

FEATURES:

CHRIST AND KRISHNA--Questions and Answers

KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS IN AMERICAN POETRY--WHITMAN

BACK TO GODHEAD



INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS, INC.

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BY THE MERCY OF KRISHNA:

No, you didn't miss the April First issue of Back To Godhead. We did. There's a long story involved, but suffice it to say that we're very sorry to have done so. We'll certainly print that edition, and put it into circulation, as soon as possible. It contains Part II of Hayagriva Das's "Krishna Consciousness in American Poetry," dealing with Henry David Thoreau and Emily Dickenson, and so we know it will be especially valued by our readers.

The pictures in this issue are of Lord Krishna carrying a lamb, and Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, the founder of the Sankirtan movement, in the ecstasy of chanting the Lord's Names. They are the work of our prolific art directress, Jadurani Devi Dasi (Judy Koslofsky). Incidentally, we're very happy to announce the arrival of two new devotees, from our San Francisco temple, who have joined the art department. They are Goursundar Das Adikary and his wife, Govinda Devi Dasi (Gary and Bonnie McElroy).

Since the Swami's return to New York on April 9, we've had two initiation ceremonies on Second Avenue, adding five devotees to our ranks. They are Damodara Das Adhikary (Dan Clark), Mahapurusa Das Brahmachary (Mark Babbitt), Dwarkadhish Das (Donald Dogherty), Madhusudana Das (Michael Blumert), Purusottam Das (Paul Auerback), and, from the Montreal center, Pradyumna Das (Paul Sherbow).

The Swami's arrival at Kenndey Airport, by the way, was a grand event. More than two hundred well-wishers were on hand, and we had Kirtan for more than two hours. To all who were present, we offer our thanks for your inspiring enthusiasm.

Now that Summer is at hand, the New York temple will resume its Sunday afternoon Kirtan program at Tompkins Square Park on Seventh Street and Avenue A, from 3 to 6 P.M. We also plan to

have a giant love feast late in the same month, with poet Allen Ginsberg in attendance. More on this as things develop.

On July 9, both the San Francisco and the New York centers will hold the great Chariot Festival, which includes a parade to the edge of the sea, the distribution of a vast quantity of blessed food along the way, plenty of chanting, and the introduction, in that dramatic fashion, of the worshipable Lord Jaggannath Swami-- of Whom we'll have much to say in future issues.

Incidentally, Swami Bhaktivedanta will be at Lewison Lounge in City College, to hold Kirtan and deliver a brief lecture at noon on May 4. If you're free, why not come and join us?

Next issue, our magazine will have a new cover, mathead, and the first of a series of somewhat different layouts. But the price, the name, and our earnest endeavors will be unchanged.

Until then, Hare Krishna.

The Editors.

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KRISHNA KRISHNA, HARE HARE

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(Questions asked by congregation and devotees and answered by
Swami A. C. Bhaktivedanta, New York, Sept.-Dec. 1966)

Q: What is the relationship between Christ and Krishna?

A: Don't you know? What does it say in your Bible? Christ is the Son of God.

Q: He is also God.

A: Yes, the Father and the Son are One. The Son serves the Father and they are qualitatively One.

Q: Then they're the same?

A: Where do you get "the same?" The Father is the Father and the Son is the Son. If you are the son, then you and your father are one. But if you say, "I am not only the son but the father also." then you are speaking nonsense.

How can you be the son and the father?

Q: No, but according to the Catholic position they are One. It's inexplicable.

A: If it's inexplicable then why did you ask? But there is an explanation, and I'm giving it to you. Christ is the Son of God and He is One in the Father. But He is the Son and continues to be the Son, and the Father continues to be the Father. You can't say the Son and Father are equal.

Q: You say Arjuna was a soldier and he didn't want to fight, but Krishna was there and He told him to fight. Arjuna had Krishna to tell him to fight, but who can we listen to today?

A: Arjuna belonged to one of the four social castes into which civilization was divided: Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudra. The Kshatriya class is meant to fight, in fact, the word means "to hurt." They are there to protect the weak from being hurt. If I go out onto the street and someone attacks me and

you do not come to my aid, then you are not in the Ksyatrya spirit. There is always weak and there is always strong and there is always fighting. The Ksyatrya class is meant to fight. Krishna asked Arjuna to fight against those who had been harassing the weaker Pandavas, and Arjuna's objection was on family grounds. In the two World Wars, Germany attacked the weaker countries and you went over to help the weaker countries fight. That was Ksyatrya spirit. There will always be fighting and Ksyatryas.

Q: But who do we have for authorities today?

A: By what authority is a man hanged? You have the law books. You have the authority of the Scripture. But the real point is to become engaged in Krishna consciousness, then He will dictate from within you what is Absolute beyond question. Also, there is in the Srimad Bhagawatam a list of offenses for which it is no sin to kill. If a man tries to set fire to your house-- kill him! Don't stand by and say, "Oh, I'm a non-violent man," while he burns down your house. That is nonsense. If a man comes to kidnap your wife-- kill him. There are similar injunctions. You should fight in these cases. Why not?

Q: What is the difference between Karmayoga and Bhaktiyoga?

A: Karmayoga is for those who are too much addicted to their activities. With Karma, you do something, there is a result and you enjoy or suffer. Those who are too much addicted to their activities are advised to link these activities with the Supreme. Then that is yoga. Karmayoga is a transition stage; bhakti-yoga is direct and is for those who are not addicted to karma but who are engaged directly in the service of the Lord. Sometimes ordinary karma and bhakti appear the same. We (in bhakti) have nothing to hate in the material world. Everything has its Source in God. For the bhakti, there is no materialism. The materialist is one who doesn't realize the Source. For the advanced devotee there is nothing material.

Q: Is Lord Jesus Christ mentioned as an avatar in Vedic literatures?

A: Yes. There it is mentioned that there are innumerable avatars who can be identified by their symptoms. Jesus Christ displayed these symptoms. He spoke of the Absolute Truth. He didn't bother with temporary things.

Q: Can a man believe Krishna is dead?

A: Yes. Why do you say "a man?" Many men believe that way.

Q: Can they say it and actually believe it?

A: Yes, if they have no knowledge of God science. If they do not see the signs. But one in Krishna consciousness knows, "Yes, He is here."

Q: Nietzsche can say "God is dead" but yet "Krishna lives." Is this because Krishna is consciousness?

