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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.

To know more about Srila Prabhupada visit www.iskconbangalore.org/srila-prabhupada

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The facilitators of culture camp were very friendly with children. They knew how to extract the best from them. One of the very important things that my child spoke about, which was very surprising to hear in this competitive world, is that, it is more important to participate, than to win.

— Pavitra Lakshmi, Learning & Development manager, Accenture

Hare Krishna! My Name is Kanisha. I want to share some of my experiences about the culture camp I had attended last year. I enjoyed chanting Slokas and I also enjoyed painting and drawing Krishna’s pictures. Overall I enjoyed the culture camp. It was a fantastic experience I liked it a lot.

— Kanisha Patel, Student of Cambridge Public School

I realized when I enrolled my child into Culture Camp that this is a life-time learning experience packed within a short span of 21 days.

— Muniraju, Senior Software Engineer, Microsoft

Trust me, I am so happy and satisfied about the learning that my daughter is taking from here. I will never be able to impart it to her, myself. This Culture Camp helped to utilize children’s energy in a better way. I am very very happy that my child is truly happy here. So thank you very much, ISKCON, because the entire Culture-Camp team, working for the children, is truly awesome!

— Ms. Richa Awasthi, A truly delighted parent

We’ve been learning from our children the shlokas and prayers they’ve learnt during the Camp. They have become part of our daily prayer routine. They are far more aware of Bhagavad-Gita than I am. Behaviorally, although the changes at a conscious level are subtle, at a subconscious level it has a great impact on their consciousness.

— Sangeetha Jambagi, Senior Manager, Unilever

I have attended this programme for the past 8 years. I was very interested in the Yakshagana programme and was also trained professionally. Everything was taught so nicely, learning to recite slokas and puja, which would not have been possible at home. We learnt the sessions in a fun filled environment. Chanting helped me a lot, my concentration and focus improved. Learned to depend on Krishna and He became my best friend. I miss the programme a lot now.

— Veeasha Shetty, Student of Jyothi Kendriya Vidyalaya

After Culture-Camp, my daughter has transformed a lot, in various aspects. She is more helping, more caring, and she is able to distinguish between right and wrong. Whenever she gets a thought of doing something wrong, she now says, “I can’t think that nobody is seeing, because Krishna is always seeing.” She is able to make better decisions and she is more confident.

— Dr. Sri Valli P, Dermatologist
As a sleeping person acts according to the body manifested in his and accepts it to be himself, so one identifies with his present body, which he acquired because of his past religious or irreligious actions, and is unable to know his past or future lives.”—Srimad-Bhagavatam 6.1.49

Here is a very good example of the ignorance that covers the living entity in the material world. When we dream, we forget everything about ourselves—that we are Mr. Such-and-Such, an inhabitant of such-and-such a place, with such-and-such bank balance. Everything is forgotten. And when we awaken, we forget about the dream. This is our daily experience. But whether we are in the wakened state or the dreaming state, we are seeing our own activities. In the dream we are the seer, and in the so-called awake condition we are also the seer. So we, the spirit soul, who is experiencing, remain the same, but the circumstances change and we forget.

Similarly, we cannot remember what we were in our previous life. Nor do we know what we are going to become in our next life. But it is a fact that, as spirit, souls, we are eternal. We existed in the past, we exist at the present time, and we shall continue to exist in the future. Krishna explains this in the Bhagavad-gita [2.12]: “O Arjuna, you, I, and all these persons who have assembled on this battlefield have existed before, and we shall continue to exist in the future.” This is the preliminary understanding in spiritual life—knowing “I am eternal.”

As spirit souls, we do not take birth, nor do we die (na jayate mriyate va kadacit). We are not finished with the destruction of the material body (na hanyate hanyamane sarire). The destruction of the body is going on already. Our childhood body is now destroyed; you cannot find that body. Our youthful body is also destroyed; we cannot find it anymore. And in the same way, our present body will also be destroyed, and we shall get another body (tatha dehantara-praptih).

When the soul transmigrates, the gross body is lost. The gross body is made of material, and anything material will eventually be finished. That is the nature of matter. But the spirit soul is never finished.

So we are changing bodies, one after another. Why are there different types of bodies? Because the living entity, the spirit soul, is contacting various modes of material nature. And according to what modes are influencing him, the living entity develops a gross body.

So we have acquired our present body because of our past activities. Karmena daiva-netrenas janatucchapattaye: One gets a particular type of body according to his past karma, or material activities. Nature acts automatically, according to our karma. Suppose you contract some disease. Nature will act: you will have to develop that disease and undergo some suffering. Similarly, when we come under the influence of the modes of material nature and perform karmic activities, we must transmigrate from body to body. Nature’s law works so perfectly.

Now, when we come to the civilized human life, we should ask, “Why am I suffering?” The problem is that because we are under the spell of maya, illusion, we take suffering to be enjoyment. Maya means “that which is not.” We are thinking we are enjoying, but actually we are suffering. In this material body we have to suffer. We suffer on account of the body. Pinching cold, scorching heat—we feel these things on account of the body. Under certain circumstances we feel pleasure. But in the Bhagavad-gita [2.14] Krishna advises,

matra-sparsas tu kaunteya sitosna-sukha-duhkha-dah
agamapayo ‘nityas tams titiksasva bharata

"Material happiness and distress are caused by the body. They come and go just like seasonal changes. So do not be disturbed; try to tolerate them."

As long as we are in this material world, happiness and distress will come and go. So we should not be disturbed by them. Our real business is trying for self-realization. That must go on; it must not stop. Self-realization is the goal of human life. Suffering and so-called happiness will go on as long as we have a material body, but we must come to the knowledge that “I am not the body; I am a spirit soul. I have gotten this body because of my past
activities." That is knowledge.

Now, a sensible man should consider, "Since I am a spirit soul and my body is simply a covering, is it not possible to end this process of transmigration from body to body?" This is human life—inquiring how to stop the contamination of the material body.

Unfortunately, people in the modern so-called civilization do not ask this question. They are mad after gratifying the senses of the body, so they act irresponsibly. As explained in the Srimad-Bhagavatam [5.5.4],

\[ \text{nunam pramattaḥ kurute viharma yad indriya-pritaya aprnoti na sadhu manye yata atmamo 'yam asann api klesada asa dehah} \]

"People who act only for sense gratification are certainly mad, and they perform all kinds of abominable activities. In this way they insure their transmigration from body to body perpetually, and thus experience all kinds of miseries."

We do not understand that the body is always kleshada—it always gives us pain. For the time being we may feel some pleasure, but actually the body is a reservoir of pain. Here is a good analogy in this connection: Formerly, when the government officers would want to punish a criminal, they would tie his hands, take him into the middle of a river, and push him down into the water. When he was almost drowned, they would draw him up from the water by his hair and give him a little rest. And then again they would push him down into the water. That was one system of punishment.

Similarly, whatever little pleasure we are feeling in this material world is exactly like the pleasure the criminal would feel when he was drawn up from the water. That's all. Severe suffering with a few moments of relief—this is what the material world is like.

That is why Sanatana Gosvami, who had been a wealthy minister in the Mohammedan government in India, presented himself to Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu [Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Lord Krishna Himself in the role of His Own devotee, appeared in Bengal, India, five hundred years ago to teach love of God through the chanting of the Hare Krishna mantra] and asked, \text{ke ami, kene amaya jare tapa-traya:}"

"Who am I? And why am I suffering the threefold miseries?" This is intelligence. We are constantly undergoing some sort of distress, whether caused by the body and mind, inflicted by other living entities, or brought about by natural disturbances. We don't want all these miseries, but they are forced upon us. So when one accepts a spiritual master, the first question should be, "Why am I suffering?"

But we have become so dull, like the animals, that we never ask this question. The animals are suffering (everyone knows this), but they cannot ask why. When an animal is being taken to the slaughterhouse, he cannot ask, "Why am I being taken by force to the slaughterhouse?" But if you take a human being to be killed, he'll make a great noise: "This man is taking me to be killed! Why am I being killed?" So one important distinction between human life and animal life is that only the human being can ask "Why am I suffering?"

Whether you are President Nixon or a man in the street, you are suffering. That's a fact. You are suffering on account of your body, and you are doing something that will cause you to accept another material body. You are suffering because in your past life you indulged in sense gratification and got a body according to karma, and if you engage in sense gratification in this life and do not try to elevate yourself, you'll again get a body and suffer.

By nature's way you'll get another body according to the mentality you have at the time of death. And as soon as you get another body, your suffering will begin again. Even in the womb of the mother you will suffer. To remain in that compact bag for so many months, hands and legs all tied up, unable to move—this is suffering. And nowadays there is also a risk of being killed in the womb. And when you come out, more suffering. So we should be intelligent enough to ask, "Why am I suffering? And how can I stop this suffering?" And until we ask, "Why am I suffering?" our human life has not begun. We remain animals.

Asking about the ultimate cause of our suffering is called brahma-jijnasa, inquiry into the Absolute Truth. As it is said in the beginning of the Vedanta-sutra, \text{athato brahma-jijnasa:}"

“Having gotten the human form of life, one should inquire into Brahman, the Absolute Truth.” So we should take advantage of the human form of life. We should not live like animals, without any inquiry, without trying to find out how to stop our miserable material life.

Of course, we are actually trying to stop our own miseries, by working so hard in the struggle for existence. Why do we try to get money? Because we think, “If I get money, my distress will be mitigated.” So the struggle for existence is going on, and everyone is trying to become happy by getting sense gratification. But sense gratification is not real happiness. Real happiness is spiritual happiness, which comes from serving Krishna. That is happiness. Material happiness is simply perverted happiness.

Material happiness is like the mirage of water in the desert. In the desert there is no water, but when a thirsty

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**Sri Prabhupada Ashraya**

ISKCON Bangalore conducted Sri Prabhupada Ashraya ceremony on February 18, 2018 for the participants of Krishna Life programme being conducted at the temple.

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**Sri Ishvara Puri**

Sri Ishvara Puri was the principal disciple of Sri Madhavendra Puri. While he was in Navadvipa, Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu would come and have darshan of his lotus feet every day.

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March 02, 2013

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Culture Camp at ISKCON Bangalore

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**Inspiring - A must-see:** Wow, what a moving spiritual place. One of the highlights of our trip to Bangalore! The ceremony and chanting, the vibe of pure devotion, the shrine—it doesn’t matter what your religious beliefs are: this is a beautiful and peaceful place. gs12

**Devotional place:** The maintenance is very good and prasadam is very tasty. You can buy lots of tasty sweets here and some devotional items too. Must visit for Lord Krishna’s devotees.

**Bharathic:**

Peace of mind: Truly an amazing place to witness the beauty and to park yourself for some peace. The temple looks really great with beautiful interiors and modern architecture. Stalls here are well maintained and the Food Court offers several delicious foods. The prasadam was of great taste. akshairk

**Beautiful experience!!** Have been here several times and every time the experience has been wonderful. A very peaceful place with the chants of Hare Ram! Hare Krishna that uplifts your mind. This place should never be missed if you visit Bangalore. Very well maintained. They serve delicious prasad :) Ramya K
animal sees the mirage of water in the desert, he runs after it—and dies. We know that there is no water in the
desert—that the “water” is just a reflection of the sunshine—but animals do not know this. Similarly, human life
means to give up looking for happiness through sense gratification, which is just like a mirage in the desert, and
to try for spiritual happiness.

