ISKCON Communications Journal

ISKCON Communications Journal (ICJ) is a journal of dialogue, focusing on issues related to missionary development in the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) and with issues of communication, administration, social development and education that affect its mission. ICJ also provides a forum for members of various communities to comment on ISKCON's development in these areas. These communities have come to appreciate the sincere and open nature of the discussion offered in this journal.

Internally, ICJ has become ISKCON's primary expression of self-analysis as it provides a forum for devotees to share realisations and experiences and to discuss specific areas of success and difficulty in communicating the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava message to governments, academics, other faith communities, the media and to its own members.

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Dealing with Difference: A Catholic Point of View

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This paper is based on a talk given by Monsignor Felix Machado of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (the Vatican's central office for the promotion of such dialogue) in April 2004 at the annual ISKCON Communications Europe Leadership Team meetings near Bergamo, Italy. In this paper Mons. Machado argues that interfaith dialogue does not require difference be ignored for fear of offending. Quite the opposite: he argues that difference must be acknowledged and respected before proper interreligious understanding can take place, and that ignoring difference is more likely to lead to a breakdown of relations between people of different faiths. Here he examines some of the unique difficulties and opportunities presented by Christian theology in interfaith dialogue and how Christian doctrine regards the diversity of faith that now pervades almost all societies. This paper and the talk it is based on mark a significant development in ISKCON dialogue with other faith traditions, a dialogue that was begun in earnest with the 1999 statement: ISKCON in Relation to People of Faith in God.

The commitment of the Catholic Church to interreligious dialogue is firm and irreversible. Through the practice of interreligious dialogue the Catholic Church wishes to cultivate sincere respect for other religious traditions, their followers, and their beliefs. The Catholic Church attempts to approach other religious traditions with honesty and frankness. It also has its own understanding about what precisely is meant by interreligious dialogue.

The call to dialogue entails inherent limits. It is not an uncritical and ambiguous engagement on the part of Catholic Christians, especially not in the field of theology. In other words, the Catholic Church exhorts her faithful to engage in dialogue with people of other religious traditions while at the same time obliging them to adhere uncompromisingly to the essential truths of Christian faith. The Catholic Church has been trying, especially in these past forty years, to incorporate the practice of interreligious dialogue in its overall teaching.

The Catholic faithful do not consider themselves to be on a higher level or better than the believers of other religious traditions, such as Hindu Vaiṣṇavas. I think hardly anyone in the Catholic Church today would really have this attitude of superiority. The text of *Dominus Jesus*, an important document from the Central Authority of the Catholic Church, clearly states: 'Equality, which is a presupposition of interreligious dialogue, refers to the equal personal dignity of the parties in dialogue, not to doctrinal content, nor even less to the position of Jesus Christ—who is God himself made man—in relation to the founders of the other religions' (*Dominus Jesus,* n. 22).

I would like to introduce here, with frankness and honesty, the fundamental faith of the Catholic Church concerning the uniqueness of God. The respect I have for the

Vaiṣṇava religious tradition has brought me to write this. I write, in my official capacity, with the knowledge of my colleagues in the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue.

I would like here to present the fundamental difference between the Catholic and Vaiṣṇava traditions. I am convinced that once we accept each other, and the basic difference between our respective religious traditions, we will see many paths open up to allow us to affirm our unity, which is radical, fundamental, and decisive. 'There is only one divine plan for every human being who comes into this world [cf. John 1:9], one single origin and goal, whatever may be the colour of his skin, the historical and geographical framework within which he happens to live and act, or the culture in which he grows up and expresses himself' (John Paul II, n. 3). It is important to understand the essential faith of the Catholic Church in order to deepen our friendship.

The human being is the crown of God's creation

A theology course I teach, entitled 'Christian Anthropology', deals with the basic question: 'Why does the Catholic Church value human life, even to the point of clearly distinguishing the incomparable dignity of human being life from the rest of creatures?' The doctrine of the Catholic Church begins by affirming that every human, male and female, is created in the likeness and image of God. We as Catholic Christians believe that the human being is the crown of God's creation; that God did not create humans simply as one creature among many other creatures. According to Gregory of Nyssa (*commentarius in Canticum Canticorum*), the human person is all but the equal of God (Daniélou, pp. 162–3).

God is the creator of everyone and everything. He did appoint the human person as steward of His creation; but this can hardly be interpreted to mean that the human being received absolute power to dominate and rule indiscriminately over other creatures. That would mean the human could replace God, the creator of heaven and earth. The Christian tradition upholds the truth that God is always the creator of all people and of every creature. This truth is reflected in the life of St Francis of Assisi who, in his well-known 'Canticle to the Sun', called the water his sister, the sun his brother, and so forth. He treated everyone and everything as God's creation. However, according to the Catholic faith, we must still affirm that the human person is the crown of God's creation. The human enjoys a singular place within the whole creation of God.

From faith in God the Saviour . . .

The general method in teaching theology is that we should first turn to the scriptures, the divine revelation, the Bible. Meditating on the sacred scriptures, and particularly the Old Testament, I am struck by the fact that the first realisation of the people of Israel was: 'God is with us and He saves us; even when beset by danger He never abandons us'.

The word 'saving' for the Israelites did not mean some philosophical, dry, abstract concept. Being 'saved' by God was a concrete experience for the people of God. They saw in that experience the trans-historical act of God. This is why, to prove that God exists, the Israelites narrated history in which God was revealed to them as saviour-God. For example, the crossing of the Red Sea as narrated in the Book of Exodus is not a myth, if we understand by that word something a-historical or something that simply never took place. Fundamental truth is conveyed through various episodes that narrate the life of the ancient Israelites, namely, that the living God was their unique saviour.

The Lord God saves people who put their trust in Him. That is the conviction of the Hebrew people. This conviction is based on the revelation of God in history. When speaking of God they do not give conceptual philosophical proofs for His existence; they simply narrate their history. That is also how they transmit belief in God to the new generations.

. . . to faith in God the Creator

The first revealed truth that the Israelites learnt about God was that He saved them. But linked to that revealed truth was another question: 'Who is this God who saves us?' The Israelites are pushed to deepen this question. They came to realise gradually that the God who revealed Himself to them as their saviour was also their creator.

In the first book of the Bible, the Book of Genesis, we learn that God created us and everything that exists. There are two creation stories side-by-side with the same message. On the first day, God creates light, separating it from darkness, dividing day from night. On the second day He creates heaven; on the third day He creates vegetation; on the fourth day He creates the sun, moon, and the stars; on the fifth day God creates living creatures. On the sixth day God creates the human being, male and female, in His own image and likeness. And on the seventh day God had completed the work He had been doing. He rested on the seventh day (Genesis 1–2). The Book of Genesis notes that at the end of each day of the creation 'God was happy, He saw that it was good'. But on the sixth day, when He created the human person, Genesis distinctly records that not only 'God saw it was good', but '*indeed* it was *very* good' (Genesis 1:31, emphasis mine).

Although this story of the creation is placed at the beginning of the first book of the Bible, it was not necessarily how believers first became historically aware of this truth. Chronologically, the people first learned from God's revelation to them that He was their saviour, their liberator, the one who set them free from the bondage of all their enemies. Later, when they were taken as captives to Babylon, they learnt that the God who saved them was also the God who created them.

As captives in the strange land of Babylon the people of God felt cut off from their roots and out of place. They hoped to return to the Promised Land that God had given them. During the period of exile in Babylon they learnt a deeper truth: The saviour of Israel is not only the creator of the Israelites but He is also the creator of all the people around them who belonged to the various religions of the time, and also of everything that exists. The Book of Genesis teaches this fundamental truth. I would like to draw attention to the point that God was revealing Himself to the people He chose in order to make Himself known among the nations of the world; He revealed Himself the unique creator God as well as the saviour God of all people.

The fundamental difference: Jesus Christ as the fulfilment of God's revelation

The third chapter of the Book of Genesis speaks about the fall, the sin of the human person. In spite of their sinfulness, God does not abandon His people to the power of death. He has a plan to save them. The Bible narrates the unfolding of this divine plan, which is finally fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, born of the Virgin Mary, who suffered under Pontius Pilate, died, and on the third day was raised from the dead. God saved the fallen human race in, with, and through Jesus Christ who is the unique, complete, and final revelation of God, not only of the Israelites but also of all people upon the face of the earth.

This is the fundamental difference between Christianity and all other religious traditions: According to the faith of the Church, God's revelation in history as the liberator of the Israelites and creator of all is finally, completely, and fully concluded in Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God. We observe that there is continuity in the revelation of God in Jesus Christ but there is also a radical (rupture) newness. Jesus Christ is seen to satisfy the hunger and thirst for God, not only of the Israelites, but also of every person.

This revelation must be respected in its integrity as it is the essential identity of the Church's faith, which can also become the foundation, starting point, and guiding principle for the Catholic Church's dialogue with people of other religious traditions.

I am aware that Vaiṣṇavas also aim to be devotees of God. The Church surely respects this. However, in fidelity to the unique divine revelation that it has received, and abiding in faith in a consistent and coherent manner, the Church asks: 'Is the God you claim the same God whom Jesus Christ revealed?' Christianity is going to stay with this question and this is going to define the fundamental and decisive difference with other religions.

The faith of the Church claims to know no other God than the one who is revealed completely, definitively, and perfectly in Jesus Christ, who is the unique saviour of all people. The Church admits that—without any intention of being superior—her claim is, in a certain sense, a judgement about the belief in God by people of other religions. Jesus Christ is the complete and final truth of God; He is the objective truth whom all people are obliged to seek and accept; all other truth claims become relative to this unique and objective truth, the mystery of Jesus Christ.

Relation of other religious traditions to Jesus Christ

Christians cannot simply think: 'Just as God is revealed in Jesus of Nazareth so also He is revealed elsewhere'. A Christian may speak of God's revelation elsewhere, though not to the same degree as in Christ, the final and complete revelation of God. Rooted in his faith, a Christian is certain of the one true God who is the unique creator and saviour of all people. However, the Church emphatically points out that the God worshipped by people of other religions is understood differently and worshipped differently by them. This, I would say, is the fundamental, perhaps provocative, difference between Christianity and other religious traditions. It is important to understand how Christians hold firmly to this difference without renouncing their commitment to engage and promote dialogue with other religious traditions, because this God of Christian revelation is also the merciful father of all; and in this all people can be necessarily seen as related to Him and therefore related among themselves.

Ignored differences often result in religious conflicts

How do people in various religions appropriate difference? How do they deal with essential religious differences? Does one's religious difference become a threat to the other? These are the basic questions we need to ask. We can best do this in dialogue.

The purpose of dialogue is not to change or compromise the basic tenets of our respective religions, but to arrive at a better and fair understanding of each other's religions. We must accept that our religions are different from each other. To ignore, forget, cancel, or compromise differences between our religions would be irresponsible and may lead to false irenicism. It would also be incoherent, inconsistent, and unfaithful to our respective religious traditions.

Should difference necessarily become a threat? Is it viewed as a threat by our partner in dialogue? Further, is difference (ab)used by way of manipulation of the other? Is difference something we can integrate into understanding our own religion and that of the other? This last relates somewhat to the approach of the Church, namely, to integrate into its theology of religions this fundamental and decisive difference with other religions so that it does not become a pretext for an attitude of superiority, or an excuse to be closed in on itself, or a reason to reject dialogue with people of other religions. In presenting difference with other religions in dialogue the Church sees an occasion for the possibility of a deeper encounter.

Holding firmly to its fundamental identity when in dialogue with other religious traditions, and not searching for the lowest common denominator in order to try and please others, the present-day Catholic theology of religions is trying to help Christians attain a spirit of respect and friendship towards people of all religions.

When differences are ignored they can and do raise their heads in violent forms. A strong image that comes to mind is 6 December 1992, when the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya, North India, was torn down by Hindu fundamentalists, and after that when Hindu temples were destroyed by Muslim extremists in Bangladesh and Pakistan. In dialogue we need to talk about differences. Differences must not be ignored, forgotten, hidden, masked, or suspended as they will always raise their head after hiding for a while.

With a very naive understanding some people think that difference automatically creates disharmony in society or blocks the path to peace. They then prefer to close their eyes to the basic differences between religions. That is not good. The ignorance of essential differences between religions by their respective followers in the name of harmony and peace can be identified as one of the main causes of religious conflicts. Ignored differences raise their heads in violent forms. It is necessary to acknowledge differences and deal with them.

Hinduism has always had an accommodating and absorbing mentality. It accommodates and absorbs different perspectives. For example, in the *Ṛg-veda* we read '*ekam sat viparah bahuda vandanti*'—'the Absolute is unity, which is seen in its diversity by sages' (*Ṛg-veda,* I.164,46). This view seems to suggest the multi-faceted nature of truth; it suggests that truth is one but it is seen in different ways by different wise people. Based on this interpretation, the Hindu worldview accommodates/assimilates differences between religions. For example, Buddha is seen as an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu and Jesus Christ is sometimes placed in the same shrine with others in the Hindu pantheon.

Until now, in our dialogues, we have not paid sufficient and careful attention to essential differences between religions. Anxious to bring people of various religions together we have rather preferred to ignore or hide these basic differences. The result has often been a sudden eruption of inexplicable and shocking violence. To ignore the essential identity of a religion is to fail to know that religion. This failure can lead to an attitude of compromise on the part of the adherent, and can breed fear on the part of the partner in dialogue. This fear, in turn, creates hatred, which finally shows up in violent forms. In the absence of dialogue, frustrated extremists use violence even in an organised manner. This is why I strongly recommend a closer look at differences between religions through dialogue in order to acknowledge them and respect them. It is important that Hindus try to understand Christians in the integrity of the Church's faith just as Christians should try to understand Hindus and respect them in the integrity of their religious beliefs.

I would propose four interpretations of violence that are directly linked to religions:

1. Violence erupts when relationships are avoided with the excuse of the other being different from me. We need to be in relationships with one another. We avoid relating to the other because we are afraid of each other, because the other is different from

me. (Violence also breaks out when religious believers choose to live in ignorance of their own religion as well as that of the other.)
2. In many parts of the world violence is the result of the politicisation of religion for vested interests.
3. Violence can explode because of different understandings of secularism. Religious believers are grappling with the question of how to deal with increasing secularism that often encourages marginalisation of religion in society or induces an attitude of indifference towards religions.
4. Violence may flare up due to the changing/evolving understanding of the role of religion in society.

Is religious pluralism a problem to Christianity?

For Christianity, religious pluralism does pose a problem in a certain sense. Why? Because no other religion proclaims itself so absolutely as 'the' religion, the one and only valid revelation of the one living God. Thus Christianity obviously considers its basic identity in relation to other religions as being of significant importance. Christianity gives serious attention to the difference between religions lest people begin to think that one religion is as good as another.

This is the fundamental question that Christians pose: 'If we believe in one God who perfectly, finally, and completely revealed Himself in Jesus Christ, then how can there be others who can claim to worship God other than the one whom Jesus Christ revealed?' Thus, in a certain sense, religious pluralism does become the greatest scandal when seen from the point of view of the Church's faith. This perceived problem can be intensified for individual Christians in today's world as we are surrounded also by relativistic ideas from within as well as from outside of Christianity.

It could be roughly stated that, in the past, it was understood that Europe had its religion, Christianity; India had its religion, Hinduism; Thailand had its religion, Buddhism; and so on. Culture and religion were uncritically linked. An individual Christian in Europe thus felt safe, for he thought: 'Hindus live in India, far away', or 'Buddhists live in Thailand, also far away'. Hindus in India would do the same: 'Christians live over there in Europe'. However, our societies are becoming increasingly multi-religious. Very little attention has been paid by respective religious traditions to teach their followers to deal with the new situations created by religious pluralism. Individual believers often feel threatened by the presence of the followers of other religions. An exclusively Christian Europe, for example, does not exist today. Men and women with their different religious beliefs are becoming neighbours. Modern Catholic theology is grappling with questions posed by this religious pluralism. When fundamental differences are not integrated into the coherent theological visions and systems of different religious traditions there obviously come about many misunderstandings that give rise to prejudices, hatred, and finally end in violence and killing in the name of religion.

Attempts by Christians to understand others

Catholic theologians have been reflecting on the fact of religious pluralism in order to integrate the spirit of respect and friendship towards other religious traditions while remaining coherent with the integrity of the Church's faith. One of them, for example, noted in rather categorical language: 'Religious pluralism poses for Christianity a greater threat and grounds

for greater anxiety than for all other religions. For no other religion, not even Islam, proclaims itself so absolutely as *the* religion; Christianity is the one and only valid revelation of the one living God'. He further observed: 'Christianity conceives of itself as the absolute religion determined for all humankind, as a religion that can recognise no other as having equal rights alongside itself' (Rahner, 1962).

An urgent need is being felt today to re-articulate, with the help of the positive experiences of dialogue among religions, the basic difference between Christianity and other religions in order to arrive at a more exact understanding of the identity of a Christian in a religiously pluralistic world. The Church's faith in the revealed mystery of God, on the one hand, and a genuine search for the mystery of God by the people of other religions[1], on the other hand, can be seen to be related. This possible relation can become the basis for Christians to enter deeper into dialogue with people of other religions. Christianity identifies itself with the revealed mystery of God in Jesus Christ, the unique mediator between God and the human person. Can we then say that the authentic search for God in other religious traditions is ultimately related to Jesus Christ as He alone can satisfy the hunger and thirst of every person for God?

The fundamental question remains: Are we Christians and people of various religions really talking of the same God? Obviously we would all agree that there cannot be more than one God. But who is the true God? The Christians firmly believe that He is revealed as the Trinitarian God. Logically then there should have been only one religion. The fact is that there are many religions. Christianity is struggling to come to terms with this enigma, not by abandoning or compromising the Church's faith, but by trying to integrate into its coherent theological vision the religious search for God by people of other religious traditions, pointing out to them that their search can be fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

God's offer of salvation extends to all humanity. This means that God makes His grace available to all people so that all people come to know Him in His fullness. God's grace cannot be reserved only for a few. Since God wants to save all people, all must also find access to Him. It cannot be the privilege of a few. I would summarise this reflection in three points: (1) all people are called to salvation, (2) all salvation is in Christ as there is no salvation outside Christ. Therefore, (3) all people who seek God sincerely can be related to the mystery of God in Jesus Christ.

Why does the Church, especially the Catholic Church, promote dialogue among religions? How do Catholics remain open to the followers of other religious traditions while at the same time holding firm to their essential identity, the faith of the Church? By holding firmly to her essential faith, namely, that there is no God outside the one revealed in Jesus Christ, the Catholic Church wishes to be respected for its faith.

The Catholic Church can never impose her faith on others; the Canon Law of the Catholic Church stipulates that 'It is never lawful to induce men by force to embrace the Catholic faith against their conscience' (Canon 74.8 §2), although she must always propose it to all.

Every religion has its own way of understanding itself. The reason people of different religions must come together in dialogue is primarily to have every religious tradition mutually respected in its integrity. Just as I am not going to tell devotees of Kṛṣṇa how or what to believe, so I expect that they also will not tell me, a Christian, how or what to believe. Of course, I do not mean to reduce the entire exercise of interreligious dialogue to just allowing me to live my faith and letting you live yours. Interreligious dialogue is more than that. However, it is fundamental to respect essential differences between our religions without making these differences obstacles in the path of respectful and friendly relationships.

Essential differences among religions: Recognise, identify, and respect

Dialogue among religions can often take place because of essential differences. Therefore we should not try to do away with essential differences by ignoring them or by trying to cancel them and thus engage in facile compromise. In order for our dialogue to become effective and fruitful we need to identify essential differences, acknowledge them, and respect them; and when it comes to respecting other religions let it be an exercise worthy of its name. That is the conviction of the Catholic Church, particularly since the Second Vatican Council. Lest there be an attitude of indifferentism in our respect for differences, all partners in dialogue should relentlessly seek the truth that is the common destiny of all.

In the administration of the Catholic Church, on the universal level, one office, or department, the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples, looks after the spread of the Gospel of Jesus Christ; but there is also an office, or department, the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID), for dialogue with people of other religions. The respective competences of these two offices are well defined. The Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples promotes the spread and deepening of the Christian faith, a duty of every single Christian as well as of the whole Church. This is carried out, in principle, without imposing the Church's faith on anyone. The PCID works to 'promote adequate studies (on various religious traditions) and to favour friendly relations of the Church with the followers of other religions. The Council is linked, for doctrinal and practical aspects, to the Second Vatican Council's *Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, Nostra Aetate*. The Apostolic Constitution, *Pastor Bonus*, of John Paul II (28 June 1988) on the Roman Curia, assigned to the Council the competence to favour and regulate relations with members and groups of other religions which are not included under any Christian denomination, and also with people who are, in whatever manner, endowed with a religious sense' (*Annuario Pontificio 2004*, p. 1722).

A Hindu can say to a Christian, 'thank you very much, I have listened to you proposing to me the Catholic faith; but I am a Hindu and would happily like to remain a Hindu'. This answer is perfectly legitimate and must be respected. Catholics do not shy away from relating to Hindus who wish to remain Hindus, knowing well that they may never become Christians, for Christians must relate with people of all religions at all times and in every place. Similarly, if a Muslim says, 'I want to remain a Muslim', a Catholic does not turn around and say, 'Ah, I thought you were going to become a Christian, that is why I came to propose to you the Christian faith; but now that you do not wish to become Christian I will have nothing to do with you'. No, I, as a Catholic, must still relate with that Muslim. Catholics wish to become friends even of those who declare their firm adherence to their respective religions. That is why there is, in the Vatican, besides the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples, the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. That you are different does not prevent me, a Christian, in any way from relating to you, a Hindu, and becoming your friend. I hope it is also true vice-versa. As Hindus you are different from me and I respect you. As Hindus you see me different from you and I appeal to you to respect me in my difference without asking me to change what I must and must not believe as a Catholic Christian.

The Catholic Church recommends and encourages its faithful to study other religions, while at the same time exhorting them to deepen their own faith. Such an exercise allows Christians to accurately identify differences among religions, gladly acknowledge them, and humbly respect them in order to grow in genuine friendship with people across religious boundaries.

The God in whom Christians believe as the God of all is certainly not the exclusive God of Christians alone. His revelation in history is for all people; all seek Him, for only He can satisfy, beyond every expectation, the hunger and thirst of every human heart. It is interesting to listen to St Paul who, after coming to know the religion of the Athenians, declares to them the fundamental difference of Christianity while at the same time drawing their attention to the relation their search for God had with Jesus Christ. St Luke, the author of the Acts of the Apostles, reports St Paul's speech to the Athenians:

> Men of Athens, I have seen for myself how extremely scrupulous you are in all religious matters, because, as I strolled round looking at your sacred mountains, I noticed among other things an altar inscribed: To an unknown God. In fact, the unknown God you revere is the one I proclaim to you.
>
> Since the God who made the world and everything in it is Himself Lord of heaven and earth, He does not make His home in shrines made by human hands. Nor is He in need of anything, that He should be served by human hands; on the contrary, it is He who gives everything—including life and breadth—to everyone. From one single principle He not only created the whole human race so that they could occupy the entire earth, but He decreed the times and limits of their habitation. And He did this so that they might seek the deity and, by feeling their way towards Him, succeed in finding Him; and indeed He is not far from any of us, since it is in Him that we live, and move, and exist, as indeed some of your own writers have said: We are all His children.
>
> Since we are the children of God, we have no excuse for thinking that the deity looks like anything in gold, silver, or stone that has been carved and designed by a man.
>
> But now, overlooking the times of ignorance, God is telling everyone everywhere that they must repent, because He has fixed a day when the whole world will be judged in uprightness by a man He has appointed. And God has publicly proved this by raising Him from the dead. (Acts 17:23–31)

Dialogue with religions and the mystery of the Blessed Trinity

Christians believe in one God who is Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God is tri-unity, community, family. God is not an isolated monad, He is one God in three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. I find it easier to explain this to Hindus than to people of other religious traditions. My ancestors were Hindus and part of my distant family is still practising Hinduism. Although we, of two different religions, are not speaking of the same thing it is not very difficult for Hindus to understand me if I speak of the Trinitarian mystery of God; it is a pluralistic mystery rather than a mystery of God which is pure monism.

God the Father

Christianity gives fundamental value to love. God can't be a loving God if He is a pure monad which, as closed-in upon itself, would be just loving itself—a form of pure egoism. Jesus Christ reveals God as the loving merciful Father: 'God is love' (1 John 4:8). When God is invoked as a loving Father, He is certainly the Father of all. Here 'all' should mean 'all without exclusion'. If He is the Father of all, then He is the single origin and the single destiny of all people. In that then, despite the difference, He is the authentic and objective goal of search of all people for God. In your search for the true God I see you related to Him and therefore, related to me, a Christian believer. Christians cannot negate this fundamental relationship. Therefore, dialogue with other religions becomes indispensable for all Christian believers.