A: God isn't dead. God and Krishna are the same.

Q: But some men call God wrong things.

A: Neither God is dead nor Krishna is dead. They are the same thing.

Q: A person can say God is dead, but can he act that way in fact?

A: There is no question of disbelief. I'll give you a crude example.

Everyone is under Government laws, do you agree?

Q: Yes.

A: Someone may say, "I don't care for law," or someone may say, "God is dead," but the law and God will nonetheless act upon him. If someone says "I don't care for law," he will be placed in prison and forced to obey laws.

Those who refuse to believe God are put into the material world to suffer reactions of sins under the laws of Nature. Those who obey Him live peacefully and are eligible to be transferred to the spiritual kingdom of bliss, eternity and knowledge. A person can accept or not accept-- it doesn't matter. Either in the spiritual or material energy, God will act upon him.

A man trying to enjoy the material world is treated to the "drowning man"

punishment by Nature. By this process a man is plunged into the river until he is almost drowned, then he is pulled out by the hair. His gasping for breaths of fresh air is his enjoyment . . . then at once he is again plunged into the water, and so on and on in an endless cycle.

Q: You mentioned the two different worlds. What are the two different worlds?

A: Let's take a circle to represent the entirety of the two worlds. I say a "circle," but it is limitless. The circle is the Brahmajyoti effulgence. Within this great circle, down in one section, is a little circle. This little circle represents the material world. The remainder of the large circle is filled with spiritual planets of which the topmost is Krishna Loka. Dwelling in bliss in the numberless Vaikuntha planets are the devotees of adoration. Those of pure love who forget that Krishna is greater than them get transferred to Krishna loka. In Vaikuntha loka they wear diamond necklaces and worship the Lord as Narayan in full opulence and adoration. In Krishna loka, Goloka Vrindaban, they wear simple cowherd dress. There they do not know who is Krishna and who is an ordinary boy. Although all function in equal freedom from contamination in these spiritual planets, there is differentiation.

Q: If the reflection of the Original is valueless, isn't revelation valueless since it is maya?

A: Yes . . . if it doesn't lead one back to the Original. People are engaged in the reflection and they don't return to the Source, and that is due to ignorance. We are in the reflection and are being baffled, but we don't question why we are being baffled. There is a song, "I thought I was building my cottage safely, but it was burnt to ashes." Anything we do here is patchwork. How long can you have happiness? It will soon vanish. This sense of the transitory nature of material existence should come to one.

One's life is a failure unless he develops spiritual knowledge. Fight with Maya and go to the Real Tree-- that should be the aim of knowledge.

Q: You say the reflection itself has no value-- but its value is in the spiritual world?

A: Yes. Because it is reflection, you can't touch it or use its fruit. Similarly, the material world is a reflection of spiritual happiness. But when we go to enjoy the material world, we are frustrated. We are struggling in the reflection with no knowledge of the spiritual world. People are also falsely thinking that this reflection is all. Their lives are failures because they have no spiritual knowledge of the true Source. The aim of knowledge is the Source.

Q: Is the attainment of love of Krishna without knowing Him possible?

A: Yes. In the Bhagavad Gita it is stated that if you love, He will dictate within you. One who is so engaged in love of Krishna, Krishna shows him special favor. He becomes compassionate and dissipates and destroys the darkness due to ignorance. Because Krishna is situated in everyone's heart, He dictates information. He who loves Krishna does not remain in ignorance and engage himself in nonsense. He becomes perfect in knowledge.

Q: Can you reach love through understanding?

A: If you love, understanding will come. Both ways. Some of us here understand nicely-- no one understands perfectly-- but even a person who does not understand Krishna due to strong material attachments-- is given intelligence in order to understand Him.

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HARE KRISHNA

TEACHINGS OF LORD CHAITANYA

by Swami A. C. Bhaktivedanta

Part III

Actually all the Vedic literature directs the human being toward the perfect stage of devotion. The path of fruitive activities, speculation, knowledge and meditation do not actually lead one to the perfectional stage, but the Lord actually becomes approachable by the process of devotional service; therefore one is recommended throughout all the Vedic literature to accept the process of devotional service. Lord Chaitanya quotes in this connection a verse from the Srimad Bhagawata, 11th canto, 14th chapter, in which the Lord says, "My dear Uddhava, neither philosophical speculation nor yoga achievements, nor penances can give Him such pleasure as can devotional service practiced by the living entities. He can be achieved alone by devotional service, and He is dear only to the devotees. If a person born in the lower or lowest family of humanity is a devotee, then he becomes freed from all contamination. Devotional service is the only path to achieve the Supreme Personality of God."

This is also the only perfection accepted in all Vedic literature. As a poor man, upon receiving some treasure, becomes at once happy, similarly when one attains devotional service, automatically the pains of material existence are vanquished. As one advances in devotional service, one attains love of Godhead, and as he advances in the love for the Supreme he becomes free from all material bondage. Disappearance of poverty and liberation from bondage are not, however, the end results of love of Krishna. Actually, the love of Krishna or love of God exists in relishing the reciprocation of loving service. In all Vedic literature one will find that attainment of

this loving relationship of the Supreme Lord by the living entities is the function of devotional service. Our actual function is devotional service, and our ultimate goal of achievement is love of Godhead. Therefore in all Vedic literature Krishna is the ultimate center. By knowledge of Krishna, all problems of life are solved.

The Lord said that according to Padma Purana there are different Puranas for worshipping different types of demigods, but such indications for worship only bewilder persons into thinking that the demigods are Supreme. And yet if the Puranas are scrutinized and studied it will be found that Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is the only object of worship. For example, in the Markandio Purana there is mention of Devi worship, worship of the goddess Durga or Kali. But in that same Chandika it is also stated that all these demigods--- whether in the shape of Durga or Kali--- are different energies of Vishnu. Therefore, even the study of the Puranas will reveal Vishnu, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, to be the only object of worship. The conclusion is that directly or indirectly all types of worship are more or less indicating a worship of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krishna. In the Bhagavad Gita it is confirmed that anyone who worships other demigods is in fact only worshipping Krishna because the demigods are different parts of the Body of Vishnu or Krishna. That such worship of demigods is really irregular is clearly stated in the Bhagavad Gita: Abidhipurvakam. Srimad Bhagawata confirms this also by the question: What is the object of worshipping different types of demigods?

