HIS DIVINE GRACE
A.C. BHAKTIVEDANTA SWAMI PRABHUPADA
(Founder-Acharya of International Society for Krishna Consciousness)
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 Eternal Struggle

A lecture by
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Lord Narasimhadeva appeared to protect His devotee Prahlada from being killed by his demonic father, Hiranyakashipu. Srila Prabhupada gave the following talk after watching a play about the appearance of Lord Narasimhadeva. The talk was given on May 5, 1974, in Bombay.

This is a very instructive history about the struggle between the atheist and the theist. The story of Prahlada Maharaja is eternally true. There is always a struggle between the atheist and the theist. If a person becomes God conscious, Krishna conscious, he will find he has many enemies, because the world is full of demons.

What to speak of the devotee of Krishna, even Krishna, when He personally came, had to kill so many demons. Even His maternal uncle, Kamsa, wanted to kill Him. As soon as any son was born to Krishna's mother, Devaki, Kamsa killed him. There had been a prediction that the eighth child of Kamsa's sister, Devaki, would kill Kamsa. So Kamsa killed all her children. At last Krishna came. But Kamsa could not kill Krishna. He was killed by Krishna.

Nobody can kill God. The demons, the godless society—they simply want to kill God. But actually, God is never killed, but the demon is killed by God. That is the law of nature. This is the instruction from Prahlada Maharaja's life. As Krishna states in the Bhagavad-gita, mṛtyuh sarva-haras caham: "I am also death, in the shape of taking away everything—whatever you possess."

Hiranyakashipu was very clever, just as the materialists and scientists are very clever. Cleverly they are inventing so many things. What is the idea? The idea is "We shall live forever and enjoy sense gratification more and more."

This is called atheistic advancement of civilization.

Hiranyakashipu was a typical materialist. Hiranya means "gold," and kashipu means "soft bed" or "cushion." Materialistic persons are very much fond of gold and sex. That is their business.

Prahlada Maharaja's name comes from ahlada, which means "transcendental bliss." The living entity's real identification is Prahlada, blissfulness. But because of material association, we are in a miserable condition of life.

Hiranyakashipu wanted to become immortal, so he underwent such severe penances that the whole universe trembled. Lord Brahma had to come to pacify him—"What do you want?"

Hiranyakashipu said, "I want to become immortal!"

Lord Brahma replied, "Although I have a very long duration of life, even I am not immortal, so I cannot grant you immortality."

The duration of life of Brahma is stated in the Bhagavad-gita: sahasra-yuga-paryantam arhad yad brahmano viduh. This means that Brahma's day is sahasra-yuga. Sahasra-yuga means one thousand times the duration of the four yugas—Satya, Treta, Dvapara, and Kali—or one thousand times 4.3 million years. This comes to 4.3 billion years, which is twelve hours for Brahma. And he lives for a hundred years of such days.

So although Brahma lives for trillions of years, still he has to die. Wherever you go within this material world, either in Brahma-loka or in Patala-loka, you have to die. That is the problem. Krishna says in the Bhagavad-gita, "The real problem is janma-mṛtyu-jara-vyādhi: birth, death, old age, and disease."

Hiranyakashipu wanted to solve these problems in a materialistic way, but that is not possible. When Brahma said he could not make Hiranyakashipu immortal, Hiranyakashipu tried to secure immortality by trickery. He asked Brahma to grant that he not be killed in any of these ways: by any weapon; during the day or night; on land, in water, or in the sky; inside or outside; or by any man or beast.

So Hiranyakashipu thought he was immortal. But to protect Prahlada Maharaja, Lord Narasimhadeva killed Hiranyakashipu without violating the boons granted by Lord Brahma. Narasimhadeva was neither man nor beast but half man, half lion. Placing Hiranyakashipu on His lap, the Lord killed him with His fingernails, on the threshold of the demon's palace, at dusk.

Prahlada is the opposite of Hiranyakashipu. He is the Lord's devotee. In any condition, a devotee always remains a humble servant of Krishna. Therefore he has no danger. Even if he has danger, he will be saved. Krishna says...
in the Bhagavad-gita, kaunteya pratijanahi na me bhaktah pranasyati: "Arjuna, you can declare it all over the world that anyone who has taken shelter at My lotus feet—who has become My devotee—will never be vanquished." And Krishna says:

sarva-dharman parityajya
mam ekam saranam vraja
aham tvam sarva-papebhyo
moksayisya mi ma sucah

"Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reactions. Do not fear."

So these are the assurances. But the atheistic class of men like Hiranyakashipu cannot understand this. That is their defect. They always challenge God. The dissension between the father (Hiranyakashipu) and the son (Prahlada) was that the son was a believer in God, Krishna, and the father was not. So at the end the father saw God in the form of death. At that time he could not save himself.

That is the difference between theist and atheist. The atheist always challenges, "Where is God? Can you show me?"

"Well, you will see Him. Not now. Just at the maturation of your sinful activities—when death comes—you will see Him."

Prahlada Maharaja is one of our gurus. There are twelve gurus called mahajanas:

svayambhur naradah sambhuh
kaumarah kapilo manuh
prahlado janako bhismo
balir vaiyasakhir vayam

"Lord Brahma, Bhagavan Narada, Lord Shiva, the four Kumaras, Lord Kapila [the son of Devahuti], Svayambhuva Manu, Prahlada Maharaja, Janaka Maharaja, Grandfather Bhisma, Bali Maharaja, Shukadeva Gosvami, and I [Yamaraja]."

If we want to make progress in spiritual life, we have to follow the mahajanas, the great personalities. They are mentioned in the scriptures.

