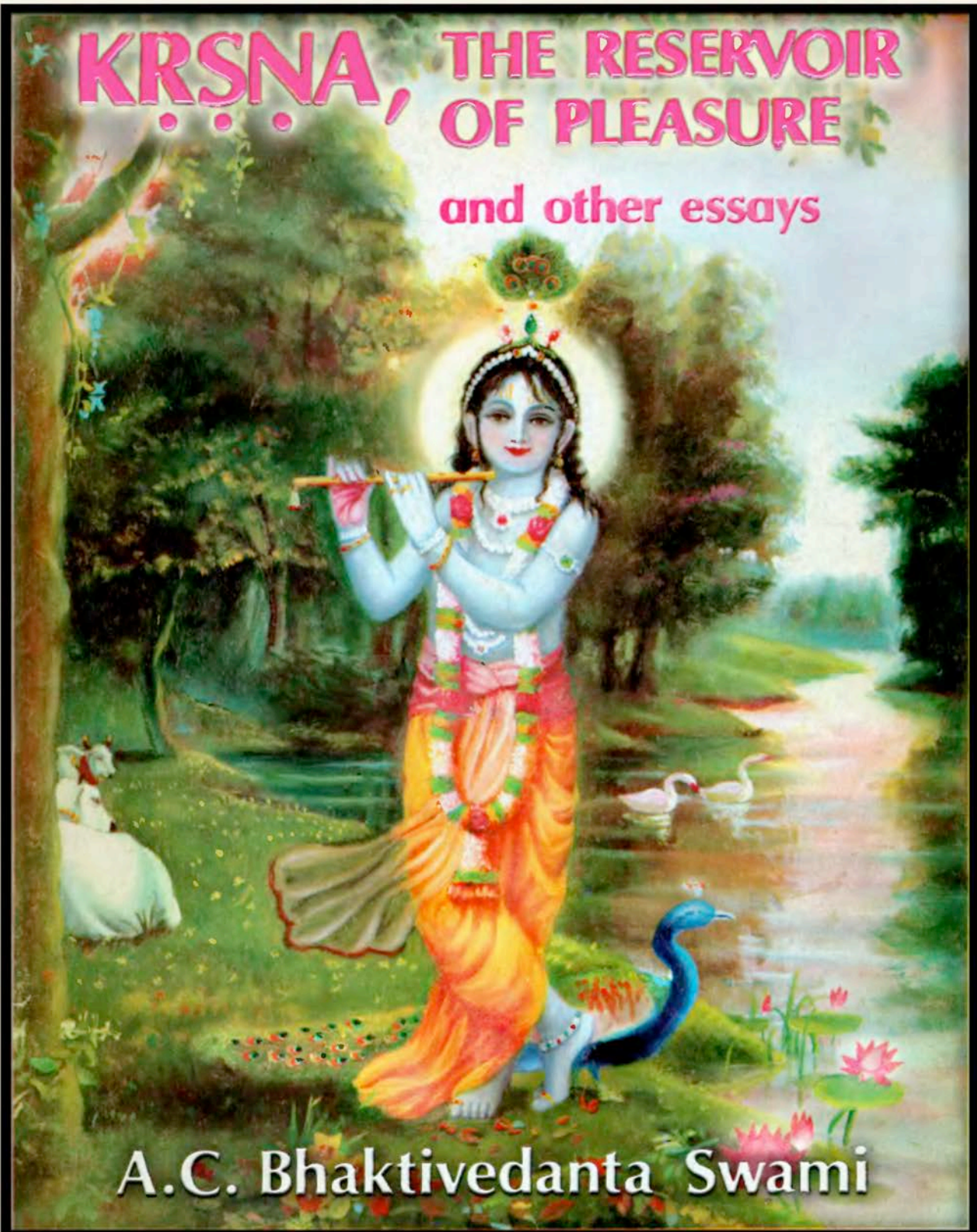


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KṚṢṆA, THE RESERVOIR OF PLEASURE

and other essays



A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami

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What is the International Society for Krishna Consciousness?

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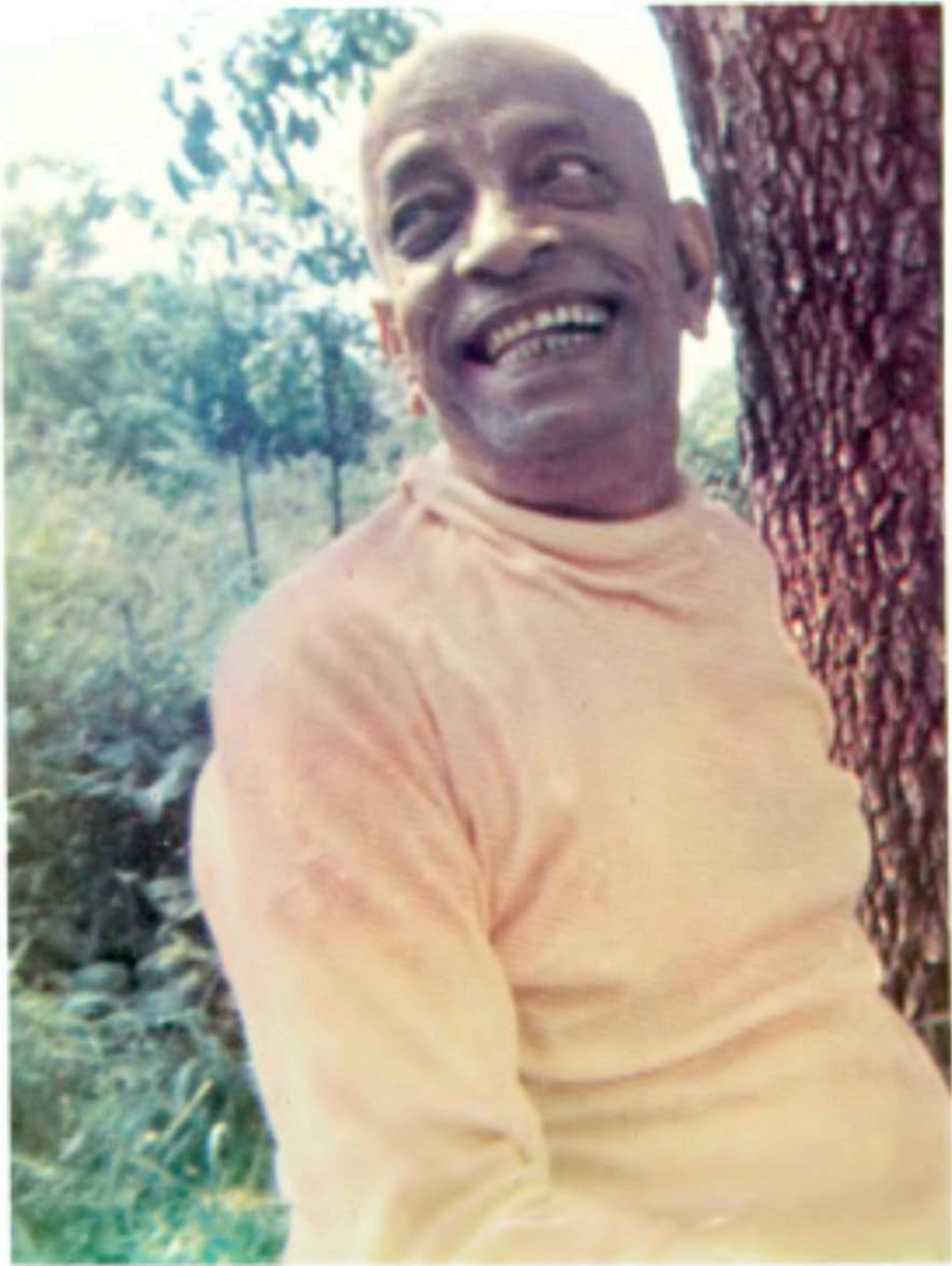
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada was born Abhay Charan De on September 1, 1896 in Calcutta. In 1920 he finished his schooling, majoring in philosophy, English and economics at the University of Calcutta. Soon afterward, Abhay Charan De took up the duties of manager of a large chemical concern. Then in 1922, he met His Divine Grace Sri Srimad Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Cosvami Maharaj, the founder of 64 Caudiya Vaisnava Maths in India, Berlin and London. Bhaktivedanta Swami recently recalled the key to his approaching his spiritual master: “When I first started going to see my Guru Maharaj, he said of me, ‘This boy hears very nicely. He does not go away. So I shall make him a disciple.’ That was my qualification, or whatever you may call it. I would simply ask when Guru Maharaj would speak, then I’d sit down and go on hearing. I would understand, or not understand; others would disperse, I’d not disperse. So he remarked, ‘This boy is interested to hear.’ Because I was serious in hearing, therefore I am now serious about *kirtanam*, which means speaking or preaching. If one has heard nicely, then he will speak nicely.”

At Allahabad in 1933, Abhay Charan De was formally initiated, and in 1936, just days before Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati’s departure from this mortal world, he was specifically ordered to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the English language to the West.

A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami, known as Prabhupada to his disciples, has told us that at first he did not take the mission given to him by his spiritual master with the utmost seriousness. But then he was reading a *Bhagavad-gita* commentary written by Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur, who was the father of Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati and the pioneer of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement in the modern age. Srila Bhaktivinode has written that just as one cannot separate the body from the soul while in this conditioned state, so the disciple cannot separate the spiritual master’s order from his very life. Bhaktivedanta Swami took these words seriously, and gradually his whole life became dedicated to carrying out the orders of his Guru Maharaj. In 1959 he took *sannyasa*, the renounced order of spiritual life, and in 1965, at the advanced age of 70, A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami arrived in New York City to fulfill his master’s sacred mission.



One must try to understand that Srila Prabhupada is neither an Indian author nor Indian culturist nor Hindu sectarian. The first teaching of the *Bhagavad-gita* is that no one is Indian, no one is American—our real self is beyond this temporary bodily designation; our permanent identity, eternal, blissful and full of knowledge, is with the Supreme Personality of Godhead as His eternal servant; and our position is to be situated beyond the material universes in the spiritual planets, within the spiritual sky. This is the platform of Krsna consciousness.

To think, “I am American,” “I am Russian,” etc., is our disease, and is due to forgetfulness of our eternal nature as spirit soul. Unfortunately, under the spell of illusion, every embodied creature is satisfied with his present material body. Even the worm in the stool is thinking, “I am all right.” Despite so many disadvantages and miseries, all living entities are engaged in satisfying their senses and are thinking it is all right. Therefore when the bona fide *guru* comes with the transcendental message, calling the souls back to home, back to Godhead, they do not want to come out of material encagement. Often, people prefer to be encouraged in illusion and therefore pay fees to learn that they are God or equal to God in all respects and thus “free” to go on “enjoying” material life of sense gratification. So we see yoga and meditation teachers advertising that they will improve one’s material facilities. They overlook the fact that elimination of sense gratification is the first step in the standard *yoga* or transcendental system. A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami does not encourage unrestricted sense gratification, or the belief that one is God, or that God is impersonal or void. He is passing on, as it is, the information from Vedic literature, that the Supreme Personality of Godhead is a person and that devotional service unto Him is the perfection of all purificatory processes. Lord Krsna in *Bhagavad-gita* is recognized as the Supreme Lord, and *Sri isopanisad* confirms the Personality of Godhead as the antimaterial supreme controller and the only enjoyer. A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami is teaching surrender to Krsna, the Supreme Lord.

Srila Prabhupada is the living example of the saintly person pointed to in all Vedic literature who is personally free from all material contamination and active in spiritual understanding. He is the Krsna conscious personality who is so dear to Krsna, who understands that the highest welfare is not to pose oneself as the friend of humanity, but to teach that God or Krsna is the dearest friend who alone is capable of alleviating the misery of each and every living entity. A.C. Bhaktivedanta is teaching what is really common sense to our intelligence, but we are so bewildered by the glitter of the material Nature that we are distracted from his message. He is simply canvassing for God on the order of his spiritual master. Once Srila

Prabhupada was asked, “Are you an incarnation of God?” “No,” he answered, “I am servant of God.” Then he paused and went on, “Not exactly servant. To be servant of God is not an ordinary thing.” The servants or devotees of Krsna are so great that they are beyond the desire to merge with God. Sometimes, in their intimate association and exchange with God, they even become “greater” than Him, as when He allows some devotee to become His mother or lover. Prabhupada’s mission is not less than to distribute this topmost love of God to all persons. It is stated in the Vedic literature that a small man wants to make only himself happy, a somewhat bigger man wants to make his family or his country happy, but the great man wants to make all persons happy.

