



KRISHNA VOICE

Vol 22, No.8, August 2021, ₹40



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Sri Krishna Janmashtami

Aug 29-30
2021



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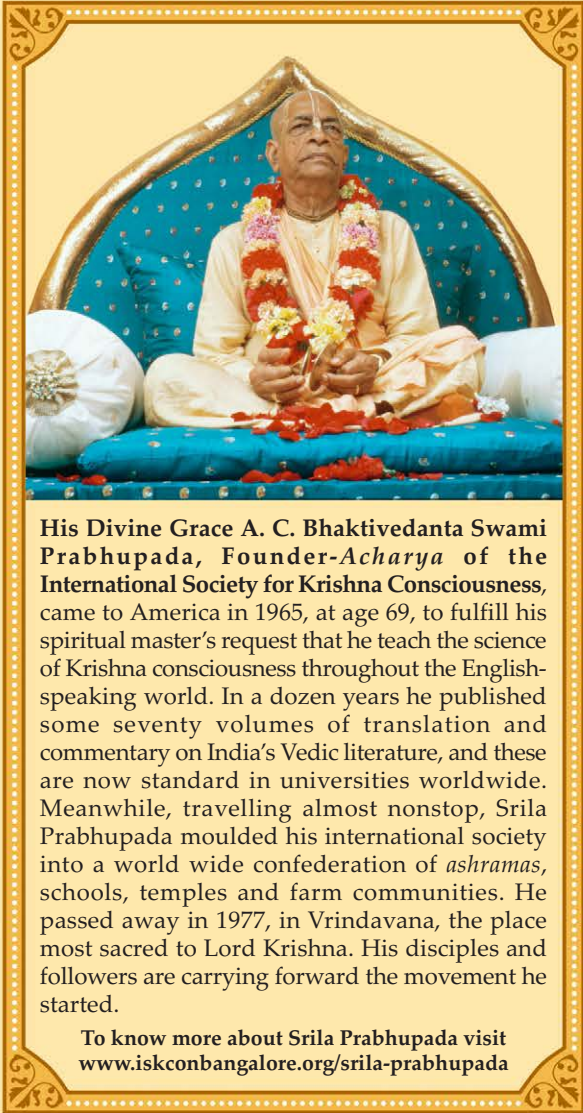
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His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, Founder-Acharya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, came to America in 1965, at age 69, to fulfill his spiritual master's request that he teach the science of Krishna consciousness 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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Published and owned by Sankirtana Seva Trust. Editor: Chamari Devi Dasi. Layout, design and graphics by ISKCON Design Group, Bangalore.

For all information contact: Editor, Krishna Voice, SST, Hare Krishna Hill, Chord Road, Bangalore - 560 010 INDIA Phone: 91-80-2347 1956, 91-80-2357 8346 Fax: 91-80-2357 8625.

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The Mature Fruit of the Vedas

The author of the Vedic literature urges us to taste the best fruit from the Vedic tree of knowledge.

A lecture given in London, August 19, 1971

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

*nigama-kalpa-taror galitam phalam
suka-mukhad amrta-drava-samyutam
pibata bhagavatam rasam alayam
muhur aho rasika bhuvi bhavukah*

O expert and thoughtful men, relish *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, the mature fruit of the desire tree of Vedic literature. It emanated from the lips of Sri Sukadeva Gosvami. Therefore this fruit has become even more tasteful, although its nectarean juice was already relishable for all, including liberated souls.—*Srimad-Bhagavatam* 1.1.3

Srimad-Bhagavatam is the ripe fruit of Vedic literature. The Vedic literature is compared to a desire tree—*kalpa taru*. *Kalpa* means "desire," and *taru* means "tree." We have no experience of a *kalpa taru* in the material world; the *kalpa taru* is in the spiritual world. Here in the material world, from a mango tree you can get a mango only, not any other fruit. But from the *kalpa taru* you can get any kind of fruit. And the *kalpa taru* is found on Krishna's planet.

The *Brahma-samhita* tells us that Krishna's planet is made of touchstone. If you touch iron with a touchstone, the iron becomes gold. In the spiritual world there are also houses, trees, cows—and Krishna is there with His associates. These are all described in the *Brahma-samhita*.

Do not think that we have imagined something artistic and created a Krishna. No. Krishna and His planet are completely supported by Vedic literature, especially the *Brahma-samhita*. The *Brahma-samhita* clearly describes Krishna's original place. The world we live in now is also Krishna's place, but because we have forgotten Krishna we accept this place as material.