God the Son

When Christians proclaim God the Son, Jesus Christ, as God made visible, they witness to the unique mediator between God and the human person. He is true God and true man, the God-man. He is the eternal Word of the Father. 'He was with God in the beginning. Through Him all things came into being, not one thing came into being except through Him' (John l:2–3). Jesus Christ is the incarnate God. Only in Him is God fully, perfectly, and finally revealed. Christians thus believe that Jesus Christ did not assume a body of merely a single individual belonging to a nation, a race, or a religion, but He assumed in His incarnation entire humanity. In other words, the mystery of His incarnation saved every human person and therefore He cannot be limited to a particular people, race, or religion. In this He united himself with every human being. Jesus Christ is God mingling with humanity. In His incarnation Jesus Christ is united with all; in His person He fulfils all search for true God. Can a Christian then think: 'I have nothing to do with people of other religious traditions?' On the contrary, Christians have everything to do with everybody, without exception, because they profess their faith in the mystery of Jesus Christ, the Lord and saviour of all.

As the second person of the Blessed Trinity, Jesus Christ is also referred to as the 'Word made flesh'. The creator God has sown the 'seeds of the Word' in every culture and religion (everything is created through Him, with Him, and in Him). Consequently, He is the source of all goodness, truth, and holiness which may be found in every culture and religion. The Church urges Christians to discover the 'seeds of the Word', the hidden treasure, everywhere.

Jesus Christ is the unique saviour of all. He redeems all from sin and gives everyone fullness of life. Christians celebrate the feast of Easter as the final liberation that Jesus Christ brought to all. Jesus Christ completed the definitive liberation of every person by shedding His own blood, by willingly offering His own life. Jesus did this not only for people of a particular religion or race but He did it for all. Recognising this truth, Christians are obliged to build deep relationships with everybody.

God the Holy Spirit

The third person of the Blessed Trinity is the Holy Spirit. The Heavenly Father sent His Son into the world out of love. God wants all people to be saved. Upon accomplishing the mission entrusted to Him, the Son returns to the Father but without leaving us orphans, as it were. We are animated from within because we are accompanied by the Holy Spirit. He has no confines or boundaries. He is God ever present in our midst. We who are baptised in Him are always to follow God and not make God follow us, as we often tend to do. The Holy Spirit, it is clearly said in the sacred scriptures, is like wind; it blows where it wills. We are to follow wherever He precedes us. The Catholic bishops in India once wrote: 'Other religions are not walls to be brought down; they are temples of the Holy Spirit whom we have failed to visit'.[2]

Dialogue with other religions is an obligatory path for Christians because the presence of God through the Holy Spirit is limitless and without confines. God is present everywhere through the promise of the Holy Spirit. We believe that He is present in a special and in particular way in the Catholic Church because that is the explicit promise of Jesus Christ before he ascends to the Father; that does not mean the Holy Spirit is not present in other places and people. He is giver of all gifts, light of all hearts; He is the perfect consoler; in fatigue and tiredness He is our rest, in sorrow He is our comfort; without Him there is nothing authentic

in any of us. He is the bond of unity among us. We like to say that the Holy Spirit is the patron of our dialogue with other religions.

I would like here to reiterate the irreversible option of the Catholic Church to dialogue with people of all religious traditions.

A history of the Church's dialogue with other religions

We can roughly divide the history of Christianity and its dialogue with other religions into four stages.

In its earliest period, nascent Christianity was influenced by other religious traditions. In imitation of the mystery of the incarnation, 'the young Churches, rooted in Christ and built up on the foundation of the Apostles, take to themselves in a wonderful exchange all the riches of the nations which were given to Christ as an inheritance (cf. Psalms 2:8). They borrow from the customs and traditions of their people, from their wisdom and their learning, from their arts and disciplines, all those things which can contribute to the glory of their Creator, or enhance the grace of their Savior, or dispose Christian life the way it should be' (*Ad Gentes*, 22). The early fathers of the Church, while affirming the unique, original, and singular character of Christianity, presented the Christ-event as the fulfilment of the ancient quest for the absolute.

In the next stage Christians became more occupied with safeguarding the uniqueness of the Christian faith in the context of heresies of their time. Other religions were completely ignored, or their role in the life of their adherents was underestimated. Christianity is accused of exclusivism as it is seen to be acting in a way that seemed superior and triumphalistic. However, one cannot overlook the danger with which Christianity was threatened in this period. The struggle with inner heresies that endangered the purity of Christian faith meant that differences were considered threats.

With the dawn of colonialism, which brought the Christians of Europe into more direct contact with other cultures and religions, and following the period of illumination in Europe, there began the stage of serious study of other religions and their comparison with Christianity. As a result of this study, discussion and debate emerged about other religious beliefs and the place of the followers of other religions in God's plan of salvation.

Finally, a radical change of attitude took place. Today the Catholic Church wants to approach other religious traditions with sensitivity to the spiritual and human values enshrined in them. Religions command respect because they bear witness to efforts to find answers to the profound mysteries of the human condition and give expression to the experience and longings of millions of their adherents. Other religions are not considered mere objects of Christian mission but partners in dialogue.

The Church's dialogue is founded on the content of its faith

Hindus and Christians today must deepen their mutual respect and friendship, not by ignoring the essential differences that exist between the two religious traditions, but rather by understanding, acknowledging, and accepting them, and thus mutually respecting them. In Hindu-Christian dialogue there is a tendency to dwell on apparent analogies or similarities, the result of which is often facile irenicism. Let me share with you three examples:

The symbol of food: In the Vedic tradition food is sometimes said to be a sacred symbol. The *Ṛg-veda* teaches that food is life. I quote from the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*: 'From food indeed are creatures born. All living things that dwell on earth, by food in truth do

they live and into it they finally pass. For truly food is the first of all beings and therefore it is called the universal remedy. Those who worship Brahman as food, assuredly obtain all the food they need. From food are all things born; by food when they are born they grow and develop. Food is eaten by beings and itself eats beings; because of that its name is food' (III, 1–2; 6–10).

For me, as a Christian, this example is very attractive, and it is a tempting proposition to indulge in a comparison with a similar symbol and draw a hasty conclusion by simply putting some verses from the New Testament alongside the above Hindu texts. But here is where I must firmly hold to the essential identity. The rest follows from the content, the essential difference, which I have tried to elaborate in the preceding pages. The verses from the New Testament of the Bible sometimes placed alongside the Hindu texts are the following:

'I am the bread of life. He who comes to me shall not hunger and he who believes in me shall never thirst. This is the bread which comes down from heaven that a man may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that comes down from heaven; if anyone eats of this bread he will live forever and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh' (John 6:35, 50–1). Jesus Christ publicly declared himself the bread of life.

In Hinduism food is sometimes used as a symbol of absolute reality and in Christianity Jesus Christ is the bread of life. Although there is a striking similarity in the expression of symbols, for me as Christian, Jesus Christ who declares himself food is the unique, complete, perfect, and final revelation of the one and true God. There is no God outside Him. Only He is eternal food, the bread that has come down from heaven. This is the fundamental difference between our two religions. Since we do not begin from the same premise we cannot draw one conclusion that is valid for both religions as if they were parallel ways of salvation.

The same things may be spoken of in various religions in different ways. But that cannot become a pretext for Christians to ignore or to relativise the essential faith of the Church. There is a fundamental identity in the very content of the Christian faith that should always remain the norm and the criterion, especially for Christians, in all comparison.

Let us take another example. The *Bhagavad-gītā* in chapter four (vv. 7–8) speaks about *avatāra*. It is said: 'For whenever the law of righteousness withers away and lawlessness arises then I generate myself on earth for the protection of the good, for the destruction of evildoers, for the setting up of the law of righteousness, I come into being age after age'.

The mystery of the 'Word of God becoming flesh' in Christianity is of paramount importance. St John the evangelist introduces the mystery of the incarnation of Jesus with these words: 'In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through Him and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life and the life was the light of man. The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world. He was in the world and the world was made through Him and yet the world knew Him not' (John 1:1–5, 9–12, 14).

Again, the tempting proposition is to put the two quotations alongside and indulge in drawing hasty conclusions. I repeat, the premise is not the same, therefore the conclusion cannot be the same. The content, namely Jesus Christ who 'becomes man' is the unique, complete, and decisive revelation of one and true God.

My third example is about the respective call to conversion according to our two religions. I would stand by the distinction which is made in India between *dharma-parivartan* (conversion to God) and *dharma-antara* (change from one religion to another). *Dharma-parivartan* is understood as the ongoing conversion that each person is called on to undergo,

no matter which religion, including Christianity. God forbid that any of us think that we have arrived at our final destiny, namely, union with God. All of us have a long way to go to achieve our union with God. Therefore there is a constant need, daily, at every moment, for everyone for conversion. This is *dharma-parivartan.*

The whole *sādhana* (practice) of the Hindu way of life is considered an ongoing conversion. A Hindu may try to gradually become aware of the *satyāsa-satyaṃ* (the truth of truth) by abandoning all illusion (*māyā*) and thus finally attain liberation.

Mahatma Gandhi coined another word, with a new meaning, namely, *dharma-antara,* change from one religion to another. In Christianity, *dharma-parivartan* and *dharma-antara* are considered distinct but related to each other. One's real conversion is to God, who has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ who cannot be separated from the Church, which is His body. One's daily conversion to God and consequently the conversion from another religion to Jesus Christ are seen as intrinsically related.

Obviously, Christianity builds its teaching on the faith of the Church. One cannot pretend to be a Christian when one ignores or attempts to relativise the faith of the Church on which the whole edifice of Catholic religion stands. The Church's faith is the content, the basic identity, of every Christian who must uncompromisingly adhere to it and live it in this religiously pluralistic world. Christians can certainly not impose their faith on others although they must always propose it to everyone. But Christians must also respect others in their religious otherness.

What kind of relationship is the Catholic Church looking for?

Theological relationship between religions can be quite problematic. However, our common spiritual sensitivities can become the basis for our relationships. The relationship that Christianity is looking for is a deep friendship among religious believers. We must build trust and confidence in each other. The first duty of the human being is to respond to God who loves us; God is the supreme value in life (*summum bonum*). Christians are motivated to go to others in response to God who loves us. This response may take the concrete forms of service such as dialogue or inculturation. The God of Christians is the God of all. In Him we are all related. The comprehensive Hindu tradition has sought God relentlessly. Jesus Christ, we believe, fulfils that search. Because of the openness of Hindus to the mystery of God, Hindu-Christian dialogue can become a model of dialogue also for other religious traditions.

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Notes

[1] 'The desire for God is written in the human heart, because man is created by God and for God; and God never ceases to draw man to himself. Only in God will he find the truth and happiness he never stops searching for.' (Catechism of the Catholic Church, ch. 1, 27)

[2] Catholic Bishops' Conference of India, New Delhi, 1969.

Scholarship and Devotion: Can They Co-Exist?

Prof. Keith Ward

Can a scholar be a true believer? Can a believer be a good scholar? Two parts of a problem that has exercised many in the West since at least the Enlightenment. Prof. Keith Ward, Regius Professor Emeritus of Divinity at the University of Oxford, takes a fresh look at the conundrum by examining some of the main problems and outlining a few principles that may help modern-day devotee-scholars.

Religion calls for total commitment and faith. Scholarship calls for critical reasoning and a questioning of all presuppositions. How then can religious devotion and academic scholarship live together, even in the same person?

It may seem impossible. There are those who say that simple faith is enough, and scholarship is a distraction from a life of devotion. There are others who say that the study of religions requires a lack of commitment, so that you can be dispassionate and detached about whatever findings you come up with. Are devotees who become scholars thus doomed to religious schizophrenia, with two halves of their minds, the committed and the sceptical, condemned never to meet?

Must critical reasoning lead to scepticism?

I have taught philosophy in British and American universities for forty years, and I have been a Christian devotee for thirty of them, and I have to say that it has sometimes felt that way. It is easy to be sceptical about other people's faiths, but it is quite hard to be sceptical about your own. Anyway, why should you be sceptical? Can you not have a form of education that is purely affirming and supports your faith?

In tackling questions like this, it must first be asked whether the use of critical reason is bound to lead to scepticism. It does not do so in physics, and that might be a good place to start thinking about the problem.

Learning the fundamentals

In physics, it would be totally false to say that everyone is encouraged from the start to criticise everything they hear. No, Newton's laws are just true, and if any first year student tried to criticise them they would be thrown out of the class. The laws have been confirmed by thousands of observations and experiments and never disconfirmed (at least at speeds much less than the speed of light, and at magnitudes much greater than that of atoms). They are the basis of modern science and students just have to learn them.

That is perhaps the first important point to make. Before you can criticise anything, you must have a great deal of correct information. If you are looking at physics, you need

to learn the laws and equations of the great physicists, to know how to apply them and what they do and do not say. So, if you are looking at religion, you need to know what devotees believe, what significance those beliefs have for their lives, and what they do and do not imply about the world.

At this stage there is no threat to religious belief. Unfortunately, teachers of religion are sometimes so ill-informed that misleading information is given, and a great deal of prejudice can be conveyed. It is possible but quite difficult for someone who does not believe in rebirth to give a sensitive account of that doctrine. All too often over-simple accounts are given, and the teacher does not have the information or experience to know when the doctrine is much more sophisticated than the simple versions that are often found.

'Skilful means'

This suggests a second point, that the information given must be suited to the intelligence or insight of the student, it must be at an appropriate level of sophistication, and the teacher must be able to identify the points at which it is being simplified to suit its audience, and at which more subtle doctrines exist that cannot as yet be meaningfully conveyed.

Again there is a parallel in physics, where quantum theory would never be taught to schoolchildren, yet teachers should be able to convey that it does exist, so that things are not as simple as the way they are forced to put them in primary school. Buddhists often apply the principle of 'skilful means', which says that you teach in a way that is best calculated to give an appropriate level of insight to the pupils. It is not that something is being concealed. It is just that some things can be beyond the understanding of pupils, and it is important to know just where simplifications are being made, even though what is being said is appropriate at a certain level of knowledge. As a matter of fact, when I just remarked that Newton's laws were true, I was doing just that!

One of the main problems with religious education is that this principle of skilful means is not properly conveyed, so people with very simple understandings of religious doctrines wrongly think that what they believe is the absolute truth. This is where one problem between scholars and devotees can arise. Many devotees have no inclination or ability to engage in abstract thought about religious doctrines. They want to be wholly devoted to their Lord, without understanding abstruse points about rebirth or the nature of the self.

Of course they are absolutely right in saying that there is no IQ test for the attainment of liberation. For most faiths, liberation is by faith and moral commitment, not by the ability to pass an examination in theology. Yet it would be quite wrong to say that there are no intellectual truths in religion, or that it does not matter if nobody understands them.

All devotees depend on the insight of the primary gurus and teachers of their paths. They do not discover all spiritual truths for themselves, or ever attain to complete wisdom and understanding. Gurus have not obtained their qualifications by passing examinations in theology. But then they do not need to. They have immediate insight and transcendent wisdom, and know things by personal apprehension that devotees can only learn from them and dimly understand.

In physics, truths are discovered by observation and experiment. The physicist learns to observe closely and with discrimination, and to set up experiments that will disclose aspects of nature that are not always apparent in everyday life. In religion, truths are discovered by experience and practical experiments in living. Spiritual teachers have the

ability to experience spiritual reality and to discriminate between reality and illusion. They live in ways that explore deep and intense relationships to the Spirit, ways of meditation and prayer, and in that way they apprehend aspects of spiritual life that are not apparent in everyday life.

Pointing to the real purpose of religion

There are similarities between ways of discovering truths in physics and in religion, but there is one major difference. Physicists are not inwardly changed by their discoveries, and they deal with objects in a publicly observable world. Religious teachers, however, are transformed by their experiences of Spirit, and they are raised to higher levels of existence by their relation to a reality that is most real but difficult to find.

Scholarship will not raise anyone to such levels of wisdom and sanctity. But what it can do is to raise our understanding of spiritual truths, which will always be inadequate, slightly higher. So a third principle of religious scholarship, in addition to receiving correct information about religious beliefs, and realising the points at which such information is inadequate to full understanding, is that it should point to the source of such information in the authoritative teaching of the founders of the tradition, and be concerned to understand that teaching as a source of personal insight and development. There should, in other words, be sensitivity to the real purpose of religion, which is the transformation of individual life by growth in knowledge of the Supreme Lord, or of that which is of ultimate reality and value. Any religious education that lacks that element is like a course in music that fails to get anyone to appreciate the beauty of music. Perhaps some courses in the study of religion are like that. But there is no reason why scholarship should lead to indifference. Scholars of music should love and appreciate music even more than other people, and if they do not, something has gone wrong.

So religious scholarship should teach us more about our religious beliefs; it should teach us humility as we see the inadequacy of our intellects before the mysteries of the spiritual realm, and it should increase our love and appreciation for the teachings we embrace and for the teacher from whom they come. Religious scholarship is only for those who have the inclination and ability to pursue it. But for them it can be a religious duty.

Three challenges

It sounds as if the problem of being a scholar and a devotee has faded away. But things are not that easy! The sixteenth century in Europe saw the birth of three major cultural forces that raised the problem in a very pointed way. First, the rise of the natural sciences introduced new standards of precision in the observation of the natural world, and aimed to bring all phenomena under absolute and apparently inflexible laws of nature. Second, the rise of critical history introduced a stress on careful scrutiny of the evidence for all assertions about the past, and scepticism about the accuracy of ancient historical records. Third, an insistence that all traditional moral rules should stand before the bar of reason, and justify themselves in terms of human flourishing, threw doubt on many traditional moral attitudes that were often associated with religious traditions.

I will consider each of these in turn, and examine the problems they raise for religious believers. In each case, those problems threaten any easy relationship between critical scholarship and religious commitment, and it is not easy to find a way of enabling scholarship and devotion to live together.

The whole truth?

Over the past three hundred years or so, scientific knowledge has transformed our world. Modern medicine, computers, aircraft, and electricity have all changed the world to an immense extent. Science works. It has given rise to a view of the universe that is often presented something like this: the universe originated with a Big Bang about fourteen thousand million years ago. By a long process of cosmic evolution, organic life, in the form of bacteria, formed on earth about four thousand million years ago, and human beings evolved from them a few million years ago. In about five thousand million years the sun will expand as it dies, and the earth will be swallowed up in fire. Eventually the whole physical universe will die, as the second law of thermodynamics inexorably takes effect. Between the birth and death of the universe, all things proceed in accordance with a few simple and elegant laws of nature, and human beings are complex physical organisms that are, like everything else, products of these laws, and not separate spiritual souls. All that we are and love—beauty, morality, thought, and friendship—is part of a long impersonal and purposeless interplay of blind unconscious atoms, and will eventually subside into the chaos from which it originated, leaving no physical trace.

This view clearly conflicts with most religious beliefs and their account of the history of the universe and the place of humans within it. Particular points of conflict lie in the question of whether human life has developed by random mutation from purely physical causes, whether human souls are more than physical entities, whether miracles or spiritual causes for physical events exist, and whether human life in the universe has any significance.

There is one basic conflict underlying all of these questions, and that is whether science allows any reality other than the physical to exist and to play a causal role in the way things happen. As a matter of fact the natural sciences do not have much, if anything, to say on this issue. It is important to distinguish what is established in the sciences by observation and experiment from philosophical views that may be suggested by the sciences, but are not themselves scientific—like the one just presented.

Some religious views deny that the evolution of life on earth happened at all. That is a major conflict, and such believers will have to hold that many of the conclusions of modern science are mistaken. This, however, is not such a major problem as it may at first seem. All scientific theories are provisional. They are based on the best evidence available, but they do not claim absolute finality. Newton's laws came to be supplemented by Einstein's theory of relativity, and modern quantum theory may yet be replaced by some theory that manages to unite relativity and quantum theories more coherently. The theory of evolution is accepted by the vast majority of scientists as the best available explanation of the diversity of life on earth, and as a very satisfactory way of accounting for all sorts of observed data (like the existence of fossils). But it could be wrong. What those who disagree with it can do is just what Isaac Newton did, and say 'I frame no hypotheses'. In his case, he discovered the inverse square law of gravity, but could not accept what gravity seemed to imply, that there was action at a distance. His law worked, but he just had no theory about how it worked. So a biologist could accept all testable predictions and repeatable observations in biology, but simply frame no hypotheses about how organisms developed long before any observations could be made and tested. Such a biologist could simply remain agnostic about that, preferring to wait for further evidence to come in, and proceed quite happily with observable and testable facts in biology.

Despite this fact, most religious believers, like people in general, feel that though the theory of evolution is provisional, there is enough cumulative evidence for it to be accepted

as a well established scientific theory. In that case, some amendments will have to be made to some traditional religious views. In the Christian case, the Biblical account of creation in six days will have to be interpreted as metaphorical and poetic, not as literally true. And some Christian doctrines will need to be reformulated in this new scientific context. Indian religious traditions can do much the same thing. This is not too big a step, for everyone agrees that there is a great deal of poetry and metaphor in ancient religious traditions anyway. All that is needed is to distinguish accounts of the origin and nature of the physical world, which now becomes the province of natural science, from accounts of spiritual truth, which is the real business of religion. It is sometimes quite difficult to say exactly where this line should be drawn. But many religious believers (the Roman Catholic Church, for example) agree that religion has to accept the best findings of science on matters of physical fact.

At the same time, religion has the right to insist on the reality of the spiritual and its influence on the physical world. So believers should reject any claims that there is no purpose in the universe, that everything happens by blind chance, or that physical laws of nature explain absolutely everything that happens. These claims do not properly belong to science. They are forms of a highly dubious philosophy, the philosophy of materialism.

Since science deals only with the material, it is not surprising that it does not mention any spiritual factors—they lie outside the province of science. But it does not follow that the spiritual does not exist, and it may seem very improbable that only science can give the truth about the universe. If there are spiritual truths about the universe, they will not be discovered by science, but by spiritual insight. So there is much room for debate about just what the relation between the spiritual and the physical is. Science cannot dogmatically discount the spiritual, but there are many problems about how science and the spiritual relate to one another. Where is the spirit at work in evolution? And how does the spiritual influence the physical?

These problems, like the problem of how exactly the physical brain relates to human consciousness, may not be solvable with our present knowledge. They may not be solvable by humans at all. So, while the devotee who studies science will come across many materialist viewpoints, those viewpoints can be readily distinguished from the actual experimental findings of science. There is no necessity for the believer to be able to resolve all the puzzles of spirit-matter relationships in order to continue believing. But it is a good thing to admit that they are puzzles. Believers do not have all the answers, any more than scientists do. Both religious believers and scientists need to cultivate humility, try to see the limits of their expertise, and accept that many intellectual problems have no solution in the present state of knowledge.

Buddhists see presently insoluble problems of a theoretical sort as 'unprofitable questions'. It does not matter to your spiritual life whether the universe began or did not begin, whether human life evolved or did not evolve. Profitable questions are questions that have consequences for the attainment of the spiritual goal—a goal of inner peace, equanimity, non-attachment, freedom from hatred, greed and delusion, and devotion to a supreme Lord or a supreme good. If you thought that science showed there was no supreme Lord (because everything is physical), or that you could never achieve liberation from illusion (because there are no spiritual states), then there would be a major conflict between science and spiritual life. But these are just the things science cannot show. Therefore the very real problems of mind-matter interaction and of purpose in evolution are 'unprofitable' from a spiritual point of view.

That does not mean you should not try to tackle them. If you have the inclination and ability, you should try to tackle them. The attempt to do so may bring new insights and help

others who are troubled by these sorts of problems. But it does mean that not everybody need concern themselves with such problems, that we should not be discouraged if we cannot solve them, and that it is reasonable to have faith that there is a solution, even if it is not known to us.

The reason why at least some devotees should study science is that it increases human understanding of the world. Truth is indivisible, and any study that leads to a greater understanding of truth is a proper spiritual pursuit for those whose vocation it is. There is no conflict between the findings of natural science and spiritual truth, as long as you approach both with a certain humility, and bear in mind the proper subject matter of science—understanding the nature of the physical world and its laws—and of spirituality—seeking a transforming relationship with a supreme spiritual reality. Devotees who are scientific scholars will have a keener eye than most for what is really established by scientific evidence, for the point at which supposedly neutral theories are sometimes affected by assumptions, religious or anti-religious, that are not strictly scientific, and for the limitations of human rationality and knowledge. They will also see the scientific exploration of the universe as part of seeing more clearly the glory and wisdom of the Supreme Source of all reality. The believer will often need patience, humility, and faith—patience to put up with unsolved, yet spiritually unprofitable, puzzles; humility to accept the provisionality of human knowledge; and faith to trust, on non-scientific grounds, in the supreme spiritual ground of all being.

History or mythology?

The problems involved in being a devotee and a scientist do not seem too severe after all. Things get more difficult, however, when devotees get involved in the critical study of history. This is the area where sacred texts are viewed with the same critical questions about authorship, accuracy, and reliability as any other historical document. And it is where the wide range of human beliefs throughout history and throughout the whole planet becomes vividly apparent. If your own sacred texts are treated by a historian just like any one else's sacred texts, you are liable to find much of them regarded as myth or legend, as exaggeration or fabrication. And if your present beliefs are shown to be just a small part of a whole range of the constantly changing religious beliefs of humanity, most of which make the same claims to revealed status as yours, you may have difficulty in maintaining the unique and absolute truth of your beliefs. This is the area in which Christians have encountered most difficulties in the last one hundred and fifty years or so. Those difficulties exist for all religious traditions, but it just happens that, since many Europeans were Christians, that is where the problems were most sharply focused.

