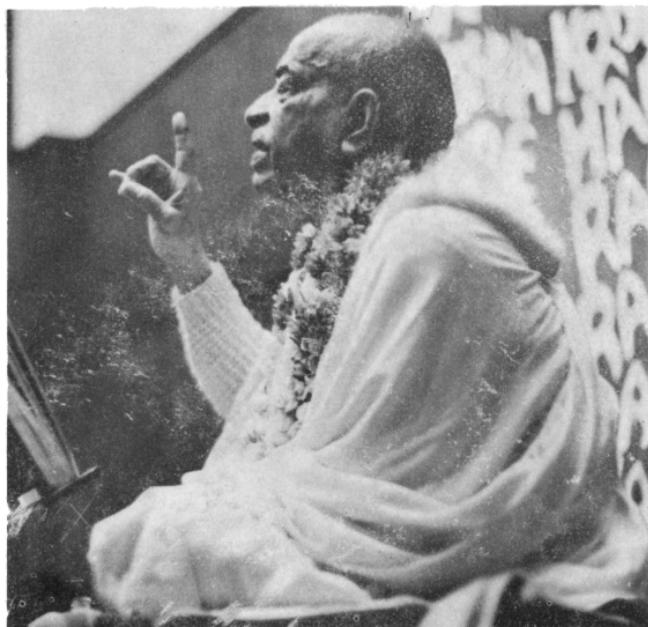


THE KRŚNA CONSCIOUSNESS MOVEMENT
IS THE GENUINE VEDIC WAY

a cogent discussion between



A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami
(Ācārya: *International Society for Krishna Consciousness*)

and

Dr. J.F. Staal

(*Professor of Philosophy and of South Asian Languages,
University of California, Berkeley*)



THE GENUINE VEDIC WAY

TO GO BACK TO HOME, BACK TO GODHEAD

THE KRŚNA CONSCIOUSNESS MOVEMENT IS THE GENUINE VEDIC WAY

On January 11, 1970, an article appeared in the *Los Angeles Times* on the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. What follows are excerpts from the article and the unusual correspondence that ensued between the two authorities, A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami and Professor Staal.

Excerpt from the Los Angeles Times article:

“...Dr. J.F. Staal, professor of philosophy and Near Eastern languages at UC Berkeley and an instructor in Indian philosophy, believes that the Kṛṣṇa sect is an authentic Indian religion and that its adherents are sincere. He attributes the Society’s rapid increase in members to the tendency of today’s younger generation to reject organized churchgoing while at the same time searching for fulfillment of a belief in mysticism.

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

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

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

Editor Los Angeles Times

January 14, 1970

Dear Sir:

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

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

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

impersonal Brahman effulgence is the transcendental light and heat distributed everywhere.

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

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

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

The Kṛṣṇa Consciousness Movement

honest facilities to spread it for everyone's benefit.

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

cc: J.F. Staal

January 23, 1970

Swami A.C. Bhaktivedanta

Dear Swamiji:

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

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

Second, I never expressed nor felt disgust at the chanting of the name of Kṛṣṇa. I am not only not irritated at it (like some people), but I rather like it. But it is an indisputable fact that

the *Bhagavad-gītā* (not to mention the *Vedas*) does not require such constant chanting. The *Gītā* deals with quite different subjects, which I treat at some length in my courses on the philosophies of India.

Thanking you,

Yours sincerely,
J.F. Staal
Professor of Philosophy
and of South Asian Languages

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

January 30, 1970

My Dear Professor Staal:

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

This is the easiest process of spiritual realization and is re-

commended in the *Vedas*. In the *Bṛhan-nāradīya Purāṇa* it is clearly stated that it is only chanting of the holy name of Hari that can save people from the problems of materialistic existence, and there is no other alternative, no other alternative, no other alternative in this Age of Kali.

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

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

*satataṁ kīrtayanto mām
 yatantaś ca dṛḍha-vratāḥ
 namasyantaś ca mām bhaktyā
 nitya-yuktā upāsate. (Bg. 9.14)*

The engagement of the great souls, freed from delusion and perfect in their realization of God, is described here: “*Satataṁ kīrtayanto mām*”—they are always (*satataṁ*) chanting (*kīrtayantah*) My glories and—“*nitya-yuktā upāsate*”—always worshiping Me (Kṛṣṇa).