Prahlada Maharaja is our guru in the disciplic succession. The Mahabharata (Vana-parva 313.117) states:

tarko 'pratisthah srutayo vibhinna
nasav rsir yasya matam na bhinnam
dharmasya tattvam nihitam guhayam
mahajano yena gatah sa panthah

"Dry arguments are inconclusive. A great personality whose opinion does not differ from others is not considered a great sage. Simply by studying the Vedas, which are variegated, one cannot come to the right path by which religious principles are understood. The solid truth of religious principles is hidden in the heart of an unadulterated self-realized person. Consequently, as the scriptures confirm, one should accept whatever progressive path the mahajanas advocate."

We cannot chalk out the path of religion. It is very difficult to find out because there are many different scriptures and philosophers. Each philosopher has a different opinion. So how to get the real path of religion? You have to follow the footsteps of great personalities. And Prahlada Maharaja is one of them.

Prahlada Maharaja was born in a demon's family. His father was a demon. Prahlada Maharaja used to address his father as asura-varya—"the best of the demons." Hiranyakashipu was patting his son, "My dear son, do like this, do like that. Tell me the best thing you have learned."

So Prahlada Maharaja said, tat sadhu manye 'sura-varya dehinam. He never said, "My dear father." He said, "My dear 'the best of the demons.'" Tat sadhu manye. "I think this is very nice." What is that? Hitvatma-patam andhakupam vanam gato yad dharim asrayeta: "That this worldly life—materialistic life—is self-killing, just like a dark well. So one should give it up and go to the forest and take shelter of Krishna. That is the best way of life."

So his father became very angry. The atheist and the theist will never agree. The theist will never submit to the atheist. This is the principle. Prahlada Maharaja was put into so many troubles by his father, but he never forgot chanting om bhagavate vasudevaya namah. He never forgot.
We should learn from this story that even in a dangerous position we should not forget Krishna. Krishna will save us. It is said in the Bhagavad-gita (6.22),

\[\text{yam labdhva caparam labham} \\
\text{manyate nadhikam tatah} \\
\text{yasmin sthito na duhkhena} \\
\text{gurunapi vicalyate}\]

"Established thus [in Krishna consciousness], one never departs from the truth, and upon gaining this he thinks there is no greater gain. Being situated in such a position, one is never shaken, even in the midst of the greatest difficulty."

Krishna consciousness is so nice that if one gets Krishna consciousness, any other benefit or gain is never considered. This is so nice. We are hankering after getting this, that, this, that, that, that—so many things. But as soon as you get Krishna consciousness, you will be satisfied. Just like Prahlada Maharaja. He was offered all benedictions. Lord Narasimhadeva said, "My dear Prahlada, whatever you like, you can ask for." But Prahlada never asked for anything. And he was so kind. He is the example of a Vaishnava son in the family. Despite so much trouble given by his father, still he begged from Narasimhadeva, "My Lord, my father has committed so many offenses. Kindly give him liberation." He did not ask anything for himself.

So Narahari, Narasimhadeva, immediately said, "Why do you speak of your father? Your father's father, his father—fourteen generations—all will be liberated because a son like you is in this family." This is the benefit. If a son becomes a pure Vaishnava devotee, he can deliver fourteen generations.

What service can we give our family or nation materially? But if we become a devotee, we can give the best service to our nation, to our family, to humanity. That is the philosophy of Krishna consciousness.

Our Krishna consciousness movement is preaching this philosophy: "You take to Krishna consciousness, and your life will be perfect." And the method is very simple. There is no secrecy. This evening I was talking with a boy who has gotten a mantra and must keep it very secret. But we have no secret mantra. Our mantra, Hare Krishna, is open to everyone. Why should it be a secret? If by chanting the Hare Krishna mantra we can approach God, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, why should it remain secret? It should be distributed like anything so that everyone can go back to God. So there is no secrecy. We don't approve of any secret mantra. It must be very open. The shastra never says that a mantra can be secret.

In this age of Kali it is very difficult to come to the right conclusion by philosophy and other methods. "Kali" means the age of quarrel, misunderstanding, and disagreement. Therefore in the scripture it has been openly declared:

\[\text{harer nama harer nama} \\
\text{harer namaiva kevalam} \\
\text{kalau nasty eva nasty eva} \\
\text{nasty eva gatir anyatha}\]

"In this age of Kali there is no alternative, there is no alternative, there is no alternative for spiritual progress than the holy name, the holy name, the holy name of the Lord."

Meditation, sacrifice, elaborate worship in the temple—in this age these things are impossible to perform, but even a child can chant the Hare Krishna maha-mantra. That is proved by our experience. Whenever there is chanting of the Hare Krishna maha-mantra, even the child can take part, even an old man can take part.

So this is the only method for God realization. There is no expenditure, but the gain is very, very great. That was the teaching of Prahlada Maharaja, and we are following his footsteps. Let us stick to his principle and become more and more advanced in Krishna consciousness.

Thank you very much. 😊
In the Twelfth Canto of *Srimad-Bhagavatam* this current Age of Kali, the age of quarrel and hypocrisy, is described:

\[
\text{tasmat ksudra-drso martyah} \\
\text{ksudra-bhagya mahasanah} \\
\text{kamino vitta-hinas ca} \\
\text{svairinyas ca striyo 'sath}
\]

This means, "Gradually people will become dwarves, and they will die very young. They will be mostly unfortunate, eat too much, and be very much sexually agitated. Gradually they will become poverty-stricken and aimless, and the women all unchaste." Just see. Everything’s coming true.

\[
\text{dasyutkrsta janapada} \\
\text{vedah pasanda-dusitah} \\
\text{rajanas ca praja-bhaksah} \\
\text{sisnodara-para dvijah}
\]

"The cities will be full of rogues and thieves." Just see.