One place to begin confronting this difficulty is to remember that no one speaks from a position of religious neutrality. Everybody begins by thinking that some claims about spiritual reality are true and some are false. So the devotee is in just the same position as, say, the atheist. They both begin from assumptions about the truth or falsity of many religious beliefs.

Devotees affirm as part of their experience an apprehension of a supreme spiritual reality that has real and beneficial effects on their lives and on the lives of those around them. This is not a historical assertion. It is an assertion about present experience, about the way you see the world, and about the supreme reality and value of the spiritual. Atheists will not share this view, and that means that their interpretation of the past, like their interpretation of the present, will exclude the spiritual from consideration. All allegedly spiritual presences in the past will be re-interpreted by atheists as illusions, having purely

social or psychological causes. In other words, devotees are right to be suspicious of atheistic interpretations of the past.

There is no such thing as neutral history, since history consists in finding the most probable explanations of past events, and what you think is probable depends on your initial beliefs. So any accounts of miraculous events—events that are spiritually caused, that transcend the normal regularities of physical events, and that carry a spiritual meaning—are bound to be interpreted by atheists as legends. If, on the other hand, there is a spiritual reality, it is rather likely that some miracles will occur. Devotees are right to trust their sacred texts, if there is reason to think they have been given by a person with unique knowledge of spiritual reality. There is still much to learn from atheistic historians, for they may point out aspects of events that have been overlooked, and they may help you to distinguish interpretations of your tradition that are less spiritually profitable than others. But there is no reason to think that what they say is the one correct version of events.

It is important to realise, however, that there is not just one obvious version of historical events. Muslims and Christians, for example, differ about whether Jesus was crucified. Jews and Christians differ about whether Jesus ascended into heaven. Hindus and Christians differ about whether Jesus was the only divine incarnation, or sometimes about whether he was a divine incarnation at all. This seems sufficient to show that there is not just one account of religious history that every person of good will would, if rational and pious, accept.

It is not quite enough to say that I will just stick to my tradition and ignore all the others. I need to know why others do not accept my tradition, and why there are so many different traditions. The hard thing for a devotee is to remain committed to your tradition—to be loyal to the personal experience you have received, and the relationship to the Supreme that you enjoy—yet also to be open to learn from very different perspectives on human experience. We would all agree that, when we begin our spiritual journey, there is little that we understand about spiritual things. Can we increase our understanding by confining our knowledge to just the one tradition in which we began? Well, yes, of course we can increase it. But if we do that, and only do that, there is an immense amount of knowledge about the world we will never have. How do we know that we are not missing something of enormous value? It seems arrogant to think that only our tradition has the truth, that there is no truth anywhere else, and that we cannot benefit from other viewpoints. How could we even know that without knowing something about other traditions? Since there is no neutral view, it is right to start from where we stand, in our tradition. But it is reasonable to seek to extend our understanding as widely as possible, and that should help us to see what is importantly true in our tradition, and what may turn out to be due to historical accident or even prejudice, and might need amending.

This can give rise to tensions in personal life, if we really face up to the very different understandings of others, which can often challenge our own. But there is a huge difference between the deep and unchanging truth of a tradition and the cultural forms and conventional interpretations that we may have accepted unthinkingly. The distinctive truth of our tradition may not change, but often our understanding of it should change, and many things that we had thought a central part of our tradition may turn out to be temporary forms, suited to earlier understandings, but now in need of restatement.

Critical scholarship can thus serve devotion, by helping us to distinguish central truths from culturally conditioned forms, and by enabling us to see our tradition in a wider historical context. But for that to happen, if you are a devotee you must follow three principles. You must not be emotionally attached to every particular form and statement that has come to you in your tradition. You must identify with care the central experiences and beliefs to

which you are fundamentally committed, and distinguish them from culturally influenced interpretations and practices. And you must be committed to extending your understanding of truth as widely as you can, whatever the consequences. Openness to the truth requires a preparedness to revise views that come to seem false, however attached to them we are. But this does not mean there are no absolute commitments. Devotion to truth is itself a sort of spiritual commitment, since what the devotee worships is the truth, usually in personal form. And if it is the truth, no honest examination can undermine it. We must remember the weakness of our intellects, however, and this means that we should not give up our spiritual commitment just because of some intellectual puzzle or perplexity.

This requires a degree of spiritual maturity, a resolution often to live with uncertainty and even doubt, but with a passionate commitment to the highest spiritual truth we have discerned, and a determination not to let complex and difficult theories undermine the most important spiritual experiences that shape our lives. In this way the devotee can embrace historical scholarship, however critical, as an aid to the discovery of truth, though not as the ultimate arbiter of spiritual truth.

Authority, morality

The third main cultural force that derives from the European Enlightenment is the stress on moral autonomy, the principle that you should make your own moral decisions, and not accept them on authority. I suppose many of us would now say that the Enlightenment writers who espoused this principle, like Immanuel Kant, were much too optimistic about human nature. They thought that everyone would decide on the same set of moral principles. Experience has shown, however, that humans will make very different decisions about how to live. They may even decide that they do not care what other people think, but will maximise their own pleasure.

This is not at all what Kant had in mind. What he was really concerned about was that moral rules should be justifiable rationally. That is, they should be seen to be conducive to human well-being, as opposed to being just absolute commands that cannot be seen to have any rational point. Religious devotees, however (and Kant was not a devotee), see ultimate human well-being as lying in a relation of devotion, submission or loving obedience to a Supreme Lord. The rules of religion spell out the way in which that is best pursued in human life. Such rules may not be rational to an atheist, but they are supremely important to a believer.

It is true that such rules should not be repressive, and that they should not infringe the freedom of humans to choose their own course of action, as long as it does not harm others. So believers must ask themselves if the moral rules they subscribe to are harming others in subtle ways, or if they are sometimes relics of ancient cultural conventions that cannot be justified either on grounds of widening human freedom and responsibility or of pointing the way towards the ultimate religious goal.

So in matters of conduct and morality the devotee should not fear the most ruthless critical examination. Religion is concerned with the ultimate good for humans, and with the nature of that good. It therefore has an interest in examining as carefully as possible the principles that make for such good. It particularly needs to ask why its rules and practices are so often destructive, intolerant, and oppressive of others. Such investigation may sometimes be uncomfortable, since devotees tend to be rather conservative in their moral views. What needs to be discovered is how far such conservatism is rooted merely in traditionalism for its own sake, and how far it can be justified in the light of the real goal of human good that

a religious tradition enjoins. Again, the devotee needs to balance a practical commitment to a spiritual journey with an intellectual openness that may challenge accepted practices and interpretations. But that is just what all great religious teachers have embodied—an unflinching commitment to the supreme good, with a very critical attitude to many current social norms and conventions. In the end the devotee will not completely agree with the slogan, 'Decide for yourself what moral principles to follow'. Most humans do not have the wisdom and insight for that. But the devotee will agree that all moral principles accepted on authority continually need to be tested against their efficacy in promoting human well-being and the ultimate good for all sentient beings. For that is, after all, what enlightened religious teachers have always taught.

Concluding thoughts

Is it, after all, difficult to be a scholar and a devotee? It may seem so, if reason is seen as the enemy of faith, and if reason is seen as purely critical and destructive of belief. But reason also has a constructive role to play in showing the coherence and plausibility of beliefs. Its criticisms are necessary to distinguish superstition and mere convention from wisdom and truth.

It can feel difficult to face the criticisms of others, especially when we cannot think of arguments to defend our own position. We can be almost overwhelmed by the sheer amount of information the modern world offers, and that can shake our confidence.

But the spiritual approach is to let the arguments flow where they will, and to absorb as much information as we can, but to continue our spiritual practice with resolution. It is rather as if someone who is deeply in love is also a psychologist investigating the nature of love. That person will gather as much information as possible and will listen to as many views and arguments as possible. None of that will affect the fact of being in love, though some of it may affect the ways in which that love is expressed.

So it is with religious faith. It is part of spiritual practice that we should be non-attached to the arguments that flow around and through us, but should view them like the thoughts and feelings that pass in meditation. We should maintain a calm confidence that truth will never contradict that supreme Real who is Truth, even if we are not very good at getting access to the truth. Our task is to try to discover more of the truth, without attachment to our success or depression at our failure. Seek the truth but do not believe you have ever finally found it, exactly as it really is. Embrace all criticisms, but never despair if you cannot respond to them adequately. Always seek what is good and spiritually useful in all the knowledge you acquire. And always sustain your practical commitment to the highest good that you know—which, for any devotee, will be the Supreme Good and the Ultimately Real. If we can sustain such attitudes, scholarship will, for many of us, be part of devotion, and there will be no schizophrenia—though there will be many personal failures of coherence and rationality—between the scholar and the devotee.

Editing the Unchangeable Truth
An Overview of the Editorial History of the Books of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

Jayādvaita Swami

'Don't add anything. Don't subtract anything. Don't change anything.' This was the instruction ISKCON's founder-*ācārya,* Śrīla Prabhupāda, many times gave to his disciples. Yet some disciples he engaged to edit his words for publication—that is (by definition) to add, subtract, and change. Here I present a brief history of that editorial work.

Before Śrīla Prabhupāda came to the West, his writing, publishing, and distribution were a 'one-man show'. He himself did it all. The only editing done on his writing was whatever editing he did himself.

He put substance ahead of language. As stated in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.5.11): 'Literature that is full of descriptions of the glories of the unlimited Supreme Lord is a different creation, full of transcendental words directed toward bringing about a revolution in the impious lives of this world's misdirected civilization'. Even if imperfectly composed, the *Bhāgavatam* says, such literature is 'heard, sung, and accepted by purified men who are thoroughly honest'.

Śrīla Prabhupāda was aware of the shortcomings of his English. As he himself wrote in his unedited commentary on this verse:

> We know that in our honest attempt for presenting this great literature conveying the transcendental message for reviving God-consciousness of the people in general, as a matter of re-spiritualisation of the world atmosphere,—is fret with many difficulties. Regard being had to the facts that our capacity of presenting the matter in adequate language, specially a foreign language, will certainly fail and there may be so many literary discrepancies inspite of our honest attempt to present it in the proper way.

Still, he had hope:

> But we are sure that with our all faults in this connection the seriousness of the subject matter will be taken into consideration and the leaders of the society will still accept this on account of its being an honest attempt for glorifying the Almighty Great so much now badly needed.

He offered an example:

> When there is fire in the house, the inmates of the house go out for help from the neighbors who may be foreigners to such inmates and yet without any adequate language the victims of the fire express themselves and the neighbors understand the need even though not expressed in adequate language.

And so:

> The same spirit of co-operation is needed in the matter of broadcasting this transcendental message of the Srimad Bhagwatam throughout the whole poluted atmosphere of the present day world situation. After all it is a technical science of spiritual values and as such we are concerned with the techniques and not with the language. If the techniques of this great literature are understood by the people of the world, there is the success.

Yet once Śrīla Prabhupāda came to the West, he wanted his writings edited: 'I wish that all copies, before finally going to the press, must be thoroughly revised and edited so that there may not be any mistakes especially of spelling and grammar or of the Sanskrit names.'[1]

How were the books written?

Before we discuss the editing, let's first look at how the books were written.

Some books Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote out in longhand or typed himself. These include *Easy Journey to Other Planets, Śrī Īśopaniṣad,* the first and second cantos of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam,* the first five or six chapters of *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is,* and chapters one through five or six of *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā.*

Most of his books, however, he dictated on a Grundig dictating machine, using tapes that each afforded perhaps an hour of dictation. This enabled him to achieve greater speed. Yet the method had its drawbacks: he had less opportunity to review and revise his words, he sometimes spoke passages twice, and—most of all—he had to depend on the accuracy of his transcribers. Especially in the early years, accuracy was poor. The transcribers were not yet deeply familiar with his philosophy, they had difficulty with his strong Bengali accent, and most of his Sanskrit words and quotations were strange to their ears.[2] Moreover, Śrīla Prabhupāda's frequent clicking of the switch to start, stop, and review his dictation clipped short many words or deleted them entirely.

This resulted in numerous gaps and errors. Sometimes transcribers simply left things out—entire Sanskrit quotations, for example—or gave only phonetic approximations. Sometimes they could only guess at what Śrīla Prabhupāda was saying, and often guessed wrong.

This was most conspicuously true for *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, and to a lesser extent for the 'Kṛṣṇa Book'.[3] In later books, the quality improved. Śrīla Prabhupāda, instead of mailing tapes for transcription, had a transcriber personally travelling with him. The transcribers became well versed in his philosophy, accustomed to his accent, and familiar with his favourite quotations. And some of the transcribers learned the Sanskrit and Bengali alphabets in order to refer to the source texts that Śrīla Prabhupāda himself was using. So errors in transcription, though they still occurred, became considerably less frequent and less severe.

Some of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books were compiled from his recorded lectures or conversations. Examples are *Teachings of Queen Kuntī, Teachings of Lord Kapila,* and small books like *On the Way to Kṛṣṇa* and *The Perfection of Yoga. The Nectar of Instruction* was exceptional. Śrīla Prabhupāda dictated it to disciples who took down his words longhand.[4]

For some books Śrīla Prabhupāda saw the edited manuscript or a pre-press blueprint. For most he didn't.

Who were the editors?

Śrīla Prabhupāda's editors were various. His first steady editor was Rāyarāma Dāsa, an early disciple who worked professionally as a freelance writer for comic books. By the time I joined Śrīla Prabhupāda's society, in 1968, Rāyarāma was among what Śrīla Prabhupāda called 'the main pillars of the society'.[5] Next came Hayagrīva Dāsa, whom Śrīla Prabhupāda met in 1966 while walking down a street on New York's Lower East Side. Hayagrīva (then known as Howard Wheeler) had an MA in English, and as he relates, Śrīla Prabhupāda (then most often referred to simply as 'the Swami') had work for him to do:

> Noticing that he has been typing, I offer to type for him, and he hands me the manuscript of the First Chapter, Second Canto, of Vyāsadeva's *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.
>
> 'You can type this?'
>
> 'Oh yes', I say.
>
> He is delighted. We roll a small typewriter table out of the corner, and I begin work. His manuscript is single spaced without margins on flimsy, yellowing Indian paper. It appears that the Swami tried to squeeze every word possible onto the pages. I have to use a ruler to keep from losing my place.
>
> The first words read: 'O the king'. I naturally wonder whether 'O' is the king's name, and 'the king' stands in apposition. After concluding that 'O King' is intended instead, I consult the Swami.
>
> 'Yes', he says. 'Change it, then.'
>
> As I retype another paragraph, I notice certain grammatical discrepancies, perhaps typical of Bengalis who learned English from British headmasters in the early 1900s. Considerable editing is required to get the text to conform with current American usage. After pointing out a few changes, I tell the Swami that if he so desired, I could make all the proper corrections.
>
> 'Very good', he says, smiling. 'Do it! Put it nicely.'
>
> Thus my editorial services begin.
>
> I type all morning in the room where he reads, translates, welcomes visitors, and 'takes rest'. There is a tin footlocker, used as a desk, and a rug on which he sits and sometimes sleeps. Apart from my typewriter table, there is no other furniture. As I type, I hear him cooking in the kitchen, and can smell the butter being boiled to make ghee. I finish the chapter: twenty pages, double spaced with wide margins. The original had filled only eight pages.
>
> 'Let me know if there's any more work', I tell him. 'I can take it back to Mott Street and type there.'
>
> 'More? Yes', he says. 'There is lots more.'
>
> He opens the closet door and pulls out two large bundles tied with saffron cloth. Within, he shows me thousands of pages of single spaced, marginless manuscripts of literatures unknown in the Western world. I stand before them, astounded.
>
> 'It's a lifetime of typing', I protest.
>
> 'Oh, yes!' he smiles happily. 'Many lifetimes.' (Hayagrīva Dāsa, pp. 15–16)

Another early disciple, Satsvarūpa Dāsa (later Satsvarūpa Dāsa Goswami), did considerable editing on Śrīla Prabhupāda's early dictated works. Gaurasundara Dāsa and others also tried their hand at editing. In 1970 I gradually began, and later in the 1970s, Draviḍa Dāsa.

For Sanskrit, Śrīla Prabhupāda's first editor was Pradyumna Dāsa, who continued to serve as the main Sanskrit editor throughout Śrīla Prabhupāda's life. Among the other editors in what eventually became the BBT Sanskrit department were Nitāi Dāsa, Jagannātha Dāsa, Santoṣa Dāsa, Jayaśacīnandana Dāsa, and Gopīparāṇadhana Dāsa.

What sort of editing was done?

In principle, the editing Śrīla Prabhupāda asked for was minimal: '[S]imply we have to see that in our book there is no spelling or grammatical mistake. We do not mind for any good style, our style is Hare Kṛṣṇa, but, still, we should not present a shabby thing.'[6]

In practice, to keep from shabbiness, more than grammar and spelling was involved. Apart from spelling, grammar, and punctuation, the editors applied standards of consistency ('Deity' or 'deity'? 'spirit-soul' or 'spirit soul'?). They tried to make sure that pronouns had unambiguous antecedents. They broke long paragraphs into shorter ones. They turned passive constructions ('and the rest is being awaited by Him') into active ('and He is awaiting the rest').[7] They made skewed constructions parallel.

They turned British or Indian usages into American. 'We have got' often became 'we have'. Rupees became dollars, 'lakhs and crores' became 'thousands and millions', and figures like '1,00,000' (one lakh) became '100,000'.

In some instances, minor examples that would have seemed strange or jarring to a Western reader were modified or deleted.

In the books as published, when Śrīla Prabhupāda quotes a verse in Sanskrit an English translation usually follows. Most often, this translation was inserted by the editors. It was the editors, too, who routinely supplied the chapter-verse references (Śrīla Prabhupāda did so only on occasion) and corrected wrong ones.

When Śrīla Prabhupāda used outmoded rhetorical devices, like parenthetical question marks or exclamation marks to express irony—'the modernised Sanyasins (?)'[8]—the editors deleted them.

The editors often changed Śrīla Prabhupāda's choice of words. 'Therefore give up your disparity of mind' became 'Therefore give up your anxiety'.[9] And the *gopīs*, in the edited 'Kṛṣṇa Book', modestly try to cover their nakedness not 'by placing the left-hand palm upon the vagina' but 'by placing their left hand over their pubic area'.[10]

Any editor, typically, strives to bring out a work that is properly polished and yet stay as close to the author's language as possible. For Śrīla Prabhupāda's books, this could be especially challenging. The technical nature of the subject, the enlightened status of the author, the sense that Kṛṣṇa Himself was speaking through him, and the charm, grace, simplicity, and precision so often found in his personal voice—all these were in constant tension with a grammar and diction just as often in need of serious repair.

And then again, by working so much with Śrīla Prabhupāda's writings and in his Society, an editor could be lulled into accepting Śrīla Prabhupāda's nonstandard locutions as standard. The use of 'benedict' as a verb, and 'semina' instead of 'semen', thus sometimes bluffed their way past the editors' eyes.

The editors pruned for conciseness. 'Since he has departed from this place it is now seven months past up to date but he has not as yet returned back from there' became 'Since he departed, seven months have passed, yet he has not returned'.[11] Sometimes redundant sentences were deleted and sometimes (again because of redundancy) entire paragraphs.

Before coming to America, Śrīla Prabhupāda had twice translated some or all of the first five or six chapters of *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta,* so as editor I amalgamated the two manuscripts, choosing text sometimes from one, sometimes the other. And for books compiled from lectures, of course, extensive cutting and rearranging were required.

For all of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books, the editors checked and revised for mundane accuracy. When Śrīla Prabhupāda gave mathematical calculations, did the numbers tally? When he gave a geographical reference, did it match the map?

For grammar, clarity, readability, and flow, the editors routinely changed Śrīla Prabhupāda's sentence structure—often utterly reworking it—merging sentences, or severing them, or rearranging clauses, striving for a suitable mixture of simple sentences and complex.

Connectivity was another concern. Did each sentence follow from the one before? For this the editors routinely added connectives: 'and', 'but', 'however', 'therefore', 'nonetheless'. (Hayagrīva was particularly liberal with 'indeed', and I became nearly as generous.)

The editors worked for clarity, euphony, and force. Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote to Hayagrīva, 'I am glad that you are not omitting anything, but just making grammatical correction, and phrasing for force and clarity, and adding Pradyumna's transliteration, that is very nice'.[12] In practice, as mentioned, such editing was a multifaceted task.

A large part of this task—this is where Pradyumna came in—was the Sanskrit editing. Pradyumna began by learning, on his own, to transliterate Devanāgarī into roman characters. Śrīla Prabhupāda was pleased, and Pradyumna, going further, became expert in the Sanskrit language. He tells of his role:

> Sanskrit editing means that I would put the correct diacritic marks on the Sanskrit words, and I would spell them correctly according to the international system. I would also adjust Prabhupāda's grammar in the word-for-word translations. Also, if something were missing, I would send a lot of queries, 'What about this, what about that, is this okay?' I had a lot of letters from Prabhupāda, 'Yes, you can do this. You can do this. Yes, that's okay'. (Siddhānta Dāsa, p. 10)[13]

Pradyumna was speaking modestly. He did considerably more. He's the one who set the Sanskrit transliteration standards for Śrīla Prabhupāda's books, who systematised the division of Sanskrit compound words into their constituent parts, who set rules of style (italics? caps?), and who made scriptural verse references a consistent feature.[14]

Beyond this, he answered countless queries from the English editors, and straightened the editors out when they misunderstood intended meanings. I remember that on one occasion, when a passage for the last chapter of the 'Kṛṣṇa Book' was unclear, Pradyumna and I sent a query to Śrīla Prabhupāda, who simply sent back a one-word answer: *yaduvaraparisat*. In other words, 'This is the word I'm translating. You figure it out and set things right'.

In 1972 Pradyumna joined Śrīla Prabhupāda's personal entourage and travelled with him to serve as Sanskrit editor for the rest of Śrīla Prabhupāda's days. While travelling with him, Pradyumna often did considerable work in editing his translations.

To give an extreme example of how much Pradyumna might revise, we may consider *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 5.22.2. Here is the transcription of Śrīla Prabhupāda's original dictation:

> SG answered, My dear king, it is exactly like the big wheel which is moving and along with him the small ants which have taken shelter of the big wheel, they are also moving; that is to say, the big wheel is moving towards northern side, the small ants also moving towards that side. Similarly, with movement of the big orbit, the small stars appear to be moving along with it, so when passing through the Dhruva loka and Sumeru mountain, the small ant-like stars also move like that. So with the movement of the sun and other small planets and stars which have taken shelter of the big orbit moves in the same direction, therefore, it sometimes appears to be moving differently in different directions.

After Pradyumna's revision:

> Sri SG answered, My dear king, it is exactly like the wheel of the potter which is moving and along with it the small ants which are located on the big wheel, they are also moving along with the wheel, but their motion is seen to be different because they are noticed at one time to be in one place and later in another on the wheel. Similarly, with movement of the wheel of time which is observed by the constellations and signs. They are moving to the right around Dhruva loka and Sumeru mountain and moving with them are the ant-like planets like the sun and other small planets. But because these planets are seen in different constellations and signs at different times, the motion of these planets is different from the motion of the zodiac or wheel of time.

And this is how the verse finally appeared in print:

> Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī clearly answered: When a potter's wheel is moving and small ants located on that big wheel are moving with it, one can see that their motion is different from that of the wheel because they appear sometimes on one part of the wheel and sometimes on another. Similarly, the signs and constellations, with Sumeru and Dhruvaloka on their right, move with the wheel of time, and the antlike sun and other planets move with them. The sun and planets, however, are seen in different signs and constellations at different times. This indicates that their motion is different from that of the zodiac and the wheel of time itself.

In a lecture in 1973, Śrīla Prabhupāda, on the occasion of his Vyāsa-pūjā,[15] expressed his gratitude for Pradyumna's service. Śrīla Prabhupāda's edition of *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* had just been published, and Śrīla Prabhupāda humbly gave Pradyumna this credit for the book:

> Our Paṇḍitjī, Pradyumna, he has presented. Actually, he has worked for it. Although I have translated, . . . I am very much indebted to him that he very carefully edits and makes the thing very perfect. . . . Because mostly there is Sanskrit portion, my beloved disciple Pradyumna—I call him Paṇḍit Mahāśaya because he is actually doing the paṇḍit's work—so he edits and he works very hard.

For Śrīla Prabhupāda's final literary work—*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam,* Tenth Canto, Chapter Thirteen—the last portion was in fact an extraordinary collaboration between Śrīla Prabhupāda and Pradyumna. While Śrīla Prabhupāda lay prone on his bed, close to death, Pradyumna, having studied the Sanskrit verses and the Sanskrit commentaries Śrīla Prabhupāda preferred, would read them to him in Sanskrit, in small portions. Some portions Pradyumna would translate and read out, some Śrīla Prabhupāda himself would translate, and Śrīla Prabhupāda would comment. The translations and commentary, recorded on tape, were then blended and edited together to become the text for the book.

Who did what?

A history of who served as the English editors for which books is best presented in tabular form. Listed here are only the books published during Śrīla Prabhupāda's lifetime. The year given is the year of first publication. Editors mentioned in parentheses did minor work, usually in the form of final checking or polishing or supplying missing material.

