His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, Founder-Acharya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, came to America in 1965, at age 69, to fulfill his spiritual master’s request that he teach the science of Krishna consciousness throughout the English-speaking world. In a dozen years he published some seventy volumes of translation and commentary on India’s Vedic literature, and these are now standard in universities worldwide. Meanwhile, travelling almost nonstop, Srila Prabhupada moulded his international society into a world wide confederation of ashramas, schools, temples and farm communities. He passed away in 1977, in Vrindavana, the place most sacred to Lord Krishna. His disciples and followers are carrying forward the movement he started.
The Highest Education

The Vedic literature reveals the essential qualification of a person ready to accept a spiritual master.

A lecture given in New York, November 22, 1966

By His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada
Founder-Acharya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

raja-vidya raja-guhyam
pavitram idam uttamam
pratyaksavagamam dharmyam
su-sukham kartum avyayam

"This knowledge is the king of education, the most secret of all secrets. It is the purest knowledge, and because it gives direct perception of the self by realization, it is the perfection of religion. It is everlasting, and it is joyfully performed."—Bhagavad-gita 9.2

Vidya means "education," and raja means "king." What is the king of education?

We have different statuses of life in the material world. In education, someone is an M.A., someone is a B.A., someone is in school three years, someone four years. There are different grades of education. Now, what is the summum bonum—the highest or topmost education? The topmost education—raja-vidya—is Krishna consciousness.

Real knowledge is to understand what I am. Unless we come to this point, we are not in knowledge.

When Chaitanya Mahaprabhu began His preaching, His first disciple was Sanatana Gosvami, a finance minister of Nawab Hussain Shah. Being attracted by Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's movement, Sanatana retired from service and joined Lord Chaitanya. When he came to Lord Chaitanya for the first time, he inquired, "What is education?"

Sanatana was highly educated. In those days the Persian language was being taught in India. Just as during British rule the English language was taught to us, during Pathan rule the Persian language was the state language. Sanatana Gosvami was a great scholar in Sanskrit also. Still, he inquired, "What is education?"

Why did he inquire like that? He told Lord Chaitanya, "People in general consider me very educated, and I am such a fool that I accept that I am educated."

So the next question is "Then why do you think you are not educated? You are great scholar in Sanskrit, a great scholar in Persian. Why do you think you are not educated?"

Sanatana replied, "I think I'm not educated because I do not know what I am. I do not wish to suffer, but material miseries are forced upon me. I do not know where I have come from or where I will have to go, and still people think that I am very educated. They designate me a great scholar, and I am satisfied. But I am such a fool that I do not know what I am."

Actually, this is our present situation. We are very proud of our advancement of education. But if you inquire from various persons, "What are you?" hardly anyone will be able to answer. Everyone is under the conception that we are the body. But we are not actually the body. This we have discussed many times. So by passing this examination—by knowing "I am not this body"—one has come to real knowledge. That is the beginning.

Knowledge and Action

Of the knowledge Lord Krishna is now imparting to Arjuna, Krishna says, "This is raja-vidya." Raja-vidya means to know oneself and act accordingly. If I do not know what I am, then I am mistaken about my situation, and all my activities are mistaken and illusory. Simply knowing "I am not the material body" is not sufficient. You are not material; you are spiritual. So you must act accordingly. That spiritual activity is Krishna consciousness, and it is called raja-vidya, the king of all education.

Raja-guhyam means "very confidential." It is not possible to accept Krishna consciousness very easily. But by the mercy of Krishna and Lord Chaitanya, it is very easily delivered to us through chanting Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare.

Lord Chaitanya has given an analytical study of the living entity. He has begun by saying that there are innumerable living entities all over the universe. If you dig into the earth, you'll find many living entities. If you study the air, you'll
find many living entities. If you go deep into the water, you'll find living entities. So all over the universe there are different types of living entities.

Lord Chaitanya divides the living entities into two classes: some are moving and some are not moving. Trees, stones, plants, grass—they cannot move. A stone has life, but a stone has no developed consciousness. It is too covered. Similarly, if a person in the human body does not understand his position, he's almost stonelike.

Then there are the moving entities, such as aquatics, beasts, birds, reptiles, human beings, demigods, celestial angels. Out of the moving entities, a very small number are human beings. There are 8,400,000 species of life. Out of them, only 400,000 are in the human body. Lord Chaitanya says, "Out of these 400,000 human species, some are civilized. And out of many civilized persons, some are devoted to the scriptures." People say, "I belong to the Christian religion," "I belong to the Hindu religion," or "I belong to the Moslem religion." But in the present age, most people who claim "I belong to this religion" do not believe in the scriptures.

Three Kinds of Religious Acts

Those who do believe in the scriptures are mostly attracted by pious, philanthropic activities. They believe, for example, that charity is a good thing. Pious, religious acts are of three kinds: yajna-dana-tapah. Yajna means "sacrifice," dana means "charity," and tapah means "penance." The spiritual orders of brahmacharya (celibate student life) and sannyasa (renounced life) involve tapah. Tapah means voluntarily accepting rigid principles of austerity. Charity means voluntarily giving away one's material possessions.

Yajna means "sacrifice." Nowadays we have no experience of sacrifice. But we get information about sacrifices from such historical literature as the Mahabharata. Formerly kings performed big sacrifices. They distributed millions of rupees, millions of valuables, and gold and silver. That is not possible today. But formerly the kings did that. The kings used to collect taxes from the citizens, but when the kings performed sacrifices, they distributed wealth freely to the citizens. Nowadays the state simply collects taxes but never distributes. So we have no idea what is yajna.

Yajna is the duty of kings or heads of state, dana is the duty of the general householders, and tapah is the duty of the brahmacharis, sannyasis, and vanaprasthas (retired persons). These are different kinds of rules in religious life. Some who believe in scriptures adopt these rules. Mostly, however, people simply accept a certain faith. They say they accept a certain religion, but they do not do anything. Still, out of many millions of people like that, some are really religious: they perform sacrifice and penance and give charity.

