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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 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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“I cannot be satisfied by serving something that is not me; I can be satisfied only by serving me. But that ‘me’ I do not know....”

Enlightened Self-interest

Srila Prabhupada’s First Talks in America (New York, July 26, 1966)

by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

This chanting of Hare Krishna is the process of ceto-darpana-marjanam to cleanse the material dust from the mirror of our mind. The whole process is to dust out the dirty things which we have accumulated by our material association, and thereby to revive our spiritual consciousness, or Krishna consciousness. From Bhagavad-gita we are studying about the process of life by which we can revive our Krishna consciousness. There is no need of external help for reviving Krishna consciousness. You have Krishna consciousness dormant in your self. In fact, it is the quality of the self. So, we simply need to invoke it by this process of chanting.

This chanting is such an attractive thing. Of course, this attraction depends on pure-hearted chanting. As we become advanced in this chanting method, our heart becomes freed from all the dirty things of material contact. Then even the animals can be captivated by this chanting what to speak of human beings.

So, in Bhagavad-gita [4.19] Krishna advises us how to invoke this Krishna consciousness in our practical life. He says,

\[
yasya sarve samarambhah kama-sankalpa-varjitah jnanagni-dagdha-karmanam tam ahuh panditam buddah
\]

“One whose every act is devoid of desire for sense gratification is said to be in full knowledge. He is said by sages to be a worker whose fruitive action is burned up by the fire of perfect knowledge.”

Yasya sarve samarambhah. You are not forbidden to execute your duties. We are not for stopping the general process of material activities. That is not our mission. The whole thing is that we have to do everything in Krishna consciousness. It is very easy to understand. We all have some vocation in our life. But what is our consciousness? Our consciousness is ... “I am engaged in this business because I have to maintain my family,” or “I have to maintain myself,” or “I have to satisfy the government,” or “I have to satisfy somebody else.” This is our consciousness. And nobody is free from such consciousness. So, we simply need to change the consciousness only. Now we are doing everything with the idea that “I want to satisfy myself,” or “I want to satisfy somebody else.” This consciousness has to be changed into Krishna consciousness, so that I think, “I want to satisfy Krishna.” That’s all.

Therefore, Lord Krishna says, yasya sarve samarambhah: “Whatever activities you may be doing, continue to do them, but kama-sankalpa-varjita don’t be carried away by kama.” Kama means desire for our own satisfaction. The Sanskrit word kama is used to mean “lust” or “desire for sense satisfaction.” So, Lord Krishna recommends, “Don’t act for the satisfaction of your senses, for the satisfaction of your lust, or for the satisfaction of your desires.” That is the whole thing. The whole teaching of Bhagavad-gita is based on this principle. Arjuna wanted to satisfy his senses by not fighting with the opposite party, who were composed of his relatives-brothers and brothers-in-law and fathers-in-law and so many other relatives. Arjuna did not want to fight, and therefore he needed Krishna’s instruction of Bhagavad-gita.

Now, materially it appears very nice that Arjuna wanted to satisfy his relatives by giving up his claim to the kingdom. “Oh, he’s a very good man,” we might think. But Krishna did not approve it. Why? Because the basic principle was that Arjuna decided to satisfy his own senses. Externally, it appears very nice. But anything which is done for the satisfaction of one’s own senses that is kama, lust, desire. Here in this verse of Bhagavad-gita it is prescribed that you can do anything. There is no harm. Whatever business, vocation, or occupation you are engaged in, that does not have to be changed. Simply your consciousness has to be changed. That’s all.

Now, how can that consciousness be changed? Jnanagni-dagdha-karmanam. Transferring our present self-interested consciousness to Krishna consciousness requires knowledge. And what is that knowledge? That
knowledge is knowing, “I am part and parcel of Krishna. I am not different from Krishna. I am the superior energy
of Krishna.” This is knowledge. Real knowledge does not mean to understand how this tape recorder is manufactured.
This kind of technical knowledge is not real knowledge. Of course, to execute our occupation we must have some
technical knowledge, but that knowledge is temporary knowledge. Real knowledge comes when one understands,
when one is convinced, that he is part and parcel of Krishna, or God. (When we say “Krishna,” you should
understand that we mean the Supreme Lord, the Absolute Truth. Krishna is a technical word which is meant to
indicate “the Absolute Truth,” “the Supreme Personality of Godhead,” “the whole,” “the whole pleasure,” “the whole
attraction.” These are the meanings of Krishna.)

So, we are all part and parcel of the supreme pleasure Krishna. And because I am part and parcel of Krishna, my
pleasure, my happiness, is dependent on serving Krishna. It is just like my hand and my body. Now, my hand can
take pleasure when it is attached to my body. My hand can take pleasure when it serves my body. It does not take
pleasure by serving your body. My senses are satisfied when they are used for my purpose, not for your purpose.
This is the whole philosophy: I cannot be satisfied by serving something that is not me; I can be satisfied only by
serving me. But that “me” I do not know. That “me” is Krishna. That is Krishna because we are part and parcel of
Krishna. Always remember: we are part and parcel of Krishna. Mamaivamso jiva-loke jiva-bhutah sanatanah.
In the Fifteenth Chapter of Bhagavad-gita, you’ll find that Krishna says, “All these living entities they are My eternal
parts and parcels. Now by material contact, they are detached from Me.” [Bg. 15.7]

So, the whole purpose of Krishna consciousness is to attach ourselves again to Krishna. Now we are detached,
so we have to attach ourselves again. That is Krishna consciousness. And that Krishna consciousness is within
you, because you are originally, eternally, part and parcel of the Supreme. Artificially, we are trying to forget this;
we are trying to live independently. But that is not possible. We are not independent. If we try to live independently
of Krishna, that means we voluntarily become dependent on the influence of material nature. That’s all.

For example, if I think that I am independent of government regulations, then I become dependent on the police
force. My dependence is either in this way or that way. So, this is our mistake: everyone is trying to become
independent. And this is called maya, or illusion. Nobody can be independent individually, community-wise, society-
wise, or nation-wise. Even universe-wise, nobody can be independent. We are all dependent. And when you come
to know, “I am dependent; I am not independent,” this is called knowledge.

In another place in Bhagavad-gita [5.29], you’ll find that Krishna says,

\[ \text{bhoktaram yajna-tapasam sarva-loka-mahesvaram} \]
\[ \text{suhrdam sarva-bhutanam jnativa mam sanitm rcchati} \]

“What is the ultimate purpose of all sacrifices and austerities? The Supreme Lord of all planets and demigods, and the benefactor and well-wisher of all living entities, the sages attain peace from the pangs of material miseries.” People are planning for peace in the world, but they do not know the peace formula. The United Nations has been trying for the last twenty years or more for peace, but there is no actual peace in the world, The Vietnam War is going on because they do not know the peace formula in the Bhagavad-gita.

Krishna says, bhoktaram yajna-tapasam sarva-loka-mahesvaram: “I am the proprietor of everything. Whatever you are doing, I am the ultimate beneficiary. I take the result.” For example, a labourer may work in a factory, but who is the proprietor? The ultimate proprietor is the owner of the factory. Now we are thinking, “I am working, so I am the proprietor of this thing.” That is a misconception. When we understand that whatever we are doing, the ultimate proprietor is Krishna, that is Krishna consciousness. That is the fire of perfect knowledge.