**Disciple:** That’s Paris.

**Srila Prabhupada:** Anywhere. In Calcutta it is dangerous to go out, because you do not know whether you’ll come back. People are so afraid. A man is going to work at the office; it will be God’s grace if he returns. I was a guest at the place of one of our life members, sitting there in the morning, when someone came in—"Oh, that gentleman who was at the temple this morning has been killed."

He was a very important businessman. He went to the temple, and coming back he was killed from behind.

About so-called saintly persons, the *Bhagavatam* predicts, *tapasvino grama-vasa:* "The so-called yogis—they’ll live in the city." Actually, the yogis have no business in the city. They should go to a secluded place. But they will live in the city, just like any ordinary materialistic person. Some man is living a materialistic life in the city of Paris,
and he's supposed to be a yogi.

**Disciple:** This is all in the Twelfth Canto of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*?

**Srila Prabhupada:** Yes. Foretold five thousand years ago. Here it is said, *tapasvino grama-vasa nyasino 'tyartha-lolupah:* "And the sannyasis, the so-called renunciants—they'll be too greedy for money." And *patim tyaksyanti nirdrayam bhryta apy akhilottamam:* "The common tendency will be to divorce the husband, especially when he has insufficient money or insufficient sex power." The wife will divorce. Divorce cases take place mainly in two instances: when the husband has no money and when the sex indulgence is not very good.

Here is more:

\[
\text{vaso-'nna-pana-sayana-} \\
\text{vyavaya-snana-bhusanaih} \\
\text{hinah pisaca-sandarsa} \\
\text{bhavisyanti kalau prajah}
\]

"In the Kali-yuga, the general public will lose their places of residence and will become homeless." You see. I was surprised when I saw, just after arriving in America, that so many people were lying on the street in the Bowery. They had no place of residence. Sometimes they had shelter at night; they would pay one dollar and lie down, and in the morning they would go away. I saw many signboards there.

**Disciple:** They call them "flophouses."

**Srila Prabhupada:** Anyway, *vasa* means "residence," *anna* means "food," and *pana* means "beverages"—milk or water or whatever, you require something to drink. And *sayana:* "sleeping," lying down on a bed. And *vyavaya:* "sex." Regulated sex, within marriage, for having nice children, is also required. But the *Bhagavatam* predicts, "These things will be nil." Even *bhusanaih,* proper clothing. *Hinah pisaca-sandarsa bhavisyanti:* "Being devoid of all these things, people will be just like urchins." These hippies—they are exactly like this. They have no place to sleep. Nothing of the sort. And with long, long hair—looking like *pisaci.* [To his Sanskrit editor:] What is the meaning in English?

**Sanskrit editor:** Ghosts?

**Srila Prabhupada:** Ghosts, yes. Ghostlike. *Hinah pisaca-sandarsa bhavisyanti kalau prajah:* "In the Kali-yuga, the *prajah,* the people in general, will become devoid of proper residence and food and drink and even proper resting places and bathing and clothing. They'll look like ghosts." And more:

\[
\text{kalau kakinike 'py arthe} \\
\text{vighrya ca tyakta-sauhrdah} \\
\text{tyaksyanti ca priyan pranan} \\
\text{hanisyanti svakan api}
\]

This means that in the Kali-yuga, for a cent—for the matter of taking a cent only—a man will give up his friendship with others. And he'll even kill his own relatives to take two cents or five cents.

**Disciple:** Srila Prabhupada, your visitors have arrived.

**Srila Prabhupada:** Yes, yes. And *na rakisya yanti manujah sthavirava pitarav api:* "People will not even give protection to their elderly parents."

[To guests coming in:] Hare Krishna.

**Disciple:** Srila Prabhupada, I'd like to introduce these visitors who have come to see you. Father Canivez, here, is Secretary of the Bishops of France. And here are Father Fransad and also Madame Siaude, who is studying Ramanujacharya and Madhvacarya.

**Srila Prabhupada:** Very good. Vaishnava philosophy.

**Disciple:** And Mr. Misraki not only composes music but also wrote a book on life after death.

**Father Fransad:** Thank you, Your Divine Grace, for so kindly receiving us. May I ask, first, do you believe that God is a person?

**Srila Prabhupada:** At least, Christians cannot believe in an impersonal God. Christians cannot say that God is impersonal. After all, Christ is God's son, and since the son is a person, how can the Father be impersonal?

And in the Bible it is said, "In the beginning was the word." That is God's word. So if one has a word, then he's a person. A word comes from a tongue and mouth. As soon as there is a word, the background is a tongue and mouth.

And the Christians pray in the church, "O God, give us our daily bread." So God has ears—so that He will hear and supply. But His personality, His word, His hearing—they're all transcendental, nonmaterial.

**Father Fransad:** I agree on this point. As you say, God is a person. That is why we can say we have a personal relationship with God.

**Srila Prabhupada:** Yes, God is a person. *Brahmeti paramatmeti bhagavan iti sabdyate:* The Absolute Truth is realized from three angles of vision—Brahman, Paramatma, and Bhagavan. Brahman, the Supreme Person's impersonal, all-pervasive energy; Paramatma, His localized expansion in everyone's heart; Bhagavan, the Supreme Person.

**Father Fransad:** I'm accepting some of the things you are saying, but I don't think that I'm obliged to accept everything. I find many things agreeable in the Vedic literature, but I think it might be a mistake to say that the Bible is exactly the same thing as the Vedas. There are still distinctions.

