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



The Magazine of the Hare Krishna Movement

Pages : 36 April 2022



The Mind

Magnificent and Mighty



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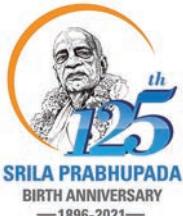


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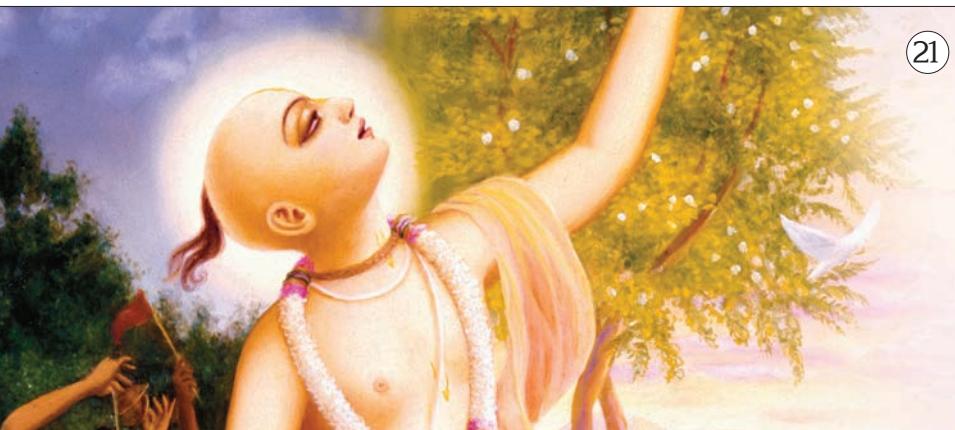
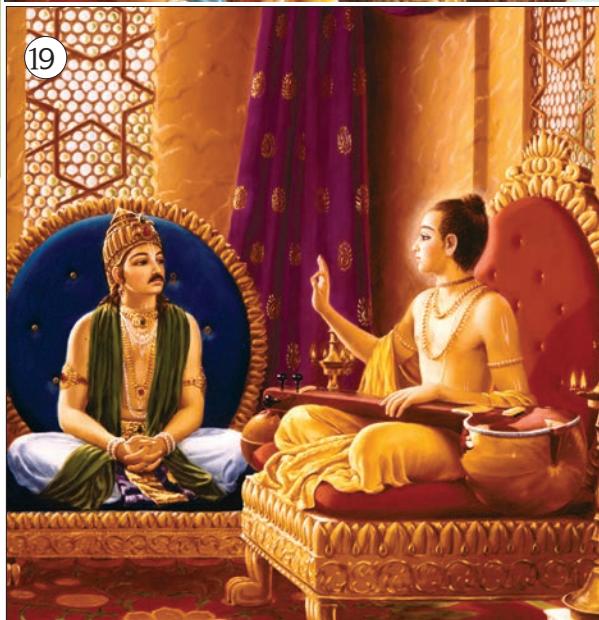
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OUR PURPOSES

- To help all people discern reality from illusion, spirit from matter, the eternal from the temporary.
- To expose the faults of materialism.
- To offer guidance in the Vedic techniques of spiritual life.
- To preserve and spread the Vedic culture.
- To celebrate the chanting of the holy names of God as taught by Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu
- To help every living being remember and serve Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.
- To expose the faults of

BACK TO GODHEAD



The Magazine of the Hare Krishna Movement

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(under the direction of His Divine Grace Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda) His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda - Founder-ācārya of The International Society for Krishna Consciousness

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ANXIETY

I'm a nineteen-year-old from India, and I'm facing the problem of anxiety and panic attacks. Can you please help me come out of it?

—Aniket

Via the Internet

Reply: We are sorry to hear about your problem. The material world is really showing its difficulties lately. The only real solution is to find peace inside ourselves, through the soul and the Supreme Soul, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. He has been waiting for us to turn to Him. Sometimes He has to make us miserable so we become desperate for relief and find our shelter only in Him. He has given us the process of chanting His holy names and hearing about Him to revive the lost consciousness of our eternal loving relationship with Him.

This place is not our real home, and Kṛṣṇa wants us back. Chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* and following Kṛṣṇa's instructions will purify us and qualify us to enter the spiritual world. Even now we can experience that world and its eternal pleasure by the *bhakti* process of serving Him with love and devotion.

We encourage everyone to read Śrīla Prabhupāda's books, associate with Kṛṣṇa's devotees, and chant and hear His holy names. These activities soothe the soul and help us transcend all our bodily demands and problems.

You may also need to seek professional help. But please visit your local temple or practice *bhakti* in your home. Early

morning is the most effective time for spiritual practices, when the mind is more likely to be free of distractions and more able to concentrate on hearing Kṛṣṇa's name, taking it into your heart. Pray to the Lord to help you contact Him. He will hear your requests.

TRANSFORMING LIFE

I want to transform my life in every way. I need assistance. Please help me to know what I should do.

—Ashish Kumar Singh

Via the Internet

Reply: We have all been suffering in the material world for many lifetimes. So we need to do something different this lifetime to make sure we don't have to come back again and again. Kṛṣṇa and His representatives teach us exactly how to transform our consciousness from material to spiritual by the process of *bhakti*, or devotional service to the Lord. We have to purify our consciousness of the conception that we are the all and all, that we are meant to enjoy in these bodies. We are actually meant to please Kṛṣṇa, God, with all that we do, think, and desire. We have to learn to do everything with the aim of placing His pleasure before ours. We are part of Him, and if He is pleased then we will be truly happy, eternally.

Our material desires are never satisfied and create anxiety, hankering, and lamenting. Only if Kṛṣṇa is in the center of our lives will we be satisfied. The

wonderful process of chanting and hearing the glories of the Lord is the most effective way to give us the taste of enjoyment we want.

To learn the philosophy of *bhakti*, please read Śrīla Prabhupāda's books, visit ISKCON's centers, and try chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra. These activities will work wonders in changing your life for the better. They will gradually awaken your God consciousness, the loss of which is at the core of all our troubles. Your choice of association is critical for your spiritual advancement, so seek out people who are happily devoted to the service of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

WHY BELIEVE?

Why should I believe what you have to say? Is there any evidence to make me believe in you?

—Dayanand Kumar
Via the Internet

Reply: The real business of human life is to follow the teachings of the Supreme Lord and His representatives. The Lord will reveal His representative to the sincere seeker of the truth. For our benefit, we should be submissive to hear the glories of the Lord from His representative and engage in the Lord's service.

Use your human intelligence to inquire from spiritually elevated pure souls and ask how you can become purified. This requires some humility and discrimination. Read Śrīla

Prabhupāda's books and test what they have to say. They can change your heart, touch your soul, and begin to reveal your real position as an eternal lover of the Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. He is in your heart waiting for you to turn to Him. He is anxious to have you back home with Him. Give it a try. Chant and glorify Him, render service to Him, and you will discover the evidence you seek.

DEMONS AND DEVOTEES

In devotional service, demons are not allowed; only good people are allowed. So how can we come to Kṛṣṇa if we have demoniac tendencies? In devotional practice, so many traps are there. How can we overcome them?

—Vamsi

Via the Internet

Reply: Souls in this world are influenced by the modes of passion and ignorance and sometimes take to sinful, demoniac activities or lifestyles. Fortunately, Lord Kṛṣṇa has come as Lord Caitanya to deliver even the most fallen. In His biographies we hear about Jagāi and Mādhāi, two men so wicked that it was said that the secretary of Yamarāja, who punishes the sinful, could not record their sinful activities fast enough. But they were delivered by the mercy of the holy name and the Lord Himself.

So everyone is not condemned, despite the demoniac influences on us. The Hare Kṛṣṇa *māhā-mantra* is Kṛṣṇa Himself, and it can purify

even the dirtiest hearts. Also, contact with the pure devotees of Kṛṣṇa, in person or through their teachings, can change one's destination very quickly. All over the world, where everyone is engaged in sinful activities, many people have quickly given up all bad habits after hearing the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness delivered by the Lord's representative. Yes, there are many obstacles to spiritual progress, but they can be conquered by this *saEÖkirtana* movement. There is no doubt about this. ☩

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Kṛṣṇa Consciousness in a Nutshell

by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness



The Bhagavad-gītā is an authoritative statement given to Arjuna by Lord Kṛṣṇa. It must be borne in the mind that the Bhagavad-gītā was spoken on a battlefield. Before the battle, Arjuna declined to fight with his own kinsmen. After the Bhagavad-gītā was spoken, he changed his mind and fought. There was not much time for this discussion—one hour at the most—for the opposing armies were already lined up, and eager to begin the combat.

After hearing about the yoga of meditation, which requires going to a secluded place and sitting perfectly still with the eyes focussed on the tip of the nose, Arjuna said, "Dear Kṛṣṇa, I think this system is too difficult for me, on account of my agitated mind." In the material world our minds are agitated. The nature of the material world is such that we cannot be free from anxieties.

God has many names, according to His different activities. Arjuna here addresses Kṛṣṇa as "Killer of Demons," because Arjuna sees his own mind as a demon. The sum and substance of any yoga system is to control the mind. Arjuna said that his mind was so agitated, that it was impossible for him to practise meditation. Now, Arjuna, a great warrior, was a personal friend of Lord Kṛṣṇa, and he was able to understand the Gita in less than an hour whereas today people can't understand it in an entire lifetime. If Arjuna, who was so

intelligent and spiritually receptive that he could understand the Gita in an hour, said that meditation was too difficult for him, what about us? We are not even in the same category as Arjuna, who was Kṛṣṇa's friend, and who was so intelligent. If it was impossible for Arjuna, can it be possible for us? It is impossible to still a hurricane, and it is equally impossible to still the mind by force. We can control the mind, however, by always thinking of Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa Consciousness is the perfect form of yoga.

Meditation was good in a former age, when people lived millions of years. In the age after

even Kṛṣṇa said that meditation was too difficult in this age. Meditation requires renunciation, but today, even renunciation is too difficult.