Or, take the example of many people working in an office. Hundreds of people may be working there, but everyone is conscious that whatever profit they are making belongs to the proprietor. Then there is peace. But as soon as the cashier thinks, “Oh, I have so much money; I am the proprietor,” then the trouble begins. Similarly, if we think, “I am a very rich man. I have such a big bank balance, and I can use it for my sense gratification,” that is kama, lust. But if I understand that whatever I have, it belongs to Krishna, then I am a liberated person. You’ll have the same money under your custody. It doesn’t matter. But as soon as you think, “I am the proprietor of this wealth,” you are under the influence of Maya. And as soon as you think, “Krishna is the proprietor of all these things,” you are free. So, kama-sankalpa-varjitaḥ/jnanagni-dagdha-karmanam tam ahuḥ panditam buddhaḥ: one who knows that Krishna is the proprietor of everything, who is situated in that consciousness, is panditam he is learned, he’s actually a man of knowledge. This is the whole process.

Now, this consciousness has to be invoked not only individually, but also community-wide, society-wide, nationwide, all over the world. Then there will be peace. If you want real peace, you have to follow Krishna’s instructions in Bhagavad-gita [see previous reference for English translation]:

\[ \text{bhoktaram yajna-tapasam sarva-loka-mahesvaram} \]
\[ \text{suhrdam sarva-bhutanam jnativa mam sanitm rcchati} \]

Now we are trying to become the friend of our countrymen, of our society, of our family. But that is a wrong conception. The real friend is Krishna, and you should work on His behalf.

How? If you actually want to do something good for your family, then try to make all the members of your family Krishna conscious. Then your life will be successful. If you want to help them otherwise, without Krishna consciousness, then you will not be serving them; you will be rendering them a disservice. Why? Because no amount of material knowledge will help your wife or children. No amount of material knowledge will solve their real problem. What is their real problem? That is what we do not know. The real problem is janma-mrtyu-jara-vyadhi birth, death, old age, and disease. The Srimad-Bhagavatam [5.5.18] says, pita na sa syaj janani na sa syat/ na mocayed yah samupeta-mrtym: “One should not become a father, nor should one become a mother, unless one is able to save one’s children from the grip of material nature.” How? By Krishna consciousness. If you are a responsible father, and if you are completely in knowledge of Krishna consciousness, then your duty will be to think, “For these innocent creatures who are now playing in my home as my children, as my boys, this life should be the last installment of their transmigration from one body to another. I shall train these boys in such a way that after this life, they’ll no more have to go into the cycle of birth and death.” This is Krishna consciousness.

And this means you have to make yourself expert. Then you can help your children, also. Then you can help your nation, also. Then you can help your society, also. If you yourself are ignorant, then andha yathandhair upaniyamanas/te ‘pisa-tantryam uru-damni baddhah [Bhag. 7.5.31]: if a person is tightly bound up, hands and feet, how can he free others? Suppose we are sitting here, some twenty-five gentlemen and ladies and all our hands are tightly bound up by some ropes. Now, although I may want to make you free, if my hands are also tightly bound up, how is it possible? It is not possible. My hands must be free. Then I can untie your bindings. So, unless one is a free man, he cannot free others. And what is that freedom? One who is Krishna conscious he is a free man. Nobody else is a free man.

In the Seventh Chapter of Bhagavad-gita [7.14], Krishna says,
Celebrate This Ugadi
WITH NEW BEGINNINGS
Live A Luxurious Lifestyle At The Location Of Your Convenience

Rejoice in the Natural Surroundings

Live a Life of Privacy & Pristine Luxury

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“This divine energy of Mine, consisting of the three modes of material nature, is difficult to overcome. But those who have surrendered unto Me can easily cross beyond it.” Everyone is under the spell of the material influence, maya. Nobody’s free. But maya has nothing to do with one who has surrendered unto Krishna, with one who has taken to Krishna consciousness. Maya cannot touch him. Maya is like darkness, but there is no question of darkness if you place yourself in the sunlight. (Not this artificial light; this artificial light may be extinguished at any time. But sunlight is not like that.) So Krishna is just like sunlight. As soon as you come in front of the sun, there is no darkness. And as soon as you become Krishna conscious, there is no ignorance, there is no maya, no illusion.

So, jnanagni-dagdha-karmanam tam ahuh panditam budhah. We have to become budha, or learned. And you’ll find in the Tenth Chapter of Bhagavad-gita [10.8] what Lord Krishna says are the symptoms of a man who is budha:

\[
\text{aham sarvasya prabhavo mattah sarvam pravartate} \\
\text{iti matva bhajante mam budha bhava-samanvitah}
\]

“I am the source of all spiritual and material worlds. Everything emanates from Me. The wise, who know this perfectly, engage in My devotional service and worship Me with all their hearts.”

Budhah: this very word is used again, So, one who is learned, one who actually has some sense, who is not nonsensical, he’s called budha. And what are his symptoms? The symptoms of a man who is budha are that he knows that Krishna is the fountainhead of all emanations, of everything we see (aham sarvasya prabhahavah). Take, for example, this material world. The most prominent thing here is the attraction between man and woman. Now, one may inquire, “Wherefrom has this attraction between male and female come?” Not only in the human society, but also in the animal society, the bird society, in any society, every living being has this attraction for the opposite sex. This is a fact. And where does this attraction come from? It comes from Krishna. So, somebody who does not actually understand Krishna may criticize, “Krishna had so many girlfriends.” But unless the tendency is in Krishna, where do we get this idea of having girlfriends? You can have nothing here in this material world unless it is also in Krishna (janmady asya yatah). But here sex is perverted; it is polluted. In Krishna’s world it is in pure consciousness, purely spiritual. That is the difference.

So, these things have to be studied very scientifically from books like Bhagavad-gita and Srimad-Bhagavatam. And when one is perfectly learned, then his symptom is that he becomes a pure devotee of Krishna. Aham sarvasya prabhavo mattah sarvam pravartate: “I am the source, the fountainhead,” Krishna says. “I am the source and fountainhead of everything. One who understands this scientifically takes to Krishna consciousness.” How? Budhah bhava-samanvitah with full knowledge. He becomes a pure devotee of Krishna.

Krishna similarly describes a mahatma in Bhagavad-gita (mahatma means “great soul”):

\[
\text{mahatmanas tu mam partha} \\
\text{daivim prakrtim asritah} \\
\text{bhajany ananya-manaso} \\
\text{jnativa bhutadim avayam}
\]

“O Arjuna, son of Prtha, the great souls are those who are not deluded by My illusory, material energy. They are under the protection of the divine nature. They are fully engaged in devotional service, because they know Me as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, original and inexhaustible.” [Bg. 9.14]

Who is a mahatma? Who is a great soul? A great soul is he who is under the influence of the superior nature. There are two kinds of nature: the superior nature and the inferior nature. Now we are under the influence of the inferior, material nature. But by practicing Krishna consciousness we shall be transferred to the superior nature. Just try to understand by an example: one person is in prison, another person is outside the prison. The government’s influence is present in both places outside the prison and inside the prison. Outside the prison, the government’s rules and regulations are considered superior. Inside, they are considered inferior. But in either case, the government’s influence is there. Similarly, wherever you are, either in the material world or in the spiritual world you are under Krishna’s influence. Your position is marginal. You can remain under the influence of Krishna’s inferior nature, or you can transfer yourself into the influence of His superior nature. Because Krishna is fully independent, and because you are part and parcel of Krishna, you have the quality of independence. You can make your choice; whether to be under the influence of His inferior nature, or to come under the influence of His superior nature. But because we do not know what that superior nature is, we have no other alternative than to remain in this inferior nature. This is the whole problem.
Many philosophies inform us that there is no other nature but this material nature, which we are now experiencing and which is so troublesome. “Make an end of it and become void,” they say. But you cannot be void, because you are an eternal living entity. Na hanyate hanyamane sarire: the end of your body does not mean that you are finished. No. You are continuing. Vasarmsi jirnani: that I change my dress does not mean that I am finished. So, I am eternal. And if I want to finish my suffering, if I want to get out of the influence of material nature, then I have to seek my place in the superior, spiritual nature. But if we do not know of the superior nature, then we say, “All right, however bad it may be, let me remain here and rot.” So, Bhagavad-gita [15.6] gives you information of the superior nature:

na tad bhasayate suryo
na sasanko na pavakah
yad gatva na nivartante
tad dhama paramam mama

“My abode is not illumined by the sun or moon, or by electricity. One who reaches it never returns to this material world.”

