



The Laws of Nature: An Infallible Justice

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Introduction

Man prides himself on being a creature of reason, above the lowly beasts. Yet it seems that when he applies his reason to unlocking the secrets of nature for his benefit, he sinks deeper and deeper into a quagmire of intractable problems. The internal combustion engine gets us where we're going faster, but also results in choking air pollution, the greenhouse effect, and a dangerous dependence on oil. Harnessing the atom gives us cheap energy, but also leads to weapons of mass destruction, Chernobyl, and a rising tide of dangerous radioactive waste. Modern agribusiness produces a dizzying variety and abundance of food at the supermarket, but also results in the death of the family farm, the pollution of ground water, the loss of precious topsoil, and many other problems.

It's clear we're missing something in our attempts to harness the laws of nature for our own purposes. What is that "something"? We find out in the very first mantra of the Isopanisad, the

foremost of ancient India's books of wisdom known as the Upanisads: "Everything in this creation is owned and controlled by the Lord. One should therefore accept only those things necessary for himself, which are set aside as his quota, and one should not accept other things, knowing well to whom they belong."

In nature we see this principle at work. Nature's arrangement, set up by the Lord, maintains the birds and beasts: the elephant eats his fifty kilos per day, the ant his few grains. If man doesn't interfere, the natural balance sustains all creatures.

Any agriculturalist will tell you the earth can produce enough food to feed ten times the present human population. Yet political intrigues and wars, unfair distribution of land, the production of cash crops like tobacco, tea, and coffee instead of food, and erosion due to misuse ensure that millions go hungry, even in wealthy countries like the United States.

We must understand the laws of nature from the viewpoint of the Supreme Lord, who has created these laws. In His eyes all the earth's inhabitants--whether creatures of the land, water, or air--are His sons and daughters. Yet we, the human inhabitants, the "most advanced" of His creatures, treat these sons and daughters with great cruelty, from the practice of animal slaughter to destruction of the rain forests. Is it any wonder that we suffer an unending series of natural disasters, wars, epidemics, famines, and the like?

The source of our problem is the desire for sense gratification beyond the consideration of anyone else's rights. These rights are the rights of the child in relation to the father. Every child has the right to share the wealth of his father. So creating a brotherhood of all creatures on earth depends on understanding the universal fatherhood of God.

As we have seen, the Vedic literature declares that the Supreme Lord owns and controls the entire creation. Not a blade of grass moves without His sanction. He is the complete whole. Then what is our position? Just as a king is no king without subjects, God is no God without His servants. He is the supreme enjoyer, and we are meant to take part in His enjoyment through service to Him, not by trying to enjoy separately. He is omnipotent and thus completely independent. Our minute independence is a tiny reflection of His total independence. It is our misuse of that minute independence and our attempt to enjoy separate from Him that have resulted in our current predicament.

Why do we misuse our independence? Because we are ignorant of our real nature. The first lesson of the Vedic wisdom is that we are not bodies but rather spirit souls--minute particles of consciousness dwelling within the body and animating it. Just as a car is a machine that allows a driver to travel from point A to point B, the body is a machine that allows the spirit soul to act and to experience sensations and thoughts within the Lord's material nature. When we understand our true identity as spiritual beings, part and parcel of the Supreme Spirit, God, we understand that we are meant to serve Him just as the hand or foot serves the whole body.

Our problem, however, is that we forget our identity separate from the body and instead misidentify ourselves with it. If a person happens to be born in America he considers himself an American, if he is born in France he considers himself a Frenchman, and so on. We also identify ourselves according to our sex, race, creed, social status, etc. But all these qualities apply only to the body, not the soul. Therefore embracing them as our true identity causes us to forget the Lord and our relationship with Him, and to see ourselves as independent enjoyers of His material nature.

The Vedic literature explains that human activity, when devoid of service to the Lord, is governed by a subtle law known as the law of karma. This is the familiar law of action and reaction as it pertains to what we do in this world and the enjoyment or suffering we experience as a result. If I cause pain to another living being, then as surely as the wheel of life turns, I will be forced to suffer similar pain. And if I bring happiness to another, a like pleasure awaits me. At every second, with every breath, our activities in this material world cause enjoyment and suffering. To facilitate these endless actions and reactions, there has to be more than just one life. There has to be reincarnation.

Until recently the idea of reincarnation, while universally accepted in India and other Eastern countries, had found few adherents in the West. The Church banned the philosophy of reincarnation centuries ago. This is a long story dating as far back as the history of the early Christian Church between 300 A.D. and 600 A.D. Recounting this controversy is not within the scope of this book, but the denial of this important concept has left a void in the world view of the Western peoples.

However, in the last decade or so many thinkers in the West have begun to take the idea of reincarnation seriously. For example, Dr. Michael Sabom of Emory University Medical School has written a book entitled *Recollections of Death: A Medical Investigation* (1982), which details his studies confirming the out-of-body experiences reported by cardiac arrest patients. Sabom writes, "Could the mind which splits apart from the physical brain be, in essence, the soul, which continues to exist after the final bodily death, according to some religious doctrines?"

And Dr. Ian Stevenson, a psychiatrist at the University of Virginia, in his book *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation* (1966), has documented and verified past-life memories in young children. Other studies using such methods as hypnotic regression indicate that the idea of reincarnation may soon gain acceptance among mainstream scientists in the West.

The Vedic literature makes reincarnation of the soul a central feature in its explanation of human destiny. And the logic is obvious when we consider a simple question like the following: Why is one child born to wealthy parents in the United States, while another is born to starving peasants in Ethiopia? Only the doctrine of karma and reincarnation--reward and punishment carried over many lifetimes--answers this question easily. *The Laws of Nature: An Infallible Justice* has been compiled primarily from two sources. The first is a series of talks given on the Sri Isopanisad by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada (see "The Author," p. 84). Delivered in Los Angeles in the spring of 1970, these talks provide an illuminating account of how the universe really operates. The second source is Srila Prabhupada's commentated translation of the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. From the Third Canto of this monumental work we here reproduce Chapter Thirty, titled "Description by Lord Kapila of Adverse Fruitive Activities." In this section we learn the fate of the sinful soul who transgresses the laws of God's nature and incurs punishment according to the law of karma.

In one of his Isopanisad talks, Srila Prabhupada says, "If you do good work, you will have so-called enjoyment in your next life--but you will remain bound up in the cycle of birth and death. And if you do bad work, then you will have to suffer the sinful reactions and also remain bound up in birth and death. But if you work for Krsna, there are no such reactions, good or bad, and at the time of death you will return to Krsna. This is the only way to break the bonds of karma."

And this is the only way for society as a whole to mitigate the sufferings mentioned earlier. While we are in this world there is no getting rid of suffering al-together, for, as the Vedic teachings recognize, this material world is by nature a place of suffering. Ultimately we are powerless in the

midst of a vast array of natural forces. The hope, therefore, is to know and follow the will of the Supreme Lord, the master of nature. Only in this way can we transcend the laws of nature, end the cycle of reincarnation, and attain the perfection of life--love of God and a place in His kingdom.

Chapter 1 **God and The Law of Karma**

Among the vast ancient Sanskrit writings known as the Vedas, the 108 Upanisads contain the philosophical essence. And among all the Upanisads, the Isopanisad is considered the foremost. In the following essay, based on talks Srila Prabhupada gave on the Isopanisad in 1968, we learn the truth about the Supreme Lord, the laws governing His material and spiritual energies, and how to break free of the bondage of karma.

The Isopanisad states that the Supreme Personality of Godhead is "perfect and complete." Part of the Lord's complete arrangement for this material world is his process of creation, maintenance, and destruction. Every living being in this material world has a fixed schedule of six changes: birth, growth, maintenance, the production of by-products, diminution, and destruction. This is the law of material nature. A flower is born as a bud. It grows, remains fresh for two or three days, produces a seed, gradually withers, and then is finished. You cannot stop this by your so-called material science. To try to do so is avidya, ignorance.

Sometimes people foolishly think that by scientific advancement man will become immortal. This is nonsense. You cannot stop the material laws. Therefore in the Bhagavad-gita (7.14) Lord Krsna says that the material energy is duratyaya, impossible to overcome by material means.

Material nature consists of three modes, or gunas: sattva-guna, rajo-guna, and tamo-guna, or the modes of goodness, passion, and ignorance. Another meaning of guna is "rope." Rope is made by twisting fiber in a threefold process. First the fiber is twisted in three small strands, then three of them are twisted together, then again three of those are twisted together. In this way the rope becomes very strong. Similarly, the three modes of nature--goodness, passion, and ignorance--are mixed, after which they produce some by-product. Then they are mixed again, and then again. Thus they are "twisted together" innumerable times.

In this way the material energy binds you more and more. By your own efforts you cannot get out of this bondage, which is known as pavarga. Pa-varga is the fifth set of letters in the Sanskrit Devanagari alphabet. It contains the letters pa, pha, ba, bha, and ma. Pa stands for parisrama, "hard labor." Every living entity in this world is struggling very hard to maintain himself and survive.

This is called the hard struggle for existence. Pha stands for phena, "foam." When a horse works very hard, foam comes out of its mouth. Similarly, when we are tired from working very hard, our tongue may become dry and some foam forms in our mouth. Everyone is working very hard for sense gratification--so much so that foam is coming from their mouth. Ba represents bandha, "bondage." In spite of all our efforts, we remain bound up by the ropes of the material modes of nature. Bha stands for bhaya, "fear." In material life, one is always in a blazing fire of fear, since no one knows what will happen next. And ma represents mrtyu, "death." All our hopes and plans for happiness and security in this world are ended by death.

So, Krsna consciousness nullifies this pavarga process. In other words, by taking to Krsna consciousness one attains apavarga, where there is no hard struggle for existence and no material bondage, fear, or death. Pavarga symptomizes this material world, but when you add the prefix "a" to pavarga, that means it is nullified. Our Krsna consciousness movement is the path of apavarga.

Unfortunately, people do not know of these things, and therefore they are wasting their lives. This modern civilization is a soul-killing civilization; people are killing themselves because they do not know what real life is. They are simply living like animals. The animal does not know what life is, so he simply works under the laws of nature, undergoing gradual evolution. But when you get this human form of life, you have a responsibility to live in a different way. Here is a chance for you to become Krsna conscious and solve all problems. But if you don't--if you continue to act like animals--you will again have to enter the cycle of birth and death and transmigrate through 8,400,000 species of life. It will take many, many millions of years to come back to the human form of life. For example, the sunshine you are seeing now you will not see again until after twenty-four hours. Everything in nature moves in a cycle. So if you lose this opportunity of elevating yourself, then again you must enter the cycle of transmigration. Nature's law is very strong. Therefore we are opening so many centers so that people may take advantage of this International Society for Krishna Consciousness and elevate themselves.

It is important to take to Krsna consciousness immediately, because we do not know how much time is left before death. When your time in this body expires, no one can stop your death. The arrangement of material nature is so strong. You cannot say, "Let me remain." Actually, people sometimes request like that. When I was in Allahabad, an old friend who was very rich was dying. At that time he begged the doctor, "Can't you give me at least four more years to live? I have some plans which I could not finish." You see. This is foolishness. Everyone thinks, "Oh, I have to do this. I have to do that." No. Neither the doctors nor the scientists can check death: "Oh, no, sir. Not four years, not even four minutes. You have to go immediately." This is the law. So before that moment comes, one should be very careful to become realized in Krsna consciousness. You should realize Krsna consciousness very quickly. Before your next death comes, you must finish your business. That is intelligence. Otherwise you will suffer defeat.

The Isopanisad states that whatever emanates from the complete whole--the Supreme Lord--is also complete in itself. Therefore if you want to take advantage of your life and become Krsna conscious, there is complete facility. But you have to come to the point of taking up the practice. Krsna consciousness is not theoretical; it is practical. All experiments have already been performed. So, as indicated in the Isopanisad, there is a complete facility for the small complete units--ourselves--to realize the supreme complete, Krsna. We are complete units, but we are small. For example, in a big machine there is a small screw, and the perfection of that small screw is to be

fitted in its proper place. Then it has value. But if it becomes unscrewed from the machine and falls down on the floor, it has no value. Similarly, we are perfect as long as we are attached to Krsna; otherwise we are useless.

To realize the complete means to realize what our relationship with the complete is. And all forms of incompleteness are experienced only on account of incomplete knowledge of the complete. We are thinking, "I am equal to God. I am God." This is incomplete knowledge. But if you know, "I am part and parcel of God, and therefore I am equal to God in quality," that is complete knowledge. The human form of life is a chance to revive the complete manifestation of the consciousness of the living being. You can revive this complete consciousness by the process of Krsna consciousness. But if you don't take advantage of this complete facility, you are killing yourself, committing suicide. As it is said in the Isopanisad, "The killer of the soul, whoever he may be, must enter into the planets known as the worlds of the faithless, full of darkness and ignorance. " So don't be the killer of your soul. Utilize the complete facility of your human life to become Krsna conscious. That is your only business.

Breaking the Bonds of Karma

In conditioned life we are committing sins at every step, even without knowing it. The reason we are sinning unknowingly is that we have been in ignorance from our very birth. This ignorance is prominent despite so many educational institutions. Why? Because despite so many big, big universities, none of them is teaching atma-tattva, the science of the soul. Therefore people remain in ignorance, and they continue to sin and suffer the reactions. That is stated in the Srimad-Bhagavatam (5.5.3): parabhavas tavad abodha-jato yavan na jijnasata atma-tattvam. This foolishness will continue until one comes to the platform of understanding self-realization. Otherwise, all these universities and institutions for imparting knowledge are a continuation of that same ignorance and foolishness. Unless one comes to the point of asking "What am I? What is God? What is this world? What is my relationship with God and this world?" and finds proper answers, one continues to be foolish like an animal and is subjected to transmigration from one body to another in different species of life. This is the result of ignorance.

So, the modern civilization is very risky. One may feel comfortable as a successful businessman or politician, or one may think oneself comfortable because of being born in a rich nation like America, but these statuses of life are temporary. They will have to change, and we do not know what kind of miseries we will have to suffer in our next life because of our sinful activities. So if one does not begin cultivating transcendental knowledge, then one's life is very risky. Suppose a healthy man is living in a contaminated place. Is his life not at risk? He may become infected by disease at any moment. Therefore we should work to dissipate our ignorance through cultivation of transcendental knowledge.

A good example of how we commit sins unknowingly is cooking. In the Bhagavad-gita (3.13) Krsna says that His devotees are freed from sin because they eat only the remnants of food that has been offered to Him. But, He says, those who cook for themselves eat only sin. The difference between cooking here in this temple and cooking in some ordinary house is that our cooking and eating are relieving us from sin, while the cooking and eating of a nondevotee are simply

entangling him more and more in sin. The cooking appears to be the same, but this cooking and that cooking are different. Here there is no sin because the food is being cooked for Krsna.

Anything you do outside the field of Krsna conscious activities entangles you in the modes of nature. Generally, you are being implicated in sinful activities. Those who are a little more cautious avoid sinful activities and perform pious activities. But one who performs pious activities is also entangled. If a man is pious, he may take birth in a family that is very rich or aristocratic, or he may be very beautiful or get the opportunity to become very learned. These are the results of pious activities. But whether you are pious or impious, you have to enter into the womb of some mother. And that tribulation is very severe. That we have forgotten. Whether you take birth in a very rich and aristocratic family or from an animal womb, the pangs of birth, old age, disease, and death continue.

The Krsna consciousness movement is meant to give you an opportunity to solve these four problems--birth, old age, disease, and death. But if you continue to act sinfully and eat sinfully, then these miseries will continue. Otherwise, you can nullify your sinful reactions by surrendering to Krsna, as He states in the Bhagavad-gita (18.66): "Just give up all your so-called religious practices and surrender unto Me. I shall protect you from all your sinful reactions." Part of surrendering to Krsna is being careful not to eat anything that has not been offered to Him. That should be our determination. Even if we have committed some sin, by eating prasadam, food offered to Krsna, we will counteract it. If we surrender to Krsna in this way, He will protect us from sinful reactions. That is His promise.

And where does a surrendered devotee go at the time of death? Is he finished, as the voidists say? No. Krsna says, mam eti: "He comes to Me." And what is the benefit of going there? Mam upetya punar janma duhkhalayam asasvatam napnuvanti: "One who comes back to Me does not have to return to this miserable material world." That is the highest perfection.

The Isopanisad states, "The killer of the soul, whoever he may be, must enter into the planets known as the worlds of the faithless, full of darkness and ignorance." Krsna is a lion to the demons and a lamb to the devotees. The atheists say, "We have not seen Krsna." Yes, you will see Krsna--you will see Him as the lion of death when He ultimately comes to capture you: "Ow!" The atheist sees Krsna as death. And the theist, or devotee, sees Krsna as his lover, as gentle as a lamb.

Actually, everyone is engaged in Krsna's service, either out of love or by force. One who is entangled in material life is engaged in Krsna's service because he is forced to serve Krsna's external, material energy. It is just like what we see with the citizens of the state: whether one is a law-abiding citizen or a criminal, one is subservient to the state. The criminal may say he doesn't care for the state, but then the police will force him to accept the authority of the state by putting him in prison.