In Kṛṣṇa Consciousness there are only four things that must be renounced: illicit sex, intoxication, gambling, and meat-eating. These four activities agitate the mind. Renunciation of these is easy in Kṛṣṇa Consciousness for the process of bhakti-yoga is so easy that these four things become distasteful. Kṛṣṇa Consciousness does not completely discourage sex, but it discourages sex outside of marriage. One who is serious about spiritual

Meditation for the sake of impressing others or yourself will never be successful for even Kṛṣṇa said that meditation was too difficult in this age.

that the best method was sacrifice. After that, it was temple worship. Today, the best method is to chant the Name of the Lord, especially "Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare, Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare." Today, we don't live long. We are unfortunate, disturbed and unintelligent. The whole world is fighting. In times such as these, how can we perform anything as difficult as meditative yoga? Bhakti yoga—Kṛṣṇa Consciousness, and "Hare Kṛṣṇa"—is recommended for the present age. Meditation for the sake of impressing others or yourself will never be successful

advancement cannot encourage illicit or promiscuous sex. If we really want to control the mind it is not necessary to give up sex and food altogether. We can eat food that is properly cooked and offered to Kṛṣṇa, and we can get married. Keeping the mind always in Kṛṣṇa Consciousness is samadhi. When one is in Kṛṣṇa Consciousness, he is leading a renounced life, even if he is not a monk. Success in any form of yoga is not possible without control of the mind.

Once we start on a yoga system, we must stick with it. The desire for spiritual advancement should be there. Out of many men, only a few will



try for perfection. Out of thousands of these, only a few will reach it, for it is a difficult process. However, if you want to be a physician, you must study until you graduate. Spiritual advancement is just like that—except that the rewards are eternal.

Arjuna asked Kṛṣṇa, “What happens to one who starts to study yoga and then gives up?” Kṛṣṇa replied that when a cloud gathers together, there is a possibility of rain, but if the wind blows the cloud away, there is no rain. There may be thunder and

wind, but there will be no rain. Similarly, if one starts the yoga process and quits, he will not have success. Arjuna asked this question so that, in the future, people would not get discouraged and quit.

Bhagavan means one who has complete and perfect riches, strength, knowledge, renunciation, beauty, and fame. Famous people come and go, but God is always famous. God, or Bhagavan, is One Who has the above attributes in completeness and perfection. Kṛṣṇa is the proprietor of all riches but He

can renounce them at a moment's notice. We receive spiritual knowledge from Kṛṣṇa, but He Himself had no need of a spiritual master. We must believe One Who is in complete knowledge. We accept the authority of the newspaper, so why insist on seeing before believing the *Bhagavad-gītā*? The Gita comes from the highest authority, therefore we must make an attempt to study the Gita well suffer no degradation, even if he fails. One who makes an attempt to study the Gita will never be vanquished. This the Lord guarantees.

When one is self-realized, he makes no distinctions between man and animal, or lower and higher. Ideas of high and low, and other pairs of opposites, belong to the material world. When one is in the transcendental position, and sees Kṛṣṇa everywhere, he is fit to enter into the kingdom of God. He knows the Supreme Soul, the workings of nature and of the body, and the relationships of these to each other. When one is in his relationship with the Supreme Lord, all things are of equal value. This is not to say that the living entity is seen as equal to the Supreme Lord, or that all distinctions are obliterated. This would be equivalent to being proficient in a language and not being able to distinguish nouns from verbs.

We are all part and parcel of the Supreme Lord. The realized man therefore sees all things as part of the Supreme Lord. He sees all things as Spirit Soul, in different dress. One who is

bound to the material world in order to become fit to enter into the kingdom of God. Kṛṣṇa comes Himself, or sends His Son or servants to help us—but people still prefer to live on the level of cats and dogs. They want to exploit nature for business purposes, and live sensuously like animals.

The work of nature goes on under the direction of God, to give a chance to the conditioned souls. This world's miseries remind us that we cannot be happy outside of the kingdom of

God. We have no control over the rain or the snow. We should understand that we are helpless—that whatever we do, we are forced to do. Even the blinking of our eyes is controlled by material nature. We have no independence. We are continually being slapped by material nature, and we keep asking for more. The intelligent person knows he is being slapped and kicked.

The condition of the world has deteriorated because we have fools for leaders and teachers.

We must first realize the helplessness of our situation before we can surrender to God. We cannot get material nature to stop slapping us, just as a prisoner cannot stop the harassment of prison life. We must be released from the prison of this material nature, for material nature condemns us. When we decide to return to God, spiritual nature helps us. Just as we are free to move on land, but not in the water, so we are truly free in the spiritual world, but not in the material world. ♪



**Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa
Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare
Hare Rāma Hare Rāma
Rāma Rāma Hare Hare**

Floating Stones

Nothing Is Impossible for the Omnipotent

*How can stones float on water?
They did . . . once upon a time.*

by Gaurāṅga Darśana Dāsa



ACCORDING TO THE Vedic scriptures, millions of years ago, in an age known as Tretāyuga, God appeared as a human being and engaged some monkeys to throw stones into water. By the power of His name, the stones floated, and thus a bridge was built across the ocean. Crossing that bridge, God rescued His wife, who had been kidnapped by a demon.

As most readers of this magazine know, this is a popular pastime of Lord Śrī Rāmacandra

from the ancient scripture the *Rāmāyaṇa*. But most people don't believe such stories, calling them mythology. Nevertheless, they are not myth but factual incidents recorded in timeless scriptures. To understand them takes some intelligence,

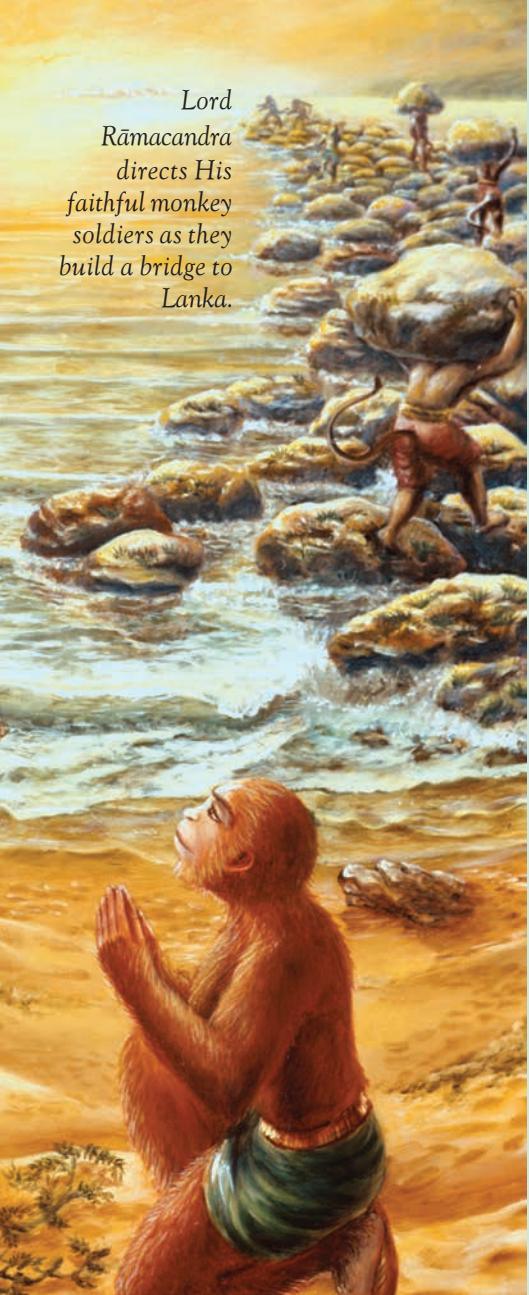
WHY CAN'T THIS HAPPEN?

It is not difficult or illogical to agree that the world we perceive is functioning based on specific laws. We see orderliness and

predictability in the characteristics of the sun and the moon, day and night, the seasons, and so on. By whose power and organization is nature functioning in such a systematic manner? Any rational person should agree that there is some creator, controller, and maintainer for the universe. He is God.

God exercises His omnipotence in exhibiting many names, forms, and activities. He resides in a spiritual abode of

Lord
Rāmacandra
directs His
faithful monkey
soldiers as they
build a bridge to
Lanka.



eternal variety, and at times kindly descends into this created world in His various forms, such as Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, Nṛsiṁha, and Varāha. There are multiple purposes for His descent, especially to protect the righteous, punish the wicked, and establish right conduct. Lord Kṛṣṇa says in the *Bhagavad-gīta* (4.7),

*paritrāṇāya sādhuṇām
vināśāya ca duṣkṛtām
dharma-saṁsthāpanārthaḥ
sambhavāmi yuge yuge*

"To deliver the pious and to annihilate the miscreants, as well as to re-establish the principles of religion, I Myself appear, millennium after millennium."

Further, the literary masterpiece *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* describes that the material universe was formed with the basic ingredients earth, water, air, fire, and ether, which emanated from the body of Lord Mahā-Viṣṇu, who lies in the "causal ocean" (*kāraṇa samudra*). After the formation of the universe, Mahā-Viṣṇu entered it in the form of Garbhodakaśayī Viṣṇu, from whose navel sprouted a universal lotus that gave rise to the fourteen planetary systems that make up the universe.

Modern science confirms that the universe consists of planets in space. It is only by the inconceivable power and will of the Supreme Lord that innumerable planets float like cotton balls, suspended perfectly in their orbits. If this is possible for the Lord, why can't He, in the form of Rāmacandra, float some stones in water? After all, can the creator be limited by the laws of His own creation?

The natural elements like earth and water have their inherent properties. The earth element in the form of stone doesn't float on water. It sinks. But who has given the elements their qualities? God. If God can invest the elements with certain characteristics, He can change them for a specific purpose as well, because material nature is controlled by the omnipotent Lord.

*mayādhyakṣena prakrtih
sūyate sa-carācaram
hetunānena kaunteya
jagad viparivartate*

"This material nature, which is one of My energies, is working under My direction, O son of Kuntī, producing all moving and nonmoving beings. Under its rule this manifestation is created and annihilated again and again." (*Gītā* 9.10)

WHY SHOULD THIS HAPPEN?

Another natural question: If Lord Rāma had the power to float stones on water, didn't He have the power to walk on water and make the other monkeys do it as well? Or He could have adopted any way to cross the ocean. Why did He have to build a bridge?

Yes, certainly Rāma and His party could have crossed the ocean even without a bridge. The Supreme Lord is independent, however, and can do anything according to His sweet will. So if He wants to do something in a certain way, no one has the power to question Him. Still, the scriptures reveal a few reasons in this regard.

Lord Rāma came to know that His wife, Sītā Devī, had been kidnapped by the king of demons, Rāvana, who held her captive in Lanka. To reach Lanka, Lord Rāma had to cross the ocean. He reached the shore accompanied by a huge army of monkey soldiers headed by Sugrīva, Hanumān, Jāmbavān, and others. To summon the ocean personified, Lord Rāma,

the Supreme Being, fasted for three days, awaiting the ocean's arrival. When the lord of the ocean did not respond, Lord Rāma exhibited anger, and simply by His glance all the aquatics within the ocean were struck with fear.

The ocean-god then hastily approached Lord Rāmacandra, fell at His feet, and prayed, "O all-pervading Supreme Person, we are dull-minded and did not

with His sweet will.