So, we have to become Krishna conscious by scrutinizingly studying this authoritative book, Srimad Bhagavad-gita, without creating a fashionable interpretation. We have to hear it as it is. What Krishna says, He says for all time. It does not change. Take the verse which we are just now discussing. He says that it does not matter what occupation you are in; you simply have to change your consciousness. You are now guided by the consciousness of self-interest, of sense gratification, Not exactly self-interest, because we do not know what our self-interest is. Rather, sense interest not self-interest, but sense interest. Whatever we are doing, we are doing to satisfy our senses. This consciousness has to change. We have to satisfy Krishna. If this Krishna consciousness is invoked, then our life will be successful. Thank you very much.
Srila Prabhupada: "Bothering" someone who is going to kill himself—that is natural. Even if you don't know the other person, still, if you are a gentleman, you want to give him some protection. This is the duty of a gentleman.

Someone may say, “But most of all, you are bothering yourself. Why are you bothering yourself?”

But as a human being, I must bother myself. Every true human being will do that.

Even Lord Krishna comes-bothering Himself. Yada yada hi dharmasya glanir bhavati bharata: “Whenever these people on earth become rascals and fools, I descend again and deliver them.”

So those who are servants of God—they are doing the very same thing, on behalf of God. And so they are exalted, because they are doing the work of God. They’re not cheating the public:

Therefore, for the sake of the people in general, I am requesting you to pursue this farming life with great enthusiasm. Help people to see this traditional, natural way of living. You must help them see how they can become happy, how they can go back to Godhead.

So advance this project—plain living, high thinking. This
modern civilization is so nasty, A nasty civilization, artificially increasing the so-called necessities of life. Anartha—
unwanted; unbenevolent “improvements.”

Disciple: We would not have understood you if you had said that eight, ten years ago. Now we understand a little
bit.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. Take this electric light, for example. Now, to get light we simply grow same castor seed
and take the oil. As with everything else, we get light from the earth. The modern civilization gets light from
complicated electric generators. But really, they get the power from petroleum. Which means they too get their
power from the earth.

The difference is this: We get our power so very simply and easily. But to search out petroleum they have to dig
deeply into the earth and even bore into the ocean floor. Therefore it is called ugra-karma, horrible work. And as
soon as their petroleum supply stops, everything stops.

Just consider. All you need to do is grow some castor seed, press out the oil, put it in any pot, add a wick, and
the light is there. The light is there. So even allowing that you may have somewhat improved the lighting system,
still, lighting is not the main necessity of your life. And to stay artificially advanced—beyond the castor-oil lamp
to this modern electric lamp—you have to work so horribly hard. You have to go to the middle of the ocean and
bore into the ocean floor. In this way your real, spiritual business in life is forgotten. Finished.

God gave you so much energy and intelligence for attaining self-realization. First you must realize this precarious
position you are in—repeatedly dying, life after life, and taking birth repeatedly in various species for more and
more suffering. This is your problem, and this problem you are to solve now that you have received the human
form. In human life, after all, you possess advanced intelligence. But instead of using this advanced intelligence
for self-realization, modern man has used it to go from the castor-oil lamp to the electric lamp. That’s all.

Just try to understand. Modern civilization—what is the improvement? And by advancing from the castor-oil lamp
to the electric lamp, you have forgotten your real business. You have lost your real self.

And yet this so-called civilization goes on and on. This is called maya, illusion. For some fictitious happiness, you
lose out on your real business, your whole purpose in life.

You may not admit it, but you are under the control of nature: sooner or later, you have to give up this material
body. All right, you may make a very nice arrangement for living here in comfort. But nature will not allow you to
live here in comfort. You must die.

And after death you are going to get yet another material body. Perhaps in this life you are working to maintain a
house with high-grade electrical lamps and so forth. You are working so hard—you have got your own business.
But if next life, by the laws of nature, you get the body of a dog, then what is the benefit? You cannot check the
laws of nature.’ So if nature rewards your business efforts with the body of a dog, what is the benefit? Hmm? What
is the answer?

Disciple: Simple living, high thinking.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, but here is the charge. Now, what is your answer? In this life you may be living very
comfortably. But if, due to neglecting God and your soul, in your next life you are going to be a dog, then what is
the benefit?

This is the charge. Now, how will this “modern man” answer this charge? Can he deny he is going to be a dog?

Disciple: He’ll say he doesn’t believe it.

Srila Prabhupada: He may believe or not believe. Take this little child. He is just a little boy, so he does not know
anything about his future. But his mother knows, his father knows, and I know that some day he’s going to be a
young man.

If he says, “No, I’m not going to be a young man,” it is childish. His father and mother know that this boy is going
to grow into a young man, and so he should be properly educated. That is the guardians’ business.

Admittedly, a child—or one who is childish—doesn’t know what he is going to become in the future. He doesn’t
know about his future life. But does that mean his future life is not a fact?

(To be continued.)
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Thieves working for the king of Vishnupura stole priceless manuscripts Srinivasa and his friends were bringing to Bengal. Srinivasa therefore sent his companions ahead while he stayed in Vishnupura. He recovered the manuscripts, made the king his disciple, and inspired him to spread Krishna consciousness throughout the kingdom.

PART III (Conclusion)

Now Srinivasa needed to see his dear friends Narottama and Shyamananda again. He had written them of the developments in Vishnupura, but he knew little of what his friends were doing. He had heard that his teacher Narahari Sarakara Thakura was ill and getting ready to die, so he wanted to go to Srikhanda to see him and to nearby Jajigram to see his own aging mother.

Srinivasa Returns to Jajigram

Bidding farewell to King Virhamvir, Srinivasa took the chest of books to Jajigram. Upon arriving there, he told the devotees what had happened. All the holy town's people, especially his mother, rejoiced in his company. But they had heart-breaking news for him as well: Srimati Vishnupriya had left this world. Srimati Vishnupriya was Sri Chaitanya's widow, an important person in the preaching mission of Bengal. On hearing of her passing, Srinivasa fainted, and the devotees had to revive and console him.

A few days later, a message came from Narahari Sarakara and Raghunandana Thakura asking Srinivasa to come to Srikhanda. Srinivasa left at once to see these two well-wishers who had guided him in his youth. During this meeting, Narahari suggested that Srinivasa get married.

"Your mother is a great devotee," Sri Narahari said. "She has been rendering valuable service in Jajigram for many years. You should fulfill whatever small desire she might have. I know she would be happy to see you married. Since she is a great devotee, you should comply."

Hearing this, Srinivasa resolved to marry and raise a family.

After a few more days in Srikhanda, Srinivasa left for Kanthak Nagara to visit the great Gadadhara Dasa, one of the personal associates of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. When Srinivasa arrived, Gadadhara Dasa embraced him with affection. He asked Srinivasa about the devotees of Vrindavana, especially the Gosvamis: How were they able to live in separation from the Lord and His confidential devotees? Where were they living and under what conditions? Gadadhara Dasa and Srinivasa talked about Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and the plight of His devotees in His absence.

After several days, Srinivasa was to return to Jajigram. Before he left, Gadadhara Dasa blessed him: "One day you will taste the nectar of congregational chanting in the company of the Lord Himself, and in the company of His intimate associates. For now, you have my blessings to marry. May it bring you all good fortune."