**Srila Prabhupada:** Distinctions. Then it is to be considered which is perfect: the later edition, or the original.
The ancient Greek writer Aratos tells the following story about the constellation Virgo, or the virgin. Virgo, he says, may have belonged to the star race, the forefathers of the ancient stars. In primeval times, in the golden age, she lived among mankind as Justice personified and would exhort people to adhere to the truth. At this time people lived peacefully, without hypocrisy or quarrel. Later, in the age of silver, she hid herself in the mountains, but occasionally she came down to berate people for their evil ways. Finally the age of bronze came. People invented the sword, and "they tasted the meat of cows, the first who did it." At this point Virgo "flew away to the sphere"; that is, she departed for the celestial realm.

(E. C. Sachau, trans., Alberuni's India (Delhi: S. Chand & Co., 1964), pp. 383-4.)

The Vedic literature of India gives an elaborate description of the universe as a cosmos—a harmonious, ordered system created according to an intelligent plan as a habitation for living beings. The modern view of the universe is so different from the Vedic view that the latter is presently difficult to comprehend. In ancient times, however, cosmologies similar to the Vedic system were widespread among people all over the world. Educated people of today tend to immediately dismiss these systems of thought as mythology, pointing to their diversity and their strange ideas as proof that they are all simply products of the imagination.

If we do this, however, we may be overlooking important information that could shed light on the vast forgotten period that precedes the brief span of recorded human history. There is certainly much evidence of independent storytelling in the traditions of various cultures, but there are also many common themes. Some of these themes are found in highly developed form in the Vedic literature. Their presence in cultures throughout the world is consistent with the idea that in the distant past, Vedic culture exerted worldwide influence.

In this article we will give some examples of Vedic ideas concerning time and human longevity that appear repeatedly in different traditions. First we will examine some of these ideas, and then we will discuss some questions about what they imply and how they should be interpreted.

In the Vedic literature time is regarded as a manifestation of Krishna, the Supreme Being. As such, time is a controlling force that regulates the lives of living beings in accordance with a cosmic plan. This plan involves repeating cycles of creation and destruction of varying durations. The smallest and most important of these repeating cycles consists of four yugas, or ages, called Satya, Treta, Dvapara, and Kali. In these successive
ages mankind gradually descends from a high spiritual platform to a degraded state. Then, with the beginning of a new Satya-yuga, the original state of purity is restored, and the cycle begins again.

The story of Virgo illustrates that in the ancient Mediterranean world there was widespread belief in a similar succession of four ages, known there as the ages of gold, silver, bronze, and iron. In this system humanity also starts out in the first age in an advanced state of consciousness and gradually becomes degraded. Here also, the progressive developments in human society are not simply evolving by physical processes, but are superintended by a higher controlling intelligence.

It is noteworthy that Aratos' story specifies the eating of cows as a sinful act that cut mankind off from direct contact with celestial beings. This detail fits in nicely with the ancient Indian traditions of cow protection, but it is unexpected in the context of Greek or European culture.

One explanation for similarities between ideas found in different cultures is that people everywhere have essentially the same psychological makeup, and so they tend to come up independently with similar notions. However, details such as the point about cow-killing suggest that we are dealing here with common traditions rather than independent inventions.

Another example of similarities between cultures can be found among the natives of North America. The Sioux Indians say that their ancestors were visited by a celestial woman who gave them their system of religion. She pointed out to them that there are four ages, and that there is a sacred buffalo that loses one leg during each age. At present we are in the last age, an age of degradation, and the buffalo has one leg. "**(J. E. Brown, ed., The Sacred Pipe (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1971), p. 9.)**

This story is a close parallel to the account in the Srimad-Bhagavatam of the encounter between Maharaja Parikshit and the bull of Dharma. There, Dharma is said to lose one leg with each successive yuga, leaving it with one leg in the present Age of Kali.

According to the Vedic system, the lengths of the Satya, Treta, Dvapara, and Kali yugas are 4, 3, 2, and 1 times an interval of 432,000 years. Within these immense periods of time the human life span decreases from 100,000 years in the Satya-yuga to 10,000 years in the Treta-yuga, 1,000 years in the Dvapara-yuga, and finally 100 years in the Kali-yuga.

Of course, this idea is strongly at odds with the modern evolutionary view of the past. In the ancient Mediterranean world, however, it was widely believed that human history had extended over extremely long periods of time. For example, according to old historical records, Porphyry (c. 300 A.D.) said that Callisthenes, a companion of Alexander in the Persian war, dispatched to Aristotle Babylonian records of eclipses and that these records covered 31,000 years. Likewise, Iambicus (fourth century) said on the authority of the ancient Greek astronomer Hipparchus that the Assyrians had made observations for 270,000 years and had kept records of the return of all seven planets to the same position. "**(D. Neugebauer, History of Ancient Mathematical Astronomy (Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 1975), pp. 608-9.)** Finally, the Babylonian historian Berosus assigned 432,000 years to the total span of the reigns of the Babylonian kings before the Flood. "**(J. D. North, "Chronology & the Age of the World," in Cosmology, History, & Theology, eds. Wolfgang Yourgrau and A. D. Breck (N.Y.: Plenum Press, 1977), p. 315.)**

We do not wish to suggest that these statements are true (or that they are false). The point here is that people in the old Mediterranean civilization evidently had a much different view of the past than the dominant view today. And this view was broadly consistent with Vedic chronology.