Lord Chaitanya says, "Out of many millions of persons actually engaged in charity, penance, and sacrifice, some come to the perfect understanding of what they are: 'I am not this body.'"

Now, simply theoretically knowing "I am not this body; I am spirit soul" is not perfect. You actually have to become liberated from material entanglement. That is called mukti, liberation. Out of many thousands of people who know what they are, some of them are actually liberated. And out of many thousands of people who are liberated, some can understand Krishna.

Symptoms of Liberation

So understanding Krishna is not easy. But Krishna is kind. He knows that in this Age of Kali it will be very difficult for people to become liberated by the ordinary process—first to become civilized, then to become religious, then to give charity and perform sacrifices, then to come to the platform of knowledge, and then to come to liberation. Therefore He came as Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and gave us a direct method of becoming Krishna conscious.

After being liberated, you can know Krishna. That is stated in the Bhagavad-gita: brahma-bhutah prasannatma. The first symptom of a liberated person is that he is very happy. You'll never find him morose. Na socati na kanksati: he has no anxiety. We are full of anxieties. "Oh, I haven't got this thing. I have to secure that thing. I have to pay this bill. Oh, this I have to do"—so many anxieties. But a liberated person has no anxieties. Does this mean that because he has no anxieties he is a very rich man? No. Not necessarily. But he has no anxiety.

He also has no lamentation. He does not think, "I am poor." Why should he think he's poor? When I think, "I am a part of this material world, and I haven't got this material possession," then I think, "I am poor." But one who is liberated from the material conception of life has no concern for what he possesses or does not possess. Therefore he's prasannatma, joyful. "Oh, I have nothing to lose, nothing to gain. I am completely separate from here." That is liberation.

The liberated person's vision of life is samah sarvesu bhutesu: he does not see anyone as rich or poor, foolish or educated. There are so many dualities in the material world, but the vision of the liberated person is completely
on the spiritual platform. He sees that every living entity is a part and parcel of Krishna. Therefore he tries to take all living beings back to Krishna consciousness. He does not distinguish "He is a brahmana. He is a sudra, a labourer. He is Indian. He's American," or "He's black. He's white," or "He's educated. He's noneducated." No. "Everyone should come to Krishna consciousness." That is his viewpoint. Samah sarvesu bhutesu. When one is qualified in that way, then mad-bhaktim labhate param. Lord Krishna says, "Then he becomes eligible to become My pure devotee."

The process of coming to liberation under regulative principles is not easy, especially in this age. The Bhagavatam describes the people of this age as prayenalpayusah: "Their duration of life is very short." And mandah. Mandah means "very slow." Out of twenty-four hours, people sleep twelve, and out of the remaining twelve, they're busy ten hours earning money. Two hours left. What can they do for spiritual understanding? There's no time.

Then the Srimad-Bhagavatam says: sumanda-matayo. If someone has the intention to make spiritual progress, then there are so many pseudo spiritual societies to entrap him.

Then manda-bhagyah: "And most of the people are unfortunate." Most people don't even have sufficient arrangements...
for the primary principles of life—eating, sleeping, defending, and mating. These are only primary principles; they are available even in animal life. But in this age, even these primary principles are difficult to obtain—shelter, food, a wife. And everyone is afraid. "When will war be declared and I'll be sent to the warfield?"

And finally, *upadruta*—"On top of all this, people are always disturbed with diseases and so many other things."

This is the position of people in this age. Therefore Lord Krishna thought that it would be impossible for such people to come to the point of liberation under the regulative process. So out of His causeless mercy, He came as Lord Chaitanya and distributed the highest perfection of life—spiritual ecstasy—through the chanting of Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. This chanting is practical. It does not depend on whether you are liberated or nonliberated, on your position or your condition. Just come and take part in it, and you'll feel spiritual ecstasy. Therefore this process is called *pavitram*, "very pure." Anyone who takes to this process becomes purified. The purification begins at once.

_Uttamam_ means "the highest," or "transcendental." Yesterday I explained the meaning of _uttamam_ by quoting a commentary on today's verse. The commentator explained the meaning of _uttamam_ by referring to a verse from the _Padma Purana:_

> aprarabdha-phalam papam kutam bijam phalonmukham  
> kramenaiva praliyeta visnu-bhakti-ratatmanam

This means that when one is in Krishna consciousness—in the highest transcendental knowledge—gradually the seeds of all reactions to his sins become vanquished. We have studied in the _Bhagavad-gita_ the example that if you put something into the fire, the fire turns it into ashes. Similarly, as soon as the fire of Krishna consciousness begins, all reactions of sinful activities from our past life are destroyed.

**The Purpose of Scripture**

Our suffering is due to sinful activities. And sinful activities are due to our ignorance. Sinful activities are done by persons who do not know what is what. A child does not know the result of touching fire, because he is ignorant. But as soon as the child touches fire, his hand becomes burned. The fire does not allow any concession for the child. The fire will act as fire. Similarly, we do not know how this material world is going on—what the laws are, who the controller is, how it is being controlled. Out of ignorance we act in some way, but nature is so stringent that it will never excuse us, whether we do it knowingly or unknowingly.

Therefore ignorance is the cause of suffering. So one should be put into proper knowledge. And proper knowledge means knowing things as they are: what we are, what the world is, what God is, what our relationship with God is. We should know these things. One should not simply become a technical expert or some departmental expert. That is not knowledge. Here is knowledge: you should know what you are and how you should act. And this knowledge can be achieved in the human form of life, not in the animal form of life. Therefore, to give you knowledge, to give you proper direction, there are so many scriptures in all parts of the civilized world. They should not be neglected.

Chaitanya Mahaprabhu says, "Since time immemorial, people have forgotten their relationship with the Supreme Lord. Therefore the Lord has sent many representatives to give them the scriptures." So we should take advantage of the scriptures, especially the _Bhagavad-gita_. In _Bhagavad-gita_ you'll find everything presented nicely. You can put your arguments. You can try to understand with your knowledge, with your intelligence. Everything will be clear.