In loving devotion, a devotee wants to glorify the Supreme Lord for eternity, just as the ocean-god so desired after realizing his mistakes. He wanted to see the future generations glorify Rāma for doing something no human being had done before or could do later. Thus the Supreme Lord Rāma, by enacting this magnificent pastime, created suitable

It is only by the inconceivable power and will of the Supreme Lord that innumerable planets float like cotton balls.

understand who You are, but now we understand that You are the Supreme Person, the master of the entire universe, the unchanging and original Personality of Godhead. . . O great hero, although my water presents no impediment to Your going to Laṅkā, please construct a bridge over it to spread Your transcendental fame. Upon seeing this wonderfully uncommon deed of Your Lordship, all the great heroes and kings in the future will glorify You." (*Bhāgavatam* 9.10.14–15)

The ocean-god's initial inability to recognize Lord Rāma's identity represents the rebellious mentality of the mortal beings that doesn't allow them to submit to God. But by devotional service to the Lord they can go beyond their illusion and gain the sublime realization of an eternal, blissful life aligned

material for our discussion, absorption, and purification to increase our love for Him.

WHAT DOES THIS INDICATE?

Lord Rāmacandra's superhuman deed of floating stones on water declares His omnipotence and proves that He is the Supreme Personality of Godhead and not an ordinary human being. He is capable of doing anything, and no material conventions can obstruct His will. He was not merely advertised as the Godhead or elected by popular vote.

Ordinary human beings who cannot change the properties of the material elements still think they are great – or even God. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes,

Nowadays it has become fashionable to create some

artificial God who performs no uncommon activities; a little magic will bewilder a foolish person into selecting an artificial God because he does not understand how powerful God is. Lord Rāmacandra, however, constructed a bridge over the water with stone by making the stone float. This is proof of God's uncommonly wonderful power. Why should someone be accepted as God without displaying extraordinary potency by doing something never to be done by any common man? We accept Lord Rāmacandra as the Supreme Personality of Godhead because He constructed this bridge, and we accept Lord Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Personality of Godhead because He lifted Govardhana Hill when He was only seven years old. (*Bhāgavatam* 9.10.15, Purport)

Many people blindly believe some ordinary mortal to be God just by seeing a display of a few magical feats. But what is the magician's significance in comparison to that of the Supreme Godhead, whose unsurpassable natural wonders manifest in the creation. Śrīla Prabhupāda says that people pay a lot of money to see and appreciate a magician barking like a dog, but they don't appreciate God, who creates millions of dogs in this world. People believe a so-called saint who "creates" a little gold, but they don't put faith in God, who

created millions of planets, each containing thousands of gold mines.

Allured by the tiny wonders created by mortals, foolish people ignore the great wonders created by God. People who adore fictitious heroes in comics and movies do not admire the real heroic acts of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa, but consider them myth. All the superhuman acts of the Supreme Lord in His various incarnations indicate His Godhood and omnipotence. If only we trust the words of the scriptures and relish such wondrous pastimes of God, we can make tremendous progress in our spiritual journey. Lord Kṛṣṇa therefore says in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (4.9),

*janma karma ca me divyam
evam yo vetti tattvataḥ
tyaktvā deham punar janma
naiti mām eti so 'rjuna*

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

The deep mysteries of the miraculous pastimes of God are inconceivable to the common person, but for people who have faith in His unlimited potency, such pastimes become a source of relish and nourishment. They discuss their beloved Lord’s pastimes with great satisfaction, as Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself says in the *Bhagavadgītā* (10.9):

*mac-cittā mad-gata-prāṇā
bodhayantah parasparam*

*kathayantaś ca mām nityam
tuṣyanti ca ramanti ca*

“The thoughts of My pure devotees dwell in Me, their lives are fully devoted to My service, and they derive great satisfaction and bliss from always enlightening one another and conversing about Me.” ☩

*Gaurāṅga Darśana Dāsa, a
disciple of His Holiness
Rādhānāth Swami, is dean of the
Bhaktivedānta Vidyāpīṭha at*

ISKCON Govardhan Eco Village (GEV), outside Mumbai. He has written books including *Gītā Subodhinī*, *Bhāgavata Subodhinī*, *Caitanya Subodhinī*, and *Disapproved but not Disowned*. He teaches śāstric courses at several places in India and oversees the deity worship at GEV. His website is www.gaurangadarshan.com. Lord Rāmacandra directs His faithful monkey soldiers as they build a bridge to Lanka.

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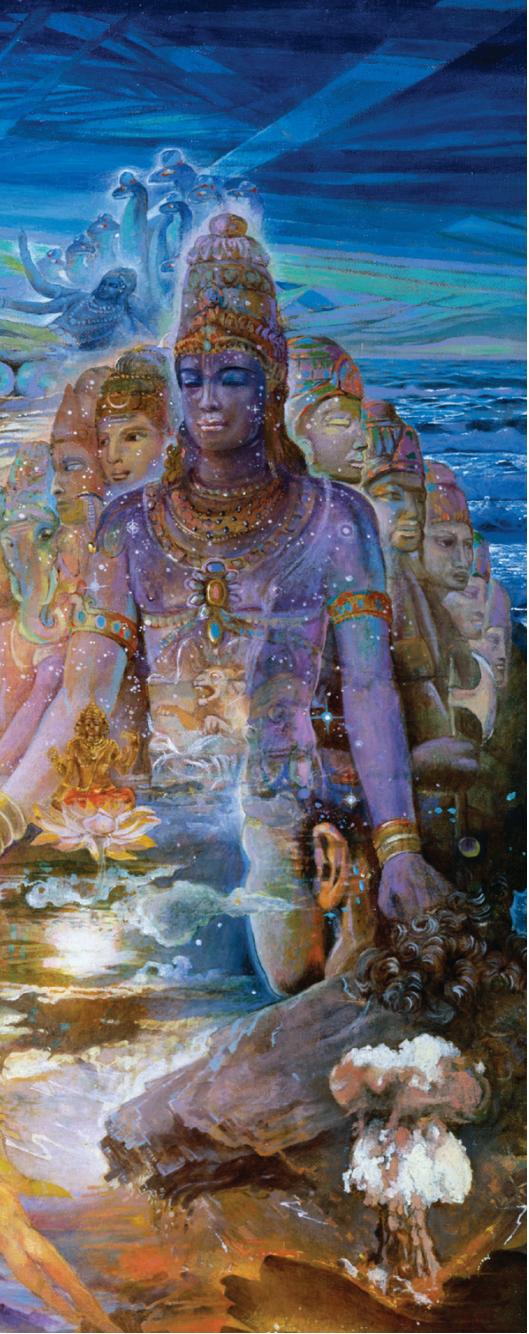
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The Significance of the Universal Form

Exploring how the most dramatic revelation in the Gītā conveys its teachings vividly and illustrates the Gītā's universal relevance.

By Caitanya Caraṇa Dāsa



The universal form is an intriguing revelation in the Bhagavad-gītā's eleventh chapter. To understand the universal form fully, we need to look at what is special or significant about the revelation. Let's look at six aspects of the universal form.

THE UNPRECEDENTED REVELATION

In the Bhagavad-gītā's eleventh chapter, Kṛṣṇa states

twice that his revelation of the universal form is unprecedented (11.06: *adr̥ṣṭa-pūrvāṇi*, 11.47: *na dr̥ṣṭa-pūrvam*). Arjuna too confirms this (11.45: *adr̥ṣṭa-pūrvam*).

These repeated assertions raise a question: when Kṛṣṇa had shown the universal form earlier, why is this revelation considered unprecedented? To answer, let's consider the previous revelations.

In his childhood, Kṛṣṇa had shown the universal form to his mother Yashoda. And a few weeks before the Kurukṣetra war, he had shown it to Duryodhana. Though both these revelations are called the universal form, they were slightly different. To his mother, Kṛṣṇa had shown how the entire universe was contained in his mouth. To Duryodhana, he had shown the size and might of the form that the Kuru prince had foolishly tried to arrest: in that form were the mighty devatas who were cosmic guardians — with the five Pāṇḍavas among their ranks. This revelation was meant to send a strong deterrent message to Duryodhana, who unfortunately was too obstinate to learn.

Among these two revelations, the revelation to Duryodhana was closer to what was shown to Arjuna. Still, Arjuna was shown something extra: the *kāla-rūpa*, the form of destructive time. This additional revelation provided Arjuna a sneak peek at the future; he could see that the warriors assembled on the Kurukṣetra battlefield were all destined to die due to their own

past actions. The underlying message was that Arjuna couldn't change their destiny by abstaining from fighting; better that he do his duty and get the credit for being a worthy instrument of the divine will (11.33). Because Arjuna, unlike Duryodhana, was ready to learn, Kṛṣṇa's revelation to him had the intended effect (18.73).

Kṛṣṇa's revelation of the universal form to Arjuna was unprecedented because Kṛṣṇa's previous revelations hadn't included his *kāla-rūpa*.

WHY THE BONUS REVELATION?

When Arjuna asks Kṛṣṇa to display the universal form, Kṛṣṇa obliges, but also displays something extra: his form as time. Why this bonus revelation?

Because Kṛṣṇa is always conscious of the original purpose of the discussion: to resolve Arjuna's dilemma about whether to fight or not. Therefore, whichever subject he may be contextually addressing, he expertly reorients the discussion toward that purpose.

In this context, Kṛṣṇa goes beyond addressing Arjuna's specific request to be shown the universal form — he also shows an aspect of that form which will help Arjuna make a decision. Kṛṣṇa's form as time, specifically its destructive aspect, emphatically demonstrates to Arjuna a key point: The opposing Kauravas were doomed to death because of their many misdeeds, as were those who had chosen to be allied with them. Even if Arjuna chose not to

fight, he couldn't save them from their due karmic reactions. Kṛṣṇa hints at this point by using the Sanskrit word *rte* —a word that can mean both “except” and “without.” The former meaning indicates that Arjuna would be exempt from the destruction wrought by time on the battlefield, whereas the latter meaning indicates that time would bring about its destruction even without Arjuna’s participation. If he participated, he would do his social and spiritual duty, thus being glorified and elevated.

Kṛṣṇa had hinted at this bonus revelation when describing what he was going to show: “I will show you something that has never been shown before.” By thus giving an unsought bonus revelation of his manifestation of time, Kṛṣṇa offers Arjuna complete guidance, providing him not just what he had asked for, but also what he needed but hadn’t known enough to ask about.

WHY THE GHASTLINESS OF THE FORM?

In the Bhagavad-gītā’s eleventh chapter, the universal form is shown to be devouring the major warriors assembled on the battlefield. Why is the form so ghastly? Why is it considered divine? Is it meant to depict a form of divine cannibalism? Let’s address these questions one-by-one.

