishna consciousness, he will very soon become a pious man. If you take to Krishna consciousness very sincerely—chanting, and with rules and regulations—you will very soon become a pious man. If you want to sit on the high court bench you have to have many credentials, along with the proper background and training; but with Krishna consciousness, if you'll just sit on the bench, all education will follow. You will relish Krishna consciousness so much that you will readily give up all nonsense.

The whole world is chasing after sense gratification, but the man in Krishna consciousness will very quickly give it up. You don't have to train yourself to stop sense gratification. Just chant and hear—you will enjoy this so much that you will automatically give up what is not conducive to spiritual life. Chant Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare, Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. In this fashion, a man will easily attain to perfect, eternal blissful life.

"My dear Arjuna," the Lord says, "Declare it boldly to the world, that My devotee never perishes." Why doesn't He Himself tell it? Krishna has promised that He will protect His devotee. God can violate His own promise, but He will protect the devotee who will spread His word. At the battle of Kuruksetra, Krishna was on one side with Arjuna, while His soldiers were on the other side. He declared, "I shall join Arjuna's side, but I shall not fight. I shall simply take some work: I shall drive Arjuna's chariot." But in the fight, when Arjuna was hard-pressed by Bhishma, the Lord broke His word. Bhishma had been accused by his comrades of not fighting hard enough because he had so many dear relatives in Arjuna's camp. And so he promised that he would kill all five enemy leaders—the Pandava brothers—on the next day of battle. For this purpose he had five special arrows with Duryodhana kept. Now, Krishna sent Arjuna to Duryodhana—who was king of the opposing forces—after that
day's battle. Arjuna went to the king's camp and was received. He now asked
Duryodhana to fulfill the promise of a boon he had made, and Duryodhana a-
greed to do what Arjuna asked. Arjuna asked for the five arrows, which were
promptly handed over to him.

Aware of Krishna's hand in this, Bhima resolved to kill His devotee or
else force Him to break His promise and fight. On the battlefield the next
day Bhima fought Arjuna so fiercely that Krishna had to grab the wheel of
their shattered chariot and run up to him, demanding that he stop. "It were
better I break my promise," said the Lord, "than that you kill Arjuna."

So the Lord says, "You are my devotee... You tell them that anyone
who takes to Krishna consciousness will never be destroyed." What is de-
struction? When we lose our spiritual consciousness, we lose our identity.
As a spiritual being you have eternal bliss and all knowledge, but here you
are in a wretched condition, already destroyed—without bliss, eternity or
full knowledge. Unless you revive your spiritual awareness, you are destroyed
by illusory energy. But whosoever takes to this process will never return to
this material world of sense gratification and misery. Sooner or later he
will be taken up by the Lord, according to how he approaches Krishna conscious-

Material existence is ignorance of the spiritual world. We are being
kicked around like footballs from body to body—in one birth American, then
Indian, then Chinese, etc. This process of Krishna consciousness is the only
way to attain full spiritual life. Eternity, bliss and knowledge are awaiting
us. Why should we refuse them? Nor is this a mere theory. Don't think that
Bhagavad Gita is imaginary—people have taken to it for thousands of years;
in its written form it is 5,000 years old and, before that, it was taught to
the sun-god millions of years ago. The Gita is followed by all great acharyas.

Take to this process and you will be saved from the material world. If
you are thrown in the ocean, it is practically your destruction even if you
swim well. To struggle here in the material world is also your destruction. Get out of the ocean. Krishna promises that He will take them from the ocean of birth and death. Save yourself from destruction.

Now, someone may ask, Is there any qualification? Krishna appeared to be Hindu, and the acharyas are very learned; how can one take to Krishna consciousness if he is not learned or belonging to a particular creed? But Krishna says that even women (who are generally considered to have small endowment for spiritual advancement), sudras and vaishyas (the lower classes) and even lower can come too. Lord Krishna surpasses all formalities of social structure. All can come. There is no bar to spiritual consciousness. If you simply take to Krishna consciousness, the Lord is there, and He will give you all protection. One in Krishna consciousness is already liberated. This is its beauty. Never mind what you are. Take to it. You will reach the perfection of life. Your progress is guaranteed. Just take to this process.

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PRAYER TO VISHNU

In the morning
after heavenly porridge,
we go out the door,
down the street
flying with the Maha Mantra
through duel atmosphere
of sad and glad,
trying to forget all that nonsense
and just fight for
reaching Krishna.

Soaring with the Maha Mantra
into all that sad-glad material
blue sky and flags
and karmis hurrying to work.