Just as a king possesses all the places of his country, Krishna possesses all worlds, material and spiritual. Krishna says in the *Bhagavad-gita*,

*bhoktaram yajna-tapasam
sarva-loka-mahesvaram
suhrdam sarva-bhutanam
jnatva mam santim rcchati*

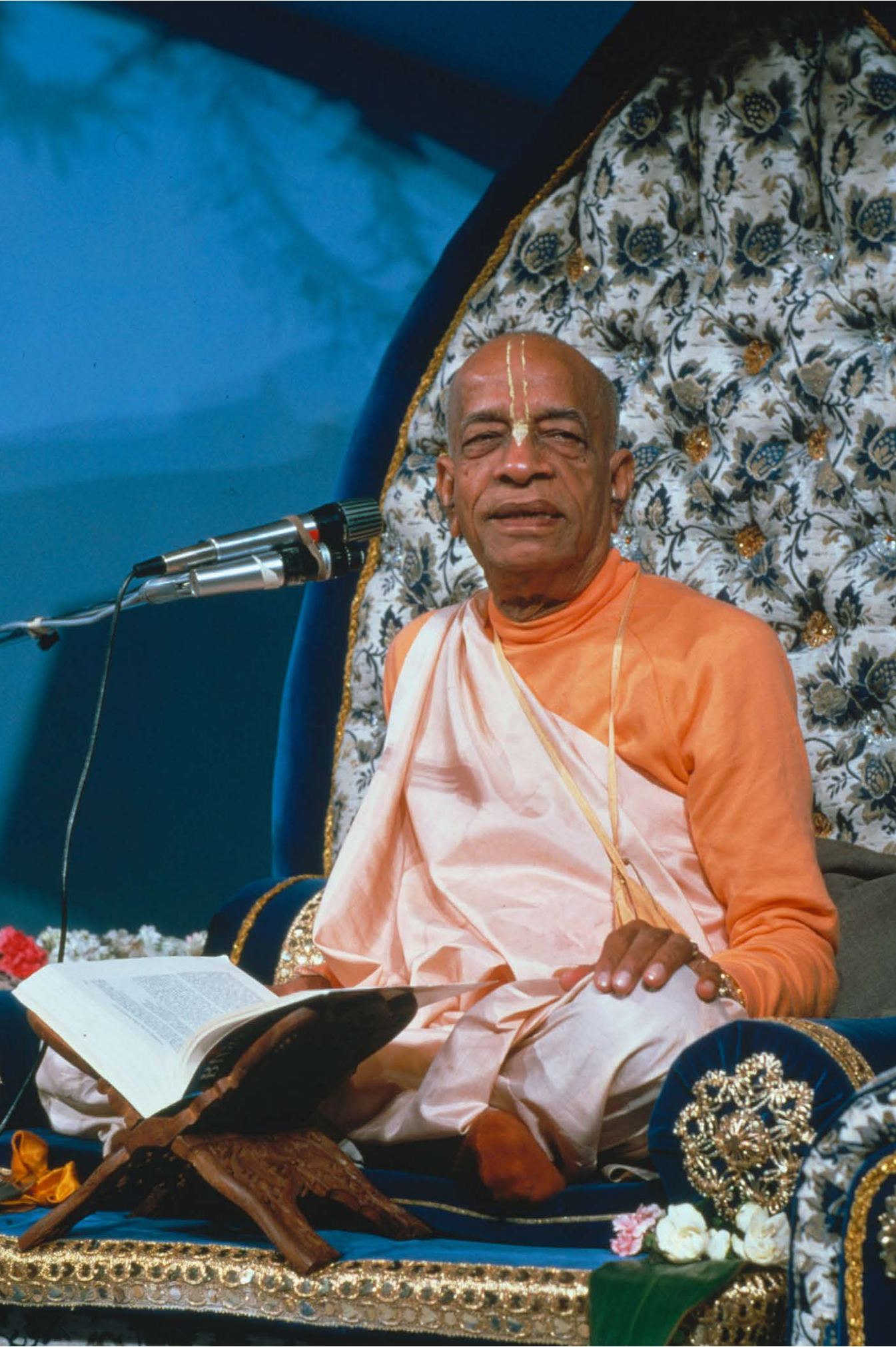
If one wants peace and happiness, then one must know these three things about Krishna: that Krishna is the enjoyer of everything, the owner of everything, and the friend of everyone.

You can perform *yajna*, sacrifices, you can perform austerities and penances, but the result you earn by these should be enjoyed by Krishna. That is Krishna consciousness. Everyone is thinking, "I must enjoy. Why others?" That is the materialistic way of thinking. But in the Krishna consciousness movement we are trying to change that consciousness. The Krishna consciousness movement teaches that you may earn as much as you like but the enjoyer should be Krishna, not you. That way of thinking is Krishna consciousness.

The ultimate aim of the *karmis*, people who work hard day and night, is to satisfy their senses. That's why they work so hard. The *Bhagavatam* therefore says, *nayam deho deha-bhajam nrloke kastan kaman arhate vid-bhujam ye*: "We should not work so hard simply for sense gratification, which is available even to the hogs and dogs."

Krishna consciousness means to work for Krishna, not for sense gratification, because the real proprietor is Krishna. To think "I am the proprietor, I am the enjoyer" is illusion.

In the *chintamani-dhama*, Krishna's abode, everything is there, and there everyone acts for Krishna's pleasure. Here everyone tries to enjoy for himself, so there is competition—man to man, family to family, society to society, nation to nation. But that competition will stop as soon as there is Krishna consciousness, as soon as we think, "We are not the proprietor; Krishna is the proprietor." To think in that way is the basis of peace.



We must also understand that Krishna is everyone's friend. He is situated in everyone's heart as friend. That is stated in the *Upanishads*. There the body is compared to a tree, and the soul and the Supersoul, or Krishna, are compared to birds in the tree. One bird is eating the fruit of the tree, and the other, the friend, is simply witnessing.