The ghastliness of the universal form: The universal form depicts the complete reality of the universe. And this complete reality includes death.

While the event of death can sometimes be peaceful, the fact of death itself is nonetheless harsh. The universal form offers an unvarnished vision of this reality, hence its ghastliness.

perverse. What is that profound reality? Depicting the inevitable end of the physical body as it succumbs to death. In the Vedic tradition, the dead body is cremated, with the sacred fire



Death of the assembled warriors is compared to moths entering fire (top) and multiple rivers entering the ocean (opposite page).

The divinity of the universal form:

No matter how powerful anyone might become, death eventually triumphs over everyone. Therefore, death is considered to be almighty or more specifically, a manifestation of the almighty reality: the supreme divinity. Just as the sight of the ghastly aspect of the universal form impels Arjuna to seek a vision of a more affectionate form of the Divine, an unflinching look at the unappealable finality of death can impel us to ponder higher realities, culminating in the supreme reality.

The symbolism of the universal form: To equate the ghastliness of the universal form with cannibalism is to take literalism to such an extreme as to render a profound reality

offering the soul a gateway to transition to another reality. For onlookers, cremation provides a graphic reminder of the irreversible temporality of the body and the brutal finality of death. The fire emanating from the mouth of the universal form that consumes the assembled warriors depicts such a cremation.

Thus, the ghastly aspect of the universal form depicts the harsh reality of death, impels us to think of higher reality and replicates the cremation that consumes the physical body.

DEMONSTRATING THE GITA’S TEACHINGS

The revelation of the universal form is the most dramatic event in the Bhagavad-gītā’s narrative. Why is this

dramatic revelation present in a philosophical book like the Gita? It serves to illustrate the Gita's teachings, based on both the immediate context and the broader context.

Immediate context: In the Gita chapters before the chapter on the universal form (namely, chapters nine and ten), Kṛṣṇa has explained his mysterious relationship with the material world. The most direct assertion of this mystery occurs in chapter nine, where Kṛṣṇa elaborates on that relationship using twin statements that seem directly contradictory: he sustains the world (9.04) and he doesn't sustain the world (09.05). Such is his mystical opulence (9.05: *yogam-aiśvaram*). In that chapter and especially in the next chapter, Kṛṣṇa explains through philosophical analysis

and cosmic examples how he sustains everything in existence (10.42). Arjuna requests Kṛṣṇa to reveal that opulence of his (*rūpam-aiśvaram*) and Kṛṣṇa responds by showing the universal form.

Broader context: In its fourth chapter, the Gita has dramatically expanded the ambit of the concept of *yajna* (fire-sacrifice), by stating how a wide gamut of human activities can be conducted in a mood of sacrifice. The implication is that Arjuna can see the battle at Kurukṣetra as a sacrifice, with those propagating or supporting adharma being the oblation and Arjuna being the priest offering that oblation. As such a sacrificial image might be unusual for Arjuna and he might hesitate to play his part in it, the universal form demonstrates the

fulfillment of that sacrifice through its time aspect (*kāla-rūpa*). The revelation of the Kaurava warriors entering into the fiery mouth of the universal form demonstrates that this sacrifice is being accepted by the divine. Hence, the concluding call to Arjuna to do his part.

Thus, the universal form is revealed to manifest Kṛṣṇa's opulence and persuade Arjuna to do his duty in a sacrificial mood.

THE TWO METAPHORS

In the Bhagavad-gītā, Kṛṣṇa describes the death of the assembled warriors using two metaphors: they are like rivers entering into an ocean (11.28) and like moths entering into fire (11.29).

Gītā commentators such as Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī

Thākura explain that these two metaphors refer to two distinct modes of death: circumstantial and volitional. Just as rivers naturally flow toward the ocean, some assembled warriors, such as Bhīṣma, had been pushed by force of circumstances into the war. Unlike rivers, moths move intentionally toward fire, believing it to be enjoyable. Similarly, some warriors, such as Duryodhana, had knowingly caused the war by repeatedly provoking and persecuting the



Pāṇḍavas; he had believed the war would grant him unrivaled power and prosperity.

Additionally, when moths enter fire, their bodies are destroyed. In contrast, when rivers enter into the ocean, their defining component, water, is not destroyed; it continues to exist, just within a larger body of water. Similarly, when materialistic people like Duryodhana die, they suffer terribly, as if their very existence has ended. Why? Because they strongly identify with their bodies; they feel that bodily destruction is like self-annihilation. In contrast, spiritually-evolved individuals like Bhīṣma know that their defining essence is their soul;

metaphors, Kṛṣṇa allays Arjuna's concerns: though his venerable elders like Bhīṣma were fated to die, their death would be far different from the death of the likes of Duryodhana.

Even if we can't change the fact of our mortality, we can change how we experience death and how we contribute while alive.

THE CALL FOR NON-ANIMOSITY

In the Bhagavad-gītā, the eleventh chapter reveals the *kāla-rūpa*, the form of time in its destructive manifestation. Not only did this form depict how almost everyone on the battlefield will be destroyed, but

wants to eliminate the other party for their many perceived or actual wrongdoings. Arjuna too could have easily dwelt on the many atrocities the opposing Kauravas had perpetrated against his family and taken that as an impetus to fight. Kṛṣṇa categorically tells him to avoid such animosity.

Kṛṣṇa's clear caveat points to the real import of the whole chapter: it is not a call for all of us to fight, as Arjuna is called to do; it is a call to harmonize with Kṛṣṇa, which Arjuna can do in his context by fighting. Such harmonization requires us to free ourselves from emotions that disconnect us from him — and one such prominent emotion is animosity. Kṛṣṇa is everyone's well-wisher (05.29) and he wants us all to be similarly disposed, as he will specify in the next chapter (12.13).

Why, then, does Kṛṣṇa want Arjuna to fight? Because in that specific situation, the opposing army was adamantly opposed to Kṛṣṇa's plan to establish dharma for the world's good.

Indeed, Kṛṣṇa's core call is not to fight, but to become an instrument for the Divine, which requires freedom from animosity, the cause of most fighting. The revelation of the universal form is meant to reinforce the Gita's core message. ☸

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Kṛṣṇa's core call is not to fight, but to become an instrument for the Divine, which requires freedom from animosity, the cause of most fighting.

when their body is destroyed, their soul gracefully transits to a higher reality, in greater harmony with the ultimate reality.

Moreover, moths flying into a fire don't do any good for anyone, whereas rivers flowing toward the ocean provide life-nourishing water to everyone living on their banks. Similarly, Duryodhana didn't do any good for anyone during his lifelong pursuit of the Kuru kingdom, but Bhīṣma was a fount of wisdom for everyone throughout his life.

Through these two pregnant

it also called upon Arjuna to assist in that war (11.33). This call can be disconcerting, given that our world is haunted by the specter of violence in the name of religion.

Intriguingly though, Kṛṣṇa concludes this Gītā chapter by describing how Arjuna (and by implication all of us) can come to him (11.55). While listing five to-dos, Kṛṣṇa lists one that is striking: be free from animosity toward all living beings. Why striking? Because a common cause for war is animosity, wherein one party hates and

Strong protection through wise association

by Chandrahas Pujari

*vijayo mantra-mūlo hi rājñām
bhavati bhārata /
susānvṛto mantra-dhanair
amātyaiḥ śāstra-kovidaiḥ*

Translation: “O Bhārata, the victories of kings are rooted in the good counsel of their ministers. Have you protected your kingdom by holding close to yourself the counsel of ministers learned in the scriptures?”
(Nārada to Yudhishtira)

This verse underscores the importance of good counsel in decision-making. While every decision that everyone takes has consequences, decisions of leaders can have huge, even catastrophic, consequences that can affect thousands or even millions of people — and can continue to affect for decades or even centuries.

For example, if a head of state, be it a king or a president or prime minister, decides to attack another country, the resulting war can take a devastating toll not just in financial loss or infrastructural damage but even in human casualties and fatalities. Such destruction may result not just because of one king’s reckless aggression but also because of another king’s

thoughtless provocation — if the second king repeatedly incites the first king with covert conspiracies or overt humiliating actions that fall below an open war, that king may well be culpable for the war, even if it is the first king that actually launches the attack.

Similar was the situation

before the Kurukṣetra war. Yudhiṣṭhīra was repeatedly provoked by Duryodhana’s many atrocities, which the virtuous Pāṇḍava endured while undergoing many austerities during exile. Taking good counsel from guides like Kṛṣṇa, Vyāsa and others, Yudhiṣṭhīra sought a

(Continued on page 25)





The Mind Magnificent and Mighty

Our mind, an aspect of Kṛṣṇa's material energy, can be a helpful ally or a hindering foe.