Vishnu! guide me, protect me,
keep me assured to expect
Mercy in You.
How do I keep my mind on You?
With mace and conch-shell and
lotus and disc,
You, Great, Kind, Unattached Ruler of
Universal Good,
let me turn within to You--
soul of me, turn to Vishnu!
let me dwell in Him,
and the rest can go on and on.

The sighing faces at work,
the demigod bosses,
bowing to the temporal Office . . . .
it can go on and me with it,
but give me strength
to bear for you
acts in Your Name,
and since I'm unconcerned,
it can go on to the end.

I say I want to
got out
to where
You are
just to be at Your Feet--
but what do I do? Why
don't I answer every question
with Vishnu? Why do I flinch
when they ask me why I'm flowering
just by the thought of You
--You the Indweller in all of us--
even the office boys who think
existence is a kind of joke which
they control.
Vishnu-in-me!
Enable me
to turn a braver face to You
and then to talk out everywhere
for You and say:
"everyone should turn to
Godhead and yearn for that."

Empower me, try me
with the courage
to do much more
so that at least
I can begin
at the foot of Love.

--Satsvarupa Das Brahmacary
(Stephen Guarino)
The Supreme Gift is
KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS
This is an Invitation to all Men and Women of Good Will to Benefit
the Human Race and all other Inhabitants of planet Earth by distrib-
buting the Peace and eternal Bliss of KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS.

Wherever you Live, you can do this Work. This is called the Devotional
Service of the Lord, and it is simply a matter of finding Others who
may be receptive to the philosophy and practice of Love of Godhead.
Inquire at your neighborhood Shops to see if the storekeepers will
retail Back To Godhead Magazine, or our record album, KRISHNA CON-
SCIOUSNESS. Speak with your Friends and Relatives about Krishna
Consciousness. Perhaps you can hold Kirtan with them at regular
Meetings.

Kirtan means Chanting the Lord's Praises—such as the Maha
(Hare Krishna) Mantra—and Reading from authorized Scriptural
Literature, such as Bhagavad Gita, Srimad Bhagawatam, Holy Bible,
Koran, Chaitanya Charitamrita, and others of the same stature. This
will Purify Consciousness, and the active Participation will immensely
benefit All concerned.

The most valuable Asset for Spiritual Life is the ability to Serve
the Lord actively. Take this Opportunity. See for yourself whether
the effect is simply Abstract Theoretics, or the practical experience
of Sublime Love. And you may have the added Satisfaction of Knowing
that Humankind cannot fail to be Elevated by your Labors, be those
Labors great or small.
We were doing it together
and there was no imperfection—
the Prayer in our hearts,
and Krishna: there was only
Our Sea of Ecstasy.

We were bowing down
and there was no effort.
Before us the Prasadam offering
was alive, the plate and food ecstatic.
The altar was fashioned of Ecstasy.

The flowers, candle, the very flame,
al were made of Ecstasy. Everything
a maddening sweet Scent, breathing,
bursting our pores in universes of pleasure,
drowning, a blissful rush of fragrant waves.

We were borne on Ecstasy, Thoughts of
Krishna swelling over and over, washing us away . . .

Then, how did we get there? In that bed,
moving, awakening only for a brief
remembering murmur (falling asleep
I promised not to forget):

Later you said you had a dream
about giving Christmas presents
or something? (Yes, it is December).
But was I not there also? Oh Krishna . . .

Now it is noon and you say there
was no dream at all, that you
were agreeing only to please me!
"Surely, you have only forgotten . . . ."

Rupanuga says, Oh Maya, Maya,
Maya, such a Thief you are!
stealing memories and leaving
dreams that disappear.

-- Rupanuga Das Adhikary
(Robert F. Corens)

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TWO IN ONE

and if I saw god in the woods?
and I see god in cement
and god in the sky
and god in the headlights?
would that be good?
or would that be bad?

and if I saw the woods in god?
and I see cement in god

and the sky in god
and the headlights in god?
would that be good?
or would that be bad?

and if I saw the air in god?
and I see god in the air?