Table 1: Who did what

Book	Editor(s)	Year
Bhagavad-gītā As It Is (abridged)[16]	Hayagrīva, Rāyarāma[17]	1968
Teachings of Lord Caitanya	Satsvarūpa, Rāyarāma[18]	1969
Śrī Īśopaniṣad	Rāyarāma	1969
Easy Journey to Other Planets	Rāyarāma	1970
Kṛṣṇa Consciousness: Topmost Yoga System	Hayagrīva	1970
The Nectar of Devotion	Puruṣottama,[19] Rāyarāma (Hayagrīva, Jayādvaita)	1970
Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead (chapters one through thirty-seven)	Satsvarūpa, Hayagrīva	1970
Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead (chapters thirty-eight through ninety)	Satsvarūpa, Jayādvaita (Hayagrīva)	1971
Bhagavad-gītā As It Is (unabridged)	Rāyarāma, Hayagrīva (Jayādvaita)	1972
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, First Canto	Hayagrīva (Jayādvaita)	1972
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Second Canto	Hayagrīva (Jayādvaita)	1970–2[20]
The Perfection of Yoga	Hayagrīva	1972
Beyond Birth and Death	Hayagrīva	1972
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Third Canto–4	Satsvarūpa, Jayādvaita (Hayagrīva)	1972
On the Way to Kṛṣṇa	Hayagrīva	1973
Rāja-vidyā: The King of Knowledge	Hayagrīva	1973
Elevation to Kṛṣṇa Consciousness	Hayagrīva	1973
Kṛṣṇa Consciousness: The Matchless Gift	Hayagrīva	1974
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Fourth Canto (chapters one through eight)	Satsvarūpa, Jayādvaita (Hayagrīva)	1974
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Fourth Canto (chapters nine through thirty-one)	Hayagrīva (Jayādvaita)	1974
Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā	Jayādvaita	1974
Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā	Hayagrīva (Jayādvaita)	1975
Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Antya-līlā	Jayādvaita, Draviḍa[21]	1975
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Fifth Canto (chapters one through thirteen)	Hayagrīva (Jayādvaita)	1975
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Fifth Canto (chapters fourteen through twenty-six)	Jayādvaita, Draviḍa[22]	1975
The Nectar of Instruction	Hṛṣīkeśānanda, Hayagrīva (?) (Jayādvaita)	1975
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Sixth Canto–6	Jayādvaita	1975
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Seventh Canto	Jayādvaita	1976
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Eighth Canto	Jayādvaita	1976
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Ninth Canto	Jayādvaita	1977
Perfect Questions, Perfect Answers	Śyāmasundara,[23] Jayādvaita	1977
Teachings of Lord Kapila	Hayagrīva (Jayādvaita)	1977
The Science of Self-Realization	Several[24]	1977
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Tenth Canto (chapters 1-13)[25]	Jayādvaita	1977

Revisions to BBT books

Starting from the early 1970s, or perhaps even earlier, the BBT has published revised versions of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books.[26] The editorial staff discovered occasional errors in published books and routinely corrected them in later printings. Rarely, Śrīla Prabhupāda himself also pointed out a word or passage he wanted revised.[27] In accordance with standard publishing practice,[28] the BBT published such revisions without giving notice.

Also beginning from the early 1970s, the BBT began publishing Śrīla Prabhupāda's books in versions revised so extensively that they deserved to be called 'second editions'. The first of these were re-edited versions of *Easy Journey to Other Planets* (1972) and *Śrī Īśopaniṣad*, both revised by Hayagrīva Dāsa on the grounds that the English editing stood in need of substantial improvement.[29] Sometime in 1972 or 1973 I made extensive revisions to the Second Canto. The revised version, though never marked 'Second Edition', was used in all printings after the first.

In 1974 the BBT published a second edition of *Teachings of Lord Caitanya*, again revised for English by Hayagrīva. (He revised the book entirely from the published text, without benefit of the original manuscripts, by then lost, or Śrīla Prabhupāda's *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, not yet written.) The second edition used Sanskrit diacritical spellings, and with Śrīla Prabhupāda's permission Nitāi Dāsī supplied transliterations for many Sanskrit verses given in the first edition only in English.

In 1972, when the first American edition of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, First Canto, was in preparation and the first volume nearly ready for printing, Satsvarūpa brought to Śrīla Prabhupāda's attention that in numerous instances the edited version seemed to have low fidelity to Śrīla Prabhupāda's original work. Śrīla Prabhupāda responded, in essence: 'Don't lose time. Just print it'.[30]

In 1976, however, on my own initiative, I did extensive revisions for this canto, especially for the translations in the first two chapters. I then prepared a list showing these revised translations, with a cover letter explaining what I had done, and when Śrīla Prabhupāda visited ISKCON New York in July of 1976 I brought the package to his room.

I had expected merely to drop it off with his secretary. But to my surprise I found Śrīla Prabhupāda right there before me, asking to know why I had come. I told him, and he instructed me to read to him the revised translations, right there on the spot. So I began, Śrīla Prabhupāda listening attentively, and after I had read a few verses he interrupted: 'So, what you have done?'

'I've revised the translations to make them closer to what Your Divine Grace originally said.'

'What *I* have said?'

'Yes, Śrīla Prabhupāda.'

Śrīla Prabhupāda then made a characteristic dismissive gesture and said: 'Then it is all right'.

And that was that.[31]

After Śrīla Prabhupāda passed away, the BBT editorial staff continued to notice and correct editorial discrepancies in Śrīla Prabhupāda's books. Many of these were brought to light by ISKCON devotees, especially those serving as BBT translators.[32] (The BBT has translated books by Śrīla Prabhupāda into some eighty-five languages.) As during Śrīla Prabhupāda's presence, the BBT continued to correct minor editorial errors routinely, without giving notice.

But again as in Śrīla Prabhupāda's time, for some books more extensive revisions seemed needed. Thus in 1979 the BBT trustees resolved: 'Harikeśa Swami will discuss with Satsvarūpa Goswami and Jayādvaita Swami about the necessary corrections in original manuscripts such as *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* (complete ed), 3rd canto, etc'.[33]

My review of *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* turned up editorial errors and omissions extensive enough to warrant a second edition. And so, after extensive consultation with senior ISKCON devotees, the second edition was published in 1983.[34]

For *The Nectar of Devotion* I did a light revision, published by the BBT in 1982. Probably the most prominent feature of this second edition was some adjustment to the structure of the chapters. Several of Śrīla Prabhupāda's original chapters had been large, so Rāyarāma had broken them down, at somewhat arbitrary intervals, into chapters of a comfortable size.[35] While revising the book, I found that some chapter titles and section titles mismatched their contents,[36] and some chapters began in the midst of a topic, rather than before or after. I renamed and redivided accordingly. The second edition also included an appendix that showed where the 'waves' of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī's 'Ocean of Devotional Service' had their places in Śrīla Prabhupāda's summary study.

In 1993, Draviḍa Dāsa revised *Śrī Īśopaniṣad,* comparing the first and second American editions with the original text Śrīla Prabhupāda had published in 1960 in his *Back to Godhead.* Again, Draviḍa recovered extensive passages that earlier editions had lost.[37] In 1996 the BBT also published second editions of 'Kṛṣṇa Book' and *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta,* both revised by Draviḍa Dāsa, who corrected errors and included passages earlier omitted.[38] For *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta,* also, many geographical place names fussily Sanskritised by the editors of the first edition were rendered in the vernacular forms by which the places are actually known.

In the mid-1990s the BBT published a second edition of *Perfect Questions, Perfect Answers,* edited by a less experienced BBT editor. Because readers of this edition pointed out numerous editorial discrepancies, the BBT directors resolved in 2002 that Draviḍa Dāsa will review the book before its next printing. Either he will correct the discrepancies, or the BBT will revert to the first edition.

Apart from the books mentioned here as having been revised, all of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books continue to be published only in their original editions, with only occasional minor corrections for typographical and other such errors. So, for example, the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* from the Second Canto onwards continues to be published only in its original BBT edition.[39]

Because translators, indexers, and other readers who intensively study Śrīla Prabhupāda's books continue to turn up suspected editorial errors, the BBT provides an e-mail address to which such errors may be sent: errors.english.books@pamho.net. As a matter of policy the BBT editors, mindful of Śrīla Prabhupāda's instructions, resist changes. But verified editorial errors are corrected in later printings or editions. This policy has brought the BBT some outspoken criticism, much of it, unfortunately, uncivil and badly uninformed.[40] An extended response to such criticism stands beyond the scope of this article.[41]

Keeping track of BBT editorial history

Because on the title and copyright pages of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books the BBT staff has often been less than meticulous about recording new editions, for some books, especially those published and revised during Śrīla Prabhupāda's lifetime, one may have a hard time discerning which edition one is reading. Aware of this, the BBT directors have resolved that future printings should make the publishing history more clear.

Additionally, in 2002 the BBT directors hired a consultant to conceive of a comprehensive system for keeping track of the editorial history of each English BBT title. The system, the directors said, should enable us to preserve, catalogue, and access the various edited and unedited versions, and it should tell us, for each version, who did what, when, and why, both in summary and, ideally, at the level of the sentence or the word. And the system should work for other languages as well.

The consultant has provided specifications for such a system, ambitious in scope, and work is underway at the Bhaktivedanta Archives. The envisioned outcome is a searchable hypertext library, perhaps accessible on the internet, that would enable a researcher who selects a particular verse or passage to view the relevant pages of the original and revised manuscripts, any editorial notes, the first and later editions, the Sanskrit or Bengali commentaries Śrīla Prabhupāda consulted, and so on. Also included for each title would be a production history, naming the original editors, typesetters, proofreaders, layout people, and other production people, telling where the prepress work was done, giving the size of the first print run, and telling who were the printers and binders for the original edition.

By this system, the BBT intends to keep, as far as practicable, an 'audit trail' for scholars, BBT staff, and other interested readers, so that most readers can have the benefit of books carefully edited yet free from burdensome critical apparatus while those who wish may avail themselves of a detailed editorial history. In advance of such a history, I hope the present overview will be of some service to seekers of editorial truth.

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Notes

[1] Śrīla Prabhupāda letter to Satsvarūpa Dāsa, 25 January 1970.

[2] In recent years, followers of Śrīla Prabhupāda have produced video recordings of his lectures, with subtitles to make his words easier to follow. Yet the subtitles themselves are rich with examples of mishearing—an illustration that the problem is ongoing.

[3] This was how Śrīla Prabhupāda referred to his book *Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.*

[4] For the history of *The Nectar of Instruction* I am grateful to Satsvarūpa Dāsa Goswami, who himself did the bulk of this work.

[5] Śrīla Prabhupāda letter to Rāyarāma Dāsa, 3 March 1968.

[6] Śrīla Prabhupāda letter to Satsvarūpa Dāsa, 9 January 1970.

[7] *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.13.50.

[8] *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.3.24, purport.

[9] *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.13.45.

[10] *Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead,* Chapter 22.

[11] *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.14.7.

[12] Śrīla Prabhupāda letter to Hayagriva Dāsa, 18 November 1968.

[13] For other memories from Pradyumna about how he got started, see Siddhānta Dāsa, pp. 4–5, 7, and 9–10.

[14] Śrīla Prabhupāda therefore wrote to Pradyumna (on 21 June 1970), 'So your efforts in the matter of our Sanskrit editing are effectively improving our books more and more with scholarly standards'.

[15] Vyāsa-pūjā is the celebration for the 'appearance day' (birthday) of the spiritual master. The lecture took place on 22 August 1973, in London.

[16] The manuscript for the complete book was prepared for publication, but it was abridged at the request of the original publisher, the Macmillan Company. Brahmānanda Dāsa (personal interview, 5 April 2003) reports that Rāyarāma Dāsa flew from New York to Los Angeles to abridge the manuscript in direct consultation with Śrīla Prabhupāda.

[17] At first, several devotees had a hand in editing this book. Brahmānanda Dāsa says, 'We were all working on it. I mean, I did it, and Kīrtanānanda did it, Satsvarūpa, Hayagrīva, Rāyarāma, I think even Ranchor. We all had a shot at it. Anyone with any education' (personal interview, 5 May 2003). Similarly, Pradyumna Dāsa reports, 'A lot of people were editing Prabhupāda's books when they first came into Montreal. Kīrtanānanda had a copy of the *Gītā* manuscript, Hayagrīva had something else, and Rāyarāma had something else. These were the early days of ISKCON—1967, '68' (*Memories*, Vol. 2, p. 7). Hayagriva and Rāyarāma finally became the editors for the book.

[18] Satsvarūpa did preliminary editing, as he did on all the books for which he is listed. Here Rāyarāma was the main editor.

[19] Puruṣottama, who transcribed the book while travelling with Śrīla Prabhupāda as secretary, did some preliminary editing.

[20] Each of the first nine chapters was first published as an individual paperback book.

[21] Draviḍa edited chapters 13, 14, 15, and 17. I oversaw and polished his work and edited the rest of the book.

[22] Draviḍa edited chapters 17 and 25 and at least parts of 18 and 26. I oversaw and polished his work and edited the rest of the book.

[23] Śyāmasundara did some preliminary editing and gave useful editorial suggestions.

[24] The text for this book came from articles previously edited by various editors and published in *Back to Godhead*. I chose the articles and their sequence. Rāmeśvara Swami and Mukunda (later Mukunda Goswami) added one or two more articles and wrote the titles and introductions.

[25] Chapter 13 was published after Śrīla Prabhupāda passed away.

[26] In 1972, *Easy Journey to Other Planets* and *Kṛṣṇa Consciousness: The Topmost Yoga System* were registered with the US Copyright Office with 'Revisions and additions'. But minor errors in these and other books may have been noticed and fixed in still earlier printings.

[27] The example most well known to ISKCON devotees: He pointed out that in *Bhagavad-gītā* 18.44 an editor had wrongly supplied for *go-rakṣya* the translation 'cattle-raising' instead of 'cow protection'. On another occasion he pointed out that 'purified rice', in *Bhāgavatam* 1.15.22–3, should have been 'putrefied rice'.

[28] Both *The Chicago Manual of Style* and *The Oxford Style Manual* seem to regard the matter as routine. While noting the difference between a new edition (in which a work is significantly revised or enlarged) and a new impression (in which a book is simply reprinted), *Chicago* (p. 9) matter-of-factly says, 'Corrections are sometimes made in new impressions', and *Oxford* (p. 6) simply notes that one meaning of 'reprint' is 'a second or new impression of any printed work, with only minor corrections'.

Expressing an uncontroversial view, one scholar goes so far as to say, '[E]mendations in reprintings. . . have often been *fewer* than accuracy would demand.' (Halpenny, p. 11, emphasis supplied.)

[29] The revised editions of these books came under criticism in a discussion between Śrīla Prabhupāda and some disciples in Vṛndāvana on 22 June 1977. With reference to a judgment by Śrīla Prabhupāda, the discussion was later entitled 'Rascal Editors'.

[30] At the time, I was working with ISKCON Press in Boston, where this incident took place, and Satsvarūpa related it to me soon after it occurred.

[31] The revised version was published in 1976. A full comparison of the revised translations for the first two chapters is online as *Bhāgavatam Revisions Examined* at www.krishna.com/newsite/main.php?id=286.

[32] For two examples, with explanations, see www.krishna.com/newsite/main.php?id=287#GRE_Kasi and www.krishna.com/newsite/main.php?id=287#GRE_Encircled.

[33] BBT resolutions, 12 March 1979. What was intended was that we were to see about necessary corrections with reference to the original manuscripts.

[34] A brief history appears in *Responsible Publishing* (p. 29). A letter widely circulated to solicit input from ISKCON devotees before the book was published appears on pp. 29–33. *Responsible Publishing* is available online at www.krishna.com/newsite/downloads/responsible_publishing.pdf.

[35] Rāyarāma personally told me this, and I personally retyped the manuscripts that bore his editing.

[36] 'Techniques of Hearing and Memorizing', for example, had nothing to do with memorisation.

[37] For examples, see Responsible Publishing, p. 8–9.

[38] For examples, see *Responsible Publishing*, p. 10–13.

Some readers objected to one change in the revised *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*: In the introduction to the first chapter, the word 'initiated' has twice been replaced by new wording. Regarding this objection as reasonable, the BBT directors agreed to review it. They sought counsel from eight senior, well educated devotees outside the BBT, who came to a split decision, four favouring the earlier version, four the later. The directors took the view that either version would be justifiable and the difference was of no great consequence. Of the two instances of 'initiated', one had come from Śrīla Prabhupāda's original text (but was arguably not what he intended), the other from me as editor where grammar had required a verb supplied. Deferring to the original text, the directors decided to restore Śrīla Prabhupāda's 'initiated' but not mine. This revision will appear in the next printing.

[39] Curiously, one website advertises the 'pre-1978 edition' of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. What is it? The same edition the BBT has published all along.

[40] For examples, see '108 Changes to Śrīla Prabhupāda's *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*' by Madhudviṣa Dāsa (www.vnn.org/editorials/ET9903/ET08-3273.html) and 'In-Depth Examination of Book Revisions' by IRG (www.vnn.org/world/WD9812/WD11-2662.html). A collection of links to articles arguing various points of view is published online by the Vaishnava News Network at www.vnn.org/news/bbt_revisions.html. Anonymous critics of the BBT's editorial policies maintain a site, meant to appear populist, called 'Adi-vani.org' (www.adi-vani.org).

[41] Such a response may be found in the BBT booklet *Responsible Publishing,* mentioned above. Other responses appear in *Gita Revisions Explained,* available online in three parts, starting at www.krishna.com/newsite/main.php?id=288. Of relevant interest is *Bhāgavatam Revisions Examined,* also mentioned above. The BBT's editorial policies are briefly explained at www.krishna.com/newsite/main.php?id=40.

Walking a Theological Tightrope: Controversies of Sampradāya in Eighteenth-Century Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism[1]

Ravi M. Gupta (Rādhikā Ramaṇa Dāsa)

This article takes us to a time and place of special importance in the history of Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism. The first half of the eighteenth century was a period of dynamic growth, prestige, and prosperity for the followers of Śrī Caitanya, especially in the Rajput kingdom of modern-day Rajasthan. But with the growth and success of any community, crucial questions of identity and legitimacy arise. How do we define ourselves as a community? From where do we derive our authority? How do we represent ourselves to those who are not members of our community? In the Indian religious context, such questions usually centre on the important concept of sampradāya, or disciplic tradition. So also in the history of Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism, questions of sampradāya have caused some controversy, particularly in regard to the issue of affiliation with the Madhva tradition. Some members of the tradition argue that Śrī Caitanya and his followers were affiliated with Madhvācārya, others argue to the contrary. The author's purpose here is not to decide the debate either way or even present all the evidence; rather to show how controversies of this sort can become opportunities for clarifying a community's sense of identity and purpose. One ācārya in particular, Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa, seized such an opportunity when it arose and used it to preserve and strengthen the tradition.

It is ironic that the nature of a community's religious identity is often most clearly revealed when that identity is called into question. The delicate network of relationships that lends stability to a notion of religious identity is clarified precisely when that network becomes unstable. A challenge from outside the community, a controversy from within, or changing socio-political circumstances can bring issues of identity into sharp focus.

In the Hindu context, such disturbances are often centred on the important category of *sampradāya*. The word '*sampradāya*' can be loosely translated as 'tradition' or 'religious system', although the word commands much more power and respect in the Indian context than do its translations in English. Perhaps *sampradāya* is more analogous to 'cumulative tradition', in the way Wilfred Cantwell Smith uses the phrase.[2] *Sampradāya* is a body of precept, practice, and attitudes, which are transmitted to, and redefined by, each successive generation of followers. Participation in *sampradāya* forces continuity with the past, but at the same time provides a platform for change from within the community of practitioners.

Besides this human locus, however, *sampradāya* also has a divine genesis, an origin which continually re-presents itself in successive generations. The notion of *sampradāya* is closely tied to the concrete reality of *guru-paramparā*—the lineage of spiritual masters who

are both repositories and transmitters of tradition. William Pinch writes of the relationship between *sampradāya* and *paramparā*,

> What requires emphasis, however, is the fact that the institutional memory implicit to *guru parampara* defined the contours of *sampraday* [sic] for every individual. Each is linked to the others by a common memory, binding Ramanandis [members of the *sampradāya*] in the present by connecting them collectively to the past. *Sampraday* is predicated upon a remembered past lined with charismatic preceptors deriving inspiration from a divine origin. (Pinch, p. 40–1)

This continuity with the past and appeal to divine inspiration go hand in hand with issues of legitimacy and authority. Bestowing legitimacy, whether to a theological doctrine, a ritual procedure, or to an individual in the *paramparā*, is one of the primary functions of *sampradāya*. Membership in, and appeal to, a *sampradāya* not only lends authority to one's truth claims, but allows one to make those claims in the first place. An oft-quoted verse from the *Padma Purāṇa* states, *sampradāyavihīnā ye mantrās te niṣphalā matāḥ*: 'Mantras which are not received in *sampradāya* are considered fruitless.'

Because of the multi-faceted role *sampradāya* plays in the formation, transmission, and perpetuation of communal religious identity, it naturally becomes the locus of many challenges to that identity. These challenges, in turn, become fruitful places to look at for the constituents of religious identity. But for most observers, controversies regarding *sampradāya* usually mean controversies of succession. These are controversies at the human end of the *paramparā*, over 'who is the legitimate representative of a particular line, or . . . whose "level of divine realization" is superior' (Jarow, p. 60). What is often ignored is that the divine end (or rather, divine beginning) of the *paramparā*, the transcendental origin of the lineage, can be equally problematic. This is especially the case with the younger *sampradāya*s of North India, whose members often have to look to older lineages to establish the legitimacy of their line. Questions such as, 'Who is the founder of, or primary inspiration for, our *sampradāya*? Did he in fact found a new *sampradāya*, or was he simply transforming and renewing one that already existed? In either case, did he establish his legitimacy by accepting initiation in an existing *sampradāya*, or is his authority self-manifest?' Questions such as this invert the locus of controversies, and in a sense deepen it, because they challenge the identity structure of every member of the lineage. Whereas a controversy over succession may cause the *sampradāya* to *branch* under two leaderships, controversy over divine origin threatens to *split* the *sampradāya* into two distinct lines, with only one point of intersection—namely, the common inspirer of both.

In many ways, such controversies over origin of lineage reflect the much larger Indian concern over parentage. This concern operates at many levels, including the religious, and is closely tied to issues of identity and legitimacy. At the most basic, individual level, membership in a legitimate *sampradāya* is akin to having legitimate parentage in social circles. Even as producing a genealogy ensures respectability in society, initiation into a *paramparā* community brings acceptability in religious circles.

But the force of parentage does not stop here. The *paramparā* community itself must prove its legitimacy in order to gain an identity for the community as a whole. As Wright and Wright put it, 'If one cannot prove natal legitimacy, one may be cast out as a bastard. The same social standard applies to religious organizations. If a religious group cannot prove its descent from one of the recognised traditions, it risks being dismissed as illegitimate.' (Wright and Wright, p. 162) This meta-parentage, so to speak, is the divine end of *sampradāya*, the non-human source which gives 'birth' to the line of human teachers. This higher order of legiti-

macy can be secured by a community in two ways: either by making an independent claim to direct descent from God himself, or by aligning oneself with another *sampradāya* which has already secured its meta-legitimacy. The second option is easier, because it allows one to make the leap to a divine origin simply by connecting to the human end of another *sampradāya*. But it also means less prestige for the younger group, as it gets 'tagged on' to a larger and more soteriologically important community. Thus, a younger group might choose both options, professing allegiance to a recognised *paramparā* in order to gain acceptability, while claiming divine status for its founder and an independent theology.

This, then, brings us to the heart of the identity issue I wish to focus on here, namely, the controversy over meta-parentage that was and still is played out in the Caitanya Vaiṣṇava *sampradāya* of Vṛndāvana and Bengal.

The Caitanya school of Vaiṣṇavism, also known as Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism because of its Bengali origins, was founded in the sixteenth century by the ecstatic saint and spiritual teacher, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya. Śrī Caitanya, also known to his followers as 'Mahāprabhu', the great master, taught that unmotivated *bhakti* (devotion) to Kṛṣṇa is the highest human goal. Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas prefer to worship Kṛṣṇa as the blue-hued cowherd-boy sporting in forests of Vṛndāvana, his childhood home. This Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Godhead, the source even of Viṣṇu, and all living entities are his natural servitors. The ideal of selfless devotion and surrender to Kṛṣṇa is exemplified by the *gopīs* of Vṛndāvana, Kṛṣṇa's cowherd girlfriends, and of all the *gopīs*, Śrīmatī Rādhā is the topmost. Thus, in Caitanya Vaiṣṇava temples, Kṛṣṇa is worshipped along with his eternal consort, Rādhā.

Caitanya himself is considered by members of the *sampradāya* to be a combined incarnation of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.[3] This fact is not insignificant for our study, because the founder's dual identity provides the theological underpinnings for the *sampradāya*'s issues over identity. As both Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, Caitanya plays a dual role in the lives of devotees. He is both the ideal worshipper (*sādhaka*) and the worshipable goal (*sādhya*), he is both the best devotee (*bhakta*) and the Supreme Lord (*bhagavān*), and he is both the teacher (*ācārya*) to be emulated but also the Lord (*īśvara*) who is not to be imitated. Caitanya's dual role encapsulates the tension that unfolds itself in the controversy over the meta-parentage of the *sampradāya*. Who is Śrī Caitanya? As God himself, is he the self-illuminating founder of a new and independent *sampradāya*? Or as the ideal devotee, did he take initiation into an already-recognised *sampradāya* to set a proper example? Do his followers owe allegiance to a *paramparā* that predates Caitanya, or are they recipients of a new dispensation who need answer to no one?