Therefore, whether one accepts or rejects Caitanya Mahaprabhu's philosophy that every living entity is eternally the servant of Krsna, one remains His servant. The only difference is that the atheist is being forced to accept Krsna as his master, and the devotee is voluntarily offering Him service. This Krsna consciousness movement is teaching people that they are eternal servants of God and should voluntarily offer Him service: "Don't falsely claim that you are God. Oh, you don't care for God? You have to care." The great demon Hiranya-kasipu also didn't care for God, and so God came and killed him. God is seen by the atheist as death, but by the theist as a lover. That is the difference.

If you are a devotee and understand this philosophy of spiritual life, you can live for a moment or you can live for a hundred years--it doesn't matter. Otherwise, what is the use of living? Some trees live for five hundred or five thousand years, but what is the use of such a life, devoid of higher consciousness?

If you know that you are Krsna's servant and that everything belongs to Krsna, you can live for hundreds of years doing your duties and there will be no karmic reaction. This is confirmed in the Bhagavad-gita (3.9): yajnarthat karmano 'nyatra loko 'yam karma-bandhanah. "Except work for Krsna, any work, whether good or bad, will bind you to this material world." If you do good work, you will have so-called enjoyment in your next life--but you will still remain bound up in the cycle of birth and death. And if you do bad work, then you will have to suffer the sinful reactions and also remain bound up in birth and death. But if you work for Krsna, there are no such reactions, good or bad, and at the time of death you will return to Krsna. This is the only way to break the bonds of karma.

Krsna, the Controller and Owner of All

In the Isopanisad, the word isa is used to describe the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Isa means "controller." Do you think you are controlled or not? Is there any person anywhere within this universe who is not controlled? Can anyone say, "I am not controlled"? Nobody can say that. So if you are controlled, then why do you declare, "I am not controlled, I am independent, I am God"? Why this nonsense? Mayavadi impersonalists claim, "I am God, you are God, everyone is God." But if they are controlled, how can they be God? Does this make any sense? God is never controlled; He is the supreme controller. So if somebody is controlled, immediately we should know that he is not God.

Of course, some rascals claim that they are not controlled. I know one such rascal who has a society and is preaching, "I am God." But one day I saw him with a toothache; he was moaning, "Ohhh!" So I asked him, "You claim that you are God, the supreme controller, but now you are under the control of a toothache. What kind of God are you?" So if you see someone who claims that he is God or that everyone is God, you should immediately know such a person is a number-one rascal.

Now, this is not to say that the living entities are not controllers to some extent. In the Bhagavad-gita Lord Krsna says that the living entities are His superior energy. Why are the living entities superior energy? Because they are conscious, whereas the material energy is not. Therefore the living entities can control the material energy to some extent. For example, all the paraphernalia in this temple has been made from matter: earth, water, fire, and air. But it was a living entity who molded the material energy into this paraphernalia for the purpose of worshiping Krsna. Another example: before people came from Europe, this land of America was mostly vacant. The people who lived here before that did not fully exploit it. But the Europeans came and developed it into a country with great industries and roads.

So the superior energy, the living entities, can have some control over the material energy. That Krsna explains in the Bhagavad-gita (7.5): yayedam dharyate jagat. The importance of this material world is due to the living entities. A big city like Los Angeles, New York, or London is valuable as

long as the living entities are there. Similarly, the body is valuable as long as the living entity--the soul--is there. Therefore the soul is superior to matter. But that superiority is being misused to exploit matter for sense gratification. That is conditioned life. We have forgotten that, although we are superior to matter, we are still subordinate to God.

The people of the modern civilization do not care for God because they are intoxicated with their superiority over matter. They are simply trying to exploit matter in different ways. But they are forgetting that all people--American, Russian, Chinese, Indian--are subordinate to God. They have forgotten Krsna and want to enjoy this material world. That is their disease.

So, the duty of the devotee of the Lord is to invoke the people's Krsna consciousness. The devotee explains to them: "You are superior to matter, but you are subordinate to Krsna. Therefore you should not try to enjoy matter but rather use it for His enjoyment." For example, we have decorated this temple not for our sense gratification but for Krsna's pleasure. What is the difference between us and ordinary people? They are decorating their apartment very nicely, and we are decorating our place very nicely--but the purpose is different. We are doing it for Krsna, and they are doing it for themselves. Whether you decorate your personal apartment or Krsna's temple, your superiority over matter remains, since you are utilizing matter for your purposes. But when you apply your intelligence toward utilizing matter for Krsna's pleasure, your life is successful, whereas when you apply the same intelligence for your sense gratification, you become entangled in material nature and feel anxiety. Then you have to change bodies, one after another.

Krsna is the supreme controller of both the inferior energy, matter, and the superior energy, the jivatma--ourselves. We are Krsna's superior energy because we can control the material world, but that control is also conditional. We have only limited control over this material world. But Krsna has control over us; therefore, whatever control we have, He has sanctioned. For example, a human being has manufactured this nice microphone using his intelligence. That means he has been able to control matter to a certain degree to fulfill his desires. But where has his intelligence come from? Krsna has given man his superior intelligence. In the Bhagavad-gita (15.15) Krsna says, sarvasya caham hr̥di sannivisto mattah smrtir jnanam apohanam ca: "I am seated in everyone's heart, and from Me come remembrance, knowledge, and forgetfulness." Therefore the supreme controller is giving intelligence to the superior energy in the human form of body: "Do this. Now do that..." This direction is not whimsical. The person wanted to do something in his past life, but in his present life he forgets, and so Krsna reminds him: "You wanted to do this. Here is an opportunity." So although you have superior intelligence, that is also controlled by Krsna. If Krsna gives you the intelligence, you can manufacture this nice microphone. Otherwise, you cannot. Therefore in every sphere of life we are controlled by Krsna.

We can also see Krsna's control on the universal level. For example, there are so many huge planets; this earth planet is only a small one. Still, on this planet there are big oceans like the Atlantic and Pacific, as well as big mountains and skyscraper buildings. Yet despite all this load, the earth is floating in the air just like a swab of cotton. Who is floating it? Can you float even a grain of sand in the air? You may talk about the law of gravity and so many other things, but you cannot control it. Your airplane is flying in the air, but as soon as the petrol is finished, it will immediately fall. So if it takes so many scientists to build an airplane that can float only temporarily in the air, is it possible that this huge earth is floating of its own accord? No. Lord Krsna declares in the Bhagavad-gita (15.13), "I enter into the material planets and keep them aloft." Just as to keep an

airplane aloft a pilot has to enter it, so to keep this earth aloft Krsna has entered it. This is the simple truth.

We have to take knowledge from Krsna. We shouldn't accept any process of gaining knowledge except hearing from Krsna or His representative. Then we will have first-class knowledge. If you find an authority who is representing Krsna and who can speak on the subject matter, and if you accept the knowledge he gives, then your knowledge is perfect. Of all the processes for receiving knowledge, the least reliable is direct sense perception. Suppose someone asks, "Can you show me God?" That means he wants to experience everything directly. But this is a second-class process for gaining knowledge, because our senses are imperfect and we are prone to make mistakes. Suppose you need some gold but you don't know where to purchase it. So you go to a proprietor of a hardware store and ask, "Do you have any gold in stock?" He will immediately understand that you are a first-class fool because you have come to purchase gold in a hardware store. Therefore he will try to cheat you. He will give you a piece of iron and say, "Here is gold." Then what will you say? Will you accept that iron as gold? Because you do not know what gold is and have gone to a hardware store to purchase it, you will get a piece of iron and be cheated. Similarly, rascals who demand that they be shown God do not know what God is, and therefore they are being cheated by so many bogus spiritual leaders who claim that they are God. That is happening.

If you want to purchase gold, you must have at least some preliminary knowledge of what gold is. Similarly, if you want to see God, the first requirement is that you must know some of the basic characteristics of God. Otherwise, if you go to some rascal and he claims to be God and you accept him as God, you will be cheated.

Another question we should ask when someone says "I want to see God" is, "What qualification do you have to see God?" God is not so cheap that He can be seen by anybody and everybody. No, the Krsna consciousness movement does not present any nonsense or cheap thing. If you want to see God face to face, then you must follow the rules and regulations. You must chant Hare Krsna and purify yourself. Then gradually the time will come when you are purified and you will see God.

Still, even though in your present contaminated condition you are not qualified to see God, He is so kind that He allows you to see Him in His Deity form in the temple. In that form He agrees to be seen by everyone, whether or not one knows He is God. The Deity is not an idol; it is not imagination. The knowledge of how to construct the Deity and install Him on the altar is received from the scripture and the superior acaryas, or spiritual masters. Therefore the authorized Deity in the temple is Krsna Himself and can fully reciprocate your love and service.

With your present blunt material senses, however, you cannot immediately perceive God's spiritual form, name, qualities, pastimes, and paraphernalia. And because people in the present civilization have no power to understand God, nor are they guided by some person who can help them understand God, they have become godless. But if you read Vedic scriptures like the Isopanisad and Bhagavad-gita under superior guidance and follow the rules and regulations, eventually God will be revealed to you. You cannot see God or understand God by your own endeavor. You have to surrender to the process by which God can be known. Then He will reveal Himself. He is the supreme controller; you are being controlled. So how can you control God? "O God, come here. I want to see You." God is not so cheap that by your order He will come and be seen by you. No, that is not possible. You must always remember, "God is the supreme controller

and I am controlled. So if I can please God by my service, then He will reveal Himself to me." That is the process of knowing God.

Ultimately, this process leads to love of God. That is real religion. It doesn't matter whether you follow the Hindu, Muslim, or Christian religion: if you are developing love of God, then you are perfect in your religion. And what kind of love should we develop for God? It must be without any selfish motivation--"O Lord, I love you because You supply me so many nice things. You are my order supplier." No, we should not have this sort of love for God. It should not depend on any exchange.

Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu taught, "O Lord! Whether You trample me under Your feet or embrace me or leave me brokenhearted by not being present before me, that does not matter. You are completely free to do anything, for You are my worshipable Lord unconditionally." That is love. We should think, "God may do whatever He likes, yet I will still love Him. I don't want anything in exchange." That is the sort of love Krsna wants. That is why He is so fond of the gopis. In the gopis' love there is no question of business ex-changes--"Give me this, then I will love You." Their love was pure, unalloyed, without any impediment. If you try to love God in this way, nothing in the whole world can check you. You only have to develop your eagerness--"Krsna! I want You." That's all. Then there is no question of being stopped. In any condition your love will increase. If you attain that state, you will feel fully satisfied. It is not that God wants you to love Him for His benefit. It is for your benefit. If you do otherwise, you will never be happy.

God and His energies

The Isopanisad explains that whatever we see, whether animate or inanimate, is controlled by the Supreme Lord. Lord Krsna says the same thing in the Bhagavad-gita (9.10)--that His energies are managing everything. And the Visnu Purana confirms, eka-desa-sthitasyagner jyotsna vistarini yatha: "As heat and light are distributed all around by a fire situated in one place, so the whole creation is a manifestation of energies expanded from the Supreme Lord." For example, the sun is in one place, but it is distributing its heat and light all over the universe. Similarly, the Supreme Lord is distributing His material and spiritual energies all over the creation.

The spiritual energy is present in this temporary material world, but it is covered by the material energy. For example, the sun is always shining in the sky--no one can stop the sun from shining--but it is sometimes covered by a cloud. When this happens, the sunshine on the ground is dim. The more the sun is covered, the dimmer the sunlight. But this covering of the sun is partial. All the sunshine cannot be covered; that is not possible. An insignificant portion of the sunshine may be covered by a cloud. Similarly, this material world is an insignificant portion of the spiritual world that is covered by the material energy.

And what is the material energy? The material energy is just another form of the spiritual energy. It manifests when there is an absence of spiritual activity. Again the analogy of the sun and the cloud: What is a cloud? It is an effect of the sunshine. The sunshine evaporates water from the sea, and a cloud is formed. So the sun is the cause of the cloud. Similarly, the Supreme Lord is the cause of this material energy, which covers our vision of Him.

In this way, two energies are working in this material world: the spiritual energy and the material energy. The material energy consists of eight material elements: earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, intelligence, and false ego. These are arranged from the grosser to the finer. Water is finer than earth, fire is finer than water, etc.

So, the finer the element, the more powerful it is. For example, at the speed of the mind you can go many thousands of miles within a second. But even more powerful than the mind is the intelligence, and even more powerful than the intelligence is spiritual energy. What is spiritual energy? That is stated by Krsna in the Bhagavad-gita (7.5): *apareyam itas tv anyam prakrtim viddhi me param jiva-bhutam*. "Beyond My inferior, material energy is another energy, which is spiritual. It comprises the living entities."

We living entities are also energy, but superior energy. How are we superior? Because we can control the inferior energy, matter. Matter has no power to act on its own. The big airplane can fly so nicely in the sky, but unless the spiritual energy--the pilot--is there, it is useless. The jet plane will sit in the airport for thousands of years; it will not fly unless the small particle of spiritual energy, the pilot, comes and touches it. So what is the difficulty in understanding God? If there are so many huge machines that cannot move without the touch of the spiritual energy, a living being, then how can you argue that this whole material energy works automatically, without any control? Who would put forward such a foolish argument? Therefore, those who cannot understand how this material energy is being controlled by the Supreme Lord are less intelligent. The godless men who believe that this material energy is working automatically are fools.

The statement of the Isopanisad is that "Everything animate or inanimate is controlled and owned by the Supreme Personality of Godhead." Because He is the supreme controller, He is also the supreme proprietor. In our practical experience we see that the man who controls a business establishment is the proprietor. Similarly, since God is the controller of this material world, He is also its proprietor. This means that as far as possible we should engage everything in the Lord's service.

Then what about our own needs? That is explained in the Isopanisad: "One should accept only those things necessary for himself, which are set aside as his quota, and one should not accept other things, knowing well to whom they belong." Krsna consciousness means to understand things as they are. So if we simply understand these principles, we will be well situated in Krsna consciousness.

The Position of Krsna

The Isopanisad states, "Although fixed in His abode, the Personality of Godhead is swifter than the mind and can overcome all others running. The powerful demigods cannot approach Him. Although in one place, He controls those who supply the air and rain. He surpasses all in excellence." The Brahma-samhita says something similar: *goloka eva nivasaty akhilatma-bhutih*. Although Krsna is always in Goloka Vrndavana, He is simultaneously in the hearts of all living beings.

Krsna has no duties to perform in Goloka. He is simply enjoying in the company of His associates--the gopis, the cowherd boys, His mother and father, His cows and calves, etc. He is

completely free. And His associates are even freer than He is, because when they seem to be in danger, Krsna feels some anxiety about how to save them. But His associates feel no anxiety. They simply think, "Oh, Krsna is here. He will protect us." When Krsna enacted His pastimes five thousand years ago in Vrndavana, India, He would go every day with His cowherd boyfriends and their calves and cows to play in the forest on the bank of the Yamuna River. And often Kamsa would send some demon to try to kill Krsna and His friends. Yet the cowherd boys would continue enjoying their pastimes without anxiety because they were so confident of Krsna's protection. That is spiritual life, which begins with surrendering to Krsna.

Surrendering to Krsna means having the strong faith that Krsna will save us in any dangerous condition. The first step in surrendering is that we should accept whatever is favorable for devotional service. Then we should reject anything that is unfavorable for devotional service. The next stage is the confidence that in any situation Krsna will protect us and maintain us. Actually, He is already giving protection and maintenance to everyone. That is a fact. But in maya (illusion) we think that we are protecting ourselves, or that we are feeding ourselves.

For the devotees, Krsna personally takes charge of their protection and maintenance. And for the ordinary living entities, Maya-devi--Krsna's external energy--takes charge. Maya-devi is Krsna's agent for punishing the conditioned souls. The situation is like what we see in the state: good citizens are taken care of by the government directly, while criminals are taken care of by the government through the prison department. In the prison house the government takes care that the prisoners get sufficient food, and that they get hospital treatment if they become diseased. The government cares for them--but under punishment.

Similarly, in this material world Krsna has certainly arranged for our care, but also for our punishment. If you commit this sin, then slap. If you commit that sin, then kick. This is going on under the heading of the threefold miseries--those caused by our own body and mind, those caused by other living entities, and those caused by natural calamities under the supervision of the demigods. Unfortunately, instead of understanding that we are being punished for sinful activities, under the spell of maya we are thinking that this kicking, slapping, and thrashing are accidental. This is illusion.

As soon as you take up Krsna consciousness, Krsna begins personally taking care of you. As He promises in the Bhagavad-gita (18.66), "I will take care of you. I will save you from all sinful reactions. Do not worry." Because we have had so many lives in this material world, we are suffering under heaps of sinful reactions. But as soon as you surrender to Krsna, He immediately takes care of you and nullifies all your sinful reactions. Krsna says, "Don't hesitate." Don't think, "Oh, I have committed so many sins. How can Krsna save me?" No. Krsna is all-powerful. He can save you. Your duty is to surrender to Him and without any reservation dedicate your life to His service. Then Krsna will save you without a doubt.