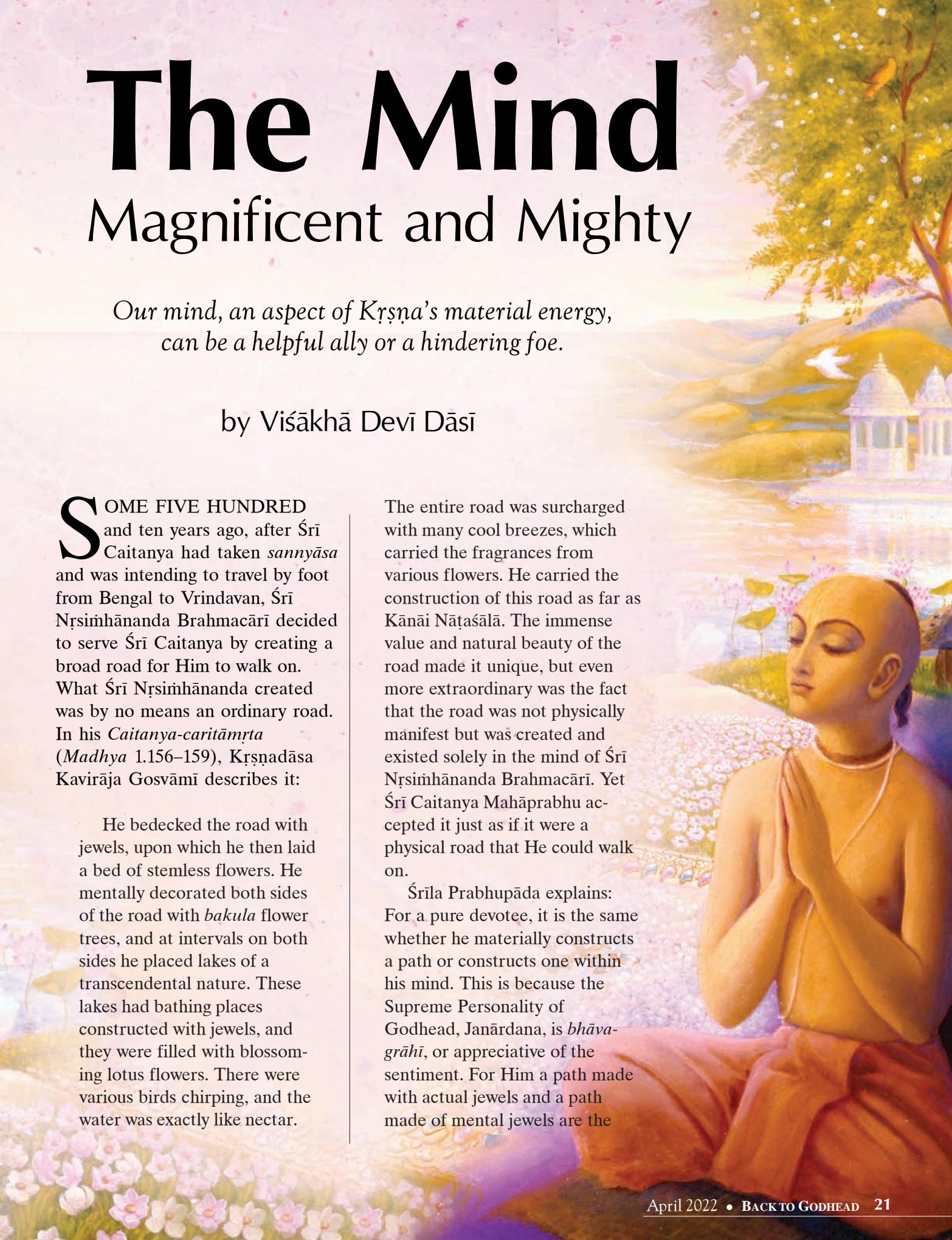
by Viśākhā Devī Dāsī

SOME FIVE HUNDRED and ten years ago, after Śrī Caitanya had taken *sannyāsa* and was intending to travel by foot from Bengal to Vrindavan, Śrī Nṛsiṁhānanda Brahmacārī decided to serve Śrī Caitanya by creating a broad road for Him to walk on. What Śrī Nṛsiṁhānanda created was by no means an ordinary road. In his *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (*Madhya* 1.156–159), Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī describes it:

He bedecked the road with jewels, upon which he then laid a bed of stemless flowers. He mentally decorated both sides of the road with *bakula* flower trees, and at intervals on both sides he placed lakes of a transcendental nature. These lakes had bathing places constructed with jewels, and they were filled with blossoming lotus flowers. There were various birds chirping, and the water was exactly like nectar.

The entire road was surcharged with many cool breezes, which carried the fragrances from various flowers. He carried the construction of this road as far as Kānāi Nāṭaśālā. The immense value and natural beauty of the road made it unique, but even more extraordinary was the fact that the road was not physically manifest but was created and existed solely in the mind of Śrī Nṛsiṁhānanda Brahmacārī. Yet Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu accepted it just as if it were a physical road that He could walk on.

Śrīla Prabhupāda explains: For a pure devotee, it is the same whether he materially constructs a path or constructs one within his mind. This is because the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Janārdana, is *bhāva-grāhī*, or appreciative of the sentiment. For Him a path made with actual jewels and a path made of mental jewels are the



same. Though subtle, mind is also matter, so any path – indeed, anything for the service of the Lord, whether in gross matter or in subtle matter – is accepted equally by the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The Lord accepts the attitude of His devotee and sees how much he is prepared to serve Him. The devotee is at liberty to serve the Lord either in gross matter or in subtle matter. The important point is that the service be in relation with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. (*Madhya* 1.161, Purport)

So complete was Śrī Nṛsiṁhānanda Brahmācārī's meditation that when he could not construct the road past Kanai Natashaala (in eastern

that, indeed, is what came to pass.

We may question this story and how it illustrates the mind's power, but when looked at logically and philosophically, it's not only reasonable but also soundly convincing.

In the *Gītā* (7.4), Kṛṣṇa explains that this world is composed of eight material elements: earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, intelligence, and false ego. Kṛṣṇa is ultimately the source of these elements (*aham sarvasya prabhavah*, *Gītā* 10.8), and they and their combinations compose the entirety of what we can perceive with our senses. Kṛṣṇa wants us to come closer to Him, and for that purpose He manifests Himself in the form of the deity. The deity, although made of material elements like wood or stone, is identical to Kṛṣṇa Himself. And if Kṛṣṇa so desires,

Bhūmir āpo 'nalo vāyuh kham mano. So, mind is also another material thing. So if you think of Kṛṣṇa's form within the body, mind, it is as good as you worship the deity in the temples made of brass or wood or stone. Because both of them are Kṛṣṇa's energy. Whatever possible, He can accept. And that is Kṛṣṇa, because it is Kṛṣṇa's energy. Therefore the energy is not different from Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa can accept your service in any of these material . . . , so-called material. Actually there are no material things. Material things means the desire for sense gratification. That is material.

(Room Conversation, Sept. 19, 1973, Bombay)

We may not be expert enough to worship and serve the deity within our mind, but we can give credit to those who are expert enough and marvel at how Kṛṣṇa reciprocates with them.

Śrīla Prabhupāda writes (*Bhāgavatam* 4.30.28, Purport):

There is a story about a *brāhmaṇa* who was offering sweet rice to the Lord within his mind. The *brāhmaṇa* had no money or any means of worshiping the Deity, but within his mind he arranged everything nicely. He had gold pots to bring water from the sacred rivers to wash the Deity, and he offered the Deity very sumptuous food, including sweet rice. Once, before he offered the sweet rice, he thought that it was too hot, and he thought, "Oh, let me test

Bihar), although he was astonished and at first could not understand why the construction stopped, after some thought he confidently declared to the devotees that Śrī Caitanya would not go all the way to Vrindavan at that time. Śrī Nṛsiṁhānanda said, "The Lord will go to Kānāi Nāṭaśālā and then will return. All of you will come to know of this later, but I now say this with great assurance." (*Madhya* 1.162) And

He can also manifest in the mind of His devotee, as He did with Śrī Nṛsiṁhānanda. "The Deity form of the Lord is said to appear in eight varieties – stone, wood, metal, earth, paint, sand, the mind or jewels." (*Bhāgavatam* 11.27.12) If Kṛṣṇa wants to appear somewhere, who are we to say that He can't or wouldn't or shouldn't?

Here's how Śrīla Prabhupāda expresses it:

it. My, it is very hot.” When he put his finger in the sweet rice to test it, his finger was burned and his meditation broken. Although he was offering food to the Lord within his mind, the Lord accepted it nonetheless. Consequently, the Lord in Vaikuṇṭha immediately sent a chariot to bring the *brāhmaṇa* back home, back to Godhead.

HOW IS THIS RELEVANT TO ME?

On one hand, our mind limits our spiritual quest: “The mind cannot catch You [the Lord] by speculation, and words fail to describe You.” (*Bhāgavatam* 8.5.26) Worse, the mind can be our archenemy: “Except for the uncontrolled and misguided mind, there is no enemy within this world.” (*Bhāgavatam* 7.8.9)

Yet, as we’ve seen above, that very mind can bring us to Kṛṣṇa and His abode. The mind is so powerful that our very destiny depends on how it’s situated: “Whatever state of being one remembers when he quits his body, that state he will attain without fail.” (*Gītā* 8.6)

If we’re worshiping the deity in the temple and our mind is distracted, a mere show of worship will not be of any benefit. (*Bhāgavatam* 5.8.14, Purport) But if our mind is focused on pleasing Kṛṣṇa, then we can please Him whatever our material circumstances. Śrīla Prabhupāda: “The whole yogic system is to convert the mind from matter to spirit. You can utilize the mind in both ways. When the mind is spiritually trained up, it is the best friend of

the soul, and when the mind is materially polluted, it is the worst enemy.” (Letter, Sept. 28, 1975)

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

In almost three quarters of a century in dealing with my own particular mind, I’ve found a few tools that help me befriend it. One is to recognize and respect its overarching power. Sometimes everything can be fine externally but my disturbed mind doesn’t allow me to appreciate anything. In fact, everything

orders. Gradually the mind should be trained to obey the orders of the soul. It is not that one should obey the orders of the mind.” (*Bhāgavatam* 5.11.17, Purport)

Boundaries also help keep the mind friendly. From the beginning of establishing the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement, Śrīla Prabhupāda requested all his initiated disciples to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and follow four regulations. These are firm activities and boundaries that, when followed with the intent of ad-

From the beginning of establishing the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement, Śrīla Prabhupāda requested all his initiated disciples to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and follow four regulations.

seems terrible. And the opposite occurs as well. The holocaust survivor Victor Frankl said, “Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms – to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way.” Such a choice takes mind control.

I must remember that my mind is not me but something covering me, the *atmā*, or spiritual being, and not take the mind so seriously. Rather, I can acknowledge its condition, become detached from it, and neglect it. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “There is one easy weapon with which the mind can be conquered – disobedience. The mind is always telling us to do this or that; therefore we should be very expert in disobeying the mind’s

vancing spiritually, do wonders to control and calm the mind. “A person free from all attachment and aversion and able to control his senses through regulative principles of freedom can obtain the complete mercy of the Lord.” (*Gītā* 2.64) Kṛṣṇa helps the sincere practitioner.

Another tool that I’ve found helpful for keeping the mind in check is a regular daily schedule. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes of the detriment of irregular habits. “Overeating, over-sense gratification, overdependence on another’s mercy, and artificial standards of living sap the very vitality of human energy.” (*Bhāgavatam* 1.1.10, Purport)

Śrīla Prabhupāda’s awareness of Kṛṣṇa was always fresh and vibrant, never hackneyed or stereotyped, and at the same

time he generally followed a predictable pattern in his days, rising early to translate, take a morning walk, lecture, have breakfast, and so forth (although he was flexible for special occasions). We can follow this in spirit and establish a regular routine for sleeping, rising, and

Ultimately our success will be when we relish and rejoice in all aspects of spiritual life. At that time we will be naturally absorbed in Kṛṣṇa, His devotees, and His service.

performing our daily activities, for this helps train the mind to function even if it's disturbed.

Bhagavad-gītā tells us that if one is too austere or too sensuous one cannot control the mind. This is confirmed in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (11.20.21):

An expert horseman, desiring to tame a headstrong horse, first lets the horse have his way for a moment and then, pulling the reins, gradually places the horse on the desired path. Similarly, the supreme *yoga* process is that by which one carefully observes the movements and desires of the mind and gradually brings them under full control.