Although the Bible is well known for advocating a very short time-span for human history, it is interesting to note that it contains information indicating that people at one time lived for about 1,000 years. In the Old Testament the following ages are listed for people living before the Biblical Flood: Adam, 930; Seth, 912; Enos, 905; Kenan, 910; Mahaleel, 895; Jared, 962; Enoch, 365; Methuselah, 969; Lamech, 777; and Noah, 950. If we exclude Enoch (who was said to have been taken up to heaven in his own body), these persons lived an

After the Flood, however, the following ages were recorded: Shem, 600; Arphachshad, 438; Salah, 433; Eber, 464; Pleg, 239; Reu, 239; Serug, 230; Nahor, 148; Terah, 205; Abraham, 175; Isaac, 180; Job, 210; Jacob, 147; Levi, 137; Kohath, 133; Amram, 137; Moses, 120; and Joshua, 110. These ages show a gradual decline to about 100 years, similar to what must have happened after the beginning of Kali-yuga, according to the Vedic system.

Here we should mention in passing that the Biblical Flood is traditionally said to have taken place in the second or third millennium B.C., and the traditional date in India for the beginning of Kali-yuga is February 18, 3102 B.C. This very date is cited as the time of the Flood in various Persian, Islamic, and European writings from the sixth to the fourteenth centuries A.D. **(J. D. North, Ibid., p. 316-7.) How did the middle-eastern Flood come to be associated with the start of Kali-yuga? The only comment we can make is that this story shows how little we really know about the past.

In support of the Biblical story of very long human life-spans in ancient times, the Roman historian Flavius Josephus cited many historical works that were available in his time:

Now when Noah had lived 350 years after the Flood, and all that time happily, he died, having the number of 950 years, but let no one, upon comparing the lives of the ancients with our lives ... make the shortness of our lives at present an argument that neither did they attain so long a duration of life.

Now I have for witnesses to what I have said all those that have written Antiquities, both among the Greeks and barbarians, for even Manetho, who wrote the Egyptian history, and Berosus, who collected the Chaldean monuments, and Mochus, and Hestiaeus, and beside these, Hieronymus the Egyptian, and those who composed the Phoenician history, agree with what I here say: Hesiod also, and Hecataeus, Hellenicaus, and Acuzilaus, and besides Ephorus and Nicolaus relate that the ancients lived a thousand years: but as to these matters, let everyone look upon them as he sees fit. **(D. W. Patten, Ibid., p. 29.)

Unfortunately, practically none of the works referred to by Josephus are still existing, and this again shows how little we know of the past. But in existing Norse sagas it is said that people in ancient times lived for many centuries. In addition, the Norse sagas describe a progression of ages, including an age of peace, an age when different social orders were introduced, an age of increasing violence, and a degraded "knife-age and axe-age with cloven shields." **(V. Rydberg, Teutonic Mythology, R. B. Anderson, trans. (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1889), pp. 88, 94.) The latter is followed by a period of annihilation, called Ragnarok, after which the world is restored to goodness.

The Norse Ragnarok involves the destruction of the earth and the abodes of the Norse demigods (called Asgard), and thus it corresponds in Vedic chronology to the annihilation of the three worlds that follows 1,000 yuga cycles, or one day of Brahma. It is said that during Ragnarok the world is destroyed with flames by a being named Surt, who lives beneath the lower world (appropriately called Hel) and was involved in the world's creation. By comparison, the Srimad-Bhagavatam (3.11.30) states that at the end of Brahma's day, "the devastation takes place due to the fire emanating from the mouth of Shankarshana." Shankarshana is a plenary expansion of Krishna who is "seated at the bottom of the universe" (Srimad-Bhagavatam 3.8.3), beneath the lower planetary systems.

There are many similarities between the Norse and Vedic cosmologies, but there are also great differences. One key difference is that in the Srimad-Bhagavatam, all beings and phenomena within the universe are clearly understood as part of the divine plan of Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. In contrast, in the Norse mythology God is conspicuously absent, and the origin and purpose of the major players in the cosmic drama are very obscure. Surt, in particular, is a "fire giant" whose origins and motives are unclear even to experts in the Norse literature. **(Ibid., pp. 448-9.)

One might ask, If Vedic themes appear in different societies, how can one conclude that they derive from an ancient Vedic civilization? Perhaps they were created in many places independently, or perhaps they descend from an unknown culture that is also ancestral to what we call Vedic culture. Thus parallels between the accounts of Surt and Shankarshana may be coincidental, or perhaps the Vedic account derives from a story similar to that of Surt.

Our answer to this question is that available empirical evidence will not be sufficient to prove the hypothesis of descent from an ancient Vedic culture, for all empirical evidence is imperfect and subject to various interpretations. But we can decide whether or not the evidence is consistent with this hypothesis.

If there was an ancient Vedic world civilization, we would expect to find traces of it in many cultures around the world. We do seem to find such traces, and many agree with Vedic accounts in specific details (such as the location of Surt's abode or the sacred buffalo's loss of one leg per world age). Since this civilization began to lose its influence thousands of years ago, at the beginning of Kali-yuga, we would expect many of these traces to be fragmentary and overlain by many later additions, and this we also see. Thus the available evidence seems to be consistent with the hypothesis of a Vedic origin.
Garlanded with roses and gardenias, surrounded by devoted followers, Srila Prabhupada sits upon a magnificent throne. Disciple after disciple prostrates himself on the ground at Srila Prabhupada's feet. The disciples praise him. Srila Prabhupada sits gravely and says nothing. Finally he begins to speak.

"Vyasa-puja," he says, "means that one day in a year, on the birthday of the spiritual master, he is offered respect." Why? "Because he is the representative of Vyasa [here Srila Prabhupada refers to the ancient compiler of the Vedic wisdom] and is delivering without any change the same knowledge which has come down by disciplic succession." **(New Vrindavana, September 2, 1972.)

Srila Prabhupada's birthday comes the day after Janmashtami, the appearance festival of Lord Krishna.

Here we select from what Srila Prabhupada said about the meaning of the Vyasa-puja ceremony. Let us listen as he continues to speak.