In the case of Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism, the senior *sampradāya* in question is the Madhva *sampradāya*, founded by the South Indian *ācārya* Madhva in the eleventh century. Defendants of the view favouring affiliation claim that Caitanya's guru's guru, Mādhavendra Purī, was initiated by a teacher of the Madhva school, Lakṣmīpati Tīrtha. Defendants of the separatist view claim that the connection is spurious.

Proponents of either side agree that Caitanya is both devotee and God; the question is simply which of the two identities is most relevant for issues of *sampradāya*. O. B. L. Kapoor, in a systematic defense of the view favouring affiliation, writes,

> We have no intention of questioning the faith of the *Sampradāya* regarding the divinity of Śrī Caitanya . . . It is a fact that he took Mantra *dīkṣā* from his Guru, Īśvara Purī, and he must, from that point of view be regarded as formally affiliated with the Sampradāya to which Īśvara Purī belonged [namely, the Madhva *sampradāya*]. Even the uniqueness of his position of Bhakta-Bhagavān involves this aspect, since as Bhakta, who must seek

> initiation before he can start his Sādhanā, he must be linked with some Sampradāya. (Kapoor, p. 45)

For Kapoor, Caitanya's identity as devotee necessitates his adherence to the formality of initiation. But Radha Govinda Nath, an early twentieth century devotee-scholar to whom Kapoor responds in his essay, argues that Caitanya's identity as God makes *sampradāya* affiliation redundant and unwanted. Nath quotes the eighteenth century commentator Śrī Īśvarī in support of his point,

> 'Therefore . . . Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, who is the Supreme Godhead Himself (*svayaṃ bhagavān*), is the propagator of the *sampradāya* and his associates only are the gurus of the *sampradāya*, not anyone else.' . . . By this statement it is clear that Śrīman Mahāprabhu himself is the propagator of the 'Gauḍīya Sampradāya.' Therefore it is indeed appropriate to call it the 'Caitanya Sampradāya' [as opposed to 'the Madhva *sampradāya*'].[4] (Nath, pp. 22, 33)

Whether or not Caitanya's prestige is diminished by his membership in another *sampradāya* is a question that must be resolved theologically within the tradition itself. What is clear, however, is that the issue of *sampradāya* affiliation was not near as important to the early followers of Caitanya as it became for later generations. The immediate disciples of Caitanya, especially the six Gosvāmīs, argue neither for nor against affiliation with any particular *sampradāya*. Caitanya's position as their leader and spiritual master was quite obvious to them. Although they were aware that he was affiliated with another *sampradāya* by virtue of the fact that he received both *mantra-dīkṣā* and *sannyāsa-dīkṣā* from gurus of already-existing *sampradāyas*, they saw no reason to emphasise that affiliation.[5] At the same time, they did not see themselves in opposition to other lineages, and were quite happy to use the *ācāryas* of these traditions as authoritative sources in their writings.[6]

It was at the beginning of the eighteenth century that the issue of *sampradāya* affiliation took centre stage and became a point of serious controversy both within and beyond the Caitanya tradition. The events and literature of this period provide us with a concrete example of how the tradition was transformed on the inside when its identity structure was challenged on the outside. A brief account of the historical context surrounding the controversy will put the issues at stake in sharper focus.

Since the time of Caitanya himself, the village of Vṛndāvana, Kṛṣṇa's childhood home, has been the spiritual, intellectual, and administrative centre of the Caitanya Vaiṣṇava movement. Because of its proximity to Delhi and Agra, as well as its importance as a centre of trade and pilgrimage, the Mathurā-Vṛndāvana region, in present day Uttar Pradesh, was held under close supervision by the Mughal rulers of India. When Aurangzeb issued an edict in 1669 to 'destroy with a willing hand the schools and temples of the infidels', the Vaiṣṇavas of Vṛndāvana saw a real threat to their lives, property, and deities (Edwardes, p. 116).

As a counterbalance to the Mughal rule, however, the Rajput kings of Eastern Rajasthan also held considerable sway in the Vṛndāvana area.[7] Since the time of Akbar, the Mughal rulers had given considerable autonomy to the Rajputs , or more specifically, the Kachavāhās, in exchange for their political loyalty and military support (Spear, p. 52). The Kachavāhās, who became the highest ranking officers of the Mughal court (Horstmann, p. 2), saw themselves as guardians of the Hindu tradition and were given direct charge of several Vṛndāvana temples belonging to the Caitanya *sampradāya* (Horstmann, p. 3).

The most important of these temples was the one dedicated to Govindadeva, a form of Kṛṣṇa established by Rūpa Gosvāmī. The image of Govinda is accompanied by his consort, Śrīmatī Rādhā, and together they are the *ārādhya* (worshipable deities) for all followers of Caitanya.[8] The Kachavāhā kings had long-standing affinity for the deities of Rādhā and Govinda, and through them for the Caitanya *sampradāya*. Monika Horstmann describes Govindadeva's increasing significance for the Kachavāhā rulers:

> Around 1669, the images of GD [Govindadeva] and his consort, Rādhā, . . . were removed from Vrindaban and taken to the Kachavāhā territory. The period from 1670 to 1739 is characterized by the gradual transformation of GD from the Lord of Braj's Vrindaban . . . to the Lord of the Palace of Jaipur, a Lord who demanded tribute from the entire Jaipur State. This glorious transformation was achieved by Jai Singh II. (Horstmann, p. 3)

With the rising fortunes of Govindadeva, his caretakers, the Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas, also gained prominence in matters of ritual procedure and royal ceremony. Over time, they superseded another *sampradāya* which had so far enjoyed precedence in the kingdom, namely the Rāmānandīs. This Vaiṣṇava *sampradāya*, founded by the fourteenth-century North Indian teacher Rāmānanda, reveres Lord Rāma as the Supreme Godhead. Although the Kachavāhās had long venerated Rāma as their forefather and family deity, 'since the time of Jai Singh II Govindadeva has superseded Sītārāma in the hearts of the rulers and in certain ceremonies' (Clementin-Ojha, p. 57, quoted in Horstmann, p. 7).

This rise to prominence, however, was not always smooth for the Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas, as the new arrivals faced many challenges to their legitimacy, especially in their role as caretakers of Govindadeva. Questions were raised by both rival *sampradāya*s and by Jai Singh himself, and were always mediated in the court of the King.[9] During the first quarter of the eighteenth century, three main challenges were brought forward, hitting at Caitanyite theology, ritual, and *sampradāya*. First, the propriety of worshipping Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa together was questioned since they are apparently not married. Second, it was argued that one should worship Viṣṇu before worshipping Kṛṣṇa, since Kṛṣṇa is an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu, yet the Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas did not follow this order. And lastly, it was alleged, the followers of Caitanya did not belong to an authorised *sampradāya*, since there are only four recognised Vaiṣṇava *sampradāya*s, namely, those founded by Rāmānuja, Madhva, Viṣṇusvāmī, and Nimbārka.[10]

The first two objections strike at the heart of what is unique to Caitanya theology and practice. Kṛṣṇa's pre-eminence as the Supreme Godhead and Rādhā's inseparability from him are beliefs that are held dearly by devotees. Any possibility of Rādhā's being separated from Kṛṣṇa would have caused much consternation in the community, for it would have stripped the devotees of their very impetus to perform worship. The most serious objection, however, is the third, since, as we have noted, without *sampradāya*, the followers of Caitanya would lose the very ability to defend their theology and practice.

Around 1723, the issue of *sampradāya* legitimacy came to a head and, in the traditional manner of settling religious disputes, Maharaja Jai Singh invited all parties to a conference at his court[11] (Elkman, p. 43). On the Caitanya side, a young scholar named Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa[12] was deputed for the defense. Before joining the Caitanya *sampradāya*, Baladeva had been an initiated member of the Madhva *sampradāya*,[13] and so had an advantage when it came to establishing his legitimacy in the assembly. In fact, Baladeva argued that Caitanya himself was affiliated with the Madhva *sampradāya* through his guru's guru, Mādhavendra Purī, and thus all Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas were mem-

bers of a legitimate Vaiṣṇava *paramparā*. In response to this, however, Baladeva was asked to name a commentary on the *Brahmasūtra* that was acceptable to the Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas. Traditionally, a *Brahmasūtra* commentary has been the defining work of any Vedāntic school of philosophy since the time of Śaṅkara. If the Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas claimed legitimate status, they would have to argue their theology either on the basis of Madhva's commentary, or else produce their own.

It is here that the difficulty of establishing meta-parentage for a *sampradāya* becomes clear. If Baladeva were to completely identify the Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas with the followers of Madhva, and use Madhva's *Brahmasūtra* commentary, he would be unable to defend the doctrines and practice unique to Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism (such as the worship of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa). On the other hand, the Caitanyas had no commentary of their own, for they regarded the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* as the perfect, natural commentary, making a human commentary redundant.[14] This, of course, was unacceptable to followers of other *sampradāya*s, and arguing this position would have alienated the Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas from the very *sampradāya* with which they claimed affiliation. Thus, Baladeva chose a middle course, deciding to write a commentary himself,[15] but drawing heavily from Madhva for his explanations within it.[16]

The delicate balancing act that Baladeva was engaged in might be seen most clearly in another work called the *Prameyaratnāvalī*, which was probably written around the same time as a supplement to his commentary on the *Brahmasūtra*.[17] In the *Prameyaratnāvalī*, Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa summarises Caitanya Vaiṣṇava theology in nine *prameyas* (theses). These *prameyas* are short, didactic statements, concerning such things as the nature of God and the means of knowing him, the living entities, the world, and the relationship between them. Baladeva systematically states each *prameya*, and then argues for its validity by citing numerous scriptural passages and dealing with possible objections.[18]

Now, the idea of summarising one's theology in nine points was not Baladeva's; it had already been done by Vyāsatīrtha, an eminent philosopher of the Madhva school[19] (Sharma 1981, p. 297). At the beginning of the *Prameyaratnāvalī*, Baladeva paraphrases Vyāsatīrtha's *prameyas* and then identifies them with his own, saying, 'So taught the great master, Śrī Caitanya'.[20] In other words, by utilising a pedagogical technique that was widely known as belonging to the Madhva *sampradāya*, Baladeva was clearly identifying his tradition with that of Madhva. At the same time, the *prameyas* were only brief and non-specific statements, allowing Baladeva enough theological leeway to argue for the unique aspects of Caitanyite doctrine and practice. For example, Baladeva's first *prameya* says, 'Viṣṇu is supreme', and Vyāsatīrtha's first says, 'Hari is supreme'. On the surface both *prameyas* are nearly identical. Yet in his exposition of this *prameya*, Baladeva replaces Viṣṇu with Kṛṣṇa and cites a plethora of scriptural passages establishing Kṛṣṇa's pre-eminence. He writes, 'Because Kṛṣṇa is the [original] cause, because He is the resting place of qualities like eternity, intelligence, and bliss, and because He eternally possesses Lakṣmī and other energies, therefore Kṛṣṇa is considered supreme'[21] (paragraph 10). In this way, Baladeva responds to the question of ritual priority brought against the Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas.

The *Prameyaratnāvalī* also shows clear signs of responding to the other challenges brought before the *sampradāya*. Baladeva devotes an unusually long section in the first *prameya* to Rādhā's position as the inseparable *śakti* (energy) of Kṛṣṇa and source of all other Goddesses, such as Lakṣmī and Durgā.[22] Most significantly, in the introduction to the *Prameyaratnāvalī*, Baladeva makes a clear statement regarding the issue of *sampradāya*. After offering homage to Madhvācārya, [23] he cites the verse from the *Padma Purāṇa* identifying the Vaiṣṇava *sampradāyas* as only four in number. He then lists his own *paramparā*,

tracing the succession of gurus from Madhva to Śrī Caitanya.

Although I have argued here that the *Prameyaratnāvalī* displays the concerns associated with the establishment of meta-legitimacy in the Caitanya community,[24] specifically in regard to its affiliation with the Madhva *sampradāya*, this claim is far from universally accepted. The conference at Jai Singh's court is interpreted entirely differently depending on one's stance on the issue of affiliation. Radha Govinda Nath, for example, is unwilling to concede that Baladeva was in any significant way influenced by the Madhva *sampradāya*. He regards the *guru-paramparā* at the beginning of the *Prameyaratnāvalī* as an interpolation (Nath, p. 46). In order to account for the obvious Madhva connection in the *Prameyaratnāvalī*, Nath asserts that Baladeva wrote the work before he converted to Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism (Nath, p. 51), and thus all references to Caitanya in the text are spurious. Although this seems to be a difficult position to defend,[25] we must realise that for Nath, the very purpose of the debate was to establish the Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas as an independent *sampradāya*, and so any move by Baladeva towards affiliation would have been dishonest. Nath's reasoning is simple: Baladeva was a follower of Caitanya. But the views of Madhva and Caitanya differ in significant ways, as we saw in the different interpretations of the first *prameya*; therefore Baladeva—or for that matter any Caitanya Vaiṣṇava—could not possibly have aligned himself with Madhva's lineage (Nath, p. 52).

This argument is countered by O. B. L. Kapoor, who believes that Nath assumes a faulty premise, namely that in every case a disciple must adhere to the views of the *sampradāya* into which he is initiated. Although this is ordinarily required, says Kapoor, history shows that a powerful *ācārya* may offer a new set of teachings, while still accepting membership in the *sampradāya* to set a proper example (Kapoor, p. 42). Kapoor agrees that Caitanya differs significantly from Madhva, and so concludes that their connection is purely formal, though not meaningless (Kapoor, p. 45). Baladeva Vidyābhuṣaṇa brought this historical connection into the limelight, but by no means did he invent it.[26]

There is yet a third side to the debate over meta-parentage, and that is the perspective of the parent *sampradāya* in question. In general, scholars of the Madhva *sampradāya* have been cautious in accepting Caitanyite claims of affiliation. With neither complete agreement in theology nor formal, institutional cooperation, there is little reason for the Madhvas to include the followers of Caitanya in their fold. The official *paramparā* lists of the South Indian Madhvite centres do not include Lakṣmīpati Tīrtha or Mādhavendra Purī (Sharma 1981, p. 525). Śyāmadāsa, a contemporary Caitanyite scholar who rejects affiliation, recalls several exchanges he has had with leaders of the Madhva *sampradāya* wherein they denied any familiarity with the life or teachings of Caitanya (Śyāmadāsa, pp. 13–14).

At the same time, Madhva scholars recognise the considerable influence that their theology has had on writers of the Caitanya school, and admit the real possibility of *paramparā* connections.[27] The words of Bannanje Govindacharya, a respected Madhva author from Uḍupi, exemplify the general ambivalence towards the Caitanya tradition.

> There are definite differences [between the two traditions] although there are many parallels as well. Besides Gauḍīyas accept Caitanya Mahāprabhu as the Deity, whereas Madhvas accept him as a great devotee. Who can say? . . . I think a closer link would be Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa, who was definitely influenced by Madhva's thought. (Govindacharya, p. 15).

What is important to note here is the confidence regarding Baladeva and his connection with Madhva. B. N. K. Sharma displays similar confidence, 'It may therefore be observed

that till the days of Jīva Gosvāmin, the Bengal Vaiṣṇavas were *only partially influenced* by the writings of Madhva and his followers. . . . It was in the 18th century that this influence became *very pronounced and predominant* [author's italics]' (Sharma 1981, p. 528). Sharma assures us that although Baladeva was 'an enthusiastic follower of Caitanya', 'of his zealous acceptance of and devotion to Madhva Sampradāya, there can be no doubt' (Sharma 1981, p. 529). And in a recent article in the *Journal of Vaiṣṇava Studies*, Sharma enthusiastically endorses the Caitanya connection,

> If the leaders of Madhva thought among the intelligentsia would take advantage of the existing common ground of tradition between Dvaita philosophy and the Caitanya school, with its modern offshoot of ISKCON, it may be expected to open a new chapter in the history of Vedāntic Realism in India. (Sharma 1997, p. 20)

Conclusion

We have thus seen a myriad of attitudes and responses to the Caitanyite controversy over *sampradāya*. The arguments on each side involve theological, historical, and institutional considerations, but the underlying issue is the same: the formation and transformation of communal religious identity. Using a common body of literature and history as evidence, each side arrives at a different conclusion, endorsing or rejecting the Madhva connection to varying degrees. In the midst of all this, Baladeva Vidyabhūṣaṇa and his text, the *Prameyaratnāvalī*, perform a delicate balancing act between the parties. Despite the different views, it is significant that each side claims Baladeva for itself. Those against affiliation are convinced that because Baladeva wrote a new commentary on the *Brahmasūtra*, he was establishing an independent identity for the followers of Caitanya. But those favouring affiliation claim that Baladeva was a champion of their view because he proved a connection with the Madhva *sampradāya* and thus defended the Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas from allegations of illegitimacy. The followers of Madhva are not quite sure what to make of either side, but they are sure about one thing: Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa was one of them. If Baladeva's purpose in writing was to mediate between the various parties, and if the current situation is any measure of the past, then Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa seems to have done remarkably well. He quite smoothly walked a theological tightrope in the Caitanya *sampradāya*.

This balancing act between identity and difference is one that has been performed many times in the Indian context, with varying degrees of subtlety and success. The Rāmānandī *sampradāya*, for example, went through its own crisis over meta-parentage some two hundred years after the Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas. Until the second decade of the twentieth century, Rāmānandīs considered their lineage to be a branch of the South Indian *sampradāya* of Rāmānuja. By 1921, however, after a debate held in Ujjain, Rāmānuja had been 'purged from the institutional memory of the Rāmānandī *sampraday*, and Ramanand was declared to have acted independently in originating Vaishnavism in the north' (Pinch, p. 37)[28].

A study of this sort of identity transformation as it has occurred in different traditions would be quite rewarding, bringing out many fruitful points of comparison.[29] If it is true that the constituents of a community's religious identity are brought into sharper focus when that identity is challenged, then we should have no shortage of opportunities to gain insight into the theological and institutional dynamics of communal religious identity.

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Notes

[1] An abridged version of this essay was originally presented at the Eastern International Regional Conference of the American Academy of Religion in April 2002. The essay is dedicated to the sacred memory of Tamal Krishna Goswami, who was a D.Phil. candidate at the University of Cambridge when he passed away. He gave me valuable guidance for the presentation. I am also thankful to my professors and colleagues at the University of Oxford for their comments.

[2] Smith defines the term in the *Meaning and End of Religion*. 'By "cumulative tradition" I mean the entire mass of overt objective data that constitute the historical deposit as it were, of the

past religious life of the community in question: temples, scriptures, theological systems, . . . and so on; anything that can be and is transmitted from one person, one generation, to another, and that an historian can observe.' (Smith, pp. 156–7). About the Hindu tradition he says, 'It is diverse, it is fluid, it grows, it changes, it accumulates. It crystallizes in material form the faith of previous generations, and it sets the context for the faith of each new generation as these come along. But it neither includes nor fully determines that later faith.' (p. 159)

[3] See Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja's *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Adi-līlā 1.5.

[4] I have translated this passage from the Hindi.

[5] There are, however, explicit references to affiliation with the Madhva *sampradāya* in early Caitanyite literature. See footnote 26.

[6] See Jīva Gosvāmī's *Tattvasandarbha,* Anucchedas 26–7.

[7] For a description of the Rajput involvement in Vṛndāvana, especially in relation to the Caitanya Sampradāya, see Entwistle, *Braj Centre of Krishna Pilgrimage*; Horstmann, *In Favour of Govinddevjī*; and Margaret Case, ed., *Govindadev: A Dialogue in Stone*.

[8] See Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja's *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Adi-līlā 1.16.

[9] For a thorough and carefully reasoned account of this period in Caitanya Vaiṣṇava history, see Adrian Burton's doctoral dissertation, 'Temples, Texts, and Taxes', section 3.2. Burton argues that instead of a single debate instigated by the Rāmānandīs, as is usually portrayed in traditional accounts (e.g. Wright and Wright), there were probably a series of conferences, called by the Maharaja himself in an attempt to reconcile and organise the many younger *sampradāyas* in his kingdom. All the issues described in the traditional accounts were no doubt real and crucial, but they were addressed, says Burton, in a series of debates rather than one.

[10] This claim is based on the *Padma Purāṇa*, but the oft-quoted verses cannot be located in any edition of the Purāṇa available today.

sampradāya-vihīnā ye mantrās te viphalā matāḥ
ataḥ kalau bhaviṣyanti catvāraḥ sampradāyinaḥ
śrī-brahma-rudra-sanakā vaiṣṇavāḥ kṣiti-pāvanāḥ
catvāras te kalau bhāvyā hy utkale puruṣottamāt

'Those mantras which are devoid of a *sampradāya* are considered fruitless. Therefore, in the age of Kali, there will be four founders of *sampradāyas*—Śrī, Brahma, Rudra and Sanaka. These Vaiṣṇavas purify the world, and in the age of Kali, they will arise from the Supreme Person in Utkala.'

[11] The debate took place in Galta, near Jaipur.

[12] Taking the available records into account, Burton places Baladeva between about 1700 and 1793. (Burton, p. 108)

[13] There are not many sources available on the life of Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa. A fresh, well-researched account is provided by Burton in his doctoral dissertation (pp. 82–100). A very readable hagiography, focusing especially on the debate in Jaipur, is given by Michael and Nancy Wright in *The Journal of Vaiṣṇava Studies*. Surveys of Baladeva's philosophy are found in *A History of Indian Philosophy*, by Surendranath Dasgupta, and *The Vaiṣṇava Philosophy According to Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa*, by Sudesh Narang.

[14] See Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja's *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Madhya-līlā 25.91–100.

[15] Baladeva named his commentary *Govindabhāṣya*, in appreciation of the inspiration he received from Govindadeva. Tradition says that he was given only eighteen days (or one month) to compose the work.

[16] Just how much Baladeva's commentary owes to Madhva is a matter that merits careful study. B. N. K. Sharma believes that 'Baladeva is virtually in agreement with Madhva on all the fundamental points of his system' (Sharma 1981, p. 596).

[17] I say this because the book's content strongly reflects the issues at stake during the debate. Furthermore, the opening verses of the *Prameyaratnāvalī* are identical to those *of Sūkṣmāṭīkā,* a commentary on the *Govindabhāṣya* written by Baladeva himself.

[18] The nine *prameyas* are as follows: (1) Viṣṇu is supreme; (2) He is to be known by all the Vedas; (3) The universe is real; (4) There is difference [between Viṣṇu and the world]; (5) The living entities are servants of Hari [Kṛṣṇa]; (6) There is gradation among the living entities; (7) Liberation is the attainment of the feet of Viṣṇu; (8) Spotless worship of those feet is the cause of liberation; and (9) the means of proof are three, beginning with *pratyakṣa*.

[19] Vyāsatīrtha's famous *prameyaśloka* goes like this:

śrīman-madhva-mate hariḥ paratamaḥ satyaṃ jagat tattvato
bhedo jīva-gaṇā harer anucarā nīcocca-bhāvaṃ gatāḥ
muktir naija-sukhānubhūtir amalā bhaktiś ca tat-sādhanam
akṣādi-tritayaṃ pramāṇam akhilāmnāyaikavedyo hariḥ

[20] *śrī-madhvaḥ prāha viṣṇuṃ paratamam akhilāmnāya-vedyaṃ ca viśvam*
satyaṃ bhedaṃ ca jīvān hari-caraṇa-juṣas tāratamyaṃ ca teṣām
mokṣaṃ viṣṇv-aṅghri-lābhaṃ tad-amala-bhajanaṃ tasya hetuṃ pramānam
pratyakṣādi-trayaṃ cety upadiśati hariḥ kṛṣṇa-caitanya-candraḥ

Compare this verse with Vyāsatīrtha's *prameyaśloka* above.

[21] *hetutvād vibhu-caitanyānandatvādi-guṇāśrayāt*
nitya-lakṣmyādimatvāc ca kṛṣṇaḥ paratamo mataḥ

[22] See paragraphs 18–24. For example:

pūrtiḥ sārvatrikī yady apy aviśeṣā tathāpi hi
tāratamyaṃ ca tac-chakti-vyakty-avyakti-kṛtaṃ bhavet

'Although each form of Lakṣmī is complete, and although there is no difference between them, still there may be a gradation caused by the appearance or non-appearance of their powers.'

. . .

gautamīya-tantre ca—
devī kṛṣṇa-mayī proktā rādhikā para-devatā
sarva-lakṣmī-mayī sarva-kāntiḥ saṃmohinī parā

'And in the *Gautamīyatantra*, "The supreme goddess is Rādhikā. She is completely imbued with Kṛṣṇa, and she is the supreme enchantress. She possesses all of the Lakṣmīs, and all of their loveliness combined."'

[23] *ānanda-tīrtha-nāmā sukha-maya-dhāmā yatir jīyāt*
saṃsārārṇava-taraṇiṃ yam iha janāḥ kīrtayanti budhāḥ

'May the ascetic named Ānandatīrtha, who is an abode full of happiness, be ever victorious. Learned persons glorify him, who is the boat in the ocean of *saṃsāra*.'