The Supersoul is our supreme friend. He's always trying to get us back home, back to Godhead. Not only does He sit within our hearts, but He descends as Krishna. He comes and canvasses. *Sarva-dharman parityajya mam ekam saranam vraja*: "Why are you engaged in so many so-called occupations? Simply surrender unto Me."

But we are so engulfed in matter that we cannot take Krishna's advice. Therefore Krishna comes again, as a devotee—Lord Chaitanya. Lord Krishna said, "Surrender unto Me." And later Krishna comes as Lord Chaitanya, a devotee of Lord Krishna, to show us how to surrender. He comes Himself as the Supreme Lord, He comes as a devotee, He sends His representative—simply to canvass us to come to the *chintamani-dhama*, the spiritual world, where there are desire trees and touchstones, where there is eternal happiness.

The Vedic literature gives us knowledge of the spiritual world. *Veda* means "knowledge." *Vetti veda vido jnanam*: "Anything from which one gets knowledge is called *veda*." From the *Vedas* we have to acquire the supreme knowledge. We have so many types of knowledge, but what is the ultimate knowledge? That is called Vedanta. And that ultimate knowledge is knowledge of the Supreme.

We get knowledge by inquiry. We ask, "What is in the newspaper today? What has happened?" The answers to those inquiries are also knowledge. But they are not the ultimate knowledge. The ultimate knowledge is knowledge of Krishna. Therefore Krishna says in the *Bhagavad-gita*, *vedais ca sarvair aham eva vedyah*: "By all the *Vedas*, I am to be known."

People seek knowledge from so-called Vedantists who do not know Krishna. But one who is actually a Vedantist must know Krishna. Some time ago some Vaishnavas gave me the title "Bhaktivedanta." "Bhaktivedanta" means that the ultimate understanding of Vedanta is *bhakti*, not impersonalism.

Here it is stated, *nigama-kalpa-taror galitam phalam: Srimad-Bhagavatam* is the ripe fruit of Vedic knowledge. All the *Vedas* are summarized in the *Vedanta-sutra*, and the *Bhagavatam* is the explanation of the *Vedanta-sutra*. Therefore in the very beginning of *Srimad-Bhagavatam* we find this aphorism of the *Vedanta-sutra: janmady asya yatah*.

The first statement in the *Vedanta-sutra* is *athatho brahma-jijnasa*: "Now we have to inquire about Brahman, the Absolute Truth." That inquiry is the business of a human being. In lives other than the human form we have simply passed our time in the matter of bodily necessities: eating, sleeping, mating, and defending. Animals and human beings both have these bodily necessities. Then what is the extra business of the human form of life? If a human being is simply engaged in these four principles of life, then what is the difference between that human being and a dog? There is no difference. A human being is distinguished from the animals by the ability to inquire into the Absolute Truth—*athatho brahma-jijnasa*. A human being can come to the temple and inquire about Krishna, or the Absolute Truth. That is the difference. The Krishna consciousness movement gives everyone the chance to come and inquire about Brahman. In other words, the whole activity of the Krishna consciousness movement is Vedanta life.

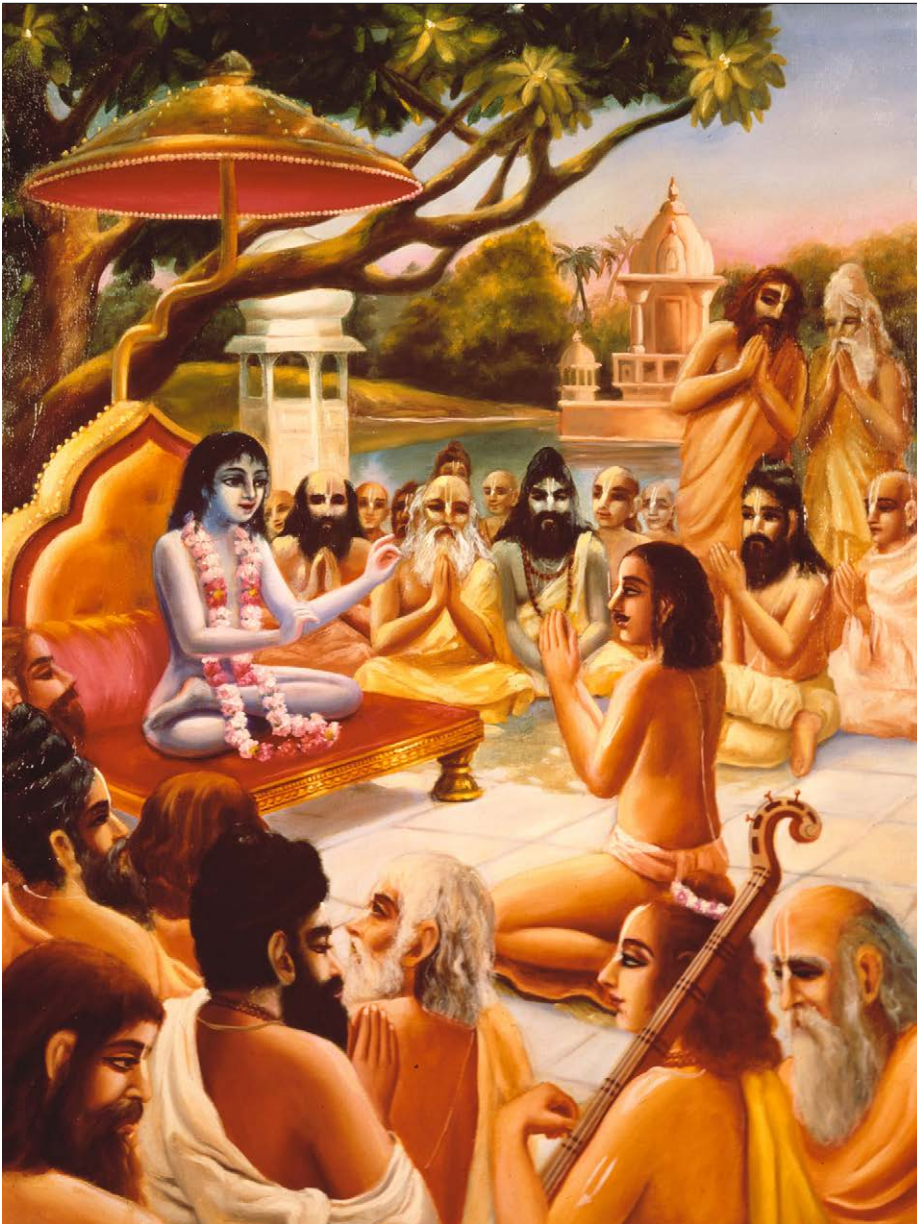
Now, there are different stages of inquiring about the Absolute Truth. That is explained in the *Bhagavatam*:

*vadanti tat tattva-vidas
tattvam yaj jnanam advayam
brahmeti paramatmeti
bhagavan iti sabyate*

The Absolute Truth is one, but some accept the Absolute Truth as impersonal Brahman, some accept the Absolute Truth as the localized Paramatma, or Supersoul, and some accept the Absolute Truth as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krishna or Vishnu.

The Krishna consciousness movement is for understanding the Absolute Truth in the ultimate sense. That means to understand the Absolute Truth as the Supreme Person. The *Bhagavatam* describes the Absolute Truth in the beginning—*om namo bhagavate vasudevaya*: "I offer my respectful obeisances unto Vasudeva." *Vasudeva* means Krishna, the son of Vasudeva. Krishna appeared as the son of Vasudeva. *Vasudeva* also means *suddha-sattva*, or "pure goodness." Unless one comes to the position of Vasudeva—pure goodness—one cannot understand Vasudeva, Krishna.

In the material world there are three statuses: goodness, passion, and ignorance. Ignorance and passion are simply material. The symptoms of ignorance and passion are greed and lust. Above greed and lust is the Vedanta



platform, from which one can understand everything clearly. That platform is called goodness. And pure goodness is transcendental to the material platform of goodness.

The material platform of goodness can be contaminated by the other two qualities, namely passion and ignorance. For example, a pure *brahmana* is on the platform of goodness. He is truthful, tolerant, and full of knowledge, he controls his mind and senses, and so on. These are brahminical qualifications. But sometimes the brahminical qualifications become contaminated by passion and ignorance. Today we see that many people from brahminical families have been contaminated by passion and ignorance.

So material goodness can be attacked by the other two qualities, and a person on the platform

of material goodness may fall down. But when you transcend the material platform of goodness and come to the transcendental platform of goodness, you cannot fall down. *Sattvam visuddham vasudeva-sabditam*. *Sattva*, existence of pure goodness, is called Vasudeva. In that pure, transcendental platform of goodness you can understand Vasudeva, Krishna. Vasudeva is already within your heart, but you realize His presence by placing yourself on the platform of pure consciousness.

We can come to the platform of pure goodness simply by discussing *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. Therefore it is said here, *nigama-kalpa-taror galitam phalam: Srimad-Bhagavatam* is the mature fruit of Vedic knowledge. And *sukamukhad amrta-drava-samyutam*. The *Srimad-Bhagavatam* was written by Vyasadeva. And it was spoken for the first time by Sukadeva Gosvami, Vyasadeva's son. Vyasadeva wrote the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* under the instruction of his spiritual master, Narada Muni. And Vyasadeva told his beloved son, Sukadeva Gosvami, "I have written *Srimad-Bhagavatam*; now you preach it."

That is the duty of the student: The spiritual master writes, and the disciple must preach. And if the student is as pure as the spiritual master, then the student's preaching will be very nice.

There is another explanation of this verse: A fruit ripened in the tree will be very nice, very sweet. If you take an unripe fruit from the tree and keep it at your home, it will also ripen, but it will not be so tasteful. And if a tree-ripened fruit is cut by the beak of a parrot, or *suka*, the fruit becomes still more tasteful. Similarly, *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, the ripe fruit of Vedic knowledge, is already very tasteful, but because it has been touched by the

lips of Sukadeva Gosvami, it is *drava-samyutam*—still more tasteful.

Therefore it is recommended, *pibata bhagavatam rasam*: "Drink the juice of the ripe fruit of the *Bhagavatam*." When we eat something, we taste its *rasa*, its juice. Krishna says in the *Bhagavad-gita*, *raso 'ham apsu kaunteya*: "My dear Kaunteya, Arjuna, I am the taste of water." When we are thirsty we ask for water because the taste in water will immediately quench our thirst.