Srinivasa gets Married

The words of Gadadhara Dasa touched Srinivasa. Meditating on their import, he returned to Jajigram, where he met Gopala Chakravarti, an elderly brahmana with a beautiful and devoted daughter named Draupadi. Observing that Srinivasa and Draupadi were attracted to each other, Sri Raghunandana Thakura arranged the wedding.

After the marriage, Draupadi was called Ishvari (some say it was her initiated name), honouring her devotion to God and acknowledging her marriage to a great saint. Her father, Gopala Chakravarti, soon accepted Srinivasa as his spiritual master, as did her two brothers, Shyama...
Dasa and Ramachandra. Srinivasa quickly became one of the most prominent gurus in all of Bengal.

After some time, Ishvari bore a son, and when Srinivasa wrote about the event to Jiva Gosvami in Vrindavana, Jiva sent back an exuberant reply and named the boy Vrindavana Vallabha. Some time after, Srinivasa married again (polygamy was common then). His second wife, Padmavati, was also a great devotee, and after initiation she was known as Gauranga Priya.

One may wonder why Srinivasa took a second wife. Most of the standard biographies do not elaborate, stating merely that the second marriage followed the first by a few years. But the Anuragavali informs us that his most intimate disciples asked that he remarry upon the death of his two sons from Ishvari. They are said to have died young.

Ishvari had three daughters—Hemlata, Krishna-priya, and Kanchana, also known as Yamuna. Gauranga Priya had a son, Gati Govinda. Both Ishvari and her daughters later had many disciples, and Srinivasa's bloodline is still said to continue in Vrindavana from Gati Govinda.

The Passing of Narahari Sarakara

Some time after Srinivasa's marriage, Narahari Sarakara Thakura left the world, having seen Srinivasa one last time. Srinivasa organized a massive festival to honour Narahari's memory. Everyone from Srikhanda and neighbouring villages attended, and Vaishnava festivals soon spread throughout the region. Ceremonies to install Deities of Krishna took place with elaborate festivities, including singing, dancing, and sharing of sacred food (prasadam). By such festivals the Hare Krishna movement spread throughout Bengal.

Srinivasa's Disciples

In due course, Srinivasa decided to return to Vrindavana. Ramachandra Kaviraja, one of his most renowned followers, went with him on this trip. Ramachandra was considered Srinivasa's "other eye and other arm." Ramachandra and his brother, Govinda, who was also Srinivasa's disciple, were the sons of an intimate associate of Lord Chaitanya. Both Ramachandra and Govinda were celebrated scholars, artists, and poets, but Ramachandra came to be widely accepted as Srinivasa's most noteworthy disciple. This was in some measure due to Narottama Dasa Thakura, who at Srinivasa’s request took charge of Ramachandra and forged an intimate friendship with him while schooling him in all the details of Vaishnava philosophy.

With the help of King Virhamvir of Vishnupura, Srinivasa spread his preaching in Bengal to the districts of Birbhum, Bankura, Burdwan, and as far as Tripura in the East. He taught all over Bengal and made hundreds of disciples.

Hemlata Thakurani

To the list of his prominent disciples, Hemlata Thakurani, his daughter, is often added. Although as a blood relation she is not properly counted a disciple, she was one of his most notable followers. A highly educated and vigorous preacher, she has been compared to the revered Jahnava Devi in spreading the movement throughout Bengal. She was a gifted and devoted leader, initiating both men and women into the Gaudiya Vaishnava tradition. One of her disciples, Yadunandana
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SCAN TO APPLY
Thakura, became a famous scholar and poet. He composed simple Bengali versifications of Gaudiya literature, some at her personal request.

In time she married a great devotee and had several children. Today her descendants live in the villages of Maliati and Budhaipad, in the Murshidabad district of Bengal, where she revolutionized the preaching of Gaudiya Vaishnavism.

Srinivasa Returns to Vrindavana

Srinivasa had not been to Vrindavana since recovering the stolen books. The Gosvamis were eager to show their appreciation, and when Srinivasa arrived they did so gloriously. And now Srinivasa had come to Vrindavana with Ramachandra Kaviyra. Such a worthy disciple showed Srinivasa's merit as a preacher. So Gopala Bhatta Gosvami, who had wanted Srinivasa to take over the worship of the Radha-Ramana Deity in Vrindavana, gave the duty to his other disciple, Gopinatha Pujari, and insisted that Srinivasa keep preaching in Bengal. The descendants of Gopinatha's brothers are still in charge of the Radha-Ramana temple.

Shyamananda Pandita returned to Vrindavana about the same time as Srinivasa, so they were able to deepen their friendship. Together they resumed their studies. Gradually, Srinivasa began to reveal his mystic potency, and it became apparent he was fully absorbed in the most intimate love of God.

Back to Vishnupura

But the missionary work was incomplete, and after several months Srinivasa and others returned to Bengal, encouraged by the Vrindavana Gosvamis. On the way, they stopped in Vana Vishnupura to see King Virhamvir, who was delighted by the presence of his guru and the other devotees.

The king's devotion showed throughout the kingdom. In the words of D.C. Sen:

Raja Vira Hamvira would not do anything without the advice of his guru [Srinivasa Acharya], even in political matters. His [Srinivasa's] voice prevailed alike in the court and in the domestic circles of Vishnupura. We find that repeating the name of God a fixed number of times was made compulsory by penal law in the State. Sacrifice of animals at the altar of the gods was also disconquenanced, though not actually prohibited by law. Worldly dignity attended the guru who had brought spiritual glory to the country. We find that on every occasion of Vaishnava festivities of any importance, valuable presents were given to Srinivasa, while Raja Vira Hamvira was ever ready to minister to his physical comforts in every possible manner. But true to the traditions of a brahmin scholar and saint, Srinivasa contented himself with living in a strawroofed hut, though he might have built palaces with the help of the Raja and other influential disciples. The money he received was mainly spent in feeding his disciples, of whom there was always a large number residing at his house.

The Glories of Vishnupura

The pervasiveness of Krishna consciousness in Bengal, especially in Vishnupura, lasted well after the time of Srinivasa and into the following centuries. King Virhamvir's successor, Raghunatha Singh I, built Vaishnava temples in many distant villages to make Krishna consciousness popular with the tribal people. In fact, the kings of Vishnupura from the time of Virhamvir onward assumed great responsibility for the material and spiritual wellbeing of their subjects.

According to Dr. Sambidananda Das:

In short, the Vaishnava kings, from Vira Hamvira downwards, developed Vaishnava culture in all its branches. The practical religious lives of the kings ...
made the people of Vishnupura God-fearing, virtuous, humble, and courteous in manner and pure in heart. It is not an easy matter to make the whole population happy and pious. [But] the people regarded their kings as their gurus. To this day it is their custom to offer edibles to Sri Chaitanya’s altar in the name of the king, on the occasion of public worship. Thus did Srinivasa, through Raja Vira Hamvira, start a new epoch in the religious life of the country.

**Srinivasa's Daily Activities**

The activities of Srinivasa Acharya can fill volumes, and they have. Several books offer details of his daily life in Vishnupura and Jajigrama.

In the early morning he would read from scriptural books, explaining and interpreting them for his disciples. The study of these books would occupy him until ten o'clock in the morning. Then, till two in the afternoon, he would chant on beads in solitude, occasionally worshiping Krishna according to his inner meditation. From four o'clock to six in the evening he would perform congregational chanting with his disciples. The form of kirtana for which he became famous is called Manohar Shoy. Some say it is the only authentic classical style that has survived. At night he used to instruct his disciples and talk with them of Krishna’s pastimes.

**His Literary Work**

It is said that Srinivasa composed only five songs. He also wrote a commentary—studied and respected to this day—on the four essential verses of the Srimad-Bhagavatam. His other works include the famous Gosvamy-ashtakam (“Eight Prayers to the Six Gosvamis”). Though his literary work is spare, its content and style are nectarean. It has left a unique mark on the Gaudiya tradition.