So we should take advantage of the _Bhagavad-gita_. And our power to understand it will increase if we begin our study with this transcendental sound vibration: Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare.

Thank you very much.
The Highest Pleasure in a Rascal Culture

This exchange between His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada and some of his disciples took place on October 18, 1975, during a morning walk in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Disciple: Srila Prabhupada, people sometimes criticize by saying, “Your Vedic culture was most solidly established in India. And India is now considered relatively poor and unfortunate. So why should we respect the Vedic culture?”

Srila Prabhupada: The thing is, when you Westerners went to India you curbed down the original Vedic culture. The people in India could not take to your rascal Western culture, and thanks to you they have lost their own culture. This is India’s bad luck. The British did not teach them how to actually take up the Western culture, but they killed the Eastern culture. You understand?

Disciple: Yes.

Srila Prabhupada: Now India has no position. She cannot take to the Western culture fully, and she has lost her own culture. This is India’s bad luck. The British never taught Indians how to become actually Westernized. No. They did not
give them sufficient education. Especially in the beginning, the British were against giving the Indians higher education. They wanted some clerks to conduct their affairs—some third-class, fourth-class men for their mercantile and government bureaucracies.

"Educated" meant ABCD. That's all. "Let the Indians know ABCD, then take fifty, sixty rupees' salary, go home to their little neighbourhoods outside the city and return the next day on the train. Let them work hard in our city and get just enough money to maintain themselves."

Nothing more. No money, no education, no real knowledge of industry. The Indian people were not taught properly. In America, for instance, I see the factories, and the arrangement is so nice. But go to those Indian factories—it is hell. Simply hell. The Britishers exploited the Indians, and the mercantile class of India—they have learned simply how to exploit.

Disciple: Exploit their own people.

Srila Prabhupada: That's all. Formerly, the Manchester people were exploiting the Indians. And now the Ahmedabad people—they have learned how to exploit. And the government is satisfied, because the exploiters pay taxes: "Never mind. The workers may go on suffering." This is going on. And the Indian people have lost their own culture. They have been taught how to drink alcohol, how to eat flesh.

Aside from all this, Indians cannot work as hard as Westerners. The hot climate does not allow it. India's climate is good for living peacefully, not working so hard, and instead engaging the brain in spiritual advancement.

That is India's gift. Her people are not meant for hard work.

Actually, hard work is not required for anyone. This is animal civilization—simply to work very hard. If a man works hard like an animal, then what is the difference between the man and an animal? Here in the Western countries the climate is more suitable for heavy industry, and as one would expect, the people are being taught to work very hard like animals, and they do that. Therefore, materially they have become so-called advanced, to the point that spiritually they are committing suicide. Is it not?

Disciple: This is true.

Srila Prabhupada: Materially advanced, spiritually suicidal. Am I right or wrong?

Disciple: Right, Srila Prabhupada. Another dimension also comes to mind. In your commentary on Srimad-Bhagavatam you write that if people want to increase their material advancement, then they should also increase their sex lives.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. Without sex one cannot be materially enthusiastic. And if you stop sex, then you become spiritually advanced. This is the secret. If you stop sex, then you will become spiritually advanced, and if you indulge in sex, then you will become materially enthusiastic. That is the difference between Western and Eastern culture. The whole Eastern culture is based on stopping sex, and here in the Western countries on how to increase sex. The people here are eating meat, eggs, drinking wine. These things increase sex desire. And as soon as you get a very satisfactory sex life, you...
become enthusiastic to work hard. Therefore for karmis, or those seeking material advancement, marriage is necessary, because without sex they cannot work. And for those seeking spiritual advancement, sex is prohibited.

Actually, in this Western culture, people do not know the science of life. For them, "life" means this body. Their life is this body. That means they do not know what life is. After all, when the living person has gone, the body they thought he was is lying there. They are very proud of their scientific advancement, but in reality do they know who the person was? They cannot explain. This is their ignorance. And yet they are very proud of their advancement.

But once this person's life span has come to an end, can they bring him back to life? That they cannot do. That means the whole basic principle of their so-called culture is ignorance. Mudho yam nabhijanati: Krishna says, "Fools and rascals can never understand the soul or the Supreme Soul." And moghasa mogha-karmano mogha-ijnana vicetasah: "Their material cleverness— their so-called knowledge—leaves them spiritually baffled." Why? Raksasim asurim caiva prakritim mohinim srutah: "Those who take shelter not of My divine nature but of prakrti, the material nature, become so bewildered that they do not know life's real aim." Moghasa: "They are utterly baffled." And therefore, mogha-karmano: "Whatever they are doing—that will be useless." Again, mogha-ijnana: in this so-called advanced culture, there is no spiritual knowledge. So actually there is no knowledge.

Disciple: So with their advancement of knowledge they are increasing their sex lives, but if they were really advanced in knowledge, they would be decreasing their sex lives.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. They do not even know what knowledge is. To these fools and rascals, knowledge means sex. That is their knowledge. Advancement of knowledge means how to enjoy sex. How to take shelter of abortion—child killing. And how to perfect their contraceptive method. The whole thing is on the basis of sex. That's all. They do not know anything except these things. They know that after sex there is so much botheration. But they cannot give sex up. Therefore, they make all these arrangements: take contraceptives, or kill the child.

That means their whole so-called civilization, their whole culture, is based on sex. That's all. But yan maithunadigrhamedhi-sukham hi tuccham/ kanduyanena karayar iva duhkhah duhkhah: "Sex is like the rubbing of two hands to relieve an itch. Those with no spiritual knowledge consider this itching the greatest happiness, although actually, from start to finish, the whole business is distress—and it is most abominable."