Krsna: A Seeming Paradox

The Isopanisad states, "The Supreme Lord walks and does not walk. He is far away, but He is very near as well. He is within everything, and yet He is outside of everything." How can Krsna walk and also not walk? As a crude example, consider how the sun at noontime shines on your

head. Now, if you begin walking, you will see that the sun is accompanying you. About forty years ago, when I was a householder, I was once walking with my second son in the evening. He was four years old. All of a sudden he said, "O father, why is the moon following us?" You see? The moon and the sun are fixed in the sky, yet they seem to be moving with us. Similarly, if you are going on an airplane or a train, you will see that the moon or the sun is going with you. So if this is possible for the sun and the moon, why can't Krsna also walk with you? "Although He is situated far away, He is very near as well." In other words, although Krsna is in Goloka Vrndavana enjoying pastimes with His associates, He is simultaneously everywhere in this material world. In this way the Supreme Lord "walks and does not walk."

If Krsna were not present here as well as in Goloka, how could He accept the food the devotees offer Him? Don't think that Krsna does not accept the devotees' offerings. He can stretch His hand immediately if one offers Him something with devotion. In the Bhagavad-gita (9.26) Krsna says, *tad aham bhakty-upahrtam asnami*: "Whenever someone offers Me something with faith and love, I accept it." People may ask, "Oh, Krsna is far away in Goloka Vrndavana. How can He eat your offering?" Yes, He accepts it. Yes, He eats it--provided it is offered with love.

So, Krsna is present everywhere, and He can manifest Himself anywhere immediately, but you must have the qualification to call Him. If you are actually a devotee, Krsna will immediately come to protect you. The demon Hiranyakasipu challenged his son, the devotee Prahlada: "Where is your God? You say He is everywhere. Then is He in this column of my palace? You think your God is there? All right. Then I will kill Him." Hiranyakasipu immediately broke the column. Then Krsna came out of the column in His form as Nrsimhadeva--half man and half lion--and killed the demon. That is Krsna.

So Krsna can manifest Himself anywhere because He is present everywhere. That is explained in the Isopanisad: *tad antarasya sarvasya tad u sarvasyasya bahyatah*. "The Supreme Lord is within everything, and yet He is outside of everything as well." This Vedic mantra is proof that the Lord is everywhere. Whatever is said in the Vedas is a fact. Unless you accept the Vedas as axiomatic truth, you cannot make progress in Krsna consciousness. In mathematics there are also many axiomatic truths--a point has no length or breadth, things equal to the same thing are equal to one another, etc. These are axiomatic truths, and we have to accept them if we want to learn mathematics. Similarly, the Vedas contain axiomatic truths, and we have to accept the Vedas as axiomatic if we want to make spiritual progress.

Sometimes the Vedas seem to contradict themselves, but still we have to accept all the Vedic injunctions. For example, according to Vedic injunction, if you touch the bone of an animal you immediately become impure and must take a bath. Now, a conchshell is the bone of an animal, but the conchshell is used in the Deity room, where everything must be spotlessly pure. You cannot argue, "Oh, you said that a bone is impure, and that as soon as you touch it you become impure. Still you are putting a conchshell in the Deity room?" No. There is no room for such an argument. You have to accept that while bones are impure, the conchshell is so pure that it can be used in the Deity room.

Similarly, you have to accept the spiritual master's order as axiomatic. There can be no argument. In this way you can make progress. You cannot argue about things that are inconceivable to you. You will only fail. You have to accept the Vedic injunctions and the orders of the spiritual master as axiomatic truth. This is not dogmatic, because our predecessor spiritual masters accepted this

principle. If you argue with your spiritual master, you will never reach a conclusion. The argument will go on perpetually: you put some argument, I put some argument... That is not the process.

As the Mahabharata says, tarko 'pratisthah srutayo vibhinna: Mere logic and argument can never come to a firm conclusion, and due to different countries and different circumstances, one scripture is different from another. Then nasav rsir yasya matam na bhinnam: As far as philosophical speculation is concerned, one philosopher puts forward some theory, then another philosopher puts forward another theory, and the theories always contradict each other. Unless you defeat another philosopher, you cannot be a famous philosopher. That is the way of philosophy. Then how can one learn the conclusive philosophical truth? That is stated: dharmasya tattvam nihitam guhayam. The secret of the religious process is lying within the hearts of the self-realized souls. Then how do you realize it? Mahajano yena gatah sa panthah: You have to follow in the footsteps of great spiritual personalities. Therefore we are trying to follow Lord Krsna and Lord Caitanya. That is perfection. You have to accept the injunctions of the Vedas, and you have to follow the instructions of the bona fide spiritual master. Then success is sure.

The Lord and His Energy--One and Different

The Isopanisad states, "One who always sees all living entities as spiritual sparks, in quality one with the Lord, becomes a true knower of things. What, then, can cause him illusion or anxiety?" This realization is Krsna consciousness. There are different kinds of realization, but the devotee of Krsna realizes the truth--that we are qualitatively one with the Lord but quantitatively different from Him. The impersonalists think that we are a hundred percent one with the Lord, or the Supreme Absolute Truth. But that is not a fact. If we were a hundred percent one with the Supreme Lord, then how have we come under the control of maya (illusion)? The impersonalists cannot answer this question.

The real nature of our identity with the Supreme is described in the Vedic literature with the analogy of the sparks and the fire. The sparks of a fire have the same quality as the fire, yet they are different in quantity. But when the small spark leaves the fire and falls down in water, its fiery quality is lost. Similarly, when the infinitesimal soul leaves the association of the Lord and contacts the mode of ignorance, his spiritual quality becomes almost extinct. When a spark falls on the land instead of in the water, then the spark retains some heat. Similarly, when the living entity is in the quality of passion, there is some hope that he can revive his Krsna consciousness. And if the spark drops onto dry grass, it can ignite another fire and regain all its fiery qualities. Similarly, a person who is in the mode of goodness can take full advantage of spiritual association and easily revive his Krsna consciousness. Therefore one has to come to the platform of goodness in this material world.

Again, the analogy of the fire can help us understand the simultaneous oneness and difference of the Lord and His diverse energies. Fire has two main energies, heat and light. Wherever there is fire, there is heat and light. Now, the heat is not different from the fire, nor is the light--but still, heat and light are not fire. Similarly, the whole universe can be understood in this way. The universe is simply made up of Krsna's energies, and therefore nothing is different from Krsna. But still, Krsna is separate from everything in the material universe.

So, whatever we see within the material or spiritual worlds is but an expansion of Krsna's multifarious energies. This material world is an expansion of Krsna's external energy (bahiranga sakti), the spiritual world is an expansion of His internal energy (antaranga sakti), and we living entities are an expansion of His marginal energy (tatastha sakti). We are sakti, energy. We are not the energetic.

The Mayavadi philosophers say that because the energies are not outside of Brahman, the energetic, they are all identical with Brahman. This is monism. Our Vaisnava philosophy is that the energy is simultaneously one with and different from the energetic. Again the analogy of the heat and fire: When you perceive heat, you understand that there is fire nearby. But this does not mean that because you feel some heat, you are in the fire. So the heat and the fire, the energy and the energetic, are one yet different.

So the Mayavada philosophy of oneness and our Vaisnava philosophy of oneness are different. The Maya-vadis say Brahman is real but that the energy emanating from Brahman is false. We say that because Brahman is real, His energy must also be real. That is the difference between Mayavada philosophy and Vaisnava philosophy. One cannot claim that this material energy is false, although it is certainly temporary. Suppose we have some trouble. There are so many kinds of trouble pertaining to the body and mind and external affairs. That trouble comes and goes, but when we are undergoing it, it is certainly real. We feel the consequence. We cannot say it is false. The Mayavadi philosophers say that it is false. But then why do they become so disturbed when they have some trouble? No, none of Krsna's energies is false.

The Isopanisad uses the word vijanatah--"one who knows"--to describe a person who understands the oneness and difference of the Lord and His energies. If one is not vijanatah, one will remain in illusion and suffer. But for one who knows, there is no illusion, no lamentation. When you are perfectly convinced that there is nothing except Krsna and Krsna's energies, then there is no illusion or lamentation for you. This is known as the brahma-bhuta stage, as explained in the Bhagavad-gita (18.54): brahma-bhuta prasannatma na socati na kanksati. "One who is transcendently situated in Brahman realization becomes fully joyful, and he never laments or desires to have anything."

For our sense gratification we are very eager to get things we do not have. That is hankering. And when we lose something, we lament. But if we know that Krsna is the source and proprietor of the entire material energy, we understand that everything belongs to Him and that anything gained is given by Him for His service. Thus we do not hanker for the things of this world. Furthermore, if something is taken away by Krsna, then what is the need for lamentation? We should think, "Krsna wanted to take it away from me. Therefore, why should I lament? The Supreme Lord is the cause of all causes. He takes away, He also gives." When one is thus in full knowledge, there is no more lamentation and no more hankering. That is the spiritual platform. Then you can see everyone as a spiritual spark, as part and parcel of Krsna, and as His eternal servant.

Krsna, the Supreme Pure

The Isopanisad states that the Lord is "the greatest of all, unembodied, omniscient, beyond reproach, without veins, pure and uncontaminated." No sin can pollute Krsna. Sometimes less intelligent persons criticize Krsna: "Why did Krsna engage in the rasa dance, enjoying with other

men's wives in the middle of the night?" Krsna is God. He can do whatever He likes. Your laws cannot restrict Krsna. For you there are so many restrictive laws, but for Krsna there is no restrictive law. He can surpass all regulations.

Pariksit Maharaja asked this same question of Sukadeva Gosvami: "Krsna came to establish the principles of morality and religion. Then why did He enjoy the company of so many young girls who were the wives of others? This seems to be very sinful." Sukadeva Gosvami answered that Krsna cannot be contaminated by sin; rather, whoever comes in contact with Krsna, even with a contaminated mind, becomes purified. The sun is a good analogy: the sun cannot be contaminated; rather, if something contaminated is placed in the sunshine, it becomes purified. Similarly, you may approach Krsna with any material desire and you will become purified. Of course, the gopis' feelings toward Krsna are not at all material. Still, as young girls they were captivated by His beauty. They approached Krsna with the desire to have Him as their paramour. But actually, they became purified. Even demons can become purified by coming in contact with Krsna. The demon Kamsa, for example, thought of Krsna as his enemy. But he was also Krsna conscious, always thinking, "Oh, how will I find Krsna? I will kill Him." That was his demoniac mentality. But he also became purified. He got salvation.

The conclusion is that if we can somehow or other develop our Krsna consciousness, we will immediately become purified of all sinful desires. Krsna gives this chance to everyone.

Beyond the Limits of the Body

When the Isopanisad describes the Supreme Lord as "He who is the greatest of all, who is unembodied and omniscient," this shows the distinction between God and ourselves. We are embodied. Therefore my body is different from me. When I leave this body, it becomes dust. As the Bible says, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." But I am not dust; I am a spirit soul. Therefore thou means "the body."

Krsna, however, is not embodied. This means there is no difference between His body and His soul. In other words, His body is pure spirit. Therefore He does not change His body. And because He does not change His body, He is omniscient--He remembers everything. Because we do change our material bodies, however, we forget what happened in our last birth. We have forgotten who we were, just as when we sleep we forget our body and our surroundings. The body becomes tired and rests; it becomes inactive. In contrast, in a dreamland I work, I go somewhere, I fly, I create another body, another environment. This we experience every night. It is not difficult to understand.

Similarly, in every life we create a different environment. In this life I may think I am an Indian. In my next life, however, I may not be an Indian--I may be an American. But even if I become an American, I may not be a man. I may be a cow or a bull. Then I would be sent to the slaughterhouse. Do you see the difficulty?

The problem is that we are always changing bodies, life after life. It is a serious problem. We have no fixed position; we do not know where we will be placed within the 8,400,000 species of life. But there is a solution: If somehow or other a person develops pure Krsna consciousness, he will go to Krsna at the time of death, and then he does not have to accept a material body again. He gets a spiritual body similar to Krsna's, full of eternity, knowledge, and bliss.

Therefore we should take up the practice of Krsna consciousness and execute it very seriously, without any deviation. We should not think that Krsna consciousness is some kind of fashion. No, it is the most important function of every human being. Human life is simply meant for developing Krsna consciousness. One has no other business.

Unfortunately, the people of the modern civilization have created so many other engagements that they are forgetting Krsna consciousness. This is called maya, or illusion. They are forgetting their real business. And the rascal, blind leaders are leading everyone to hell. They are simply misleaders. People do not like to accept any authority. Still, they have accepted these rascals as leaders and are being misled. In this way both the rascal leaders and their unfortunate followers remain bound up by the stringent laws of material nature.

So, if somehow or other one comes in contact with Krsna, one should seriously take up the process of Krsna consciousness and catch hold of His lotus feet very tightly. If you hold on to Krsna's lotus feet very tightly, maya will not be able to harm you.

Spiritual and Material Education

The Isopanisad states, "Those who are engaged in the culture of nescience shall enter into the darkest region of ignorance. " There are two kinds of education, material and spiritual. Material education is called jada-vidya. Jada means "that which cannot move," or matter. Spirit can move. Our body is a combination of spirit and matter. As long as the spirit is there, the body is moving. For example, a man's coat and pants move as long as the man wears them. It appears that the coat and pants are moving on their own, but actually it is the body that is moving them. Similarly, this body is moving because the spirit soul is moving it. Another example is the motorcar. The motorcar is moving because the driver is moving it. Only a fool thinks the motorcar is moving on its own. In spite of a wonderful mechanical arrangement, the motorcar cannot move on its own.

Since they are given only jada-vidya, a materialistic education, people think that this material nature is working, moving, and manifesting so many wonderful things automatically. When we are at the seaside, we see the waves moving. But the waves are not moving automatically. The air is moving them. And something else is moving the air. In this way, if you go all the way back to the ultimate cause, you will find Krsna, the cause of all causes. That is real education, to search out the ultimate cause.

So the Isopanisad says that those who are captivated by the external movements of the material energy are worshipping nescience. In the modern civilization there are big, big institutions for understanding technology, how a motorcar or an airplane moves. They are studying how to manufacture so much machinery. But there is no educational institution for investigating how the spirit soul is moving. The actual mover is not being studied. Instead they are studying the external movements of matter.

When I lectured at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, I asked the students, "Where is the technology to study the soul, the mover of the body?" They had no such technology. They could not answer satisfactorily because their education was simply jada-vidya. The Isopanisad says that those who engage in the advancement of such materialistic education will go to the darkest region of existence. Therefore the present civilization is in a very dangerous position because there is no

arrangement anywhere in the world for genuine spiritual education. In this way human society is being pushed to the darkest region of existence.

In a song, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura has declared that materialistic education is simply an expansion of maya. The more we advance in this materialistic education, the more our ability to understand God will be hampered. And at last we will declare, "God is dead." This is all ignorance and darkness.

So, the materialists are certainly being pushed into darkness. But there is another class--the so-called philosophers, mental speculators, religionists, and yogis--who are going into still greater darkness because they are defying Krsna. They are pretending to cultivate spiritual knowledge, but because they have no information of Krsna, or God, their teachings are even more dangerous than those of the outright materialists. Why? Because they are misleading people into thinking they are giving real spiritual knowledge. The so-called yoga system they are teaching is misleading people: "Simply meditate, and you will understand that you are God." Krsna never meditated to become God. He was God from His very birth. When He was a three-month-old baby, the Putana demon attacked Him--and Krsna sucked out her life air along with her breast milk. So Krsna was God from the very beginning. That is God.

The nonsense so-called yogis teach, "You become still and silent, and you will become God." How can I become silent? Is there any possibility of becoming silent? No, there is no such possibility. "Become desireless and you will become God." How can I become desireless? These are all bluffs. We cannot be desireless. We cannot be silent. But our desires and our activities can be purified. That is real knowledge. We should desire only to serve Krsna. That is purification of desire. Instead of trying to be still and silent, we should dovetail our activities in Krsna's service. As living entities, we have activities, desires, and a loving propensity, but they are being misdirected. If we direct them into Krsna's service, that is the perfection of education.

We don't say that you should not become advanced in material education. You may, but at the same time you should become Krsna conscious. That is our message. We don't say that you shouldn't manufacture motorcars. No. We say, "All right, you have manufactured these motorcars. Now employ them in Krsna's service." That is our proposal.

So education is required, but if it is simply materialistic--if it is devoid of Krsna consciousness--it is very, very dangerous. That is the teaching of the Isopanisad.

Knowledge vs. Nescience

The Isopanisad says, "The wise have explained that one result is derived from the culture of knowledge and that a different result is obtained from the culture of nescience." As explained above, the real culture of knowledge is the advancement of spiritual knowledge. And advancement of knowledge in the matter of bodily comforts or to protect the body is the culture of nescience, because however you may try to protect this body, it will follow its natural course. What is that? Repeated birth and death, and while the body is manifested, disease and old age. People are very busy cultivating knowledge of this body, although they see that at every moment the body is decaying. The death of the body was fixed when it was born. That is a fact. So you cannot stop the natural course of this body--namely birth, old age, disease, and death.

The Srimad-Bhagavatam (10.84.13) says that this body is nothing but a bag containing three primary elements--mucus, bile, and air--and that one who accepts this combination of mucus, bile, and air as himself is an ass. Even great philosophers and scientists take themselves to be this combination of mucus, bile, and air. This is their mistake. Actually, the philosophers and scientists are spirit souls, and according to their karma they are exhibiting their talent. They do not understand the law of karma.