We can awaken to this higher happiness simply by chanting the Hare Krishna
mahamantra:
Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/
Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare.
Chanting Hare Krishna is such a simple thing, yet it can relieve all our suffering in the material world.

Our suffering is caused by the many dirty things within our heart. We are just like a criminal
who has dirty things within his heart. He thinks, “If I get such-and-such thing, I’ll be happy.” And at the risk of his life he commits a crime.

A burglar, a thief, knows that if he is captured by the police he’ll be punished, but still he goes and steals. Why?
Nunam pramattah: he has become mad after sense gratification. That’s all.

So we have to purify our hearts of our dirty desires, which are forcing us to act for sense gratification and suffer.
And in this age the purification is very, very easy:
Just chant Hare Krishna. That’s all. This is Chaitanya Mahaprabhu’s contribution.

Ceto-darpana-marjanam bhava-maha-davagni-nirvapanam.

If you chant the Hare Krishna mantra, you will be relieved of the suffering caused by
transmigrating perpetually from body to body. Chanting is such a simple thing. There is no question of caste, creed,
nationality, colour, social position. No, By the grace of God, everyone has a tongue and ears. So everyone can
chant Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/
Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare.

Just chant Hare Krishna and be happy.

Thank you very much.

Sri Prabhupada, the founder-acharya of ISKCON, has delivered more than
1500 lectures on Vedic scriptures like Bhagavad-gita, Srimad-Bhagavatam and
Sri Chaitanya-charitamrita. The audio recording of his lectures are available in
ISKCON centers. You can also hear some of these lectures in
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Sri Narasimha Jayanti - April 29, 2018
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 nama te narsimhaya, prahladadhatada-dayine
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“I offer my respectful obeisances unto You, Lord Narasimhadeva. You are the giver of pleasure
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Srila Prabhupada: Human life is meant for cultivating God consciousness. But in the modern so-called advanced civilization, instead of cultivating God consciousness people are cultivating nudity. Isn’t it so? So nature will punish them:

“All right, you want to be nude? Then become a tree and remain standing naked for five thousand years.”

I’ve seen them sometimes live up to five thousand years. I’ve seen them in a park near San Francisco.

Devotee: But they argue that if God wanted us to wear clothes. He would have made us with clothes.

Srila Prabhupada: Here in the material world, you have to work for whatever you want. Things are provided, but you have to work for them. In the spiritual world, there is no need for work: you get all your necessities automatically. That is one difference between the spiritual world and the material world.

Devotee: We could argue with the nudists that by their logic, if God had wanted us to have food He would have made us with food, too. Just as you have to work for your food, you also have to work for your clothes.

Srila Prabhupada: The Vishnu Purana explains why we have to work:

\[
\text{vishnu-saktih para prokta} \\
\text{ksetrajnakhya tatha para} \\
\text{avidya-karma-samjnanya \\
\text{tritya saktir isyate}
\]

This is a definition of the three divisions of God’s energy. One energy is the internal, spiritual energy. Another energy is the marginal energy—the living entities, who are also spiritual. And the third energy is the external, material energy, where there is ignorance and work. In the material world, everyone is ignorant, and they have to work.

So, the people of the modern civilization have simply increased their work. They call it civilization, but it is actually just like a prison house, where you have to work. They are thinking that to work constantly is civilization. So they have
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Our tendency is to work but to get things freely. This is why we sometimes hear the statement: “If God wanted us to wear clothes, why has He not created us with clothes?” This question shows that our tendency is not to work. And that is a spiritual tendency—want all our necessities to be automatically available. This is why we see that as soon as a man becomes rich, he generally quits work. He gets his things by having others work for him. So the human tendency is to retire from work. Devotee: Many people would disagree with you. They think that to be unemployed is one of the worst things that can happen to you.

Sri Rupa Gospaldas: Man is not meant to work like an ass all day long. Real civilization means to minimize work, save time, and cultivate your spiritual life. That is civilization—not to work like a hog or a dog for sense gratification. That kind of life is condemned in the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam [5.5.1]: nayam deho deha-bhajam nrloke kastan kaman arhate vid-bhujam ye. Human life is not meant for working very hard for sense gratification, which is done by the dogs and hogs. Human life is meant for austerity (tapah). Why austerity? To purify your existence (yena sattvam suddhyed). Then you’ll get unlimited pleasure (yasmad brahma-saúkhyam tv anantam). We are all seeking unlimited pleasure. But that is not possible in this material life. Unfortunately, people do not know this, so they are working very hard like hogs for a little happiness. The hog works day and night, searching out stool. And as soon as he gets some stool he becomes stout and strong. Then—sex with the nearest female. Never mind whether it’s his mother, sister, or daughter. This is hog life. So, human life is not meant for imitating the stool-eating hogs. But people of the modern society are imitating them: “We shall work hard, eat whatever we like, and have as much sex as we want.” They have no discrimination in the matter of food: they eat all sorts of nonsense. And in this way they grow very strong and have sex, even with their sister or daughter. The Bhāgavatam warns that this is not human life, but this has actually become the life of many modern, “civilized” men.

Devotee: But if people didn’t work hard, how could things go on? Wouldn’t there be an economic crisis?

Sri Rupa Gospaldas: No. Lord Krishna tells how we can make our life very comfortable: Just produce some food grains, vegetables, and fruits, and take the milk from the cow. All your economic problems will be solved. And even if you don’t produce food grains and vegetables, you can still live on fruits and milk. But no, modern man takes the source of milk—the cow—cuts her throat, and eats the meat. This is civilization? All their intelligence is being utilized for sinful life. They have good intelligence, but it is being used sinfully. Therefore they must suffer very severe reactions—war, famine, earthquakes, and so on. 😉

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Subhananda dasa: In your conclusion to A Cultural History of India, you say that the Hare Krishna movement “is historically very significant, for now for the first time since the days of the Roman Empire an Asian religion is being openly practiced by people of Western origin in the streets of Western cities.” There are, of course, many religious groups of Asian origin that have established outposts in the West in one form or another. Why do you call special attention to the Hare Krishna movement?

Dr. Basham: For one thing, the Hare Krishna movement is very definitely a religion. It’s a religion which you have to believe in fully and completely. The numerous organizations in the past which have brought Indian ideas to the Western world—organizations like the Ramakrishna Mission, the Theosophical Society, and so on—while having certain religious characteristics, have essentially been societies of people interested in mysticism, gnosticism, and so on, mostly middle-aged people who met together once a week and listened to the local swami lecturing to them, and then went back and carried on with their conventional secular lives. But the Hare Krishna movement demands a significant change in one’s way of life if one is to become a full member of it.

As such, I don’t think anything like it has occurred in the European context since the days of the Roman Empire when Christianity, Judaism, Mithraism, and other religions made numerous converts in the West. It is, therefore, something not completely new, but something which, I think, hasn’t happened for a very long time indeed. And so I feel that it is very important historically.

You notice, I said in the streets of Western cities. We have, in fact, people of purely Western blood coming from families of the Christian or Jewish tradition who are doing, in the streets of Western cities, all the things and more which religious Hindus do in the streets of Calcutta. This being the case, I feel that—without making any value judgments—it is a very important historical phenomenon, and I can’t think of anything like it since the Roman Empire.

Subhananda dasa: In that same conclusion to A Cultural History of India, you write, “A new aspect of the counter-attack from the East is the importation not only of the mystical gnosis of India, but also of her simple faith. This is chiefly the work of the Hare Krishna movement founded by Srila Prabhupada.” What sorts of groups do...
you have in mind when you refer to the importation of "the mystical gnosis of India"? How is the Krishna consciousness movement different from these?

Dr. Basham: One can trace the steadily increasing influence of mystical gnosis in the Western world almost from the end of the eighteenth century onwards when the Bhagavad-gita was first translated into a European language by Charles Wilkins. Indian ideas circulated rapidly among the intelligentsia, not only in the English-speaking world, but also in other parts of Europe. They certainly had an effect on people throughout the Western world—Germans like Schlegel, Deussen, and Schopenhauer, Americans like Emerson and Thoreau, Englishmen such as Max Mueller (an Englishman by adoption) and Aldous Huxley, Frenchmen like Romain Rolland, and Russians like Tolstoy. But these people were in no sense thoroughgoing Hindus, and they were impressed primarily by the mysticism of the Upanishads and of the Bhagavad-gita.

Since the Second World War, particularly, there has been a great increase in the number of practitioners and teachers of Indian mystical gnosis in the Western world. But these people have been essentially teachers of yoga, of mystical praxis, and of mystical ideas, but they have not been, in the same sense as in your Hare Krishna movement, religious leaders. Undoubtedly you do practice some form of meditation in the Hare Krishna movement, but your primary activity is not mysticism in that sense but singing the praises of Krishna. So this is a different thing. It is the simple Indian bhakti which you have brought into the Western world and not the mystical, otherworldly Upanishadic doctrines, which you may accept in theory but which do not mean so much to you as these simple, straightforward practices.

Subhananda dasa: But the bhakti tradition can also be accurately described as mystical and otherworldly, don’t you think? By “mystical” or “gnostic” I think you are referring specifically to Indian pantheism or monism, aren’t you?

Dr. Basham: Yes, that’s correct. Certainly bhakti tradition is mystical. It leads to transcendental experience. I myself have watched—and you can almost say taken part in—Chaitanya kirtanas in Calcutta where one does feel complete release from all the toils and worries of the world and one is carried off into a higher sphere. It’s a wonderful experience and you feel better for it. This is a kind of mysticism; I’m not disputing it. But when I talk about the mystical gnosis of India I mean primarily the Advaita Vedanta of Shankara and his modern supporters and followers. This has come through in all sorts of ways with the Ramakrishna Mission and many smaller movements of one kind or another. But it isn’t quite the same thing as yours, which is essentially a matter of simple faith—faith which is, of course, brilliantly articulated in a long-standing theological tradition.

Subhananda dasa: In a letter you recently sent me, you briefly contrast the Hare Krishna movement with the Vedanta of the neo-Hindu propagandists, whom you refer to as the “streamlined swamis.” What exactly do you mean?

Dr. Basham: “Streamlined swamis” is a facetious phrase which I invented myself. I don’t mean it with any particular ill will, and I don’t wish to be unduly critical in the use of this term, but I intend it as a reference to the doctrines and teachings which various Indian swamis put forth, a streamlined kind of Hindu mysticism designed to appeal to modern, jet-age disciples: levitation in a few months or even weeks, moksha in a few easy lessons—a Hinduism without class, without worship, without rigid taboos, and so forth. At the opposite extreme from your form of Indian religion or mysticism, we have, for example, Transcendental Meditation. TM seems to have dropped all its theological and even philosophical trappings. It’s just a method of mental and psychic training.

That is one extreme. Yours is the other. You appropriate an Indian religious sect—its beliefs, its practices, all its taboos, and so on—root and branch and import it into the West. In between these extremes we have all sorts of variations, and the “streamlined swamis” are those who tend rather to the Transcendental Meditation extreme than to yours. I don’t mean it with any undue disparagement, but such people do streamline their religious, theological, and philosophical ideas in order to make them palatable to the twentieth-century Western mind. That being the case, I think my phrase “streamlined swamis” is perhaps justified.