Bhaktivedanta Swami produces his books by speaking them on a dictaphone. He is presently working on five books at once. These books are a matter of realization. As he has said, “When you become self-realized you automatically write volumes of books.” And one of the qualifications of a devotee is that he is poetic. Srila Prabhupada is always immersed in Krsna by speaking, dictating, singing about Krsna’s glories, preaching formally at meetings or planning the expansion of the Krsna consciousness movement. In the Bhagavad-gita, Seventh Chapter, it is stated that out of thousands of men few seek perfection, and out of the thousands who attain perfection hardly one knows Krsna. Lord Krsna also declares in the Eighteenth Chapter that the dearest devotee of all is he who spreads the teaching of love of Krsna: “Never will there be one dearer to Me.”

Bhaktivedanta Swami’s spiritual master, Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati, once drew a picture of a *mrdanga* (drum used on sankirtana) and, beside it, a printing press. He said that the *mrdanga* can be heard for several blocks, but the press can be heard around the world. He therefore called the printing press “the big *mrdanga*.” For the purpose of world-wide service to humanity, ISKCON Press has been established, for the exclusive printing of Srila Prabhupada’s books.

In 1968, Macmillan published *The Bhagavad Gita As It Is*, translated with commentary by A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami. The Gita is the gist of the entire Vedic literature. Just this one book can free anyone from the clutches of material Nature and fix one in eternal loving service unto Sri Krsna, the Personality of Godhead. As originally written by Srila Prabhupada, the manuscript of *The Bhagavad Gita As It Is* is many times larger than the version published by Macmillan. Publication of this original, expanded version is being undertaken by ISKCON. Another important published literature by Prabhupada is his *Teachings of Lord Chaitanya*. This book outlines the precepts of Caitanya Mahaprabhu, the golden *avatara* who appeared in

India 500 years ago and propagated the Hare Krsna mantra as the means of God realization for the present age. A book called *Nectar of Devotion*, an authorized summary study of Sri Rupa Gosvami's *Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu*, will also soon be published. Prabhupada is presently writing a several volume work called *Krsna*, which contains all of the pastimes of the Supreme Lord when present on this planet 5000 years ago. Translations are also underway of the *Vedanta-sutras*, *Caitanya-caritamrta* and his 12 volumes of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. The literatures compiled by A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami are authorized by the disciplic succession, which is descending from Krsna Himself; Prabhupada's whole life mission is to faithfully pass on the original understanding of Krsna consciousness without distortion. According to the Vedic literature this descending process is the only way to realization of the Absolute Truth, as the Absolute Truth is beyond the reach of our mundane speculation or scholarship.

The author is not a retired personality, despite his prodigious literary output. He personally and very intimately guides his disciples through the most practical problems of daily life. Spiritual life is practical and, due to the predominant material atmosphere of *Kali-yuga*, often problematic. As spiritual master, Bhaktivedanta Swami is the last recourse and the ultimate standard of Krsna consciousness, and he writes some twenty-five letters a day to leaders and students of his various worldwide centers. He himself resides in no one place but travels from center to center and regularly lectures. The spiritual master is responsible for his devotees; when he accepts a sincere soul as his disciple, he promises to take him back to home, back to Godhead. No one should think, "Oh, everyone is taking a spiritual master; let me take one." The spiritual master as a style or as a pet is useless. Rather, his order is to be taken as one's life and soul. By taking shelter at the feet of the bona fide guru and serving him 24 hours a day, the fallen soul can be lifted to the spiritual sky. It is said that if the spiritual master is pleased, then one can make great advances in spiritual life. And one pure convinced devotee can make many pure devotees by his example and teachings. Those serious students with an understanding of the absolute value of the spiritual platform of life therefore honor the spiritual master with the honor due to God, because the guru is the transparent *via media* or representative of God and is distributing unalloyed love of God. The intelligent reader is invited to take to this philosophy with the utmost seriousness.

KRSNA THE RESERVOIR OF PLEASURE

By A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami

Krsna— this sound is transcendental. *Krsna* means the highest pleasure. All of us, every living being, seeks pleasure. But we do not know how to seek pleasure perfectly. With a materialistic concept of life, we are frustrated at every step in satisfying our pleasure because we have no information regarding the real level on which to have real pleasure. For the last few weeks we have been learning that we are not this body; we are consciousness. Not exactly consciousness, for consciousness is actually the symptom of our real identity: we are pure soul, now merged within this material body. Modern material science lays no stress on this; therefore the scientists are sometimes misled in their understanding of spirit soul. But spirit soul is a fact, which anyone can understand by the presence of consciousness. Any child can understand that consciousness is the symptom of the spirit soul.

Now the whole process we are trying to learn from the *Bhagavad-gita* (*The Song of God*) is how to bring ourselves to this level of consciousness. And if we act from the level of consciousness, then we may not be pushed again into the level of this bodily conception; and, if we can continue on that level, if we can continue to act in pure consciousness, then, at the end of this body we shall be free from material contamination, our spiritual life will be revived, and the ultimate result will be that in our next life, after leaving this body, we shall have our full, eternal spiritual life. Spirit, as we have already discussed, is described as eternal.

Even after the destruction of this body, consciousness is not destroyed. Rather, consciousness is transferred to another type of body and again makes us aware of the material conception of life. That is also described in the *Bhagavad-gita*. At the time of death, if our consciousness is pure, we can be sure that our next life will not be material—our next life will be spiritual. If our consciousness is not pure at the point of death, then, after leaving this body, we shall have to take another material body. That is the process which is going on. That is Nature's law.

We have now a final body. The body which we see is the gross body. It is just like a shirt and coat: within the coat there is a shirt, and within the shirt there is a body. Similarly, the pure soul is covered by a shirt and coat. The garments are the mind, intelligence and false ego. False ego means the misconception that I am matter, that I am a product of this material world. This misconception makes me localized. For

example, because I have taken my birth in India, I think myself Indian. Because I have taken my birth in America, I think myself American. But as pure soul, I am neither Indian nor American. I am pure soul. These others are designations. American, or Indian, or German, or Englishman; cat or dog, or bee or bat, man or wife: all these are designations. In spiritual consciousness we become free from all such designations. That freedom is achieved when we are constantly in touch with the supreme spirit, Kṛṣṇa.



The International Society for Krishna Consciousness is simply intended to keep us in constant touch with Krsna. Krsna can be in constant companionship with us because He is omnipotent. Therefore, He can be fully in touch with us by His words. His words and He are not different. That is omnipotence. Omnipotence means that everything relating to Him has the same potency. For example, here in this material world, if we are thirsty and we want water, simply repeating “Water, water, water, water,” will not satisfy our thirst, because this word has not the same potency as water itself. We require the water in substance. Then our thirst will be satisfied. But in the transcendental, absolute world, there is no such difference— Krsna’s name, Krsna’s quality, Krsna’s word—everything is Krsna and provides the same satisfaction.

Some people argue that Arjuna was talking with Krsna because Krsna was present before him, whereas in my case, Krsna is not present. So how can I get directions? But that is not a fact. Krsna is present by His words—the *Bhagavad-gita*. In India, when we speak on the *Bhagavad-gita* or *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, we regularly perform worship with flowers, or with other paraphernalia, as is required for worshiping. In the Sikh religion also, although they have no form of the Deity, they worship the book *Granthasahib*. Perhaps some of you are acquainted with this Sikh community. They worship this *Grantha*. Similarly, the Moslems worship the *Koran*. Similarly, in the Christian world, the *Bible* is worshiped. It is a fact that the Lord Jesus Christ is present by His words. Krsna is also present by His words.

These personalities, either God or the son of God, who come from the transcendental world, keep their transcendental identities without being contaminated by the material world. That is their omnipotence. We are in the habit of saying that God is omnipotent. Omnipotence means that He is not different from His name, from His quality, from His pastimes, from His instruction. Therefore, the discussion of *Bhagavad-gita* is as good as discussion with Krsna Himself.

Krsna is seated in your heart, and in my heart too. *Isvarah sarva-bhutanam hrddese’rjuna tisthati*. God is situated in everyone’s heart. God is not away from us. He is present. He is so friendly that He remains with us in our repeated change of births. He is waiting to see when we shall turn to Him. He is so kind that though we may forget Him, He never forgets us. Although a son may forget his father, a father never forgets his son. Similarly, God, the original father of everything, everybody, all living entities, will never forsake us. We may have different bodies, but they are our shirt-coats. That has nothing to do with our real identity. Our real identity is pure soul, and that pure soul is part and parcel of the Supreme Lord. There are 8,400,000

species of life. Even the biologist and the anthropologist cannot calculate this accurately, but from authoritative, revealed scripture we get this information. Human beings represent 400,000 species, and there are 8,000,000 other species. But Krsna, the Supreme Lord, claims that all of them, whether beast, man, snake, god, semi-god, demigod—anything whatever—all of them are, in reality, His sons.

The father gives the seed, and the mother receives the seed. The body is then formed, according to the mother's body. And when the body is completely formed, it comes out—either from cats, from dogs, or from man. That is the process of generation. The father gives the seed, and it is emulsified with two kinds of secretion in the womb of the mother, and on the first night the body is formed just like a pea. Then, gradually, it develops. There are nine holes that develop: two ears, two eyes, nostrils, a mouth, a navel, a penis, and an anus.

According to his last *karma*, or action, one gets this body to enjoy, or to suffer. That is the process of birth and death. And after finishing this life, again one dies, and again one enters into the womb of some mother. Another type of body then comes out. This is the process of reincarnation.

We should be very diligent as to how we can discontinue this process of repeated birth and death and change of body. That is the prerogative of the human form of life. We can stop this process of repeated change through birth and death. We can get our actual spiritual form again and be blissful, full of knowledge and eternal life. That is the purpose of evolution. We should not miss this. The entire process of liberation begins just as we have now begun this chanting and hearing. I wish to point out that this chanting of the holy name of God (HARE KRSNA, HARE KRSNA, KRSNA KRSNA, HARE HARE/ HARE RAMA, HARE RAMA, RAMA RAMA, HARE HARE) and hearing the truths of the *Gita* is as good as bodily association with Krsna. That is stated in the *Gita*. This process is called *kirtan*. Even if one does not understand the language, still, just by hearing, he acquires some piety. His assets lead him to a pious life, even if he does not understand—it has such power.

There are two topics concerning Krsna. Two kinds of topics, actually. One topic is this *Bhagavad-gita*. It is spoken by Krsna. And the other topic concerning Krsna is *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. That is spoken about Krsna. So there are two types of Krsna *katha* (topics), and both of them are equally potent because they are connected with Krsna.

Because the *Bhagavad-gita* is spoken on the Battlefield of Kuruksetra some people have asked what we have to do with the battlefield. We have nothing to do with any battlefield. We are after knowledge of the spiritual sphere. Then, why should we bother about this battlefield? Because Krsna is on the battlefield, and therefore the whole battlefield has become Krsna-ized. Just as when an electric current is passed into some metal, the whole metal becomes surcharged with electricity; so too, when Krsna is interested in some matter, that matter becomes Krsna-ized. Otherwise, there would be no need of discussing the Battlefield of Kuruksetra. That is His omnipotence.

This omnipotence is also described in *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. There are many Krsna *kathas*. The Vedic literature is full of them. *Vedas* mean that they are Krsna *kathas*. Scripture, including the *Vedas*, may appear to be different, but they are all meant for Krsna *katha*. If we simply hear these topics on Krsna, then what will be the result? It is pure transcendental vibration, and the result will be spiritual consciousness.

We have accumulated many inauspicious things within our hearts due to our material contamination during the course of many, many births. Many, many births—not only this birth, but past births as well. So, when we search into our hearts with the Krsna *katha*, then the contamination we have accumulated will be washed off. Our hearts will be cleansed of all rubbish. And, as soon as all the rubbish is cleared off, then we are situated in pure consciousness.