Why do we find so many different personalities? If human beings are nothing but combinations of mucus, bile, and air, why are they not identical? One man is born a millionaire; another is unable to have two full meals a day, despite struggling very hard. Why this difference? Because of the law of karma, action and reaction. One who understands this mystery is in knowledge.

Human life is meant for understanding the mystery of life. And one who fails to utilize this human form for this purpose is a krpana, a miser. This is stated in the Garga Upanisad. If you get one million dollars and do not use it, thinking, "Oh, I will simply keep this bank balance of one million dollars," you are a krpana. You do not know how to use your money. On the other hand, one who uses his million dollars to make another million dollars is intelligent. Similarly, this human body is invaluable. One who uses it for cultivating spiritual knowledge is a brahmana, a wise man, and one who cultivates materialistic knowledge is a krpana, a miser. That is the difference between brahmana and krpana.

One who uses this body the way cats and dogs do--for sense gratification--is a miser. He does not know how to use his "million dollars." Therefore it is the duty of the father, the mother, the state, and the teachers to provide spiritual education for their dependents from the very beginning of their lives. Indeed, the Srimad-Bhagavatam says that one should not become a father, a mother, a teacher, or a governmental head unless one is able to elevate one's dependents to the platform of spiritual knowledge, which can save them from repeated birth and death.

The Way of Knowing God

In the Vedic disciplic succession, the spiritual masters always base their statements on what they have heard from authoritative sources, never on personal experience. Trying to understand things by one's own direct experience is the material process of gaining knowledge, technically called pratyaksa. The Vedic method is different. It is called sruti, which means "to hear from authoritative sources." That is the secret of Vedic understanding.

With your imperfect senses you should not try to understand things that are beyond your experimental powers. That is not possible. Suppose you want to know who your father is. Can you find out by experimenting? Is it possible? No. Then how can you know who your father is? By hearing from the proper authority, your mother. This is common sense. And if you cannot know your material father by the experimental process, how can you know the Supreme Father by the experimental process? Krsna is the original father. He is the father of the father of the father, all the way down to you. So if you cannot understand your immediate father, the previous generation, by the experimental process, how can you know God, or Krsna, in this way?

People search for God by the experimental process, but after much searching they fail. Then they say, "Oh, there is no God. I am God." But the Isopanisad says that one should try to learn about

God not by the experimental process but by hearing. From whom should one hear? From a shopkeeper? From fanatics? No. One should hear from those who are dhira. Dhira means "one whose senses are not agitated by material influence."

There are different kinds of agitation--agitations of the mind, the power of speech, and anger, and agitations of the tongue, belly, and genitals. When we become angry, we forget everything and can do any nonsense and speak so much nonsense. For the agitation of the tongue there are so many advertisements: "Here is liquor, here is chicken, here is beef." Will we die without liquor, chicken, or beef? No. For the human beings Krsna has given so many nice things to eat--grains, fruits, milk, and so on.

The cow produces milk abundantly, not for herself but for human beings. That is proper human food. God says, "Mrs. Cow, although you are producing milk, you cannot drink it. It is for the human beings, who are more advanced than animals." Of course, in the infant stage animals live off their mother's milk, so the calves drink some of the cow's milk. But the cow gives excess milk, and that excess is specifically meant for us.

We should accept whatever God has ordained as our proper food. But no, because of the agitation of the tongue, we think, "Why should I be satisfied eating grains, milk products, vegetables, and fruits? Let me maintain a slaughterhouse and kill these cows. After drinking their milk, just as I drank my mother's milk, let me kill them to satisfy my tongue." You shouldn't think such nonsense but should hear from the dhiras, or svamis, who have controlled their senses. A svami, or gosvami, is one who has control over the six agitations: the speech, the mind, anger, the tongue, the belly, and the genitals.

There is a nice poem by Kalidasa called Kumara-sambhava describing how Lord Siva is dhira. When Lord Siva's wife, Sati, heard Siva being blasphemed at a sacrifice performed by her father, she committed suicide. Upon hearing about his wife's suicide, Lord Siva became very angry and left this planet to meditate elsewhere. During that time there was a war between the demons and the demigods. The demigods needed a good general. They concluded that if Lord Siva were to beget a son, the son would be able to lead them in the fight against the demons. Lord Siva was completely naked while meditating. So Parvati, the reincarnation of Sati, was sent to agitate his genitals for sex. But he was not agitated. He remained silent. At this point Kalidasa remarks, "Here is a dhira. He is naked, and a young girl is touching his genitals, but still he is not agitated." Dhira means that even if there is some cause for agitation, one will not be agitated. If there is some very nice food, my tongue should not be agitated to taste it. If there is a very nice girl or boy, still I should not be agitated sexually. In this way one who is dhira is able to control the six agitating forces mentioned above. It is not that Lord Siva was impotent: he was dhira. Similarly, Krsna danced with so many girls, but there was no sex appetite.

So, you have to hear from a person who is dhira. If you hear from the adhira, from those who are not self-controlled, then whatever knowledge you learn will be useless. In the Isopanisad, a student has approached his spiritual master to inquire from him, and the spiritual master is saying, "This is what I have heard from authoritative sources." The spiritual master is not inventing something from his own experience. He is presenting exactly what he has heard.

So we have nothing to research. Everything is there. We simply have to hear from a person who is dhira, who is not agitated by the six urges. That is the Vedic process of gaining knowledge. And if we try to use some other process, we will remain covered by nescience.

The Isopanisad states, "Only one who can learn the process of nescience and that of transcendental knowledge side by side can transcend the influence of repeated birth and death and enjoy the full blessings of immortality." People do not understand what immortality is. They think it is a mythological idea. They are proud of their advancement of knowledge, but there are many things they do not know, nor can they ever know them by their modern system of experimentation.

So if you want real knowledge, you should take knowledge from the literature known as the Vedas. (The word veda means "knowledge.") Part of the Vedas are the 108 Upanisads, out of which eleven are very important. Of those eleven, the Isopanisad stands first. In the word upanisad, upa means "near." So the knowledge in the Isopanisad will take you nearer to Krsna.

In learned society the Vedas are accepted as sruti, or primary evidence. The Vedas are not knowledge established by the research work of contaminated, conditioned souls. Such people have imperfect senses, and so they cannot see things as they are. They simply theorize, "It may be like this. It may be like that." That is not knowledge. Knowledge is definite, without any doubt or mistake. Conditioned souls commit mistakes, become illusioned, and cheat. How do they cheat? When one who does not understand the Bhagavad-gita writes a commentary on it, he is cheating the innocent public. Someone has a title as a scholar, so he takes advantage of the popularity of the Bhagavad-gita and writes a commentary. Such so-called scholars claim that anyone can give his own opinion. But in the Bhagavad-gita Krsna says that only His devotee can understand the Gita. So these so-called scholars are cheating.

The conclusion is that if you want genuine spiritual knowledge you have to approach a bona fide spiritual master who has realized the Absolute Truth. Otherwise you will remain in darkness. You cannot think, "Oh, I may or may not accept a spiritual master. In any case, there are books that I can learn from." No, the Vedic injunction is tad-vijnanartham sa gurum evabhigacchet. The word gacchet means "one must go," not that one may or may not go. To understand transcendental knowledge, one must go to a spiritual master. That is the Vedic injunction.

You must know two things: what is maya (illusion) and what is Krsna. Then your knowledge is perfect. Of course, Krsna is so nice that if you somehow or other fully surrender to Him, all your searching for knowledge will be finished: not only will you know what Krsna is, but you will automatically learn what maya is. Krsna will give you intelligence from within.

So, by the mercy of both the spiritual master and Krsna, one takes up devotional service. How is that? Their mercy runs on parallel lines. If you have not yet found a spiritual master but are sincere, Krsna will direct you to a bona fide spiritual master. And if you get a bona fide spiritual master, he will take you to Krsna. Krsna is always sitting in your heart as the caitya-guru, the spiritual master within. It is that caitya-guru who manifests Himself externally as the spiritual master. Therefore the spiritual master is the direct representative of Krsna.

The Isopanisad says we should learn what vidya and avidya are. Avidya is ignorance under the guise of materialistic knowledge. Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura writes in one of his songs that "advancement of material knowledge is simply the advancement of maya's jurisdiction." The more you become implicated in material knowledge, the less you can understand Krsna consciousness. Those who are advanced in material knowledge think, "What use is this Krsna consciousness movement?" They have no attraction for spiritual knowledge; they are too absorbed in avidya.

Some Indian boys reject the spiritual culture of India and come to the West to learn technology. When they see that I have introduced in the West the things they rejected in India, they are

surprised. One reason I came to the West is that modern India has rejected spiritual knowledge. Today Indians think that if they can imitate Western technology, they will be happy. This is maya. They do not see that those who are three hundred times more technologically advanced than the Indians are not happy. India will not be able to equal American or European technology for at least three hundred years because the Western countries have been developing technology for a very long time. But since the time of creation Indian culture has been a spiritual culture. Vidya, or genuine spiritual knowledge, does not depend on technology. Srila Vyasadeva is the original guru of Vedic knowledge. How was he living? In a cottage in Badarikasrama. But just see his knowledge! He wrote so many Puranas, including the Srimad-Bhagavatam. He also wrote the Vedanta-sutra and the Mahabharata. If you studied every single verse written by Vyasadeva, it would take your whole life. The Srimad-Bhagavatam alone has no less than eighteen thousand verses. And each verse is so full of meaning that it would take a whole lifetime to fully understand it. This is Vedic culture.

There is no knowledge comparable to that contained in the Vedic literature--not only spiritual knowledge, but material knowledge also. The Vedas discuss astronomy, mathematics, and many other subjects. It is not that in ancient times there were no airplanes. They are mentioned in the Puranas. These airplanes were so strong and swift that they could easily reach other planets. It is not that there was no advancement of material knowledge in the Vedic age. It was there. But the people then did not consider it so important. They were interested in spiritual knowledge.

So, one should know what knowledge is, and what nescience is. If we advance in nescience, or material knowledge, we will have to undergo repeated birth and death. Moreover, there is no guarantee what your next birth will be. That is not in your hands. Now you are happy being an American, but after quitting this body you cannot dictate, "Please give me an American body again." Yes, you may get an American body, but it may be an American cow's body. Then you are destined for the slaughterhouse.

So, cultivating material knowledge--nationalism, socialism, this "ism," that "ism"--is simply a dangerous waste of time. Better to cultivate real knowledge, Vedic knowledge, which leads one to surrender to Krsna. As Krsna says in the Bhagavad-gita (7.19), *bahunam janmanam ante jnanavan mam prapadyate*. After many, many births, one who is in genuine knowledge comes to Krsna and surrenders to Him, realizing, "O Krsna, You are everything." This is the culmination of all cultivation of knowledge.

Beyond the White Light of Brahman

The Isopanisad states, "One should know perfectly the Personality of Godhead and His transcendental name, as well as the temporary material creation with its temporary demigods, men, and animals. When one knows these, he surpasses death and the ephemeral cosmic manifestation with it, and in the eternal kingdom of God he enjoys his eternal life of bliss and knowledge. O my Lord, sustainer of all that lives, Your real face is covered by Your dazzling effulgence. Kindly remove that covering and exhibit Yourself to Your pure devotee."

Here the Isopanisad mentions the kingdom of God. Every planet, both spiritual and material, has a predominating deity. In the sun, for example, the predominating deity is Vivasvan. We get this information from the Bhagavad-gita. So, there are millions and trillions of universes within the

material sky, and within each universe are millions and trillions of planets, and in every planet there is a predominating deity.

Beyond the material sky is the brahmajyoti, or spiritual sky, where there are innumerable Vaikuntha planets. Each Vaikuntha planet is predominated by the Supreme Lord in His Narayana form, and each Narayana has a different name--Pradyumna, Ani-ruddha, Sankarsana, etc. One cannot see these planets because they are covered by the spiritual brahmajyoti effulgence, just as one cannot see the sun globe on account of the dazzling sunshine. The effulgence in the spiritual sky is coming out of Krsna's planet, Goloka Vrndavana, which is above even Vaikuntha and where Krsna alone is the predominator.

The planet of the Absolute Truth, Krsna, is covered by the Brahman effulgence. One has to penetrate that effulgence in order to see the Lord. Therefore in the Isopanisad the devotee prays, "Kindly remove Your effulgence so I can see You." The Mayavadi philosophers do not know that there is something beyond the brahmajyoti. But here in the Isopanisad is the Vedic evidence that the brahmajyoti is simply a golden effulgence covering the real face of the Supreme Lord.

The idea is that Krsna's planet and the Vaikuntha planets are beyond the Brahman effulgence and that only devotees can enter those spiritual planets. The jnanis, the mental speculators, practice severe austerities to enter the Brahman effulgence. But the demons who are killed by Krsna are immediately transferred to that Brahman effulgence. So just consider: Is the place that is given to the enemies of Krsna very covetable? If my enemy comes to my house, I may give him some place to stay, but if my intimate friend comes, I give him a much nicer place to stay. So this Brahman effulgence is not at all covetable.

Srila Prabodhananda Sarasvati has composed a nice verse in which he says that for the devotee, for one who has attained the mercy of the Lord, the Brahman effulgence is just like hell. Then what about heaven? The karmis, or fruitive workers, are very eager to go to the heavenly planets, where the demigods reside. But for the devotees heaven is just a will-o'-the-wisp. They are not at all attracted to go there. And then there are the mystic yogis, who try very strenuously to control the senses in order to attain special powers. The senses are like venomous serpents because as soon as you indulge in sense gratification--as soon as the senses "bite" you--you become degraded. But the devotee says, "I do not fear the poisonous serpents of the senses." Why? "Because I have extracted their fangs." In other words, by engaging his senses in Krsna's service, the devotee is no longer tempted to indulge in sense gratification, and thus his senses cannot drag him down to a hellish condition of life.

In this way, the devotees are above the karmis, jnanis, and yogis. The devotees' place is the highest because only by devotion can one understand God. Krsna does not say you can understand Him by fruitive work. He does not say you can understand Him by speculation. He does not say you can understand Him by mystic yoga. He clearly says (Bg. 18.55), bhaktya mam abhi-janati yavan yas casmi tattvatah: "Only by devotional service can one truly understand Me as I am."

Except for devotional service, there is no possibility of understanding the Absolute Truth. Any other process is imperfect because it is based on speculation. For example, the scientists may speculate on what the sun planet is, but because they have no access there, they cannot actually know what the sun planet is. They can only speculate. That's all. Once three blind men came upon an elephant. They began feeling the elephant and speculating on what it was. One felt its big legs and concluded, "Oh, the elephant is just like a pillar." The second man felt the trunk and concluded,

"Oh, this elephant is just like a snake." And the third man felt the belly of the elephant and concluded, "This elephant is like a big boat." But actually, the blind men did not know what the elephant really was.

If you have no ability to see something, you can only speculate about it. Therefore the Isopanisad says, "Please remove this brilliant effulgence covering Your face so I can see You." That seeing power is bestowed upon the devotee by Krsna when He sees the devotee's love for Him. As the Brahma-samhita says, premanjana-cchurita-bhakti-vilocanena: The devotees anoint their eyes with the salve of love of God, and therefore they can see the Lord's beautiful form within their hearts. In India there is a special eye ointment. If you apply it you can immediately see clearly. Similarly, if you smear your eyes with the ointment of love of Godhead, you will see God always. This is the way of understanding God--by service and by enhancing your love for Him. This love can be developed only by devotional service; otherwise there is no possibility of achieving it. So the more you increase your spirit of service to God, the more you increase your dormant love for God. And as soon as you are in the perfectional stage of love of God, you will see God always, at every moment.

Chapter 2

Bad Karma

The Srimad-Bhagavatam is an ancient Sanskrit scripture that contains the essence of all Vedic wisdom, recording the teachings of the Lord's devotees, as well as those of the Lord in many of His incarnations. In this Thirtieth Chapter of the Third Canto, an incarnation of Krsna's named Kapiladeva graphically describes the results of sin. Srila Prabhupada explains the texts in his purports.

TEXT 1: The Personality of Godhead said, "As a mass of clouds does not know the powerful influence of the wind, a person engaged in material consciousness does not know the powerful strength of the time factor, by which he is being carried."

PURPORT: The great politician-pandita named Canakya said that even one moment of time cannot be returned, even if one is prepared to pay millions of dollars. One cannot calculate the amount of loss there is in wasting valuable time. Whether materially or spiritually, one should be very alert in utilizing the time which he has at his disposal. A conditioned soul lives in a particular body for a fixed measurement of time, and it is recommended in the scriptures that within that

small measurement of time one has to finish Krsna consciousness and thus gain release from the influence of the time factor. But, unfortunately, those who are not in Krsna consciousness are carried away by the strong power of time without their knowledge, as clouds are carried by the wind.

TEXT 2: "Whatever is produced by the materialist with great pain and labor for so-called happiness, the Supreme Personality, as the time factor, destroys, and for this reason the conditioned soul laments."