Subhananda dasa: So, as far as the other extreme—the Krishna consciousness movement—is concerned, you see its followers as pursuing more than merely Indian mystical ideas or meditational techniques. They venture upon a path of self-transformation, devoting themselves to a path that represents a clearly radical departure from normative Western thought, behaviour, and lifestyle. In your view, then, what is it about Western or modern culture that they find so distasteful? Against what are they rebelling? On the other hand, what is it about Indian culture or Vaishnava bhakti tradition that they find so attractive?

Dr. Basham: I think one of the things that they subconsciously find difficult to get on with is the “permissive society,” the notion of “do your own thing”: concern yourself only with the fulfillment of your own personal whims and aims. You know the Hindu doctrine of the four progressive aims of life: dharma [social duty], artha [acquisition of wealth], kama [worldly enjoyment], and moksha [liberation] as the final end. The tendency of the permissive society is to leave dharma out altogether. And if you’re one of the “outsider” types who float around among the educated youth today—quite a
Bangalore: alankara (above) and abhisheka (below)
few of our students are like that—you might also leave artha out. All you need bother about is kama. And that kama needn't necessarily express itself in sexual activity. A lot of these kids seem to think that kama just means having sex, due to the phrase “Kama-sutra.” But obviously, in its broad context, kama means self-gratification; just do whatever you want to do, whatever you imagine is going to make you happy.

Subhananda dasa: As they say, “If it feels good, do it.”

Dr. Basham: Yes, if you think it’s going to benefit you and make you happy, then do it. That’s kama. And they find it just doesn’t work. They want something to map their courses by; they want something which gives them a feeling of direction. And, of course, dharma does that.

Psychologically, if we don’t follow our dharma—whatever our dharma may be—we’re sunk. As you realize, in the Hindu tradition, while there is sanatana-dharma [the eternal codes of right conduct, applying to everybody], everyone has also his own individual dharma, sva-dharma. We’ve got to follow our dharma or we suffer from all sorts of psychological difficulties, to say the least of it. It affects our karma [actions] and our overall behaviour as well as our future happiness. And in this way—whatever we believe about a future life—there is a lot of truth in the fundamental doctrines of Hinduism.

Now, if people have no dharma, if they deliberately deny having a dharma, then their only dharma is just a vague sense of not bothering other people too much and getting on with “doing their own thing.” But everybody has a different “own thing.” They are no longer a group; they don’t really belong to anybody. They are isolated. Moreover, their life lacks direction. They drift. And for this reason, among others, we have a great growth in the use of dangerous drugs nowadays.

Sexual promiscuity or the permissive society may look all right on paper, but it has certain disadvantages which I think the world, more and more, is beginning to realize. For one thing, while the famous “pill” has largely solved the problem of unwanted children—you can now use sex as a pleasant entertainment without any great fear of consequences—it hasn’t solved the problem of human jealousy. A man and a woman are not going to be very happy in their relationship when they are constantly fearing that someday somebody might come along and take their partner away from them. This is what they are fearing today. I know from many of my students whom I’ve talked to—especially it affects the women, but men feel it too. The thought of losing their beloved constantly haunts them. And it’s the same in marriage. A young married man has no real confidence in being able to keep his spouse until old age. And perhaps he himself will turn his eyes to another one. And thus the lack of stability in human relationships is one of the main causes of the growth of mental and psychological trouble in the world today.

Your movement sets itself diametrically against all this sort of thing. It disparages undue sexual activity. You mustn’t have sexual activity unless you definitely want to produce a child. One man for one woman for the rest of your life. It goes back, in a very new and different guise, to eighteenth and nineteenth century Puritanism.

I might seem old-fashioned, but it seems to me that that is what the world needs. It may be that with the invention of easier and more reliable contraception, the world will never go back to anything quite like the old Puritanical conception of human relationships, but it needs something a bit like Puritanism . . . not necessarily the rigid Puritanism which would brand every person who committed adultery with an “A” on their forehead or, as the Muslims do in Saudi Arabia, execute them. It should be far more tolerant than that. At least some people feel that the world needs, and that they need, a system which has taboos about it.

We can’t all be grown-up all the time; only sannyasis and saints can do that. Many of us, for most of our lives, are children at heart, and we need some sort of guidance and control. A religious movement gives that. It is depressing that the Christian churches are doing very little in this respect now. Even the Catholics are getting almost as permissive as the unbelievers concerning their ideas of human relationships.

Not only does the young man or woman of this age, in many cases at least, find that the permissive society is unsatisfying, but he also finds the system of values which he is expected to follow unsatisfying.

On the one hand, he has the choice of one or another of the Christian communities, most of which still expect him to believe in certain doctrines he might find difficult to accept, such as the physical resurrection of Jesus. On the other hand, he has a downright unbelief, which is psychologically unsatisfying.

Man needs a sense of the mystery and the wonder of the world and of his existence within it. Unbelief or lack of concern for religion—atheism, agnosticism, whatever you like to call it—just doesn’t give that. An attitude of faith is really very important for human happiness: faith in something outside oneself, faith in the fundamental goodness of the world, or faith that there is good in the world and that the world has meaning. And if you can get that, you are at least some way on the road to a happier and better life.

I think that this is what attracts some people to the Krishna consciousness movement. The movement offers them a completely different lifestyle, one which is guided and directed. Within the framework of the movement they have a good deal of liberty, but it lays down guidelines which its members are expected to follow. Many young people really need direction, guidance, meaning.
Further, there is a general feeling, among many, that the capitalist society has made a mess of things. Communist society, which allows even less freedom than capitalism does, has also made a mess of things. Between them there is the danger of their blowing the world to bits. Many seek a third alternative, a different way of life which is neither one nor the other. Your movement presents them with an alternative which some, at least, find acceptable.

Subhananda dasa: Let me ask you to explain a little more about the two major and conflicting schools of Indian thought which you've been alluding to in our discussion: the devotional/theistic school versus the nondevotional/atheistic school—that is, Indian dualism (Dvaita) and Indian nondualism (Advaita), or what might be called the Personalistic versus Impersonalistic traditions. Do you have any suggestions—perhaps from a psychological viewpoint, or perhaps from a sociology-of-knowledge perspective—why people, in fact, become attracted to the monism of the Impersonalistic school? What are such people looking for? What sorts of needs may be satisfied by that particular philosophical viewpoint?

Dr. Basham: There are psychological influences at work. You see, this is an age of deep insecurity and fear—fear of serious and terrible catastrophes in the world such as a Third World War, economic depression, severe depletion of natural resources, widespread social breakdown, disintegration of human moral values, and so on—fears of all sorts and kinds which derive from the "acquisitive society" and the "permissive society." And this deep insecurity and anxiety, in turn, help toward a feeling that you've got to negate or transcend your individuality, because if you're no longer a personality, a self, you can't suffer, because there's no self to have consciousness of suffering. Moreover, the Advaita formula of "atman equals Brahman" implies that you yourself are the whole universe and all that underlies it. But this is a refined form of egoism, if you like. It satisfies the individualist craving, and at the same time, by getting rid of the specific embodied individual, it gives the person hope that he will be saved from all the sufferings of finite selfhood.

Subhananda dasa: So there are two aspects, you're saying, of the attraction to impersonalistic thought. One is the fear of a spiritual personal identity, and the other is a kind of ultimate egoism—a desire to become God. Dr. Basham: Yes, that is how I see it.

Subhananda dasa: In his commentary on one verse of the Bhagavad-gita, Srila Prabhupada writes that those who have experienced the suffering of the world conclude that happiness can be experienced only when one is completely freed from personal identity per se, because it was as individual, personal selves that they experienced suffering.

Dr. Basham: Yes, they want to cut out their identity. If you're not an individual, you can't suffer. They want to get rid of themselves because they're frightened of being a person. It's a deep cosmic fear, a fear of the whole universe, the sort of thing that is reflected in some of the existential philosophers like Heidegger and Sartre.

Subhananda dasa: You seem to express a preference for the dualistic and theistic traditions. What is it about the great Vaishnava theologians like Ramanuja and Madhva that you find attractive?

Dr. Basham: I find their teachings more attractive because they leave room for personality in the universe: the personality of God and the personalities of individual souls who are God's children and who are always sufficiently individualized to recognize themselves as being creatures of God. What the factual truth of the Ramanuja picture of the universe is, I don't wish to discuss here. But it is certainly a much more attractive universe to me than the Shankara one; and for me it's much more psychologically satisfying.

Subhananda dasa: Why?

Dr. Basham: Well, because the world obviously isn't "one." It may be all one within the body of God, contained in God. But I'm not you and you're not me and I don't see why when I achieve complete moksha (which I probably never shall in a thousand lives) I should be completely merged in you, and I don't think I want to be. I don't see logically why I should. I might become merged in God in that I feel that I'm almost one with God in devotion, and that I am within God, within the soul of God or that my soul is linked with God. But if I lose my individuality completely, I don't see how I can enjoy the presence of God.

Subhananda dasa: Yes, that is our view also.

Dr. Basham: Well, these are all the arguments that go back to Ramanuja and his criticism of Shankara. And they are thoroughly valid. Shankara might have been more clever as a philosopher than Ramanuja, but in the final analysis I think that Ramanuja was a better philosopher.

Subhananda dasa: Theologically, our tradition is quite close to that of Ramanuja.

Dr. Basham: Yes, I know it is. If you follow Chaitanya, you're close to Ramanuja.

Subhananda dasa: You've put the Krishna consciousness movement within the broad historical context of theistic Hinduism, the bhakti tradition. More specifically, as you know, the movement is a direct modern expression of the devotional movement founded in sixteenth-century Bengal by the well-known mystic and saint Sri Chaitanya.

In your Encyclopaedia Britannica article, "History of Hinduism," you state, "With its discouragement of
ritualism, its strong ethical emphasis, and its joyful expressive mood of worship, the Chaitanya movement affected the whole life of Bengal and was not without influence in other parts of India. With these or any other points in mind, what is most distinctive and important about Sri Chaitanya’s movement within the overall context of India’s religious history?

Dr. Basham: There were, of course, other movements in other parts of India during the medieval period which are rather similar, but the Chaitanya movement was, perhaps, most fully expressive of certain characteristics of these movements. It dispensed with the traditional, complicated brahminical yajna rituals, viewing them as unnecessary for salvation. As far as its “strong ethical emphasis” is concerned, it taught fellowship and brotherhood and the love of man for man with an intensity which many religious movements in India didn’t. It tended, thus, to oversimplify. We’re told that members of all castes were welcome in Chaitanya’s order and that they lived together in perfect amity and unity. And, finally, the movement’s joyful and expressive method of worship, the kirtana with dancing through the streets of the towns and villages. If certain other Hindu sects do adopt this practice, I think they’ve done so under the influence of Chaitanya. And all these things have tended to affect the whole life not only of Bengal but, to some extent, the rest of India.

Subhananda dasa: You mentioned earlier that you had taken part in a Chaitanya kirtana in Calcutta. Can you describe that experience?

Dr. Basham: Over the years, I’ve observed several Chaitanya kirtanas, but I remember one in particular. It was about twenty years ago. I got off a train in Sealdah Station, in Calcutta, just about sunset, and noticed that there was a Chaitanya kirtana taking place in one corner of the station yard.

Whenever I come across a kirtana in progress, I always stop and listen, but often I’m in a hurry and have other things to do, and so I can only wait a minute or two. This time I was in no hurry. I had plenty of time to spare.