So I do not know how you can say “indisputable.” And, if you want references from the *Vedas*, I can give you many. In

the *Vedas*, the chief transcendental vibration *omkāra* is also Kṛṣṇa. *Pranava omkāra* is the divine substance of the *Vedas*. Following the *Vedas* means chanting the Vedic *mantras*, and no Vedic *mantra* is complete without *omkāra*. In the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*, *omkāra* is stated to be the most auspicious sound representation of the Supreme Lord. This is also confirmed again in the *Atharva Veda*. *Omkāra* is the sound representation of the Supreme Lord and is therefore the principal word in the *Vedas*. In this connection, the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa says, “*praṇavah sarva-vedeṣu*” (Bg. 7.8)—“I am the syllable *om* in all the Vedic *mantras*.”

Furthermore, in the 15th verse of Chapter 15, *Bhagavad-gītā*, Kṛṣṇa says, “I am seated in everyone’s heart. By all the *Vedas* I am to be known; I am the compiler of *Vedānta*, and I know *Veda* as it is.” The Supreme Lord, seated in everyone’s heart, is described in both the *Mundaka* and *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣads*: “*dvā suparṇā sayujā sakhāyā...*” The Supreme Lord and the individual spirit soul are sitting in the body as two friendly birds in a tree. One bird is eating the fruits of the tree or reactions of material activities, and the other bird, the Supersoul, is witnessing.

The goal of Vedantic study, therefore, is to know the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa. This point is stressed in *Bhagavad-gītā*, Chapter 8, verse 13, where it is stated that by the mystic *yoga* process, ultimately vibrating the sacred syllable *om*, one attains to His supreme spiritual planet. In the *Vedānta-sūtras*, which you have certainly read, the Fourth Chapter, 4th *adhikarana*, 22nd *sūtra*, states positively: “*anāvṛttih śabdāt...*”—“By sound vibration one becomes liberated.” By devotional service, by understanding well the Supreme Personality of Godhead, one can go to His abode and never come back again to this material

condition. How is it possible? The answer is, simply by chanting His name constantly.

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

In the *Nārada-pañcarātra* it is stated that all the Vedic rituals, *mantras* and understanding are compressed into the eight words Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare. Similarly, in the *Kalisantarāṇa Upaniṣad* it is stated that these sixteen words, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare, are especially meant for counteracting the degrading and contaminating influence of this materialistic age of Kali.

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

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

The scope of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is universal. The process for regaining one's original spiritual status of eternal life, full with bliss and knowledge, is not abstract

dry theorizing. Spiritual life is not described in the *Vedas* as theoretical, dry or impersonal. The *Vedas* aim at the inculcation of pure love of God only, and this harmonious conclusion is practically realized by the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, or by chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra.

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

Thanking you once again,

Yours sincerely,
A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami

February 8, 1970

Swami A.C. Bhaktivedanta

Dear Swamiji:

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

And yet, I am afraid, you have not convinced me that all

the scriptures you quote prescribe only chanting of the name of Kṛṣṇa. Let me refer only to the most important ones.

In the *Bhagavad-gītā* 9.14, *kīrtayantah* need not mean chanting of the name of Kṛṣṇa. It may mean glorifying, chanting, reciting, talking, and refer to songs, hymns, descriptions or conversations. The commentators take it that way. Śaṅkara in his commentary merely repeats the word, but Ānandagiri in his *vyākhyā* classes *kīrtanam* as *vedānta-śravaṇam prajava-japaś ca*, “listening to the *Vedānta* and muttering *om*”—(that the Vedic *om* is Kṛṣṇa is said in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, where Kṛṣṇa is also identified with many other things, and which is *smṛti*, but not in the *Vedas*, which are *śruti*). Another commentator, Hanumān, in his *Paiśāca-bhāṣya*, says that *kīrtayantah* merely means *bhāṣmānah*—“talking (about).”

More important, I think, than the precise meaning of this word, is that the entire verse does not require that everyone always engages in *kīrtana*, but merely states that some great souls do so. This is obvious from the next verse, which states that *anye*, “others,” engage in *jñāna-yajñena...yajanto mām* “worshipping me...with the worship of knowledge.” The *Bhagavad-gītā*, is broad-minded and tolerant of a variety of religious approaches, although it also stresses one aspect above all others (i.e., *sarva-phala-tyāga*).

Finally, in the last *sūtra* of the *Vedānta-sūtra, anāvṛttiḥ-śabdāt..., śabda* refers to the scripture or to the revelation of the *Vedas* as is clear from the context and from the commentators. Śaṅkara quotes a number of texts (ending with *ity ādi-śabdebhyaḥ*, “according to these *śabdas*”) to support this, i.e., to support the statement that “according to the scripture there is no return.” He also refers to *śabda* in this *sūtra* by saying *mantrārtha-vādādi...“mantras, descriptions, etc.”* Vācaspati Miśra in the *Bhāmati* supports this and clarifies it further

by adding that a contrary view is *śruti-smṛti-virodhah*, “incon-flict with the *smṛti* and the *śruti*. ”

Thanking you once again for your kind attention.