--Daffi
Nobody can trace out the history of the living entity's entanglement in material energy; therefore the Lord says that it is beginningless. Beginningless means that conditional life exists prior to the creation— it is simply manifested with and after the creation. Due to this forgetfulness, the living entity, although spirit, is suffering all kinds of miseries of material existence. It is to be understood here also that there are other living entities who are not entangled in this material energy. Such living entities are situated in the spiritual world, and they are called liberated souls. They are also always engaged in Krishna Consciousness and in devotional service. The activities of those who are under the conditions of material nature are taken into account, and in their next life, according to such activities, they are offered different grades of material bodies. In the material world the spiritual soul in conditional life is subjected to different rewards and punishments. When he is rewarded he is elevated to the higher planets due to his righteous activities, and there he becomes one with the many demigods; and when he is punished for his abominable activities he is thrown into different kinds of hellish planets, and there he suffers the miseries of material existence more acutely. The Lord gives a very nice example of this punishment; formerly a king used to punish a criminal by dunking him in the river and then raising him again for breath, and then again dunking him in the water; now, material nature punishes and rewards the individual entity in just the same way. When he is punished he is dunked into the water of material miseries, and when he is rewarded he is taken out of it for some time. Elevation of the living
entity to higher planets or to a higher status of life is never permanent. He
has to come down again to be drowned in the water. All this is going on in
this material existence. Sometimes he is elevated to the higher planetary sys-
tem, and sometimes he is thrown into the hellish condition of material life.

In this connection the Lord recites a nice verse from Srimad Bhagawatam
taken from the instruction of Narenda Nuni to Vasudeva, father of Krishna. In
this quotation from the nine sages who were instructing Maharaj Nemi it is
stated that forgetfulness of the relationship with Krishna is called maya.
Actually, maya means that which is not. It has no existence. Therefore that
the living entity has no connection with the Supreme Lord is a false conception.
He may not believe in the existence of God, or he may think he has no relation-
ship with God, but these are all so called "illusions," or maya. Due to his
absorption in this false conception of life, man is always fearful and full of
anxieties; in other words, such a Godless concept of life is maya—therefore
one who is actually learned in the Vedic literatures surrenders unto the Supreme
Lord with all devotion and accepts Him as the Supreme Goal. When a living
entity becomes forgetful of the constitutional position of his relationship
with God, then he is at once overwhelmed by the external energy, and this is
the cause of his false ego of identifying his body as self. His whole concep-
tion of the material universe is due to his false conception of Body. He there-
fore becomes attached to this body and the by-products of this body. To get
out of this entanglement he has simply to perform his duty— to surrender unto
the Supreme Lord with intelligence, with devotion, and with sincere Krishna
Consciousness.

A conditioned soul falsely thinks himself happy in the material world,
but if he is favored by an unalloyed devotee— by hearing instruction from an
unalloyed devotee— he gives up the desire for material enjoyment and becomes
enlightened in Krishna Consciousness. As soon as one enters into Krishna Con-
sciousness, his desire for material enjoyment at once is vanquished, and gradually he becomes free from material entanglement. For example, because there is no question of darkness where there is light, Krishna consciousness is like the light that dispels the darkness of material sense enjoyment. One who is engaged in Krishna Consciousness generally has no desire for material enjoyment. A Krishna Conscious person is never under the false conception that he is One with God. He does not think that he would be happy by working for himself. He engages all his energy in the service of the Supreme Lord, and thereby becomes released from the clutches of illusory energy, or material energy. In this connection the Lord quotes a verse in the Bhagavad Gita, 7th Chapter, to the effect that the material energy containing the three modes of material nature, is very strong. It is very difficult to get out of the process of material energy, but one who surrenders unto Krishna easily comes out from the clutches of Maya.

The Lord continued to teach that the conditioned soul, for each and every moment in which he is engaged in some fruitive activity, is forgetting his real identity. Sometimes when he is fatigued, when he is tired of material activities, he wants liberation and wants to become one with the Supreme, but other times he thinks that by working hard for his sense gratification he will be happy. In both cases he is covered by material energy. For the enlightenment of such bewildered conditioned souls who are working in false identification, the Lord has presented before us so many Vedic literatures, like the Vedas, the Puranas, Vedanta-sutra—all intended to guide the human being back to Godhead. The Lord has presented further instructions advising that when a conditioned soul is recognized by the mercy of the spiritual master and when he is guided by the Supersoul, he takes advantage of the various Vedic literatures, becomes enlightened, and makes progress in his spiritual realization. It is understood that Lord Krishna is always merciful to His devotees, therefore He has presented
all these Vedic literatures by which one can understand his relationship with Krishna and can act in that relationship with the result that he is benefited with the ultimate goal of life.