The devotees had erected a decorative tent in which they had set up the statue of Krishna and numerous brightly coloured pictures of Krishna and Chaitanya and the various saints of the order. The whole scene was lit up with bright lights and decorated with many flowers and various other decorations.

Not very many people were there at first, but as I stood watching and looking, more and more people came along and got involved. They were chanting “Hare Krishna, Hare Rama” just as you do. They kept on chanting and chanting and chanting, until, after a while, a few of them began to dance and then nearly everybody was dancing. I don’t think I got as far as dancing, but I found that I was certainly joining in the chanting and I was really carried away. I was there for at least two hours. It was a wonderful experience.

As I think you know, on a theoretical and logical level I am not able to fully accept your doctrine of the historicity of Krishna and so on, but nevertheless I do see the emotional and spiritual force of the Chaitanya movement. That evening outside Sealdah Station is something which I will never forget—the intense experience of exhilaration and relief, and the feeling of security and safety and inner happiness which came from it. And it was so clear that all the people were feeling it. It couldn’t but affect me too. The worshipers were mostly poor people or lower-middle class and better types of working-class people from the buildings and tenements of the surrounding neighbourhood. They had, most of the time, very dull and difficult lives, no doubt. They worked hard and had to look forward to materially. But there was such happiness, such relief from tension and strain on their faces as one could hardly imagine. And I feel that this is a very good form of religious worship. Irrespective of the truth or falsehood of what they believe in, it does people enormous good. I’m afraid I tend to take a rather pragmatic view of religion.

Subhananda dasa: The tradition is, of course, not based merely upon caturthi religious emotionalism, but on a rich and sophisticated theology as well.

Dr. Basham: Yes, of course, Chaitanya had a theology, and it was fully developed by his immediate and subsequent followers. He developed a cohesive theology which he communicated orally to his followers, and which was fully elucidated in their various theological commentaries and other writings. So, obviously, the Chaitanya tradition has its own logically worked-out philosophical and theological system, one that is based upon the Bhagavad-gita and the Bhagavata Purana and of course Chaitanya’s own special insights. But this tradition is distinctive in that it gives full play to religious emotion. It demonstrates that theological rationality and religious emotion go hand in hand. Mere theology cannot satisfy the heart. That is the importance of bhakti.

Subhananda dasa: Would you view bhakti as one of India’s most important gifts to the world?

Dr. Basham: Yes, I would say so. Of course, from a purely quantitative, historical point of view, we’d have to say that Buddhism was India’s most significant gift to the world. Buddhism became much more of a missionary religion than Hinduism ever was, and has affected the life and the way of thought of most of Asia. Whether this is spiritually the greatest gift or the greatest in the sense of marvelous is another matter. Although the Indian form of bhakti hasn’t had a great direct influence on the rest of the world, we can say that this attitude of loving devotion to a personal God, as developed in Indian bhakti tradition, is undoubtedly one of India’s greatest gifts to the world, and a very precious and a very valuable gift—if the world will accept it.
Swamy, stands very much like Sri Venkateshwara of Thirupathi. The Lord appears in His four-handed form, with conch and discuss in the upper hands. The sanctum also houses the Deity of His consort, Senkamalavalli Thayar (also called Hemabhujavalli, Vaikuntha Nayaki and Amrithavarshini) in sitting posture, with lotus in both hands. The festival Deity of Vishnu, called by different names like Moovaraghia Oruvan, Achyutha, Dvistantha, Devanatha, Vibhuthanatha and Dasyatha, is housed in the sanctum. The temple houses other Deities like Pallikonda Perumal, Andal, Adi Keshava Perumal, Alwars, Hanuman and Garuda. There is a separate shrine housing Rama, though the presiding Deity is Devanatha Swamy. The temple is known for the shrine of Lord Hayagriva, the horse-faced avatar of Vishnu.

Thirumangai Alwar has sung 10 beautiful songs on the Lord of Thiruvaheendrapuram:

The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Sri Narayana, who, as Varaha, lifted Bhoomidevi from the sea with His curved tusk—resides in Thiruvaheendrapuram. The hill temple town is beautiful with ponds and forests, where lotuses and champaka flowers are seen. Swarms of bees seek the lotus flowers, drink honey and go to champaka flowers, singing, dancing and hovering around.

(This hill temple town is Thiru Aheendrapuram, which takes the Tamil pronunciation Thiruvaheendrapuram. It is said Adishesha worshipped Him here.)

The Supreme Personality of Godhead Sri Narayana — who has chakra ayudha in His right hand and Mahalakshmi on His chest and who is all that is objectified in the Vedas, resides in Thiruvaheendrapuram. The city has plenty of lotus lakes and forests where the male bees sit on the lotus flowers and woo their mates who sit on the jasmine creeper, buzzing tunefully to them. He is called Mayavan since He, astonishingly small, lies on a tiny banyan leaf during pralaya after swallowing all the worlds. He is true to His devotees who can feel Him in their hearts, but false to the non-believers who don’t see Him anywhere. He is called Devanayakan in Thiruvaheendrapuram, which has plenty of lotus lakes and forests, where tulasi plants grow and the champaka trees entwined by jasmine creepers.

The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Sri Narayana, took Narasimha avatar and split open the chest of Hiranya, who came charging with his teeth gnawing at Him, and saved His son Prahlada from the asura’s clutches. He resides in Thiruvaheendrapuram, where there are plenty of sugarcane fields where the crops grow sky high. They touch the ceiling of the sky, cannot grow any taller and therefore bulge sideways. Since they bulge, they crush their neighbouring sugarcane crops, resulting in the flow of sugarcane juice into the water, making the place muddy.

For the sake of Indra, Vamana begged three feet of land from Mahabali in his yagashala. When He got it, He measured with the huge feet of Trivikrama. For the sake of Mahalakshmi, He defeated the seven huge, Goddess Mahalakshmi with Devanatha Perumal
The Legend

Located in the outskirts of Cuddalur town is the wonderful hill temple of Thiruvaheendrapuram Devanatha.

The Legend

The legend of the temple is closely associated with Adishesha and Garuda. Sage Kashyapa had two wives - Kadru and Vinata. Though both were sisters, they were jealous of each other. Kashyapa offered each of them a boon. Kadru said, “Let thousand brave and radiant sons be born to me.” Kashyapa granted her the boon. At this, Vinata became jealous and said, “Let such sons be born to me, who are even braver and brighter than my sister’s sons.” Kashyapa granted her the boon also. After his wives became pregnant, he advised them to look after the children, and then left for his penance in the forest.

After a long time Kadru gave birth to a thousand eggs, and Vinata, to two eggs. The eggs were carefully incubated in jars which were kept warm. After a lapse of five hundred years, the eggs laid by Kadru hatched and of these sons. Vinata became jealous, as her eggs had not yet hatched.

Once Kadru called Vinata and asked her to tell her the colour of the celestial horse Uchaaishravas, who emanated from the ocean, when it was churned by the devas and asuras, to generate nectar. Without a second thought, Vinata said that the horse was pure white. Kadru contradicted her and said that its tail was black. An argument ensued, and Kadru challenged Vinata to a wager, saying that whoever lost the bet would have to become the other’s servant. Intending to cheat Vinata, Kadru called her thousand sons to coil neatly around Uchaishravas’s tail so that it would appear black. While some of her sons obeyed her instructions, others refused to obey her. Those who disobeyed her instructions were cursed by Kadru, to be charred alive in the sarpa satra yagna (snake sacrifice) that would be performed by King Janamejaya of Hastinapura. (Janamejaya was the son of Maharaja Parikshit) Kashyapa was upset by this curse, but Brahma, who happened to be there, told him such a curse was essential, as serpents had become very dangerous to society. Brahma then gave Kashyapa the boon. Kadru said, “Let thousand brave and radiant sons be born to me.” Kashyapa granted her the boon. At this, Vinata became jealous and said, “Let such sons be born to me.” Kashyapa granted her the boon also. After his wives became pregnant, he advised them to look after the children, and then left for his penance in the forest.

After a long time Kadru gave birth to a thousand eggs, and Vinata, to two eggs. The eggs were carefully incubated in jars which were kept warm. After a lapse of five hundred years, the eggs laid by Kadru hatched and of these thousand Naga sons, the most prominent ones were Shesha, Vasuki and Takshaka. All the serpents born in this world are the descendants of these thousand sons. Vinata became jealous, as her eggs had not yet hatched.

In a moment of haste, she broke open one of the eggs, revealing a half-formed son. This son was enraged by his physical form and cursed his mother for her hasty act, saying she would be a slave to Kadru for five hundred years, till the son from her second egg was born. He became a charioteer and herald for the sun god and the creator of the red sky at dawn, and was therefore named Aruna. Eventually, after five hundred years, Vinata’s second son, Garuda, was born in the form of a huge bird with immense power. As soon as he was born, he flew away with grace, seeking food.

Garuda went around to bring water for the Lord, came across a rishi in mid-air, and, finding water inside the rishi’s sacred kettle, knocked it down, thus letting the water into this place. The river brought by Garuda flows in Thiruvaheendrapuram and is known by the name Garudanithi. Angered by this act of Garuda, the rishi cursed him, turning the water into a dirty colour. Realising his folly, Garuda explained the reason for his hasty action and apologised. To this day, one finds the water in the river dirty but when cupped in the hands, it seems pure and clear.

Garuda returned late (after Adishesha had already helped quench the Lord’s thirst) and requested the Lord to accept his water too as sacred. The Lord accepted the water on the day of the chariot procession. To this day, water from this river is offered to the Supreme Lord on this festival day.

This is the only hill temple town where both servants of Vishnu brought water for the Lord.

The Temple

The temple faces east, but the rajagopuram, the temple’s gateway tower, is located on the western entrance and has five tiers. It rises to a height of 60 feet (18 m). The temple is located on the foothills of Oothadagiri, a small hill which houses a temple of Hayagriva. The river Kedilam (Garuda river), located on the other side of the temple, flows from south to north and is locally called Uttaravahini. The temple is built in the Dravidian architectural style. A granite wall surrounds the temple, enclosing all its shrines and bodies of water. The presiding Deity, Devanatha called Shesha Theeratham. This is a prayer well where devotees offer jaggery, salt and pepper, seeking remedy for the illnesses they suffer. Those facing serpent effects (sarpa dosha) pray here for speedy remedy.

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The thirst quenched

Thiruvaheendrapuram Devanatha Temple
by Sampathumara Ramanuja Dasan (Adv. Ashwin S)

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The Legend

Vinata became jealous, as her eggs had not yet hatched. In a moment of haste, she broke open one of the eggs, revealing a half-formed son. This son was enraged by this world. This is the reason for his hasty action and apologised. To this day, one finds the water in the river dirty but when cupped in the hands, it seems pure and clear.