The Original Guru

"Vyasa is the original guru because from his literature we understand spiritual knowledge. All these literatures, whatever we have produced, are originally from Vyasadeva." **(London, August 22, 1973.)

"This asana [throne] where they have seated me is called the vyasasana. The guru is the representative of Vyasadeva.... So anyone who represents the great acharya [spiritual master] Vyasadeva is allowed to sit on the vyasasana."

Disciplic Succession

As an orthodox representative of an ancient tradition, Srila Prabhupada follows the system of Vyasa-puja out of respect for the practices and philosophy of that tradition.

"This Vyasa-puja ceremony," he says, "means to offer our thanks to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, because He is the original guru. We receive this message through the parampara system: from Krishna to Brahma, Brahma to Narada, Narada to Vyasadeva...."

Srila Prabhupada continues to name the illustrious teachers in the parampara, the disciplic chain: "Madhavendra Puri, then Ishvara Puri, then Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, then the six Gosvamis, then others—Bhaktivinoda Thakura, Jagannatha dasa Babaji, Gaura Kishora Dasa Babaji, Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati...." It is in this parampara, Srila Prabhupada says, that he himself comes next.

"So we come to Krishna conscious understanding through this long parampara. Similarly, in the Vyasa-puja ceremony, whatever respect, honour, and presentations you give go to Krishna through that parampara system."

**(London, August 22, 1973.)

The Lord's Viceroy

"The spiritual master," Srila Prabhupada explains, "receives all honour, all contributions, on behalf of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, not for himself. For example, in our country when there was British rule there was a viceroy, a king's representative. So naturally when the viceroy used to go to some meeting, many people used to present valuable jewels just to honour him. But the law was that the viceroy could not touch a single jewel or contribution. It was going to the royal treasury. On behalf of the king the viceroy could accept all contributions, but they went to the king.

"Similarly, on Vyasa-puja day whatever respect, contributions, and feelings are being offered to the spiritual master go to Krishna. As we have received the knowledge from upwards, this respect goes upwards." **(New Vrindavana, September 2, 1972.)

"Don't jump over to God, crossing the spiritual master. Then it will be a failure. You must go through the spiritual master. We are observing the Vyasa-puja ceremony, the birth anniversary of our Guru Maharaja [spiritual master]. Why? We cannot understand Krishna without a spiritual master.

"If anyone wants to understand Krishna by jumping over the spiritual master, then immediately he becomes bogus. Nobody can understand Krishna without going through His most confidential servant.

"If you think that you have become very learned and very advanced and can now avoid the spiritual master and understand Krishna, that is bogus.... We should always pray, yasya prasadad bhagavat-prasadah: only by the grace of the spiritual master can we achieve the grace or mercy of Krishna. This is the meaning of Vyasa-puja."

**(Atlanta, March 2, 1975.)

A Revolutionary Practice

Srila Prabhupada is very much aware that some people may misconstrue the
Vyasa-puja ceremony.

"Of course," he says, "those who are my students know what is this ceremony. ... But an outsider may ask, 'Why is a person being worshiped like God?' There may be some doubt." **(New Vrndavana, September 2, 1972.)

"Now I must explain my position, because in these days a person's being worshiped as a most exalted personality is something revolutionary." **(Hyderabad, August 19, 1976.)

"It is not that I am training my disciples to worship me—man worship—or that I'm getting some honour from them for nothing. No. It is not that. Whatever honour, whatever respect, whatever presentation you are giving to your spiritual master, it will go to Krishna by the parampara system." **(London, August 22, 1973.)

"An outsider may think, 'This man is being flattered, and he is hearing his own eulogy.' But this is not the fact. The disciples are receiving the message sincerely, and they are expressing their feeling. So that feeling is going to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. And as the message has come through the channel of disciplic succession, all these praises will also reach Krishna through that disciplic succession." **(Hamburg, September 5, 1969.)

"If you offer prayers to the acharya, then Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is pleased. To please Him you have to please His representative.

"If you love me, love my dog.' And in the Bhagavad-gita it is said, acharyopasanam: we have to worship the acharya." **(Hyderabad, August 19, 1976.)

"Krishna says, acharyam mam vijaniyan: 'You accept the acharya as Myself.' Why? I see that he is a man. His sons call him father, he looks like a man, so why should he be as good as God?

"Because he speaks as God speaks, that's all.... He says as the Supreme Personality of Godhead says; therefore he is guru. Even though you see that he is materially born, that his behaviour is like that of other men, he says the same truth spoken in the Vedas or by the Personality of Godhead; therefore he is guru. He does not make any whimsical change; therefore he is guru. That is the definition. It is very simple." **(Hyderabad, August 19, 1976.)

**The Humility of the Pure Devotee**

Srila Prabhupada feels indebted, he says, not only to his spiritual master, from whom he received the message of Krishna, but also to his disciples, who are helping him spread it.

"Anyone who is coming to Krishna consciousness is not an ordinary living being.

Actually, he's a liberated soul. And I am very much hopeful that, even if I die, my disciples who are now participating today will continue my movement....

"Bhaktivinoda Thakura wanted European and American people to understand the philosophy of the Chaitanya cult and take part in it. That was his desire. My Guru Maharaja, His Divine Grace Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Gosvami Prabhupada, also attempted to send his disciples to preach the Chaitanya cult in the Western world....

"At our first meeting, perhaps you know, he asked me to preach. So at that time I was a young man, only twenty-five years old, and I was also a house-holder. I should have joined and executed his desire immediately, but due to my ill luck I could not immediately execute his order. But it was in my heart: 'It is to be done.'