Purport: Just as an expert rider intimately knows the propensities of an untamed horse and gradually brings the horse under control, an expert *yogi* allows the mind to reveal its materialistic propensities and then controls them through superior

intelligence. A learned transcendentalist withholds and supplies sense objects so that the mind and senses remain fully controlled, just as the horseman sometimes pulls sharply on the reins and sometimes allows the horse to run freely. The

rider never forgets his actual goal or destination, and eventually places the horse on the right path. Similarly, a learned transcendentalist, even though sometimes allowing the senses to act, never forgets the goal of self-realization, nor does he allow the senses to engage in sinful activity. Excessive austerity or restriction may result in great mental disturbance, just as pulling excessively on the reins of a horse may cause the horse to rear up against the rider. The path of self-realization depends upon clear intelligence, and the easiest way to acquire such expertise is surrender to Lord Kṛṣṇa. The Lord says in *Bhagavad-gītā* (10.10):

*tesāṁ satata-yuktānāṁ
bhajatāṁ pṛiti-pūrvakam
dadāmi buddhi-yogam tam
yena mām upayānti te*

One may not be a great scholar or spiritual intellect,

but if one is sincerely engaged in loving service to the Lord without personal envy or personal motivation the Lord will reveal from within the heart the methodology required to control the mind. Expertly riding the waves of mental desire, a Kṛṣṇa conscious person does not fall from the saddle, and he eventually rides all the way back home, back to Godhead.

So we befriend our mighty mind through knowledge ("I am a spiritual being"), detachment ("I am not my mind"), purity (chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa), regulation, and especially through our correct intention. That intention is to come closer to Kṛṣṇa, and we do that by serving Him with devotion. "Please try to conquer this mind by the weapon of service to the lotus feet of the spiritual master and of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Do this with great care."

(*Bhāgavatam* 5.11.17)

Ultimately our success will be when we relish and rejoice in all aspects of spiritual life. At that time we will be naturally absorbed in Kṛṣṇa, His devotees, and His service, and will serve Him however we're able, including within our mind, just as Śrī Nṛsiṁhānanda Brahmācārī did.

Śrīla Prabhupāda writes (*Bhāgavatam* 5.11.8, Purport), "The mind is the cause of material existence and liberation also. Everyone is suffering in this material world because of the mind; it is therefore proper to train the mind or to cleanse the

mind from material attachment and engage it fully in the Lord's service. This is called spiritual engagement." 

Visākhā Devī Dāsī has been writing for BTG since 1973. The author of six books, she is the temple president at Bhaktivedanta Manor in the UK. She and her husband, Yadubara Dāsa, produce and direct films, most recently the biopic on the life of Śrīla Prabhupāda Hare Krishna! The Mantra, the Movement, and the Swami Who Started It All. Visit her website at OurSpiritualJourney.com. In meditation, Śrī Nṛsiṁhānanda Brahmacārī creates a beautiful road for Lord Caitanya's journey.



Strong Protection.... *(Continued from page 19)*

peaceful resolution by every means possible, human and even divine — the supreme divinity, Kṛṣṇa, went on a peace mission on his behalf. When Duryodhana remained adamant, it became clear to the Pāṇḍavas and to all objective observers that it was Duryodhana who wanted the war, not the Pāṇḍavas.

Yudhiṣṭhīra recognized that the costs of fighting a war would be heavy, but sometimes the costs of not fighting the war would be far heavier. To give a contemporary example, Yudhiṣṭhīra refused to become a pollyanish pacifist, akin to Chamberlain before the Second World War, who by dithering in curbing Hitler's aggressions initially only ended

up making a regional war global.

In contrast to Yudhiṣṭhīra's acting according to good advice, Duryodhana never accepted any good advice from the many sages who urged him to settle for a peaceful resolution. Did Duryodhana's defiance mean that he didn't take advice from anyone? Not at all; he took advice — just bad advice from self-serving people such as Śakuni. Thus, he did the opposite of what Nārada advises in this verse; he opened his kingdom for devastation by holding bad advice close to himself and keeping good advice at a long distance from himself.

We may not be heads of states, but we too have to take decisions during the course of our life. Whenever we take decisions, we rarely realize how much our decisions are influenced by factors outside ourselves. We may believe that we are thinking for ourselves, but actually our thinking is substantially influenced, even if subconsciously, by the words, actions and expectations of others. We can't avoid such influence, but we can choose who we are influenced by. And that choice begins by examining who is around us and especially whose words we are keeping close to our heads and hearts. 



Editorial.... *(Continued from page 34)*

demoniac think that all these things are accidental and due to the strength of one's personal ability. They do not sense any arrangement behind all the varieties of people, beauty and

education. Anyone who comes into competition with such a demoniac man is his enemy. There are many demoniac people, and each is enemy to the others. This enmity becomes more and more deep—between persons, then between families, then between societies, and at last between nations. Therefore there is constant strife, war and enmity all over the world. (16.16)

Śrīla Prabhupāda once gave a striking example of how the forces of Māyā work:

"In my young days we had one teacher. Whenever there was any misbehavior between the boys, the teacher would stop them and bring them out to the front of the class. He would make them stand face-to-face and each take hold of the ears of the other and on his order make them pull. So the one, he is pulling, and the other is hurting, so he pulls back even harder, and each one is pulling and crying. But they cannot let go because the teacher is ordering, 'No, you cannot stop. You must go on pulling!' Similarly, Māyā brings together one Churchill and one Hitler—'Now, rascal, pull!' And neither can stop. And the foolish people glorify them."

Still, someone would ask, "Are you not doing any relief work for the war affected people?" Of course, we are doing. The Hare Krishna devotees, through our 54 centers in the Ukraine as well as in Hungary, have immediately started free food relief camps serving the hundreds of refugees fleeing war impacted zones. 

—Śyāmānanda Dāsa



Overnight Politics and Intrigue

How one person under evil influence destroyed the peace and happiness of an entire kingdom.

By Vrajabihārī Dāsa

We love to hear gossip and politics. News channels flourish because of our fetish for mundane news of this world. Therefore our scriptures help us

dovetail our propensities by offering us stories of transcendental intrigue and politics. The difference, however, is that when we read these stories from Rāmāyaṇa

and other scriptures, we get purified and become free from material desires.

Emperor Daśaratha had announced his desire to coronate Rāma as the prince regent, in his royal assembly. In a short time, the news spread far and wide. In Ayodhyā, women gathered at each other's houses and discussed happy news of Rāma's coronation. Merchants, shopkeepers, traders and others stopped their daily activities and happily celebrated the upcoming event. Children who gather outside the houses to play stopped their regular fun-filled activities, and instead discussed the exciting news of Lord Rāma.

People sprinkled the streets with flowers; they lit incense and sprayed perfumes. They decorated their houses with flags, festoons, and auspicious leaves and flowers.

But then a disaster, unknown to the innocent citizens, was about to strike....

A DISASTER STRIKES

Mantharā, an elderly, hunchbacked maid-servant of Kaikeyī, saw from the balcony of the palace, a flurry of activity. The cheerful faces of citizens of Ayodhyā disturbed her. She saw the streets cleaned with water and strewn with fresh flowers. Brahmins chanted Vedic mantras and people merrily distributed sweets. Even the animals like elephants and horses seemed so happy and the bulls roared in jubilation. Yet, ironically, Mantharā seemed unhappy at others' happiness. Pensively, she asked a maid and learnt of

Rāma's coronation.

Mantharā's fundamentally flawed character teaches us an important lesson. If you were to see a great celebration outside your house, you'd also enquire, but would it be in a spirit of wanting to be part of the energy of happiness that's spreading everywhere, or would you feel insecure that others are celebrating? Mantharā's spontaneous concern reflects who she is- a highly insecure and evil plotter.

We may claim to have others' interests in our hearts but it's during those sudden moments when we are caught unawares, that our real intention is revealed. A planned, rehearsed speech is usually good. But what if the camera catches you when no one is watching?

Mantharā was exposed in this immediate response to the citizens' celebration when she asked another maid: "What's happening here? Is Kauśalyā giving away a lot of charity, when she is herself so lusty for wealth?"

She is a classic case of someone who is enemy centred. She perceives Kauśalyā, the elder queen of King Daśaratha as her enemy. Her happiness is dependent on how someone else- in this case, Kausalya- is either getting popular or suffers a calamity. A successful person makes proactive choices whereas harbingers of evil react to the conduct and disposition of an imaginary foe. That's why Valmiki when introducing Mantharā to the readers of Rāmāyaṇa, addresses her as

papa-darśinī — a person with sinful thought. Mantharā was uncomfortable that citizens of Ayodhyā were happy and on learning that Kausalya's son would be the king, she rushed hurriedly to Kaikeyī's bedroom and saw her mistress lie comfortably on a soft bed.

"You foolish woman, you relax in ignorance when grave calamity is at your doorstep" yelled Mantharā who nursed hatred for the king and Rāma. "The king has sent away Bharata and in his absence plans to anoint Rāma as the prince regent. Soon, Rāma's son would become a king and Bharata's clan would be wiped away. Rise oh naive queen, act fast, and know that your husband is evil. You trust him like an imprudent man who keeps a poisonous serpent on his bosom and imagines he is safe."

Mantharā began to envision the terrible consequences of Rāma's appointment as a king.

When our paradigms are faulty, we amplify our worries, exaggerate others' faults and justify our sinister motives.

KAIKEYĪ'S JOY TRANSFORMS INTO ANGER

Kaikeyī felt happy on hearing the news about Rāma and she handed Mantharā a priceless jewelled necklace as a gift.

"Last night the king told me that he is going to appoint my son as the prince regent" said the exuberant Kaikeyī, "So why are you agitated? These are happy moments!"

Mantharā became furious and

she threw away the necklace, and admonished the queen.

"Your son?" she asked sarcastically, "Are you sure it's Bharata that the king is going to appoint? You do not realize that Ram will be made the king and Bharata will simply be the servant of Rāma."

At this moment, Kaikeyī said these famous words: "I do not see any difference between Rāma and Bharata. Therefore I am happy that Rāma is being anointed for the crown by the king." (2.7.35)

It's pertinent to note that it's the same Kaikeyī, who a few minutes later, sees a huge difference between the two princes- Rāma and Bharata.

What transpired in this discussion? How did Mantharā convince Kaikeyī that this was an unjust move by the king? And more importantly, it's sobering to note that bad association is destructively powerful!

Mantharā began to laugh loudly. "I feel sorry for you, oh gentle queen," she said, "but can't help laughing to see how childish you are. My heart grieves in pain to see your plight, yet I laugh."