Is that pleasure? These supposedly advanced rascals think it is pleasure to unite the urine-passing parts. [Laughter.] And we have to believe this is pleasure—a standard of pleasure utterly third-class, fourth-class. Yan maithunadigrhamedhi-sukham hi tuccham. Very abominable. Tuccham: the Vedic literature says, "Sex is most abominable." And yet these fools take it as the highest goal, and they make all sorts of elaborate arrangements for this abominable pleasure.

When dogs have sex, everyone knows that their whole "enjoyment" is abominable and insignificant. Therefore, dogs are allowed to do it on the street. And people can see it. Is that a very nice scene? Yet when the same abominable and insignificant thing is done by the human beings, they are taking it that "This is the highest." This is the basic principle of their happiness. That's all. Mohinim—captivation by the opposite sex.

And this is real captivation. For instance, nature has already made women's faces, breasts, and hips beautiful, their singing and talking and walking all very attractive. And now, thanks to this rascal culture, the women are walking around virtually naked. This is going on. The whole thing is based on sex, and that is tuccham, most abominable. Prakrtim mohinim srutah: people are being taught to take shelter of the material nature's potency for bewilderment.

It will take them three hundred births to understand that sex pleasure is actually abominable. Therefore, in Bhagavad-gita Krishna says, bahunam janmanam ante: "A rascal gains the wisdom to surrender to Me only after many, many births." Not that immediately, simply by hearing our Gita lecture, people will give this abominable pleasure up. It will take many, many births to understand.

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As Krishna delivered the message of the Bhagavad-gita to Arjuna on the Battlefield of Kuruksetra, just as two titanic armies were about to clash. The trumpets and conch shells heralding the battle had already been blown, and the bows were drawn tight with their arrows ready to fly. The horses were nervous, the warriors tense with anticipation of mortal combat. It was at this point that Arjuna had second thoughts. Although he was convinced of the righteousness of his cause and had the direct sanction of the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself, he became sickened at the prospect of leading his army into civil war. He could see no good result coming from the battle. He decided to leave the field—ruined and dishonoured—and to adopt a life of poverty, although he was by birth and upbringing a prince of splendid position.

At that point, Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, advised Arjuna to fight. The course of the conversation which followed between these two is the instruction of the Bhagavad-gita. This may seem an unlikely tree from which to pluck the fruit of peace—but we shall soon see that the fruit is there, and that it is well within our reach.

To begin His instructions to Arjuna, the Lord made clear the difference between the body and the soul. Arjuna’s misgivings were all on the level of material consciousness—he was considering the ills, comforts and relationships of the body. Krishna politely called him a fool for this, and then explained that the living entity—the real being—is not matter at all. The real person is the soul, the pure spirit that dwells within the body. Krishna speaks of the soul in these terms:

He who thinks that this slays
And he who thinks that this is slain—
Both fail to perceive the truth:
This one neither slays nor is slain.
He is never born, nor does he die at any time,
Nor, having being, will he cease to be.
He is unborn, eternal, permanent and primeval.
He is not slain when the body is slain.
(=Gita, 2.19-20=)

It is to this real person, and not to the material covering, that Bhagavad-gita is addressed. The material covering—the body—is born, and is quite as ephemeral as a flicker of sunset colour. Of the soul, however, these things are not true. Again, Lord Sri Krishna says:

Weapons do not cut this self,
Fire does not burn him,
Waters do not wet him,
Nor does the wind make him dry.
He is unceavable. He cannot be burnt.
He can neither be wetted nor dried.
Though he pervades the body, he is eternal, unchanging, and immovable.
He is the same forever.
=Gita, 2.23-24=

This is the real person, who has by mischance fallen into this ocean of material misery. Here, he is not at home. He has identified himself with the body, and is therefore suffering the pangs of disease, old age, death and rebirth. All the impermanence and insecurity of the ever-changing material universe are his—although he is in fact “eternal, unchanging and immovable...the same forever.”

Before we can actually consider the problem of peace, we must make clear this distinction between matter and spirit. This is what Krishna did for Arjuna, before going on with the teaching of Bhagavad-gita. And so this distinction is necessary for our further understanding also. The great acharya and our grand spiritual master Sri Srimad Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Goswami used to tell the following brief story to his disciples, to illustrate this point:

Once a man fell into a lake. Being unable to swim, he shouted and cried for help, failing desperately in the water. A well-meaning passerby, seeing the man’s plight, leapt into the lake and swam to him. He was very proud of himself, but the people on the shore jeered at him for being a terrible fool. He had brought the drowning man’s coat to safety, but the man himself had by now gone down to his death.

In Bhagavad-gita, Krishna says:

Just as a person casts off worn-out garments
And puts on others that are new-
Even so does the embodied soul cast off worn-out bodies
And takes on others that are new.
=Gita, 2.22=

Just as we would deride the fool who brought the drowning man’s coat to shore—so we must deride the doers of good deeds in our present society, who ignore the soul—the true, imperishable person—and make prodigious efforts towards the relief of the body. Fortunes are cast into the fire for saving people’s bodies, but in the end everyone surely dies. Meanwhile, the real living entity within goes on suffering indefinitely, neither its disease nor its very existence being regarded.

This applies to our present strivings for peace in the world as well. All our grave and earnest efforts are being directed at the body—to prevent its death on the field of battle—yet no one can stay the hand of death, nor turn the sun back on its course, nor stop the coming of dusk. We think that conditions in Vietnam are pitiable, but we ignore the pitiable conditions on the Bowery, in Harlem—and, yes, even in Levittown.