**Divine Ascension**

Just as the authorized biographers of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu leave aside the details of His passing from this world, Srinivasa's followers are silent about Srinivasa's disappearance. But although his divine ascension remains a mystery, his life remains an inspiration.

**NOTES**


Located in the city of Kanchipuram is the temple of the Supreme Personality of Godhead Sriman Narayana, known affectionately by devotees as Deepaprakasar.

The temple is also known as Thuppul temple as dharba grass was grown abundantly in this area in olden times. (pul in Tamil means grass)

The legend

The legend behind Thiruthanka is associated with yet another yaga. Kanchipuram is known as moksha bhumi and is very closely associated with yagas or fire sacrifices. Most of the temples here are associated with yagas in one way or other. And Lord Brahma has a close connection with this temple as well, as in Varadaraja Perumal temple, the principal temple of Kanchipuram.

Lord Brahma wanted to perform Aswamedha Yagam in Kanchipuram. Asuras wanted to stop that yaga. The asuras stopped the daylight by covering the sky and invoking darkness. To save the world and the yaga, Sriman Narayana appeared there as a light and cleared the darkness. Since Lord Narayana appeared like a bright light, He is called as Deepaprakashar. Deepam means light and prakasha is brightness. Since the Lord shone like light, He is also called as Vilakku Oli Perumal as well in Tamil.

The temple

The temple has a three-tiered rajagopuram or gateway tower. The temple has a rectangular plan surrounded by brick walls and has two precincts. The central shrine of the temple houses the presiding Deity, Deepaprakasha Perumal in standing posture with four arms. He is flanked by Sridevi and Bhodevi. Interestingly, the shape of the lotus face of the Lord here resembles the flame of fire in a lamp. There are shrines for Lakshmi Hayagriva, Andal, Vedanta Deshika and the Alwars. The temple tank, Saraswathi Theertham, is located outside the premises. It is the birthplace of Vedanta Deshika. There is a separate shrine for Lord Hayagriva along with Vedanta Deshika. The deity of Deshika is believed to be installed by his son Nayinar Varadhachariar. The
The temple practices Vaikhasana Agama.

The event of Lord Varadaraja Perumal granting darshana on His Garuda vahana to Saint Vedanta Deshikan in Vaikasi is grandly celebrated in May-June. The Aavani festival in August-September of Lord Vilakkoli Perumal visiting Deshika’s shrine and the one in Margazhi (December-January) of Perumal honouring Deshika are the festivals that demand many eyes for the devotees to enjoy the Lord’s grace.

Swami Vedanta Deshika

Since this is the birthplace of Swami Vendata Deshika, or Sri Venkatanatha, a great Acharya of Sri Vaishnava parampara, it is appropriate to discuss his glories.

Anantha Somayaji was one of the great acharyas of Sri Vaishnava sampradaya. He lived in Kanchipuram with his son Pundarikaksha, who had a son, Sri Ananthasuri and who studied all shastras. When he was of marriageable age, Pundarikaksha approached Sri Appullar with a request that the latter’s sister Tottarambha might be given in marriage to his son. Sri Appullar prayed to the Lord Varadaraja Perumal of Kanchipuram for guidance in this matter. That night the Lord appeared in his dream and said, “Give your consent. By this marriage, a great acharya will be born, who will work for the good of the world by his precept and practice.”

The next morning, Sri Appullar met Pundarikaksha and said that the Lord Himself had approved the wedding. On an auspicious day, the marriage was held. Sri Ananthasuri and Tottarambha began to lead an ideal household life in their house at Thuppul, opposite to the shrine of Lord Deepaprakasha Perumal. Years passed by and their desire to beget a son grew. They prayed to the Lord for a son. They set out on a pilgrimage and visited several divya desams, bathing in several holy rivers and sacred pushkarinis. At last they came to Thirumala. They bathed in Swami pushkarini and paid obeisance to Lord Varaha first on its bank. Then they went into the temple of Lord Srinivasa Perumal, the Lord of Thirumala hills, and worshipped Him with great devotion. They also prayed to the Lord for a son.

After the evening worship, the devoted and pure-minded couple went to sleep. In the later part of the night, Lord Srinivasa appeared in their dream and said, “Sri Ananthasuri, you shall be blessed with a wonderful son.”

The next day, Ananthasuri and Tottarambha took leave of the Lord after worshipping Him and returned to Kanchipuram with great joy. Returning from Thirumala, Tottarambha was thus blessed to become pregnant. With the growth of the divine child in her womb day by
day, her whole body shone with extraordinary lustre. Tottarambha gave birth to a baby boy at the most auspicious moment in the Tamil month of Purattasi, in the year Vibhava according to Tamil almanac (September-October 1268 CE). It was Shravana nakshathra, a day that is dedicated to Lord Srinivasa at Thirumala. A special function is conducted at the conclusion of the annual Brahmotsavam when thousands of devotees, old and young, rich and poor, congregate to bathe in the sacred waters of Swami pushkarini, after the Deity of Sudarshana takes a dip in the pond. After the preliminary ceremonies were conducted, the infant was named Sri Venkatanatha, the name of Lord Venkatesha, since the child was born by His grace.

Sri Venkatanatha himself gives us information about his parentage, birth etc., in the prologue of his play Sankalpa Suryodhaya. It is considered by wise men that the bell of Hari was born as Vedantha Deshika. This is done on the strength of abundant and appropriate reasons proposed by various acharyas of the sampradaya. The contemporaries and successor of Vedanta Deshika were so much impressed with his superior knowledge and service to humanity by means of his works in Sanskrit and Tamil as well as his discourses, that they considered him as a great scholar and acharya.

Venkatanatha grew up in an atmosphere of devotion to the Supreme Personality of Godhead Sri Narayana and His devotees, and of spiritual and Vedic knowledge. Even as a young boy, Sri Venkatanatha was very intelligent and quick in grasping and remembering things. His maternal uncle Sri Appullar took great interest in his upbringing. He would take him to the temple of Lord Varadaraja. Venkatanatha would worship the Lord with folded hands and as much devotion as his uncle. He would hear from him, the stories of Rama and Krishna, and about Their qualities. This left a deep impression in the child’s mind at a tender age of five. After writing many books of learning and high philosophy, Sri Venkatanatha himself wrote in Rahasyathrayasara, his magnum opus, “All that I have said so far is the result of the training given to me by my uncle and Sri Appullar, with love and perseverance like the words of a pet parrot taught by its master.”

It was a memorable day in the life of Sri Venkatanatha when he was just a boy of five. Sri Appullar took him as usual to the temple of Varada, where his acharya, Nadadur Ammal, was expounding Sri Bhashya to his disciples. The bright and promising five-year-old boy Venkatanatha attracted everyone’s attention, including that of Sri Nadadur Ammal. Ammal enquired about him and his upbringing. Hence there was a break in the instruction. All of them were so absorbed in hearing about the boy that they forgot the trend of the lesson. The young boy, with the permission of the teacher, lisped out the words to the surprise of all. Nadadur Ammal was so much pleased and overawed by the intelligence of the boy, that he immediately blessed him with long life, right knowledge and worldwide reputation.

Turning to his disciple Sri Appullar, Nadadur Ammal said: “Teach your nephew all shastras and make him a
full-fledged scholar. I would like to teach him myself. But I am too old for that. He will certainly prove to be a great acharya and spread the teaching of our own acharya Sri Ramanuja. Sri Appullar took leave of his master and went home with Venkatanatha.