That which we enjoy in something is also called *rasa*. Everything we do is to get *rasa*. A man may work very hard day and night. Why? To maintain his wife and children. There is some flavour in maintaining the family with hard labour. Unless there is some *rasa*, some taste, a man cannot work so hard day and night. Sometimes we see, therefore, that a person with no family or no family affection does not work so hard. Therefore in the Vedic civilization family life is recommended, because a person without the taste of family affection may become confused and hopeless. So in everything we do there is some *rasa*. Without that taste one cannot live.

Now, here it is recommended, *pibata bhagavatam rasam alayam*: "Here is a taste you can enjoy up to the end of your life or up to the point of liberation." Life is meant for getting liberated from our painful material existence. Everyone is trying to get out of the painful situation we are in. That is the struggle for existence. But people do not know that the ultimate goal of life is to be free from all painful activities. That is called liberation. The whole Vedic civilization is based on this point—how to get liberated and enjoy eternal happiness.

*ramante yogino 'nante
satyanande cid-atmani
iti rama-padenasau
param brahmabhidhiyate*

The word *rama* comes from *ramana*, "enjoyment." And Rama is a name for the Supreme Lord, the source of all enjoyment. In the material world people are engaged in *ramana* in the form of sex, that's all. But if you take shelter of Lord Rama, you will get real happiness.

Ramante yoginah anante. Those who aspire after spiritual perfection are called yogis, or transcendentalists. Today people practice a preliminary yoga system such as *hatha-yoga*. But they are not perfecting even the beginning practices, what to speak of making further progress.

Bhakti-yogis are engaged in the *bhakti-yoga* system. What is that *bhakti-yoga* system? Hearing about Krishna, chanting about Krishna, remembering Krishna, and so on. And Krishna says,

*mam ca yo 'vyabhicarena
bhakti-yogena sevate
sa gunan samatityaitan
brahma-bhuyaya kalpate*

"One who takes to the *bhakti-yoga* system without any deviation and who strictly follows the regulative principles at once becomes transcendental to the three material qualities, namely goodness, passion, and ignorance."

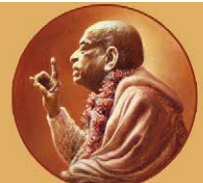
To transcend the material qualities is called *mukti*, liberation. *Mukti* does not mean getting many heads or many legs. No. *Mukti* is defined as *sva-rupena vyavasthitih*—to be situated in one's original constitutional position, or Krishna consciousness.

This verse recommends, *pibata bhagavatam rasam alayam*. *Laya* means "to merge." We are now merged into the material world. Although we are the soul, our bodies are material, and we are merged into the material body. But because we are spirit, merging with the body does not give us happiness.

If you are put into the Atlantic Ocean, you will merge with the ocean, but because you are not a living entity of the water, you cannot be happy there. Similarly, you cannot be happy by merging into the material existence. You have to merge into the spiritual existence, in Krishna consciousness. Then you'll be happy. That is the meaning of *bhagavatam rasam alayam*.

Thank you very much. 🙏

Srila 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/srila-prabhupada-lectures



SRILA PRABHUPADA SPEAKS OUT

How Can There Be Peace?

This exchange between His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada and some of his disciples took place in Geneva, Switzerland, on June 2, 1974.

Disciple: Srila Prabhupada, in a recent study by U.S. agricultural officials, they found that it's uneconomical to eat meat. It takes so much energy and man hours to raise and transport and slaughter the cows that it's very wasteful.

the whole year. You work only three months, and you get sufficient food for your whole family. And in the remaining nine months, you chant Hare Krishna.

But these rascals will not do that. They will work hard like asses simply for eating. *Nunam pramattah kurute vikarma yad indriya-pritaya aprnoti.* They will not accept an easy life.