Power of bad association

Mantharā's laughter was intentional; she wanted to make Kaikeyī feel like she is an idiot. When someone laughs at your gullibility, you feel mocked and hurt. Also Mantharā was out of her 'window of tolerance'; she couldn't tolerate losing control of the situation. She was livid and wanted to express her anger viciously. But for obvious reasons, she couldn't allow her

disproportionate fury to get violent. So she laughed- as a release, but to also indicate that she was contriving a more creepy conspiracy.

Mantharā then revealed to Kaikeyī that her mind was weak and disturbed. “To feel happy at an enemy’s prosperity is like praising the arrival of death” said the evil maid servant. “Don’t you realize that Rāma is afraid of Bharata because he has equal right over the kingdom? And don’t you know that those who

emphatically explained how Rāma served her more than he served His own mother Kauśalyā, and therefore this is a joyous occasion indeed.

Mantharā scoffed. “What logic is this?” she haughtily dismissed Kaikeyī, “After Rāma, the kingdom would be ruled by Rāma’s sons. There is no question of Bharata or his children becoming kings. You stupid woman, you don’t realize that Rāma would never harm Lakshmana but Bharata would

Power, false pride and hankering for position is not a pursuit merely of the wealthy and aristocratic people; even lesser mortals could become victims of this mentality.

are afraid of us, only give us pain and suffering?”

Just see the irony here! Mantharā is afraid but thinks it is Rāma who is fearful.

POLITICS UNFOLDS

She explained to Kaikeyī that Lakshman was faithful to Rāma, while Shatrughna to Bharata. So the rivalry is essentially between Rāma and Bharata. And if Rāma became the king, Bharata would be destroyed.

Kaikeyī dismissed this theory by saying that Rāma was trained properly by his elders, and he cultivated gratitude. He would surely take care of his brothers and servants, just like a father protects his dependents. Besides, after Rāma’s rule of hundred years, he’d give away the kingdom to Bharata. So there is no need to worry. Kaikeyī

always remain a threat to His peace. So He’d surely send him away to the forest or get him killed.”

Initially, Kaikeyī didn’t take Mantharā’s outbursts seriously. She knew the old woman was cranky at times, but she meant well. However, trusting her as a real well-wisher, Kaikeyī soon began to see merit in what she said. Her mind changed.

The turning point in this conversation was when Mantharā expertly played on the natural rivalry that existed between the queens in Ayodhyā. She pointed out that if Rāma became the king, Kauśalyā, for being the mother of the king, would get all the worship and attention. So far, it was Kaikeyī who was the king’s favourite as he spent every night with her. But once Rāma got the throne,

the equations would change. Kauśalyā, who was snubbed by Kaikeyī, would now take revenge.

The unspoken fear expressed by Mantharā was that if Kaikeyī gets second class treatment, then Mantharā would also lose her position as the head amongst the servants in the royal palace.

Power, false pride and hankering for position is not a pursuit merely of the wealthy and aristocratic people; even lesser mortals could become victims of this mentality. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes in one purport that the nature of false pride is such that even a beggar is proud of his penny. Thus, intoxicated by pride and due to fear of losing her coveted position, she poisoned Kaikeyī’s heart with imaginary problems; she explained that her past arrogance towards Kauśalyā will now come back with vengeance.

IMAGINING PREJUDICES AND CONSPIRACY

Soon Kaikeyī’s mind changed. She was convinced of injustice and a conspiracy against her son Bharata, while unwittingly it was she who was dragged into the machinations of crafty Mantharā. If you have a stinking fishbone stuck on your nostril, you’d declare the whole world as foul-smelling. When I see that a problem is “out there,” that vision could be a real problem. When you put on a red coloured glass, the world appears red. It’s our paradigms that are often faulty and rarely do we examine our own judgements. Kaikeyī



was a partner in crime but imagined herself to be a victim.

Emperor Daśaratha hadn't planned to coronate Rāma by sending Bharata away. It was a coincidence that Bharata and Śatruघna had been out of the kingdom when the auspicious time for Rāma's ascendency was

calculated by the royal priest. But Mantharā latched on to the king's timing of Rāma's installation, and presented this as conclusive evidence of his dubious intention. So powerful was Mantharā's propaganda that Kaikeyī, who a few minutes before thought that Rāma was

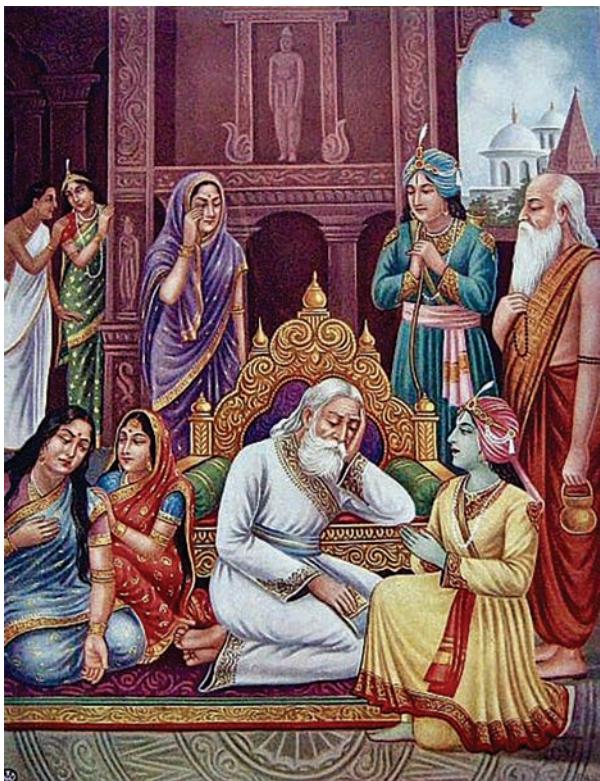
most dear to her heart, was now swayed to believe that he was her sworn enemy. She desperately asked Mantharā for a plan by which her son could be the king and Rāma could be banished to the forest.

Mantharā recalled an earlier incident when Daśaratha was wounded while fighting the demons. In that battle, Kaikeyī had expertly manoeuvred the king's chariot and brought him to safety. Pleased with her service, he had promised her two boons, which she deferred to a later day. Now was the time, Mantharā reminded Kaikeyī, to invoke the two gifts by anointing Bharata as the king and sending Rāma to fourteen years exile into the forest. A valuable lesson to learn here: never allow servants or those dependent on you to get so close to you by your friendship, that they could manipulate you at a future date. Kaikeyī shared intimate details of her association with her husband, with her maid servant, who now used them to unleash a disaster

in the kingdom.

Kaikeyī wondered if Bharata can be made the king by asking a boon, why should she send Rāma to the forest? What purpose would that avail?

Mantharā narrowed her eyes, lowered her voice, and bent low and forward. She said, "O



innocent one, when Rāma goes to the forest, Bharata will make friends with the citizens of Ayodhyā and win their trust. With Rāma gone, there will be no threat to Bharata's reign, and besides, when Rāma returns, Bharata would have consolidated his position. He would be the undisputed emperor of the planet."

Kaikeyī now began to see Mantharā as her real well-wisher. She heaped lavish praise on the hunchbacked maid and even declared her hunch back as the most beautiful creation. She promised to decorate it with a golden necklace.

Mantharā wasn't impressed by her queen's acclaim. Instead, she unveiled a deadly plan to achieve her goals.

THE FATAL ATTACK

"Put on soiled clothes, keep

your hair dishevelled, and lie forlornly on the floor in the anger room," said Mantharā. Her sly smile gave away her malicious intention. "The emperor loves you madly and he wouldn't tolerate seeing your distressing condition. He would offer anything to placate your wounded heart. Don't be tempted by the gold, riches, and other distractions that he'd surely lure you with. Stay focussed on the goal and ask only for

Rāma's banishment, and Bharata's appointment as the prince regent."

Kaikeyī surrendered to Mantharā's evil ploy and rushed to the *kopa-bhavan* — the room of wrath.

The pastime reveals the danger of accepting the shelter of people with a malevolent purpose. Kaikeyī could have clarified with the king about the reason why he sent away Bharata and why is he appointing Rāma in haste. If she didn't trust her husband, there were elders in the kingdom like the head priest Vashistha and the sagacious minister Sumantra. A lot of trouble could have been avoided if she had taken a second opinion. However, blinded by Mantharā's ill advice, Kaikeyī played havoc in the palace that eventually led to Rāma's banishment. Moreover, emperor Daśarath's painful death

in the separation of Rāma, and total rejection of the crown by her own son Bharata, sobered Kaikeyī. In fact, Bharata rejected his own mother and even said that had she not been his mother or in a woman's body, he would have killed her for her unpardonable crime! The person for whom she destroyed the peace of Ayodhyā himself rejected her and her terrible plans.

The irony and the gravity of her folly haunted her day and night. Kaikeyī spent every moment of her next fourteen years in deep regret and shame.

This is politics in action: When we allow someone's wicked motives to go unchecked, compounded by our own weaknesses, then the community or nation that we seek to serve is threatened with destruction.

The pastime underscores the need for a spiritual practitioner — like Kaikeyī — to guard against Mantharā-like bad association. Kaikeyī realized too late her folly and then lived with regret. This is a sober warning that we need to guard against impulsive actions. We could choose prayerful connection with the Lord and humble association of other devotees, to protect ourselves from the external and internal Mantharā-like wrong voices. ☸

Vraja Bihārī Dāsa holds a post-graduate degree in International Finance and an MBA from Mumbai University. He is a resident monk at ISKCON Chowpatty and an active teacher of bhakti-yoga. Visit his website: www.yogaformodernage.com

ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA ARRIVES IN SOUTH KOREA



Patañjali Muni Dāsa is head of the kitchen at Bhaktivedanta Manor, and he also oversees the preaching activities in ISKCON South Korea. Recently he ceremoniously received the life-size murti (sacred image) of Śrīla Prabhupāda in the temple of Śrī Śrī Rādhā Kṛṣṇacandra, which is situated on the border of South Korea near to the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), which divides the South from the North.

"It is a great leap for the preaching efforts for ISKCON South Korea," explained Patañjali Muni das. "Śrīla Prabhupāda is now gracing them in his full-size murti form, overseeing their preaching efforts and the mission to spread Krsna consciousness and goodwill amongst the Korean people".

ṚAMĀNUJĀCĀRYA: THE STATUE OF EQUALITY

On February 5th, 2022, the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi Inaugurated the Statue of Equality of Śrī Rāmānujācārya as part of the 12-day ongoing 1000th birth anniversary celebrations of the saint.

The 216-foot tall statue is among the tallest metallic sitting statues in the world. It is located in a 45-acre complex on the outskirts of Hyderabad. The foundation stone was laid in 2014. The project cost Rs 1,000 crores and was funded fully by donations from devotees all over the world.