It is very difficult to eradicate all the false designations from oneself. For example, I am Indian. It is not very easy to immediately think that I am not Indian, but pure soul. Similarly, it is not a very easy task for anyone to end his identification with these bodily designations. But still, if we continue hearing the Krsna *katha*, it will be very easy. Make an experiment. Make an experiment to see how easily you'll be able to free yourself from all these designations. Of course, it is not possible to clear out the rubbish from the mind all of a sudden, but we are immediately aware that the influence of the material nature has become slackened.

The material nature is working in three modes—goodness, passion, and ignorance. Ignorance is hopeless life. Passion is materialistic. One who is influenced by the modes of passion wants this false enjoyment of material existence. Because he does not know the truth, he wants to squeeze out the energy of the body just to enjoy this matter. That is called the mode of passion. As for those in the mode of ignorance, they have neither passion nor goodness. They are in the deepest darkness of life. Situated in the mode of goodness, we can understand, at least theoretically, what I

am, what this world is, what God is, and what our interrelationship is. This is the mode of goodness.

By hearing Kṛṣṇa *katha*, we will be freed from the stages of ignorance and passion. We will be situated in the mode of goodness. At least we'll have the real knowledge—knowledge of what we are. Ignorance is like the animal existence. The animal's life is full of suffering, but the animal does not know that he is suffering. Take the case of a hog. Of course, here in New York City no hog is seen. But in villages in India one sees the hog. Oh, how miserable his life is, living in a filthy place, eating stools and always unclean. Yet the hog is very happy by eating stools, and having constant sexual intercourse with the she-hog and just getting fat. The hog gets very fat, because of the spirit of enjoyment which is there—although, for him, it is sensual enjoyment.

We should not be like the hog, falsely thinking that we are very happy. Working hard all day and night, then having some sex life—we think that in this way we are very happy. But this is not happiness. This has been described in the *Bhagavatam* as a hog's happiness. Man's happiness is when he is situated in the mode of goodness. Then he can understand what true happiness is.

In our daily routine, if we hear this Kṛṣṇa *katha*, the result will be that all the dirty things in the heart, accumulated life after life, will be cleared out. As a matter of fact, we will see that we are no longer in ignorance or in passion, but are situated in the mode of goodness. What is that position?

We will find ourselves joyful in every circumstance of life. We will never feel morose. In the *Bhagavad-gīta* we find that this is our *brahma-bhūta* (highest stage of goodness) situation. The Vedas teach us that we are not this matter. We are *Brahman*. *Aham brahmasmi*. Lord *Sankaracarya* preached this gospel to the world. We are not this matter; we are *Brahman*, spirit. When spiritual realization is actually accomplished, then our symptoms will change. What are those symptoms? When one is situated in his own spiritual consciousness, then he will have no hankering and no lamentation. Lamentation is for loss, and hankering is for gain. Two diseases characterize this material world: What we do not possess, we hanker after. "If I get these things I'll be happy. I have no money, but if I get a million dollars, then I'll be happy." And when we have a million dollars, somehow it will be lost. So we'll cry, "Oh, I have lost it!" When we hanker for earning, that is a kind of distress. And when we suffer loss, that is also distress. But if we are situated in *brahma-bhūta*, we will neither be distressed nor will we hanker. We will view equally everyone and

everything. Even if we are situated in the midst of fiery turbulence, we will not be disturbed. That is the mode of goodness.

Bhagavatam means the science of God. If the science of God is perservered in, we will be situated in the *brahma-bhuta* status. From that *brahma-bhuta* status, we have to work, for work is recommended here. So long as we have this material body, we have to work. We cannot stop working; it is not possible. But we have to adopt the tactics of *yoga*, and in this way, even by doing some ordinary work, which, by destiny or circumstances we are put into, there is no harm. Suppose that, in one's own occupation, one must speak a lie or his business can't go on. Lying is not a very good thing, so one concludes that the business is not based on very moral principles and one should therefore give it up. In the *Bhagavad-gita*, however, we find instruction not to give it up. Even if we are put in such circumstances that our livelihood cannot go on without some unfair practice, we should not give it up. But we should try to make it purified. How is it purified? We should not take the fruitive result of our work. That is meant for God.

Sukrta means pious activities. And *duskṛta* means impious activities. On the material level we can be pious or impious. Either we are performing some pious activities, or we are performing some impious activities—or we have a mixture, pious and impious. Lord Kṛṣṇa advises that we should act with knowledge of, or devotion to the Supreme. What does that knowledge mean? It means that I am the part and parcel of the supreme consciousness, or that I am not this body. If I identify myself as an American, as an Indian, or this or that, then I am on the material plane. We should identify ourselves as neither Americans nor Indians, but as pure consciousness. I am a subordinate consciousness of the supreme consciousness; in other words, I am the servant of God. God is the supreme consciousness, and I am His servant. So, for our present understanding, subordinate means servant.

We don't ordinarily carry out the work of a servant in relationship to God. Nobody wants to be a servant, but everyone wants to be the master, because to become a servant is not a very palatable thing. But to become the servant of God is not exactly like this. Sometimes the servant of God becomes the master of God. The real position of the living entity is to be the servant of God, but in the *Bhagavad-gita* we can see that the master, Kṛṣṇa, became the servant of Arjuna. Arjuna is sitting in the chariot, and Kṛṣṇa is his driver. Arjuna is not the owner of the chariot, but in the spiritual relationship we should not cling to the concept of the material relationship. Although the whole relationship, just as we have experience of it in this world, is there in the spiritual world, that relationship is not contaminated by

matter. Therefore it is pure and transcendental. It is of a different nature. As we become advanced in the spiritual conception of life, we can understand what the actual position in the spiritual, transcendental world is.

Here the Lord instructs us in *buddhi-yoga*. *Buddhi-yoga* means that we have full consciousness that we are not this body; and if I act with this understanding, then I am not body—I am consciousness. That is a fact. Now, if we act on the level of consciousness, then we can overcome the fruitive result of good work or bad work. It is a transcendental stage.

It means that we are acting on another's account—on the Supreme's account. We are not liable to loss or gain. When there is gain, we should not be puffed up. We should think, "This gain is for the Lord." And when there is loss, we should know that this is not our responsibility. It is God's work—His. Then we will be happy. This we have to practice: everything on account of the Supreme. This transcendental nature we have to develop. This is the trick of doing work under these present circumstances. As soon as we work on the level of bodily consciousness, we become bound by the reaction of our work. But when we work through spiritual consciousness, we are not bound either by pious activities or by vicious activities. That is the technique.

Manisinah—this word is very significant. *Manisin* means thoughtful. Unless one is thoughtful, he cannot understand that he is not this body. But if one is a little thoughtful he can understand, "Oh, I am not this body. I am consciousness." Sometimes, in our leisure time, we can see, "Oh, this is my finger, and this is my hand. This is my ear, and this is my nose. Everything is mine, but what I, what I?" I am feeling this is mine, and that I am. Simply a little thought is required. Everything is mine—my eyes, my finger, my hand. My, my, my, and what is the I? The I is that consciousness, in which I am thinking, "This is mine."

Now, if I am not this body, then why should I act for this body? I should act for myself. Then, how can I work for myself? What is my position? I am consciousness. But what kind of consciousness? Subordinate consciousness—I am part of the supreme consciousness. Then, what will my activities be? My activities will be under the guidance of the supreme consciousness, just as in the office, the managing director is the supreme consciousness. For example, in the office everyone is working under the direction of the manager; therefore they have no responsibility. They have only to discharge their duties. Either pious or impious duties—never mind. In the military line, too, the order of the captain or the commander is there. The

soldier has to execute it. He does not consider whether it is pious or impious. That does not matter. He simply has to act, then he is a real soldier. He acts in that way and he gets his reward. He gets title and honor. He doesn't care. The commander says, Just go and kill the enemy, and he is rewarded. Do you think that by killing one gets reward? No—it is for the duty discharged.

Similarly, here the situation is that Krsna is instructing Arjuna. Krsna is the supreme consciousness. I am consciousness, the part and parcel of the supreme consciousness. So my duty is to act according to that supreme consciousness. For example, I consider my hand as a part of my body. Now, it is moving in its own way. "As I want, let my hand be moved. Let my legs be moved. Let my eyes be opened and see." So, I am dictating, and these parts are working. Similarly, we are all parts and parcels of the Supreme. When we train ourselves to move and act in accordance with supreme consciousness, then we become transcendental to all these pious or impious activities. That is the technique. What will the result of this technique be? We become free from the bondage of birth and death. No more birth and death.

Modern scientists and philosophers do not think about these four things: birth, death, disease, and old age. They set them aside. "Oh, let us be happy. Let us enjoy this life." But human life is meant for finding a solution to this bondage of birth, death, disease and old age. If any civilization has not found a solution to these four problems, then that is not a human civilization. Human civilization is meant for finding a complete solution to these things.

So herein the *Bhagavad-gita*, the Lord says, *Karmajam buddhi-yuktah. Karmajam* means whenever there is action there will be some reaction. If one acts in badness, there will be a bad reaction. But reaction, either good or bad, is, in the higher sense, all suffering. Suppose that by good action I get a good birth, fine bodily features, and a good education. All these good things I may have, but that does not mean that I am free from material pains. The material pains are birth, death, old age and disease. Even if I am a rich man, a beautiful man, an educated man, born in an aristocratic family, etc., I still cannot avoid death, old age, and disease.

So, we must not be concerned with pious activities or impious activities. We must be concerned with transcendental activities only. That will save us from this bondage of birth, death, old age and disease. That should be our aim in life. We should not be hankering after good or bad things. For example, suppose one is suffering from some disease. He is lying in bed, eating, passing nature's call uncomfortably, and taking bitter medicines. He always has to be kept clean by the

nurses; otherwise there is an obnoxious smell. While he is lying in this condition some friends come to him and ask how he is feeling. "Yes, I am feeling well." What is this well? Lying in bed uncomfortably taking bitter medicine, and unable to move! Yet despite all these inconveniences he says, "I am well." Similarly, in our material conception of life, if we think, "I am happy," that is foolishness. There is no happiness in material life. It is impossible to have happiness here. In this condition, we do not know the meaning of happiness. That's why this very word is used, *manisinah*—thoughtful.

We seek happiness by some extraneous, artificial means, but how long does it last? It will not endure. We again come back to sorrow. Suppose, by intoxication, we feel happy. That is not our actual happiness. Suppose I am made unconscious by chloroform, and I don't feel the pain of an operation. That does not mean that I am not having an operation. This is artificial. Real pleasure, real life exists.

As is commanded in the *Bhagavad-gita* by Sri Krsna, the thoughtful give up the reaction of work, being situated on the level of pure consciousness. The result is that this bondage of birth and death, disease and old age comes to an end. This end is in union with the true identity, Krsna, the reservoir of pleasure and eternal bliss. There, indeed, is the true happiness for which we are intended.

WHO IS CRAZY?

By A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami

Lord Sri Krsna says, “My dear Arjuna, there are different classes of men. One class of men, they are sleeping. And another class of men, they are awake. They are not sleeping.” And how is this so? This chanting, which we have performed just now, is the wakening process for the sleeping soul. The soul is sleeping, covered by this material body. These bodily activities are in the sleeping stage. Just as we see dreams in the sleeping stage, similarly, all these bodily activities are dreams. Just think for yourself: how many incidents have there been in your past life? If you think of them, they will appear just like dreams. At least for myself this is the case. I was born in India, educated, then married, then I had very good days with my wife, got some children, some of whom died, some of whom are living, some of whom are married; now they have begotten children. All this occurred in my past life. Now it is all a dream. I have no connection with it. Similarly, in dreams I sometimes find that I have become a king. Oh, there are so many riches and so much opulence. Then, as soon as the dream is over, I come home and all is gone.

So actually, these bodily activities which we are now engaged in are not our actual life. Therefore, the Vedic mantra says, “O human race, please wake up. Just utilize the opportunity which you now have.” You have a special opportunity. And what is that? This human form of life. Utilize it; don’t waste it. Don’t go on sleeping. This very same matter is taken up by Sri Krsna. Those who are accustomed to the *yoga* process know this. The first principle of the *yoga* process is to control the senses. This is so for every process. In any bona fide process for spiritual realization, the first principle is to control the senses. This is because the senses are dragging us into the darkest region of life. But we do not realize this.