PURPORT: The main function of the time factor, which is a representative of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is to destroy everything. The materialists, in material consciousness, are engaged in producing so many things in the name of economic development. They think that by advancing in satisfying the material needs of man they will be happy, but they forget that everything they have produced will be destroyed in due course of time. From history we can see that there were many powerful empires on the surface of the globe that were constructed with great pain and great perseverance, but in due course of time they have all been destroyed. Still the foolish materialists cannot understand that they are simply wasting time in producing so-called material necessities, which are destined to be vanquished in due course of time. This waste of energy is due to the ignorance of the mass of people, who do not know that they are eternal and that they have an eternal engagement also. They do not know that this span of life in a particular type of body is but a flash in the eternal journey. Not knowing this fact, they take the small flash of their present life to be everything, and they waste time in improving economic conditions.

TEXT 3: "The misguided materialist does not know that his very body is impermanent and that the attractions of home, land, and wealth, which are in relationship to that body, are also temporary. Out of ignorance only, he thinks that everything is permanent."

PURPORT: The materialist thinks that persons engaged in Krsna consciousness are crazy fellows wasting time by chanting Hare Krsna, but actually he does not know that he himself is in the darkest region of craziness because of accepting his body as permanent. And in relation to his body he accepts his home, his country, his society, and all other paraphernalia as permanent. This materialistic acceptance of the permanence of home, land, etc. is called the illusion of maya. This is clearly mentioned here. Mohad grha-ksetra-vasuni: out of illusion only does the materialist accept his home, his land, and his money as permanent. Out of this illusion have grown family life, national life, and economic development, which are very important factors in modern civilization. A Krsna conscious person knows that this economic development of human society is but temporary illusion.

In another part of the Srimad-Bhagavatam, the acceptance of the body as oneself, the acceptance of others as kinsmen in relationship to one's body, and the acceptance of the land of one's birth as worshipable are declared to be the products of an animal civilization. When, however, one is enlightened in Krsna consciousness, one can use these for the service of the Lord. That is a very suitable proposition. Everything has a relationship with Krsna. When all economic development

and material advancement are utilized to advance the cause of Krsna consciousness, a new phase of progressive life arises.

TEXT 4: "In whatever species of life the living entity appears, he finds a particular type of satisfaction in that species, and he is never averse to being situated in such a condition."

PURPORT: The satisfaction of the living entity in a particular type of body, even if it is most abominable, is called illusion. A man in a higher position may feel dissatisfaction with the standard of life of a lower-grade man, but the lower-grade man is satisfied in that position because of the spell of maya, the external energy. Maya has two phases of activity. One is called praksepattmika, and the other is called avaranattmika. Avaranattmika means "covering," and praksepattmika means "pulling down." In any condition of life, the materialistic person or animal will be satisfied because his knowledge is covered by the influence of maya. In the lower grade or lower species of life, the development of consciousness is so poor that one cannot understand whether one is happy or distressed. This is called avaranattmika. Even a hog, who lives by eating stool, thinks himself happy, although a person in a higher mode of life sees how abominable that life is.

TEXT 5: "While deluded by the covering influence of the illusory energy, the living entity feels little inclined to cast off his body, even when in hell, for he takes delight in hellish enjoyment."

PURPORT: It is said that once Indra, the king of heaven, was cursed by his spiritual master, Brhaspati, on account of his misbehavior, and he became a hog on this planet. After many days, when Brahma wanted to recall him to his heavenly kingdom, Indra, in the form of a hog, forgot everything of his royal position in the heavenly kingdom, and he refused to go back. This is the spell of maya. Even Indra forgets his heavenly standard of life and is satisfied with the standard of a hog's life.

By the influence of maya the conditioned soul becomes so affectionate toward his particular type of body that even if someone says to him, "Give up this body, and immediately you will have a king's body," he will not agree. This attachment strongly affects all conditioned living entities.

Lord Krsna personally canvasses, "Give up everything in this material world. Come to Me, and I shall give you all protection," but we are not agreeable. We think, "We are quite all right. Why should we surrender unto Krsna and go back to His kingdom?" This is called illusion, or maya. Everyone is satisfied with his standard of living, however abominable it may be.

TEXT 6: "Such satisfaction with one's standard of living is due to deep-rooted attraction for body, wife, home, children, animals, wealth, and friends. In such association, the conditioned soul thinks himself quite perfect."

PURPORT: This so-called perfection of human life is a concoction. Therefore it is said that however materially qualified a person may be, if he is not a devotee of the Lord he has no good qualities because he is hovering on the mental plane, which will drag him again to the material existence of temporary life. One who acts on the mental plane cannot get promotion to the spiritual

plane. Such a person is always sure to glide down again to material life. Still, in the association of so-called society, friendship, and love, the conditioned soul feels completely satisfied.

TEXT 7: "Although he is always burning with anxiety, such a fool always performs all kinds of mischievous activities with the unfulfillable hope of maintaining his so-called family and society."

PURPORT: It is said that it is easier to maintain a great empire than a small family, especially in these days, when the influence of Kali-yuga is so strong that everyone is harassed and full of anxieties because of accepting the false presentation of maya's family. The family we maintain is created by maya; it is the perverted reflection of the family in Krsnaloka. In Krsnaloka there are also family, friends, society, father, and mother; everything is there, but they are eternal. Here, as we change bodies our family relationships also change. Sometimes we are in a family of human beings, sometimes in a family of demigods, sometimes a family of cats or dogs.

Family, society, and friendship are flickering, and so they are called *asat*. It is said that as long as we are attached to this *asat*--this temporary, nonexistent society and family--we are always full of anxieties. The materialists do not know that the family, society, and friendship here in this material world are only shadows, and thus they become attached. Naturally their hearts are always burning, but in spite of all inconvenience, they still work to maintain such false families because they have no information of the real family association with Krsna.

TEXT 8: "He gives heart and senses to a woman, who falsely charms him with maya. He enjoys solitary embraces and talking with her, and he is enchanted by the sweet words of the small children."

PURPORT: Family life within the kingdom of the illusory energy, maya, is just like a prison for the eternal living entity. In prison a prisoner is shackled by iron chains and iron bars. Similarly, a conditioned soul is shackled by the charming beauty of a woman, by her solitary embraces and talks of so-called love, and by the sweet words of his small children. Thus he forgets his real identity.

In this verse the words *strinam asatinam* indicate that womanly love exists just to agitate the mind of man. Actually, in the material world there is no love. Both the woman and the man are interested in their sense gratification. For sense gratification a woman creates an illusory love, and the man becomes enchanted by such false love and forgets his real duty. When there are children as the result of such a combination, the next attraction is to the sweet words of the children. The love of the woman at home and the talk of the children make one a secure prisoner, and thus he cannot leave his home. Such a person is termed, in Vedic language, a *grhamedhi*, which means "one whose center of attraction is home." The word *grhastha* refers to one who lives with family, wife, and children but whose real purpose of living is to develop Krsna consciousness. One is therefore advised to become a *grhastha*, not a *grhamedhi*. The *grhastha*'s concern is to get out of the family life created by illusion and enter into real family life with Krsna, whereas the *grhamedhi*'s business is to repeatedly chain himself to so-called family life, in one life after another, and perpetually remain in the darkness of maya.

TEXT 9: "The attached householder remains in his family life, which is full of diplomacy and politics. Always spreading miseries and controlled by acts of sense gratification, he acts just to counteract the reactions of all his miseries, and if he can successfully counteract such miseries, he thinks he is happy."

PURPORT: In the Bhagavad-gita the Personality of Godhead Himself certifies the material world as an impermanent place that is full of miseries. There is no question of happiness in this material world, either individually or in terms of family, society, or country. If something is going on in the name of happiness, that is illusion. Here in this material world, happiness means successful counteraction of distress. The material world is so made that unless one becomes a clever diplomat, his life will be a failure. What to speak of human society, even in the society of lower animals, the birds and beasts cleverly manage their bodily demands of eating, sleeping, mating, and defending. Human society competes nationally or individually, and in the attempt to be successful the entire human society becomes full of diplomacy. We should always remember that in spite of all diplomacy and all intelligence in the struggle for existence, everything will end in a second by the supreme will. Therefore, all our attempts to become happy in this material world are simply a delusion offered by maya.

TEXT 10: "He secures money by committing violence here and there, and although he employs it in the service of his family, he himself eats only a little portion of the food thus purchased, and he goes to hell for those for whom he earned the money in such an irregular way."

PURPORT: There is a Bengali proverb: "The person for whom I have stolen accuses me of being a thief." The family members for whom an attached person acts in so many criminal ways are never satisfied. In illusion an attached person serves such family members, and by serving them he is destined to enter into a hellish condition of life. For example, a thief steals something to maintain his family, and he is caught and imprisoned. This is the sum and substance of material existence and attachment to material society, friendship, and love. Although an attached family man is always engaged in getting money by hook or by crook for the maintenance of his family, he cannot enjoy more than what he could consume even without such criminal activities. A man who eats eight ounces of food may have to maintain a big family and earn money by any means to support that family, but he himself is not offered more than what he can eat, and sometimes he eats the remnants that are left after his family members are fed. Even by earning money by unfair means, he cannot enjoy life for himself. That is called the covering illusion of maya.

The process of illusory service to society, country, and community is exactly the same everywhere; the same principle is applicable even to big national leaders. A national leader who is very great in serving his country is sometimes killed by his countrymen because of irregular service. In other words, one cannot satisfy his dependents by this illusory service, although one cannot get out of the service because being a servant is his constitutional position.

A living entity is constitutionally part and parcel of the Supreme Being, but he forgets that he has to render service to the Supreme Being and diverts his attention to serving others; this is called maya. By serving others he falsely thinks that he is master. The head of a family thinks of himself as the master of the family, or the leader of a nation thinks of himself as the master of the nation,

whereas actually he is serving, and by serving maya he is gradually going to hell. Therefore a sane man should come to the point of Krsna consciousness and engage in the service of the Supreme Lord, applying his whole life, all of his wealth, his entire intelligence, and his full power of speaking.

TEXTS 11-13: "When he suffers reverses in his occupation, he tries again and again to improve himself, but when he is baffled in all attempts and is ruined, he accepts money from others because of excessive greed. Thus the unfortunate man, unsuccessful in maintaining his family members, is bereft of all beauty. He always thinks of his failure, grieving very deeply. Seeing him unable to support them, his wife and others do not treat him with the same respect as before, even as miserly farmers do not accord the same treatment to their old and worn-out oxen."

PURPORT: Not only in the present age but from time immemorial no one has liked an old man who is unable to earn in the family. Even in the modern age, in some communities or states, the old men are given poison so that they will die as soon as possible. In some cannibalistic communities, the old grandfather is sportingly killed, and a feast is held in which his body is eaten. Here the example is given that a farmer does not like an old ox who has ceased to work. Similarly, when an attached person in family life becomes old and is unable to earn, he is no longer liked by his wife, sons, daughters, and other kinsmen, and he is consequently neglected, what to speak of not being given respect. It is judicious, therefore, to give up family attachment before one attains old age and take shelter of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. A person should employ himself in the Lord's service so that the Supreme Lord can take charge of him and he will not be neglected by his so-called kinsmen.

TEXT 14: "The foolish family man does not become averse to family life although he is maintained by those whom he once maintained. Deformed by the influence of old age, he prepares himself to meet ultimate death."

PURPORT: Family attraction is so strong that even if a person is neglected by family members in his old age, he cannot give up family affection, and he remains at home just like a dog. In the Vedic way of life, it is advised that before getting too weak and being baffled in material activities, and before becoming diseased, one should give up family life and engage oneself completely in the service of the Lord for the remaining days of his life.

Therefore the Vedic scriptures enjoin that as soon as one passes fifty years of age, he must give up family life and live alone in the forest. After preparing himself fully, he should become a sannyasi, travel widely, and distribute the knowledge of spiritual life to each and every home.

TEXT 15: "Thus he remains at home just like a pet dog and eats whatever is so negligently given to him. Afflicted with many illnesses, such as dyspepsia and loss of appetite, he eats only very small morsels of food, and he becomes an invalid, who cannot work any more."

PURPORT: Before meeting death a man is sure to become a diseased invalid, and when he is neglected by his family members, his life becomes less than a dog's because he is put into so many

miserable conditions. Vedic literatures enjoin, therefore, that before the arrival of such miserable conditions, a man should leave home and die without the knowledge of his family members. If a man leaves home and dies without his family's knowing, that is considered a glorious death. But an attached family man wants his family members to carry him in a great procession even after his death, and although he will not be able to see how the procession goes, he still desires that his body be taken gorgeously in procession. Thus he is happy without even knowing where he has to go when he leaves his body for the next life.

TEXTS 16-17: "In that diseased condition, a man's eyes bulge due to the pressure of air from within, and his glands become congested with mucus. He has difficulty breathing, and upon exhaling and inhaling he produces a sound like ghura-ghura, a rattling within the throat. In this way he comes under the clutches of death and lies down, surrounded by lamenting friends and relatives, and although he wants to speak with them, he no longer can because he is under the control of time."

PURPORT: For formality's sake, when a man is lying on his deathbed, his relatives come to him, and sometimes they cry very loudly, addressing the dying man: "O my father!" "O my friend!" or "O my husband!" In that pitiable condition the dying man wants to speak with them and instruct them of his desires, but because he is fully under the control of the time factor, death, he cannot express himself, and that causes him in-conceivable pain. He is already in a painful condition because of disease, and his glands and throat are choked up with mucus. He is already in a very difficult position, and when he is addressed by his relatives in that way, his grief increases.

TEXT 18: "Thus the man who engaged with uncontrolled senses in maintaining his family dies in great grief, seeing his relatives crying. He dies most pathetically, in great pain and without consciousness."

PURPORT: In the Bhagavad-gita it is said that at the time of death one will be absorbed in the thoughts he cultivated during his lifetime. A person who had no idea other than to properly maintain his family members must have family affairs in his last thoughts. That is the natural sequence for a common man. The common man does not know the destiny of his life; he is simply busy in this present flash of life, maintaining his family. At the last stage, no one is satisfied with how he has improved the family economic condition; everyone thinks that he could not provide sufficiently. Because of his deep family affection, he forgets his main duty of controlling his senses and improving his spiritual consciousness. Sometimes a dying man entrusts the family affairs to either his son or some relative, saying, "I am going. Please look after the family." He does not know where he is going, but even at the time of death he is anxious about how his family will be maintained. Sometimes it is seen that a dying man requests the physician to increase his life at least for a few years so that the family maintenance plan which he has begun can be completed. These are the material diseases of the conditioned soul. He completely forgets his real engagement--to become Kṛṣṇa conscious--and is always serious about planning to maintain his family, although he changes families one after another.

TEXT 19: "At death, he sees the messengers of the lord of death come before him, their eyes full of wrath, and in great fear he passes stool and urine."

PURPORT: There are two kinds of transmigration of a living entity after passing away from the present body. One kind of transmigration is to go to the controller of sinful activities, who is known as Yamaraja, and the other is to go to the higher planets, up to Vaikuntha. Here Lord Kapila describes how persons engaged in activities of sense gratification to maintain a family are treated by the messengers of Yamaraja, called Yamadutas. At the time of death the Yamadutas become the custodians of those persons who have strongly gratified their senses. They take charge of the dying man and take him to the planet where Yamaraja resides. The conditions there are described in the following verses.

TEXT 20: "As a criminal is arrested for punishment by the constables of the state, a person engaged in criminal sense gratification is similarly arrested by the Yamadutas, who bind him by the neck with strong rope and cover his subtle body so that he may undergo severe punishment."

PURPORT: Every living entity is covered by a subtle body and a gross body. The subtle body is the covering of mind, ego, intelligence, and consciousness. It is said in the scriptures that the constables of Yamaraja cover the subtle body of the culprit and take him to the abode of Yamaraja to be punished in a way that he is able to tolerate. He does not die from this punishment because if he died, then who would suffer the punishment? It is not the business of the constables of Yamaraja to put one to death. In fact, it is not possible to kill a living entity because factually he is eternal; he simply has to suffer the consequences of his activities of sense gratification.

The process of punishment is explained in the Caitanya-caritamrta. Formerly the king's men would take a criminal in a boat in the middle of the river. They would dunk him by grasping a bunch of his hair and thrusting him completely under water, and when he was almost suffocated, the king's constables would take him out of the water and allow him to breathe for some time, and then they would again dunk him in the water to suffocate. This sort of punishment is inflicted upon the forgotten soul by Yamaraja, as will be described in the following verses.

TEXT 21: "While carried by the constables of Yamaraja, he is overwhelmed and trembles in their hands. While passing on the road he is bitten by dogs, and he can remember the sinful activities of his life. He is thus terribly distressed."

PURPORT: It appears from this verse that while passing from this planet to the planet of Yamaraja, the culprit arrested by Yamaraja's constables meets many dogs, which bark and bite just to remind him of his criminal activities of sense gratification. It is said in the Bhagavad-gita that one becomes almost blind and is bereft of all sense when he is infuriated by the desire for sense gratification. He forgets everything. A man is bereft of all intelligence when he is too attracted by sense gratification, and he forgets that he has to suffer the consequences also. Here the chance for recounting his activities of sense gratification is given by the dogs engaged by Yamaraja. While we live in the gross body, such activities of sense gratification are encouraged, even by modern governments. In many states all over the world, the government encourages such activities by

pushing birth control. Women are supplied pills, and they are allowed to go to a clinical laboratory to get assistance for abortions. This is going on as a result of sense gratification. Actually sex is meant for begetting a good child, but because people have no control over the senses and there is no institution to train them to control the senses, the poor people fall victim to the criminal offenses of sense gratification, and they are punished after death as described in these passages of the Srimad-Bhagavatam.