In Vedic literature there are three divisions of ritualistic activities; one is called Karmakanda, or purely ritualistic activities; another is called Upasana-kanda, or speculating on the Supreme Absolute Truth. What then is the purpose of the ritualistic sections of Vedic literature, and what is the purpose of different mantras or hymns indicating the worship of different types of

demigods? And what is the purpose of philosophical speculation on the subject of the Absolute Truth? The Srimad Bhagawatam replies that all these different methods defined in Vedic literatures indicate the worship of the Supreme Lord, Vishnu. They are all indirect ways of worshipping the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Sacrifices contained in the ritualistic portion of the literatures are to satisfy the Supreme Lord Vishnu because yajna is specifically meant to satisfy Vishnu. Vishnu's Name is also Yojneswara, or Lord of the Yogis. The neophytes are not all on the transcendental level, therefore according to their situations in the different modes of material nature they are recommended to worship different types of demigods so that gradually they may rise to the transcendental plane and be engaged in devotional service of Vishnu, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. For example, it may be said that some of the neophytes are attached to flesh eating, and for them, the Puranas prescribe that they can eat flesh after offering it to the deity Kali.

The philosophical sections of the Vedic hymns are meant to enable one to distinguish the Supreme Personality of Godhead from Maya. After indicating the position of Maya, the Supreme Personality of Godhead is approached in pure devotional service. That is the purpose of philosophical speculation. This is confirmed in the Bhagavad Gita in the 7th Chapter, Bahunam janma-nam ante.. "The philosophical speculators and empiric philosophers, after speculating for many, many births, ultimately come unto the Supreme Lord Krishna, and accept that Vasudeva is everything." Therefore all Vedic rituals and different types of worship or philosophical speculation are all ultimately aiming at Krishna.

The Lord then told Sanatan Goswami about Krishna's multiforms and His unlimited opulence; he also described the nature of the spiritual manifestation, the material manifestation, and the manifestation of the living entity. He also informed Sanatan Goswami that the planets in the Spiritual Sky, known as

Vaikunthas, and the universes of the material manifestation are to be known as different types of universes, for they are creative manifestations of the two different types of energies, namely the material energy and the spiritual energy. Therefore as Krishna Himself is concerned, He is directly situated in His spiritual energy, or specifically in His internal potency. To help us understand the difference between the manifestation of the spiritual energy and the material energy, there is a clear analysis in the Second Canto of Srimad Bhagawatam of the two manifestations. Also, Sukdeva Goswami, by commenting on verse one of the Tenth Canto, makes a clear analytical study as follows. Lord Chaitanya accepts Sukdeva Goswami as an authorised commentator on the Srimad Bhagawatam, therefore He quotes his writing in this connection, and He explains that in the Tenth Canto of the Bhagawatam the life and activities of Krishna are described because Krishna is the shelter of all other manifestations. Therefore Sukdeva Goswami worshipped and offered his obeisances unto Krishna, the Shelter of everything.

This purport maintains that in this world there are two different principles; the one principle is the origin, or the shelter of everything, and the other principle is the deduction from the original principle. The principle on which everything rests, as it is confirmed in the Srimad Bhagawatam, begins Janmadyasya, and in the Vedanta Sutra the same aphorism appears, Janmadyasya-- the Supreme Truth is the shelter of all manifestations. That Supreme Truth is called Asraya. All other principles which remain under the control of the Asraya-tatta, or the Absolute Truth, are called Asrita, or subordinate correlaries and reactions. The purpose of material manifestation is to give the conditioned soul a chance to become liberated and return to the Asraya-tatta, or the Absolute Truth. So everything that is created in the cosmic creation is dependent on the Asrita-tatta, or the Supreme Absolute Truth. As such, in

the creative manifestation or the Vishnu manifestation, and in different types of demigods and manifestations of energy, the living entities, the material elements-- everything, is dependent on Krishna, the Supreme Truth. In the Srimad Bhagawatam everything, directly and indirectly, is indicated to have Krishna as the Supreme Shelter. Therefore the analytical study of Krishna is the perfect knowledge, as it is confirmed in the Bhagavad Gita.

Lord Chaitanya described the different features of Lord Krishna in the following manner, and asked Sanatan Goswami to hear attentively: He said that Krishna originally is the Son of Nanda Maharaj and He is the Absolute Supreme Truth. He is the cause of all causes, and He is the origin of all emanations and all incarnations, but there in the Vraja or Goloka Vrindaban He is just like a young boy. His Form is eternal, full of bliss and full of Knowledge Absolute. He is the shelter of everything, and He is the Proprietor or Master of everything. In this connection Lord Chaitanya gives evidence from Brahma Samhita, fifth chapter, first verse, which states that Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead and His Body is full of knowledge, eternal and blissful. He is the original Person known as Govinda and He is the Cause of all Causes. Therefore, Krishna is the Original Personality of Godhead; He is full of all six opulences and His abode is known as Goloka Vrindaban, the highest planetary system in the Spiritual Sky. Lord Chaitanya also quotes a verse from the Srimad Bhagawatam, the First Canto, third chapter, in which it is stated clearly that all the incarnations described in that particular verse are either direct expansions of Krishna or are indirectly expansions of the expansions of Krishna. But the Krishna Name mentioned there is the Original Personality of Godhead, and He appears on this earth, in this universe or in any other universe when there is a disturbance created by the demons, who are always trying to disrupt the administration by the demigods.

To understand Krishna, there are three different processes: the process

of empiric philosophical speculation, the process of meditation in the mystic yoga system, and the process of Krishna consciousness, or devotional service. Accordingly, in these different process, 1) by empiric philosophical speculation, the feature of impersonal Brahma or Krishna is understood; 2) by the process of meditation of yogi mysticism, the feature of the Supersoul all-pervading expansion of Krishna is understood; and 3) by devotional service in full Krishna consciousness, the Original Personality of Godhead, Krishna, is realised. In this connection Lord Chaitanya quotes first from the Srimad Bhagawatam, First Canto, 2nd chapter, which states that those who are knowers of the Absolute Truth describe the Absolute Truth in three features: some describe the Absolute as impersonal Brahma, and some describe the Absolute Truth as the localised all-pervading Super soul, and some know that the Absolute Truth is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krishna. In other words, Brahma, the impersonal manifestation, and Paramatma, the localised manifestation, and the Supreme Personality of Godhead are One and the same, but according to the different processes adopted He is realised in different features known as Brahma, Paramatma and Bhagavan. Impersonal Brahma realisation is simple realisation of the effulgence emanating from the transcendental Body of Krishna. We compare this effulgence of the transcendental Body of Krishna to the sunshine-- just as the sun disc is there, the sun planet is there, and the sun god is there, and the sun shine is the shining effulgence of that original sun god, similarly, brahmajyoti, the spiritual effulgence or impersonal Brahma, is nothing but the personal effulgence of Krishna.