We are all suffering at the hands of material nature, because it is alien to us. No man can live contentedly in the midst of the North Atlantic, nor can a whale find a peaceful home on the Great Plains. The eternal spirit soul, in similar fashion, is out of its natural environment.
when, under the cloud of illusion, it accepts the bodily concept of life. Its plight is duly noted by the Lord:

The living entities are Eternal fragmental portions of Myself. They are dragging on in a bitter struggle for existence in material nature
With the six senses, including the mind. (Gita, 15.7)

Because we are eternal, we seek eternal surroundings. But we have accepted material nature, and so our strivings for happiness, security and peace are carried out here, where they cannot be brought to success. In the eight chapter of Bhagavad-gita, Krishna says, "The basis of all created things is mutable nature." (Gita, 8.4). As the basis of the created—or material—world, mutability is not separable from the material world. Just what this mutability consists of and how it acts is elsewhere described by the Lord, in discussing the three modes by which nature manifests itself.

Goodness prevails, overpowering
Passion and ignorance, O Bharata.
Passion prevails, overpowering goodness and ignorance. Even so ignorance prevails, overpowering goodness and passion. (Gita VIX/10)

This is the working of nature—both within man and within the whole context of material creation. Just as there are many men today who are labouring dearly for peace—so there are even more men (obviously) who are labouring for war. This is an eternal process, according to Lord Sri Krishna. At one time the forces of goodness prevail, at another the powers of passion, and then again—as in a dark or stagnant age—the forces of ignorance are most prominent.

This revolving wheel cannot be stopped. It is not a phenomenon peculiar to human activities, but a universal law—the mutability of material existence. Even on a much higher scale, the very cosmos itself is subject to this restless activity. Here is the Lord's description of cosmic evolution:

At the coming of day
All manifested things come forth from the unmanifested
And at the coming of night
They merge in that same unmanifested.
This very same multitude of existences
Arising again and again
Merges helplessly at the coming of night, O Partha,
And streams forth into being at the coming of day. (Gita, 8.18-19)

What peace then shall we find here? Here, there is only a perpetual struggle to survive, where survival is assuredly impossible. The Utopian concept of a world without war—a world of material peace and comfort—
is an imagination. There is a place of true peace and, more than comfort, eternal ecstacy—but it is not here in the sphere of cosmic evolution.

However, we have already seen that the living entity is not matter. Although he has identified himself with the body, he is actually eternal, and lives on after the annihilation of the body. He lives on, in fact, beyond the annihilation of the very universe—through cosmic days and nights without end. His real position lies outside the spinning modes of material nature.

The master (of the body) does not act, 
Nor does he cause others to act, 
Nor does he connect work with its fruit. 
It is nature that accomplishes these things. 
(Gita 5.14)

Disturbance, turbulence and unrest, the grim struggle for existence, the savage grappling for impossible survival—these are nature's actions. The real living spark does not participate. He merely lends his consciousness, and therefore he suffers. But, when he can withdraw his attachment, and fix himself in his real nature—then he is free, for he has broken his artificial ties with nature. Being established in one's real identity, we must therefore conclude, is the meaning of peace. No aspect of body consciousness can bring peace, because the body is only an artificial covering—itself the cause of our unhappiness, subject by its very constitution to the limits of day and night, and day and night again, and on and on again.

We can have real peace. We can withdraw ourselves from our attachment to matter, and fix ourselves in ourselves as we really are—full of knowledge, blissful and eternal. This real peace can be had first of all in personal terms—immediately and directly for the individual. The Lord, in His infinite kindness, appeared and eternal. This real peace can be had first of all in personal terms—immediately and directly for the individual. The Lord, in His infinite kindness, appeared.

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These three items of knowledge, then, will bring us peace: First, that God is the Enjoyer of everything, and that everything is meant for His enjoyment. Second, that God is the Lord and Master of all worlds. And, third, that the Lord is friend to all beings, whatever their aspect. If we accept these principles, we have drawn ourselves out of the entanglement of material nature. If the nations of the world and their government will accept these principles, then we can actually have world-wide peace at once. There will be no need to battle over some land, some sky, some jewels or some influence. If we realize that all these things are the property of God. It is because we imagine them to be ours that we are killing each other for them. We come to this earth naked and we go empty-handed—and while we're here we struggle ferociously for some clods of clay. But these things are not ours. They will never be ours. They are God's, and we are also God's.

Modern civilization is deeply engrossed in the search for peace, but for all the efforts made, no peace has been found. Nations are engaged in vicious warfare—and individuals are likewise so engaged in the course of their daily lives. In Sweden today there is no war, and yet the people are committing suicide in appalling numbers. No armies are contesting the roadways in New York or California, but you cannot count the dead which pile up on them everyday. There is no more peace in Stockholm or in the Bronx than there is in Vietnam—all the fashion of the struggle and its attendant agonies are different. This is because we have failed to recognize the Lord. Our godless civilization is a disaster on every account.

There is a Sanskrit verse which translates approximately like this: "Eating, sleeping, defending and mating are instincts common to animals and men. But the extra instinct, which distinguishes the human from the animal, is his religious instinct." Human life is characterized by its highly-developed consciousness. Unless we use this developed consciousness to find out the answers to the problems of existence, then we are using only our animal instincts. In other words, without at least a serious

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Krishna Voice, April 2012
enquiry into the nature of our being, our life cannot be said to be human.

This society as it stands today, then, is not human society. It has cast aside all interest in God and the spirit, and has bent all its energies to sophisticating and elaborating upon the gratification of those simple instincts which we hold in common with the dogs, the hogs and the buffalo. Because war disturbs one's ability to enjoy his animal propensities, our society has decided to find some means to abolish war. It has not taken any consideration of the Lord, however. That would also mean giving up our deep attachment to those propensities which we share with the less-conscious animals. However, without god-consciousness, we are no more than sophisticated dogs. This is why the United Nations is a failure, and why it will continue to fail. There is no more hope of a workable peace coming from the General Assembly than there is from the city pound.