[24] There is a commentary on the *Prameyaratnāvalī* called *Kāntimālā* which shows further signs of responding to these issues. The *Kāntimālā* is usually attributed to Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa himself (Dasgupta, p. 438), but sometimes to Kṛṣṇadeva Sārvabhauma (Śāstri, p. 1).

[25] Caitanya is mentioned five times in the text, and the theological content is thoroughly Caitanya Vaiṣṇava. For example, the doctrine of three *śaktis*, the five types of *rasa* relationships, and the supremacy of Kṛṣṇa are all discussed in the *Prameyaratnāvalī*.

[26] Indeed, since the time of Śrī Caitanya himself, Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas have affiliated themselves with the Madhva *sampradāya*. *Paramparā* lists connecting Caitanya to Madhvācārya are found in several works from Orissa written during or just after the time of Mahāprabhu. These include *Bhaktijñānabrahmayoga* by Acyutānanda Dāsa (a close associate of Caitanya in Purī) and a list by Gopālaguru Gosvāmī, a disciple of Vakreśvara Paṇḍita. Outside of Orissa, the most significant claim to the Madhva connection is the *parampara* list given by Kavi Karṇapūra in his *Gauragaṇoddeśadīpikā*, which is quoted in Viśvanātha Cakravartī's *Gauragaṇatattvasvarūpac adrikā* and in the *Bhaktiratnākara*. Lāla Dāsa's *Bhaktamāla* also supports the Caitanya-Madhva link. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that early writings of the Vallabha *sampradāya* also make mention of Mādhavendra Purī as a Madhva *sannyāsī*, even though they consider him to be part of their own *sampradāya*. For a discussion of the available textual evidence, see Elkman, pp. 32–9 and Kapoor, p. 38.

[27] B. N. K. Sharma suggests that a link may be found in Viṣṇu Purī, the author of *Bhaktiratnāvalī,*

who is said to have been a disciple of the Madhva *sannyāsī* Jayadhvaja (or Jayadharma). 'Most probably, it was this Viṣṇu Purī, who was the real founder of the Bhakti Movement in the North and the teachers Lakṣmīpati, Mādhavendra Purī and Īśvara were descended from him . . .' (Sharma 1981, p. 526).

[28] For a historical analysis of the controversy, see William R. Pinch, *Remembering Ramanand*. Pinch's description elicits many comparisons with our own discussion of meta-parentage. 'A central referent in the debate over Ramanandi tradition was the integrity of Ramanand as a form of Ramchandra. Though Ramanand's god-like status was practically assumed by Ramanandis at the turn of the century, by 1918 a group of Ramanandis chose to reject in vehement terms the possibility that Ramanand was originally a member of someone else's *sampraday*, and insisted rather that he single-handedly founded the Ramanandi *sampraday* as part of his own divine plan. This radical element could stomach no presentation of Ramanand that compromised in any way his complete and total control over his own destiny and the destiny of his religious community. Inasmuch as a radical position demands either allegiance or refutation, one either remained a Ramanandi or became a "Ramanujite" accordingly.' (Pinch, p. 41)

[29] Another place to look would be the Haridāsī tradition of Vṛndāvana, which also diverged over issues of *sampradāya* affilation. Haynes writes, 'One of the major points in the controversy between the two branches of the Haridāsī *sampradāya* is Svāmī Haridās' own sectarian affiliation. The *sādhus* say it was the Nimbārka Sampradāy, the Gosvāmīs insist he belonged to the Viṣṇusvāmī Sampradāy. There is the third possibility that Haridās belonged to neither of these two sects, since a clear theological orientation in the history of the Haridāsī Sampradāy appears first with the attempt at governmental regulation in the time of Jaisingh in the early eighteenth century.' (Haynes, p. 225)

Pizza or Pakoras: Reconciling Conservative and Liberal Viewpoints in ISKCON

Braja Bihārī Dāsa

Drawing on his experience in conflict resolution in ISKCON, Braja Bihārī Dāsa examines one of the core factors of conflict—the division between 'conservative' and 'liberal' positions on the understanding and application of a shared set of teachings. He uses several models for understanding such conflict and from these he draws solutions that aim to enable conflict to be resolved, where appropriate, or to be acknowledged for their potential to form the basis of healthy, productive dialogue.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, the founder of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), often voiced concern about internal conflicts in his growing ISKCON society:

> We have so much work to do, we cannot lose our solidarity. Do not cause a crack there with any fighting spirit or competition. Whenever I hear complaints or disturbances in our centres my mind becomes [. . .] disturbed and I cannot properly translate my books. So please spare me from such disturbance by cooperating all together, Godbrothers and Godsisters. (Śrīla Prabhupāda letter to Malati, 7 January 1974)

> You have dedicated your life for Kṛṣṇa and therefore you should be ideal. We are introducing Kṛṣṇa Consciousness movement for the harmony and good will of humanity. But if you yourselves are suffering from the very ills we are trying to remove, how can the people be influenced favourably? Stop this fighting, tolerate. (Śrīla Prabhupāda letter to Trivikrama, 1 May 1974)

> Only after exhausting every possibility of peaceful solution shall we fight anyone. Just like Kṛṣṇa. He did not call for fighting until after every chance for settlement failed. (Śrīla Prabhupāda letter to Balavanta, 13 December 1972)

This paper analyses some of the causes of conflict in ISKCON, particularly, as the title suggests, in the conservative/liberal realm. Should ISKCON stick to tradition as closely as possible or can we adapt Kṛṣṇa consciousness to the surrounding culture when appropriate: Can we offer Kṛṣṇa vegetarian pizzas or must we only offer traditional items such as pakoras? The paper ends by offering a number of solutions in keeping with Prabhupāda's desire for cooperation in his Society.

Causes of conflict

There are many causes of conflict. In his book, *The Mediation Process*, Christopher Moore outlines the main ones (pp. 64–5):

(1) Value conflicts: caused by parties having different criteria to evaluate ideas, or by different lifestyles, ideologies, or religions.
(2) Relationship conflicts: caused by strong emotions, misperceptions, miscommunications, and regular, negative interactions.
(3) Data conflicts: caused by a lack of information, different interpretations of data, and different views on what is relevant.
(4) Interest conflicts: caused by competition over substantive interests, procedural interests, or psychological interests.
(5) Structural conflicts: caused by destructive patterns of behaviour, unequal control and ownership of resources, unequal power and authority, time constraints, and geographical/environmental factors that hinder cooperation.

Moore suggests interventions for each of these sources of conflict. As Arnold Zack mentioned in an article for *ISKCON Communications Journal* (Vol. 10), organisations worldwide are recognising the need to address such conflicts and are finding promising results from their foray into Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR). Zack describes the way ISKCON has begun a programme to deal with cases of conflict within the organisation. Without repeating his detailed article, I would like to further explore conflicts as they relate to religious organisations, and of course, as they apply specifically to ISKCON, and even more specifically, between conservative and liberal viewpoints in ISKCON.

In *Managing Church Conflict,* Hugh F. Halverstadt adds to Moore's list by citing three causes of conflict particular to church settings (p. 2). Of particular interest to this discussion is Halverstadt's first point: Church conflicts are intense because we have attached our commitment and faith to them. He writes:

> For one thing, parties' core identities are at risk in church conflicts. Spiritual commitments and faith understandings are highly inflammable because they are central to one's psychological identity. When Christians differ over beliefs or commitments, they may question or even condemn one another's spirituality or character. Their self-esteem is on the line. (Halverstadt, p. 2)

Perhaps more than the average churchgoer, ISKCON members make sacrifices and major lifestyle changes when taking to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. They change how they eat, sleep, dress, and speak; they develop new friendships and frequently relinquish the old; and they develop a new set of life aspirations. To become devotees, they also adopt a drastically different outlook on life from the one with which they were raised. They invest a lot of themselves in becoming Kṛṣṇa's devotee, and thus if aspects of their core identity are brought into question by someone with a different point of view—especially by someone in their own ranks—conflict often results.

There are a number of factors that influence a devotee's 'take' on Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The first is cultural diversity. There are ISKCON temples in 103 countries, and although they afford a basic uniformity of theology and practices, the host cultures each bring in much variety. Prabhupāda infers this in one of his commentaries: 'A candidate for Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the Western countries should be taught about the renunciation of material existence, but one would teach candidates from a country like India in a different way. The teacher (*ācārya*) has to consider time, candidate and country.' (*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Madhya-līlā 23.105, purport) Other significant differences in 'takes' are caused by devotees' early training in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, their level of spiritual advancement, their *pūrva-saṃskāras* (mental impressions from previous lives), their conditioning in this life, their socio-economic status,

their intellectual capacity, their choice of friends, their habits, and more. Thus although all are members of ISKCON, there is variety in how members perceive, experience, teach, and practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Understanding how that variety manifests is an essential tool in analysing ISKCON's conflicts and coping with the confusion those conflicts create. Śrīla Prabhupāda was fond of quoting the Sanskrit saying, *ātmavan manyate jagat*, 'I think like this, so the whole world must also think in the same way'. Ross and Ward of Stanford University give a detailed outline of a similar concept (pp. 110–11). They coin the phrase 'naïve realism', and describe the concept as follows:

(1) That I see entities and events as they are in objective reality, and that my social attitudes, beliefs, preferences, priorities, and the like follow from a relatively dispassionate, unbiased and essentially 'unmediated' apprehension of the information or evidence at hand.

(2) That other rational social perceivers generally will share my reactions, behaviour and opinions—provided they have had access to the same information that gave rise to my views, and provided that they too have processed that information in a reasonably thoughtful, and open-minded fashion.

(3) That the failure of a given individual or group to share my views arises from one of three possible sources:

(a) The individual or group in question may have been exposed to a different sample of information than I was (in which case, provided that the other party is reasonable and open-minded, the sharing or pooling of information should lead us to reach an agreement);

(b) The individual or group in question may be lazy, irrational, or otherwise unable or unwilling to proceed in a normative fashion from objective evidence to reasonable conclusions; or

(c) The individual or group in question may be biased (either in interpreting the evidence or in proceeding from evidence to conclusions) by ideology, self-interest, or some other distorting personal influence.

I prefer the term 'subjective realism' to the more pejorative 'naïve realism'; for me, 'naïve' tends to make this syndrome sound undesirable. Rather, thinking in these ways is natural—it is clear that this influence is frequently at work in most people's lives—the only undesirable part is when we don't recognise it in others or ourselves. Indeed, if we look at Moore's five causes of conflict, it's reasonable to say that subjective realism can play a part in nearly all of them. We see the world differently from others, and we are often willing to enter into a dispute because of that. ISKCON members are no exception.

It is important to clarify that when applying these considerations in ISKCON, I'm not implying that the standard spiritual truths mentioned in Vaiṣṇava *śāstra* (scripture) are up for subjective reinterpretation. Clearly ISKCON has a standard theology to which all its members must adhere if they are to be considered members at all. Similarly, Śrīla Prabhupāda has established certain incontrovertible standards, including the initiation vows (no illicit sex, no gambling, no intoxication, and no eating of meat, fish, or eggs, and the promise to chant at least sixteen rounds of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* a day). In fact, these common understandings held by all ISKCON devotees are essential and will be discussed later as a possible means to overcoming differences.

Thus, although I use the terms 'conservative' and 'liberal', it should be clear that (1) these terms are used in relation to non-core practice and that each party would agree on the core ISKCON theology, and (2) these terms are used relative to ISKCON practices

(even the 'liberals' would generally be considered highly conservative by current Western standards).

Still even within this narrow definition there is plenty of room for individual emphasis, interpretation, and realisation—based on spiritual inspiration, practical and material considerations, and a combination of these. Differences arise, ignited by subjective realism and stoked by the age we live in.

The argument culture and Kali-yuga

The Vaiṣṇava *śāstra* (scripture) repeatedly explains that we are now living in the age of Kali, of quarrel. This is a time when people all too easily enter into conflict. Although conflict is inevitable in this age, how a person or organisation deals with it marks the difference between that person's ability to excel or simply limp along. Spiritual organisations, although meant to be reservoirs of peace, are not exempt from this influence. Indeed, for all the reasons stated above and more, religious groups have long histories of quarrel. Even a relatively new institution like ISKCON has already built conflict into its history. In her book, *The Argument Culture*, Deborah Tannen explains how this tendency towards quarrel is affecting today's society: '. . . conflicts can sometimes be resolved without confrontational tactics, but current conventional wisdom often devalues less confrontational tactics even if they work well, favouring more aggressive strategies even if they get less favourable results. It's as if we value a fight for its own sake, not for its effectiveness in resolving disputes' (p. 23).

Kali-yuga's beginnings seem to exemplify this tendency. In *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* we have the story of Śṛṅgi, an unqualified son of a *brāhmaṇa*, cursing the great devotee-king Parīkṣit to die within seven days after the king had apparently offended Śṛṅgi's father when the *brāhmaṇa* did not offer him a proper reception. While this particular event is viewed as the Lord's arrangement meant to bring about the speaking of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, it is also said that Kali-yuga's influence began when Śṛṅgi chose an aggressive strategy even though alternatives were certainly available.

Kali influences in another substantial way: it breaks down authority. Tannen quotes Robert Bly who writes in *Sibling Society* that present-day citizens '. . . are like squabbling siblings with no authority figures who can command enough respect to contain and channel their aggressive impulses. It is as if every day is a day with a substitute teacher who cannot control the class and maintain order' (Tannen, p. 25). When I joined ISKCON in 1977, the authority structure was strong and firmly intact. After Prabhupāda's departure that year and the subsequent difficulties centred on questionable leadership decisions and the moral shortcomings of some of the renunciates, the authority structure has weakened considerably. History is yet to reveal how well this weakened structure will survive in ISKCON. Some say that ISKCON is doing relatively well in keeping the Governing Body Commission intact, but, for the present, ISKCON certainly suffers from the 'substitute teacher syndrome'. With a decrease in authority, opinions proliferate with the understanding that one opinion is not better than any other. Lack of strong authority encourages subjective reality to run amok, resulting ultimately in more disagreements.

The medium affects the message

Authority is also weakened by the advent of desktop publishing and the internet. Previously, if one wished to publish a book, he or she had to convince an ISKCON publisher of its

value—often a daunting task. Now anyone with an idea, a computer, a printer, and a small investment can publish a book.

Websites, with their anyone-can-say-anything aspect, are even easier to establish.[1] It is a fact that many of the disagreements that take place in ISKCON exist only in cyberspace; the devotees involved may not even have met in person. The internet has connected us in ways never before possible. It has also extended the influence of both subjective realism and Kali-yuga beyond all boundaries: people can now send mail to hundreds of receivers all over the world in a matter of seconds. Furthermore, if we were to accept the popular statistic that 10% of communication is in what we say, 30% is in how we say it, and the final 60% revealed in our body language, then e-mail is clearly not a useful tool for discussing topics that have emotional and philosophical components. E-mail is quite useful for knowing when to pick someone up at the airport or other innocuous dealings, but it is not a fit medium for working out long-standing disagreements. For example, recently the Executive Committee of ISKCON's Governing Body Commission (GBC) was called upon to referee a complicated issue involving the alleged misbehaviour of a regional leader. Over 1000 e-mails were exchanged on the subject with little progress but much miscommunication and some ill feelings. Realising that e-mail was not bringing the problem closer to a solution, the Executive Committee chairman called a meeting of the involved parties. Within a short time the problems were sorted out to everyone's satisfaction. While it's true that the meeting was much more costly in terms of time and travel expenses and that the e-mails had cost nothing, still, the meeting proved much more efficient in coming to a solution. It also seems clear, however, that e-mail will continue to fuel ISKCON's conflicts, despite its usually negative effects.

Another technological hazard in ISKCON is the Vedabase, a searchable compilation of all of Prabhupāda's writings, letters, and transcribed conversations. While it is a wonderful facility for a researcher or a traveller who doesn't want to carry books (all the books fit on one DVD), it has its downside. The front matter of the Vedabase states, 'The Bhaktivedanta Vedabase is a powerful tool, and like all tools it may be used either well or badly. Used well, it can help us discover, gather, and bring to light many teachings the scriptures and Śrīla Prabhupāda give us. Used badly, it can help assemble false evidence, fallacious arguments, and wrong conclusions'. All too often devotees approach the information contained on the Vedabase with an agenda, and then use the Vedabase to find quotes to confirm their prejudicial views. Rather than trying to understand Prabhupāda's statements and how they fit in with his other statements and the scriptural conclusions, it seems that many people only turn to the Vedabase to find ammunition in their attempts to defeat others.

Conservative and liberal

The above-mentioned causes of conflict are best visible today in ISKCON in a variety of conservative versus liberal conflicts. There are a number of subjects affected by the conservative-liberal dichotomy, including the role of women, ISKCON's relations with the wider world, approaches to missionary activities, the usefulness of interfaith dialogue, and the degree of inculcating traditional culture.

At the risk of over-generalising, here is a brief synopsis of the viewpoints: liberals take an egalitarian approach to the role of women based on the inherent equality of all souls on the spiritual platform. They feel ISKCON needs to be relevant to the outside world and that we can learn much from others. We should therefore be creative in our missionary activities, adjusting them to time, place, and circumstance. They also feel that the give-and-take of interfaith dialogue is helpful for ISKCON and for others, and that

while cultural traditions are important, they are secondary to higher, spiritual principles. Implementing a traditional culture in ISKCON, they say, has to be done carefully, because previous attempts were immature and left scars on those who were part of the attempt.

Conservatives accept a complementarian approach to the role of women: women have a distinctive role centred on being wives, mothers, and are in no way competing with men. They believe we should give to the outside world but that there is little we should take. While adjustments can be made to the culture for outreach activities, we already have a perfect, if yet to be fully implemented, culture; we need only execute our teachings with faith. Conservatives believe we should be wary of interfaith dialogue; after all, we already have the truth and others should learn it from us. They believe we have little to gain from others. We need only preach and exemplify the Vedic culture, which is glorious—supremely so. The closer we come to following it, the happier we will be, as will those who come in contact with us.

Both parties present evidence from *śāstra* as well as examples from Prabhupāda's personal application of it to substantiate their viewpoint. It may be that on some issues, based on *śāstra*, one party is right and the other wrong, but until now in ISKCON, neither the liberal nor the conservative position has been established as dominant, nor is that likely to happen in the near future. In the ongoing debates, both continue to quote legitimate passages and attempt to connect those passages to the present-day institution.

An example: the issue surrounding the role of women in ISKCON

What is the role of women in ISKCON? Can women take leadership positions? Can they be gurus? Should they rather play a complementary role to men as pious wives and mothers protected by their fathers in youth, their husbands in marriage, and their grown sons in old age? Much of the contention in this conflict centres around hermeneutics: on how ISKCON should interpret the scriptures and Prabhupāda's comments on them. What constitutes an unchangeable spiritual principle? What constitutes a detail, a time-and-place attempt to apply a principle that can be changed when time and place differ? Are the cultural *varṇāśrama*[2] considerations a principle or a detail? What is to be done when two parties emphasise different and apparently opposing principles?

Egalitarians emphasise the oneness of all souls and that bodily differences are of secondary importance. *Bhakti*, loving devotion to Kṛṣṇa, is a function of the soul; it has nothing to do with the external body one happens to inhabit. Men aren't men eternally, nor are women eternally women. Egalitarians believe we should be evolved enough to 'get off the bodily concept of life' and respect each other as souls, as eternal servants of Kṛṣṇa. We should be careful not to allow mundane concepts to enter a spiritual society. Egalitarians quote passages from Prabhupāda's letters and writings like these:

> Regarding lecturing by women devotees: I have informed you that in the service of the Lord there is no distinction of caste, or creed, colour, or sex. (Śrīla Prabhupāda letter to Jayagovinda, 8 February 1968)

> Sometimes jealous persons [from India] criticise the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement because it engages equally both men and women in distribution of love of Godhead. Not knowing that men and women in countries like Europe and America mix very freely, these fools and rascals criticise the boys and girls in Kṛṣṇa consciousness for intermingling. But these rascals should consider that one cannot suddenly change a

> community's social customs. However, since both men and women are being trained to become preachers those women are not ordinary women but are as good as their brothers who are preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Therefore it is a principle that a preacher must strictly follow the rules and regulations laid down in the *śāstras* yet at the same time devise a means by which the preaching work to reclaim the fallen may go with full force. (*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Ādī-līlā 7.38, purport)

The complementarians protest the growing acceptance of a feminist agenda in ISKCON. They fear the creeping in of a materialistic, left-wing mindset that runs contrary to ISKCON's stated goals. ISKCON, which is based on an ancient culture, is, they say, being influenced by modern, materialistic considerations that run contrary to the *varṇāśrama* ideal that ISKCON is meant to establish. While they certainly accept the philosophical point that 'we are not these bodies', they maintain that the *varṇāśrama* social norms are an important vehicle for attaining the spiritual platform. They consider *varṇāśrama* the support culture upon which the spiritual Vaiṣṇava culture will be built. They also feel that without the support of this Vaiṣṇava social model, we will by default embrace the culture of Western hedonism, a culture that will not support our spiritual aspirations. They cite scripture such as the following to support their points:

> A chaste woman should not be greedy, but satisfied in all circumstances. She must be very expert in handling household affairs and should be fully conversant with religious principles. She should speak pleasingly and truthfully and should be very careful and always clean and pure. Thus a chaste woman should engage with affection in the service of a husband who is not fallen. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 7.11.38)

> Women need to be protected by men. A woman should be cared for by her father in her childhood, by her husband in her youth, and by her grown sons in her old age. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 6.18.42, purport)

The role of women is a high profile issue. If it is handled with care, respect, and sufficient attention, its resolution can go a long way in giving ISKCON members confidence of their ability to overcome differences and work cooperatively.

Pizza or pakoras?

In his article, 'Conflict in Groups: The Cross-Stitching Effect' (p. 247), Ron Kraybill discusses two different church congregations. In one church, various members agree with one person on one issue and another person on a different issue (see fig. 1). In one instance, A, B, C, and D agree; on another A, B, F, and E; and on a third A, B, G, and H. In the other church, members vote according to party lines, consistently siding with the same people (see fig. 2). Kraybill says that the first church paradoxically invites disagreements, as they are dealt with respectfully and have an outcome of bringing people closer together. The second church generally avoids conflict, but when it arises the members become polarised, which leads to politics, mistrust, misrepresentation of views, and potentially a split.

I presented these diagrams at a lecture entitled 'Pizza or Pakoras' in July 2004 at the ISKCON European Convention. Looking at the diagram, someone in the audience said, 'Church One looks like a pizza, Church Two looks like two pakoras, but which one is ISKCON?' I hadn't intended that this diagram to be linked to my lecture's title, and the metaphor doesn't fit exactly, but it got me thinking about the question: Which church does ISKCON most resemble?

Fig. 1: Pizzas

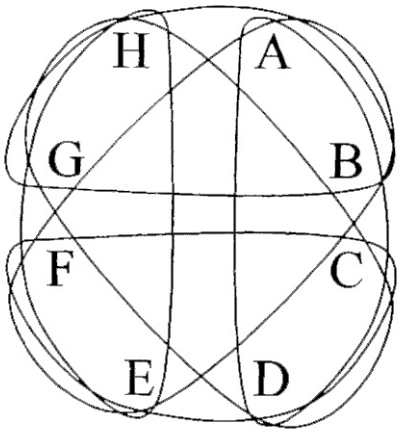
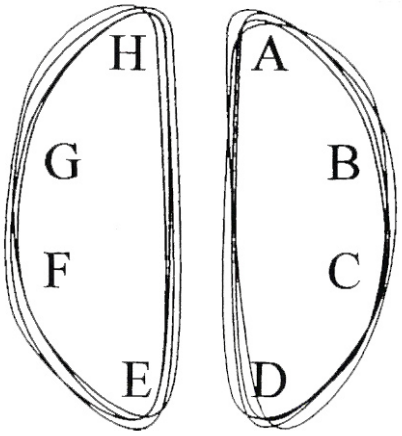


Fig. 2 Pakoras



My analysis, based on living in the heartbeat of ISKCON Vṛndāvana, India, and dealing on a daily basis with ISKCON 'issues' as the director of ISKCONResolve,[3] is that both Church One and Church Two scenarios exist in ISKCON. However, because of ISKCON's diversity, members tend to lean towards Church One despite the vocal minority entrenched in Church Two dynamics as liberals or conservatives. The Church One people, according to Kraybill, already deal with conflict in healthy ways. The question remains as to how ISKCON can help its Church Two liberals and conservatives deal with one another in mutually satisfactory and beneficial ways?

Solutions

Increased dialogue

Presently, conservatives and liberals often communicate within their own groups but do not engage in many constructive dialogues with devotees at the other end of the spectrum. Inevitably this leads to misunderstandings about the other's viewpoints and, especially, motives. Straw-man positions are presented and attacked. Polarisation occurs and positions harden. Miscommunication abounds. Ad hominem attacks—a special tool for fuelling conflict and discouraging cooperation—are not infrequent.

Dialogue can go far to ameliorate the above scenario. A structured dialogue—assisted by a neutral third-party—clarifies intentions and viewpoints. Parties can hear one another respectfully. Without dropping their own positions, they try to understand one another. Dialogue separates the real issues from the perceived ones and de-escalates the mistrust and fears shared between the parties. A de-demonisation takes place, and the atmosphere becomes conducive for empathic communications.