In the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* there is a nice verse. It says, first, man is too much addicted to this materialistic way of life. The materialistic way of life involves eating, drinking, making merry, and enjoying. That’s it—that’s all. Have very good food, sleep well, and defend yourself so that enemies may not enter into your country, or into your home. And, have sexual enjoyment to your heart's content. This is the materialistic way of life. But persons who are so sleeping do not realize that their real self-interest is different. Our real self-interest is that we must know of our lost relationship with the Supreme Absolute Truth.

The Supreme Absolute Truth is realized from different angles of vision, as impersonal *Brahman*, or localized Supersoul, or the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Sri Krsna. One who realizes the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Sri Krsna, automatically understands the other two features. But one who has approached only the impersonal feature of the Supreme Absolute Truth has no information of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Sri Krsna. Now here, in the *Bhagavad-gita*, the Supreme Personality of Godhead is present before you.

Here is the picture of Sri Krsna, with his eternal consort Srimati Radharani, His pleasure potency. In this material world, the reflection of Sri Krsna and His pleasure potency exists pervertedly. As one can see in the picture, Sri Krsna is always consorting with Srimati Radharani. His features are described in Vedic literature: He stands in a very nice curved posture, blowing His flute. This picture is not drawn from artistic imagination. It is a descriptive painting from the Vedic literature. This description is in the Vedic literature.

So, in the material world there is the perverted reflection of Sri Krsna's pastime with Radharani. It is not sex life as we have it, although it appears to be like that. It is transcendental. But that which we are after here—that is real. A young man wants a young woman, and a young woman wants a young man—this is natural. This is not artificial. It is natural because we are all part and parcel of that Supreme Being, Krsna. His attitude is in me because I am His part and parcel, just as the quality of gold is present in the minute particles of gold. The chemical composition of gold is one hundred per cent present in a small particle of gold. Qualitatively. Therefore the enjoyment which we want between man and woman is not a perversion of love and friendship. It is simply a perverted *reflection*. The real enjoyment is awakened in association with the Supreme Lord, Sri Krsna. It is the same pleasure, but is in its pure form. That same bliss is there for you, but don't become entangled in this perverted form of enjoyment. Don't remain asleep. Don't remain in this dreaming condition. Have the real thing. Awaken from the dream. That is the message of the Vedas.

This is the opportunity. If you miss this opportunity in the human form of life—the developed consciousness—you will slip again into the cycle of 8,400,000 species of life that is developing, one form after another. That is the gradual process of evolution. We are still within the evolutionary process, but that evolutionary process should be forward, progressive. Not degraded. Don't slide. Don't go downward. By your many years of endeavor, you have come forward to this stage of life. Now, make further progress. Progress toward Sri Krsna. Don't go back.

The *Srimad-Bhagavatam* says that most people do not know their self-interest in life. It is like coming to a crossroads and not knowing the way. Suppose you are going to Philadelphia, and after crossing New York City, you see a crossroads, and you do not know the road. Of course, in America, there is a very efficient system of direction on the roads. That way, you have no misguidance. Similarly, in the scriptures the Vedic literature gives you direction. Yes, here is a crossing. If you want to go this way, you may. So the *Bhagavatam* says that people do not know the direction by which to make progress. One must know that he must make further progress toward Visnu. Why? Because this is a very highly developed life. In this form of life, we have very high intelligence. We have more intelligence than cats and dogs and other animals. Why misdirect it? The misdirection is due to being attracted to this bodily concept of life. One is thinking, "I shall be happy utilizing the body and the senses to the utmost."

Because we do not know what our progressive life is, we are trying to squeeze the essence out of this body. To enjoy it. In the *Bhagavatam* there is a very good example cited about these foolish men. They are compared to the camel. The camel is a desert animal very fond of twigs containing thorns. They have very long necks, and they take a bunch of twigs with thorns and begin to chew. By contact with the thorns, blood oozes out the tongue. Naturally, if you chew thorns, your tongue will be cut. So, when they take those thorns within the mouth and begin to chew, the blood comes out. And when the blood is mixed up in that form, they eat it, because blood has a taste he likes. He thinks that twigs with thorns are very tasteful. Our sex life is like that. Just squeeze it out of the body, and we think we are enjoying it. This is our position.

Another example is given. In India the washermen keep asses. They load the ass as much as possible. The ass works all day and in the evening, he is offered some grass, and he's satisfied. For a morsel of grass, he is ready to work the whole day with half ton of clothing on his back. Similarly, we also, the *karmins*, are very busy working all day and all night. And when we come home, we eat only one piece of bread. For one piece of bread, which costs no more than ten cents, one is working all day and all night. So the comparison is to the ass. The ass does not know for whom he is working so hard, and taking some bread. "This is the aim of my life." Is it my aim of life—to eat something and go to sleep, and have some sex pleasure and then die? No, this is not the aim of life. Your aim of life should be to realize yourself—that you are part and parcel of the Supreme Absolute Personality of Godhead, Sri Krsna. Krsna is awaiting your arrival, so that you can enjoy life in His association.

One does not know what the progressive way of life is. Why? Because he has understood that this sense enjoyment is life's greatest pleasure. He is foolishly thinking that he will be happy by this sense enjoyment. This is just like having a horse which is not properly bridled. It is running on, running on, and you do not know where it will throw you. Similarly, uncontrolled senses are just like unbridled horses, dragging your chariot. You do not know where it will throw you. We do not realize how responsible we are for every action. To every small part of our action, there is a reaction. And our uncontrolled senses are putting us through the chain of action and reaction and dragging us into the darkest part of the universe.

Therefore, Lord Sri Krsna says that one who has learned how to control the senses is called *svamin*. To a controlled person, worldly activities are darkness. Those who are situated in pure consciousness see that people who work hard simply for eating, sleeping, mating, and defending—these people are sleeping. And, to the persons who are engaged in these material activities, we are sleeping. They see that Swamiji has come to America to preach something to make us inactive. He is just trying to drag us from our general engagement, and he's trying to engage us in the process of *kirtan* and *hearing* Bhagavad-gita and wasting time. So, they believe we are sleeping. Somebody may think, "These poor fellows have gathered here to waste their time in discussing something dry, which has no meaning, which is not bringing forth anything. Let us have some business discussion, so that we can gain something from it." We see that these people are sleeping and they that we are sleeping.

Now, actually, who is sleeping? He is awake who comes to the platform of consciousness that I am not this body—I am consciousness. One is awake who has understood this simple fact, that I am not this body, I am consciousness. Without consciousness, my body is useless. Therefore, I am actually consciousness. I am pure soul, and the symptom of my presence is consciousness. I am not this body. When I think deeply, I can understand that this is my body. This is not I, body. This is my body. So, one who has understood this—he is awake.

Now, the whole process described in the *Bhagavad-gita* is to be awake. You are pure consciousness—spirit soul. And, not only to be awake, but to act accordingly, so that, at the ultimate end, your pure consciousness may be liberated from this bodily entanglement. Then you'll get your healthy life. This is a disease, this material life. This material body is the symptom of my diseased form of life. I am not actually subject to birth and death. I am eternal. I never take my birth. I never die. This is my real position. Then, what is this birth and death? It is due to this body. Changing the body like a dress is called birth and death. But actually, I am pure soul.

Now, people are saying that God is dead. This theory is popular. They are making propaganda that the Lord is dead. But neither God nor we will ever die; neither do we have birth. In *Bhagavad-gita*, *Bhagavan*, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Sri Krsna, says, “Arjuna, why are you afraid of fighting? Myself, yourself, and all these kings and soldiers who have assembled before us—all of them—they existed before, and they're existing now, and they will continue to exist in the future. There is no birth and death. So, this warfare should be on the condition of the body. Don't be afraid of it.”

This point we have already discussed. One must understand this point: I am pure soul. My presence as pure soul is symptomatized by my consciousness. I know what has happened in my past life. And what is happening, that I can remember also. And, I can guess about my future life. At least, I make plans for my future. Unless I have my future, why should I plan? But, I am beyond this past, present and future. I am eternal. The Lord is eternal, and I am eternal also, as part and parcel of the Supreme God. Therefore, my self-interest is to attain that life of eternity. Life of full bliss. Life of full knowledge. That is the mission of my life. And one who takes that position seriously, who has taken up this mission of life, and is trying for that perfection, he is actually awake. And others who are not at this point, they are sleeping. This is the mark of a sleeping man. A man who is working strenuously the whole day, he is not actually awake. He is sleeping because his real intelligence is asleep. He has lost his self-interest. He does not know what the real interest of human life is.

All Vedic literature is imploring us, “Don't sleep! Don't sleep! Be awake! Be awake! Get up! Get up from this sleep! Utilize the boon which you now have. Don't be foolish.”

People are working hard, and earning enough to eat. Especially in your country, there are sufficient means for eating, and nobody is starving. That's all right, but they are still not satisfied. I have studied this very carefully. The younger people all appear to be frustrated. It is not a very good condition, when the young generation, which is the future hope of the country, feels that there is no hope. Their future is dark. Why? Because they have no direction. What is the aim of life? What will they become? The philosophy is, work hard, get dollars, and enjoy as you like. This is misguidance. Therefore, the young are not happy. So, they take center of something which is objectionable for satisfaction. But that cannot give total satisfaction.

Now, here is an opportunity. The *Bhagavad-gita* can show you your actual life. Take advantage of it. Appeal especially to the younger people. Don't be frustrated; don't be disappointed. There is full enjoyment in your future. You are all part and parcel of the Supreme. *Isvara parama Krsna, sac-cid-ananda vigraha*. The Lord says, "Oh, these poor living entities. They are suffering so much. They are feeling frustrated. Oh, they are My parts and parcels." So He comes to claim you. "My dear boys, My dear children, why are you suffering? Please hear Me. Give up all your engagements. Just hear Me. Try to follow what I say. I shall liberate you from all the reactions of sin." You'll find in the *Bhagavad-gita* that this is guaranteed. Simply surrender unto the Lord. Not only Sri Krsna, of course. Lord Jesus Christ also spoke in the same way: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matthew: 11:28-30) That is the message of all persons who come from that spiritual world—from the kingdom of Godhead. That is the only message.

So, actually, this *Bhagavad-gita* is giving you the light to a happy life. Don't miss this opportunity. Try to hear it, to have it. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu has made it very easy. To fulfill the mission of our life, there are nine different processes of devotional service: hearing, chanting, remembering, worshipping, accepting, service, offering everything, friendship and praying. Out of these nine, the first two processes, which are principle and primary, are *sravanam kirtanam visnu*. Hear and glorify. That will cleanse your heart of the dust which has accumulated for so many lifetimes, and you will see things very clearly.

Svamin and *gosvamin* are synonymous words meaning "a person who is in full control of the senses." Don't be thinking that you cannot control your senses. Everyone is able. You'll get strength by this process. This chanting of Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare will help you. Don't be dejected by thinking that you have no strength. You'll get strength. Continue this process. Kirtanam sravanam means chanting Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna, Hare Hare. And, hear some passages from the *Bhagavad-gita* and *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. Utilize these two processes, and you'll find strength for your spiritual life. One has to become situated in that position of sense control.

Now, you have no doubt seen the ocean. How full it is! The ocean is so powerful that, if it rose, all New York City would be submerged under water. But it does not disturb us. It does not go beyond its limits. For example, the Narrows is the brink of

the ocean. The ocean does not come on the other side of the Narrows. This is the example. When we have controlled the senses, we shall be just like the big ocean—although full with spiritual knowledge, calm and quiet without disturbing anyone, and without being disturbed. Peaceful.

In Bengal there are about five hundred rivers. All these rivers flow down water, to the ocean. But still, the ocean, the Bay of Bengal, is calm and quiet. Quiet. Similarly, for those who have become as full and as big as the ocean, material desires may come, but they are not disturbed. Although so many rivers are flowing down water, you won't see an inch of water out of it, and you can pour any amount of water into it. The sea level is always the same. This example is given. Desires we must have. We cannot extinguish desires. It is foolishness to think that we can subdue desires. Desires are the symptoms of life. Let there be desires. If I have life and consciousness, then desire must also be there. Just as, when the water flows down from the rivers to the ocean, the ocean is not disturbed, so a person need not be disturbed by these desires. This is the art. This is the secret of the perfection of your life.