TEXTS 22-24: "Under the scorching sun, the criminal has to pass through roads of hot sand with forest fires on both sides. He is whipped on the back by the constables because of his inability to walk, and he is afflicted by hunger and thirst. But unfortunately there is no drinking water, no shelter, and no place for rest on the road. While passing on that road to the abode of Yamaraja, he falls down in fatigue, and sometimes he becomes unconscious, but he is forced to rise again.

"In this way he is very quickly brought to the presence of Yamaraja. Thus he has to pass ninety-nine thousand yojanas within two or three moments, and then he is at once engaged in the torturous punishment he is destined to suffer."

PURPORT: One yojana is eight miles, and thus he has to pass along a road that is as much as 792,000 miles long. Such a long distance is passed over within a few moments only. The subtle body is covered by the constables so that the living entity can travel such a long distance quickly and at the same time tolerate the suffering. This covering, although material, is of such fine elements that material scientists cannot discover what the coverings are made of. To pass 792,000 miles within a few moments seems wonderful to the modern space travelers. They have so far traveled at a speed of 18,000 miles per hour, but here we see that a criminal passes 792,000 miles within a few seconds only, although the process is not spiritual but material.

TEXT 25: "He is placed in the midst of burning pieces of wood, and his limbs are set on fire. In some cases he is made to eat his own flesh or have it eaten by others."

PURPORT: This verse and the next three verses describe the sinful living entity's punishment. The first description is that the criminal has to eat his own flesh, burning with fire, or allow others like himself who are present there to eat it. In the last great war, people in concentration camps sometimes ate their own stool, so there is no wonder that in Yamasadana, the abode of Yamaraja, a meat-eater who had a very enjoyable life eating others' flesh has to eat his own flesh.

TEXTS 26-28: "His entrails are pulled out by the hounds and vultures of hell, even though he is still alive to see it, and he is subjected to torment by serpents, scorpions, gnats, and other creatures that bite him. Next his limbs are lopped off and torn asunder by elephants. He is hurled down from hilltops, and he is also held captive either in water or in a cave.

"Men and women whose lives were built upon indulgence in illicit sex are put into many kinds of miserable conditions in the hells known as Tamisra, Andha-tamisra, and Raurava."

PURPORT: The lives of all materialistic people, who are undergoing severe tribulation in the struggle for existence, are based on sex. Therefore, in the Vedic civilization sex is allowed only in a

restricted way; it is for the married couple, and only for begetting children. But when sex is indulged in for sense gratification illegally and illicitly, both the man and the woman await severe punishment in this world or after death. In this world they are punished by virulent diseases like syphilis and gonorrhea, and in the next life, as we see in this passage of the Srimad-Bhagavatam, they are put into various kinds of hellish conditions to suffer.

In the Bhagavad-gita, First Chapter, illicit sex is also very much condemned, and it is said that one who produces children by illicit sex is sent to hell. It is confirmed here in the Bhagavatam that such offenders are put into hellish conditions of life in Tamisra, Andha-tamisra, and Raurava.

TEXT 29: Lord Kapila continued, "My dear mother, it is sometimes said that we experience hell or heaven on this planet, for hellish punishments are sometimes visible on this planet also."

PURPORT: Sometimes unbelievers do not accept these statements of scripture regarding hell. Lord Kapila therefore confirms them by saying that these hellish conditions are also visible on this planet. It is not that they are only on the planet where Yamaraja lives. On the planet of Yamaraja, the sinful man is given the chance to practice living in the hellish conditions that he will have to endure in the next life, and then he is given a chance to take birth on another planet to continue his hellish life.

For example, if a man is to be punished to remain in hell and eat stool and urine, then first of all he practices such habits on the planet of Yamaraja, and then he is given a particular type of body, that of a hog, so that he can eat stool and think he is enjoying life. It is stated previously that in any hellish condition, the conditioned soul thinks he is happy. Otherwise, it would not be possible for him to suffer hellish life.

TEXT 30: "After leaving this body, the man who maintained himself and his family members by sinful activities suffers a hellish life, and his relatives suffer also."

PURPORT: The mistake of modern civilization is that man does not believe in the next life. But whether he believes or not, the next life is there, and one has to suffer if one does not lead a responsible life in terms of the injunctions of authoritative scriptures like the Vedas and Puranas. Species lower than human beings are not responsible for their actions because they are made to act in a certain way, but in the developed life of human consciousness, one who does not act responsibly is sure to get a hellish life, as described herein.

TEXT 31: "He goes alone to the darkest regions of hell after quitting the present body, and the money he acquired by envying other living entities is the passage money with which he leaves this world."

PURPORT: When a man earns money by unfair means and maintains his family and himself with that money, the money is enjoyed by many members of the family, but he alone goes to hell and suffers the resultant sinful reactions accrued from such a violent and illicit life. For example, if a man secures some money by killing someone and with that money maintains his family, those who enjoy the black money earned by him are also partially responsible and are also sent to hell, but he

who is the leader is especially punished. The money he earned is left in this world, and he takes only the sinful reaction.

In this world also, if a person acquires some money by murdering someone, the family is not hanged, although its members are sinfully contaminated. But the man who commits the murder and maintains his family is himself hanged as a murderer. The direct offender is more responsible for sinful activities than the indirect enjoyer. The great learned scholar Canakya Pandita says, therefore, that whatever one has in his possession had better be spent for the cause of sat, or the Supreme Personality of Godhead, because one cannot take his possessions with him. They remain here, and they will be lost. Either we leave the money or the money leaves us, but we will be separated. The best use of money as long as it is within our possession is to spend it to acquire and propagate Krsna consciousness.

TEXT 32: "Thus, by the arrangement of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the maintainer of kinsmen is put into a hellish condition to suffer for his sinful activities, like a man who has lost his wealth."

PURPORT: The example set herein is that the sinful person suffers just like a man who has lost his wealth. The human form of body is achieved by the conditioned soul after many, many births and is a very valuable asset. Instead of utilizing this life to get liberation, if one uses it simply for the purpose of maintaining his so-called family and therefore performs foolish and unauthorized action, he is compared to a man who has lost his wealth and who, upon losing it, laments. When wealth is lost, there is no use lamenting, but as long as there is wealth, one has to utilize it properly and thereby gain eternal profit. It may be argued that when a man leaves his money earned by sinful activities, he also leaves his sinful activities here with his money. But it is especially mentioned herein that by superior arrangement, although the man leaves behind his sinfully earned money, he carries the effect of it.

When a man steals some money, if he is caught and agrees to return it, he is not freed from the criminal punishment. By the law of the state, even though he returns the money, he has to undergo the punishment. Similarly, the money earned by a criminal process may be left by the man when dying, but by superior arrangement he carries with him the effect, and therefore he has to suffer hellish life.

TEXT 33: "Therefore a person who is very eager to maintain his family and kinsmen simply by black methods certainly goes to the darkest region of hell, which is known as Andha-tamisra."

PURPORT: Three words in this verse are very significant. Kevalena means "only by black methods," adharmena means "unrighteous" or "irreligious," and kutumba-bharana means "family maintenance." Maintaining one's family is certainly the duty of a householder, but one should be eager to earn his livelihood by the prescribed method, as stated in the scriptures. In the Bhagavad-gita it is described that the Lord has divided the social system into four classifications of castes, or varnas, according to quality and work. Apart from the Bhagavad-gita, in every society a man is known according to his quality and work. For example, when a man earns his livelihood constructing wooden furniture, he is called a carpenter, and a man who works with an anvil and

iron is called a blacksmith. Similarly, a man who is engaged in the medical or engineering fields has a particular duty and designation. All these human activities have been divided by the Supreme Lord into four varnas, namely the brahmanas (intellectuals and priests), the ksatriyas (warriors and administrators), the vaisyas (merchants and farmers), and sudras (manual laborers). In the Bhagavad-gita and other Vedic scriptures, the specific duties of the brahmanas, ksatriyas, vaisyas, and sudras are mentioned.

One should work honestly according to his qualification. He should not earn his livelihood unfairly or in a way for which he is not qualified. If someone claims to be a brahmana and works as a priest, attracting people who expect to be enlightened about the spiritual way of life, but he is not qualified as a priest, then he is cheating the public. One should not earn one's livelihood by such unfair means. The same is applicable to a ksatriya and a vaisya. It is especially mentioned that the means of livelihood of those who are trying to advance in Krsna consciousness must be very fair and uncomplicated. Here it is mentioned that he who earns his livelihood by unfair means (kevalena) is sent to the darkest hellish region. Otherwise, if one maintains his family by prescribed methods and honest means, there is no objection to one's being a family man.

TEXT 34: "Having gone through all the miserable, hellish conditions and having passed in a regular order through the lowest forms of animal life prior to human birth, and having thus been purged of one's sins, one is reborn again as a human being on this earth."

PURPORT: Just as a prisoner who has undergone troublesome prison life is set free again, the person who has always engaged in impious and mischievous activities is put into hellish conditions, and when he has undergone different hellish lives, namely those of lower animals like cats, dogs, and hogs, by the gradual process of evolution he again comes back as a human being. In the Bhagavad-gita it is stated that even though a person engaged in the practice of the yoga system may not finish perfectly and may fall down for some reason or other, his next life as a human being is guaranteed. It is stated that such a person, who has fallen from the path of yoga practice, is given a chance in his next life to take birth in a very rich family or in a very pious family. It is interpreted that "rich family" refers to a big mercantile family because generally people who engage in business are very rich. One who engaged in the process of self-realization, or connecting with the Supreme Absolute Truth, but fell short is allowed to take birth in such a rich family, or he is allowed to take birth in the family of pious brahmanas; either way, he is guaranteed to appear in human society in his next life.

It can be concluded that if someone is not willing to enter into hellish life, as in Tamisra or Andha-tamisra, then he must take to the process of Krsna consciousness, which is the first-class yoga system, because even if one is unable to attain complete Krsna consciousness in this life, he is guaranteed at least to take his next birth in a human family. He cannot be sent into a hellish condition. Krsna consciousness is the purest life, and it protects all human beings from gliding down to hell to take birth in a family of dogs or hogs.

Chapter 3

The Peace Formula

The laws of nature work collectively, as well as individually. In the following brief but cogent statement, Srila Prabhupada explains that if we want to break out of the tangled web of collective karma that is wreaking havoc in present-day society--if we want peace both collectively and individually--we need to take to Krsna consciousness seriously.

The great mistake of modern civilization is to encroach upon others' property as though it were one's own and thereby create an unnecessary disturbance of the laws of nature. These laws are very strong. No living entity can violate them. Only one who is Krsna conscious can easily overcome the stringent laws of nature and thus become happy and peaceful in the world.

As a state is protected by the department of law and order, so the state of the universe, of which this earth is only an insignificant fragment, is protected by the laws of nature. This material nature is one of the different potencies of God, who is the ultimate proprietor of everything that be. This earth is, therefore, the property of God, but we, the living entities, especially the so-called civilized human beings, are claiming God's property as our own under both an individual and collective false conception. If you want peace, you have to remove this false conception from your mind and from the world. This false claim of proprietorship by the human race on earth is partly or wholly the cause of all disturbances of peace on earth.

Foolish so-called civilized men are claiming proprietary rights on the property of God because they have now become godless. You cannot be happy and peaceful in a godless society. In the Bhagavad-gita Lord Krsna says that He is the factual enjoyer of all activities of the living entities, that He is the Supreme Lord of all universes, and that He is the well-wishing friend of all beings. When the people of the world know this as the formula for peace, it is then and there that peace will prevail.

Therefore, if you want peace at all, you will have to change your consciousness into Krsna consciousness, both individually and collectively, by the simple process of chanting the holy name of God. This is the standard and recognized process for achieving peace in the world. We therefore recommend that everyone become Krsna conscious by chanting Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna, Hare Hare. Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare.

This is practical, simple, and sublime. Five hundred years ago this formula was introduced in India by Lord Sri Caitanya, and now it is available throughout the world. Take to this simple process of chanting as above mentioned, realize your factual position by reading the Bhagavad-gita As It Is, and reestablish your lost relationship with Krsna, God. Peace and prosperity will be the immediate worldwide result.

Transcendental Teachings of Prahlada Maharaja

What follows is based on a series of talks Srila Prabhupada gave in 1968 on the Srimad-Bhagavatam, Canto 7, Chapter 6.

The Dearest Person

Today I shall speak to you of the history of a boy devotee named Prahlada Maharaja. He was born in a family that was stubbornly atheistic. There are two kinds of men in this world: the demons and the demigods. What is the difference between them? The main difference is that the demigods, or godly persons, are devoted to the Supreme Lord, whereas the demons are atheistic. They do not believe in God because they are materialists. These two classes of men always exist in this world. At the present moment, due to the Age of Kali (Age of Quarrel), the number of demons has increased, but the classification has existed since the beginning of creation. The incident I am narrating to you occurred very, very long ago, a few million years after the time of creation.

Prahlada Maharaja was the son of the most atheistic person and the most materially powerful as well. Because the society was materialistic, this boy had no opportunity to glorify the Supreme Lord. The characteristic of a great soul is that he is very eager to broadcast glorification of the Supreme Lord. Lord Jesus Christ, for example, was very eager to broadcast the glorification of God, but demoniac people misunderstood him and crucified him.

When Prahlada Maharaja was a five-year-old boy, he was sent to school. As soon as there was a recreation period, when the teacher was away, he would say to his friends, "My dear friends, come on. We shall speak about Krsna consciousness." This scene is related in the Srimad-Bhagavatam, Seventh Canto, Sixth Chapter. The devotee Prahlada says, "My dear friends, this is the time, in this young age, to prosecute Krsna consciousness."

His little friends reply, "Oh, we shall now play. Why take up Krsna consciousness?"

In answer to this, Prahlada Maharaja says, "If you are intelligent, then you must begin bhagavata-dharma from childhood."

The Srimad-Bhagavatam offers bhagavata-dharma, or the process leading to scientific knowledge about God. Bhagavata means "the Supreme Personality of Godhead," and dharma means "regulative principles." This human form of life is very rare. It is a great opportunity. Therefore Prahlada says, "My dear friends, you are born as civilized human beings, so although your human body is temporary, it is the greatest opportunity." No one knows the length of his life. It is calculated that in this age the human body may live up to a hundred years. But as the Age of Kali advances, duration of life, memory, mercy, religiousness, and all other such assets decrease. So no one has any assurance of long life in this age.

Still, although the human form is temporary, you can achieve the highest perfection of life while in this human form. What is that perfection? To understand the all-pervading Supreme Lord. For other life forms this is not possible. By the gradual evolutionary process we come to this human

form, so it is a rare opportunity. By nature's law, a human body is ultimately given to you so that you can promote yourself in spiritual life and go back home, back to Godhead.

The ultimate goal of life is Visnu, or Krsna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. In a later verse Prahlada Maharaja will say, "People in this material world who are enamored with the material energy do not know what the goal of human life is. Why? Because they have been enchanted by the Lord's glaring external energy. They have forgotten that life is an opportunity to understand the ultimate goal of perfection, Visnu." Why should we be very anxious to know Visnu, or God? Prahlada Maharaja gives a reason: "Visnu is the dearest person. That we have forgotten." We all seek some dear friend--everyone searches in this way. A man searches for dear friendship with a woman, and a woman searches for dear friendship with a man. Or else a man searches out a man, and a woman searches out a woman. Everyone searches after some dear friend, some sweet friend. Why? We want the cooperation of a dear friend who will help us. This is part of the struggle for existence, and this is natural. But we do not know that our dearest friend is Visnu, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Those who have read the Bhagavad-gita will find this nice verse in the Fifth Chapter: "If you want peace, then you must understand perfectly that everything in this world and other worlds is the property of Krsna, that He is the enjoyer of everything, and that He is the supreme friend of everyone." Why perform austerity? Why perform religious rituals? Why give in charity? All these activities are meant for pleasing the Supreme Lord, and nothing more. And when the Supreme Lord is pleased, you will get the result. Whether you want to gain higher material happiness or spiritual happiness, whether

you want to live a better life on this planet or on other planets--whatever you want you will get if you please the Supreme Lord. Therefore He is the most sincere friend. Whatever you want from Him, you can get. But the intelligent man does not want anything that is materially contaminated.

In the Bhagavad-gita Krsna says that by pious activities one can elevate oneself to the highest material planet, known as Brahmaloaka, where the duration of life is millions and millions of years. You cannot figure the duration of life there; your arithmetic will be ineffective. The statement in the Bhagavad-gita is that the life of Brahma is so long that 4,320,000,000 of our years are only twelve hours to him. Krsna says, "Whatever position you want, beginning from the ant right up to Brahma, you can have. But the repetition of birth and death will be there. However, if by practicing Krsna consciousness you come to Me, then you don't have to come back to this miserable material condition."