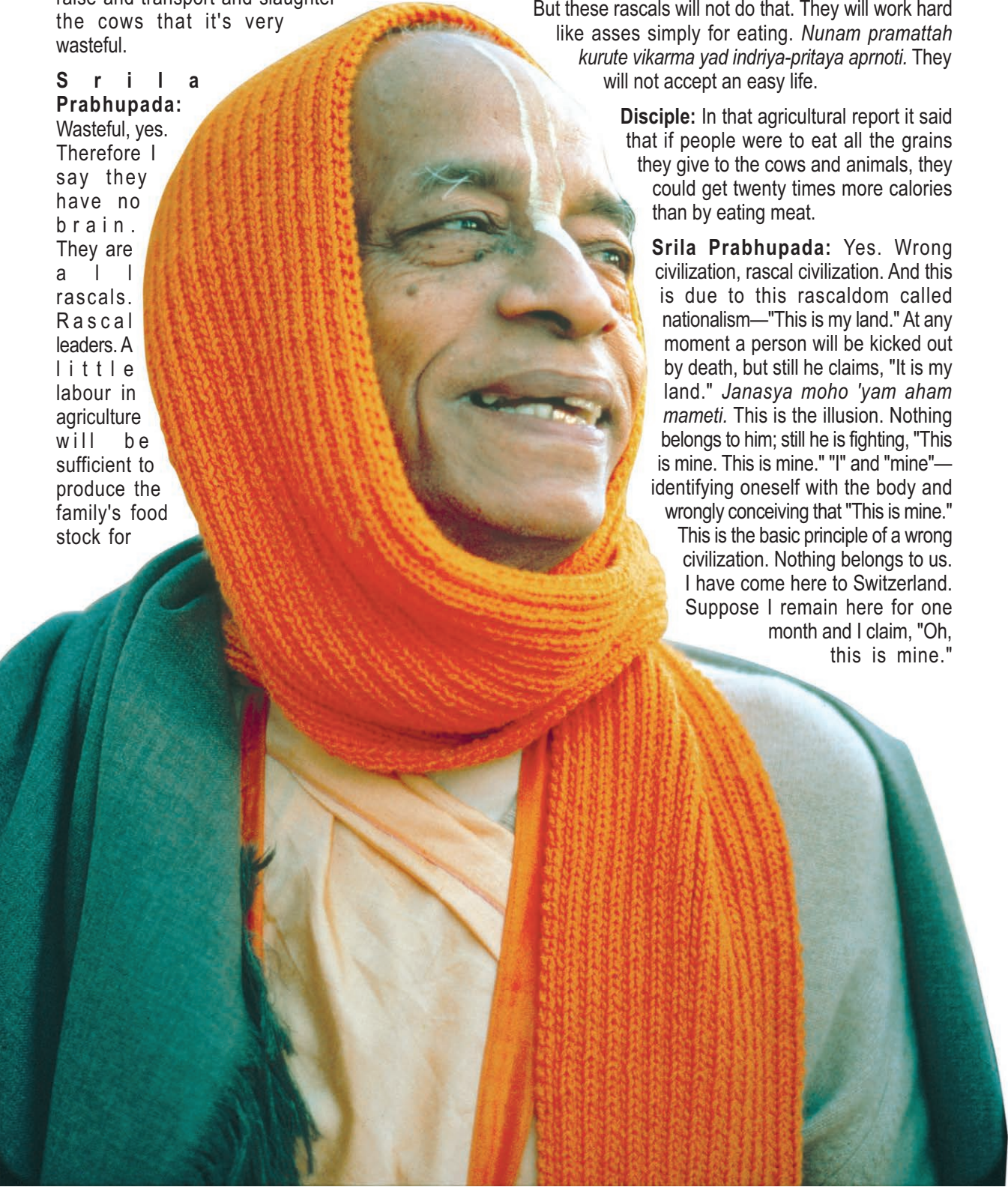
**S r i l a
Prabhupada:**

Wasteful, yes. Therefore I say they have no brain. They are a l l rascals. Rascal leaders. A little labour in agriculture will be sufficient to produce the family's food stock for

Disciple: In that agricultural report it said that if people were to eat all the grains they give to the cows and animals, they could get twenty times more calories than by eating meat.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. Wrong civilization, rascal civilization. And this is due to this rascaldom called nationalism—"This is my land." At any moment a person will be kicked out by death, but still he claims, "It is my land." *Janasya moho 'yam aham mameti.* This is the illusion. Nothing belongs to him; still he is fighting, "This is mine. This is mine." "I" and "mine"—identifying oneself with the body and wrongly conceiving that "This is mine."

This is the basic principle of a wrong civilization. Nothing belongs to us. I have come here to Switzerland. Suppose I remain here for one month and I claim, "Oh, this is mine."



What is this?

So, similarly, we come to this world as guests. We come to the womb of a mother and live here for seventy years or so. And we claim, "This is my land." But when did it become yours? The land was there long, long before your birth. How has it become yours? But people have no sense. "It is mine—my land, my nation, my family, my society." In this way, they are wasting time.

These things have been introduced by Western civilization. In the Vedic civilization there is no such thing as nationalism. You won't find it there. Have you seen the word "nationalism" in the *Bhagavad-gita*? No such thing.

Nationalism is the idea of tribes. In Africa there are still groups of tribes. Nationalism is the most crude idea of civilization. It is nothing but developed tribalism. Modern man is not advanced in civilization. This nationalism is another form of tribalism, that's all.

Disciple: Today, so-called civilized people are actually just cannibals because they maintain themselves on eating the cow.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. And they are suffering. Therefore you'll find that in recent history, every twenty-five years there is a big war with mass slaughter of people. Nature does not tolerate animal slaughter.

Now India has learned to slaughter animals, imitating the Western countries. And now there is war between India and Pakistan. During two wars between Pakistan and Hindustan, millions of people were killed unnecessarily, without any gain.

Disciple: Just recently India exploded an atomic bomb, and now Pakistan is hurrying to get an atomic bomb also.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes.

This is going on.

Disciple: The Indian government promised that nuclear energy would be only for peaceful purposes.

Srila Prabhupada: No, what do they know about peaceful conditions? They are all rascals. They do not know what a peaceful condition is. The actual peaceful condition is described in the *Bhagavad-gita*:

*bhoktaram yajna-tapasam
sarva-loka-mahesvaram
suhrdam sarva-bhutanam
jnatva mam santim rcchati*

"A person in full consciousness of Me [Krishna], knowing Me to be the ultimate beneficiary of all sacrifices and austerities, the Supreme Lord of all planets and demigods, and the benefactor and well-wisher of all living entities, attains peace from the pangs of material miseries."