Once Kadru called Vinata and asked her to tell her the colour of the celestial horse Ucchaishravas, who emanated from the ocean, when it was churned by the devas and asuras, to generate nectar. Without a second thought, Vinata said that the horse was pure white. Kadru contradicted her and said that its tail was black. An argument ensued, and Kadru challenged Vinata to a wager, saying that whoever lost the bet would have to become the other’s servant. Intending to cheat Vinata, Kadru called her thousand sons to coil neatly around Ucchaishravas’s tail so that it would appear black. While some of her sons obeyed her instructions, others refused to oblige her. Those who disobeyed her instructions were cursed by Kadru, to be charred alive in the sarpa satra (snake sacrifice) that would be performed by King Janamejaya of Hastinapura. (Janamejaya was the son of Maharaja Parikshit) Kashyapa was upset by this curse, but Brahma, who happened to be there, told him such a curse was essential, as serpents had become very dangerous to society. Brahma then gave Kashyapa the antidote for snake poisoning. Kadru won the bet as the Nagas had wound around Ucchaishravas’s tail, making it appear black. Vinata thus became the slave of Kadru.

On another occasion, Kadru suggested to Vinata that she should take Kadru, and that Garuda should take her Naga sons to the beautiful island of Ramanayaka in the middle of the ocean, within the abode of snakes. Vinata and Garuda did as directed. On reaching their destination, Kadru asked Garuda to take her sons to the abode of the sun to pray their respectful obeisance. Garuda carried the Naga sons of Kadru on his back and approached the sun. As he flew closer, the Nagas could not withstand the heat and started falling off him to the ground in a faint, on the island of Virana. Hearing the cries of her children, Kadru was deeply distressed and blamed Garuda for what had happened to her children. Vinata, distressed by her son’s plight and following a suggestion by Kadru, asked Garuda to bring water of the Ganga from the netherworld. Garuda obeyed and brought the water to the southern bank of the Gautami River. He sprinkled it on the snakes and they were revived. This curing of this incident occurred is called Nagalaya, the abode of the snakes. In another version of the story related in the Adi Parva of the Valmiki Ramayana, it is said that when the Nagas fainted and fell to the ground due to the intense heat of the sun, Kadru offered prayers to Indra to come to her children’s rescue. Indra promptly created showers of rain to fall on the Nagas and they were restored from their charred state. They then lived on the island of Ramanayaka.

Both Adishesha and Garuda went on to become eternal residents of Vilkunta. They are both always eager to serve the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Thiruvaheendrapuram was planned and developed by Adishesha. Lord Brahma had performed penance here, hence its other name, Brahmachala. It is considered that bathing in this place would bestow the same benefit to the devotee as bathing in the holy Ganga. It is said that the water of the river is red as blood during the monsoon, due to the curse of a rishi, which will be explained later. This hilly place also bears the name Oushadhaachala, as a piece of the Dronagiri Mountain which had the sanjeevani herb, fell here when Hanuman was carrying it to Lanka. The hill has many herbs with high medical value.

Once the Supreme Personality of Godhead, feeling thirsty, ordered Garuda to bring Him water. As Garuda delayed to return, Adishesha struck the ground with his tail, made a spring and offered the water to the Lord. This spring is called Shesha Theertham. This is a prayer well where devotees offer jaggery, salt and pepper, seeking remedy for the illnesses they suffer. Those facing serpent effects (sarpa dosha) pray here for speedy remedy.

Another legend has it that Garuda, who went around to bring water for the Lord, came across a rishi in mid-air, and, finding water inside the rishi’s sacred kettle, knocked it down, thus letting the water into this place. The river brought by Garuda flows in Thiruvaheendrapuram and is known by the name Garudanidhi. Angered by this act of Garuda, the rishi cursed him, turning the water into a dirty colour. Realising his folly, Garuda explained the reason for his hasty action and apologised. To this day, one finds the water in the river dirty but when cupped in the hands, it seems pure and clear.

Garuda returned late (after Adishesha had already helped quench the Lord’s thirst) and requested the Lord to accept his water too as sacred. The Lord accepted the water on the day of the chariot procession. To this day, water from this river is offered to the Supreme Lord on this festival day.

This is the only hill temple town where both servants of Vishnu brought water for the Lord.

The Temple

The temple faces east, but the rajagopuram, the temple's gateway tower, is located on the western entrance and has five tiers. It rises to a height of 60 feet (18 m). The temple is located on the foothills of Outhadagiri, a small hill which houses a temple of Hayagriva. The river Kedilam (Garuda river), located on the other side of the temple, flows from south to north and is locally called Uttaravahini. The temple is built in the Dravidian architectural style. A granite wall surrounds the temple, enclosing all its shrines and bodies of water. The presiding deity, Devanatha
Swamy, stands very much like Sri Venkateshwara of Thirupathi. The Lord appears in His four-handed form, with conch and discus in the upper hands. The sanctum also houses the Deity of His consort, Senkamalavalli Thayar (also called Hemabhujavalli, Vaikuntha Nayaki and Anirthavarshini) in sitting posture, with lotus in both hands. The festival Deity of Vishnu, called by different names like Moovaraghia Oruvan, Achyutha, Divistantha, Devanatha, Vilbuthanaath and Dasyatha, is housed in the sanctum. The temple houses other Deities like Pallikonda Perumal, Andal, Adi Keshava Perumal, Alwars, Hanuman and Garuda. There is a separate shrine housing Rama, though the presiding Deity is Devanatha Swamy. The temple is known for the shrine of Lord Hayagriva, the horse-faced avatara of Vishnu.

Thirumangai Alwar has sung 10 beautiful songs on the Lord of Thiruvaheendrapuram:

The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Sri Narayana, who, as Varaha, lifted Bhoomidevi from the sea with His curved tusk—resides in Thiruvaheendrapuram. The hill temple town is beautiful with ponds and forests, where lotuses and champaka flowers are seen. Swarms of bees seek the lotus flowers, drink honey and go to champaka flowers, singing, dancing and hovering around.

The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Sri Narayana — who has chakra ayudha in His right hand and Mahalakshmi on His chest and who is all that is objectified in the Vedas, resides in Thiruvaheendrapuram. The city has plenty of lotus lakes and forests where the male bees sit on the lotus flowers and woo their mates who sit on the jasmine creeper, buzzing tunefully to them. He is called Mayavan since He, astonishingly small, lies on a tiny banyan leaf during pralaya after swallowing all the worlds. He is true to His devotees who can feel Him in their hearts, but false to the non-believers who don’t see Him anywhere. He is called Devanayakan in Thiruvaheendrapuram, which has plenty of lotus lakes and forests, where tulasi plants grow and the champaka trees entwined by jasmine creepers.

For the sake of Indra, Vamana begged three feet of land from Mahabali in his yagashala. When He got it, He measured with the huge feet of Trivikrama. For the sake of Mahalakshmi, He defeated the seven huge, Goddess Mahalakshmi with Devanatha Perumal

The Supreme Personality of Godhead Sr Narayana — who has chakra ayudha in His right hand and Mahalakshmi on His chest and who is all that is objectified in the Vedas, resides in Thiruvaheendrapuram. The city has plenty of lotus lakes and forests where the male bees sit on the lotus flowers and woo their mates who sit on the jasmine creeper, buzzing tunefully to them. He is called Mayavan since He, astonishingly small, lies on a tiny banyan leaf during pralaya after swallowing all the worlds. He is true to His devotees who can feel Him in their hearts, but false to the non-believers who don’t see Him anywhere. He is called Devanayakan in Thiruvaheendrapuram, which has plenty of lotus lakes and forests, where tulasi plants grow and the champaka trees entwined by jasmine creepers.

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ritualism, its strong ethical emphasis, and its joyful expressive mood of worship, the Chaitanya movement affected the whole life of Bengal and was not without influence in other parts of India. With these or any other points in mind, what is most distinctive and important about Sri Chaitanya's movement within the overall context of India's religious history?

Dr. Basham: There were, of course, other movements in other parts of India during the medieval period which are rather similar, but the Chaitanya movement was, perhaps, most fully expressive of certain characteristics of these movements. It dispensed with the traditional, complicated brahminical yajna rituals, viewing them as unnecessary for salvation. As far as its "strong ethical emphasis" is concerned, it taught fellowship and brotherhood and the love of man for man with an intensity which many religious movements in India didn't. It tended, thus, to override caste. We're told that members of all castes were welcome in Chaitanya's order and that they lived together in perfect amity and unity. And finally, the movement's joyful and expressive method of worship, the kirtana with dancing through the streets of the towns and villages. If certain other Hindu sects do adopt this practice, I think they've done so under the influence of Chaitanya. And all these things have tended to affect the whole life not only of Bengal but, to some extent, the rest of India.

Subhananda dasa: You mentioned earlier that you had taken part in a Chaitanya kirtana in Calcutta. Can you describe that experience?

Dr. Basham: Over the years, I've observed several Chaitanya kirtanas, but I remember one in particular. It was about twenty years ago. I got off a train in Sealdah Station, in Calcutta, just about sunset, and noticed that there was a Chaitanya kirtana taking place in one corner of the station yard.

Whenever I come across a kirtana in progress, I always stop and listen, but often I'm in a hurry and have other things to do, and so I can only wait a minute or two. This time I was in no hurry. I had plenty of time to spare. The devotees had erected a decorative tent in which the kirtana was taking place. The whole scene was lit up with bright lights and decorated with many flowers and various other decorations.

Not very many people were there at first, but as I stood watching and looking, more and more people came along and got involved. They were chanting "Hare Krishna, Hare Rama" just as you do. They kept on chanting and chanting and chanting, until, after a while, a few of them began to dance and then nearly everybody was dancing. I don't think I got as far as dancing, but I found that I was certainly joining in the chanting and I was really carried away. I was there for at least two hours. It was a wonderful experience.

As I think you know, on a theoretical and logical level I am not able to fully accept your doctrine of the historicity of Krishna and so on, but nevertheless I do see the emotional and spiritual force of the Chaitanya movement. That evening outside Sealdah Station is something which I will never forget—the intense experience of exhilaration and relief, and the feeling of security and safety and inner happiness which came from it. And it was so clear that all the people were feeling it. It couldn't but affect me too. The worshipers were mostly poor people or lower-middle class and better types of working-class people from the buildings and tenements of the surrounding neighbourhood. They had, most of the time, very dull and difficult lives, no doubt. They worked hard and had no money to look forward to materially. But there was such happiness, such relief from tension and strain on their faces as one could hardly imagine. And I feel that this is a very good form of religious worship. Irrespective of the truth or falsehood of what they believe in, it does people enormous good. I'm afraid I tend to take a rather pragmatic view of religion.

Subhananda dasa: The tradition is, of course, not based merely upon cathartic religious emotionalism, but on a rich and sophisticated theology as well.

Dr. Basham: Yes, of course, Chaitanya had a theology, and it was fully developed by his immediate and subsequent followers. He developed a cohesive theology which he communicated orally to his followers, and which was fully elucidated in their various theological commentaries and other writings. So, obviously, the Chaitanya tradition has its own logically worked-out philosophical and theological system, one that is based upon the Bhagavad-gita and the Bhagavata Purana and of course Chaitanya's own special insights. But this tradition is distinctive in that it gives full play to religious emotion. It demonstrates that theological rationality and religious emotion go hand in hand. Mere theology cannot satisfy the heart. That is the importance of bhakti.

Subhananda dasa: Would you view bhakti as one of India's most important gifts to the world?