To support this version Lord Chaitanya quotes one important verse from Brahma-Samhita where Lord Brahma says, "I worship the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Govinda, by Whose Personal effulgence there is the unlimited manifestation of the Brahmajyoti, and in that Brahmajyoti (the impersonal manifestation of Krishna's Bodily effulgence) there are innumerable universes, each full

of innumerable planets." Lord Chaitanya further describes that the Paramatma all-pervading feature situated in everyone's body is but a partial manifestation or expansion of Krishna, but because Krishna is the Soul of the soul, there He is called Paramatma, or the origin of Paramatma. In this connection Lord Chaitanya quotes one verse from Srimad Bhagawatam concerning the talks of Maharaj Parikshit and Sukdeva Goswami. In that verse it is understood that Maharaj Parikshit, while hearing about the transcendental Pastimes of Krishna in Vrindaban, inquired from his spiritual master Sukdeva Goswami as to why the inhabitants of Vrindaban were so much attached to Krishna. To this question Sukdeva Goswami answered that Krishna should be known as the Soul of all souls; He is the Soul of all individual souls and He is also the soul of the localised Paramatan. He was present in Vrindaban for the benefit of all human beings and therefore He was acting just like a human being to attract persons to Him and to show that He is not formless. He is also as good as other human beings, but He is the Supreme and other living beings are all subordinate to Him. All living beings therefore can enjoy spiritual bliss, eternal life and full knowledge in His association. Lord Chaitanya quotes also a verse from Bhagavad Gita in which the Supreme Lord speaks to Arjuna about His different kinds of opulences, saying that He Himself enters into this universe by one of His plenary portions, just like Garbohodaksayee Vishnu, and He also enters in each universe as the Ksirodaksayee Vishnu and then expands Himself as Supersoul in everyone's heart. Therefore, He says, if anyone wants to understand the Supreme Absolute Truth in perfection, he must take to the process of devotional service in full Krishna consciousness. Then it will be possible for him to understand the last word of the Absolute Truth.

(PART IV OF LORD CHAITANYA'S TEACHING WILL APPEAR IN NEXT ISSUE)

This mandarin child waits for hidden dragon
 Sleeping sound in hollow mountain pine.
 Wanting yet in breath of bowing lower,
 Reverence serves to further keeping still.

At dawn the dragon yawning breath like thunder
 Vibrates waves of gentle wind and fire,
 Spinning dusty clouds are burst in shower
 Arousing subtle bloom of mandarin child.

Sweetly Krishna rains on fond surrender
 Swelling empty lake with endless water,
 Joyous singing spirit mounts the dragon
 Bowing ever still this mandarin child.

--Haladhar Devi Dasi
 (Holly Lefkowitz)

ON BEING VERY CRAZY

That's right, look at me,
 all of you,
 peeking over your HOUSEWIFE STABBED IN QUEENS,
 and your stockmarket scores,
 and your baseball scores,
 and your Viet Nam scores;
 just keep looking at me,
 as I sit across from you,
 fingering these ripe, red beads,
 chanting
 Hare Krishna.

Don't be afraid, I won't hurt you.
 Don't snicker, please.
 Consider me--
 I love.

Is it so very strange for a lover
 to sing his Beloved's Name?--
 especially when by singing
 flowers sprout out of his eyes
 and planets fall out of his mouth?

I hope I am disturbing you
 with these round, golden chimes
 that I ring:
 to the sound
 of His Names.

Madam, you have now stopped fretting about your declining body.
 And, my dear girl, you have stopped wondering if he's going to ask you.
 Young man, you have stopped worrying about not knowing who you are.
 And you, sir, have now stopped escaping into last night's vapid sexual promise.

Now you are all hearing
 HARE KRISHNA HARE RAMA
 a lullaby,
 bringing warm tides of peace.
 I am singing for us all
 Glories to Govinda
 on our way to work.

How beautiful amid the subway roar vibrate the Names of God!
 HARE KRISHNA HARE RAMA.

The living of your spiritual life has begun now
 with this instant of listening,
 thousands of births rendered unnecessary, cancelled
 with this rebirth.

Understand God

LIVES

in the Transcendental,
 and singing His Name
 uncovers the Transcendental spark of Him
 that is each of us,
 and we are purified to see Him
 everywhere,
 and to learn
 how to love Him.

So, sing with me.

Sing the Names of the Lord.

Sing.

What better way to praise Him?

Oh no, don't fall back into your everydaythesame newspapers,

please, look at me-- HARE KRISHNA

listen-- HARE RAMA

watch me, I'm dancing

out the door,

singing HARE KRISHNA HARE RAMA KRISHNA KRISHNA HARE HARE

down the platform,

dancing my way to work

You're right, I'm crazy,

blissfully,

from love

of Krishna

and the joy of chanting His Names.

Here I am rattling Krishna's spinal cord in this cloth bag,

and they think I'm crazy!

--Brahmananda Das Brahmachary
 (Bruce Scharf)

KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS IN AMERICAN POETRY

by Hayagriva Das Brahmachary
(Howard Wheeler)

Part III: Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself"

O joyous seer!
Recorders ages hence, yes, they shall hear
In their own veins uncanceled thy sure tread
And read thee by the aureole 'round thy head
Of pasture-shine, Panis Angelicus!
(Hart Crane's homage to Whitman, in The Bridge)