In the case of ISKCON's conservatives and liberals, some steps are being taken in this direction in the form of dialogue via an e-mail conference. Because ISKCON is an international organisation and in-person dialogue is not always possible between disputing parties, we have conceded to setting up an e-mail conference despite the risks. Also, the GBC has requested parties on both sides of the 'women's issue' to participate in a dialogue to

'seek out possible resolutions for these contentious issues and report back to the GBC body'. When properly established, dialogue is a powerful tool for ISKCON devotees. It is a primary teaching in ISKCON to respect all others without requiring respect in return. It has been my experience that dialogue becomes easy when the disputants practice Vaiṣṇava humility.

Dialogue, as a first step, is essential, and it can often lead to tangible decision making. Jennifer Lynch coins the term 'D2D' (dialogue to decision). Often, by sincere dialogue divergent groups come to conclusions on their own regarding how best to proceed with the issues at hand. That may certainly happen on various topics between ISKCON's conservatives and liberals. Further, I would suggest ISKCON leadership look at the idea of allowing a variety of positions on a given topic to be acceptable within ISKCON's official stance. As Prabhupāda once stated when writing to a GBC member:

> If we keep Kṛṣṇa in the centre, then there will be agreement in varieties. This is called unity in diversity. I am therefore suggesting that all our devotees meet in Māyāpur every year during the birth anniversary of Lord Caitanya. With all GBC and senior devotees present we should discuss how to make unity in diversity. But, if we fight on account of diversity, then it is simply the material platform. Please try to maintain the philosophy of unity in diversity. That will make our movement successful. (Śrīla Prabhupāda letter to Kirtanananda, 18 October 1973)

Much conflict and politicking takes place among liberals and conservatives in ISKCON because of an unwritten understanding that ISKCON will accept only one view on a subject. Perhaps much of the energy spent on each group trying to establish its view as *the* view could be better spent on ISKCON's primary purposes—becoming Kṛṣṇa conscious and helping others to do the same—and on living with diversity on many of the less central issues. In offering this suggestion I realise that we open up yet another contentious question: What is a core issue and what is not? I still suggest, however, that this question is easier to deal with than the differences surrounding the issue itself.

Systems approach

Since Arnold Zack's article in the last *ISKCON Communications Journal*, ISKCON's Alternative Dispute Resolution work has developed and is moving towards what is called an Integrated Conflict Management System (ICMS). ISKCONResolve, ISKCON's ICMS, offers a spectrum of services to ISKCON devotees, including mediation, dialogue, arbitration, conflict analysis, and an ombuds office[4]. ISKCONResolve offers these choices so devotees can address their concerns, complaints, conflicts, and suggestions in positive, effective ways. In addition to facilitating the existing debates, it provides conservatives and liberals with an effective, positive means to be understood and heard both by one another and by ISKCON's leadership. As Tannen concludes, 'There are times when we need to disagree, criticise, oppose, and attack—to hold debates and view issues as polarised battles. Even cooperation, after all, is not the absence of conflict but a means of managing conflict. My goal is not a make-nice false veneer of agreement or a dangerous ignoring of true opposition. I'm questioning the *automatic* use of adversarial formats—the assumption that it's *always* best to address problems and issues by fighting over them. I'm hoping for a broader repertoire of ways to talk to each other and address issues vital to us.' (p. 26) ISKCONResolve is an attempt to offer that broader repertoire to its members.

Part of the systems approach to conflict is 'capacity building' (Schirch), training members of an organisation in alternative methods of dealing with conflict. ISKCONResolve has trained over four hundred ISKCON devotees in mediation. That's a start, but now we are developing a short seminar to be made available to a far larger number of members. This shorter course will provide basic theory and skills for individuals to address conflicts that arise in their lives. The seminar will also include points on how they can take advantage of the services ISKCONResolve has to offer. A course is also being developed for use in schools and Sunday schools affiliated with ISKCON.

Another essential aspect of a systems approach is the follow-up. Sustained cooperation and peace don't come easily. Disputants often experience satisfaction with dialogue or mediation, but disappointment when the actual changes turn out to be negligible (Kraybill p. 69). Often we underestimate the amount of work needed to resolve a dispute. Decisions need to be tested and communications followed up. ISKCONResolve tries to follow up on a case as long as required.

Returning to the essence

In May 2004 I was invited to speak at the Sunday school at the Park View Mennonite Church in Harrisonburg, Virginia. Prior to my talk, I attended the sermon of Phil Kniss, the Church's pastor. He spoke of a significant schism in the Mennonite Church. I have to admit that I was surprised to hear about this schism, because Mennonites are famous for their interest in peace and their ability to invoke it. I thus listened carefully as Kniss implored the congregation to be wary of quick-fix, smiling-face solutions that ignore the depths this conflict has reached. He said that as a Church they have a duty to God to not simply deal superficially with this crisis but to go to the roots of their faith in Jesus and find a spiritual solution:

> Let me suggest, at the risk of being the bearer of bad news, that if *all* we do is help a church full of diverse people be friendly, get along with each other, and not fight very much, then we simply make church nothing more than a polite, neighbourly, social club. And we settle for a cheap substitute for Christian community. (Kniss p. 4)

Ultimately, he prescribed transcendence of the conflict by singing the Lord's praise: '. . . if real unity in the church is ever going to be achieved, it will happen when we get together and sing' (Kniss p. 10). I could relate to that. His sermon sparked my thoughts about ISKCON and the need to transcend our differences by absorption in things that bring us together: our devotion to Kṛṣṇa expressed through singing, dancing, feasting, worshipping, studying, and serving together. Not only do these activities bring us together, they are the essence of devotional service, and, according to all Vaiṣṇava *śāstra*, the most effective means of cleansing our hearts and making them suitable to receive Kṛṣṇa's instruction and audience. These are superordinate practices (practices we can all agree on and work together to perform), leading to the superordinate goal of making ISKCON an attractive and pure society of dedicated devotees. By emphasising these positive ways of associating with one another, we naturally build our capacity to transform conflict and we place our differences with one another in proper perspective. Techniques, systems, and training are important in resolving our conflicts, but they should be linked to the very transformational purpose of ISKCON. Conservatives and liberals will continue to have their differences no doubt, but I hope by employing the above mentioned ways to address those differences that their conflicts will

strengthen ISKCON. And, like the warriors in the *Mahābhārata* who fought the enemy in the day and socialised with them at night, ISKCON's conservatives and liberals will continue to differ and then come together at night to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, dance in *kīrtana*, and feast on Kṛṣṇa *prasādam*[5]—pizza and pakoras.

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Notes

[1] When a university librarian recently taught me the hierarchy of reliable research information, he mentioned websites last, speaking with disdain and obvious distrust of the information they contain.

[2] The division of society according to occupational inclinations and marital status (student, married, retired, renounced). The present caste system—often exploitive and based on one's birth—is a corruption of this ancient stratification of people according to their interests and abilities.

[3] ISKCON's office for conflict resolution and transformation.

[4] For more information on ISKCONResolve: www.iskconresolve.com.

[5] Food first offered to Kṛṣṇa.

Conference Reports

Bhakti Vedanta Mission Conference

24 September 2004

Boston, USA

Premānanda Dāsa

Since its founding by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda in 1966, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) has undergone dramatic changes. In its formative stages, ISKCON was primarily a monastic movement comprised of Western converts who became well-known for enthusiastic proselytising.

In the past twenty years, monasticism in North American ISKCON has dwindled and the organisation has become congregation-based. The face of these congregations has grown increasingly Indian. The *āśramas* (monastic quarters) have been weakened further by a dearth of Canadian and American recruits. Temples now regularly sponsor priests from other countries to perform basic functions.

Some people believe ISKCON is maturing, finding its niche as a chaplain to the Indian diaspora. Organisers of the first Bhakti Vedanta Mission Conference, held in Boston on 24 September 2004, questioned the appropriateness of this downsized role from a new perspective, making an historic first attempt to codify a mission theology for Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism.

The Conference drew twenty participants—all ISKCON members—to discuss three presentations. Governing Body Commissioner Ravīndra Svarūpa Dāsa began by underscoring the missiological themes of 'Markine Bhāgavata Dharma' ('Teaching Kṛṣṇa Consciousness in America'), a prayer written by Śrīla Prabhupāda upon his arrival in the United States in 1965.

Ravīndra Svarūpa Dāsa noted that Śrīla Prabhupāda understood that it seemed unlikely that he—an impoverished elderly monk in poor health with no institutional support—would be successful in single-handedly evangelising the West.

Through the poem, Ravīndra Svarūpa Dāsa said that readers come to understand that Śrīla Prabhupāda's mission was to spread the glorification of Kṛṣṇa all over the world. For this mission to be successful, however, Śrīla Prabhupāda prayed that the Lord bless him and his audience.

Ravīndra Svarūpa Dāsa concluded that the act of Gauḍīya mission is based upon the humility, sincerity, and compassionate insight of its proponents. These qualities will enable the presentation of the message of Kṛṣṇa in ways that are meaningful to modern audiences. The success of that mission is based upon the blessings and authority of the Lord and the teachers in disciplic succession.

Essential principles of Gauḍīya mission

In my paper, informed by a review of literature by Eastern Orthodox and Protestant theologians, as well as Gauḍīya scripture and history, I articulated eight doctrinal and practical principles of Gauḍīya missiology as follows:

Doctrinal principles

Avatāra: The Lord's descent as the model for mission
Yūtha: The *sampradāya* as the Lord's service group and missional instrument
Saragraha: The essence according to time, place, and candidate
Yukta-vairāgya: Utilising everything favourable in Kṛṣṇa's service

Practical principles

Vairāgya-vidyā: The foundation of mission in preaching, practice, and worship
Adhikāra: Mission's appeal to various audiences
Ei deśa: The native expression of worldwide mission
Sva-ceṣṭitam: The wholeness of each Vaiṣṇava community

The rise and decline of the tradition throughout the past five centuries has rested in the ability or inability of its leaders to contextualise these imperatives. I expressed my opinion that ISKCON's current nadir in North America is fundamentally a result of its members' lack of awareness of missiological principles.

The impetus for mission begins in Śrī Kṛṣṇa's compassion for all souls. The Lord descends to induce humanity to remember Him by His teachings and pastimes. These vary according to the era, but the purpose is the same: 'Kṛṣṇa should always be remembered and never forgotten. All rules and prohibitions mentioned in the *śāstras* should be the servants of these two principles.' (*Padma Purāṇa*)

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu deputed His followers to expand congregational chanting to new nations and generations. I noted that Gauḍīya *ācāryas* (teachers in disciplic succession) contextualised widely and deeply, thereby making Kṛṣṇa consciousness relevant to their audiences. By necessity the mission takes various forms to address audiences in various countries: sacred texts are translated into local languages, natives are enfranchised as laity and clergy, and so on. Adaptation and appropriation are imperatives as the mission addresses new candidates and cultural forces.

Much of the discussion regarding my paper focused on who is qualified to adapt the tradition's teachings and practices in the absence of Śrīla Prabhupāda. One participant noted that some would oppose any such attempts, insisting that ISKCON's success lay in simply imitating Śrīla Prabhupāda.

One of the conference organisers, Nimāi Nitāi Dāsa, replied that imitating Śrīla Prabhupāda would demand that devotees show the same flexibility Śrīla Prabhupāda did in adapting and contextualising Kṛṣṇa consciousness to suit its audiences.

Ravīndra Svarūpa Dāsa proposed a conciliar model in which dedicated and sincere devotees who feel the urgency to make Kṛṣṇa consciousness available to everyone could work together to discuss and experiment, following the guidance of the scriptures and the *ācāryas.* Participants noted precedent in Gauḍīya history for this method in establishing unity among Gauḍīya schools and ascertaining best theological practices.

Overcoming nominalism and developing a new strategy for American mission

Lacking a strong and active commitment to contextualisation of mission principles, ISKCON has become increasingly Hindu in appearance and tone, according to Nimāi Nitāi Dāsa, whose paper concluded the Conference. Rather than representing the maturation of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement in North America, Nimāi Nitāi said, 'Hindu-isation' represents the weakening of

mission and the growing influence of nominalism.

He emphasised the roles of sectarianism and phyletism in weakening ISKCON's appeal to mainstream audiences. He defined sectarianism as the loss of spiritual relevancy, defined in terms of transforming the lives of followers.

According to Nimāi Nitāi, a disciplic lineage (*sampradāya*) can be defined in spiritual or secular terms. The spiritual *sampradāya* focuses its energies on helping its members overcome worldliness. Its secular counterpart places greater emphasis on institutional survival: 'If it cures the living entities—if it makes the correct diagnosis of the disease, and if it knows the way of therapy—then it is the divine and not the secular *sampradāya*. . . . When the *sampradāya* does not cure the living entities, but rather is concerned with other matters, it ceases to be divine and becomes secular.'

Phyletism is the idealisation of religious ethnicity. In North American ISKCON, Nimāi Nitāi Dāsa observed, devotees adopt the language, ritualism, and appearance of Hinduism to gain 'authenticity' in the eyes of Indian congregations. 'They exchange a Western ethnicity for an Indian ethnicity, without realising that both are external designations arising from material conditioning.'

By implication, Nimāi Nitāi indicated that ISKCON in North America has gotten sidetracked by matters of institutional survival and has, perhaps unconsciously, embraced ethnocentrism as a means to that end.

He prescribed maximalism—the endeavour to embrace higher spiritual standards—as the antidote for nominalism. 'We must organically transform ISKCON in North America into a missional community that fulfils the theological, liturgical, and pastoral needs of devotees, and serves as a beacon for integration of Westerners into *bhāgavat-dharma*.'

He said the first step toward this goal is to educate and train *āśrama* members in monastic vocations steeped in spiritual practice. 'The heart of the *sampradāya* has always been its renunciates. . . . Our society needs dedicated and educated *vairāgīs* [renunciates]; not a professional clergy, as in contemporary Western religious institutions, but a committed, inspired, and inspiring core (heart).'

Inspiring faith among congregational members and the general populace is a crucial element of mission. Nimāi Nitāi noted that elements for successful outreach are already in place. He proposed a strategy to encourage seekers to become devotees through gradual and specific commitments—an expansion of the *āśrayā-krama* process adopted by the GBC in 1993. 'ISKCON has different constituencies, with different levels of commitment to the *ṣaṇkīrtana* movement of Mahāprabhu. . . . Our approach for addressing these diverse levels must be to invite devotees to go a step further—that is, the Society must facilitate their progress to the next higher level of commitment.'

Organisers expect to publish the full proceedings of the session in early 2005 and hold another conference this autumn. An obvious challenge will be raising awareness of the importance of missional principles among ISKCON leaders and members in North America. The Conference organisers noted that a mission-based approach would provide valuable insights to ISKCON reform efforts—such as the North American GBC-sponsored Spiritual Strategic Planning initiative.

Conference Report

Life and its Origin
12–14 November 2004
Rome, Italy

Jonathan Edelmann

The Bhaktivedanta Institute held the Second International Congress on 'Life and Its Origin' on 12–14 November. The Congress was held in the Protomoteca Hall, on Rome's beautiful Capitol Hill. The aim was to bring together representatives of the world's religions and the natural sciences to discuss perspectives on the origin of life, consciousness, the soul, life after death, the purpose and meaning of science and religion, and God. All of these topics were couched in various theological perspectives, as well as scientific theories such as Big Bang, neo-Darwinism, Quantum Mechanics, and Relativity Theory.

To my knowledge, most science and religion dialogues tend to focus on Christianity and modern science; Muslims, Jews, and Buddhists engage with science to a lesser extent, and Hindus even less than that. This conference, however, attempted to represent most of the world's religions, as well as many of the sciences. There was something else unique here. The very notion of dialogue suggests equality, and this was explicit. It was assumed that science is not the final arbiter of truth, rather that the sciences and the religions have their own wealth of insight on this most elusive of all topics—life itself. Instead of a competition between the religions, or between religions and science, the traditions were employed as culturally specific, yet not culturally constrained, avenues to truth. Each tradition was respected as coming from a particular cultural, linguistic, and textual context, but it was not assumed that truths and insights beyond those traditions were precluded.

The conference started with invocations and blessings from religious leaders: a Jesuit priest, a Buddhist rimpoche, a Hindu swami, a Jewish rabbi, an Islamic imam, and a Sikh all expressed their sense of the importance of such discussion between the religions and sciences.

Some memorable moments from the sessions: In Session One, Professor Arij Roest Crollius SJ of the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome spoke about beauty. That which is closer to God is more beautiful, hence this is a way of judging object, ideas, and events. Most notably, he concluded his talk by chanting a *Bhagavad-gītā* verse in the traditional Gregorian metre—and *that* was very beautiful. In Session Two there was a lively Q&A about the nature of consciousness in the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*, a Vaiṣṇava-Hindu text, and the problems of holding a non-physical view of consciousness in light of modern biology. In Session Three, Professor Robert Mann, the Chair of the Physics Department at the University of Waterloo, attempted to show that neo-Darwinian evolution is a challenge to any religious tradition that believes there is teleology in the world, and Dr Anita Goel, from the department of Health, Sciences and Technology at Harvard University, attempted to show how 'intelligent design' could be inserted in nature. In Session Five, Professor Gianfranco Basti, a Catholic Priest from the respected Lateran University in Rome, gave a lucid exposition of the mind-body problem, and a persuasive defence of Thomistic views of the soul in light of contemporary computational theory and computer science.

Session Four saw a unique turn of events: Professor Lothar Schafer, a well known physical chemist and science-religion writer, argued that matter, as seen in quantum physics, is conscious, and thus the natural/supernatural or physical/metaphysical distinction is blurred by twentieth-century physics. Also in Session Four, Mann showed how neo-Darwinism has become the lens through which fundamental academic fields of research such as psychology and religion are viewed. This shows another challenge to religions.

In Session Eight, the accomplished Professor of Physics V. V. Raman, the 2004 Metanexus Senior Research Fellow, spoke about the importance of uniting science and religion, with special reference to Hinduism. In Session Ten, Dr Marco Gozzi made a very important and insightful comment: 'We need a glossary or set of common words and concepts by which we can establish a dialogue between science and religion.' Perhaps the greatest problem in science-religion discussion—as Gozzi rightly points out—is that of translating terms and concepts from one tradition to another. If I could make one criticism of the conference, it is that words like 'science', 'religion', or 'spirituality' were employed without critical rigour, as if they meant the same thing at different points in history, for different religions, and even for various people within the same religion.

Finally, Session Eleven was a conversation led by Anita Goel into the question of how science can help religion, and how religion can help science. This is the crux of the issue: it was nice to have scientists and theologians of various religions talking about the importance of unifying themselves, but what does that really mean? I found many of the definitions of 'science' and 'religion' glib. We can't assume we know what these words mean to each other, or that their meanings are the same across history and in different scientific/religious traditions. Moreover, more work could and should be done on the heart of the issue: what does it really mean to have a synthesis, and how is this going to practically affect the academic disciplines?

Dr T. D. Singh, the organiser of this conference and head of the Bhaktivedanta Institute, concluded with a vote of thanks to all involved, especially the staff and the cooks (who prepared wonderful vegetarian Italian cuisine). He also delivered a very inspirational lecture stressing the importance of peace between academic disciplines and the world's religions, as well as the need for open-mindedness. I believe it is conferences like these that can help further the discussion between the sciences and religions, and the Bhaktivedanta Institute deserves praise for taking such an active role.

More information about the speakers and conference can be found at: www.binstitute.org/conference2004

Responses

A Response to: Dealing with Difference: A Catholic Point of View by Felix A. Machado

Rev. Maurice Ryan

Monsignor Machado's elegant and erudite paper 'Dealing with Difference: A Catholic Point of View' constitutes an important corrective to the tendency towards the adoption of a false or facile irenicism in interfaith relations. The broadening of sympathies that interfaith activity encourages should not be allowed to degenerate into a blurring of the ideological differences between religions, which indeed can only result in conflict and the corrosion of interfaith ideals. As partners in dialogue we ignore the reality and richness of religious diversity at our peril.

But if 'it is necessary to acknowledge differences and deal with them', it also behoves us to recognise and respect those ideals and values that we share in common with the followers of other faiths. In the course of the last century a cosmic shift has taken place in interfaith affairs as evidenced in the impact of Vatican II, the outworkings of a series of Parliaments of the World's Religions, the proliferation of global and local interfaith organisations and initiatives, radical rethinking regarding the role of missionary enterprise, possibilities for communal worship, and so on. One of the great issues of the moment in interfaith circles is whether the religions can agree on a set of common or shared values which would provide a sufficient degree of coherence to produce a 'Global Ethic'. What lies behind this is the thought that even if we can't (or cannot easily) agree on things theological, across the religions, we can perhaps find real common ground with regard to a generally agreed set of moral values and standards. After all, the historic religions, and indeed responsible humanists also, seem to espouse generally comparable ideals for the conduct of human affairs and relationships. Very much under the inspiration of the great Hans Kung, a great variety of organisations and interests are looking now at how this might be achieved as a basis for interfaith dialogue and development.

Ethical dialogue and agreement is one thing, of course; theological dialogue is something else. One recalls the reported comment of a Zen Buddhist abbot who remarked: 'I get rather tired of people telling me that all the ways are the same. They are spectacularly not the same!' And when we come down to some of the central theological concepts such as the personhood of God, the mystery of suffering, the means of grace, and the world to come, we can understand why there seems to be more mutual mileage in the ideal of the Global Ethic than in anything like theological convergence across the religions.

At the same time the Global Ethic ideal, in spite of its feast of possibilities, leaves one with a pang of hunger—and the tentative hope that, somewhere beyond the possibility of a sort of global moral solidarity, the ultimate dream of 'theological alignment' might be realised. Is it possible that, notwithstanding the many and complex issues of faith and doctrine seeking resolution, a key or clue to the advancement of theological dialogue could lie in the recognition that if the ethical dimension represents the 'basic prose' of religion, theology is

its poetry, abounding in symbolism, metaphor, and the language of myth as it attempts to describe that which is ultimately indescribable? As poetry it represents an extraordinarily powerful vehicle for the expression of spiritual truth, but its findings are inevitably limited by the boundaries of human thought and language, as by diverse paths in different spiritual traditions it seeks an ultimate and universal goal. The challenge for theological dialogue is to recognise the limitations of all religious language and to move beyond the divisive constraints of theological literalism towards an appreciation of the power and majesty and truth of the poetry of faith within the religious experience of humankind. This may be the arena where the spiritual traditions ultimately have to come to terms with each other, discovering the possibilities for theological global understanding through mutual acceptance and appreciation of the poetic inheritance of the religions, by which we variously reach for Transcendence.

The two references that follow seem particularly pertinent to the idea that this viewpoint on the nature of theology could help the religions move towards fuller mutual understanding and symbiosis:

> It is the very ineffability of God / Ultimate Reality that presents a basis for theological agreement across religions. All our theologies, from whatever religious tradition they emanate, are schematic, analogical attempts to describe the Indescribable. The great religious systems are all aspirational in trying to say something meaningful about what God (or Ultimate Reality) is like—in terms of fatherhood, creativity or life-force. If we can realise that fundamental area of commonality, then a new sense of openness and objectivity can inform our endeavours towards theological dialogue. (Dr Chris Arthur, In The Hall of Mirrors: Problems of Commitment in a Religiously Plural World, 1986)

> We must recognise that, ultimately, all religions possess a provisional, interim character as ways and signs to help us in our pilgrimage to Ultimate Truth and Perfection. Theology . . . represents the struggle of faith seeking understanding . . . and any dialogue must wrestle with this task. By relating our respective visions of the Divine to each other we can discover a still greater splendour of divine life and grace. I am not advocating a single-minded and synthetic model of World Religion . . . . What I want is for each tradition (and especially my own) to break through its own particularity (as Paul Tillich put it). Indeed, Tillich is worth listening to here: In the depth of every living religion there is a point at which religion itself loses its importance, and that to which it points breaks through its particularity, elevating it to spiritual freedom and to a vision of the spiritual presence in other expressions of the ultimate meaning of human existence. (Dr Robert Runcie, Francis Younghusband Memorial Lecture, 1986)

The interfaith experience reinforces the sense that the Divine transcends human thought and language, that our theologies are all 'provisional', 'interim' attempts to express the Inexpressible, and therefore no religion (and certainly no Church!) can claim a monopoly of truth. It is this that offers the ultimate basis for accepting others' religious legitimacy, while seeking sincerely to maintain one's own. This is, I believe, what Christianity must grasp in the exciting experience of encounter with people of faith worldwide.