This is peace. Unless there is Krishna consciousness, where is peace? There cannot be peace. All rascaldom. *Na mam duskrtino mudhah prapadyante naradhamah*. These rascals and fools—*mayayapahrta-jnana*—have lost all knowledge. How can there be peace? Their endeavours for peace are all useless. ☸

Fasting		Festivals	
Aug 4	Ekadashi	Aug 13	Garuda Panchami (in ISKCON Bangalore) Jaladuta's Voyage of Compassion begins (as per Jaladuta Diary)
Aug 5	<i>break fast</i>		
Aug 18	Ekadashi	Aug 18-22	Jhulan Yatra
Aug 19	<i>break fast</i>	Aug 22	Balarama Jayanthi: Appearance of Lord Balarama <i>Fasting till noon</i> Second month of Chaturmasya begins. <i>Fasting from yogurt for one month.</i>
		Aug 29-30	Sri Krishna Janmashtami <i>Fasting till midnight on Aug 30th</i>
		Aug 31	Nandotsava, Sri Vyasa Puja: Appearance of Srila Prabhupada <i>Fasting till noon</i>

Cross-Cultural Traces of Vedic Civilization

By Sadaputa Dasa

The ancient Greek writer Aratos tells the following story about the constellation Virgo, or the virgin. Virgo, he says, may have belonged to the star race, the forefathers of the ancient stars. In primeval times, in the golden age, she lived among mankind as Justice personified and would exhort people to adhere to the truth. At this time people lived peacefully, without hypocrisy or quarrel. Later, in the age of silver, she hid herself in the mountains, but occasionally she came down to berate people for their evil ways. Finally the age of bronze came. People invented the sword, and "they tasted the meat of cows, the first who did it." At this point Virgo "flew away to the sphere"; that is, she departed for the celestial realm. ** (E. C. Sachau, trans., Alberuni's India (Delhi: S. Chand & Co., 1964), pp. 383-4.)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

This story is a close parallel to the account in the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* of the encounter between Maharaja Parikshit



and the bull of Dharma. There, Dharma is said to lose one leg with each successive *yuga*, leaving it with one leg in the present Age of Kali.

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

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

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

Although the Bible is well known for advocating a very short time-span for human history, it is interesting to note that it contains information indicating that people at one time lived for about 1,000 years. In the Old Testament the following ages are listed for people living before the Biblical Flood: Adam, 930; Seth, 912; Enos, 905; Kenan, 910; Mahaleel, 895; Jared, 962; Enoch, 365; Methuselah, 969; Lamech, 777; and Noah, 950. If we exclude Enoch (who was said to have been taken up to heaven in his own body), these persons lived an average of 912 years. ** (D. W. Patten and P. A. Patten, "A Comprehensive Theory on Aging, Gigantism & Longevity," *Catastrophism & Ancient History*, Vol. 2, Part 1 (Aug. 1979), p. 24.)

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

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

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

Now when Noah had lived 350 years after the Flood, and all that time happily, he died, having the number of 950 years, but let no one, upon comparing the lives of the ancients with our lives ... make the shortness of our lives at present an argument that neither did they attain so long a duration of life. ... Now I have for witnesses to what I have said all those that have written Antiquities, both among the Greeks and barbarians, for even Manetho, who wrote the Egyptian history, and Berosus, who collected the Chaldean monuments, and Mochus, and Hestiaeus, and beside these, Hieronymus the Egyptian, and those who composed the Phoenician history, agree with what I here say: Hesiod also, and Hecataeus, Hellanicus, and Acuzilaus, and besides Ephorus and Nicolaus relate that the ancients lived a thousand years: but as to these matters, let everyone look upon them as he sees fit. ** (D. W. Patten, *Ibid.*, p. 29.)

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

to goodness.

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



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

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

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

If there was an ancient Vedic world civilization, we would expect to find traces of it in many cultures around the world. We do seem to find such traces, and many agree with Vedic accounts in specific details (such as the location of Surt's abode or the sacred buffalo's loss of one leg per world age). Since this civilization began to lose its influence thousands of years ago, at the beginning of Kali-yuga, we would expect many of these traces to be fragmentary and overlain by many later additions, and this we also see. Thus the available evidence seems to be consistent with the hypothesis of a Vedic origin. 🌀

Divine Ferocity

Srila Prabhupada acts as the model for a painting of God in His most terrifying form

By Yadurani Devi Dasi

In New York City, 1967, in Srila Prabhupada's Second Avenue apartment, he asked me to paint a picture of Lord Narasimhadeva, the half-man, half-lion incarnation of Lord Krishna who appeared many millennia ago. In a print Prabhupada's disciple Hayagriva Dasa had brought from India, Lord Narasimhadeva had about ten arms, and He was ripping apart the demon Hiranyakashipu in His lap, tearing out the demon's intestines. Prabhupada told me to paint only four arms, and he told me the story of Lord Narasimhadeva.