Prahlada Maharaja says the same thing: We should search for our dearest friend, Krsna, the Supreme Lord. Why is He our dearest friend? By nature He is dear. Now, what do you consider the dearest thing? Have you analyzed? You yourself are the dearest thing. I am sitting here, but if there is a fire alarm I shall at once take care of myself: "How can I save myself?" We forget our friends and even our relatives: "Let me first of all save myself." Self-preservation is the first law of nature.

In the grossest sense, the word atma--"self"--refers to the body. In the subtler sphere the mind or intelligence is the atma, and in the real sense atma means the soul. In the gross stage we are very fond of protecting and satisfying the body, and in a subtler stage we are very fond of satisfying the mind and intelligence. But above the mental and intellectual planes, where the atmosphere is

spiritualized, we can understand, "I am not this mind, intellect, or body. Aham brahmasmi--I am spirit, part and parcel of the Supreme Lord." That is the platform of real understanding.

Prahlada Maharaja says that of all living entities, Visnu is the supreme well-wisher. Therefore we are all searching for Him. When a child cries, what does he long for? His mother. But he has no language to express this. By nature he has his body, born of his mother's body, so there is an intimate relationship with the mother's body. The child won't like any other woman. The child cries, but when the woman who is the child's mother comes and picks him up, at once he is pacified. He has no language to express all this, but his relationship with his mother is a law of nature. Similarly, by nature we try to protect the body. This is self-preservation. It is a natural law of the living entity, just as eating is a natural law and sleeping is a natural law. Why do I protect the body? Because within the body is the soul.

What is this soul? The soul is a part of the Supreme Lord. As we want to protect the hand or the finger because it is a part of the whole body, similarly we try to save ourselves because this is the defending process of the Supreme. The Supreme does not need defense, but this is a manifestation of our love toward Him, which is now perverted. The finger and the hand are meant to act in the interests of the whole body; as soon as I want the hand to come here, it comes, and as soon as I want the finger to play on the drum, it plays. This is the natural position. Similarly, we are searching for God, to dovetail our energy in the service of the Supreme, but under the spell of the illusory energy we do not know it. That is our mistake. Now, in human life, we have an opportunity to understand our actual position. Only because you are human beings have you all come here to learn about Krsna consciousness, about the real goal of your life. I cannot invite cats and dogs to sit down here. That is the difference between human beings and cats and dogs. A human being can understand the necessity of pursuing the real goal of life. But if he loses the opportunity, it is a great catastrophe.

Prahlada Maharaja says, "God is the dearest personality of all. We have to search for God." Then what about the material necessities of life? Prahlada Maharaja replies, "You are after sense gratification, but sense gratification is automatically achieved by contact with this body." Because a hog has a certain type of body, his sense gratification comes from eating stool, the very thing that is most obnoxious to you. At once, after evacuating, you leave to get free from the bad smell--but the hog is waiting. As soon as you evacuate, he will at once enjoy. So there are different types of sense gratification according to different types of body. Everyone who has a material body receives sense gratification. Don't think that the hogs eating stool are unhappy. No, they are getting fat in that way. They are very happy.

Another example is the camel. The camel is very fond of thorny twigs. Why? Because when he eats thorny twigs, the twigs cut his tongue, blood oozes out, and he tastes his own blood. Then he thinks, "I am enjoying." This is sense gratification. Sex life is also like that. We taste our own blood, and we think we are enjoying. This is our foolishness.

The living entity in this material world is a spiritual being, but because he has a tendency to enjoy, to exploit the material energy, he has contacted a body. There are 8,400,000 species of living entities, each with a different body, and according to the body, they have particular senses with which they enjoy a particular type of pleasure. Suppose you are given thorny twigs to eat: "Ladies and gentlemen, here is very nice food. It is certified by the camels. It is very good." Would you like to take it? "No! What nonsense are you offering me?" Because you have a different body from the

camel, you have no taste for thorny twigs. But if you offer them to a camel, he will think it is a very nice meal.

Now, if the hogs and camels can enjoy sense gratification without great struggle, why not we human beings? We can--but that is not our ultimate achievement. The facilities to enjoy sense gratification are offered by nature, whether one be a hog, a camel, or a human being. So why should you labor for facilities that you are destined to receive anyway, by nature's law? In every form of life the bodily demands are satisfied by the arrangement of nature. This gratification is arranged, just as there is an arrangement for distress. Do you like fever? No. Why does it come? I do not know. But it does come, does it not? Yes. Did you try for it? No. So how does it come? By nature. That is the only answer. And if your misery comes by nature, your happiness will also come by nature. Don't bother about it. That is the instruction of Prahlada Maharaja. If you receive the miseries of life without effort, you will similarly achieve happiness without effort.

Then what is the real purpose of the human form of life? Cultivating Krsna consciousness. Other things will be obtained by nature's law, which is ultimately God's law. Even if I don't try, I will be supplied with whatever I am to achieve because of my past work and my particular type of body. Your real concern, therefore, should be to seek out the higher goal of human life.

"We Are Spoiling Our Lives"

Therefore, instead of being very anxious to stimulate our senses to increase material happiness, we should try to attain spiritual happiness by practicing Krsna consciousness. As Prahlada Maharaja says, "Although your life in this human body is temporary, it is very valuable. So instead of trying to increase your material sense enjoyment, your duty is to dovetail your activities in some way in Krsna consciousness."

Our higher intelligence comes with his human body. Because we have higher consciousness, we should try for the higher enjoyment in life, which is spiritual enjoyment. And how can that spiritual enjoyment be achieved? One should absorb himself in serving the Supreme Lord, who gives the pleasure of liberation. We should turn our attention to achieving the lotus feet of Krsna, who can give us liberation from this material world.

But can't we enjoy in this life and engage ourselves in Krsna's service in our next life? Prahlada Maharaja answers, "We are now in material entanglement. Now I have this body, but I will quit this body after a few years and then have to accept another body. Once you take up one body and enjoy as your body's senses dictate, you prepare another body by such sense enjoyment, and you get another body as you want it." There is no guarantee that you will get a human body. That will depend on your work. If you work like a demigod, you will get a demigod's body. And if you work like a dog, you will get a dog's body. At the time of death, your destiny is not in your hands--it is in the hands of nature. It is not our duty to speculate on what material body we are going to get next. At the present moment let us simply understand that this human body is a great opportunity to develop our spiritual consciousness, our Krsna consciousness. Therefore we should at once engage ourselves in Krsna's service. Then we will make progress.

How long should we do it? As long as this body keeps working. We do not know when it will stop functioning. The great saint Pariksit Maharaja got seven days notice: "Your body will fall in a

week." But we do not know when our body will fall. Whenever we are on the road, there may suddenly be some accident. We should always be prepared. Death is always there. We should not optimistically think, "Everyone is dying, but I shall live." Why will you live if everyone is dying? Your grandfather has died, your great-grandfather has died, other relatives of yours have died--why should you live? You will also die. And your children will also die. Therefore, before death comes, as long as we have this human intelligence, let us engage in Krsna consciousness. This is the prescription of Prahlada Maharaja.

We do not know when this body will stop, so let us immediately engage in Krsna consciousness and act accordingly. "But if I immediately engage myself in Krsna consciousness, what about my means of livelihood?" That is arranged for. I am very happy to inform you of the confidence of a student in one of our branches. There was a disagreement. Another student said, "You are not looking after how to maintain the establishment," and he replied, "Oh, Krsna will supply." This is a very nice conviction; I was glad to hear it. If cats and dogs and hogs can get food, will Krsna not arrange for our food also, if we are Krsna conscious and fully devote our service to Him? Is Krsna ungrateful? No.

In the Bhagavad-gita the Lord says, "My dear Arjuna, I am equal to everyone. No one is the object of My envy, and no one is My special friend, but I give special attention to one who engages in Krsna consciousness." A small child is completely dependent on the mercy of his parents, so the parents give special attention to that child. Although the parents are equally good to all the children, for the small children who are always crying "Mother!" they have greater concern. "Yes, my dear child? Yes?" This is natural.

If you are completely dependent on Krsna, who is supplying food to the dogs, birds, beasts--to 8,400,000 species of life--why should He not supply food to you? This conviction is a symptom of surrender. But we should not think, "Because Krsna is supplying my food, I shall now sleep." No, you have to work, but without fear. You should engage yourself wholeheartedly in Krsna consciousness, confident of Krsna's maintenance and protection.

Now, let us calculate our duration of life. In this age it is said that we can live at most one hundred years. Formerly, in the Satya-yuga, the age of goodness, human beings would live up to 100,000 years. In the next age, Treta-yuga, they used to live for 10,000 years, and in the next age, called Dvapara-yuga, they used to live for 1,000 years. Now, in this age, called Kali-yuga, the estimate is 100 years. But gradually, as the Kali-yuga progresses, our duration of life will decrease still further. This is the so-called progress of our modern civilization. We are very proud that we are happy and are improving our civilization. The result, however, is that although we try to enjoy material life, the duration of our life is shortened.

Now, accepting that a person lives for one hundred years, if he has no information of spiritual life, half of that is wasted at night in sleeping and sex life. That's all. He has no other interest. And in the daytime, what is his concern? "Where is money? Where is money? I must maintain this body." And when he has money: "Now let me spend for my wife and children." So where is his spiritual realization? At night he spends his time in sleep and sex indulgence, and by day he spends time working very hard to earn money. Is that his mission in life? How horrible such a life is!

The average person is illusioned in childhood, playing frivolous games. Up to twenty years, easily, you can go on like that. Then when you become old, for another twenty years you cannot do anything. When a man becomes old, his senses cannot function. You have seen many old men; they

have nothing to do but rest. Just now we have received a letter from one of our students reporting that his grandmother is paralyzed and has been suffering for the last three and a half years. So, in old age, everything is finished as soon as you are eighty years old. Therefore, from the beginning to twenty years of age, everything is spoiled; and even if you live for a hundred years, another twenty in the last stage of life is also spoiled. So forty years of your life are spoiled in that way. And in the middle age there is a very strong sex appetite, so another twenty years can be lost. Twenty years, twenty years, and twenty years--sixty years gone. This is the analysis of life by Prahlada Maharaja. We are spoiling our life instead of using it to advance in Krsna consciousness.

Family Illusion

Prahlada Maharaja told his friends, "You have to begin Krsna consciousness immediately." All the boys were born of atheistic, materialistic families, but fortunately they had the association of Prahlada, who was a great devotee of the Lord from his birth. Whenever he found an opportunity, when the teacher was out of the classroom, he used to say, "My dear friends, let's chant Hare Krsna; this is the time to begin Krsna consciousness."

Now, as we have stated, some boy might have said, "But we are just boys. Let us play. We are not going to die immediately. Let us have some enjoyment, and later we shall begin Krsna consciousness." People do not know that Krsna consciousness is the highest enjoyment. They think that the boys and girls who have joined this Krsna consciousness movement are foolish. "By Prabhupada's influence they have joined Krsna consciousness and left everything enjoyable." But actually this is not so. They are all intelligent, educated boys and girls, coming from very respectable families; they are not fools. In our Society they are actually enjoying life; otherwise they would not have sacrificed their valuable time for this movement.

Actually there is joyful life in Krsna consciousness, but people do not know of it. They say, "What use is this Krsna consciousness?" When one grows up entangled in the sense gratification process, it is very difficult to get out of it. Therefore, according to Vedic regulations, in student life, beginning from five years of age, boys are taught about spiritual life. That is called brahmacarya. A brahmacari dedicates his life to attaining supreme consciousness--Krsna consciousness or Brahman consciousness. Brahmacarya has many rules and regulations. For example, however rich one's father may be, the brahmacari surrenders himself to be trained under the guidance of a spiritual master and works in the ashram of the spiritual master just like a menial servant. How is this possible? We are getting actual experience that very nice boys coming from very respectable families do not hesitate to do any kind of work here. They are washing dishes, cleansing floors--everything. One student's mother was astonished at her boy when he visited home. Before, he would not even go to the store, and now he is engaged twenty-four hours a day. Unless one feels pleasure, how is it possible that he can engage himself in such a process as Krsna consciousness? This is due only to the chanting of Hare Krsna. This is our single asset--the Hare Krsna mantra. One can be very jolly simply by Krsna consciousness. Actually, it is a joyful life. But unless one is trained, one cannot live it.

Prahlada Maharaja says that everyone is attached to family affection. If one is attached to family affairs, he cannot control his senses. Naturally, everyone wants to love someone. Society,

friendship, and love are needed. They are demands of the spirit soul, but they are being pervertedly reflected. I have seen that many ladies and gentlemen in your country have no family life, but they have placed their love in cats and dogs. Because they want to love someone but do not see anyone suitable, they place their valuable love in cats and dogs. Our concern is to transfer this love--which has to be placed somewhere--to Krsna. This is Krsna consciousness. If you transfer your love to Krsna, that is perfection. But now, because people are being frustrated and cheated, they do not know where to place their love, and at last they place their love in cats and dogs.

Everyone is entangled by material love. It is very difficult to develop spiritual life when one is advanced in material love, because this bondage of love is very strong. Therefore Prahlada proposes that one should learn Krsna consciousness from childhood. When a child is five or six years old--as soon as his consciousness is developed--he should be sent to school to be trained, and Prahlada Maharaja says that his education should be Krsna conscious from the very beginning. The period from five to fifteen years is a very valuable time; you can train any child in Krsna consciousness, and he will become perfect.

If a child is not trained in Krsna consciousness and instead becomes advanced in materialism, it is difficult for him to develop spiritual life. What is materialism? Materialism means that all of us in this material world, although we are spirit souls, somehow or other want to enjoy this material world. The spirit of enjoyment is present in its pure form in the spiritual world, in relation to Krsna, but we have come here to partake of contaminated enjoyment, just as a man on the Bowery thinks he can enjoy by drinking some liquor. The basic principle of material enjoyment is sex. Therefore, you will find sex not only in human society but in cat society, dog society, bird society--everywhere. During the daytime, a pigeon has sex at least twenty times. This is his enjoyment.

The Srimad-Bhagavatam confirms that material enjoyment is based upon nothing more than the sexual combination of man and woman. In the beginning a boy thinks, "Oh, that girl is nice," and the girl says, "That boy is nice." When they meet, that material contamination becomes more prominent. And when they actually enjoy sex, they become more attached, completely attached. How? As soon as a boy and girl are married, they want an apartment. Then they have children. And when they have children, they want social recognition--society, friendship, and love. In this way their material attachment goes on increasing. And all of this requires money. A man who is too materialistic will cheat anyone, kill anyone, beg, borrow, or steal--anything to bring money. He knows that his buildings, his family, his wife and children cannot continue to exist perpetually. They are just like bubbles in the ocean: they have come into existence, and after a little while they will be gone. But he is too much attached. He will sacrifice his spiritual advancement for the pursuit of money to maintain them. His perverted consciousness--"I am this body. I belong to this material world. I belong to this country. I belong to this community. I belong to this religion. I belong to this family."--becomes greater and greater.

Where is his Krsna consciousness? He becomes so entangled that money becomes more valuable to him than his own life. In other words, he can risk his life for money. The householder, the laborer, the merchant, the thief, the dacoit, the rogue--everyone is after money. This is illusion. One loses himself in the midst of this entanglement.

Prahlada Maharaja says that in this state, when you are too much implicated in materialism, you cannot cultivate Krsna consciousness. Therefore one should practice Krsna consciousness from early childhood. Of course, Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu is so kind that He says, "Better late than

never. Even though you missed the opportunity to begin Krsna consciousness from childhood, begin now, in whatever position you are." That is Caitanya Mahaprabhu's teaching. He never said, "Because you did not begin Krsna consciousness from your childhood, you cannot make progress." No. He is very kind. He has given us this nice process of chanting Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna, Hare Hare. Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. Whether you are young or old--no matter what you are--just begin. You do not know when your life will be finished. If you chant sincerely, even for a moment, it will have great effect. It will save you from the greatest danger--becoming an animal in your next life.

Although only five years old, Prahlada Maharaja speaks just like a very experienced and educated man because he received knowledge from his spiritual master, Narada Muni. That is disclosed in the next chapter of the Srimad-Bhagavatam (7.7). Wisdom does not depend on age, but on knowledge received from a superior source. One cannot become a wise man simply by advancement of age. No. That is not possible. Knowledge has to be received from a superior source; then one can become wise. It doesn't matter whether one is a five-year-old boy or a fifty-year-old man. As it is said, "By wisdom one becomes an old man, even without advanced age."

So although Prahlada was only five years old, by advancement in knowledge he was imparting perfect instructions to his classmates. Some may find these instructions unpalatable. Suppose a man is already married and Prahlada says, "Take to Krsna consciousness." He will think, "Oh, how can I leave my wife? We talk so nicely together, sit together and enjoy. How can I leave?" Family attraction is very strong.

I am an old man--seventy-two years old. I have been away from my family during the last fourteen years. Yet sometimes I also think of my wife and children. This is quite natural. But that does not mean I have to go back. This is knowledge. When the mind wanders to thoughts of sense gratification, one should at once understand, "This is illusion."

According to the Vedic system, one has to forcibly give up family life at the age of fifty. One must go. There is no alternative. The first twenty-five years are for student life. From age five to age twenty-five, one should be educated very nicely in Krsna consciousness. The basic principle of one's education should be Krsna consciousness, nothing else. Then life will be pleasing and successful, both in this world and in the next. A Krsna conscious education means one is trained to give up material consciousness altogether. That is perfect Krsna consciousness.