Actually every living entity is destined to reach the Supreme Lord, and every one can understand his relationship with the Supreme Lord. The execution of duties to attain perfection is known as devotional service, and in fullness such devotional service becomes love of God, the factual goal of life for every living entity. The living entity is not intended to achieve success in religious perfection or economic development or sense enjoyment. Religiosity, economic development, sense enjoyment, and liberation should not actually be desired by the living entity. The real desire of the living entity should be to achieve the stage of loving transcendental service of the Lord. The All Attractive features of Lord Krishna help one in attaining Krishna Consciousness, and when one is engaged in Krishna Consciousness he can realize the relationship between Krishna and himself. In this connection the Lord quotes one story from the commentary of Nahabarata which occurs in Srimad Bhagawatam, fifth canto. The story involves the instruction of Sarvajna to a poor man who came to Sarvajna to have his future told. When Sarvajna saw the horoscope of the poor man he was at once astonished that the man was so poor, and he said to the poor man, "Oh, why are you so unhappy? I see from your horoscope that you have some hidden treasure left to you by your father. The horoscope, however, states that your father could not disclose his hidden treasure to you because he died in a foreign place. But now you can search out the hidden treasure left by your father and be happy." This story is cited because the living entity is suffering due to his ignorance of the hidden treasure of the father. The hidden treasure of the Father, Krishna, is love of Godhead. In every Vedic literature the conditioned soul is advised to find that hidden treasure which is known as love of God. As stated in the Bhagavad Gita, Vadaisachasarvai aham
A conditioned soul, although he is the son of the wealthiest—the Personality of Godhead—does not realize it, therefore the Vedic literature is given to him to help him search out his father and his paternal property.

Sarvajna further advised the poor man, "Don't try to dig on the southern side of your house to find the hidden treasure. If you do so then you'll be attacked by a poisonous wasp and you will be baffled in finding the treasure. The search should be to the eastern side where there is actual light which is called devotional service, or Krishna Consciousness. On the southern side there is ritualistic performance of the Vedic scripture, and on the western side there is speculative empiric knowledge, and on the northern side there is the yoga system or meditational process of self realization. If somebody searches for his ultimate goal by the ritualistic process then he will be baffled. Such a process involves performance of rituals under the guidance of the priest who takes money in exchange of service. A man thinks he'll be happy by such performances, but actually that will not make him happy. Even if he does gain some result therefrom, it is only temporary and his material distresses will continue, so he never becomes happy by such a ritualistic process—instead, his material pangs increase more and more. Similarly, digging for the hidden treasure on the northern side is compared with one's self-realization by dint of the meditational process. By the meditational process, even if one attains perfection—he thinks he is One with the Supreme Lord—this merging into the Supreme by the living entity is something like the great serpent swallowing up the smaller serpent. From practical experience we see sometimes that the big serpent swallows up a smaller serpent, and the merge into the spiritual existence of the Supreme is analogous. The small serpent is, therefore, searching after perfection, and he is understood to be swallowed by the big serpent. Digging on the western side is compared to the hidden
treasure protected by yakasa. He is the evil spirit that protects hidden treasure. The idea is that hidden treasure can never be delivered by one who asks favor of Yakasa for attaining the hidden treasure— the result is that he will simply be killed. The Jnanis or the yogins are analogous to the serpent relationship of the meditational process. The speculative process of self-realisation, or yoga perfection of self-realisation, is suicidal in this case. Actually one has to dig for the hidden treasure from the eastern side which is called devotional service in full Krishna Consciousness. That is the perpetual hidden treasure, and when one attains to that achievement, he becomes perpetually rich. One who is poor in devotional service and Krishna consciousness is always in need of material gain. Sometimes he is suffering the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune," and sometimes he is baffled; sometimes he is following the philosophy of monism and therefore losing his identity, and sometimes he is swallowed up by the big serpent. By giving up all these things and becoming fixed in Krishna Consciousness or devotional service to the Lord, he achieves the perfection of life.

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MY SUBWAY SONG OF LOVE

A formidable endeavor,
To enter the labyrinthine depths
And pass among the shuffling, shuttling
Subway mob—
Shoving, scuffling, rushing with the hour
In a gray atmosphere which only merchant greed will adorn,
In a foul, burnt-iron, screeching hell.

Here beneath the surface
So little as a smile can signify the conquest of material nature—
But few emerge victorious.

Yet, swaying and jolting in our passage as we span a borough,
Are we not like posies in the wind?
Are we not touched and kissed and tickled
In a passion we ourselves cannot abate?
O, do you hear the whine in the clatter?
Some poor, sun-starved deity is wandering these passages with us,
And he is singing the song of our hearts,
He is the herald of our Spring, the crier of our own true need:
IS KRISHNA AMONG YOU? IS KRISHNA AMONG YOU?