Dr. Basham: Yes, I would say so. Of course, from a purely quantitative, historical point of view, we'd have to say that Buddhism was India's most significant gift to the world. Buddhism became much more of a missionary religion than Hinduism ever was, and has affected the life and the way of thought of most of Asia. Whether this is spiritually the greatest gift or the greatest in the sense of marvelous is another matter. Although the Indian form of bhakti hasn't had a great direct influence on the rest of the world, we can say that this attitude of loving devotion to a personal God, as developed in Indian bhakti tradition, is undoubtedly one of India's greatest gifts to the world, and a very precious and a very valuable gift—if the world will accept it. 😍

powerful bulls. For the sake of bhaktas and bhagavatas, He resides in Thiruvaheendrapuram. There are tamala, coconut and kadamba trees where monkeys live. They jump, play, shout and eat the honey-laden sweet jackfruits. (The monkeys represent human beings—the conditioned souls—who enjoy the worldly matters, shouting and running after pleasures. They sometimes eat the jackfruits (devotional service) because of their association with the place.)

Manthara, the hunchback woman, instigated Kaikkeyi to ask the boon to Dasharatha. Sri Rama went to the forest along with His brother and wife in order to fulfil His father's words. He who is dark like a rain cloud resides in Thiruvaheendrapuram where there are tall trees, thick forests, strong forts, all of which reach sky high, touching the moon. The description speaks of the greatness of the city.

Sri Rama killed Ravana by beheading his ten heads and crushed the crowns upon them. He, who had done this for the sake of Mahakalakshmi, resides in Thiruvaheendrapuram, where the swans sit on the huge lotus flowers with their mates and are being fanned by the red paddy stalks.

(The swans normally refer to bhaktas and learned scholars who, like the mythical bird (which take milk alone, leaving the water mixed with it) take the essence of all shrutis leaving aside the non-essentials, or it may mean the Hariprasada avatar of Bhagavan.)

In Sri Ramavatara, He broke the bow for the sake of Sita, as Krishna He lifted Govardhana Hill for the sake of the cattle, to save them from the heavy rain caused by Indra. He resides in Thiruvaheendrapuram, a hill temple town where the river pushes the tusks of elephants and tamala trees along with her currents and enters the fertile fields to irrigate the crops, scattering them everywhere.

Sri Krishna played the role of a charioteer in the Bhagata yuddha for Vijaya (Arjuna), with a whip in His hand. He made Arjuna fight against the foes with spears in their hands and caused their death. He resides in Thiruvaheendrapuram—where there are forests full of betel leaf creepers which have fresh leaves in every node, and areca nut trees which have tender shoots spreading their aroma everywhere. There are plenty of rivers—which have different kinds of fish jumping and playing—irrigating the fertile lands.

Thirumangai Alwar has sung ten songs on the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Sri Narayana, who takes three forms - Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, in order to perform three functions - creation, sustenance and destruction. He swallowed the three worlds in order to protect the jivas, and spat them out in order to enable them to do good karmas and get liberation. He measured three worlds in order to give His sambandha to all, irrespective of their love or hate towards Him, who resides in Thiruvaheendrapuram. Those who sing and meditate on these songs will surely get rid of their sins. 😋

Photo courtesy: Santhanakrishnan, Srirangam
Further, there is a general feeling, among many, that the capitalist society has made a mess of things. Communist society, which allows even less freedom than capitalism does, has also made a mess of things. Between them there is the danger of their blowing the world to bits. Many seek a third alternative, a different way of life which is neither one nor the other. Your movement presents them with an alternative which some, at least, find acceptable.

Subhananda dasa: Let me ask you to explain a little more about the two major and conflicting schools of Indian thought which you've been alluding to in our discussion: the devotional/theistic school versus the nondevotional/nontheistic school—that is, Indian dualism (Dvaita) and Indian nondualism (Advaita), or what might be called the Personalistic versus Impersonalist traditions. Do you have any suggestions—perhaps from a psychological viewpoint, or perhaps from a sociology-of-knowledge perspective—why people, in fact, become attracted to the monism of the impersonal school? What are such people looking for? What sorts of needs may be satisfied by that particular philosophical viewpoint?

Dr. Basham: There are psychological influences at work. You see, this is an age of deep insecurity and fear—fear of serious and terrible catastrophes in the world such as a Third World War, economic depression, severe depletion of natural resources, widespread social breakdown, disintegration of human moral values, and so on—fears of all sorts and kinds which derive from the "acquisitive society" and the "permissive society." And this deep insecurity and anxiety, in turn, help toward a feeling that you've got to negate or transcend your individuality, because if you're no longer a personality, a self, you can't suffer, because there's no self to have consciousness of suffering. Moreover, the Advaita formula of "atman equals Brahman" implies that you yourself are the whole universe and all that underlies it. But this is a refined form of egoism, if you like. It satisfies the individualist craving, and at the same time, by getting rid of the specific embedded individual, it gives the person hope that he will be saved from all the sufferings of finite selfishness.

Subhananda dasa: So there are two aspects, you're saying, of the attraction to impersonalist thought. One is the fear of a spiritual personal identity, and the other is a kind of ultimate egoism—a desire to become God. Dr. Basham: Yes, that is how I see it.

Subhananda dasa: In his commentary on one verse of the Bhagavad-gita, Srila Prabhupada writes that those who have experienced the suffering of the world conclude that happiness can be experienced only when one is completely freed from personal identity per se, because it was as individual, personal selves that they experienced suffering.

Dr. Basham: Yes, they want to cut out their identity. If you're not an individual, you can't suffer. They want to get rid of themselves because they're frightened of being a person. It's a deep cosmic fear, a fear of the whole universe, the sort of thing that is reflected in some of the existentialist philosophers like Heidegger and Sartre.

Subhananda dasa: You seem to express a preference for the dualistic and theistic traditions. What is it about the great Vaishnava theologians like Ramanuja and Madhva that you find attractive?

Dr. Basham: I find their teachings more attractive because they leave room for personality in the universe: the personality of God and the personalities of individual souls who are God's children and who are always sufficiently individualized to recognize themselves as being creatures of God. What the factual truth of the Ramanuja picture of the universe is, I don't wish to discuss here. But it is certainly a much more attractive universe to me than the Shankara one; and for me it's much more psychologically satisfying.

Subhananda dasa: Why?

Dr. Basham: Well, because the world obviously isn't "one." It may be all one within the body of God, contained in God. But I'm not you and you're not me and I don't see why when I achieve complete moksha (which I probably never shall in a thousand lives) I should be completely merged in you, and I don't think I want to be. I don't see logically why I should. I might become merged in God in that I feel that I'm almost one with God in devotion, and that I am within God, within the soul of God or that my soul is linked with God. But if I lose my individuality completely, I don't see how I can enjoy the presence of God.

Subhananda dasa: Yes, that is our view also.

Dr. Basham: Well, these are all the arguments that go back to Ramanuja and his criticism of Shankara. And they are thoroughly valid. Shankara might have been more clever as a philosopher than Ramanuja, but in the final analysis I think that Ramanuja was a better philosopher.

Subhananda dasa: Theologically, our tradition is quite close to that of Ramanuja.

Dr. Basham: Yes, I know it is. If you follow Chaitanya, you're close to Ramanuja.

Subhananda dasa: You've put the Krishna consciousness movement within the broad historical context of theistic Hinduism, the bhakti tradition. More specifically, as you know, the movement is a direct modern expression of the devotional movement founded in sixteenth-century Bengal by the well-known mystic and saint Sri Chaitanya.

In your Encyclopaedia Britannica article, "History of Hinduism," you state, "With its discouragement of

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Honorary Doctorate Conferred on Sri Madhu Pandit Dasa

Sri Madhu Pandit Dasa - President, ISKCON Bangalore, Chairman, Akshaya Patra Foundation, and Padma Shri awardee, has been conferred the honourary doctorate.

K L University, Vijayawada, recognising the outstanding service of Sri Madhu Pandit Dasa in the fields of Applied Spirituality and Social Service has been awarded the honourary doctorate.

The honour was conferred by Sri K Satyanarayana, President, K L Educational Foundation at the University’s convocation programme, in the presence of the Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, Deans, Officers and students of the University.

K L University is an institute devoted to be university consisting of 11 academic departments and six schools, with emphasis on scientific and technological research. Established in 1985, the university is located on a 100 acre site, about 8 kilometres from Vijayawada and 20 km from Guntur City. It acquired the status of deemed university in 1999 and was named “Best Private University in South India” with more than a thousand research scholars so far. K L University has a strength of over 16,000 students.
A young married man has no real confidence in being happy in their relationship when they are constantly fearing that someday somebody might come along and take their partner away from them. This is what they imagine is going to make you happy.

**Subhananda dasa**: As they say, “If it feels good, do it.”

**Dr. Basham**: Yes, if you think it’s going to benefit you and make you happy, then do it. That’s kama. And they find it just doesn’t work. They want something to map their courses by; they want something which gives them a feeling of direction. And, of course, dharma does that.

Psychologically, if we don’t follow our dharma—whatever our dharma may be—we’re sunk. As you realize, in the Hindu tradition, while there is sanatana-dharma [the eternal codes of right conduct, applying to everybody], everyone has also his own individual dharma, sva-dharma. We’ve got to follow our dharma or we suffer from all sorts of psychological difficulties, to say the least of it. It affects our karma [actions] and our overall behaviour as well as our future happiness. And in this way—whatever we believe about a future life—there is a lot of truth in the fundamental doctrines of Hinduism.

Now, if people have no dharma, if they deliberately deny having a dharma, then their only dharma is just a vague sense of not bothering other people too much and getting on with “doing their own thing.” But everybody has a different “own thing.” They are no longer a group; they don’t really belong to anybody. They are isolated. Moreover, their life lacks direction. They drift. And for this reason, among others, we have a great growth in the use of dangerous drugs nowadays.

Sexual promiscuity or the permissive society may look all right on paper, but it has certain disadvantages which I think the world, more and more, is beginning to realize. For one thing, while the famous “pill” has largely solved the problem of unwanted children—you can now use sex as a pleasant entertainment without any great fear of consequences—it hasn’t solved the problem of human jealousy. A man and a woman are not going to be very happy in their relationship when they are constantly fearing that someday somebody might come along and take their partner away from them. This is what they are fearing today. I know from many of my students whom I’ve talked to—especially it affects the women, but men feel it too. The thought of losing their beloved constantly haunts them. And it’s the same in marriage. A young married man has no real confidence in being able to keep his spouse until old age. And perhaps he himself will turn his eyes to another one. And thus the lack of stability in human relationships is one of the main causes of the growth of mental and psychological trouble in the world today.

Your movement sets itself diametrically against all this sort of thing. It disparages undue sexual activity. You mustn’t have sexual activity unless you definitely want to produce a child. One man for one woman for the rest of your life. It goes back, in a very new and different guise, to eighteenth and nineteenth century Puritanism.

I might seem old-fashioned, but it seems to me that that is what the world needs. It may be that with the invention of easier and more reliable contraception, the world will never go back to anything quite like the old Puritanical conception of human relationships, but it needs something a bit like Puritanism . . . not necessarily the rigid Puritanism which would brand every person who committed adultery with an “A” on their forehead or, as the Muslims do in Saudi Arabia, execute them. It should be far more tolerant than that. At least some people feel that the world needs, and that they need, a system which has taboos about it.

We can’t all be grown-up all the time; only sannyasis and saints can do that. Many of us, for most of our lives, are children at heart, and we need some sort of guidance and control. A religious movement gives that. It is depressing that the Christian churches are doing very little in this respect now. Even the Catholics are getting almost as permissive as the unbelievers concerning their ideas of human relationships.