Aside from Shakespeare, more books have been written about Walt Whitman than any other American or British writer. The interest generated by Whitman testifies to his universal appeal and to the complexity of his thought, poetry, and personality. In high schools in America today many of his poems are required reading and hardly a college student of American literature has not read his "Song of Myself." There are many varying interpretations of him, naturally, but undoubtedly he emerges most strongly as a mystical, intensely spiritual man, for his poetry and life reveal him as such. Living in 19th century America (1819-92), he was influenced by the transcendentalists (especially Emerson), witnessed the Civil War as a stretcher-bearer in the Washington hospitals, and lived to see and abhor the encroaching materialism that he feared was undermining the young nation's spirituality. But in addition, as a poet, seer and sage, he experienced much more-- for he was a mahatma in the true sense, and was even adept at cosmic travel. He knew well that the "Great Camerado" is there, and his "Song of Myself" is something of an American Song of the Lord, though it is not accepted as authorized Scripture. Whether or not Whitman possessed certain unusual spiritual powers is

beside the point. His sense of cosmic consciousness seems as highly developed as Christ's and Buddha's-- at least his Leaves of Grass testify as strongly in his case as the Evangelists and the Sutras do for Christ and Buddha. Actually, all men are eternal, but the point is they don't know it. As Whitman writes: "I am the mate and companion of people, all just as immortal and fathomless as myself, / (They do not know how immortal, but I know.)" (SofM, 7) "Song of Myself" reveals Whitman to be fully aware of both his divinity and immortality, and indicates that he was at a highly advanced state of God consciousness. This state seems to have been precipitated by a revelation (or illumination) that occurred at the age of about 36, when the Supreme Lord touched him one June morning in the woods, and was sustained throughout his life to greater and lesser degrees. This initial illumination gave birth to America's greatest poetic outburst-- "Song of Myself," a hymn of joy celebrating the Creator, the creation, and the immortality of the soul. Other poems in Leaves of Grass shed additional light on his philosophy and science of God, but only his first major poem, the "Song of Myself" of 1855, is considered here. It is this poem that provoked Emerson's unconditional praise ("I greet you at the beginning of a great career.") and brought Thoreau to Whitman's Brooklyn printshop with lists of Hindu writings.

In the poem's opening lines, Whitman strikes the theme of the unity of the creation, the "song of me rising from bed and meeting the sun," proclaiming the creation to be non-different from the Creator.

I celebrate myself, and sing myself
 And what I assume you shall assume,
 For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you. (section 1)

The "Self" speaking here is Bhagavan, using the poet as a mouthpiece, Paramatma speaking through jivatman. This cosmic "I" is non-different from His creation, for He permeates every atom, and every atom belongs to Him--

yet He is also beyond this creation which He spins as a spider spins its web.
 "And these tend inward to me, and I tend outward to them And of these
 one and all I weave the song of myself." (sec. 15)

The vision of the unity of the creation, the insight that the creation rests in the Creator, is communicated to the jivatman, Walt Whitman, by Bhagavan in an overwhelming mystical experience. In this experience, Bhagavan functions in the rasa of lover, and Whitman the beloved, in what is an early climax in the poem and one of the greatest statements in our literature of the exquisite beauty and wonder of the entire creation, from the grand pervading Spirit of God to the seemingly insignificant "mossy scabs" and "pokeweed."

I mind how once we lay such a transparent summer morning,
 How you settled your head athwart my hips and gently turn'd over upon me,
 And parted the shirt from my bosom-bone, and plunged your tongue to my
 bare-stript heart,
 And reach'd till you felt my beard, and reach'd till you held my feet.

Swiftly arose and spread around me the peace and knowledge that pass all
 the argument of the earth,
 And I know that the hand of God is the promise of my own,
 And I know that the spirit of God is the brother of my own,
 And that all the men ever born are also my brothers, and the women my
 sisters and lovers,
 And that a kelson of the creation is love,
 And limitless are leaves stiff or dropping in the fields,
 And brown ants in the little wells beneath them,
 And mossy scabs of the worm fence, heap'd stones, elder, mullein and
 poke-weed. (sec. 5)

Throughout this creation, the Self functions unattached. The dates, wars, sicknesses, etc. "come to me days and nights and go from me again, / But they are not the Me myself." (4) The finite Whitman is often jolted and bruised in the game, the leela or play of the Lord, but his true Self is always the untouched and unattached Witness within:

Apart from the pulling and hauling stands what I am,
 Stands amused, complacent, compassionating, idle, unitary,
 Looks down, is erect, or bends an arm on an impalpable certain rest,
 Looking with side-curved head curious what will come next,
 Both in and out of the game and watching and wondering at it. (4)

This Supreme Self is not a part of the material creation, though the material creation is His song. "I am not an earth nor an adjunct of an earth." (7) This Self, in which Whitman has seen his own jiva to be integrally one, is totally full and self-sufficient in itself.

I exist as I am, that is enough,
 If no other in the world be aware I sit content,
 And if each and all be aware I sit content.
 One world is aware and by far the largest to me, and that is myself. (20)

For Whitman, the individual body and soul are no less wonderful and worshipful than the Supreme. As part and parcel of the Supreme, he sees himself as good as the Supreme, as eternal and as divine. "Walt Whitman, a kosmos, of Manhattan the son," he describes himself, then goes on to delight in the miracle of himself, which is the miracle of any man and, indeed, of life itself. "Seeing, hearing, feeling, are miracles, and each part and tag of me is a miracle." (24) He sees his individual soul as journeying in eternity through countless cosmic changes, travelling from the infinity of the past to the present.

Immense have been the preparations for me,
 Faithful and friendly the arms that have help'd me.
 Cycles ferried my cradle, rowing and rowing like cheerful boatmen,
 For room to me stars kept aside in their own rings . . .
 All forces have been steadily employ'd to complete and delight me,
 Now on this spot I stand with my robust soul. (44)

It is his soul that ascends "dazzling and tremendous as the sun," and that laughs "at what you call dissolution," and that looks at the crowded heavens and questions, "When we become the enfolders of those orbs, and the pleasure and knowledge of every thing in them, shall we be fill'd and satisfied then?" and answers, "No, we but level that lift to pass and continue beyond," (46) for it is his soul that is "tenon'd and mortis'd" in the granite of eternity. With a clean sweep of his hand, he absorbs previous incarnations, "outbidding" them and bestowing equal divinity on the average, common man:

Magnifying and applying come I,
 Outbidding at the start the old cautious hucksters,
 Taking myself the exact dimensions of Jehovah . . .
 Buying drafts of Osiris, Isis, Belus, Brahma, Buddha . . .
 Taking them all for what they are worth and not a cent more,
 Admitting they were alive and did the work of their days . . .
 Accepting the rough deific sketches to fill out better in myself,
 bestowing them freely on each man and woman I see . . .
 The supernatural of no account, myself waiting my time to be one of
 the supremes . . .
 By my life-lumps! becoming already a creator . . . (41)

The surety of this conviction results from his perception of the omnipresence of the Supreme Lord. He sees the creation "lav'd" all over by the Creator, as a fish by the water of the ocean.