The statue consists of five metals or pañca-loha consisting of gold, silver, zinc, brass, and copper. It

has been constructed on a base-building bhadra-vedi that is 54 ft tall. The building has floors for a Vedic digital library and research center, ancient Indian texts, a theater, and an educational gallery detailing the works of Rāmānujācārya. The base will have a meditation hall where a small, 120 kg gold statue of the saint will represent the years he lived.

The Statue of Equality was conceptualized by Sri Chinna Jeeyar Swami of Śrī Rāmānujācārya



Ashram. There are 108 Divya Desams (ornately carved temples) surrounding the Statue of Equality.

INDIAN TRIBAL CARE TRUST MOBILE MEDICAL UNIT

India Development and Relief Fund (IDRF) is a US-based non-profit charity. They aim to support the poverty-stricken people of India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. In January 2022, IDRF extended its support to the India Tribal Care Trust (ITCT) through the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) by providing a mobile medical vehicle.

The India Tribal Care Trust is an organization



that serves to provide a prosperous, healthy, educated, and culturally rich life for tribal communities. Their goal is to help maintain the tribal heritage which is becoming endangered. They have been providing education for children, health care facilities, and uplifting people's lives with spiritual philosophy.

AUSTRALIAN FLOODING & RELIEF EFFORTS

Melbourne, Australia: Approximately a dozen people have been reported dead from the flash flooding that battered northeastern Australia, with the wild weather forcing residents to evacuate and schools to close, while thousands of homes have been left immersed in water. Thousands have been ordered to evacuate as the southeast coast of Australia experienced the worst flood in decades.

The local devotees were quick to provide healthy, hot prasāda meals to those badly affected by the floods, stationing themselves in various parts of the town.

BIHS THIRD COSMOLOGY WORKSHOP

In 2019, the Bhaktivedanta Institute for Higher Studies (BIHS) sponsored its initial cosmology workshop, "Taking the 5th... Canto!" This gathering explored the study of Puranic cosmography within ISKCON as an outgrowth of interest raised by the development of the Temple of the Vedic Planetarium (TOVP) in Mayapur, West Bengal. The second workshop in 2020, "Models and Memes and Maps: A Modern Journey through Ancient Cosmography," aimed toward developing a unified framework for intellectual discourse aspiring to enrich scholarship exploring Puranic cosmology.

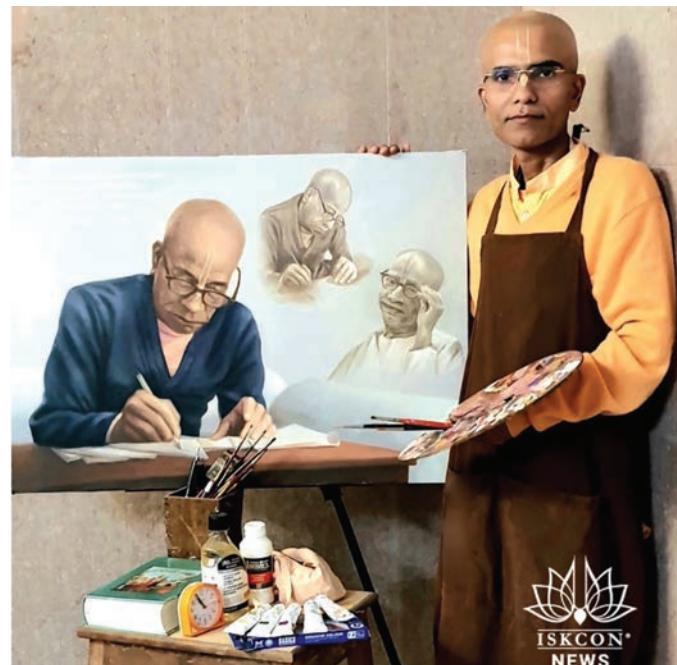
This third in the series examined Puranic perspectives on the nature of spacetime and the origin and fate of the universe. With a growing acknowledgment in the academic and scientific discourse of the opportunity for further research, it is important for Vaishnava scholars to actively engage philosophical, mathematical, and experiential frameworks that appreciate both traditional Indic as well as a modern scientific theory.

Prior to the workshop on Friday, February 18, several local participants made a visit to the University of Florida's Physics Department to attend a

lecture by workshop presenter Bhupal Dev, Ph.D., titled "A New Idea for Relic Neutrino Detection," where he discussed new findings from his current research based on data collected by the IceCube Neutrino Observatory at the Amundsen–Scott South Pole Station in Antarctica. The evening concluded with a casual dinner and meet-and-greet at the Bhaktivedanta Institute Center.

THE ART OF HARIDAS THAKUR DAS

In his stunning paintings, Haridāsa Ṭhākura Dāsa is able to capture life in his subjects in such a vivid way, they almost come across as photography. He captures realism in his paintings so true to life, one feels that they are in the presence of Śrīla Prabhupāda himself. Haridāsa Ṭhākura Dāsa is a monk, artist, art teacher, and inspirational speaker.



He is a disciple of Rādhānātha Swami.

Coming from the background of fine art Haridāsa Ṭhākura Dāsa thought of depicting His Divine Grace Śrīla Prabhupāda with his spiritual emotions, moods, meditations, and ecstasies. Thanks to BBT and other devotees for capturing the illustrious photographs on all different occasions, which were used for his artworks with creativity and innovation. Also, extra care has been taken to make sure to get the likeness of Śrīla Prabhupāda. ♀

CENTRES IN INDIA

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness

Founder-Ācārya: His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivendanta Swami Prabhupada

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VAIŚNAVA CALENDAR

April 1 – May 15 2022

- 6 Apr:** Śrī Rāmānujācārya Appearance
10 Apr: Rāma Navamī: Appearance of Lord Śrī Rāmacandra (Fast today)
13 Apr: Fasting for Kāmadā Ekādaśi
14 Apr: Break fast 05:55 – 10:11 (LT), Tulasī Jala Dāna begins.
16 Apr: Śrī Balarāma Rāsayātrā, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Vasanta Rāsa, Śrī Vāṁśīvadana Ṭhākura Appearance, Śrī Śyāmānanda Prabhu Appearance
23 Apr: Śrī Abhirāma Ṭhākura Disappearance
25 Apr: Śrīla Vṛndāvanadāsa Ṭhākura Disappearance
26 Apr: Vyanjuli Mahādvādaśī, Fasting for Varūthīnī Ekādaśi
27 Apr: Break fast 06:44 – 10:05 (LT)
30 Apr: Śrī Gadādhara Pañḍita Appearance
3 May: Akṣaya Tṛtīyā. Candana Yātrā starts. (Continues for 21 days)
8 May: Jāhnu Saptamī
10 May: Śrīmatī Sītā Devī (consort of Lord Śrī Rāma) Appearance, Śrī Madhu Pañḍita Disappearance, Śrīmatī Jāhnavā Devī Appearance
12 May: Fasting for Mohini Ekādaśi
13 May: Break fast 05:31 – 10:00 (LT), Rukmiṇī Dvādaśī
14 May: Śrī Jayānanda Prabhu Disappearance
15 May: Nr̄siṁha Caturdaśī: Appearance of Lord Nr̄siṁhadeva (Fasting till dusk)

Making Sense of the Russia-Ukraine Conflict: A Vedic Perspective

COVID is no longer dominating headlines. The Russia-Ukraine conflict is the new breaking news. Russia feels threatened by NATO dominance in what she calls her “area of influence,” and the current regime in Ukraine wants to distance itself from Russian influence. Historians agree that wars and conflicts are too complex to be explained in one short sentence. After the onset of the First World War Rudyard Kipling tried his best in explaining the conflict in just one sentence –

“If any question why we died, tell them, because our fathers lied.” Rudyard Kipling

Many at that time woke up to the grim reality that almost every conflict has lies and exaggerated claims as their basis. Although Kipling vented his anger at the lying politicians he too was accused of jingoistically supporting the war.

Today we have social media to add to our knowledge (or confusion, as some would put it) about any developments throughout the world. I saw a small video of a young Russian soldier who was captured by local Ukrainians and was crying piteously. Obviously he had nothing personal to settle with the country he had invaded and was completely feeling lost. Another was about the eastern regions of Ukraine with a sizeable Russian speaking population which was seen as partisan in its attitude towards the Ukrainian regime and therefore fit to be treated as enemies within the country. This region is having -3degree temperature outside as well as inside due to being cut off from the national electric supply grid.

There, I thought, we see the human cost of a conflict. Even if this does not escalate into another World War (which we all hope does not happen) still the average person has nothing to lose or gain from these conflicts.

“A beggar’s mistake harms no one but the beggar. A king’s mistake, however, harms everyone but the king. Too often, the measure of

power lies not in the number who obey your will, but in the number who suffer your stupidity

—R. Scott Bakker

The above quote exactly sums up the situation with politicians today. The following two quotes from Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books will equip you to make sense of this and other conflicts from a Vedic point of view. The first is from Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam First Canto: “In the Kali-yuga the whole atmosphere is surcharged with faithlessness. Men are no longer interested in spiritual values. Material sense gratification is now the standard of civilization. For the maintenance of such material civilizations, man has formed complex nations and communities, and there is a constant strain of hot and cold wars between these different groups. It has become very difficult, therefore, to raise the spiritual standard due to the present distorted values of human society.” (SB 1.1.10)

And the next one is from the Bhagavad-gītā: “The demoniac man knows no limit to his desire to acquire money. That is unlimited. He thinks only of how much assessment he has just now and schemes to engage that stock of wealth further and further. For that reason, he does not hesitate to act in any sinful way and so deals in the black market for illegal gratification. He is enamored by the possessions he has already, such as land, family, house and bank balance, and he is always planning to improve them. He believes in his own strength, and he does not know that whatever he is gaining is due to his past good deeds. He is given an opportunity to accumulate such things, but he has no conception of past causes. He simply thinks that all his mass of wealth is due to his own endeavor. A demoniac person believes in the strength of his personal work, not in the law of karma. According to the law of karma, a man takes his birth in a high family, or becomes rich, or very well educated, or very beautiful because of good work in the past. The

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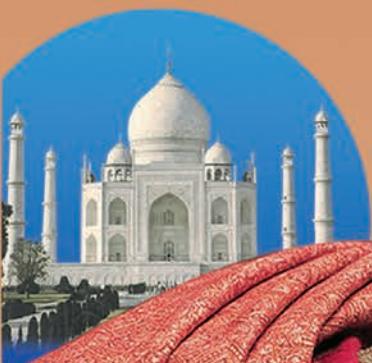
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