Not only does the young man or woman of this age, in many cases at least, find that the permissive society is unsatisfying, but he also finds the system of values which he is expected to follow unsatisfying.

On the one hand, he has the choice of one or another of the Christian communities, most of which still expect him to believe in certain doctrines he might find difficult to accept, such as the physical resurrection of Jesus. On the other hand, he has a downright unbelief, which is psychologically unsatisfying.

Man needs a sense of the mystery and the wonder of the world and of his existence within it. Unbelief or lack of concern for religion—atheism, agnosticism, whatever you like to call it—just doesn’t give that. An attitude of faith is really very important for human happiness: faith in something outside oneself, faith in the fundamental goodness of the world, or faith that there is good in the world and that the world has meaning. And if you can get that, you are at least some way on the road to a happier and better life.

I think that this is what attracts some people to the Krishna consciousness movement. The movement offers them a completely different lifestyle, one which is guided and directed. Within the framework of the movement they have a good deal of liberty, but it lays down guidelines which its members are expected to follow. Many young people really need direction, guidance, meaning.
Bangalore: alankara (above) and abhisheka (below)

Sri Gaura Purnima
Glorious Appearance Day Of Lord Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu

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you have in mind when you refer to the importation of “the mystical gnosis of India”? How is the Krishna consciousness movement different from these?

Dr. Basham: One can trace the steadily increasing influence of mystical gnosis in the Western world almost from the end of the eighteenth century onwards when the Bhagavad-gita was first translated into a European language by Charles Wilkins. Indian ideas circulated rapidly among the intelligentsia, not only in the English-speaking world, but also in other parts of Europe. They certainly had an effect on people throughout the Western world—Germans like Schlegel, Deussen, and Schopenhauer, Americans like Emerson and Thoreau, Englishmen such as Max Mueller (an Englishman by adoption) and Aldous Huxley, Frenchmen like Romain Rolland, and Russians like Tolstoy. But these people were in no sense thoroughgoing Hindus, and they were impressed primarily by the mysticism of the Vedanta of Shankara and his modern followers and supporters. Undoubtedly you may accept in theory but which do not mean so much to you as these simple, straightforward practices.

Dr. Basham: Yes, that’s correct. Certainly bhakti tradition is mystical. It leads to transcendental experience. I myself have watched—and you can almost say taken part in—Chaitanya kirtanas in Calcutta where one does feel complete release from all the toils and worries of the world and one is carried off into a higher sphere. It’s a wonderful experience and you feel better for it. This is a kind of mysticism; I’m not disputing it. But when I talk about the mystical gnosis of India I mean primarily the Advaita Vedanta of Shankara and his modern followers and supporters. This has come through in all sorts of ways with the Ramakrishna Mission and many smaller movements of one kind or another. But it isn’t quite the same thing as yours, which is essentially a matter of simple faith—faith which is, of course, brilliantly articulated in a long-standing theological tradition.

Subhananda dasa: In a letter you recently sent me, you briefly contrast the Hare Krishna movement with the Vedanta of the neo-Hindu propagandists, whom you refer to as the “streamlined swamis.” What exactly do you mean?

Dr. Basham: “Streamlined swamis” is a facetious phrase which I invented myself. I don’t mean it with any particular ill will, and I don’t wish to be unduly critical in the use of this term, but I intend it as a reference to the doctrines and teachings which various Indian swamis put forth, a streamlined kind of Hindu mysticism designed to appeal to modern, jet-age disciples: levitation in a few months or even weeks, moksha in a few easy lessons—a Hinduism without class, without worship, without rigid taboos, and so forth. At the opposite extreme from your form of Indian religion or mysticism, we have, for example, Transcendental Meditation. TM seems to have dropped all its theological and even philosophical trappings. It’s just a method of mental and psychic training.

That is one extreme. Yours is the other. You appropriate an Indian religious sect—its beliefs, its practices, all its taboos, and so on—root and branch and import it into the West. In between these extremes we have all sorts of variations, and the “streamlined swamis” are those who tend rather to the Transcendental Meditation extreme than to yours. I don’t mean it with any undue disparagement, but such people do streamline their religious, theological, and philosophical ideas in order to make them palatable to the twentieth-century Western mind. That being the case, I think my phrase “streamlined swamis” is perhaps justified.

Subhananda dasa: So, as far as the other extreme—the Krishna consciousness movement—is concerned, you see its followers as pursuing more than merely Indian mystical ideas or meditational techniques. They venture upon a path of self-transformation, devoting themselves to a path that represents a clearly radical departure from normative Western thought, behaviour, and lifestyle. In your view, then, what is it about Western culture that they find so distasteful? Against what are they rebelling? On the other hand, what is it about Indian culture or Vaishnava bhakti tradition that they find so attractive?

Dr. Basham: I think one of the things that they subconsciously find difficult to get on with is the “permissive society,” the notion of “do your own thing”; concern yourself only with the fulfillment of your own personal whims and aims. You know the Hindu doctrine of the four progressive aims of life: dharma [social duty], artha [acquisition of wealth], kama [worldly enjoyment], and moksha [liberation] as the final end. The tendency of the permissive society is to leave dharma out altogether. And if you’re one of the “outsider” types who float around among the educated youth today—quite a
Krishna Voice, April 2018

Interview

A Theology with Heart

Professor A. L. Basham, the renowned authority on the history and religions of India, discusses the Krishna consciousness movement.

Professor A. L. Basham, one of the world's most highly respected authorities on ancient Indian civilization, has written extensively on the Hindu and Buddhist religious traditions. He is best known, perhaps, for The Wonder That Was India, a widely used college text. Dr. Basham retired as chairman of the Department of Asian Civilizations at the Australian National University, in Canberra.

This is a condensation of an interview with Dr. Basham in 1983, conducted at A. N. U. The full interview appears in Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna: Five Distinguished Scholars on the Krishna Movement in the West, a book published by Grove Press. The interviewer, and the book's editor, is Steven J. Gelberg, a senior editor of the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust who is known within the Hare Krishna movement as Subhananda dasa.

Subhananda dasa: In your conclusion to A Cultural History of India, you write, “A new aspect of the counter-attack from the East is the importation not only of the mystical gnosis of India, but also of her simple faith. This is chiefly the work of the Hare Krishna movement founded by Srila Prabhupada.” What sorts of groups do you call special attention to the Hare Krishna movement?

Dr. Basham: For one thing, the Hare Krishna movement is very definitely a religion. It’s a religion which you have to believe in fully and completely. The numerous organizations in the past which have brought Indian ideas to the Western world—organizations like the Ramakrishna Mission, the Theosophical Society, and so on—while having certain religious characteristics, have essentially been societies of people interested in mysticism, gnosticism, and so on, mostly middle-aged people who met together once a week and listened to the local swami lecturing to them, and then went back and carried on with their conventional secular lives. But the Hare Krishna movement demands a significant change in one’s way of life if one is to become a full member of it.

As such, I don’t think anything like it has occurred in the European context since the days of the Roman Empire when Christianity, Judaism, Mithraism, and other religions made numerous converts in the West. It is, therefore, something not completely new, but something which, I think, hasn’t happened for a very long time indeed. And so I feel that it is very important historically.

You notice, I said in the streets of Western cities. We have, in fact, people of purely Western blood coming from families of the Christian or Jewish tradition who are doing, in the streets of Western cities, all the things and more which religious Hindus do in the streets of Calcutta. This being the case, I feel that—without making any value judgments—it is a very important historical phenomenon, and I can’t think of anything like it since the Roman Empire.

Subhananda dasa: In that same conclusion to A Cultural History of India, you write, “A new aspect of the counter-attack from the East is the importation not only of the mystical gnosis of India, but also of her simple faith. This is chiefly the work of the Hare Krishna movement founded by Srila Prabhupada.” What sorts of groups do...
created more work: from early morning, five o’clock, till ten o’clock at night they are simply working. They do not know that this working is their punishment. Because they’re ignorant, they think that working is life. Instead of decreasing work and saving time for self-realization, they increase their work and complicate life. This they call advancement of civilization, but it is actually avidya, ignorance.

Our tendency is not to work but to get things freely. That is why we sometimes hear that question: “If God wanted us to wear clothes, why has He not created us with clothes?” This question shows that our tendency is not to work. And that is as soon as a man becomes rich, he generally gives up work. He gets his things by having others work for him. So the human tendency is to retire from work.

Devotee: Many people would disagree with you. They think that to be unemployed is one of the worst things that can happen to you.

Srila Prabhupada: Man is not meant to work like an ass all day long. Real civilization means to minimize work, save time, and cultivate your spiritual life. That is civilization—not to work like a hog or a dog for sense gratification. That kind of life is condemned in the Srimad-Bhagavatam [5.5.1]: namah deho deha-bhajam nrloke kastan kaman arhate vid-bhujam ye. Human life is not meant for working very hard for sense gratification, which is done by the dogs and hogs. Human life is meant for austerity (tapah). Why austerity? To purify your existence (yena sattvam suddhyed). Then you’ll get unlimited pleasure (yasmad brahma-saukhyam tv anantam).

We are all seeking unlimited pleasure. But that is not possible in this material life. Unfortunately, people do not know this, so they are working very hard like hogs for a little happiness. The hog works day and night, searching out stool. And as soon as he gets some stool he becomes stout and strong. Then—sex with the nearest female. Never mind whether it’s his mother, sister, or daughter. This is hog life.

So, human life is not meant for imitating the stool-eating hogs. But people of the modern society are imitating them: “We shall work hard, eat whatever we like, and have as much sex as we want.” They have no discrimination in the matter of food: they eat all sorts of nonsense. And in this way they grow very strong and have sex, even with their sister or daughter. The Bhagavatam warns that this is not human life, but this has actually become the life of many modern, “civilized” men.

Devotee: But if people didn’t work hard, how could things go on? Wouldn’t there be an economic crisis?

Srila Prabhupada: No. Lord Krishna tells how we can make our life very comfortable: Just produce some food grains, vegetables, and fruits, and take the milk from the cow. All your economic problems will be solved. And even if you don’t produce food grains and vegetables, you can still live on fruits and milk. But no, modern man takes the source of milk—the cow—cuts her throat, and eats the meat. This is civilization? All their intelligence is being utilized for sinful life. They have good intelligence, but it is being used sinfully. Therefore they must suffer very severe reactions—war, famine, earthquakes, and so on.

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Fasting

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On this occasion, His Holiness Vishvesha Tirtha Swamiji released the book “Sri Chaitanya Sambhrama” which presents the teachings of Sri Chaitanya in Kannada as explained by scholars. After the inaugural ceremony, devotees from ISKCON Bangalore sang Bengali Vaishnava bhajans.

This was followed by Vichara and Kavya Gosthi – deliberations on the various pastimes of Sri Chaitanya’s life by eminent scholars and poets.

The event concluded with an enthusiastic maha sankirtana by all devotees. Over 700 devotees from ISKCON Bangalore group of temples from different parts of the country participated in this event. Read the full article at: https://goo.gl/agHjiZ

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SALARPIA SATTVI
Srila Prabhupada: Human life is meant for cultivating God consciousness. But in the modern so-called advanced civilization, instead of cultivating God consciousness people are cultivating nudity. Isn’t it so? So nature will punish them: “All right, you want to be nude? Then become a tree and remain standing naked for five thousand years.” Trees sometimes live up to five thousand years. I’ve seen them in a park near San Francisco.