Yes, yes! He is here! But
Everything blurs somehow,
The lights flicker from time to time,
And when they're back the crowds are milling—like shadowy sheep.

There are the boys with their books and bragging
Pretty as their own pretty dreams.
There I see the girls with their giggles and their hairdos and in their
eyes I spy the calm wisdom possessed by veterans of a
thousand mock-tea parties, awaiting their time to come,
not to be seen with basketballs and guns, and not distracted.

The mother's careless hand upon the child's cheek takes my eye.
The old man's grumbling, and the embarrassed lady of means
Quite thrill me by their tragic play.
 Oh yes, this is a tragic playground.

Fellow passengers, I regard you all fondly,
Wink and smile, don't let me embarrass you . . . .
This is only the prelude to my message.
In a moment I shall rise and go to each and every one,
(Nor will I miss a single car throughout this train)
And in each ear I shall whisper something special that I know, and share it,
for I love you dearly.

I will say:
Don't tell anyone else, but
It's all much sweeter than you feared.
Yes, yes indeed, my dear, my pal,
Just don't believe them no matter what they say.
They have deceived you and told you monstrous lies . . . .
It is not all in the eyes, it is not all in the thighs.
It is all in the heart.
Krishna, Who is all
Is in your heart.

The glory of the Lord shimmers even in this dirt,
This hell is as splendid as the glittering night skies,
And the shadows of the subway do not diminish us,
But have themselves become sublime.

—Rayarama Das Brahmachary
(Raymond Marais)

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Close your eyes to all this
Roaring illusion
And dance in the white light uncontaminated
By shades of birth and place.

The cymbal sound is clear,
We need no yearning clarion call
Here, breathing the springtime
Winds of His immortal laughter.
NIGHT SHOWER SUTRA

Bathroom lightbulb bulging energy
blissfully from the ceiling,
white tile walls radiant,
I strip naked, chanting,
chanting, I prepare my billionth bath
maneuvering myself behind rubber-plastic curtains
and into the tub as if
for the first time
and turn on hot and cold water
simultaneously and watch with joy
the ceiling burst into countless
water-drop universes.

"Krishna is water! Hare! Hare! Hare!"
I chant joyfully, while the lightbulb
like Vivasvan, sun-god, pours his energy,
blissful, blissful, blissful kilowatts
all out for Lord Bhagavan in excelsis
while each joyous drop spurts
to mirror Mr. Sun-Bulb
showing dear mythical body
with a water orgy,
showing hairs and flesh
with warm water sensation.

Sensation is emptiness,
emptiness sensation
says Lord Buddha-woodha. Ah-cha!

Sensation is not different from Krishna, I add,
nor is Krishna different from sensation,
indeed, Krishna is sensation,
water sensation,
shower sensation over Hayagriva's feathers,
giving a shower ecstasy
over the millennium,
a bathroom satori,
a washtub samadhi,
free of charge.

Krishna is soap, I think, grabbing the Ivory,
slippery on my belly as I lather
watching with awe
a trillion rainbow'd soapbubbles
run down my pubic tangle
while Niagara
falls down my back.
"Hare Krishna, Hare Rama," I sing,
chanting the white cosmic bathtub
and universal gurgling drain
and soap and wondrous water shower
and washrag and bulging lightbulb
and billowing steam clouds and my own
miraculous body,
certain my nightly shower
greater indeed than Rome,
more glorious than Greece,
dwarfing, indeed, St. John's
tiny revelation,
as I lather my beard
with decillions of bubbles
while holy waters flow to my voice
sacred, sacred, sacred, sacred, sacred waters
Have Krishna-ing the neighbors awake . . .
and I thinking,
Next shower I'll have to bring
my finger-cymbals.

--Hayagriva Das Brahmachary
(Howard Wheeler)

PRANA

I breathe His Name
And for a fleeting second He's there
Now Gone . . . inhale.

Now He stays for one whole breath
At a time
Now Gone . . . I inhale.

How marvelous this situation, that
He shows Himself in these
Interval distances of my lungs.

This vital air supplied by Him
Is so precious . . .
I chant like a bellows,

Krishna, Krishna, and spiritual
Blazes ignite, searing my delusions,
Leaving my ancient self pure and vibrant.

I wipe my eyes and wake up
To this eternal spring morning.

Did all that dark, clouded suffering really happen,
Or did I just close my eyes
For a moment?