When Venkatanatha was seven, Anantasuri conducted the upanayanam samskara (the investiture of the sacred thread and the initiation into Gayatri mantra) to his son Venkatanatha. From that day, Sri Appullar took charge of educating Venkatanatha and began teaching him several shastras. There was no need for the teacher to repeat the previous day's lesson, since Venkatanatha was able to grasp and remember it by hearing it just once. Venkatanatha studied all the Vedas with all the six auxiliaries: sikshac - phonetics; chandhas - prose; vyakarana - grammar; niruktha - etymology; jyothish - astronomy and kalpa - ritual or ceremonial training. He also studied tarka and memamsa, and acquired mastery over systems of philosophy such as Sankhya and Yoga, Dvaita and Advaita, Bhaskara and Pasupatha, Buddha and Jaina. All this Sri Venkatanatha was able to do even before he was twenty years of age, as stated by himself in Sankalpa Suryodhaya.

At the end of brahmacharya or the study period, Sri Venkatanatha entered into the grihastha ashrama or householder life, by marrying one Thirumangai, suited to him in all respects. He scrupulously observed the duties of that ashrama like the daily worship of fire (aupasana) at home, visit to the temple of Lord Varadaraja for worship, worship of shaligrams and Hayagriva, and worship of guests. He had a very simple and austere life devoid of all luxury and comfort. Every day after finishing his morning rites, he would walk on the streets around the temple, reciting the sthothras and songs of the Lord, performing unchavritthi (gleaning of the grains).

The term uncham initially meant grains that have fallen off from the plant. Unchavritthi meant living out of the grains that are left after a harvest festival. With the passage of time, unchavritthi indicated the way in which a grihastha bhagavatha would lead his daily life (Dharmashastra prescribes other types of livelihood for brahmacharis and sannyasis). Uncham in this context meant the akshatha (grains) that the devotee received as a grace of God. Venkatanatha gathered this while he walked past the houses on the streets surrounding the temple, singing the holy names of the Supreme Lord Sri Krishna. In the Mahabharatha, there is a story of an erudite scholar, Padmanabhan, who, despite mastering all scriptures, had this doubt – is it possible to attain the epitome of the purpose of life, moksha, while in grihastha ashrama? His query was answered by Lord Surya, the sun god, who explained that the divine soul was that of an unchavritthi brahmana, who had practised unchavritthi dharma throughout his life. After his death, such divine soul would go to Vaikuntha.

Srimad Bhagavatam also lauds the glory of unchavritthi in Ekadasha Skandham (11th Canto), 17th Chapter:

siloncha-vrtya paritusta-citto
dharmam mahantam virajam jusanah
mavy arpitatma grha eva tisthan
nati-prasaktah samupaiti santim

A brahmana householder should remain satisfied in mind by gleaning rejected grains from agricultural fields and marketplaces. Keeping himself free of personal desire, he should practice magnanimous religious principles, with consciousness absorbed in Me. In this
way a brahmana may stay at home as a householder without very much attachment and thus achieve liberation.

Whatever was offered voluntarily by the residents at Kanchi, Venkatanatha gathered and brought home. His dutiful wife would receive it and prepare simple food. At noon, he would worship the household Deities of Varada and Hayagriva and offer food to the Lord. Then he would take it as prasadam.

"Some of the local people in Kachipuram felt bad that a great master like Venkatanatha was doing unchavrithi. They mixed gold coins along with rice and offered him, since Venkatanatha would not accept money or gold if given separately. Venkatanatha did not notice this trick and came home and gave the rice to his wife. She was also a simple lady and had never seen gold coins in her life. She called Venkatanatha and asked what the glittering coins were. Venkatanatha was surprised at this and told her that they were pests and separated them by a kusha grass, as he did not even want to touch the gold coins. Vidyaranya, one of Venkatanatha’s friends during their school days, became the minister of Vijayanagara kingdom. He heard about the poverty of Venkatanatha and wanted to help him. So he sent a message asking Venkatanatha to come to the kingdom to receive gifts from the king. Venkatanatha refused and sent him the reply in a poem called Vairagya Panchakam, about renunciation.

Sri Appullar was very much pleased with the qualities and the way of life of Venkatanatha. He wished to widen his knowledge and enrich him. So he initiated him into Vainatheya mantra (Garuda mantra) and advised him to concentrate on the mantra and meditate upon Garuda to acquire his grace.

When he began to think of a suitable place for his meditation on Garuda, it struck Venkatanatha that Thiruvvaheendrapuram (we have covered this temple in one of our previous articles) would be an ideal place. There was a river, Garudanadhi, as well as a mountain named Oushadhri, both of which had been sanctified by the divine presence of Garuda himself. He left Kanchi with the permission of Lord Varadaraja Perumal and proceeded to that shrine. There first he bathed in the sacred Garudanadhi and worshipped Lord Devanatha Perumal, the presiding Deity of Thiruvvaheendrapuram, and His consort Mahalakshmi Hemambhuja Nayika in the temple. Then he went to the top of the Oushadhri hill and chose a lonely place at the foot of a big and shady ashvatha tree. Seating himself, he controlled his mind and senses and began to meditate on Garuda. Some days passed in deep meditation. Garuda, the deity who is Veda incarnate, appeared before Venkatanatha and after initiating him in the mantra of Lord Hayagriva, the horse-faced Supreme God presiding over all knowledge, instructed him to propitiate that Lord by meditation. Venkatanatha engaged himself in meditation with great perseverance for some time, until Hayagriva was pleased and appeared before him.

With the blessings of Hayagriva, Venkatakanatha went on to pen many hundreds of works on Sri Vaishnava philosophy. Sri Venkatanatha was the master of all scriptural texts like the Vedas and the Upanishads, Agamas and Puranas (epics written by sages). He had perfect knowledge of mantra shastra (science of mystic syllables). He has incorporated the mantras presided over by several Deities in his works, for the benefit of seekers. Movement of the divine constellations and geography of the world sculpture and architecture, state craft and sorcery, music and dance, poetry and drama, prosody and poetics, ethics were all at his fingertips. He was the writer of an epic poem, a miracle play and a dance drama. He was familiar with other literary writers like Kalidasa, Bhasa, Bana and Bhavabuti. In short, there was no branch of knowledge, literary or scientific, in which he was not proficient.

Sri Venkatanatha was later known as Swami Vedantha Deshikan. Swami Deshikan lived 101 years and he felt the time has come for him to go to the spiritual abode of Narayana. He went to Sri Ranganatha of Srirangam and took His permission. His disciples and his son felt the pain of his separation and cried. Swami Deshikan consoled them and instructed them to continue their divine works and follow Swami Ramanuja. In the year 1369 he kept his head in the lap of his son Kumara Varadhachariar and left his mortal coil while listening to the chanting of Thiruvaymozhi and Upanishads.

(To be continued)

Next issue: Some important works of Swami Deshikan

Photo courtesy: Santhanakrishnan, Srirangam
Sri Gaura Purnima

Bangalore
Can Creation Come from Chaos?

A challenge to the prevailing scientific view that life comes from a chance combination of material elements.

Edited from an original paper by Madhava dasa, Sadaputa dasa, and Svarupa Damodara dasa:

Although scientists would like to assume that in the past, inert chemicals combined to produce life, as yet no one has ever observed such an event. In addition, although scientists have many theories about how life is working inside the cell, they have not been able to combine the constituent chemicals to form living cells, even in controlled laboratory settings. Thus, the claim of molecular biologists that life has come about by evolutionary development beginning from a primordial environment of methane, ammonia, and water, sparked by an electromagnetic or thermal stimulus, has never been substantiated by experimental evidence. Although scientists have found traces of amino acids (the building blocks of biological molecules) in reaction chambers filled with ammonia, methane, and water, the formation of these simple amino acids does not prove that life evolved by a chance combination of chemicals. Amino acids are a very long way from a living organism, so there is really no substantial justification for concluding that this common laboratory experiment proves life originated by chance in a “primordial chemical soup.”