Yours very sincerely,
J.F. Staal

J.F. Staal
Professor of Philosophy
and of South Asian Languages

February 15, 1970

My Dear Dr. Staal:

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

Regarding convincing you that all scriptures prescribe chanting of the name of Kṛṣṇa, I can simply present the authority of Lord Caitanya. Lord Caitanya recommended, *kīrtanīyah sadā hariḥ*.* Similarly, Madhvācārya quotes, *vede rāmāyaṇe caiva hariḥ sarvatra gīyate*.† Similarly, in the *Bhagavad-gītā* the Lord says, *vedaiś ca sarvair aham eva vedyah*.**

In this way we find all the scriptures aiming at the Supreme Person. In the *Rg Veda* the *mantra* is *om tad viṣṇoh paramam padam sadā paśyanti sīrṣayah!*†† The whole Vedic process, therefore, is to understand the Viṣṇu, and any scripture is directly or indirectly chanting the glories of the Supreme Lord Viṣṇu.

* “Hari is constantly to be praised.” (*Śikṣāṣṭaka 3*)

† “Hari is sung about everywhere in the *Vedas* and in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. ”

** “By all the *Vedas* I am to be known.”

†† “The demigods are always looking to that supreme abode of Viṣṇu.”
(RV.1.22.20)

Regarding the *Bhagavad-gītā*, verse 9.14, *kīrtayantah* certainly means glorifying, chanting, reciting, and talking, as you have said; but glorifying, chanting or reciting about whom? It is certainly Kṛṣṇa. The word used in this connection is *mām*. Therefore, we do not disagree when a person glorifies Kṛṣṇa, as Śukadeva did in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. This is also *kīrtanam*. The highest amongst all Vedic literatures is the proper place for such glorification of the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa, and this is to be well understood from the verse:

*nigama-kalpataror galitam phalam
śuka-mukhād amṛta-drava-sam yutam
pibata bhāgavatam rasam ālayam
muhur aho rasikā bhuvi bhāvukāḥ.**

“O expert and thoughtful men! Please know that *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the mature fruit of the desire tree of Vedic literatures, and it emanated from the lips of Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī. Thus the nectarean fruit has become more tasteful, although it is already readily swallowable nectar which is relished even by those who are already liberated souls.”

It is said that Mahārāja Parīkṣit attained salvation simply by hearing, and similarly Śukadeva Gosvāmī attained salvation simply by chanting. In our devotional service there are nine different methods for achieving the same goal, love of God-head, and the first process is hearing. This hearing process is called *śruti*. The next process is chanting. The chanting process is *smṛti*. We accept both *śruti* and *smṛti* simultaneously. We consider *śruti* as mother and *smṛti* as sister because a child hears from the mother and then again learns from the sister by description.

*Bhag. 1.1.3

Śruti and *smṛti* are two parallel lines. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī therefore says:

śruti-smṛti-purāṇādi-
pañcarātra-vidhiṁ vinā
aikāntikī harer bhaktir
*utpātāyaiva kalpate.**

That is, without references to *śruti*, *smṛti*, *purāṇas* and *pañcarātras*, unadulterated devotional service is never achieved. Therefore, anyone who shows a devotional ecstasy without reference to the *sāstras* simply creates disturbances. On the other hand, if we simply stick to the *śrutis*, then we become *veda-vāda-rata*,† who are not very much appreciated in the *Bhagavad-gītā*.

Therefore *Bhagavad-gītā*, although *smṛti*, is the essence of all Vedic scripture, *sarvopaniṣado gāvo*. It is just like a cow which is delivering the milk or the essence of all *Vedas* and *Upaniṣads*, and all the *ācāryas*, including Śaṅkarācārya, accept *Bhagavad-gītā* as such. Therefore you cannot deny the authority of *Bhagavad-gītā* because it is *smṛti*; that view is *śruti-smṛti-virodhah*, “in conflict with the *smṛti* and the *śruti*,” as you have correctly said.

Regarding Ānandagiri’s quotation that *kīrtanam* means *vedānta-śravaṇam prajava-japaś ca*, that knower of *Vedānta* is Kṛṣṇa, and He is the compiler of *Vedānta*. He is *veda-vid* and *vedānta-kṛt*. So where is there a greater opportunity for *vedānta-śravaṇam* than to hear it from Kṛṣṇa?