The leaders who are attempting to guide our civilization away from disaster are unmindful of God. Being ignorant of God, they are themselves blind to all truth, and at the mercy of the modes of nature. They cannot possibly accomplish anything but deviltry. The words of this writer will be less trenchant than the following three verses from Bhagavad-gita, in which the Lord Himself speaks on this subject:

Deluded by these
Threefold modes of Nature,
This whole world does not recognize Me,
Who am above them and imperishable.
This Divine Maya (illusory energy) of Mine,
Consisting of the three modes, is hard to overcome.
But those who take refuge in Me alone
Cross beyond it.
The evil-doers, the foolish,
The lowest of Mankind—whose minds are carried away
by illusion
And who partake of the nature of demons—
These do not seek refuge in Me.
(Gita 7.13-15)

Lord Krishna doesn't mince His words. We may know then, on His authority, that most of the leaders—intellectual as well as administrative—of our modern world, are evil-doers, fools, the lowest among Mankind—and that their knowledge has been carried away by illusion (in other words, they are mad). Do not expect peace in our time. These men who now lead us are particularly qualified only for the grim mischief which we have already so lavishly tasted in this Twentieth Century. As to whether these men are likely to bring about peace in spite of their poor qualifications—by chance, as it were—here are two more verses which pretty nicely examine this possibility:

The deluded despise Me
Clad in human body,
Not knowing My higher Nature
As Lord of all existences.
Partaking of the deceptive nature of fiends and demons,
Their aspirations are vain,
Their actions vain and their knowledge vain
And they are devoid of judgment.
(Gita, 9.11-12)

The fact is that there are probably at least as many atheists campaigning for peace as there are engaged in war right now. Bhagavad-gita says that all of these men are devoid of judgment. We can expect no good from them. The Lord Himself avows this, and the events of history attest to the truth of His words.

Even if a political peace can be established, it will not mean that peace has come to Mankind. Peace is a thing of the heart, the mind and the soul. Peace can be absent from the placid shores of some sylvan meadow stream, and it can also be had in the midst of brutal violence and mayhem. Even so slight a thing as a smile on the rush-hour bus is a conquest of material nature. Peace is an inner quality. It is a gift of God bestowed upon those who are wise enough to accept Him as the Supreme Enjoyer, Lord of all world, and Friend of all beings.

The great-souled (mahatmas), O Partha
Who abide in the divine nature,
Knowing Me the imperishable source of all beings,
Worship Me with undistracted devotion.
(Gita, 9.13)

These are the qualifications which we should look for in our leaders. They are rarely found, to be sure, but if we actually want peace among men, then we must seek out such people. Of course, even the present leaders of the world can quickly attain the status of great-souled. Let them take up the chanting of the Lord's Holy Names, to purify their minds. Let them recognize the Lord's sovereignty of God, and the sacredness of all that belongs to Him. Let them make it their business to propagate God-consciousness among the people whose earthly destinies they wish to guide. These measures will bring peace to this planet.

And, if we want peace within—the real peace which affects the soul and not merely its outer covering of the body—then we must ourselves bow down with undistracted devotion to the Lord. This is what Arjuna did. Thereupon, though he waded into the monstrous melee at Kurukshetra, he was free from the good and evil reactions of his deeds, because he acted not on his own behalf, but at the bidding of the Lord, Sri Krishna. Arjuna the warrior continued to be a warrior, but he was at peace, in worshiping God. We too need not retreat from the world in order to find real peace. We need only turn to the Lord. In Him lies the end of all pursuits. The words of Arjuna, upon seeing the Lord's Universal Form, well apply to us, as well as to all creatures in all ages:
And why should they not do Thee homage, O exalted One, Who art greater than Brahma, the original father? O Infinite Being, Lord of gods, Refuge of the Universe, Thou art the Imperishable, The being and the non-being and what is beyond even that. Thou art the first of the gods, the Primal Person, The Supreme Resting Place of the world. Thou art the knower and That which is to be known and the Supreme Goal. By Thee is this universe pervaded, O Thou of Infinite Form! Thou art the wind, the destroyer, The fire, the sea-god, the moon and the grandsire of all. Hail, hail to Thee a thousand fold! Hail, hail to Thee again and yet again! Hail to Thee in front, hail to Thee behind, And hail to Thee on every side, O All! Boundless in power and immeasurable in might, Thou dost penetrates all and therefore Thou art All! (Gita, 9.37-40)

One who recognizes these truths has found the genuine splendour of all existence—and he has found peace as well. He is not a weakling or a fool; he is a realist in the highest sense of the word. Let the madmen whose fingers have closed on the gold and the flesh of this world have their brief game of play. We must seek Reality. One who is sincere in his quest for peace will look to the root cause of the world's distress—and he will find it in the hardness of his own heart. So, let's pry open the doors that have sealed off the pure, radiant chambers of our hearts. Let's pray for peace with these words of Arjuna:

Thou art the Father of the world, of the moving and the unmoving.
Thou art the Object of its worship, and its venerable Teacher.

None is equal to Thee. How then Could there be one greater than Thee in the three worlds, O Thou of incomparable greatness?

Therefore, bowing down and prostrating my body before Thee, Adorable Lord, I seek Thy grace.
Thou, O God, shouldst bear with me as a father with his son, As a friend to his friend—as a lover to his beloved. (Gita 11.43-44)
Whether or not God has a form is a perennial philosophical question with arguments on both sides. The way we pray to God, and the way the saints address God in their devotional prayers, suggests that God is a person we are calling. But is personhood compatible with the idea that God must have no limits? Would a Form Limit God?

To reconcile these two concepts—personhood and unlimitedness—we need to first understand the definition of God. The Vedanta-sutras (1.1.2) define God, or the Absolute Truth (Brahman), as the source of everything: \( \text{janmady asya yatah.} \) Another ancient text, the Brahma-
samhita (5.1) defines God similarly as the cause of all causes: sarva-karana-karanam. This concise definition of God is essentially in agreement with the understanding of God given by all the theistic traditions of the world. So, if God is the source of everything, then He must possess the essential attributes of everything, or else He would be less than His creation. In this world, both personal beings and impersonal forces exist, so both these aspects must be present in God. If God were not a person, then He, by definition the Complete Being, would be incomplete. Another, simpler way of putting this: If we as the children of God are persons, how can our father, God, not be a person? So, those who say that God is not a person are actually limiting Him, by divesting Him of what His creation has.