--Achuytananda Das Brahmachary
(Charles Burnett)
ENJOY
THE SUPREME ECSTASY OF

KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS

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HARE KRISHNA
PRAYER OF SELF STUDY

Of bondage I come,
Yet must free myself and awaken.
Forgive me my inexcusable cravings, my petty wants
For denying the greatness and the Gift which
has been bestowed upon me.

Life in the fullest awakfulness in Thee--
My gift; my opportunity.

Yet I pursue my dreams, and remember not
my every deed; engrossed
are my many false selves
in this sensual play.

Hear me, Krishna, bearer of Lofty contemplations, that
I might transform these scattered games
into my search for Thee-- the
Self true in Thee.

I deny not that in my separation
I made myself a glutton by the wealth of
my passions.

Now let Thy grace and divine love strip me naked
mercifully! I seek no mercy, for I know well
the deadly lies, and am fearful.

Let me view now! Now let me see the sickness
and tormented state of my being ... my deceiving lies told!
Let this be my work, my prayer, my meditation.

Open me true to those facts
Which my false selves have long hidden away fearfully.

May I prepare myself for the glimpses of truth in my inner soul,
The shattering pulses alone in the
bubbling waters of creation,
The bursting bumble-bee's hum ... the
piercing ecstatic Bliss.

I be a son lost! Your son of spirit
Sent to bear body; this fleshy burden . . .

Porsake me not then, Golden Godstar above,
Reawaken me in spirit that I may
perceive Thine infinite forms.

There are also millions and millions
upon this tiny earth-bubble-- and they the many
have forgotten the life of spirit, and the hurdle to overcome;
this illusion we have long assumed to be
the Reality.
O these little ones . . . the universe created around them, for them!
Give unto these, Krishna, the gift to realize their
ignorance and finitude, that they
might step out to the threshold of our
Infinite Holy Godstar.

--Devakananda Das Brahmachary
(Ronald Hoyt)

************************************************************************

In the valley of the heart
lies the seed of the spirit--

When the wind blows,
sway as gently
as the tree stretches
from side to side,
keeping thy roots
rooted in God.

Water thy seed
with rains of love.

Seek the source
which shines within
as the flower faces
the sun
and drinks thereof.

Open the heart
singing songs of love,
rejoice in the Name of the Lord
as the bird that sings
at the sight of the sky.

-- Harsha Devi
(Hope Patrick)

************************************************************************

JUST SEE WHAT A NICE THING IT IS

"This birth of you and I
is just a footstep
along the way.

So it is with this child before me,
who is hearing Hare Krishna, Hare Rama.
It will not go in vain--
it will act,
because it is spiritual--
not material--
spiritual.

Just see what a nice thing it is . . .
he tried to take the cymbals from his mother's hands . . .
he wanted to play . . .
he tried to dance . . .
as he just sat and beat his two tiny hands together and gurgled,
applauding Krishna in his fashion,
as we chanted Hare Krishna, Hare Rama.

It is such a nice thing,
how it delights the children,
and what to speak of you and me?"

--Brahmananda Das Brahmachary
(Bruce Scharf)
(Rendered from Swami Bhaktivedanta's lecture)
Thoreau made Emerson's injunction of "plain living and high thinking" famous when he set out to live outside Boston on an isolated tract of Emerson's land surrounding Walden Pond. Since then, Walden has come to symbolize American asceticism. During most of Thoreau's mature years, he and Emerson were good friends, and Thoreau even lived in the Emerson home, relieving the Concord sage of many practical duties. Thoreau believed in Emerson's transcendental philosophy, and his passionate temperament carried this philosophy to the limit of rebellion against society and initiated his retreat into the woods at Walden. It was also due to Thoreau's temper and arrogance that his friendship with Emerson ran into some rough weather, nonetheless the two men generally weathered these storms. Thoreau was an ardent admirer of Indian literature, and when Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* was first issued in 1855, Thoreau went to Whitman with Emerson's compliments, and observing that "Song of Myself" was "remarkably like the Hindus," asked the poet whether he was acquainted with such writings. "No," Whitman said. "Tell me about them." Thoreau supplied Whitman with a list of books for reading, and included the *Bhagavad Gita*. In *Walden*, Thoreau writes in this way about the *Gita*:

Thus . . . the sweltering inhabitants of Madras and Bombay and Calcutta drink at my well. In the morning I bathe my intellect in the stupendous and cosmogonical philosophy of the *Bhagvat-Geeta*, since whose composition years of the gods have elapsed, and in comparison with which our modern world and literature seem puny and trivial; and I doubt if that philosophy is not to be referred to a previous state of existence, so remote is its sublimity from our conceptions. I lay down the book and go to my well for water, and lo! there I meet the servant of the Brahmin, priest of Brahma and Vishnu and Indra, who still sits in his temple on the Ganges reading the Vedas, or dwells at the foot of a tree with his crust and water jug. I meet his servant, and our buckets as it were grate together in the same well. The pure Walden water is mingled with the sacred water of the Ganges. (From *Walden*)
In *Walden*, Thoreau even wrote at greater length about the Gita, and it is clear that the words of Krishna figured prominently in the transcendentalist movement. The transcendentalist ideal was to attain union with God through "plain, healthy living," avoidance of the frills of society and all forms of artificial intoxication, avoidance of dogmatic "church religion," and abandonment to the direct revelation of the Supreme—Who usually spoke through His Nature, or Prakriti, revealing His Supreme Purusha, or what Emerson called "the Over-Soul." "The overpowering reality," Emerson says, "is that unity, that oversoul within which every man's particular being is contained and made one with all other . . . Within man is the soul of the whole; the wise silence; the universal beauty, to which every part and particle is equally related; the Eternal One." For the transcendentalists, direct contact with Nature was as good as direct contact with the Divine, for it served as a springboard to ultimate realization of Him. Nature was a wise, familiar and loving guru.

Just six years before Emerson's *Nature* was published in 1836, the greatest poetess in literary history was born in Amherst, Massachusetts. Though she had little contact with the New England transcendentalists, Emily Dickinson wrote poems of transcendental love that reveal her qualifications as a New England poet. For example:

(1) Wild nights! Wild nights!
Were I with thee,
Wild nights should be
Our luxury!

(2) Futilé the winds
To a heart in port—
Done with the compass
Done with the chart.

(3) Rowing in Eden!
Ah! the sea!
Might I but moor
Tonight in thee!

It is love that figures prominently in Dickinson's poetry, love for the creation—evinced in her Nature poems—and love for the Creator—expressed in her poems of the soul, death, time, eternity and Christ. She writes:

Love is anterior to life,
Posterior to death,
Initial of creation, and
The exponent of breath.
Her poems are intimate, intensely personal, and as one reads them one feels oneself to be actually transgressing, breaking into an elder sister's packet of love poems. Emily Dickinson became a recluse early in her life and seldom left her father's house in Amherst. She never intended that her poems be published, but after her death in 1886 her poems were salvaged and published in a series of three volumes. She never married, and though she was reportedly once interested in a Rev. Wadsworth, her interests seem wholly absorbed in transcendental matters. Capable of expressing her most subtle thoughts in verse, she is never at a loss for the perfect metaphor. Compared to Whitman, her style seems tinsel and delicate, but her poems— for all their delicate appearances— carry the weight and deliver the wallop of poetic genius. Poetically, she is far superior to Emerson, Thoreau and the other New England transcendentalists. One pictures her standing with fearless love and faith before the Infinite, actually handling God, Nature, eternity and death with a feminine finesse. This is enabled by her capacity to surrender.

My rivers run to thee;
Blue sea, wilt welcome me?
My river waits reply,
Oh sea, look graciously!

I'll fetch thee brooks
From spotted nooks,—
Say, sea,
Take me!

Her love poetry is unmistakably directed to the Divine:

I envy seas whereon he rides,
I envy spokes of wheels
Of chariots that him convey,
I envy speechless hills
That gaze upon his journey . . .

At times she actually seems to chastise God when He appears to be far from her, leaving her to stand alone before death. For example:

1) I know that he exists
   Somewhere in silence.
   He has hid his rare life
   From our gross eyes.

2) 'Tis an instant's play,
   'Tis a fond ambush,
   Just to make bliss
   Earn her own surprise!

3) But should the play
   Prove piercing earnest,
   Should the glee glaze
   In death's stiff stare,

4) Would not the fun
   Look too expensive?
   Would not the jest
   Have crawled too far?
Certain poems reveal her experiencing doubt and also wondering about her own sanity, but she always emerges from these bouts victorious, with a firm faith in the Divine and the immortality of the soul.

I never saw a moor,                      I never spoke with God,
I never saw the sea;                     Nor visited in heaven;
Yet know I how the heather looks,       Yet certain am I of the spot
And what a wave must be.                As if the chart were given.

That she "never spoke with God" is doubtless claimed for the poem's sake, for other poems display a familiarity with His ways. She expresses surprise at the atheist class that turns from God, and considers this class of men to be pitifully drowning in their own ocean of disbelief.

The Maker's cordial visage,
However good to see,
Is shunned, we must admit it,
Like an adversity.