Nor have the biologists found a chemical which, when injected into a dead organism, will restore life. In fact, they are having a difficult time explaining the activities of the living cell by chemical equations. Physicist Louis de Broglie has commented, “It is premature to reduce the vital processes to the quite insufficiently developed conceptions of nineteenth and twentieth century physics and chemistry.” And even if the microbiologist does try to analyze a living cell in the detail necessary to discover its exact chemical activity, he would have to kill it, obliterating with his instruments the very principle of “life” he was seeking in the first place. Consequently, many scientists are now looking for new concepts beyond chemistry and physics to explain how life works. These new attempts are called holistic approaches, which consider the living organism as a whole and view life as complementary to matter.

Nevertheless, most materialistic scientists reject this idea. They ignore the fact that living systems defy the second law of thermodynamics, which strictly governs inert matter. According to this law, no complex system of chemical reactions can maintain itself indefinitely. Yet living systems do maintain themselves, generation after generation, without any loss of complex order. Therefore we can safely say that life does not act according to the laws of chemistry and physics, and that it is perfectly scientific to talk of life as a principle separate from matter.

Also, from the point of view of mathematics and logic, we can see that complex living organisms cannot arise spontaneously from unorganized matter; there must be the touch of higher intelligence. Suppose we have a collection of short rods (A). If we then pass them through a box that combines the rods two at a time, at right angles to each other, we shall arrive at B. Then suppose we join the L’s together at random. We can see that the final configuration C has no greater form than that which was explicitly specified in the system going from A to B to C.

In other words, for C to have a specific, complex structure, we have to supply specific, complex information to create that structure. A random pairing of L’s cannot produce a complex, organized pattern. For example, if we wanted to generate the structure below, (D) we would have to supply explicit information at each step of the operation. In other words, all the information specifying the final structure must be available throughout the development of the structure. The basic mathematical theorems of Kolmogorov and Chaitin ** (1. G.J. Chaitin, “Information-Theoretic Computational Complexity,” IEEE Transactions, Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers, IT-20 (1974), pp. 10-15,) governing so-called complexities of formal systems confirm this argument. In general, all of this proves that something simple cannot create something complex by a random process. And when we
apply this conclusion to the current theory of evolution, we see that random atoms and molecules couldn’t possibly have developed into complex living forms without an outside source of information.

As we have seen, known scientific principles such as those of thermodynamics, mathematics, and logic confirm that life comes from life, not from matter. Also, it is a fact of experience that a living plant comes from another living plant, an amoeba comes from an amoeba, a dog from a dog, and a human being from another human being. On the other hand, no one has ever observed a living entity coming from dead matter. Despite all this evidence, however, most scientists still cling to the theory that life comes from matter. Why?

The strongest arguments of the evolutionists are based on the fossil record. However, objective analysis of the fossil record reveals a different story than the one the evolutionists would have us believe. First, it is an admitted fact that after one hundred years of digging, practically no fossils of intermediate species (the famous “missing links”) have ever been found to confirm the Darwinian evolution-of-species theory. Second, fossil records do show that an entire system of highly evolved marine life-forms appeared abruptly at the beginning of the Cambrian age. There are thousands of feet of fossil-free sedimentary rock below the Cambrian stratum. Indeed, no undisputable pre-Cambrian fossils have been found anywhere in the world. Although evolutionists have many imaginative explanations for this sudden appearance of complex marine life, available evidence clearly does not confirm their theory that life originated from matter and gradually evolved into more and more complex forms.

In addition to the insufficient evidence upon which the evolutionists base their theories, their methods are suspect. Foremost among these are the conflicting dating processes used by archaeologists especially the use of radioactive isotopes such as carbon 14. ** (2. Colin Renfrew, “Carbon 14 and the Prehistory of Europe,” Scientific American. Vol. 225 (October 1971), pp. 63-72.) Besides this, there are a great number of false claims of various evolutionists that point up the highly speculative nature of their whole theory. For example, Haeckel’s “primordial muck,” supposedly the stuff that first generated life, turned out to be no more than a combination of inorganic salts. His error was discovered only after the idea had been widely circulated and had created a stir in scientific circles. Another embarrassment for evolutionists was the story of “Piltdown man.” After being accepted for forty years, Piltdown man proved to be a hoax, a “fossil” planted by someone seeking name and fame and interested in supporting evolution. Yet the evolutionists are no more certain now about the age of man than in the heyday of Piltdown man. Their constantly changing dating schemes regularly push the “original” man farther and farther back into the past. Finally, even the most well known evidence supporting the evolutionists’ theories has recently been called into question. For instance, several investigators have pointed out that the famous series showing how the horse evolved, which still appears in many young people’s textbooks, is erroneous and misleading ** (3. Norman Macbeth, Darwin Retried; an Appeal to Reason (Boston: Gambit, 1971), p. 15.): the actual fossils betray abrupt and unchronological changes.

How can the scientific community continue to ignore all the evidence presented against Darwinian evolution? Because they’ve been conditioned to accept it as fact. Psychologists have discovered that this conditioning, or expectancy, plays a very important role in perception. For example, if you place a thermometer in some hot water, you expect the mercury to rise in the tube, and that’s what you see. But actually the mercury in the column first drops and then rises because the glass of the thermometer expands more rapidly than the mercury at first. So our expectation has colored our perception. Similarly, scientists expect archaeological and other evidence to confirm Darwinian evolution, and this is what they perceive, despite insufficient evidence.

An even more deep-rooted reason for adherence to the Darwinian theory of evolution is that it provides a very convenient basis for hedonism, a life view free of concern for future consequences or morality. Aldous Huxley once said, “I had motives for not wanting the world to have meaning... For myself, as, no doubt, for most of my contemporaries, the philosophy of meaninglessness was essentially an instrument of liberation. The liberation we desired was simultaneously liberation from a certain political and economic system and liberation from a certain system of morality. We objected to the morality because it interfered with our sexual freedom.” ** (4. Aldous Huxley, “Confession of a Professed Atheist,” Report, Vol. 111, No. 9 (June 1966), p. 19.) When someone believes that life comes from matter rather than from spirit, his concern for morality diminishes considerably. If all life is merely a complex combination of chemical reactions, and if there is thus no supreme creator and controller, what need is there for moral restraint? This is not a new philosophy. In ancient Greece, Epicurus postulated that everything was simply a combination of atoms and the void nothing more. Today the word epicurean describes a person whose main activity is enjoying fine food and drink. The conclusion is that Darwinian evolutionary theory, with its implication that life comes from matter, is a philosophy that justifies unrestricted sense gratification, but it is by no means scientific.

Thus we have seen how the theory that life originated from matter is dubious on many grounds. First, no one has
ever actually observed such an event. On the contrary, every day we see living organisms producing other living organisms; trees produce trees, dogs produce dogs, and so on. Second, living systems defy the laws of thermodynamics, proving that life is a principle separate from matter. Third, by the laws of mathematics and logic we concluded that a random combination of chemicals could not have produced complex living organisms without an outside source of information. In addition, we noted some of the more flagrant discrepancies in the evolutionists’ argument: the virtual absence of both pre-Cambrian fossils and “missing links” between species, and Piltdown man, Haeckel’s muck, and the misleading diagrams showing how the horse evolved. Finally, we noted how the scientists’ expectations and their deep-rooted hedonistic motives make their observations and conclusions less than impartial.

Although materialistic science has spread throughout the world, recently it has been challenged by thoughtful scientists, philosophers, and other intelligent people. Notably, the famous psychologist Carl Jung investigated the Western philosophical concept of matter and found that there is no clear definition of the term. Jung concluded that the term matter is no more than a symbol we attach to our observations of reality, and he saw no reason why we couldn’t see reality as spiritual (that is, conscious) rather than material. Further, many researchers are discovering phenomena that simply defy explanation by the standard laws of mathematics, chemistry, and physics. For instance, the newly recognized field of parapsychology concerns psychic phenomena such as ESP (mental telepathy), psychokinesis (“mind-over-matter”), and reincarnation. These phenomena suggest the need for a new understanding of nature one that will explain the things around us in terms of a conscious cause.