Desires may come, but if you are fixed with a proper understanding, you convert your desires. The whole process is to dovetail your desires with the Lord's. The example is that Arjuna desires not to fight, but after hearing *Bhagavad-gita*, his desire changed. He said, "Yes, I shall fight!" He desired to fight. So, there was desire. The mode of desire was changed, that's all. Similarly, we cannot stop desiring. That is not possible. But we have to change the quality of the desire. That is all. It's not very difficult: I shall do this, I shall not do this. *Bhagavad-gita* is meant to show us these things. Arjuna desired something before hearing *Bhagavad-gita*, and he desired something else after hearing *Bhagavad-gita*. The quality of desire changed. Similarly, by hearing the *Gita* you can change your desire. You don't have to stop your desire. You simply have to purify your desires. Then you'll not be disturbed by them. When your desires disturb you, you may know that you are not yet spiritually established. And when your desires enlighten you, enliven you, give you happiness—you may know that that desire is spiritual. Just as with Arjuna, the desire has to be changed.

Let desires be. Now, you can change the desires. Desire for Krsna. Don't desire for yourself. Desire for Krsna. How can I desire for Krsna? Take a practical example. Krsna came to this material world to call us: "My dear boys please give up all your nonsensical engagements. Become a follower of Mine, and I shall protect you." This is Krsna's message. Now *Bhagavad-gita* is present, the message of Krsna. If you desire to preach this message of the *Gita* to the people of the world, that means you have

changed your desire. And you can thereby purify yourself. There will be sufficient activities to execute the desire. But all those activities will be purified.

So, we don't have to stop our activities, nor our desires. But we have to dovetail them with the desires of the Lord, as Arjuna did. After dovetailing his desires with Sri Kṛṣṇa's, his activities became more responsible. Just like a coward, he was refusing to fight. He was a *ksatriya*, a military man. His duty was to fight for a good cause. And what is a good cause? Sri Kṛṣṇa instructed him to fight: "It is My plan." What can be a better cause than this? When the Supreme Personality of Godhead says that this is My wish, what can be more important? And what can be a better purpose than one which is coming directly from the Supreme Personality of Godhead?

When we dovetail with the desire of the Supreme Lord, then our responsibility becomes more imperative, and we become more active than we are otherwise. In material activity you will get tired. This is the difference between material activity and spiritual activity. When you are engaged in spiritual activities, you'll not get tired. You will have newer and newer strength to act. Therefore, desire is not to be stopped; activities are not to be stopped. Whatever potency you have in you, that is the potency given by the Supreme Lord, because you are the part and parcel of the Supreme Lord. And if you utilize it for the purposes of the Supreme Lord, then you become dovetailed with Him, and your life becomes successful. You'll not be disturbed by material desires, you'll attain peace. The peace for which you are hankering in life after life, moment after moment—that you'll get at that time when your desires are purified and dovetailed with the Lord's. One who desires sense gratification, the enjoyment of material satisfaction, will never be happy. That is not possible. If you want peace, if you want happiness, if you want perfection in your life, then just begin to dovetail your desires, activities, and potential with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Then you will see what real happiness is, and will be able to tell who is really crazy.

INTRODUCTION TO THE BHAGAVAD GITA AS IT IS

by A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami

The *Bhagavad-gita* is also known as *Gitopanisad*. It is the essence of Vedic knowledge and one of the most important *Upanisads* in Vedic literature.

There are many commentaries on the *Bhagavad-Gita* in English, and the necessity for another edition should be explained on the following basis: an American lady asked me to recommend an English edition of the *Bhagavad-gita* which she could read. I was unable to do so in good conscience. Of course, there are many translations, but of those I have seen—not only in America, but also in India—none can be said to be authoritative, because in almost every one of them, the author has expressed his personal opinion through the commentaries, without touching the spirit of *Bhagavad-gita* as it is.

The spirit of *Bhagavad-gita* is mentioned in the *gita* itself. It is like this: if we want to take a particular medicine, then we have to follow the directions written on the label of the bottle. We cannot take the medicine according to our own directions, or the directions of a friend not in knowledge of this medicine. We must follow the directions on the label or the directions of our physician. The *Bhagavad-Gita* also should be accepted as it is directed by the speaker himself. The speaker is Lord Sri Krsna. He is mentioned on every page as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, or *Bhagavan*. *Bhagavan* sometimes means any powerful person or demigod, but here it means Krsna. This is confirmed by all the great teachers, including Sankara and *Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu*. In India there are many authorities on Vedic knowledge, and they have virtually all accepted Sri Krsna as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. We should therefore accept *Bhagavad-Gita* as it is directed by the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself.

Now, in the Fourth Chapter, the Lord tells Arjuna that this *yoga* system of the *Bhagavad-Gita* was first spoken to the Sun-god:

The Blessed Lord said: I instructed this imperishable science of *yoga* to the Sun-god, Vivasvan, and Vivasvan instructed it to Manu, the father of Mankind, and Manu in turn instructed it to Ikshvaku. This supreme science was thus received through the chain of disciplic

succession, and the saintly kings understood it in that way. But in the course of time the succession was broken, and therefore the science, as it is, appears to be lost. (Giza, IV: 1-2)

Arjuna was neither a great scholar nor a Vedantist, but a great soldier. A soldier is not supposed to be scholarly, and so Arjuna was selected to understand the *Bhagavad-gita* because of one qualification only: he was a devotee of the Lord. This indicates that the *Bhagavad-gita* is especially meant for the devotee of the Lord.

There are three kinds of transcendentalists: the *yogin*, the impersonalist, and the *bhakta*, or devotee. Krsna says to Arjuna, "I am making you the first man of the discipic succession. The old succession is broken. I wish to re-establish the line of teaching which was passed down from the Sun-god. So you become the authority of the *Bhagavad-gita*." The *Bhagavad-gita* is directed to the devotee of the Lord, who is directly in touch with the Lord as a friend. To learn the *Bhagavad-gita*, one should be like Arjuna: a devotee having a direct relationship with the Lord. This is more helpful than yoga or impersonal philosophical speculation.

A devotee can be in relationship with the Lord in five different ways:

1. He may have a passive relationship.
2. He may have an active relationship.
3. He may be in friendship.
4. He may have the relationship of a parent.
5. He may have the relationship of a conjugal lover of the Lord.

Arjuna was a devotee in relationship with the Lord as a friend. This friendship is different from friendship in the mundane world. This kind of friendship is transcendental. Everyone has some relationship with the Lord. Unfortunately, in our present status, we have forgotten that eternal tie. Yet each of the millions upon millions of living beings has its particular relationship. By the process of service one can revive one's original status with the Lord.

Now, Arjuna was a devotee, and he was in touch with the Supreme Lord in friendship. Thus, the *Bhagavad-gita* was explained to him. How he accepted it should be noted. This is mentioned in the Tenth Chapter. After hearing the *Bhagavad-gita* from the Lord, Arjuna accepted Krsna as the Supreme *Brahman*. Every living being is *Brahman*, or spirit, but the supreme living being is the Supreme *Brahman*. Arjuna accepted Krsna as pure, free from all material contamination, as the supreme

enjoyer, as the foremost person, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, never born, and greatest. Now, one may say that, since Krsna and Arjuna were friends, Arjuna was only saying these things to his friend. But Arjuna mentions that Krsna is accepted as the Supreme Personality of Godhead not only by himself but by Narada, Vyasa, and numerous other great persons.

Therefore, Arjuna says, “Whatever You have spoken to me, I accept as perfect. Your personality is very difficult to understand. You cannot be known even by the demigods.” This means that even persons greater than human beings cannot know Krsna. How, then, can a human being know Krsna, unless he is a devotee?

In studying *Bhagavad-gita*, one should not think that he is the equal of Krsna. Krsna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. One who wants to understand *Bhagavad-gita* should accept Krsna as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Otherwise it is very hard to understand, and it becomes a great mystery.

This *Bhagavad-gita* is meant for delivering persons from the nescience of this material entanglement. Everyone is in difficulty, just as Arjuna was on the Battlefield of *Kuruksetra*. Not only Arjuna, but each of us is full of anxieties because of this material entanglement. Our existence is eternal, but somehow we are put into this position which is *asat*. *Asat* means unreal.

Unless one is inquiring as to why he is suffering, he is not a perfect human being. Humanity begins when this inquiry is awakened in the mind. Every activity of the human being is said to be a failure unless this inquiry is present. One should ask, “Where am I from? Where am I going? Why am I here?” When these inquiries are awakened in the mind of a sane human being, then he can understand *Bhagavad-gita*. He must also have respect for the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Krsna comes here just to establish the real work of life, which man forgets. Out of many, many human beings, the *Bhagavad-gita* is directed to the one who seeks to understand his position. The Lord has great mercy for human beings. Therefore, He spoke the *Bhagavad-gita* to Arjuna to enlighten him. Arjuna was actually above all such ignorance, but he was put into ignorance on the Battlefield of *Kuruksetra* just to ask what life was all about, so that our mission of human life could be perfected.

It is the preliminary study of the science of God which is explained here. The first question is: What is the cause? Next: What is the constitutional position of the living entities in respect to the controller? Living entities are not controllers. If I say,

“I am not controlled; I am free,” I do not speak well for my sanity. In this conditioned state of life, at any rate, we are all controlled. Next we may consider

prakṛti, or Nature. Then time—the duration of the existence or manifestation of this created universe. Then *karma*, or activity. The living beings are all engaged in different activities. All cosmic manifestation is engaged in activity.

So, we have to learn from *Bhagavad-gita* what God is. What is the nature of the living entity? Its relationship with the supreme controller? What is *prakṛti*, the cosmic manifestation? What is the control of time? And what are the activities of the living entities?

In the *Bhagavad-gita* it is established that the Supreme, or Kṛṣṇa—or *Brahman*, or whatever you like—the supreme controller is greatest of all. The living beings are controlled. The Lord has control over universal affairs—the material Nature. Material Nature is not independent. It is working under the direction of the Supreme Lord. When we see wonderful things happening, we should know that behind these manifestations there is a controller. Matter belongs to the inferior nature, or *prakṛti*, and the living entities are explained as being of the superior nature. *Prakṛti* means “who is controlled.” *Prakṛti* is female. A husband controls the activities of his wife. *Prakṛti* is also subordinate, predominated. The Lord—the Supreme Personality of Godhead—is the predominator, and *prakṛti*—the living entities and material Nature—is predominated over. So, according to the *Bhagavad-gita* the living entities, although they are part and parcel of the Supreme, are taken as *prakṛti*. It is clearly mentioned in the Seventh Chapter of *Bhagavad-gita* that this material Nature is *prakṛti* and that the living entities are also *prakṛti*. The constitution of the material, or inferior *prakṛti*, is divided into three modes: the mode of goodness, the mode of passion, and the mode of ignorance. Above these modes is eternal time. By the combinations of these modes and the control of eternal time, the activities, called *karma*, come into being. These activities have been going on from time immemorial, and we are suffering from—or enjoying—the fruits of these activities, just as in the present life we enjoy the fruits of our activities. It is as though I am a businessman who has worked very hard and intelligently and has amassed a large bank balance. I am the enjoyer of the fruits of my activities. Again, if I open a business with a large amount of money and lose it all, I am the sufferer. Similarly, in the field of life, we enjoy the different fruits of our work. Now, these things—the Supreme, the living entities, *prakṛti* or Nature, time, and *karma* are explained in the *Bhagavad-gita*.

Of these five, the Lord, time, and the living entity are permanent and eternal. The manifestations of *prakṛti* are temporary, but not false, as some philosophers say. According to the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, the manifestations are quite real, but temporary. They are like the clouds which appear during the rainy season but disappear during the dry season. These manifestations occur at certain intervals, and then they disappear and the vegetation dries up. Nevertheless, this process of Nature is working eternally.

Material Nature is separated energy of the Supreme Lord. The living entities are also energy of the Lord, but they are not separated. They are eternally related with the Lord. So, the Lord, Nature, the entity and time are all eternal. *Karma* is not eternal. The effects of *karma* may be old, and we may be suffering from the results of activity performed in time immemorial, but we are able to change our activities. We simply do not know which activities will give us release from these material entanglements. This is explained in the *Bhagavad-gīta*.