Now let's consider the question "Do personality and form not limit God?" Vedic wisdom helps us understand that what causes limitation is not form, but matter. Due to the very nature of matter, all material objects are limited, whether they have form or not. We subconsciously project our conceptions of matter on the form of God and so think that a form would limit God. But God is not material; He is entirely spiritual. Spirit has characteristics different from matter; that which is spiritual has the potential to be unlimited, whether it has form or not. God's spiritual form does not limit Him.

Is Man Made in the Image of God?

This brings us to the next objection: "Even if I accept that God has a form, why should He have a humanlike form? Isn't that another example of assigning human attributes to God?"

Factually, the opposite is true. Anthropomorphism—the idea that we have ascribed a humanlike form to God—seems sensible initially, but only because of our self-centered thinking. We think that because we have a humanlike form we have conceived of God as humanlike. But could not the reverse be true? What if God's form is the original and our human form is modeled after His?

Logically both ideas are possible. How do we know which is the reality? When we want knowledge about God, we think that because we have a self-centered perspective, it seems sensible initially, but only because of our self-centered thinking. We think that because we have a humanlike form we have conceived of God as humanlike. But could not the reverse be true? What if God's form is the original and our human form is modeled after His?

Vedic Insights

Like the scriptures of the Abrahamic religions, the Vedic scriptures assert that God has a form. But they go further by giving vivid descriptions of His form. For example, the scripture glorified as "the ripened fruit of the Vedic literature"—the Srimad-Bhagavatam—offers this enchanting description of the Lord's form:

"His complexion was dark blue and His garment golden. Wearing a peacock feather, coloured minerals, sprigs of flower buds, and a garland of forest flowers and leaves, He was dressed just like a dramatic dancer. He rested one hand upon the shoulder of a friend and with the other twirled a lotus. Lilies graced His ears, His hair hung down over His cheeks, and His lotus-like face was smiling." (10.23.22)

Similarly the Brahma-samhita (5.30) offers an enthralling glimpse of God's beautiful divine form:

"I worship Govinda, the primeval Lord, who is adept at playing on His flute, who has blooming eyes like lotus petals, whose head is bedecked with a peacock feather, whose figure of beauty is tinged with the hue of blue clouds, and whose unique loveliness charms millions of Cupids."

Vedic Impersonalism?

Despite the Vedic scriptures' containing such vivid descriptions of God's form, a common notion is that...
they say that God is nirguna (without qualities) and nirakara (without form). While the Vedic scriptures do say those things, that is not all they say. Often the very same scriptures that say that God is nirguna also say that He is saguna (with qualities). Consider this verse from the Srimad-Bhagavatam (8.3.9):

\[ \text{tasmai namah pareshaya} \\
\text{brahmame 'nanta-shaktaye} \\
\text{arupayoru-rupaya} \\
\text{nama aschcharya-karmane} \]

This verse describes the Lord as both arupaya (without form) and uru-rupaya (having many forms). To quote only the word arupaya and declare that the verse says that God is formless, as some commentators do, is disingenuous.

Are such Vedic descriptions of God self-contradictory? Not at all. In fact, the Vedic tradition teaches a higher principle that harmonizes such contradictions.

Let’s consider a verse from the Svetashvatara Upanishad (3.19): apani-pado javano grahitapashyatyaachakshhusa shrinoty akamah. This verse contains an apparent contradiction: pashyaty acakshuh—“God has no eyes, but He sees.” How is this contradiction to be reconciled?

The Vedic tradition contains a special pramana (method of acquiring knowledge) called arthapatti (postulation) used for reconciling contradictory statements by postulating a third statement. (In addition to the standard three methods of acquiring knowledge—pratyaksha [direct perception], anumana [hypothesis], and shabda [hearing, especially from the Vedic literature]—Jiva Goswami in his Sarva-samvadini gives seven other ways. Arthapatti is one of them.) To see how arthapatti works, consider these two contradictory statements:

1. Ravi does not eat food during the day.
2. Ravi is growing fat.

The arthapatti to reconcile these two statements would be: Ravi eats at night.

Similarly, the arthapatti to reconcile the statements about God having and not having a form is: God has no material form, but has a spiritual form.

The same principle applies to the descriptions of God as both nirguna and saguna. The nirguna description implies that He has no material qualities, and the saguna description conveys that He has spiritual qualities.

At this point we may wonder: “Why do the Vedic scriptures contain contradictory statements at all? Wouldn’t it be much better if they gave truths clearly and unambiguously?”

Seemingly contradictory descriptions serve the vital purpose of challenging our preconceptions and stimulating us to rise to a higher understanding.

Consider the following Ishopanishad verse (Mantra 8):

sa paryagach chukram akayam avranam/ asnaviram shuddham apapa-viddham. This verse describes God as akayam (having no body) and then as asnaviram (having no veins). If God has no body, why is there a need to say that He has no veins? Isn’t it obvious that someone who has no body has no veins?

The Ishopanishad wants us to rise to the higher understanding that God has a special kind of body that has no veins.

Describing God as akayam conveys the special nature of God's body because the word kaya (body) has several connotations that do not apply to God. A body:

* Is separate from the real person, the soul.
* Is a product of the past karma of the soul.
* Tends to degrade the soul by stimulating bodily desires.
* Has to be given up.

None of these applies to God, whose body and soul are identical, who has no karmic past, who is never degraded, and whose body is eternal. Because we tend to superimpose our material conceptions on God, the scriptures sometimes use negative words like akayam to emphasize that God does not have a body like ours. Why is it important to understand the difference between our material form and God's spiritual form? Material forms are temporary, so attraction to them leads only to eventual frustration. But God's form is eternal, so attraction to His form leads to ultimate fulfillment. The negative scriptural statements that God doesn't have a form (like ours) save us from frustration, and the positive scriptural statements lead us to fulfillment.