For her, as for Whitman, the "kelson of the creation is love."

Who has not found the heaven below
Will fail of it above.
God's residence is next to mine,
His furniture is love.

As with Emerson and Thoreau, her transcendental exhilaration is often stimulated by direct contact with Nature, and she gets drunk with air and water.

I taste a liquor never brewed,
From tankards scooped in pearl;
Not all the vats upon the Rhine,
Yield such an alcohol!

Inebriate of air am I,
And debauchee of dew . . . .

She writes poems celebrating the intimate details of Nature: the bee, the bat, the hummingbird, the robin, the butterfly, the flowers, the snake, the plants, grass, spiders, the rat, squirrel, jaybird, the rainbow and the wind—all are equally wonderful to her. Some of her Nature poetry is even cosmic, as the beautiful poem beginning "The moon was but a chin of gold . . . ."

Yet Nature is held in perspective. Throughout her poetry, death is her constant companion, and she often considers her sojourn on this earth as a sojourn in exile. Her real life and true lover are in eternity.
Not in this world to see his face
Sounds long, until I read the place
Where this is said to be
But just the primer to a life
Unopened, rare, upon the shelf,
Clasped yet to him and me.

She pictures herself as sailing on a "wondrous sea" toward the eternal shore where there are no storms and all ships are at rest. While she is at sea, she prays, "Grant me, O Lord, a sunny mind;/ Thy windy will to bear."

For her, eternity is revealed in the exquisite solitude of the Soul.

The Soul's superior instances
Occur to Her alone,
When friend and earth's occasion
Have infinite withdrawn . . . .

Eternity's disclosure
To favorites, a few,
Of the Colossal substance
Of immortality.

Death is the coachman of the carriage that carries her into eternity, and therefore is honored and glorified.

Because I could not stop for Death,
He kindly stopped for me;
The carriage held but just ourselves
And Immortality.

This carriage rides her past all the phenomena of the physical, material universe, off into a superior, timeless realm.

Since then 'tis centuries; but each
Feels shorter than the day
I first surmised the horses' heads
Were toward eternity.

In another poem, she likens death to the Spirit's discarding an old overcoat.

Death is a dialogue between
The spirit and the dust.
"Dissolve," says Death. The Spirit, "Sir,
I have another trust."

Death doubts it, argues from the ground.
The Spirit turns away,
Just laying off, for evidence,
An overcoat of clay.

To what degree she saw Christ as her Savior from the clutches of death is not certain. However, a number of poems indicate that she accepted Christ as her Savior, and one poem actually implores His help.
At least to pray is left, is left.  
O Jesus! in the air  
I know not which thy chamber is,—  
I'm knocking everywhere.

Thou stirrest earthquake in the South,  
And maelstrom in the sea;  
Say, Jesus Christ of Nazareth,  
Hast thou no arm for me?

That Emily Dickinson is an excellent candidate for "gopi-hood" is undeniable. She seems to have had fewer personal problems than Thoreau and Emerson whose experiences in cosmic consciousness appear at times to have shaken their stolid New England personalities. She is definitely unattached to her earthly life, considering the life to come as the great promise. She lets the Lord know she is "ready to go" on that carriage ride into Eternity in this way:

1) 
Tie the strings to my life, my Lord,  
Then I am ready to go!  
Just a look at the horses—  
Rapid! That will do!

2) 
Put me in on the firmest side,  
So I shall never fall;  
For we must ride to the Judgment,  
And it's partly down hill.

3) 
But never I mind the bridges,  
And never I mind the sea;  
Held fast in everlasting race  
By my own choice and thee.

4) 
Good-by to the life I used to live,  
And the world I used to know;  
And kiss the hills for me, just once;  
Now I am ready to go!

Emerson, Thoreau and Dickinson represent the major forces in the transcendental movement in America in the last century. Rebellion had indeed begun against the encroaching materialism that was triumphing in the cities and spreading through the veins of the young nation. Emerson warned young men against going to Boston and New York. Stay with your Maker in the open air, he enjoined. Thoreau retreated to the woods of Walden, and Emily Dickinson hardly ventured outside her house. But there was one courageous Olympian capable of shouting the good news of God and the universe for all men around the earth to hear, for men in cities as well as in the fields and forests—Whitman, who could absorb both good and evil in his Leaves, and who was capable of translating what was previously considered untranslatable. The great song of cosmic consciousness in America was left for him to sing. And he was to be the mendicant-bard of the American roadside.

(NEXT ISSUE: KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS IN AMERICAN POETRY, Part III: Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself")
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