But if the student is unable to capture the essence of Krsna consciousness, then he is allowed to marry a good wife and live a peaceful householder life. And because he has been trained in the basic principles of Krsna consciousness, he will not entangle himself in the material world. One who lives simply--plain living and high thinking--can make progress in Krsna consciousness even within family life.

So family life is not condemned. But if a man forgets his spiritual identity and simply becomes entangled in material affairs, then he is lost. His life's mission is lost. If one thinks, "I cannot protect myself from the attack of sex desire," then let him be married. That is prescribed. But don't have illicit sex. If you want a girl, if you want a boy, get married and live in Krsna consciousness.

A person who is trained in Krsna consciousness from childhood naturally becomes disinclined toward the material way of life, and at the age of fifty he gives it up. How does he start giving it up? The husband and wife leave home and travel together on pilgrimage. If from twenty-five to fifty one remains in family life, one should have some grown-up children. So at age fifty the

husband entrusts the family affairs to some of his sons who are family men, and he and his wife go on pilgrimage to the holy places in order to forget family attachments. When the gentleman is completely matured in detachment, he asks his wife to go home to their children, and he remains alone. That is the Vedic system. We have to give ourselves a chance to progress in spiritual life, step by step. Otherwise, if we remain attached to material consciousness throughout all our days, we will not perfect our Krsna consciousness, and we shall miss the opportunity of this human form of life.

So-called happy family life means that we have a very loving wife and loving children. Thus we enjoy life. But we do not know that this enjoyment is false, that it is resting on a false platform. At once, in the twinkling of an eye, we may have to give up this enjoyment. Death is not under our control. From the Bhagavad-gita we learn that if one dies while too much attached to one's wife, the result will be that in his next life he will have the body of a woman. And if the wife is very attached to her husband, she will get a man's body in her next life. Similarly, if you are not a family man but are attached to a cat or dog, then your next life will be as a cat or dog. These are the laws of karma, or material nature.

The whole point is that one should begin Krsna consciousness immediately. Suppose one thinks, "After finishing my sporting life, when I am old and there is nothing else to do, then I shall go to the Krsna consciousness Society and hear something." Certainly at that time one can take up spiritual life, but what is the assurance that one will live to an old age? One may die at any time; so postponing one's spiritual life is very risky. Therefore one should take the opportunity now to advance in Krsna consciousness. That is the purpose of this Society: to give everyone a chance to begin Krsna consciousness at any stage of life. And by the process of chanting Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna, Hare Hare. Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare, advancement is very quick. There is an immediate result.

We request all the ladies and gentlemen who are very kindly attending our lectures or reading our literature to chant Hare Krsna during your leisure hours at home, and to read our books. That is our request. We are sure that you will find this process very pleasing and very effective.

"I Love Krsna More Than Anything!"

Now Prahlada Maharaja makes a further statement about the complications of material life. He compares the attached householder to the silkworm. The silkworm wraps itself in a cocoon made of its own saliva, until he is in a prison from which he cannot escape. In the same way, a materialistic householder's entanglement becomes so tight that he cannot come out of the cocoon of family attraction. Even though there are so many miseries in materialistic family life, he cannot break free. Why? He thinks that sex life and eating palatable dishes are most important. Therefore, in spite of so many miserable conditions, he cannot give them up.

In this way, when a person is too much entangled in family life, he cannot think of his real benefit--to escape from material life. Although he is always disturbed by the threefold miseries of materialistic life, still, because of strong family affection, he cannot come out. He does not know that he is wasting his limited duration of life simply for family affection. He is spoiling the life that was meant for realizing his eternal self, for realizing his real spiritual life.

"Therefore," Prahlada says to his demoniac friends, "please give up the company of those who are simply after material enjoyment. Just associate with persons who have taken to Krsna consciousness." That is his advice. He says to his friends that this Krsna consciousness is easy to attain. Why? Krsna consciousness is actually very dear to us, but we have forgotten it. Therefore anyone who takes to Krsna consciousness becomes more and more affected by it and forgets his material consciousness.

If you are in a foreign country, you might forget your home and your family members and friends who are very dear to you. But if you are all of a sudden reminded of your home and friends, you will at once become very preoccupied: "How shall I meet them?" In San Francisco one of our friends told me that long ago he left his young children and went to another country. Recently a letter came from his grown-up son, and at once the father remembered his affection for him and sent some money. That affection automatically came, even though he had forgotten his child for so many years. Similarly, our affection for Krsna is so intimate that as soon as there is some touch of Krsna consciousness, we at once revive our relationship with Him.

Everyone has some particular relationship with Krsna, the Supreme Lord, which he has forgotten. But as we become Krsna conscious, gradually our old consciousness of our relationship with Krsna is revived. And when our consciousness is actually in the clear stage, we can understand our particular relationship with Krsna. One may have a relationship with Krsna as a son or servant, as a friend, as a parent, or as a beloved wife or lover. All these relationships are pervertedly reflected in life in the material world. But as soon as we come to the platform of Krsna consciousness, our old relationship with Krsna is revived.

We love--every one of us. First I love my body because my self is within this body. So actually I love my self better than the body. But that self has an intimate relationship with Krsna because the self is part and parcel of Krsna. Therefore I love Krsna more than anything. And because Krsna is all-pervading, I love everything.

Unfortunately, we have forgotten that Krsna, God, is all-pervading. This memory has to be revived. As soon as we revive our Krsna consciousness, we can see everything in relationship with Krsna, and then everything becomes lovable. Now I love you or you love me, but that love is on the platform of this ephemeral body. But when love of Krsna is developed, I will love not only you but every living entity because the outward designation, the body, will be forgotten. When a person becomes fully Krsna conscious, he does not think, "Here is a man, here is an animal, here is a cat, here is a dog, here is a worm." He sees everyone as part and parcel of Krsna. This is very nicely explained in the Bhagavad-gita: "One who is actually learned in Krsna consciousness becomes a lover of everyone in the universe." Unless one is situated on the Krsna conscious platform, there is no question of universal brotherhood.

If we actually want to implement the idea of universal brotherhood, then we will have to come to the platform of Krsna consciousness, not material consciousness. As long as we are in material consciousness, our lovable objects will be limited. But when we are actually in Krsna consciousness, our lovable objects will be universal. That is stated by Prahlada Maharaja: "Beginning from the nonmoving plants and trees and extending up to the highest living creature, Brahma, the Supreme Personality of Godhead is present everywhere by His expansion as the Paramatma, the feature of the Lord in everyone's heart. As soon as we become Krsna conscious,

that extension of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Paramatma, induces us to love every object in relation with Krsna."

Realizing that God Is Everywhere

Maharaja Prahlada informed his classmates about the all-pervasiveness of the Supreme Lord. But although the Supreme Lord is all-pervasive by means of His expansions and His energies, that does not mean He has lost His personality. That is significant. Although He is all-pervading, still He is a person. According to our material perception, if something is all-pervading, then it has no personality, no localized aspect. But God is not like that. For example, the sunshine is all-pervading, but the sun also has a localized aspect, the sun planet, and you can see it. Not only is there a sun planet, but within the sun planet is a sun-god, whose name is Vivasvan. We get this information from Vedic literature. There is no way to understand what is taking place on other planets except to hear from authorized sources. In the modern civilization we accept scientists as authorities in these matters. We hear a scientist say, "We have seen the moon; it is such and such," and we believe it. We have not gone with the scientist to see the moon, but we believe him.

Belief is the basic principle of understanding. You may believe the scientists, or you may believe the Vedas. It is up to you which source you believe. The difference is that the information from the Vedas is infallible, while that received from the scientists is fallible. Why is the scientists' information fallible? Because an ordinary man conditioned by material nature has four defects. What are they? The first is that a conditioned human being has imperfect senses. We view the sun as a small disc. Why? It is far, far greater than this earth, but we see it as just a disc. Everyone knows that our seeing power, our hearing power, and so on are limited. And because his senses are imperfect, the conditioned soul is sure to commit mistakes, however great a scientist he may be. Not very long ago in this country, there was a disaster when the scientists tried to send a rocket up but it at once burned to ashes. So there was a mistake. The conditioned soul must make mistakes, because that is the nature of conditioned life. The mistake may be very great or very slight--that doesn't matter--but a human being conditioned by material nature is sure to commit mistakes.

Further, the conditioned soul must become illusioned. This happens when he continually mistakes one thing for something else. For example, we accept the body as the self. Since I am not this body, my acceptance of the body as my self is an illusion. The whole world is going on under the illusion that "I am this body." Therefore there is no peace. I am thinking that I am Indian, you are thinking that you are American, and a Chinese man is thinking that he is Chinese. What is this "Chinese," "American," and "Indian"? It is an illusion based on the body. That's all.

The propensity to cheat is the fourth defect of conditioned life. I may be a fool, but I will boast that I am very learned. Everyone who is illusioned and commits mistakes is a fool, but still such fools pose themselves as being sources of infallible knowledge. So all conditioned souls have imperfect senses, they are subject to commit mistakes and become illusioned, and they are influenced by the propensity to cheat.

How can one expect real knowledge from such conditioned souls? There is no possibility of receiving actual knowledge from them. Whether a person is a scientist, a philosopher, or whatever,

because he is conditioned he cannot give complete information, no matter how educated he may be. That is a fact.

One may now ask, How can we get complete information? The process is to receive knowledge via the disciplic succession of spiritual masters and disciples beginning with Krsna. In the Bhagavad-gita Lord Krsna says to Arjuna, "This knowledge of Bhagavad-gita was first spoken by Me to the sun-god, and the sun-god spoke it to his son, Manu. In turn, Manu spoke this knowledge to his son Iksvaku, and then Iksvaku spoke the same to his son. In this way the knowledge has come down. But unfortunately that disciplic succession is now broken. Therefore, O Arjuna, I am now imparting the same knowledge to you because you are My very dear friend and good devotee." This is the process of receiving perfect knowledge--to accept the transcendental vibration coming down from higher sources. The entire stock of Vedic knowledge is a transcendental vibration to help us understand the Supreme Lord.

So, Prahlada Maharaja says that the Supreme Personality of Godhead is identical with the all-pervading Supreme Soul, the Paramatma. The same information appears in the Brahma-samhita--that the Supreme Lord, although situated in His own transcendental abode, is all-pervading. Still, although He is present everywhere, we cannot see Him with our imperfect senses.

Prahlada Maharaja then says, "Although He is not seen, He can still be perceived. One who is intelligent can perceive the presence of the Supreme Lord everywhere." How is this possible? During the daytime, even someone in a room can know that the sun is up. Because it is light in his room, he can understand that the sun is shining in the sky. Similarly, those who have received perfect knowledge in disciplic succession know that everything is an expansion of the energy of the Supreme Lord. Therefore they see the Lord everywhere.

What can we perceive with our material senses? We can see what is visible to the material eye--earth, water, fire. But we cannot see air, although we can perceive it by touch. We can understand that there is sky by sound, and we can understand that we have a mind because we are thinking, feeling, and willing. Similarly, we can understand that we have an intelligence which guides the mind. If we go still further, we can understand, "I am consciousness." And one who is further advanced can understand that the source of consciousness is the soul and, above all, the Supersoul.

The visible things around us are expansions of the inferior energy of the Supreme Lord, but the Lord also has a superior energy--consciousness. We have to understand consciousness from higher authorities, but we can also directly perceive it. For example, we can perceive that there is consciousness spread all over the body. If I pinch any part of my body, I will feel pain; that means there is consciousness throughout my body. In the Bhagavad-gita Krsna says we should try to understand that consciousness is spread all over the body and that it is eternal. Similarly, consciousness is spread all over this universe. But that is not our consciousness. That is God's consciousness. So God, the Supreme Soul, is all-pervading by His consciousness. One who understands this has begun his Krsna consciousness.

Our process is to dovetail our consciousness with Krsna consciousness--that will make us perfect. It is not that we merge into that consciousness. In one sense we "merge," but still we keep our individuality. That is the difference between impersonalist philosophy and Krsna conscious philosophy. The impersonalist philosopher says that perfection means to merge into the Supreme and lose our individuality. We say that in the perfectional stage we merge into the Supreme but keep our individuality. How is that? An airplane starts from the airport and climbs up and up, and

when it goes very high we cannot see it: we can simply see sky. But the airplane is not lost--it is still there. Another example is that of a green bird entering into a big green tree. We cannot distinguish the bird from the tree, but they both continue to exist. Similarly, the supreme consciousness is Krsna, and when we dovetail our individual consciousness with the Supreme, we become perfect--but keep our individuality. An outsider may think that there is no distinction between God and His pure devotee, but it is due only to a poor fund of knowledge. Every individual person, every individual being, maintains his individuality eternally, even when dovetailed with the Supreme.

Prahlada Maharaja says that we cannot see consciousness--either supreme consciousness or individual consciousness--but that it is there. How can we understand that it is there? We can understand the supreme consciousness and our individual consciousness simply by perception of blissfulness. Because we have consciousness, we can feel ananda, or pleasure. Without consciousness, there is no feeling of pleasure. Because of consciousness we can enjoy life by applying our senses in whatever way we like. But as soon as consciousness is gone from the body, we cannot enjoy our senses.

Our consciousness exists because we are part and parcel of the supreme consciousness. For example, a spark is only a tiny particle of the fire, yet the spark is also fire. A drop of the Atlantic Ocean possesses the same quality as all the ocean water--it is also salty. Similarly, because the pleasure potency exists in the Supreme Lord, we can also enjoy pleasure. The Lord is paramesvara, the supreme controller; therefore we are also isvaras, or controllers. For example, I have some controlling power to take a drink of water when I cough. According to our capacity, everyone of us has some controlling power. But we are not the supreme controller. The supreme controller is God, Krsna.

Because Krsna is the supreme controller, He can control all the universal affairs by His different potencies. I also feel that I am controlling my bodily affairs to some extent, but because I am not the supreme controller, if there is something wrong in this body, I have to go to a physician. Similarly, I have no control over other bodies. I speak of this hand as "my hand" because I can work with this hand and move it according to my desire. But I am not the controller of your hand. If I desire to move your hand, that is not in my power; that is in your power. You can move your hand if you like. So I am not the controller of your body, and you are not the controller of my body, but the Supreme Soul is the controller of your body and my body and every body.

In the Bhagavad-gita, the Lord says that you, the soul, are present in your body and that your body is the field of your activities. So whatever you are doing is limited by the field of your body. An animal bound up in a certain tract of land can move there but cannot go beyond what that space allows. Similarly, your activity and my activity are bound up within the limits of our bodies. My body is my field of activities, and your body is your field of activities. But Krsna says, "I am present in every field."

Thus Krsna, as the Supersoul, or Paramatma, knows what is going on in my body, in your body, and in millions and billions of other bodies. Therefore He is the supreme controller. We have our limited energy, but His energy is unlimited. By His controlling power, by His supreme will, this material creation is moving. That is also confirmed in the Bhagavad-gita, where Krsna states, "Under My superintendence the whole material nature is working. All wonderful things that you see in this material world are due to My supervision, My supreme control."

Krsna Consciousness: The Perfection of Mercy

Prahlada Maharaja now gives his conclusion: "My dear friends, because the Supreme Lord is present everywhere and because we are part and parcel of the Supreme Lord, our duty is to be merciful to all living entities." When a person is in a lower position, we have a duty to help him. For example, because a small child is helpless, he is dependent on the mercy of the parent: "Mother, I want this." "Yes, my dear child." We should be compassionate to all living entities and should show them mercy.

How can we show our mercy to everyone? There are millions and millions of poor people, so how can we show them all mercy? Are we able to supply clothing and food to all the needy persons of the world? That is not possible. How, then, can we be merciful to every living entity? By giving them Krsna consciousness. That is how Prahlada Maharaja is showing his class friends real mercy. They were all fools, devoid of Krsna consciousness, and therefore he was showing them how to become Krsna conscious. This is the highest mercy. If you want to show any mercy at all to the living entities, then enlighten them in Krsna consciousness, as Prahlada Maharaja did. Otherwise, it is materially beyond your power to show mercy.

"My dear friends," Prahlada says, "give up this demoniac life. Give up this nonsense." The belief that there is no God is the demoniac feature that Prahlada Maharaja requests his friends to give up. Because they were born in the families of demons and were being instructed by demoniac teachers, Prahlada's friends were thinking, "Who is God? There is no God." We find in the Bhagavad-gita that people of this mentality are called miscreants, for they always try to make mischief. They may be very well educated lawyers, for example, but their plan is to cheat. We have practical experience. These lawyers are highly educated with so many qualifications and are nicely dressed, but their mentality is more base than that of a dog. "This man has some money, so let us conspire to cheat him." They are simply miscreants.

What are they cheating for? Simply for sense gratification, just like an ass who does not know the purpose of life. He is kept by the washerman, who loads his back as much as possible. In this way the ass works the whole day with this burden simply for a few morsels of grass. Similarly, materialistic people work very hard simply for a little insignificant sense gratification. Therefore they are compared to asses. They are always planning something mischievous. They are the lowest of mankind because they do not believe in God. Why? Their knowledge has been plundered by the influence of the material energy. Because they deny the existence of God, illusion impels them: "Yes, there is no God. Work hard and commit sins so that you may go to hell."