Devotee: But they argue that if God wanted us to wear clothes, He would have made us with clothes.

Srila Prabhupada: Here in the material world, you have to work for whatever you want. Things are provided, but you have to work for them. In the spiritual world, there is no need for work: you get all your necessities automatically. That is one difference between the spiritual world and the material world.

Devotee: We could argue with the nudists that by their logic, if God had wanted us to have food He would have made us with food, too. Just as you have to work for your food, you also have to work for your clothes.

Srila Prabhupada: The Vishnu Purana explains why we have to work:

\[
vishnu-saktih para prokta
ksetrajnakhya tatha para
avidya-karma-samjnyanya
triya sakir iisyate
\]

This is a definition of the three divisions of God’s energy. One energy is the internal, spiritual energy. Another energy is the marginal energy—the living entities, who are also spiritual. And the third energy is the external, material energy, where there is ignorance and work. In the material world, everyone is ignorant, and they have to work.

So, the people of the modern civilization have simply increased their work. They call it civilization, but it is actually just like a prison house, where you have to work. They are thinking that to work constantly is civilization. So they have...
“I offer my respectful obeisances unto You, Lord Narasimhadeva. You are the giver of pleasure to Maharaja Prahlada, and Your nails cut the chest of Hiranyakashipu like a chisel cutting stone.”

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animal sees the mirage of water in the desert, he runs after it—and dies. We know that there is no water in the desert—that the “water” is just a reflection of the sunshine—but animals do not know this. Similarly, human life means to give up looking for happiness through sense gratification, which is just like a mirage in the desert, and to try for spiritual happiness.

We can awaken to this higher happiness simply by chanting the Hare Krishna mantra:

Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. Chanting Hare Krishna is such a simple thing, yet it can relieve all our suffering in the material world.

Our suffering is caused by the many dirty things within our heart. We are just like a criminal who has dirty things within his heart. He thinks, “If I get such-and-such thing, I’ll be happy.” And at the risk of his life he commits a crime. A burglar, a thief, knows that if he is captured by the police he’ll be punished, but still he goes and steals. Why? Nunam pramattah: he has become mad after sense gratification. That’s all.

So we have to purify our hearts of our dirty desires, which are forcing us to act for sense gratification and suffer. And in this age the purification is very, very easy:

Just chant Hare Krishna. That’s all. This is Chaitanya Mahaprabhu’s contribution. Ceto-darpana-marjanam bhava-maha-davagni-nirvapanam. If you chant the Hare Krishna mantra, you will be relieved of the suffering caused by transmigrating perpetually from body to body. Chanting is such a simple thing. There is no question of caste, creed, nationality, colour, social position. No. By the grace of God, everyone has a tongue and ears. So everyone can chant Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. Just chant Hare Krishna and be happy.

Thank you very much.

Sri Prabhupada, the founder-acharya of ISKCON, has delivered more than 1500 lectures on Vedic scriptures like Bhagavad-gita, Srimad-Bhagavatam and Sri Chaitanya-charitamrita. The audio recording of his lectures are available in ISKCON centers. You can also hear some of these lectures in www.iskconbangalore.org/sri-la-prabhupada-lectures
activities.” That is knowledge.

Now, a sensible man should consider, “Since I am a spirit soul and my body is simply a covering, is it not possible to end this process of transmigration from body to body?” This is human life—inquiring how to stop the contamination of the material body.

Unfortunately, people in the modern so-called civilization do not ask this question. They are mad after gratifying the senses of the body, so they act irresponsibly. As explained in the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam [5.5.4],

nunam pramattah kurutevikāra yad indriya-pritaya aprnoti
na sadhu manye yata atmāno 'yam asām api klesadā asa deah

"People who act only for sense gratification are certainly mad, and they perform all kinds of abominable activities. In this way they insure their transmigration from body to body perpetually, and thus experience all kinds of miseries."

We do not understand that the body is always klesha—i.e. it always gives us pain. For the time being we may feel some pleasure, but actually the body is a reservoir of pain. Here is a good analogy in this connection: Formerly, when the government officers would want to punish a criminal, they would tie his hands, take him into the middle of a river, and push him down into the water. When he was almost drowned, they would draw him up by his hair and give him a little rest. And then again they would push him down into the water. That was one system of punishment.

Similarly, whatever little pleasure we are feeling in this material world is exactly like the pleasure the criminal would feel when he was drawn up from the water. That's all. Severe suffering with a few moments of relief—this is what the material world is like.

That is why Sanatana Gosvami, who had been a wealthy minister in the Mohammedan government in India, presented himself to Śrī Chaitanya Mahaprabhu [Śrī Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Lord Krishna Himself in the role of His Own devotee, appeared in Bengal, India, five hundred years ago to teach love of God through the chanting of the Hare Krishna mantra.] and asked, ke ami, kene amare jare tapa-traya: “Who am I? And why am I suffering the threefold miseries?” This is intelligence. We are constantly undergoing some sort of distress, whether caused by the body and mind, inflicted by other living entities, or brought about by natural disturbances. We don’t want all these miseries, but they are forced upon us. So when one accepts a spiritual master, the first question should be, “Why am I suffering?”

But we have become so dull, like the animals, that we never ask this question. The animals are suffering (everyone knows this), but they cannot ask why. When an animal is being taken to the slaughterhouse, he cannot ask, “Why am I being taken by force to the slaughterhouse?” But if you take a human being to be killed, he’ll make a great noise: “This man is taking me to be killed! Why am I being killed?” So one important distinction between human life and animal life is that only the human being can ask “Why am I suffering?”

Whether you are President Nixon or a man in the street, you are suffering. That’s a fact. You are suffering on account of your body, and you are doing something that will cause you to accept another material body. You are suffering because in your past life you indulged in sense gratification and got a body according to karma, and if you engage in sense gratification in this life and do not try to elevate yourself, you’ll again get a body and suffer. By nature’s way you’ll get another body according to the mentality you have at the time of death. And as soon as you get another body, your suffering will begin again. Even in the womb of the mother you will suffer. To remain in that compact bag for so many months, hands and legs all tied up, unable to move—this is suffering. And nowadays there is also a risk of being killed in the womb. And when you come out, more suffering. So we should be intelligent enough to ask, “Why am I suffering? And how can I stop this suffering?” And until we ask, “Why am I suffering?” our human life has not begun. We remain animals.

Asking about the ultimate cause of our suffering is called brahma-jijnasa, inquiry into the Absolute Truth. As it is said in the beginning of the Vedanta-sutra, athato brahma-jijnasa: “Having gotten the human form of life, one should inquire into Brahma, the Absolute Truth.” So we should take advantage of the human form of life. We should not live like animals, without any inquiry, without trying to find out how to stop our miserable material life. Of course, we are actually trying to stop our own miseries, by working so hard in the struggle for existence. Why do we try to get money? Because we think, “If I get money, my distress will be mitigated.” So the struggle for existence is going on, and everyone is trying to become happy by getting sense gratification. But sense gratification is not real happiness. Real happiness is spiritual happiness, which comes from serving Krishna. That is happiness. Material happiness is simply perverted happiness.

Material happiness is like the mirage of water in the desert. In the desert there is no water, but when a thirsty
The Self and Its Bodies

A lecture given in June 1976 by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, Founder-Acharya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, at the Detroit Hare Krishna center

As long as we are in the material world, happiness and distress will come and go. They are like seasons. Similarly, we cannot remember what we were in our previous life. Nor do we know what we are going to become in our next life. But it is a fact that as spirit, souls, we are eternal. Krishna explains this in the Bhagavad-gita (2.12): “O Arjuna, you, I, and all these persons who have assembled on this battlefield have existed before, and we shall continue to exist in the future.” This is the preliminary understanding in spiritual life—knowing “I am eternal.”

As spirit souls, we do not take birth, nor do we die (na jayate mriyate va kadacit). We are not finished with the destruction of the material body (na hanyate hanyamane sarire). The destruction of the body is going on already. Our childhood body is now destroyed; you cannot find that body. Our youthful body is also destroyed; we cannot find it anymore. And in the same way, our present body will also be destroyed, and we shall get another body (tatha dehantara-praptih).

When the soul transmigrates, the gross body is lost. The gross body is made of matter, and anything material will eventually be finished. That is the nature of matter. But the spirit soul is never finished. So we are changing bodies one after another. Why are there different types of bodies? Because the living entity develops a body according to his past activities. The living entity develops a body according to his present activities.

As long as we are in the material world, happiness and distress will come and go. That must go on, for we must develop a new body. Whenever we develop a new body, we develop it because of our past activities. Senseless activities determine the gross body. As the living entity develops a body, he develops a body according to his past activities.

As long as we are in the material world, happiness and distress will come and go. As the living entity develops a body according to his past activities, so he develops a body according to his present activities. Under certain circumstances we feel pleasure, but under other circumstances we feel pain.

As soon as one gets a new body, he desires the next body. He desires the next body because of his past activities. The living entity develops a body according to his present activities.

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The facilitators of culture camp were very friendly with children. They knew how to extract the best from them. One of the very important things that my child spoke about, which was very surprising to hear in this competitive world, is that, it is more important to participate, than to win.

— Pavitra Lakshmi, Learning & Development manager, Accenture

Hare Krishna! My Name is Kanisha. I want to share some of my experiences about the culture camp I had attended last year. I enjoyed chanting Slokas and I also enjoyed painting and drawing Krishna’s pictures. Overall I enjoyed the culture camp. It was a fantastic experience I liked it a lot.

— Kanisha Patel, Student of Cambridge Public School

I realized when I enrolled my child into Culture Camp that this is a life-time learning experience packed within a short span of 21 days.

— Muniraju, Senior Software Engineer, Microsoft

Trust me, I am so happy and satisfied about the learning that my daughter is taking from here. I will never be able to impart it to her, myself. This Culture Camp helped to utilize children’s energy in a better way. I am very very happy that my child is truly happy here. So thank you very much, ISKCON, because the entire Culture-Camp team, working for the children, is truly awesome!

— Ms. Richa Awasthi, A truly delighted parent

We’ve been learning from our children the shlokas and prayers they’ve learnt during the Camp. They have become part of our daily prayer routine. They are far more aware of Bhagavad-Gita than I am. Behaviorally, although the changes at a conscious level are subtle, at a subconscious level it has a great impact on their consciousness.

— Sangeetha Jambagi, Senior Manager, Unilever

I have attended this programme for the past 8 years. I was very interested in the Yakshagana programme and was also trained professionally. Everything was taught so nicely, learning to recite slokas and puja, which would not have been possible at home. We learnt the sessions in a fun filled environment. Chanting helped me a lot, my concentration and focus improved. Learned to depend on Krishna and He became my best friend. I miss the programme a lot now.

— Veeksha Shetty, Student of Jyothi Kendriya Vidyalaya

After Culture-Camp, my daughter has transformed a lot, in various aspects. She is more helping, more caring, and she is able to distinguish between right and wrong. Whenever she gets a thought of doing something wrong, she now says, “I can’t think that nobody is seeing, because Krishna is always seeing.” She is able to make better decisions and she is more confident.

— Dr. Sri Valli P, Dermatologist
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 ashrams, 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.

To know more about Srila Prabhupada visit www.iskconbangalore.org/srila-prabhupada

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SRI NARASIMHA JAYANTHI April 29, 2018

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