"So anyway, although I began very late, at the age of seventy years, by the help of my disciples this movement is gaining ground and is spreading all over the world. Therefore I have to thank you. It is all due to you. It is not my credit. It is your credit that you are helping me execute the order of my Guru Maharaja." **(London,
How Does One Meet A Spiritual Master?

"Krishna is within everyone.... So He is called chaitya-guru, the guru within the heart. ... And when Krishna sees that a living entity is very anxious to understand Him or to revive his Krishna consciousness, then Krishna gives him all opportunity, especially by manifesting Himself as the spiritual master. ... The spiritual master is therefore Krishna's manifestation—Krishna's mercy manifestation to help a person develop his Krishna consciousness." **(London, August 22, 1973.)

"The whole world is in the blaze of the threefold miseries, and a person who is authorized to deliver people from those material pangs is called a spiritual master." **(Hamburg, September 5, 1969.)

Continuing the Disciplic Succession

Srila Prabhupada tells his disciples that they too should become spiritual masters.

"Spiritual master is not a new invention. So all my students present here who are feeling so much obliged ... I am obliged to them because they are helping me in this missionary work. At the same time, I shall request them all to become spiritual masters. Every one of you should become spiritual masters next.

And what is your duty? Whatever you are hearing from me, whatever you are learning from me, you have to distribute the same without any addition or alteration. Then all of you will become spiritual masters....

"To become a spiritual master is not a very wonderful thing. One simply has to become a sincere soul." **(Hamburg, September 5, 1969.)

"It is not difficult. It is difficult when you manufacture something. But if you simply present whatever you have heard from your spiritual master, it is very easy.

"If you want to become over intelligent, to present something, to interpret something, over what you have heard from your spiritual master, then you'll spoil the whole thing. Don't make any addition or alteration. Simply present it as it is. ... Remain always a servant of your spiritual master and present the thing as you have heard it. You will be a spiritual master. This is the secret." **(London, August 22, 1973.)

"One should not think, 'I am not qualified to become a guru.' No, you are qualified if you follow strictly the parampara system." **(London, August 22, 1973.)

"If you simply preach this cult—'My dear friend, my dear brother, you surrender to Krishna'—you become a spiritual master." **(London, August 22, 1973.)

There Is a Need

"Chaitanya Mahaprabhu has asked everyone to become a guru. Everyone. Because there is need of gurus. The world is full of rascals; therefore there is need of so many gurus to teach them....

"Chaitanya Mahaprabhu says: amara ajnaya guru hana tara' ei desa: Wherever you are living, become a guru and deliver them. Suppose you are living in a small neighbourhood; you can become a guru of that neighbourhood and deliver them.

"How is it possible? I have no education. I have no knowledge. How can I become guru and deliver them?

"Chaitanya Mahaprabhu said: It is not at all difficult. Yare dekha, tare kaha 'krishna'-upadesa. This is your qualification. If you simply deliver the message given by Krishna, you become guru.... "Krishna said, sarva- dharman parityajya mam ekam saranam vraja. ["Give up all other engagements and surrender to Me."] You preach. You request everyone, 'Sir, you surrender to Krishna.' Then you become a guru. It is a very simple thing. Krishna said, man-mana bhava mad-bhakto mad-yaji mam namaskuru. ["Think of Me, become My devotee, worship Me, and offer obeisances to Me."] You say, 'You become a devotee of Krishna. You offer obeisances. Here is a temple. Here is Krishna. Please come here....

"So this is the guru's qualification. The guru does not show some magic or produce some wonderful things to become guru ...

"People are giving me credit that I have done miracles. But my miracle is that I carried the message of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu: yare dekha, tare kaha 'krishna'-upadesa.

"So this is the secret. Any one of you can become a guru. It is not that I am an extraordinary man, an extraordinary god coming from some mysterious place. It is not that—it is a very simple thing.

"Chaitanya Mahaprabhu says: yare dekha, tare kaha 'krishna'-upadesa. So I request you to follow Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's instruction that you also become a guru at your home. It is not that you have to make a gigantic show of becoming a guru. The father has to become a guru; the mother has to become a guru. Actually, in the shastra it is said one should not become a father, one should not become mother, if he does not become a guru to his children." **(Hyderabad, August 19, 1976.)

Become Krishna's Favorite

"So I hope that all of you—men, women, boys, and girls—become spiritual masters and follow this principle. Simply sincerely follow the principles and speak to the general public. Then you become Krishna's favourite. Krishna says in the Bhagavad-gita, na ca tasman manusyesu kascin me priya-krttamah: 'One who is doing this humble service of preaching work, Krishna consciousness—nobody is dearer to Me than him.' So if you want to become recognized by Krishna very quickly, take up this process of becoming a spiritual master. Present the Bhagavad-gita as it is. Then your life is perfect." **(London, August 22, 1973.)
Their civilization seemed to develop out of nothing; one could easily remember a time when the land was undistinguished by their presence. But soon their magnificent fortress rose above the surrounding terrain, and their influence spread as thousands joined their ranks. Oh, to be a part of the excitement! This masterful civilization seemed destined to become a vortex of cultural development.

But then the lawn mower came.

Millions of ants were rendered homeless as the monstrous blades slashed through their fortress walls. Roads crumbled under heavy black tires. Countless ants were killed in but an instant. But despite the devastation, millions survived in tunnels beneath the ground, and as the lawn mower roared off into the distance, they began at once the task of rebuilding their kingdom.

Scientists estimate that there are at least one quadrillion ants on this planet. On every continent ants build their kingdoms and busy themselves with the drama of their lives. And nearly all of it escapes human attention.