Why should I wish to see God better than this day?
 I see something of God each hour of the twenty-four, and each moment
 then,
 In the faces of men and women I see God, and in my own face in the glass,
 I find letters from God dropt in the street, and every one is sign'd by
 God's name,
 And I leave them where they are, for I know that wheresoe'er I go
 Others will punctually come for ever and ever. (48)

The Supreme Lord, for such a devotee, is common, actually cheap. He is the one Great Commodity that can be purchased without money, for it is love alone that finds and binds Him. "I or you pocketless of a dime may purchase the pick of the earth." The Lord is eager for His creation to love Him, and He gives Himself freely.

What is commonest, cheapest, nearest, easiest, is Me,
 Me going in for my chances, spending for vast returns,
 Adorning myself to bestow myself on the first that will take me,
 Not asking the sky to come down to my good will,
 Scattering it freely forever. (14)

Yet Whitman intimates that the Creator has His own Superior Abode, where He "waits" for all in eternity.

My rendezvous is appointed, it is certain,
 The Lord will be there and wait till I come on perfect terms,
 The great Camerado, the lover true for whom I pine will be there. (45)

Interestingly enough, Whitman envisions a purification process by which his individual soul can return to God "on perfect terms." The soul leaves the body, as Krishna says, "as the wind carries away the scents from their

places." (Gita, XV/8) but before he can go to Krishna, he must qualify.

Krishna is the "steady and central," the "lover true," "the great Camerado" who satisfies completely. In His ocean of bliss, Whitman's individual soul debouches.

I ascend from the moon, I ascend from the night,
I perceive that the ghastly glimmer is noonday sunbeams reflected,
And debouch to the steady and central from the offspring great or small.
(49)

A quotation from "Passage to India," a later poem, should throw considerable light on the relationship between jivatman (the individual soul) and Paramatma, the Supreme Soul:

Bear me indeed as through the regions infinite,
Whose air I breathe, whose ripples hear, lave me all over,
Bathe me O God in thee, mounting to thee,
I and my soul to range in range of thee.

O Thou transcendent,
Nameless, the fibre and the breath,
Light of the light, shedding forth universes, thou center of them,
Thou mightier center of the true, the good, the loving,
Thou moral, spiritual fountain--affection's source-- thou reservoir,
(O pensive soul of me-- O thirst unsatisfied-- waitest not there?
Waitest not haply for us somewhere there the Comrade perfect?)
Thou pulse-- thou motive of the stars, suns, systems,
That, circling, move in order, safe, harmonious,
Athwart the shapeless vastnesses of space,
How should I think, how breathe a single breath, how speak, if out of
myself,
I could not launch, to those, superior universes?

Swiftly I shrivel at the thought of God,
At Nature and its wonders, Time and Space and Death,
But that I, turning, call to thee O soul, thou actual Me,
And lo, thou gently masterest the orbs,
Thou matest Time, smilest content at Death,
And fillest, swellest full the vastnesses of Space.

("Passage to India," section 8)

For Whitman, the soul, after death, retains its individual identity and becomes a great fish swimming in God's ocean of bliss. For him, faith in the Supreme Lord means faith in his individual soul. Bathing in the light of God, the individual soul itself takes on the divine properties of creator, launching "superior universes." But this is never through any separate, individual or derived power-- it simply results from God's using the living entity as an

agent, as a powerhouse of electricity uses an electric bulb to diffuse its light. The lightbulb sheds the light, but it is dependent on the "pulse," the "motive of the stars, suns, systems," which is the Supreme Lord.

It is apparent that this God consciousness is also synonymous with "cosmic consciousness," for the universe figures prominently in "Song of Myself," and though it is considered wonderful, it is not considered as wonderful as the eternal soul. The universe is created, maintained for a while, and then destroyed.

I open my scuttle at night and see the far-sprinkled systems,
And all I see multiplied as high as I can cipher edge but the rim of the
farther systems.

Wider and wider they spread, expanding, always expanding,
Outward and outward and forever outward . . .

There is no stoppage and never can be stoppage,
If I, you, and the worlds, and all beneath or upon their surfaces, were
at this moment reduced back to a pallid float, it would not avail in
the long run,

We should surely bring up again where we now stand,
And surely go as much farther, and then farther and farther . . . (45)

Through all the cosmic changes, the soul remains the same forever. Whitman exhorts men and women to maintain their placidity through all these cosmic changes, for their souls remain untouched by them.

There is no object so soft but it makes a hub for the wheel'd universe,
And I say to any man or woman, Let your soul stand cool and composed
before a million universes. (48)

Whitman himself is not frightened by the cosmic leela, in fact he is delighted by it, and seems to have had an ability for "astral travelling," like Narada Muni, the Eternal Spaceman.

To me the converging objects of the universe perpetually flow,
All are written to me, and I must get what the writing means. (20)

My ties and ballasts leave me, my elbows rest in sea-gaps,
I skirt sierras, my palms cover continents,

I am afoot with my vision. (33)

I hear you whispering there O stars of heaven,
O suns-- O grass of graves-- O perpetual transfers and promotions,

If you do not say any thing, how can I say any thing? (49)

I depart as air, I shake my white locks at the runaway sun,
I effuse my flesh in eddies, and drift it in lacy jags. (52)

As far as the methods of God consciousness are concerned, Whitman was too much of an individualist to have anything to do with institutionalized religion. Like Thoreau and many other transcendentalists, he was strictly secular. Fulfilling Emerson's image of the free man independent of the past and of the past's institutions, Whitman declares, "No friend of mine takes his ease in my chair, / I have no chair, no church, no philosophy . . ." (46) By surrendering everything to God, he takes on responsibilities and actions but relinquishes fruits and results. He holds "creeds and schools in abeyance," and permits to speak "Nature without check with original energy." (1) It is this social independence that has made orthodox religionists wary of him.