Regarding the next verse, in which it is mentioned that *jñāna-yajñena...yajanto mām*, the object of worship is Kṛṣṇa, as

*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu 1.2.101

† (Bg. 2.42) “Engaged in merely mouthing the words of the scriptures,

indicated by *mām*. The process is described in *Īśopaniṣad*, mantra 11:

*vidyāṁ cāvidyāṁ ca yas
tad vedobhayāṁ saha
avidyayā mr̥tyum tīrtvā
vidyayāmṛtam aśnute.*

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

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

Liberation is the enjoyment of the full blessings of immortality. This immortality is enjoyed in the eternal kingdom of God (*sambhūty-amṛtam aśnute*), the region of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and is the result obtained by worshiping the Supreme Lord, the cause of all causes, *sambhavāt*.

and not understanding or practicing them.”

So in this way real knowledge, *vidyā*, means to worship the Supreme Personality of Godhead Kṛṣṇa; that is *jñāna-yajñena*, “worship of knowledge.”

This *jñāna-yajñena...yajanto mām* is the perfection of knowledge, as it is stated in the *Bhagavad-gītā*:

*bahūnāṁ janmanāṁ ante
jñānavān māṁ prapadyate
vāsudevaḥ sarvam iti
sa mahātmā sudurlabhaḥ*

“After many births and deaths, he who is actually in knowledge surrenders unto Me, knowing Me to be the cause of all causes, and all that is. Such a great soul is very rare.” (Bg. 7.19)

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

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

By the grace of Lord Caitanya that highest perfectional

status of life is being distributed very freely. The effect is also very encouraging; otherwise, how are the boys and girls, without any background of Vedic culture, quickly occupying the posts of rare *mahātmās* simply by vibrating this transcendental sound, Hare Kṛṣṇa? And simply on the basis of this chanting, the majority of them (those who are very sincere) are steady in devotional service and are not falling down to the four principles of material sinful life, namely 1. meat-eating, 2. illicit sexual connection, 3. taking of intoxicants, including coffee, tea and tobacco, and 4. gambling. And that is the last *sūtra* of the *Vedānta-sūtra* (i.e., *anāvṛttih śabdāt*).

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

Sarva-phala-tyāga is explained in the *Bhagavad-gītā* by the Lord Himself in the words, *sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekam saraṇam vraja*, “Give up everything and simply surrender unto Me [Kṛṣṇa].” The Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* means “O Supreme Energy of Kṛṣṇa and O Lord Kṛṣṇa, please engage me in Your eternal service.” So we have given up everything and are simply engaged in the service of the Lord. What Kṛṣṇa orders to do is our only engagement. We have given up all resultant actions of *karma*, *jñāna* and *yoga*; and that is the stage of pure devotional service, *bhaktir uttama*.

Yours sincerely,
A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami

Swami A.C. Bhaktivedanta
Founder Ācārya
International Society for Krishna Consciousness

February 25, 1970

Dear Swamiji:

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

I am afraid that whenever you quote a passage purporting to show that only the chanting of the name Kṛṣṇa is required, I can quote another one which requires something else, adding: *yadi śloko'pi pramāṇam, ayam api ślokaḥ pramāṇam bhavitum arhati*, "If mere verses are authoritative, this verse also ought to be regarded as authoritative." And there may be no end to this in the foreseeable future as Patañjali also says: *mahān hi śabdasya prayoga-viśayah*, "for vast is the domain for the use of words."

Yours very sincerely,
J.F. Staal

April 24, 1970

Dear Dr. Staal:

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

I beg to request you to visit this place at your convenience,

and if you kindly let me know a day before, my students will be very glad to receive you properly.

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

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

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

Similarly, in Detroit there was a big peace march, and our men were appreciated as "angels" in the crowd. So this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is actually needed at the present moment as the panacea for all kinds of problems in human society. Other quotations will not act very appreciably at this time.

In a drugstore there may be many medicines, and all may be genuine, but what is required is that an experienced physician prescribe medicine for a particular patient. We cannot say in this case, "This is also medicine, and this is also medicine." No. The medicine which is effective for a particular person is the medicine for him—*phalena paricīyate*.

Yours very sincerely,
A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami

Note by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami concluding his correspondence with Dr. J.F. Staal:

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

Lord Caitanya gives His judgement on the authority of *sāstras* that the chanting of the holy names of the Lord is the only means to elevate one to the transcendental platform, and actually we can see it is effective. Each and every one of our students who have seriously taken to this process may be examined individually, and any impartial judge will find it easy to see that they have advanced in their transcendental realization further than any philosophers, religionists, *yogīs*, *karmīs*, etc.

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

A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami

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