The position of God is that of supreme consciousness. The entities, being parts and parcels, are also consciousness. The entity is *prakṛti*, or Nature, and so also is the material energy; but the living entities are conscious, and matter is not. Therefore, the entity is called the higher energy. But the living being is never supremely conscious at any stage. The supreme consciousness, explained in the *Bhagavad-gīta* as the Lord, is conscious, and the living beings are conscious: the entity of his limited body, and the Lord infinitely. The Lord lives in the heart of every being. Therefore, He has the consciousness of all living entities.

The Supersoul is living in each heart as the controller. He is giving directions to act as He desires. The living entity, however, forgets what to do. He determines to act in one way, then becomes entangled in his own actions and reactions and achieves only frustration. When he gives up one body for another, as one changes a dress, the reactions of his past activities remain with him, determining his next birth. Actions can be changed when a living being is in goodness, and, in that state of sanity, he chooses to end his entanglement.

So, of the five items, all are eternal, except *karma*. Now, the entity's consciousness and the Lord's consciousness are both transcendental. They are not generated by association with matter. The theory that some material combination can generate consciousness is rejected in *Bhagavad-gīta*. Just as a light may be reflected according to the color of the glass, consciousness is reflected in the material world. But it does not depend upon matter for its existence.

The supreme consciousness is different from the consciousness of the living entity in this way: the Supreme Lord says that when He descends into the material world, His consciousness is not materially affected. If He had been contaminated by contact with matter, He could not have spoken *Bhagavad-gita*. However, we living entities are contaminated by the material world. The *Bhagavad-gita* teaches that we must purify our activities in order to draw our consciousness back from that material entanglement. This purification of activity is called bhakti, or devotional service. This means that, although one's activities appear to be ordinary, they are actually purified. One may appear to work like an ordinary man, but the activities of a devotee of the Lord are not contaminated by the three modes.

When our consciousness is contaminated by matter, this is called our conditioned state. The false ego is the belief that one is the product of this matter. One who is absorbed in this bodily conception, as Arjuna was, must get free from it. This is a preliminary for one who wants liberation. Freedom from this material consciousness is called *mukti*. In the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, also, *mukti* is used to mean liberation from this material concept and return to pure consciousness. The whole aim of *Bhagavad-gita* is to teach us to reach this state of pure consciousness. On the last page of *Bhagavad-gita*, Krsna asks Arjuna if he is now in purified consciousness. This implies action in accordance with the directions of the Lord.

So, consciousness is there, but because we are only parts, we tend to be affected by the modes of Nature. That is the difference between the individual living entities and the Supreme Lord. In contamination, consciousness says, "I am the Lord. I am the enjoyer." Every material being thinks this. Consciousness has two psychic divisions: One says, "I am the creator," and the other says, "I am the enjoyer." Actually, the Lord is the creator and the enjoyer. The entity cooperates like a part in a machine. In the body, for example, there are hands, legs, eyes, etc. But these parts are not the enjoyers. The stomach is the enjoyer. All the parts of the body are engaged in satisfying the stomach. Everything should be given to the stomach. You can become healthy throughout your entire body when the parts of the body cooperate with the stomach. Similarly, the Lord is the enjoyer, and we living beings have only to cooperate with Him. If the fingers try to enjoy the food, they are unable. They must give the food to the stomach in order to receive the benefit of it.

The central figure in existence is the Supreme Lord. The entities, by cooperation, can enjoy. If a master is satisfied, his servants are also satisfied, of course. The entities have this tendency to create and enjoy because the Lord has it, and the entities are His parts and parcels.

We find, in *Bhagavad-gita*, that the Lord, the entities, manifestation, time and action are completely explained. Taken together, this complete whole is called the Absolute Truth, Sri Kṛṣṇa. The impersonal *Brahman* is also subordinate to the Complete Person. It is explicitly explained in the *Brahma-sutra* as being like the rays of the sun emanating from the sun disc. *Brahman* realization of the Absolute Truth is therefore incomplete. The Supreme Personality is above *Brahman*. The Supreme Personality of Godhead is called *sac-cid-ananda*.

Brahman realization is realization of His sat, or eternal feature. Supersoul realization is realization of His *sac-cid* aspect—eternity and knowledge. But, realization of the Personality of Godhead, Sri Kṛṣṇa, is realization of all features—*sac-cid-ananda*—in full *vigraha*, or form. The Lord has form. He is a transcendental person. This is confirmed in all Vedic literature. Just as we are persons, so is the ultimate truth. Realization of the Supreme Personality of Godhead is realization of all the features of the Absolute Truth. The complete whole personality must have all that we see and all that we do not see.

This phenomenal world is complete by itself. The twenty-four elements of which this manifestation is comprised are complete in this universe. No further outside energy is needed. When the time is come, the universe will be annihilated by the complete arrangement of the Complete. Small completes exist in the whole Complete. Incomplete knowledge results from misunderstanding of the complete Absolute Truth.

Bhagavad-gita is complete. The Vedic knowledge is infallible. Here is an example of how the Hindus accept Vedic knowledge as complete: Cow dung is sacred according to Vedic scripture. If one touches the dung of an animal, he must bathe his whole body, and yet cow dung can purify an impure place or person, according to Vedic scripture. This seems contradictory, but because it is a Vedic injunction, we accept it, and, by that acceptance, we make no mistake. It has been found by modern chemists that cow dung is a composition of antiseptic properties.

Vedic knowledge is complete, and it is above all doubts or errors. And *Bhagavad-gita* is the essence of all Vedic knowledge. Vedic knowledge comes down from higher sources. It is not like our material independent research work, which is imperfect. We must receive this knowledge from the spiritual master, through the disciplic succession, which began with the Lord Himself.

Just as Arjuna accepted *Bhagavad-gita* without any cutting, so we too must accept *Bhagavad-gita* without any cutting, interpretation, or whimsy. We should accept it as perfect knowledge, spoken by the Lord Himself. Only the Lord could have given this infallible knowledge. A living entity would not be able to.

A living being in the mundane world has four defects:

1. He is sure to commit mistakes.
2. He is sure to be illusioned.
3. He has a tendency to cheat.
4. His senses are imperfect.

With these four defects, one cannot offer perfect information. But Vedic knowledge was imparted by God in the heart of Brahma, the first living being in our universe, who passed it down through his sons.

Except for the Lord, no one is the proprietor of anything. The Lord is the original creator. He is the creator of Brahma, the original being in our universe. Therefore, we should accept things given to us by the Lord as our allotment. Arjuna had decided not to fight. He told the Lord that he could not enjoy the kingdom if he killed his relatives to obtain it. This was due to his bodily concept of himself, and thus his relationship with uncles, brothers, nephews, and so forth — all these relationships pertaining to the body. But, finally, Arjuna agreed to work for the Lord's enjoyment. We should not act like ordinary animals. Human life is meant for something else. Vedic literature is meant for human beings, not for animals. An animal can kill without sin because he is bound by the modes of his nature. But, if a man kills, he is responsible. He has a choice in his actions.

In the *Bhagavad-gita* activities are explained as determined by the three modes of nature. Thus, there are actions performed in ignorance, actions performed in passion, and actions performed in goodness. There are also three kinds of eatables: food eaten in ignorance, in passion, and in goodness. These are all clearly described.

Therefore, if we properly follow the instructions in *Bhagavad-gita*, our lives will be purified and we will reach our ultimate destination. This destination is also explained in *Bhagavad-gita*:

Beyond this material sky there is a spiritual sky. This material sky is temporary, and at the end of this universe it will be annihilated. That is the law of material Nature. But there is another Nature, which is eternal. The soul is eternal just as the Lord is

eternal. We have an intimate relationship with the Lord, and we are qualitatively equal to the Lord. The transcendental abode is also eternal. The association of the Lord and the living entities in the transcendental abode is the ultimate aim of human life.

The Lord is so kind to the living entities because the living entities all have a claim to being sons of the Lord. The Lord says that, of every type of living being, whatever it may be, He is the father. The Lord wishes to reclaim all these souls, to have them back in the eternal sky. The entities can be restored to the eternal sky, once they are free of illusion. So, He comes Himself, in different incarnations, or else He sends His confidential servants as son or as teachers, to reclaim the conditioned souls. This reclaiming is no sectarian religious process. It is the eternal function of the eternal living entities in relationship with the eternal Lord.

Sanatana-dharma means the eternal religion. This word eternal is explained as something without beginning and without any end. We must accept it like this. The word religion is somewhat different from *sanatana-dharma*. It means faith, and faith may change from one object to another. But *sanatana-dharma* means that which cannot be changed. Liquidity cannot be taken from water. Heat cannot be taken from fire. Similarly, *sanatana-dharma* cannot be taken from the living entities. We must find out the eternal function of the eternal living entities, in order to know what *sanatana-dharma* is. *Ramanujacarya* says that this has no beginning and no end. Some may feel that this is a somewhat sectarian concept, but if we look deeper, we will see that *sanatana-dharma* is the business of all the people of the world—nay, of all the living entities in the universe.

Now a particular religious faith may have some beginning in the history of human society, but *sanatana-dharma* lies outside of history, for it belongs to the living beings who have no birth and who never die. They continue to live after the destruction of the material body, just as they lived before its formation.

Let us try to understand this eternal religion from the Sanskrit root word for dharma. This word root, *dhr*, means to sustain. Therefore, *dharma* is that quality which remains always and which cannot be taken away. When we speak of fire, it is concluded that light and heat will be there. Otherwise we cannot call it fire. In a similar way, we must find the constant companion of the living being. That eternal part or quality is his religion.

When Sanatana Gosvamin asked Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu about *svarupa*, or the real constitution of the living being, the Lord replied that the real constitution of the entity is to render service to the Lord. Extending this, we see that one being serves another living being in some capacity and thus enjoys its life. An animal serves a man, a friend serves his friend, mother serves child, husband serves wife, Mr. A serves Mr. B, Mr. B serves Mr. C, and so on. There is no exception to service in the society of living beings. The politician convinces the voter of his capacity for service and thus gets his job. The artisan serves the merchant; the store owner serves his customer. In fact, no living being is exempted from rendering service to others. Service, then, is a thing which is the constant companion of the living being, and it can be concluded that rendering service is the eternal religion of the eternal living entity.

When a man claims allegiance to some designated faith or sect, such as Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, or Christian, this is not eternal. Such faiths can be changed. The Muslim may become a Christian, or the Christian may become a Hindu. Such changeable faith, therefore, is not religion. However, if one be Hindu, Muslim or Christian, one is always a servant. So the particular faith is not the religion, but service is the religion.

We are in a relationship of service to the Supreme Lord. He is the enjoyer, and we are His servants. We are created for His enjoyment, and if we accept that position, it makes us happy. Going back to our earlier example, fingers cannot be independently happy without the cooperation of the stomach. Similarly, the living entity cannot be happy without rendering service to the Supreme Lord.

Worship of demigods is not approved in *Bhagavad-gita* because, in the Seventh Chapter, twenty-eighth verse, the Lord says, “Only those who are cast adrift by lust worship the demigods instead of the Lord.”

Now, when we speak of Krsna, we should remember that this is not a sectarian name. Krsna means all pleasure. Krsna, the Supreme Lord, is the reservoir of pleasure. Our consciousness seeks happiness because we are part and parcel of the Lord. The Lord is always happy, and if we dovetail our activities with His, we will partake of His happiness.

The Lord incarnates in order to show us His joyous nature and pastimes. When Krsna was at Vrndavana, His activities with His friends, the cowherd boys, His girl friends, and all His other pastimes were full of happiness. The whole population of

Vrndavana was mad after Him. At this time, He even restricted His father from worshiping the demigods, to show us that no one need worship any god but Him.

The purpose of human life is to return to the abode of the Lord. This eternal sky is described in *Bhagavad-gita*. This is in Chapter Eight, verses 19 and 20. We have a material concept of the sky, with the sun, stars, moon, etc. But the Lord says that in the eternal sky there is no need of sun or moon, nor of fire or electricity, because the spiritual sky is already illuminated by the *brahma-jyoti*, the rays of the Supreme Lord. *Brahma-jyoti* is in the spiritual sky, wherein the planets are called Vaikuntha and Goloka. The Lord resides eternally in His supreme abode, but He can be approached from here also.