Formless Person?

Some people concede that God is a person, but insist that He doesn't have a form. Let's examine this proposition. We are all children or servants or parts or emanations from God; whatever words different religions use to describe our relationship with Him, the essential point is that we are dependent on Him and subordinate to Him. We are persons and have forms; if God were a formless person, then He would be less than us. Can the whole be less than the part? Obviously not. Moreover, the scriptural references we discussed earlier talked not only about God's personality, but also about His form: His eyes, hands, legs, and so on. So the argument for a formless person is both illogical and non-scriptural.

People may come up with many such fallacious arguments. Instead of bothering to refute all of them, it's better to understand that such arguments originate because the human mind cannot grasp how God can have a form and still be unlimited. But if to preserve God's all-pervading nature we argue that God doesn't have any form whatsoever, then we are confronted with another perplexity: Without a form, how would He be located anywhere at all?

People try to imagine God as all-pervading and then try
to figure out how a form can be imposed on that all-pervasive being. But form is not a quality imposed on God, as red paint is a quality imposed on an artificial rose made from white paper. Rather, form is an inherent quality of God, as red is an inherent quality of a natural rose.

God As the Three-in-One Composite

Srila Jiva Goswami compiled the classic philosophical treatise Sat-sandarbha, based on the teachings of Srimad-Bhagavatam as explained by Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. In Sat-sandarbha Jiva Goswami elaborately analyzes a succinct verse from the Srimad-Bhagavatam (1.2.11): "Learned transcendentalists who know the Absolute Truth call this nondual substance Brahman, Paramatma, or Bhagavan." This verse reveals a profound three-part ontology of the Absolute Truth that can reconcile contradictory attributes of God.

The various divine conceptions in the world's wisdom traditions can be classed under three broad categories:

1. The all-pervading energy (Brahman): What quantum physicists call the one energy sea that underlies everything in the universe, what the mystics refer to as the impersonal oneness of all things and beings, the Vedic scriptures explain to be Brahman, the all-pervading light.

2. The inner guide (Paramatma): Many spiritual traditions talk about an aspect of God immanent within us. What the Christian tradition refers to as the empowering Holy Spirit, the Vedic scriptures call the Paramatma, the inner guide who, among other things, mediates the interactions between the soul and the material body.

3. The supreme person (Bhagavan): Saints throughout history have lovingly connected with God as the Supreme Person. That Lord whom Moses called Jehovah, whom Jesus referred to as his father in heaven, whom Mohammed praised as Allah, the Vedic scriptures reveal as Krishna, God as the all-attractive transcendental Supreme Person.

Here's an analogy to illustrate this unity-in-diversity of the Absolute Truth.

Three rural students arrive one night at a railway platform with their teacher, eager to have their first sight of a train. After a long wait, when they see a bright light in the distance, the first villager asks their teacher, "Is that the train?" When the teacher nods, the student departs, convinced he has seen the train. When the train comes closer, the second student notices the engine—the form behind the light—and asks, "Is that the train?" When the teacher nods again, the second student leaves, confident of having seen the train. When the train finally comes into the station, the third student sees the train in its fullness with its driver and multiple compartments and passengers and, with the encouragement of his teacher, even meets and befriends the driver.

The train's bright headlight represents the effulgent spiritual substratum, or Brahman, and the engine with its concrete shape represents God's localized feature, Paramatma. The third student's experience is akin to meeting the Supreme Person, Bhagavan, and developing a personal relationship with Him. The teacher represents the wisdom traditions, which give an answer commensurate with the seeker's level of patient commitment.

Thus, a close-up holistic vision reveals a three-in-one Absolute Truth that integrates both the immanent and transcendent aspects as well as the personal and impersonal features.

Fulfilling the Heart's Longing

This discussion is just a small sample of the rigorous logical and scriptural analysis through which the acharyas (exemplary devotee-scholars) like Ramanujacharya, Madhvacharya, Jiva Goswami, Baladeva Vidyabhushana, and Srila Prabhupada have established unequivocally that God is a person with a transcendental form. Once this truth becomes unquestionably established in our heart, we can wholeheartedly aspire to love and serve the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Sri Krishna, and gradually achieve prema, divine love, which alone will eternally and completely satisfy our heart's longing for happiness.

Krishna Voice, April 2012
Gaura Purnima 2012

BANGALORE: The utsava vigraha of Their Lordships Sri Nitai Gauranga were taken on a Harinama sankirtana procession around Hare Krishna Hill (left) and later offered a ceremonial bath or abhisheka in the Open Air Theatre (below). A multi media presentation of the travels and teachings of Lord Chaitanya was also made.
Gaura Purnima celebrations at Chennai...

...Gwahati...

...Hubli...

...Mangalore...

...Vrindavana.
The greatest enemies to progressive spiritual culture in human society are the old fossils of political parties who are blind themselves and who try to lead other blind men. They bring about disaster in a peaceful human society.

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, *Light of the Bhagavat*

A pure devotee of the Lord ... will not give up his shelter at the lotus feet of the Lord for a single moment. Indeed, not for half a moment even, in exchange for the benediction of ruling and enjoying the opulence of the entire universe.

*Sri Havir Rsi, Srimad-Bhagavatam 11.2.53*

The conditioned soul sometimes personally appreciates the futility of sense enjoyment in the material world, and he sometimes considers material enjoyment to be full of miseries. However, due to his strong bodily conception, his memory is destroyed, and again and again he runs after material enjoyment, just as an animal runs after a mirage in the desert.

*Sukadeva Goswami, Srimad-Bhagavatam 5.14.10*
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धर्मस्वपनार्थाय सम्भवामि युगे युगे॥

“To deliver the pious and to annihilate the miscreants, as well as to reestablish the principles of religion, I Myself appear, millennium after millennium.”

- Bhagavad-gita 4.8

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