Why should I pray? why should I venerate and be ceremonious?
 Having pried through the strata, analyzed to a hair, counsel'd with doctors and calculated close,
 I find no sweeter fat than sticks to my own bones. (20)
 Divine am I inside and out, and I make holy whatever I touch or am touched from,
 The scent of these arm-pits aroma finer than prayer,
 This head more than churches, bibles, and all the creeds. (24)

This attitude is not due to irreverence or irreligiosity, but is the logical outgrowth of his enlightenment. Krishna Himself says, "To the enlightened Brahmin all the Vedas are of as much use as a pond when there is everywhere a flood." (Gita, II/46) Having reached shore, Whitman simply discards his raft. Consequently he has been criticized by religionists who profess godliness but whose hearts are in the wrong place due to ignorance and entanglement. Such hypocrites disgust Whitman.

I think I could turn and live with animals, they're so placid and self-contained . . .
 They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins,
 They do not make me sick discussing their duty to God . . .
 Not one kneels to another, nor to his kind that lived thousands of years ago (32)

For him it is not the outward show that is important-- rather, by their fruits ye shall know them, and the fruits of the soul are joy and bliss, not lamentation. "What have I to do with lamentation?" He makes it clear, how-

ever, that he is not anti-church or anti-religion.

I do not despise you priests, all time, the world over,
 My faith is the greatest of faiths and the least of faiths,
 Enclosing worship ancient and modern and all between ancient and modern. .
 Drinking mead from the skull-cup, to Shastas and Vedas admiring, minding
 the Koran
 Accepting the Gospels, accepting him that was crucified, knowing assured-
 ly that he is divine (43)

Like many true devotees, Whitman considered it a great virtue "to argue not concerning God," knowing Him to be beyond words and theosophies. "Knowing the perfect fitness and equanimity of things, while they discuss I am silent, and go bathe and admire myself." (3) It was possibly the vain discussions about God that drove him out the churches into the open fields and lonely night-time beaches of Long Island. "Logic and sermons never convince, / The damp of the night drives deeper into my soul." (30) And least of all does he advocate discussions with atheists and non-believers.

Backward I see in my own days where I sweated through fog with linguists
 and contenders,
 I have no mockings or arguments, I witness and wait. (4)
 Writing and talk do not prove me,
 I carry the plenum of proof and everything else in my face,
 With the hush of my lips I wholly confound the skeptic. (25)

Whitman has been accused of a childish, "unrealistic" optimism and of a total disregard of evil forces in the universe. He was well aware of evil forces-- he did not stay in a closet, but was active in the Civil War. The evil forces were there, but in actuality he was transcendental to them. Since the Supreme Lord is in control, evil also has its place. One of Whitman's greatest assets is his ability to absorb evil without being tainted by it. "I am not the poet of goodness only, I do not decline to be the poet of wickedness also." (22) Like the Supreme Himself, as a poet he purifies what was previously indecent, revealing the divine function behind the guise.

Through me forbidden voices,
 Voices of sexes and lusts, voices veil'd and I remove the veil,
 Voices indecent by me clarified and transfigur'd.

I do not press my fingers across my mouth,
I keep as delicate around the bowels as around the head and heart,
Copulation is no more rank to me than death is. (24)

I am the poet of the Body and I am the poet of the Soul,
The pleasures of heaven are with me and the pains of hell are with me,
The first I graft and increase upon myself, the latter I translate into
a new tongue. (21)

Seeing himself in all creatures, seeing the perfect unity of the creation as a "song of myself," he does not criticize the mysterious ways of God, nor does he judge men heavily. Whenever he sees a man falling prey to a vice, he sees himself doing the same. This divine quality of tolerance and forgiveness possibly turned him away from the hypocrites of religion who are prone to criticize and condemn others for the faults that are in themselves. Whitman does not believe in criticizing and condemning (knowing this is not in man's jurisdiction), but in helping-- or as Christ said, "I came not into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Me might be saved." Good and evil exist within the modes of Prakriti (Nature) and Whitman knows his real Self to be beyond the modes.

What blurt is this about virtue and about vice?
Evil propels me and reform of evil propels me, I stand indifferent,
My gait is no fault-finder's or rejecter's gait,
I moisten the roots of all that has grown. (22)
Whoever degrades another degrades me,
And whatever is done or said returns at last to me. (24)
In all people I see myself, none more and not one a barley-corn less,
And the good or bad I say of myself I say of them. (20)

This echoes Christ's "Judge not that ye be not judg'd, for wherein ye judge another thou condemn'st thyself." Whitman was a mahatma who believed in a merciful God who wants men to love Him, not in a God Who created a world just to condemn it. Whitman does not condemn or lament. With open eyes he regards the demoniac and atheistic and considers with wonder that such absurdities and incongruities can be.

What behaved well in the past or behaves well today is not such a wonder,
The wonder is always and always how there can be a mean man or an infidel. (22)

Throughout "Song of Myself" Whitman discourages man in looking for signs and wonders. It is the sage who seeks the Divine and miraculous in all things. His method of Krishna consciousness involves seeing God every second in the most commonplace and generally accepted things. He stresses the great miracle of the commonplace, of daily life. "A . . . clod, a stone, and gold are the same" (Gita, VI/8) to him because he sees all things reflecting the Divine.

The bull and the bug never worshipp'd half enough,
 Dung and dirt more admirable than was dream'd (41)
 I cannot tell how my ankles bend, nor whence the cause of my faintest
 wish
 That I walk up my stoop, I pause to consider if it really be,
 A morning-glory at my window satisfies me more than the metaphysics of
 books. (24)

He chooses the most commonplace, most handy phenomena as the great symbol to bind the creation-- the grass, which grows among all people irrespective of color, caste, or creed. Grass is the Great Democrat of the vegetation, and as Whitman's Leaves of Grass, it accepts and welcomes all.

This is the grass that grows wherever the land is and the water is,
 This the common air that bathes the globe. (17)
 I believe a leaf of grass is no less than the journey-work of the stars. . .
 And the running blackberry would adorn the parlors of heaven,
 And the narrowest hinge in my hand puts to scorn all machinery,
 And the cow crunching with depress'd head surpasses any statue,
 And a mouse is miracle enough to stagger sextillions of infidels . . (31)
 And to glance with an eye or show a bean in its pod confounds the
 learning of all times (48)

Like Emerson, Whitman saw the haunting past as one of man's greatest enemies. The past is completed and the future uncertain, so these only serve to divert man's mind and energy from the overwealming importance of the eternally exfoliating present. "This minute that comes to me over the past decillions,/ There is no better than it and now." (22) Whitman declared that the man in Krishna consciousness must be aware of the constant miracle and wonder of the present, and not allow his mind to wander over the past or things to come. Death comes now, birth comes now, liberation comes now, the

vision of God comes now, or, as Christ said, "The Kingdom of God is at hand."