The Lord comes to manifest His real form, *sac-cid-ananda vigraha*, so that we don't have to imagine what He is like. However, although the Lord comes among us and plays with us like a human being, we should not think that He is one of us. It is because of His omnipotence that He can come among us and show us His pastimes.

There are innumerable planets in the *brahma-jyoti*, just as there are in the material sky, but all these planets are spiritual, not material. The Lord says that anyone who can approach that spiritual sky need not return to this material sky. In the material sky, even if we live on the highest planet, which is called *Brahmaloka*, we must still suffer the miseries of material existence. These miseries are four: birth, death, disease and old age. No material being is free of them.

The Lord says that the living entities are travelling from one planet to another. We need not rely upon mechanical arrangements to go to other planets. For anyone who wants to go to another planet, such as the moon, the *Bhagavad-gita* instructs that there is a simple formula—even to go to the highest planet. If we practice the process of worshiping a particular demigod of a particular planet, we can go there.

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. I [Kṛṣṇa] am seated in everyone's heart as the Supersoul. As soon as one desires to worship demigods, I make his faith steady so that he can devote himself to that particular deity. Endowed with such a faith, he seeks favors of that demigod and obtains his desires—but in actuality these benefits are bestowed by Me alone. 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.
(*Gita*, VII:20-23)

In this way, we can go to the sun, the moon, or any other planet. However, *Bhagavad-gita* advises us not to go to any of these material planets, not even the Brahmaloaka, which can only be reached by mechanical means after forty thousand years. In the spiritual sky there are innumerable planets which are never annihilated, but there is one called Krsnaloka Vrndavana, which is the supreme planet.

Bhagavad-gita gives us the opportunity to leave this material world and to go to that eternal existence in the eternal abode of the Lord.

The description of this material world is given in the Fifteenth Chapter of *Bhagavad-gita*. The material world is described as an *asvattha* (pipal) tree, which has its roots upward. Do you know of a tree which has its roots upward? We have experience of this if we stand on the bank of a river or reservoir. We can see, in the reflection, that the tree's roots are upward and its branches are downward. So this material world is a reflection of the spiritual world, just as the reflection of the tree from the bank is seen to be upside down. This material world is called shadow. In the shadow there cannot be any substance, yet we can understand from the shadow that there is a substance. In the reflection of the spiritual world there is no happiness, but in the spiritual world itself, there is real happiness.

The Lord suggests that the eternal spiritual world can be reached by one who is *nirmana-mohah* (*Gita*, XV:5). Let us examine this phrase. We are all after designations. Artificially, we seek designations. Someone wants to become Sir, or Lord, or President, or King, or rich. These designations belong to the body, but we do not. We are not body; we are pure spirit soul. As long as we are attached to such designations, we are associated with the three modes or qualities of material Nature. We must learn to become detached by entering into the service of the Lord. So long as we are not attracted by devotional service to the Lord, then we cannot be detached from the three modes of material Nature. The Lord says that these attachments are due to our lust: We want to be lords over the material Nature. And, as long as we want to lord it over material Nature, there is no chance of going back to the spiritual kingdom of God. That eternal kingdom, which is not destructible like this material world, can be approached only by one who is not bewildered or attracted by this material Nature. One who is attracted by devotional service to the Lord can go to that eternal kingdom.

Our senses are so imperfect that we cannot even see all the planets that exist in the material sky. Vedic literature gives us information of many worlds that exist here. But one should hanker after the spiritual sky and the supreme kingdom. When one reaches the supreme kingdom, he doesn't have to return to the material world.

Now, a question may be raised: how do we approach the abode of the Supreme Lord? In Chapter Eight, verses 5-8, the means for approaching the Lord's supreme abode are given: At the time of death, if one thinks of Kṛṣṇa and remembers the form of Kṛṣṇa, and then quits the present body, he surely approaches the spiritual kingdom. Just as the transcendental nature of the Lord is *sac-cid-ananda-vigraha*, so the Lord has His form, but this form is eternal. This present body of ours is not *sac-cid-ananda*. This body is *asat*, or perishable, full of ignorance, and not happy.

The Lord says that when one quits this material body remembering the form of Sri Kṛṣṇa, he at once achieves his *sac-cid-ananda-vigraha*—the spiritual existence. This also applies to rebirth in this world. A man dies when his next birth has been decided by higher authorities. The acts of this life are a preparation ground for the next life. We are preparing for the next life by the activities of this life. So, if we make preparations to go to the abode of the Lord, we get a spiritual body, or spiritual nature, like the Lord has.

Now, there are different kinds of transcendentalists, as we have already explained. There is the *Brahman-Vadin*, the *Paramatman-Vadin*, and the devotee. In the spiritual sky, or *brahma-jyoti*, there are innumerable spiritual planets. The number of these planets is far greater than all the universes of the material world. The spiritual world represents three-fourths of the Creation. One-fourth of the Creation consists of innumerable universes like this one. Each universe has millions and millions of planets, but all of these universes together comprise only one-fourth of the whole Creation.

Now, one who wishes to go to the spiritual abode, and wishes to enjoy the association of the Supreme Lord, enters into a planet of the spiritual sky. There are many names for these planets. Any transcendentalist who, at the time of death, thinks of the *brahma-jyoti*, or Supersoul or Sri Kṛṣṇa, enters the spiritual sky, but only the devotees may go to the Lord. The Lord further says that there is no doubt of this. One should not disbelieve. When the Lord speaks, we should not reject any part of what He says. Arjuna, whom we should emulate, says, "I believe everything that You have said." The Lord tells us that at the time of death, whoever thinks of Him will enter into the spiritual sky. There should be no doubt of this.

Bhagavad-gita also describes how one should act in order to enter into the spiritual kingdom. Material Nature is a display of one of the energies of the Supreme Lord. In the *Visnu Purana*, the energies of the Supreme Lord have been summarized. The Lord has diverse, innumerable energies, of which we cannot conceive. But great learned souls have summarized all of these energies into three categories: The first is the superior, or internal, potency of the Lord. That energy is transcendental. Next is the marginal energy, which lies between the spiritual and the material. Originally, all the living entities belong to the eternal superior energy. The third energy, matter, is in the mode of ignorance. Material energy is also from God. And we can, at death, either leave this material world or remain here. Therefore, we are called marginal.

We are accustomed to think in terms of material energy. How can we transfer our thinking of material energy into thinking of spiritual energy? There is so much literature of the material world, like novels, newspapers, etc. We must transfer our reading from these to the spiritual Vedic literature. The learned sages wrote a great deal of literature, like the *Puranas*. In *Caitanya-caritamrta* there is a verse which reads: “The conditioned souls have forgotten their eternal relationship with the Lord, and are engrossed in thinking of material things. They should just transfer their thinking to the Lord. He has created so many *Vedas* for this purpose.”

At first, there were four *Vedas*. Then He explained them by the *Puranas*. Then, for those incapable of understanding these, He gave the *Mahabharata*, in which there is the *Bhagavad-gita*. Then the *Vedanta-stitra*, which summarizes all Vedic knowledge. At last, the *Vedanta-satra* was explained in *Srimad-Bhagavatam*.

Just as the materialist is always engaged in reading materialistic literature, so the devotee centers his reading capacity in this literature, so kindly presented by Vyasadeva, so that at the time of death the devotee may think of the Lord and go to Him.

Krsna advises Arjuna not simply to go on remembering Him and give up his material duty. The Lord never suggests anything impractical. To maintain the material body, one has to work. The working world is divided into four parts: *brahmana*, *ksatriya*, *vaisya*, and *sudra*. Each one works in a different way, as learned man, administrator, mercantiler, or laborer. The Lord advises us not to give up work, but to remember Him always, along with the struggle for existence. This is Krsna consciousness. Unless one does this, it is not possible to go to the Lord.

Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu practiced *kirtan*, or chanting. One should always chant the name of the Lord, because the name of the Lord and the Lord are not different. Lord Caitanya's instructions to always chant the name of Krsna and Krsna's injunction to remember Him always are not different. The Lord and His name are not different from each other. In the absolute status, there is no difference between one thing and another. Since the Lord is absolute, there is no difference between His name and Himself: He is omnipresent. We should know Him always, twenty-four hours a day. How is this possible?

A very crude example is given by the great teachers: it is like a married woman who is in love with another man. Such an attachment is necessarily very strong. Now, the woman always wants to show her husband that she is busy in family affairs so that he won't suspect her having a lover. However, she is always thinking of her lover, although she carries on her household duties well—in fact, with greater care than she might if she had no lover. In the same way, we must establish our love for the Lord and carry out our duties well.

Krsna did not advise Arjuna to go off to the Himalayas to practice yoga. When the Lord described the system of yoga to him, Arjuna declined, saying that it was too difficult for him. But then the Lord said that one who thinks always of Him is the greatest yogin, the supermost seer, and the best devotee. The Lord said, "As a warrior, you cannot give up your fighting; but devote all your actions to Me." He also says that if one is completely surrendered to Him there is no doubting.

One has to learn this process of Krsna consciousness. To do so, one should approach a person who is fixed firmly in this consciousness. The mind is always flying from this thing to that, serving no real benefit. One must learn to fix the mind always on the Supreme Lord. The mind is very restless and difficult to manage, but one can concentrate the ear on the sound of Krsna. The Supreme Personality of Godhead can be approached by one who is constantly thinking of Him in this way.

These processes are given in *Bhagavad-gita*. No one is barred from them. Hearing of Lord Krsna is possible for everyone, even a human being in the lowest status of life. Laborer, tradesman, or woman—these are counted in the category of less fully developed intelligence; but the Lord says that even one lower than this—anyone, in fact, who accepts this principle of devotional service and accepts the Supreme Lord as the highest goal of life, can approach the perfection of human existence. This is the one permanent solution of life.

This is the sum and substance of *Bhagavad-gita*.

The conclusion is that *Bhagavad-gita* is a transcendental literature that should be read very carefully. If one follows the instructions, he can be freed of all fears and sufferings in this life and attain a spiritual birth in the next life.

Another result is that if one reads *Bhagavad-gita* seriously and reverently, then the reactions of his past deeds will no longer effect him. The Lord says, in the end, that He Himself takes the responsibility to indemnify all the reactions of sins for one who comes to Him. One cleanses himself daily by bathing in water, but for one who once bathes in the sacred Ganges water of *Bhagavad-gita*, the dirt of past sins is washed away for all time. If one reads *Bhagavad-gita* regularly and attentively, no other literature is needed.

In the present age, people are engaged by so many material things that they have no time to devote their energy to spiritual topics. However, one who simply reads *Bhagavad-gita* need not read any other Vedic literature. *Bhagavad-gita* is the essence of all Vedic knowledge. It is said that one who drinks the water of the Ganges will be freed from sin. Similarly, one who studies *Bhagavad-gita* needs no other literature whatever. Lord Krsna is the original Visnu, the ultimate end of all knowledge and of all seeking after knowledge, and He is present in the teaching of the *Gita*.

THE DISCIPLIC SUCCESSION

Evam paramparapratam imam rajarsayo viduh (Bhagavad-gita, IV:2).

The Bhagavad-gita As It Is is received through this disciplic succession:

1. Krsna
2. Brahma
3. Narada
4. Vyasa
5. Madhva
6. Padmanabha
7. Nrhari
8. Madhava
9. Aksobhya
10. Jayatirtha
11. Jnanasindhu
12. Dayanidhi
13. Vidyanidhi
14. Rajendra
15. Jayadharmā
16. Purusottama
17. Brahmanyatirtha
18. Vyasatirtha
19. Laksmipati
20. Madhavendra Puri
21. Isvara Puri (Nityananda, Advaita)
22. Lord Caitanya
23. Rupa (Svarfipa, Sanatana)
24. Raghunatha, Jiva
25. Krsnadasa
26. Narottama
27. Visvanatha
28. (Baladeva) Jagannatha
29. Bhaktivinode
30. Gaurakisora
31. Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati
32. A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami

WHAT IS THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS?