We find such an explanation in India’s ancient Vedas. These books, which are about five thousand years old in written form and still older in oral tradition, describe that the underlying principle and source of life is personal consciousness, or spirit. Today, our tendency is to accept that everything is simply impersonal energy, and therefore that is all we see. But if we accept a personal, conscious background of existence, then we can understand that there must also be a Supreme Person, God. God explains Himself through the Vedas, and the Vedas come to
us through the spiritual master, who, as part of a line of spiritual masters, delivers the Vedic message unchanged (Bg. 4.2).

Because our mind and senses are imperfect and cannot perceive spirit, we cannot know God, the Supreme Absolute Truth, by induction or mental speculation. The only way to overcome such difficulties is to approach a bona fide Vedic authority (one who has himself transcended the limitations of the senses and mind) and begin practicing real science practical realization of the Vedic wisdom as taught by the spiritual master. In other words, in the Vedic sense, scientific method means to approach the spiritual master and follow his instructions.

This process is actually very practical. The spiritual master prescribes a process of spiritual discipline, and the student carries it out according to the directions given. If he experiences the predicted result, then the student draws the conclusion that the spiritual master was right. If the spiritual master is actually bona fide, then the result will be positive. This procedure is quite similar to an honest scientist's reporting his results along with his experimental method. Anyone who wants to verify the result can perform the same experiment himself. When the same result is reproduced by several scientists, it is called scientific. However, there is one very basic difference between the methods of materialistic and Vedic science: the materialistic scientist relies totally on speculation and data coming through his imperfect senses to arrive at his conclusions, while the spiritual scientist relies on a perfect, divine source of knowledge. The bona fide spiritual master receives his knowledge directly from the supreme knower, God, or through the disciplic succession from God Himself.

But how can we know whether someone who claims to be a spiritual master is bona fide or not? According to the Vedic literatures, a genuine spiritual master must meet the following three qualifications: (1) He must teach according to the system of parampara, or disciplic succession. In other words, he must have received instruction from a bona fide teacher, who also received instruction from a bona fide teacher, etc. He must be able to trace his disciplic succession back to God Himself. A bona fide teacher will therefore never present anything that has not been presented by his predecessor teachers. (2) He must teach according to the authorized Vedic literature. All his conclusions must be supported by the Vedic scriptures. (3) His arguments and conclusions must agree with those of other teachers of spiritual knowledge already accepted as authoritative. So we find that the teachings of a bona fide spiritual master are in accord with the teachings of great saintly personalities like Jesus, Muhammad, Ramanuja, or Moses.

All of these qualifications are met by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, the spiritual master of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. He is scientifically presenting the Vedic description of the origin of life and matter. According to the Bhagavad-gita, which Srila Prabhupada has presented in an English translation with extensive commentary, life is eternal, it is never created or destroyed (Bg. 2.12). In addition, the Katha Upanishad (2.2.13) explains that there is a supreme eternal living force who is supporting the infinitesimal living forces. The Brahma-samhita (5.1) describes Him as Krishna, the Supreme Controller, who possesses a purely spiritual body composed of sac-cid-ananda (eternity, knowledge, and bliss). And what is matter? Again from the Bhagavad-gita (7.4) we learn that Krishna is the source of the eight separated energies that make up what we call the material energy, or matter. These eight energies are developed by a gradual process from pure consciousness, or Krishna consciousness, into (1) false ego (based on our desire to be separated from Krishna), (2) intelligence, (3) mind, (4) ether, (5) air, (6) fire, (7) water, and (8) earth. Everything that we experience is a combination of these two kinds of energy: the superior, conscious living entities and the inferior, inanimate material elements. And above both of them is God, Krishna, guiding and controlling all.

In the Thirteenth Chapter of the Bhagavad-gita, God explains how He has expanded Himself into every atom of the world as the Parabrahman, or Supersoul (Bg. 13.16). Material nature works under the directions of the Supersoul, who is omniscient and thus perfectly aware of the desires and activities of every living being. According to how we act during our lifetime, we create a certain state of mind, or consciousness. This consciousness is understood in detail by the Supersoul, and He awards us a suitable body in our next life. There are 8,400,000 different kinds of bodies (species) to accommodate the different mentalities of the living beings. So evolution is not a process of physical development, but of conscious development from almost unconscious stages like trees or fungi, up through simple moving creatures like insects, up through birds, then four-legged animals, and finally to man.

When we reach the human form, we are at a juncture, for it is only in the human form that we have an intelligence keen enough to understand how to get free of the vicious cycle of birth and death. Human intelligence is meant for inquiring into this most important subject, not for developing extravagant means for sensual enjoyment. The method for liberation is one of purification of our mind by hearing the sacred message from a bona fide source, and purification of our heart by rendering service to God. Anyone truly interested in finding the ultimate limit of knowledge, as well as attaining an eternally blissful life, must take up this process of devotional service to God.
With the nation under a complete lockdown as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak, Akshaya Patra Foundation is aiding the Government’s relief efforts by providing food to vulnerable communities across the country. As on June 1, 2020, Akshaya Patra and its supporting organisations have served over 6 crore (60 million) meals to underprivileged members of society. These include freshly cooked meals that have been served to daily-wage earners, industrial workers, hospital staff, and other vulnerable groups. The foundation has been working tirelessly to ensure that food reaches those in need during these challenging times.
workers, labourers at construction sites, etc., and food relief kits with essential groceries—each grocery kit can serve 2 people with 42 meals for 21 days.—that have been distributed to the affected people. The Foundation is undertaking this relief feeding endeavour in association with various state governments, UT administrations and civic bodies with the continued support of corporate partners, individual donors and volunteers.

Akshaya Patra has always strived to support the Government’s relief efforts: floods in Uttar Pradesh and Kerala, drought in Rajasthan and Karnataka, and even beyond the border in Nepal after the 2015 earthquake. However most of these efforts were region-specific. In contrast, the ongoing COVID-19 relief feeding is the biggest relief endeavour in terms of scale for the organisation.

The Foundation is undertaking this initiative through its kitchens in Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Delhi and NCR, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Tripura, and Uttar Pradesh. In Madhya Pradesh and Uttrakhand, where it is in the process of building kitchens, existing structures and resources are being used to distribute food relief kits to the vulnerable population. The contents of these food relief kits are based on the local palate.

Smt. Sudha Murthy, Sri Narayana Murthy and their family have donated Rs.10 Crores from their funds to Akshaya Patra and enabled us to distribute over 1.33 lakh food relief kits to those in need. Similarly, renowned corporate houses, including the Infosys Foundation, PepsiCo Foundation, Deutsche Bank, DLF Foundation, Biocon, etc., have also come forward to support the Foundation’s relief efforts.

In addition, employees from various corporate houses, such as the Infosys Foundation and Biocon, personnel from agencies such as Home Guards and Civil Defence, and volunteer groups, such as Corona Warriors and Inspiring Indians, have been helping with the packing and distribution of food relief kits in various locations.

Speaking about these efforts, Sri Chanchalapathi Dasa, Vice-Chairman - Akshaya Patra said, "We firmly believe in the power of collective social responsibility and collaborative action. I take this opportunity to extend my deepest gratitude to the various governments, our corporate partners, individual donors, motivated volunteers, and all our well-wishers for enabling us to serve over 6 crore meals so far. We will continue to work with all our stakeholders to reach out to as many people as we can, to ensure that no one goes hungry during these tough times."
Chandana alankara of Lord Narasimha