Yet from the ant's viewpoint this life of an ant, a life we barely notice, a life that can be ended by a chance encounter with the bottom of our shoe, holds the full experience of living. Ants have their ant childhoods, their responsible ant jobs, and their relationships within a bustling community. Yet the impact of any one of these lives upon our own is minimal. For us, an individual ant is insignificant.

The world is full of such incidental lives. Birds swoop by, blades of grass bend in the wind, squirrels dash up and down trees, all on the periphery of our awareness.

And think of all the human lives that escape our notice. People rushing about in their cars, people waiting in line behind us at the post office, people flying over our homes in airplanes—more people than even the most gregarious soul could know. People whose names we will never hear spoken. People whose triumphs and tragedies will never move our hearts. All the people who to us mean nothing.

And even the human lives that rise above the others, seeming to affect millions, are crushed into insignificance by the passing of time. How many people now fear Attila the Hun? How many Americans know the names of all past American presidents? "The great kings, leaders, and soldiers fight with one another in order to perpetuate their names in history," Srila Prabhupada observes. "They are forgotten in due course of time, and they make a place for another era in history."

Even the demigods—the powerful beings who control the workings of the universe—come and go. And from their vantage point, human beings are just as important as—well, ants.

Ant societies are wasted by lawn mowers, human societies by wars and disease. Ants and people die and are forgotten. Is there anything that makes our human life more significant than that of the lowly ant?

Yes.

Ants are forced to race around building elaborate civilizations that will ultimately be ruined, and when such ruination comes, they simply begin again. No lessons learned, no philosophical perspective gained. But a human being can look around and realize, "All of this will be gone in time. Even my body will be finished. Why should I focus all my energy on something that won't last?"

Human intelligence releases us from the mindless behavior of the hapless ants. We are blessed with the power to understand the significance of the eternal soul that animates every material body. So a life that focuses on the body and ignores the cravings of the soul is fine for an ant, but it never fully satisfies the introspective human being. Srila Prabhupada compares humans who ignore the philosophical urgings of the intelligence to misers who have great wealth but never use it. The wealth is simply for show but brings nothing of value.

No one knows when his human life will end. And the greatest tragedy is to lose the chance to free oneself, through higher knowledge, from the frantic struggles of the lower species. For if such an opportunity is wasted, the gracious laws of nature allow us to return to a form of life where we won't have a human intelligence to waste.
BANGALORE: Above & below: The utsava Deities of Sri Sri Nitai Gauranga received abhisheka seva at the temple kalyani and took a dip in it. Then They enjoyed a ride in the kalyani on Their decorated barge. Devotees sang kirtanas and received chipped rice (chida) prasadam.
Project Update

ISKCON Bangalore’s Vaikunta Hill on Kanakapura Road is abuzz with activity as Phase 1 of the construction is in full swing, with the construction of the Sri Sudarshana Narasimha temple, temple kalyani, ashrama, office and prasadam hall facilities. Here is a photo gallery of the latest developments on Vaikunta Hill.

Sanctum sanctorum of the Sri Sudarshana Narasimha temple

Offices will flank the temple sanctum sanctorum

The temple kalyani

Floors below the sanctum sanctorum of Sri Sudarshana Narasimha, which will house the ashrama kitchen and prasadam hall
Devotees at the Hare Krishna Movement, Chennai, celebrated the 3rd anniversary of the pratishta of presiding Deities (right), Sri Sri Krishna Balarama & Sri Sri Nitai Gauranga on May 30, 2012. Celebrations included an elaborate abhisheka (below).
The Swing Festival

July 29 — August 2, 2012
Celebrations 7 pm onwards
at ISKCON Radha Krishna Mandir
Hare Krishna Hill, Chord Road, Bangalore-10

Regarding Jhulan Yatra Ceremony, during these five days the Deities’ clothings should be changed everyday, and there should be nice prasadam distribution and sankirtana as far as possible. If you are able to do it, a nice throne may be constructed on which the Deities can be placed. This throne may be swung gently during kirtana. That will be very good, and surely the Deities will enjoy the function.

— Srila Prabhupada
BALARAMA JAYANTI
(The Appearance of Lord Balarama)

August 2, 2012 (Thursday)

Celebrations 6 pm onwards

Grand abhisheka, special video presentation, soul stirring kirtanas, sumptuous prasadam and lots more...

Balarama is the protector of the devotees of the Lord. By His divine grace only one can approach the Supreme Lord Sri Krishna, and thus Sri Balarama is the mercy incarnation of the Lord, manifested as the spiritual master, the saviour of the pure devotees.

— Srimad Bhagavatam 1.14.28-29
Sri Krishna Janmashtami

August 9 & 10, 2012
Celebrations at Hare Krishna Hill, Bangalore
Darshana 9 am to 11 pm

Celebrations also at
ISKCON Krishna Lila Park
Vaikuntha Hill, Kanakapura Road (Near Metro), Bangalore-62
On August 9 & 10, 2012
Darshana 9 am to 11 pm

Let me offer my respectful obeisances unto the all-auspicious Lord Sri Krishna,
about whom glorification, remembrances, audience, prayers, hearing and
worship can at once cleanse the effects of all sins of the performer.
—Srimad Bhagavatam 2.4.15

For seva details contact ISKCON reception.
www.iskconbangalore.org/sri-krishna-janmashtami-2012
Vyāsa-pūjā 2012
116th appearance day of Srila Prabhupada
Saturday, August 11, 2012

Celebrations 6:30 pm onwards
at ISKCON, Hare Krishna Hill, Bangalore-10

I was born in the darkest ignorance, and my spiritual master opened my eyes with the torch of knowledge. I offer my respectful obeisances unto him.

www.iskconbangalore.org/vyasa-puja-2012