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness was formed in July, 1966 by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada and a number of his American students. ISKCON is composed of devotees. Devotees are held together by mutual agreement to accept the principles of *bhakti-yoga* or devotional service as the goal of life. By mutual endeavor, the entire Society concentrates on Sri Krsna, the Personality of Godhead, while engaged in various tasks, cooking, eating, working in an office or chanting the holy names in the city streets. A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami is a pure devotee, and those disciples who sincerely follow his instructions have every chance of becoming pure devotees themselves. The initiated devotees in each center live in urban commune settings (with the exception of New Vrndavana, ISKCON's *asrama* of homes, temples, farm land and cows in the hills of West Virginia), and are freeing themselves from the conditions of birth, death, disease and old age by fixing their minds on the eternal, joyful Personality of Godhead. To live in ISKCON as an initiated student, one agrees to accept four rules: no meat-eating, no illicit sex, no intoxicants and no gambling. The disciples perform devotional service, duties and chanting in a life-routine characterized by simple living and high thinking.

Krsna consciousness is experienced as a process of self-purification. Its means and ends are an open secret, and there is no financial charge for learning Krsna consciousness or receiving initiation into the chanting of Hare Krsna. The gist of devotional service to Krsna is that one takes whatever capacity or talent he or she has and dovetails it with the transcendental interest of the supreme enjoyer, the Absolute Truth. The writer or poet writes articles and poems for Krsna, and the Society publishes periodicals. The businessman does business in order to sell literature and establish many temples around the world. The householders raise children in the science of God, and husband and wife live in mutual cooperation for spiritual progress. And everyone in ISKCON goes on *sankirtana*! *Sankirtana* means chanting the Hare Krsna *mantra* in the city streets for the benefit of all citizens. A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami has said that the *sankirtana* party is the heart and soul of the Hare Krsna movement. Therefore, in each of the twenty-five ISKCON centers, *sankirtana* is carried on several times daily, and all other activity is subsidiary. Our spiritual master stresses this, for we are in the line of Lord Caitanya. Caitanya Mahaprabhu is revealed by Vedic scriptures to be Krsna Himself, come in the mood of a pure devotee. Five hundred years ago Lord Caitanya understood from scripture

that in this present age of Kali (quarrel and disturbance), when mental distraction is high and almost no one is serious about spiritual perfection, chanting alone is the most effective means of God realization. Following the *sankirtana* process chalked out by Lord Caitanya, the Hare Krsna movement of today takes parties of from five to thirty devotees, men wearing saffron robes and women wearing colorful saris. And they celebrate the holy name with dancing and melodious chanting.

The *sankirtana* singing is accompanied with *mrdanga* drum and pairs of *kartals* (hand cymbals). The devotees experience that this joyous singing of the names of God produces immediate feelings of ecstasy coming from the spiritual stratum. The effect is a clearing away of the dirt from the mind engrossed in the gloom of material existence. Under the instruction of the spiritual master, they gladly spread this chanting, and in reciprocation Sri Krsna allows all to taste the nectar for which everyone is always anxious. Because the Personality of Godhead is absolute, His name is nondifferent from Himself. Therefore the Supreme Person, Krsna, the reservoir of pleasure, dances on the tongue of the chanter of His name; to chant and hear fixes the mind, in meditation, in direct contact with God. The mantra is not to be mistaken for an ordinary song or anything tinged with the mundane; it is a pure transcendental sound vibration of the absolute and has been upheld as such since time immemorial by the great sages and Vedic scriptures. Lord Caitanya prays to the Supreme: "My dear Lord, You are so kind that You have invested all potency in Your holy name." This absolute presence of God in His name holds true not only for the members of the *sankirtana* party, but for any living entity who hears the chanting; anyone will benefit if he simply likes the sound of the chanting, or if he appreciates the presence of the *sankirtana* party in any way. That is the mercy of the Absolute. The holy name is compared to a fire; whether one is scientifically conversant with all the properties of fire or knows nothing about it, if one puts his hand in fire he will be burnt. Sincere chanting and hearing of the *mahamantra* will cleanse the mind and elevate one and all to the natural original position of spirit soul. Therefore there is no hesitancy on the devotees' part in going to the largest and most public gatherings of people and broadcasting, wherever possible, the sound of the transcendental names: Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare.

Chanting takes place regularly in the main streets of cities like New York, Los Angeles, Boston, San Francisco, Berkeley, Detroit, Philadelphia, Washington B.C., Honolulu, London, Hamburg, Tokyo, etc., with new ISKCON centers being regularly established. The expansion of Krsna consciousness is realization of the

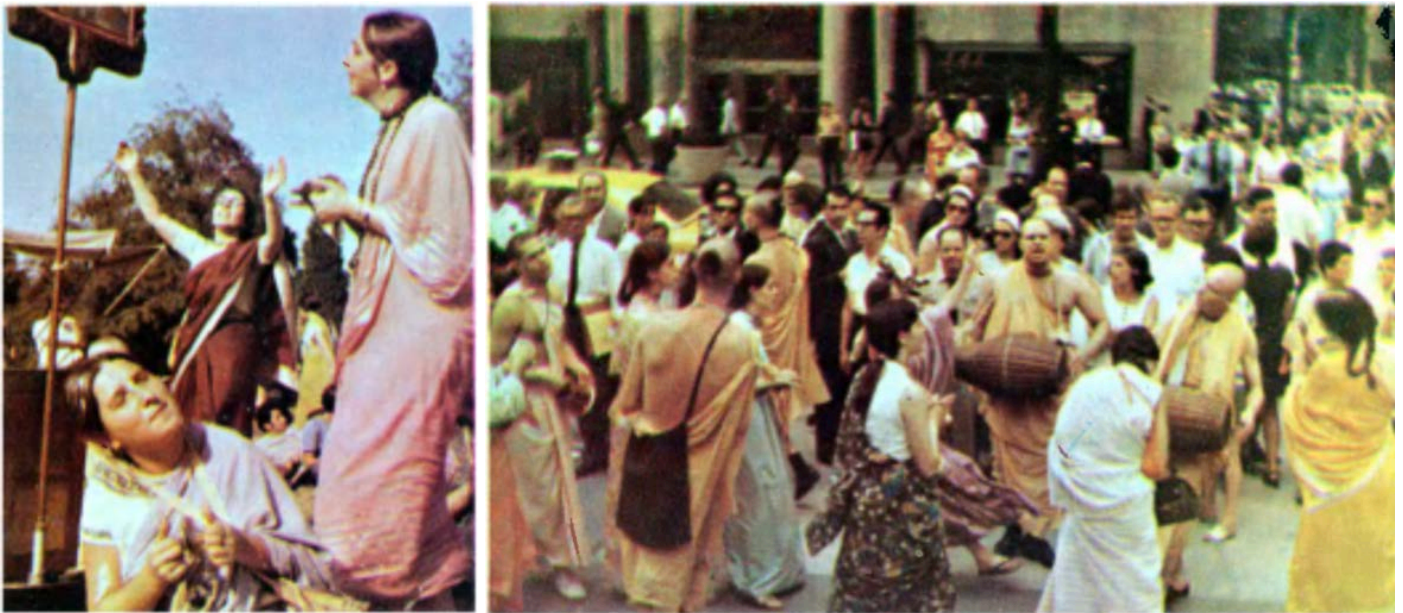
prediction made by Lord Caitanya: “The chanting of Hare Krsna will be heard in every town and village of the world.”

The Society is as famous for its Sunday feasts and festivals as for its chanting in the streets. Every Sunday, in each of the ISKCON centers, a grand feast of from 10 to 15 courses of Indian vegetarian food is prepared and distributed for guests. The feasts are arranged around festival days celebrating the pastimes of Sri Krsna during His appearance on the earth 5,000 years ago. Plays, puppet shows and chanting are regular items which invite guests to participate in the transcendental glorification of the Personality of Godhead. Krsna consciousness is not a dry philosophy. Residents of San Francisco appreciate the yearly *Ratha-yatra* Festival in which the large cart bearing the Jagannath Deity is wheeled to the sea. During the *Ratha-yatra* celebration of 1969, more than 15,000 people followed the regal 8,000-pound cart, and thousands were fed full plates of *prasadam* at the seaside.

The important aim of the festivals, chanting and philosophizing is to engage people in the service of the Personality of Godhead and in feeling His soothing contact. All miseries are caused by forgetfulness of God, and ISKCON, by reviving the lost memory of the Supreme Lord in the minds of the people, is—according to *Bhagavad-gita*—performing the greatest service and highest welfare work for suffering humanity. Moreover, it is performed in this sublime and easy way, by feasting, dancing, singing and philosophizing.

Sometimes in Lord Caitanya’s time, the devotees were accused by the impersonalists of being mere sentimentalists because they were always singing and dancing. The actual fact is that Krsna consciousness is backed by a vast learned literature, the Vedic scriptures such as *Bhagavad-gita*, *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, *Vedanta-sutra*, the *Upanisads*, *Mahabharata*, *Ramayana*, etc., so that one could read 24 hours a day without exhausting the source. All of this Krsna consciousness information is understood by revelation. Simply by applying one’s energy in a devotional service attitude, the knowledge becomes known to the devotee through the heart. Classes in the transcendental science of God consciousness, or *bhakti-yoga*, are held every morning and three nights a week at all ISKCON centers, and the public is freely invited to attend. The *Brahma Sampradaya* disciplic succession, in which A.C. Bhaktivedanta is coming, is particularly noted for being a learned line. There is plenty of philosophy and logic in stock. There are many different religious philosophies and transcendental teachings, but the Krsna conscious students and ministers are unique in that they are convinced of the Personality of Godhead. Not just that they have heard “God is great,” but they have heard from the spiritual

master and are continuously hearing from the scriptures just how great He is, how His energies are working and exactly how He is enjoying. There is no literature of theism as voluminous, exacting, consistent and clear as this Vedic literature of Krsna consciousness. The conviction in service of the Supreme Personality of Godhead is due to direct reciprocation with Him. Simply by chanting or hearing the pastimes of the Personality of Godhead, one is contacting the Absolute—and he can feel it. By engaging the senses, the will, words and energy, the devotees are receiving constant information from the spiritual world. Krsna Himself describes such devotees as the topmost *yogins* and mystics, so it is no wonder that they are conversant with the nature of God and the way back to Godhead.



Today the disciples of A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami conduct sankirtana following in the footsteps of Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

ISKCON provides formal education in the highest science, or what *Bhagavad-gita* calls the “King of knowledge.” According to Vedic sources, education can only be valid when there is spiritual knowledge or self-realization, and a man is said to have; no qualifications if he does not know who he is in terms of self-realization or God realization. Learning the texts requires living in accordance with the scriptural injunctions without the slightest deviation. The need for Krsna conscious preachers is very great, and it is a full-time vocation. The curriculum advances basically from student to minister; after studying and working in a temple for one year, the student may be awarded the title of *bhakti-sastri*, or ordained minister, with further responsibilities and with advancement of service. He may finally take the renounced order, called *sannyasa*, and receive the title *svami*.

As the philosophy of Krsna consciousness is nonsectarian, any man—Hindu or Christian—will advance in his faith by chanting the holy name of God and hearing the *Bhagavad-gita*. Without knowledge, realization and loving service to the one Supreme God, there can be no religion. Let the inhabitants of this planet rejoice in the *sankirtana* movement and live to see the fulfillment of the chanting of Hare Krsna carried to every town and village. Only in this way can real peace prevail in the world and mankind qualify to enter into the kingdom of God.



Five hundred years ago Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu led ecstatic kīrtanas of thousands in chanting the holy names of Kṛṣṇa

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A.C. BHAKTIVEDANTA SWAMI PRABHUPADA

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from WHO IS CRAZY?

“The peace for which you are hankering in life after life, moment after moment—that you’ll get at that time when your desires are purified and dovetailed with the Lord’s. One who desires sense gratification, the enjoyment of material satisfaction, will never be happy. That is not possible. If you want peace, if you want happiness, if you want perfection in your life, then just begin to dovetail your desires, activities and potential with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Then you will see what real happiness is and will be able to tell who is really crazy.”

from INTRODUCTION TO THE BHAGAVAD-GITA AS IT IS

“*Bhagavad-gita* gives us the opportunity to leave this material world and go to that eternal existence in the eternal abode of the Lord . . . Krsna advises Arjuna not simply to go on remembering Him and give up his material duty. The Lord never suggests anything impractical. To maintain the material body one has to work. The Lord advises us not to give up work, but to remember Him always, along with the struggle for existence. This is Krsna consciousness. Unless one does this, it is not possible to go to the Lord.”



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