"The clock indicates the moment, but what does eternity indicate?" Whitman asks, and the answer is now. Guru Whitman instructs the neophyte:

Long enough have you dream'd contemptible dreams,
Now I wash the gum from your eyes,
You must habit yourself to the dazzle of the light and of every moment
of your life. (46)

Being at "one" with the creation necessitates acceptance of the moment as being the best possible; happiness lies in the delight of suddenly awakening to find yourself here after so many trillions of years. God is eternal, and we are eternal. Only appearances change.

I have heard what the talkers were talking, the talk of the beginning
and the end,
But I do not talk of the beginning or the end.
There was never any more inception than there is now,
Nor any more youth or age than there is now,
And will never be any more perfection than there is now,
Nor any more heaven or hell than there is now. (3)

Whitman also believes in the transmigration of the soul, from lower forms of life and from body to body. "And as to you Life I reckon you are the leavings of many deaths, / No doubt I have died myself ten thousand times before." (49) When he sees animals, he is reminded that he was doubtless one himself in the past. The animals "bring me tokens of myself . . . I wonder where they get those tokens, / Did I pass that way huge times ago and negligently drop them?" (32) In fact, he sees his body and his spirit as integral with all the forms of the creation, that he incorporates the lower forms then "distances" them in his evolution toward the Godhead.

I find I incorporate gneiss, coal, long-threaded moss, fruits, grains,
esculent roots,
And am stucco'd with quadrupeds and birds all over,
And have distanced what is behind me for good reasons,
But call any thing back again when I desire it. (31)

As for the future, he does not put returning to earth again out of the question. "Believing I shall come again upon the earth after five thousand years" (43)

As for death, Whitman, the courage teacher, welcomes it as joyfully as anything else. In fact, he is called the poet of "death and lilacs" because of his frequent and beautiful treatments of death throughout Leaves of Grass. ("What is finally beautiful but love and death?") "I know I am deathless," he proclaims. (20) The Supreme Lord Himself accompanies the soul through the passages of birth and death, so why fear? Rather, there is cause for welcome.

Has any one supposed it lucky to be born?
I hasten to inform him or her it is just as lucky to die, and I know it.
I pass death with the dying and birth with the new-wash'd babe, and am
not contained between my hat and boots. (7)

The Lord witnesses the passing of the individual soul through various dresses (bodies) and knows its history of rebirths, as Krishna affirms in the Gita, "Many a birth have I passed through, O Arjuna, and so have you. I know them all, but you know them not." (Gita, IV/5) Even in his lifetime, Whitman was well acquainted with death, witnessing innumerable deaths of soldiers in the Washington hospitals. In fact, he muses that the leaves of grass may even transpire from the breasts of young men. This is not morbid; life and death are one, inextricably woven.

The smallest sprout shows there is really no death,
And if ever there was it led forward life, and does not wait at the end
to arrest it,
And ceas'd the moment life appear'd.

All goes onward and outward, nothing collapses,
And to die is different from what any one supposed, and luckier. (6)

Life is an omnipresent force, and death simply a transition to another form of material existence or, possibly, liberation and union with the Great Camerado.

And as to you Death, and you bitter hug of mortality, it is idle to try
to alarm me.

And as to you Corpse I think you are good manure, but that does not
offend me,
I smell the white roses sweet-scented and growing,
I reach to the leafy lips, I reach to the polish'd breasts of melons. (49)

At the conclusion of the poem, Whitman magnificently describes the parting of the soul from the body. "I depart as air," he begins, then finally concludes, "I bequeath myself to the dirt to grow from the grass I love,/ If you want me again look for me under your boot-soles." Although he bequeaths his bodily remains to Nature, his spirit returns to the eternal abode. His concluding lines remind one of Krishna's "Abandon all dharmas and come to me alone for shelter." (Gita, XVIII/66):

Failing to fetch me at first keep encouraged,
Missing me one place search another,
I stop somewhere waiting for you. (52)

It is the ultimate promise of the Supreme-- an eternal abode of peace, knowledge and bliss-- that Whitman is indicating. He was aware that Krishna is waiting there for all His children to return to Him. By Krishna's grace, he was communicated this knowledge to write for an American audience-- and world audience-- in an age of materialistic chaos and anti-spiritualism. In such a difficult age, Krishna sends His blessings in many ways, and it is by His grace that we find joyful Walt loafing along the American roadside like a polite old mendicant, offering his Leaves of Grass to the dizzy and wearied Twentieth Century traveller, offering indeed a "matchless gift" and promise:

Do you see O my brothers and sisters?
It is not chaos or death-- it is form, union, plan-- it is eternal life--
it is Happiness. (50)

(NEXT ISSUE: KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS IN AMERICAN POETRY, Part IV: Hart Crane's The Bridge and the 20th Century)

POEM TO WALT WHITMAN

You too found Him all attractive,
 And your thoughts of Him you called Leaves of Grass
 For His green handiwork bends beneath His Feet,
 And you knew well those leaves of life
 Transpire from the breasts of the dead.

Those leaves of grass for you
 Were tokens designedly dropped by the Lord, His handkerchief,
 "Bearing the owner's Name somewhere in the corner
 That we may stop and look and say Whose?"
 And those Leaves of yours, dear Greybeard,
 Were leaves you dropped so graciously for me.

I first found them ten years ago
 When at sixteen, on the Atlantic beach, the Florida sands,
 Beneath the baking sun I read
 Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking
 And marvelled at it all.

And today, in Golden Gate Park,
 The Great Camerado spread a carpet
 Of young April grass,
 And we sat upon the delicate leaves
 To sing to Bhagavan, His Song of Myself.

And looking at the grass,
 Shining radiant green in the sun, I thought
 Of Time and Life and Death,
 All the living and all the dead,
 And chanted Hare Krishna
 Just to feel the cosmos vibrate,
 And feeling a sudden terror
 When it did.

Just when I feared everything would pop,
 I thought of you,
 Who "smilest content at death,"
 And chanted much louder
 To see His light and leaves of grass
 Play before me, an endless carillon, endless miracle.
 Then I felt giddy with joy.

How lucky I am, camerado,
 To have such a great friend like you
 Reach across the century
 Just to comfort me.

-- Hayagriva Das Brahmachary
 (Howard Wheeler)

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by A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami

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