A Response to:
A Personal Reflection on Virtue and Values in the Kṛṣṇa Consciousness Movement
by Śeṣa Dāsa, Vol. 10

Rasamaṇḍala Dāsa

I was happy to read Śeṣa's article in ICJ (Vol. 10), specifically for its potential to initiate constructive debate on a topic that has received scant attention within ISKCON. In discussing the subject of values and virtues, Śeṣa moves through a broad range of issues. Drawing from his own experience in the US army, he usefully alludes to the dangers of elitism, particularly within an institution that is insulated from mainstream society. Reflecting on the aftermath of 9/11, he intuitively rejects any sense of loyalty, and sentiments such as unity, purpose, and certainty, that are grounded in enmity; an enemy who resides 'out there', who is forever the outsider, one of 'them' rather than one of 'us'. His comments reminded me of the attitudes reflected in many contemporary religions (or, more accurately, individuals and factions within them). He identifies his disquiet as being underpinned by his own conviction that a genuine religious or spiritual path is introspective, addressing, 'the need to become a better person'. Subsequently he explores some of the virtues recommended in texts such as *Bhagavad-gītā*. However, his main theme targets the tensions between material and spiritual duties. Exploring the story of the *brāhmaṇa* called Kauśika, he specifically identifies within ISKCON a tendency towards its own brand of elitism, dubbed 'premature transcendence syndrome', which may have led members into believing that the process of self-realisation exempted them from acting morally or from focusing on character formation. He proposes that ISKCON now makes it a priority to endorse and strengthen its family values, suggesting that these, for most of us, are not at odds with the path of spiritual life, but essential to it. He concludes that the practice of virtue is essential in developing not just theoretical knowledge (*jñāna*) but wisdom (*vijñāna*).

The issues raised by Śeṣa's essay are diverse. In trying to identify a common theme, I recall a colleague's observation: 'We should no longer try to squeeze the world into ISKCON, but ensure that ISKCON appropriately enters the world'. Śeṣa's emphasis on the *gṛhastha āśrama* (household life) alludes to that process whereby an individual, having imbibed spiritual responsibility, leaves the protective confines of the guru's hermitage to adopt broader social duties. This subject is relevant to some social phenomena within ISKCON: the lack of systematic education within the *brahmacārī* (celibate student) *āśrama*; the questionable attitudes developed therein, such as the misconception that *brahmacarya* is more elevated than *gṛhastha* life; and the inordinate esteem given to external renunciation at the expense of personal integrity. Hence the dialectic between worldly and spiritual duties, as Śeṣa explores, is often paralleled by tensions between renunciates and householders. Evidence is found in *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* of how Caitanya showed deep affection for both *sannyāsīs* and *gṛhasthas*. His discrimination was different. As illustrated in the story of Choṭa Haridāsa (*Antya-līlā*, Chapter 2), he was ruthless in condemning hypocrisy, the antithesis of integrity.

Śeṣa builds on his theme by explaining how personal integrity is enshrined within the practice of *dharma*, religiously ordained duties. He usefully disabuses the widespread notion that the Vedic (Hindu) concept of *dharma* is blind and non-reflective. He points to scriptural evidence supporting the need for careful consideration of consequences, implying

that the Vedic tradition interweaves strong elements of utilitarianism within a deontological approach. The reflective and anecdotal nature of his essay models the need for ISKCON members to develop the skills of relating life-experiences to *śāstra*, of establishing a reflexive dialogue between personal perceptions and scriptural views; and, indeed, of evaluating one's own conduct against expected values. This dialogical approach may well be part of the process of developing what Śeṣa calls *vijñāna* (wisdom, or realised knowledge). He also implies that personal authority (and the system of *varṇāśrama*) should be based on actual qualities rather than position or birthright, thus contesting the misplaced idea (within much academia) that *varṇāśrama* and current caste practice are synonymous. ISKCON follows in the footsteps of Caitanya, who unequivocally opposed the (hereditary) caste-system. Significantly, his rejection is based on a theology of transcendence. In the light of Śeṣa's analysis, it might be rewarding to examine whether ISKCON has developed its own forms of caste-ism, by which status and authority are inordinately determined by gender, *āśrama*, or spiritual 'parentage'.

It is only too easy, however, to discuss ISKCON in a mood of negative criticism. Śeṣa admirably avoids this, as his endorsement of personal integrity demands. In any spiritual tradition, it is natural that there is difference between the ideal and the real; this itself does not constitute hypocrisy. Rather, the real question is whether members, individually and socially, are striving to reduce any such disparities. Śeṣa's article thus encourages the ISKCON leadership (using the term broadly) to ask pertinent questions, such as, 'What values have we factually encouraged in our members? Are they congruent with our teachings? What are the social and educational processes by which values are developed?' Furthermore, we might ask, 'In any society, who is responsible for the predominant values and organisational culture?' Although Śeṣa implies that we ourselves become agents of change, he does not sufficiently explore the roles of 'key players', such as teachers, parents, and administrative leaders.

Śeṣa's study thus raises more questions than it answers. That, I suspect, was his intention. However, there are some questions that remain conspicuously unanswered. Śeṣa rightly proposes that values and virtues can be found in all societies. However, we might legitimately ask, 'Do common values exist?' For example, there are tensions between traditional, faith-based virtues and more popular values (one reason, not necessarily valid, why a spiritual society may resist contact with 'the outside world'). Chastity, though important to Śeṣa, is not popular these days.

Another passage from Śeṣa's article that requires further exploration is the butcher's statement: 'One whose heart is naturally inclined towards truthfulness, charity, and non-violence, is actually a virtuous person'. This idea that we can be virtuous in attitude despite our behaviour could easily be misconstrued. Thus, the causal inter-relationship between values and conduct requires further elaboration. Although, on one hand, Śeṣa explores 'premature transcendence', he neglects (perhaps through lack of space) to explore the opposite pole: spiritual complacency standing on the moral high ground of worldly duties.

What Śeṣa's article admirably highlights is that these issues, tensions, and (apparent) ambiguities are not easy to resolve; certainly not through dichotomous thinking. Śeṣa refers to 'the divisive us and them mentality'. Ironically, such sectarianism might be a feature not only of over-identification with the body, family, country, etc., but also of aversion to interacting with the mundane, often in the name of transcendence.

In dealing with these dialectics, Śeṣa implicitly refers to another subject pertinent to ISKCON's future: the whole issue of continuity and change. What ensures the authentic perpetuation of any tradition? What can we legitimately change? What must be preserved at all costs? Śeṣa suggests the centrality of core values as expressed through narrative. Of his

chosen story, he writes: 'Although set in ancient times [it is] adaptable to the modern world'. Whether emphasis on values and virtues alone can ensure effective continuity requires further dialogue.

Śeṣa's article thus prompts a further query: 'What are the qualities and virtues required of those engaged in such debate?' A certain intellectual integrity—and personal integrity—is certainly required. Unfortunately the level of much debate within ISKCON, particularly by e-mail, appears to reflect a culture of dichotomous thinking, of polemic and blame. I personally welcome forums such as that offered by the ICJ, and hope that Śeṣa's study serves as an impetus for further contributions—articles that are not only academic but share insights born of a reflective and reflexive commitment, and which help ISKCON constructively address the issues of values, virtues, and morality. Furthermore, I do feel that the 'Vedic' model has much to contribute to the wider discussions on values; for example, the notion that different sections of society may have—should have—somewhat different values. If ISKCON embraces such debate, within and without, it can be benefited and can also contribute to the wider good. Śeṣa's article is therefore to be applauded and certainly deserves a more thorough response than this brief review.

A Response to:
God and Science: Christian and Vaiṣṇava Perspectives
by Jonathan B. Edelmann, Vol. 8, No. 1.

C. Mackenzie Brown

How can an informed devotee conceptualise God's interaction with the world in the context of contemporary science? In his article, 'God and Science: Christian and Vaiṣṇava Perspectives', Jonathan Edelmann provides a twofold answer. In the inanimate domain, God acts only through mediating powers, avoiding personal involvement. With sentient beings, God acts directly to foster spiritual development, responding to prayers, even incarnating himself. This provocative approach allows Edelmann to endorse the methodological naturalism fundamental to modern scientific investigation when applied to what he calls the 'cosmic management' of the universe, while exempting from such a methodological stricture the actions of both God and human beings.

Edelmann develops his thesis with particular reference to the theistic Sāṅkhya of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. Theistic Sāṅkhya does not fit readily into the four major models of the religion-science relationship proposed by Ian Barbour: conflict, independence, dialogue, and integration. Edelmann makes no explicit reference to these models, but they are heuristically useful in analysing his essay, specifically his positioning of theistic Sāṅkhya vis-à-vis selected Christian theological viewpoints.

Theistic Sāṅkhya as Edelmann presents it eschews the independence model, while at times embracing modes of dialogue or integration, but at other times courting conflict. Edelmann's problem with the independence model is that it too readily reduces God and non-physical consciousness to 'unneeded hypotheses that make no difference to our understanding of the world' (p. 52). As for the ambivalence between conflict and harmony or integration manifested in the *Bhāgavata's* Sāṅkhya, this tension is also reflected in various Christian positions regarding God's activity in the world.

Regarding conflict, Edelmann notes Alvin Platinga's rejection of methodological naturalism, a rejection necessitated in order to make room for the possibility of God's special creation of worldly phenomena without recourse to mediated action through secondary causes. This view of God as cosmic magician, Edelmann suggests, has often fostered the historical conflict between science and religion when supposedly divine interventions are later understood in terms of purely natural causes.

Edelmann next considers Arthur Peacocke's cosmic musician. Peacocke views God as bestowing on matter the capacity to evolve life out of itself through the interplay of chance and law. Such improvisational creativity is like composing a fugue: general themes may be indicated, but specific notes are left undetermined. This view of God's agency, constraining the world system as a whole but in a way that does not contravene natural laws, harmonises with methodological naturalism. But it does so, from Edelmann's perspective, at the expense of, among other things, a God who alters the world in response to prayer and of a non-material soul.

The *Bhāgavata's* Sāṅkhya, Edelmann suggests, avoids the shortcomings of both Christian conceptions of the cosmic magician and musician. Theistic Sāṅkhya regards the (inanimate) world as a fully closed and self-contained system that is consilient with methodological naturalism, while leaving room for the non-physical agency of both God and the

soul, by positing a radical dualism between spirit/life/consciousness (*puruṣa)* and matter/energy/nature (*prakṛti*).

This Sāṅkhyan dichotomy only loosely corresponds to western distinctions between mind and body, and the supernatural and natural. In the Sāṅkhyan view, *prakṛti* incorporates not only potential material energies and Platonic-like templates for material forms, but also the material elements (subtle and gross) that evolve into the physical universe, including mind, intellect, and ego. These latter, in themselves unconscious, reflect the light of the conscious *puruṣa*. Spirit/consciousness encompasses God and *jīvas*, or the individual souls of all beings, including humans and *devas* (lesser gods). *Jīvas* are not material, yet are intertwined with material properties like mind, ego, as well as body. Thus souls/*devas* may be considered both as spirit ('the *jīva* is considered ontologically distinct from *prakṛti*' (p. 56)) and as a 'product of *prakṛti*' (p. 58).

Differences between Sāṅkhyan and Western views allow Edelmann to problematise Western understandings of the natural/supernatural distinction and the body/soul relation. But from a contemporary scientific perspective, the differences seem minimal: any radical disjunction of consciousness and matter, whatever the terminology, is problematic. While scientists (as scientists) have long abandoned delving into the mind of God, they are increasingly probing into the nature of human consciousness.

At this point I would like to ask Edelmann for clarification on two basic issues. First, how is the distinction between natural and supernatural causation to be understood? Second, and closely related, how does spirit interact with matter? Let me clarify each of these questions.

Regarding the first, Edelmann proposes that God creates the universe through intermediary agents. These include time and various material energies wielded by *devas* like Brahmā who order the elements evolved out of nature by time according to the templates in *prakṛti*. Edelmann then argues that Brahmā, as a product of *prakṛti* and controlled by material forces (*guṇas*), is a natural, not a supernatural agency—who may appear supernatural because of his superhuman powers.

I regard this conclusion as problematic. If, on one hand, Brahmā is completely controlled by material energies, then he becomes superfluous and God may as well be said to act directly in the world, personally imposing on matter the eternal and 'most general form of the universe, as well as the general forms of organisms' (p. 58). On the other hand, if Brahmā exercises, in any meaningful way, his free will (an inherent property of *jīvas*, according to Edelmann) in deciding how exactly to unfold the universe, then it seems he is a 'hypernatural' if not supernatural cause—a non-physical, conscious agent responsible, in however subtle a manner, for manufacturing aspects of the empirical universe. If this is the case, then Brahmā seems to become a minor magician, similar to Platinga's cosmic magician on a reduced scale, and equally capable of frustrating methodological naturalism.

Parallel to the problem of the natural/supernatural distinction is Sāṅkhya's radical disjunction of body and soul, which brings me to my second question. Sāṅkhya is faced with the same dilemma as those Christian Cartesian philosophies that have proposed a body/mind (body/soul) dualism: how does a non-physical agent activate material elements or forces? What is the precise mode of this interaction? Whatever mode is posited, would such activation be empirically detectable? This leads to the question: is human consciousness truly non-physical? Recent research in cognitive psychology and brain neurology suggest other possibilities.

Edelmann himself poses a related question in his conclusion: 'If God reciprocates with our free will [. . .], then does God's action interrupt [. . .] the normal ebb and flow of nature's

mechanisms?' (p. 59) Edelmann leaves the question unanswered as not essential to his goal of legitimating a theistic conception of the inanimate universe compatible with methodological naturalism, yet an answer is mandatory. And it seems the answer for Edelmann must be yes, given that God's reciprocating actions involve not just subtle influences in human consciousness but also physical effects in the world, as in the case of *avatāras* who visibly interact with physical entities and impact natural events. This makes suspect not only the viability of methodological naturalism in dealing with 'how the actions of free, non-physical agents affect the world' (p. 59), but also calls into question the adequacy of methodological naturalism in dealing with nature's mechanisms in themselves—which Edelmann wishes to maintain. For the distinction between 'cosmic management'—a concern Edelmann somewhat humorously considers too mundane for God—and spiritual aid to living entities seems artificial, and the boundary between indirect cosmic action and direct spiritual intervention porous.

In conclusion, let me say that I agree with Edelmann regarding the 'highly theoretical' model of the world proposed by theistic Sāṅkhya. He mentions specifically the need for 'a stronger empirical basis' for explaining 'the relationship between the *guṇas* and the laws of nature' (p. 58). Perhaps a stronger empirical basis for the relation of body and consciousness would also prove beneficial, allowing Edelmann to appropriate more fully Peacocke's notion of God as improvising musician—an apt enough metaphor in ISKCON's case given the fame of Kṛṣṇa as flute-player—thereby allowing for a more robust acceptance of methodological naturalism. The qualified theistic methodological naturalism proposed in Edelmann's essay, intriguing as it may be, seems destined to exacerbate, rather than lessen, conflict with contemporary science.

Book Reviews

The Hare Krishna Movement: The Postcharismatic Fate of a Religious Transplant

Edwin Bryant and Maria Ekstrand (Eds)
New York: Columbia University Press, 2004
ISBN: 0-231-12256

I write this review from two perspectives. First, I am an insider to the movement that is the subject of this book: I grew up in the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement, and three generations of my family are committed members of ISKCON, or the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. Together we have participated in ISKCON's activities in both India and the United States, from the early 1970s to the present day. Second, I write as an academic who specialises in the study of Hinduism.

The Hare Krishna Movement: The Postcharismatic Fate of a Religious Transplant is a collection of 25 articles on ISKCON and its institutional offshoots as they have developed since the passing away of ISKCON's founder, A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. The book is divided into six coherent sections, addressing the movement's theological background, history, controversies about lineage, heresies, social issues, and members' reevaluations.

Perhaps the most noticeable feature of the book's composition is its authorship. Nearly all the authors (and the editors of the volume) hold or have held a personal commitment to the movement. Many are forthcoming about their associations, while others are not. The selection of pieces is generally balanced between current and ex-members of the movement. The contributions of so many insiders make the book an interesting study of the insider/outsider issues that have elicited much recent interest in academia. Can a religious practitioner also be a scholar of his tradition? On the other hand, does a non-practicing scholar truly have access to the tradition he studies? Several of the authors explicitly raise these issues (e.g., Vishnu), while others provide good examples of insider scholarship (e.g., W. Deadwyler).

While it is convenient for readers to find a diverse range of perspectives within a single volume, little of this scholarship is fresh or original. Much of the material, information, and analysis has been around for years, and it will be quite familiar to anyone who has followed the movement's course over the past decade. This will be especially true for readers who are insiders to the movement—the essays on each topic, excluding the purely historical essays, are written by the usual proponents of a particular viewpoint, using material that has repeatedly surfaced in the recent past. (A few articles stand out as noteworthy or even brilliant exceptions, such as those by Kenneth Valpey and Thomas Herzig.) A direct consequence of this lack of originality is that the volume offers a very narrow window on the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement.

This limitation is recognisable in several areas:

(1) Geography. Some of the most significant recent developments in ISKCON, and certainly much of its expansion, have taken place in Eastern Europe, Russia, and India. These areas have been loci for social change, doctrinal debates, and institutional controversies of the type discussed in the book. Even for the movement in the United States, these regions have become sources of influence that are no longer easy to ignore, as does this volume.

(2) Demographics. One of the most important catalysts for change in the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement in the last two decades has been its shifting demographics. Devotees have moved from communes to congregations and have shifted from being single to supporting households. Temples themselves are often populated by priests imported from distant parts of the world. Congregational families increasingly find spiritual support in small gatherings and worship-groups, rather than large, centralised temples. The movement is experiencing the ageing of its membership, accompanied by a shift in pastoral care priorities. The movement has now seen the arrival of two generations of devotees for whom Hare Kṛṣṇa is their family religion. This has led to attempts at creating viable educational alternatives, including home-schooling, Sunday schools, and institutions of higher education such as Bhaktivedanta College, in Belgium. Perhaps the single most powerful element that has kept ISKCON afloat in its post-charismatic phase has been the consistent support of the Indian community in the diaspora. Many temples in the USA are now populated, managed, and funded by local Indian communities. The Hare Krishna Movement takes only passing notice of some of these demographic changes, succumbing instead to a 'catalogue of controversies' approach to historical documentation.

(3) Time frame. As a consequence of ignoring recent demographic changes, the book has a relatively limited time frame. Despite its stated aim of addressing the 'fate' of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement, the volume has very little to say about the movement's present or future. It focuses primarily on a series of debates from a decade ago, privileging the concerns of a specific generation of members. I found in the book little description of the ISKCON I have known as a second-generation Indian in America. My experience of the movement is far from unique; indeed, it is the experience of a significant section of the membership in countries such as the United States, United Kingdom, and India. This limited time frame, one could argue, is embedded in the title of the book. 'Fate' is a forward-looking word applied to an entity with no future. It suggests a future that is doomed or, at best, predestined to decline. Indeed, in their concluding words, the editors consider the possibility of writing 'ISKCON's epitaph', but fortunately dismiss the idea as 'premature'.

Despite The Hare Krishna Movement's virtues as an honest appraisal of institutional turmoil after 1977, and the presence of passionate articles from a diversity of viewpoints, the book is unlikely to be widely appreciated in ISKCON or its institutional offshoots for a simple reason: Two articles, written by the same author, attack the movement's founder, Prabhupāda, in a manner that many members may find to be uninformed and offensive. Even persons disaffected by ISKCON—this includes some advocates of every viewpoint voiced in the volume—maintain an attachment to the movement's founder and some conviction in his integrity as an individual and a spiritual leader.

Ekkehard Lorenz's essays on Prabhupāda attempt to depict him as racist, sexist, intellectually dishonest, ungrateful, unethical, unsophisticated, and unaware of the norms of the societies in which he lived. His teachings are blamed for condoning abuse of children, abuse of women, and abuse by leadership, while promoting dictatorship, intolerance, and autocratic rule by the guru. Lorenz's articles betray a lack of scholarly method and analysis. To make his points, Lorenz simply quotes Prabhupāda out of context and then interprets his statements with no regard to Caitanya Vaiṣṇava theology, the social contexts in which Prabhupāda lived, or Prabhupāda's own application of his teachings. A straightforward example: Lorenz produces a selection of statements by Prabhupāda on the role and

status of women; then he draws his conclusion without giving thought to traditional Hindu views on women, the understanding of women in Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism, or Prabhupāda's significant reforms and innovations in this regard (offering women brāhmaṇa initiation, the opportunity to perform worship on the altar, leadership roles in missionary activity, and so on). Such contextualised analysis would, of course, greatly complicate Lorenz's project of portraying Prabhupāda as sexist.

In their conclusion, the editors admit Lorenz's lack of attention to context, but they sidestep the difficulty by saying that 'contextualisation immediately problematises simplistic notions of the absolute nature of the guru' (p. 439). I see no good reason, however, for an academic volume to fear such problematisation, especially when the alternative is simplistic criticism.

Overall, The Hare Krishna Movement will prove useful to scholars of religion as a glimpse into the struggles of a religious tradition taking root in foreign soil. For members of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement, the book can serve as a useful tool for historical reflection and self-assessment, for it assembles material from diverse perspectives within the pages of a single volume. As there have been few studies of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement in the last decade, this book is a noteworthy contribution.

Nevertheless, for the reasons given in this review—lack of originality, the dated nature of the discussion, and insufficient attention to context, especially recent social changes—it appears that the book as a whole offers a rather limited perspective on the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement. This is unfortunate, for the notion of 'transplant' entails more than just the transport of an object from one location to another. Success in transplanting depends as much on the conditions of the new environment as it does on having a healthy and vigorous specimen. The arrival of a plant in a new landscape means that the landscape will be changed, but it also requires that the plant adapt in response to its new environment. Understanding this interaction, therefore, becomes indispensable for ensuring a verdant future.

Indeed, a contextualised analysis of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement—one that addresses recent developments within the movement along with issues of integration into new environments—would be of great value to all those interested in studying the migration of Indian traditions to the West.

Ravi M. Gupta

About the Contributors

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C. Mackenzie Brown is Professor and Chair of Religion at Trinity University in San Antonio. He has a PhD (1973) in the History of Religion from Harvard University, with specialisation in the Hindu Tradition. For most of his career his research interests focused on the Great Goddess in the Puranic literature. For the last few years, he has been exploring the relation of religion and science both in the West and in Asia. His most recent publications in this area include: 'Hindu and Christian Creationism: "Transposed Passages" in the Geological Book of Life', in *Zygon* (Vol. 37 No. 1), and 'The Conflict between Religion and Science in the Light of the Patterns of Religious Belief among Scientists', in *Zygon* (Vol. 38, No. 3).

Jonathan B. Edelmann, a native of Boston, is currently a DPhil student at the University of Oxford. His area of research is the relationship of Vaiṣṇava conceptions of nature and creation with contemporary evolutionary theory. He has a BA in Philosophy from the University of California, and an MA from Oxford. He has contributed to Journals including *Metanexus*, *ISKCON Communications Journal*, and the *Journal of Vaishnava Studies*.

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Jayadvaita Swami, a disciple of ISKCON's founder, Śrīla Prabhupāda, received spiritual initiation in 1968, at the age of nineteen. From stapling booklets he went on to typing manuscripts, transcribing Śrīla Prabhupāda's dictation, and then typesetting, proofreading, managing book production, and editing. Since 1988 he has served as a director of the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust. From 1991–8 he served as editor in chief of *Back to Godhead* magazine. Recently he served as chief editor for the BBT's three-volume edition of *Śrī Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta*, a sixteenth-century Sanskrit philosophical and devotional work.

Felix Machado was appointed by Pope John Paul II as under-secretary at the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. A PhD at Fordham University in New York, his doctoral research was on the Jnaneshvari, a commentary on the *Bhagavad-gītā* by Sant Jnaneshvar, a thirteenth-century Bhakti Saint from Maharastra. He has written over one-hundred articles in various reviews in English, Marathi, Italian, and French and is a part-time lecturer in two

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Premānanda Dāsa has been a member of ISKCON since 1992. From 1994–2004, he served in several capacities at the ISKCON temple in Boston, including Pastoral Director and Director of Interfaith Relations. He also served as its Co-President from 2001–3. He currently lives near Manchester, New Hampshire. He is author of two yet-to-be-published works: *God Among Us—The Absolute, Incarnation and Avatara*, and *Returning to and Returning God's Love—The Essence of Bhagavad-gita*. He holds a BA in Political Science and Journalism from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

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Rev. Maurice Ryan, a Presbyterian minister, is the President and founder of the Northern Ireland Interfaith Forum, an organisation that 'brings together people from across the spectrum of religious life in Northern Ireland for fellowship and mutual understanding'. He is the author of *Another Ireland*, a study of the variety of religious traditions found in Ireland, and was formerly Senior Lecturer in Religious Studies at Stranmillis University College, Belfast. He lives in Belfast with his wife, Jean.

Professor Keith Ward is the Regius Professor Emeritus of Divinity at the University of Oxford. He is also a fellow of the British Academy. He is a priest of the Church of England and Student of Christ Church, Oxford. He holds Doctor of Divinity degrees from Cambridge and Oxford Universities. Formerly Dean of Trinity Hall, Cambridge, and Professor of History and Philosophy of Religion at the University of London, he has lectured at the Universities of Glasgow, St. Andrew's, and Cambridge. He is a member of the Governing Council of the Royal Institute of Philosophy, and has taught at Drake University, Claremont Graduate School, and the University of Tulsa. His publications include: *God, Chance and Necessity* (1996), *God, Faith and the New Millennium* (1998), *Religion and Human Nature* (1998), *Religion and Community* (2000), *God: a Guide for the Perplexed* (2002), and *The Case for Religion* (2004).