I was already somewhat familiar with the story because Prabhupada had been giving lectures on Lord Narasimhadeva and Prahlada, the Lord's pure devotee, whom the Lord had come to protect. Prabhupada asked me to do a big painting of the killing scene. In fact, he posed for me to demonstrate the proper postures for the action. Imitating Lord Narasimhadeva, Prabhupada stretched out his hands and then drew them back, spreading his fingers straight a little apart from one another, like delicate claws. I could almost see long lotus nails protruding from his hands. As Prabhupada drew back his hands in a mock menacing way, he glorified Narasimhadeva: "Your lotus hands have lotus nails with which You rip apart the demon Hiranyakashipu."

As Prabhupada was pulling his arms back, he opened his eyes wide and crossed them in an inimitable way. I could feel Narasimhadeva manifesting through His pure devotee. Srila Prabhupada then dropped his arms, and his face at once gained its former composure.

In order to remember his expression for the painting, I asked Prabhupada, "Could you do that again?" He did it again, exactly as before.

Prabhupada then had Gargamuni (the temple treasure) and Brahmananda (the temple president) act out the death scene to show me the essence of the composition. Prabhupada was the director. He had one of them lie across the other's lap to mimic the way Hiranyakashipu was pulled into the Lord's lap and torn apart. I studied the scene and then set about to paint it.

I painted the blood sparingly, applying only a little on the floor and on Hiranyakashipu's body. Prabhupada looked at the painting and told me, "Paint blood everywhere." He saw the look of surprise on my face and posed a hypothetical question: "If God is not ferocious, then from where does ferocity come?"

So I painted a lot of blood and gore. But I still needed a reference picture for the rug under the Lord's feet.

Prabhupada in his lectures had described the opulence of Hiranyakashipu's palace. "What does a rug from an opulent Vedic palace look like?" I wondered. I remembered that there was an Indian picture in Prabhupada's room, right above where he would write his books or sit and talk with his disciples and guests. It showed Lord Ramachandra, Sita Devi, and Hanuman, with an opulent rug below their lotus feet.

I went into Prabhupada's room and looked high up on the wall trying to see the details of the rug in the picture. I couldn't really make out all the details without stepping on Prabhupada's mat to get a closer look. So I started standing on my toes and stretching. I must have looked pretty ridiculous.

Prabhupada, who was sitting on the mat, asked, "What are you doing?"

"I'm trying to see the print so that I can paint a similar rug in my picture of Lord Narasimhadeva. But I don't want to step on your seat."

"In Krishna's service," Prabhupada said humbly, "you can step on my head."

When the painting was finished Prabhupada okayed the blue effulgence I'd painted around Lord Narasimhadeva's head, although it would generally be perceived as yellowish white.

Soon after I'd completed the Lord Narasimhadeva painting, my younger sister came to visit the temple. Her disbelief in God was overshadowed only by her criticism of the Hare Krishna movement, which she bad-mouthed to anyone who would listen.

I tried to find some common ground with her, so I showed her the Narasimhadeva painting, hoping she could appreciate it, at least as her sister's work. As I told her the story, she insisted we should have more compassion for poor Hiranyakashipu.




"How could God kill someone," she asked, "especially the father of His devotee?"

I couldn't answer her, because our relationship was too familiar and she couldn't accept anything I said. So I brought her to Srila Prabhupada.

Defending his fledgling spiritual daughter, Prabhupada patiently explained to my sister that the father may love everyone but he especially loves his own children. Similarly, God loves everyone, but He shows special favour to His devotees. He explained that Prahlada was a five-year-old devotee and his father had repeatedly tried to kill him and others for their religious beliefs. So Krishna in His fierce form of Lord Narasimhadeva killed Prahlada's demoniac father.

Prabhupada also told her that being slain by the Lord is not an ordinary thing. Actually, the demon Hiranyakashipu, because the Lord personally killed him, attained a position usually reserved for those who have dedicated their life to austerity and piety. Krishna was doing the demon a favour by killing him.

My sister couldn't accept anything Prabhupada said. She wasn't ready for spiritual life. She got up and left in acute frustration, not realizing the benefit she had derived from associating with a pure devotee. 

24 minutes to Lord's mercy

Chozhsimhapuram Thirukkadigai Kovil

by Sampatkumara Ramanuja Dasan (Adv. Ashwin.S)

Thirukkadigai or Sholingapuram is located in Sholinghur, a village in Vellore district of the South Indian state of Tamil Nadu, and houses the amazing temple of the Supreme Personality Godhead Sriman Narayana.

The Pastime

Various scriptures refer to the place as Kadigachalam or Thirukkadigai, as the place is believed to offer blessings to devotees whose worship lasts a *kadigai* (duration of 24 minutes). Such is the power of the place and the Deity, that all prayers would be answered within 24 minutes of prayers.

The pastime of this temple is associated with Brahmarishi Vishwamitra. Vashishta Maharshi is one of the Saptarishis (seven great *rishis*) in the present Manvantara, or age of Manu. Vashishta is a son of Lord Brahma. He had, in his possession, the divine cow Kamadhenu, and Nandini her calf, who could grant anything to their worshippers. Arundhati is the wife of Vashishta.

Vashishta, as one of the nine Prajapatis (progenitors of the universe), is credited as the chief author of Mandala 7 of the Rigveda. Vashishta and his family are glorified

in Rigveda, for their role in the Battle of the Ten Kings, making him the only mortal, besides Bhava, to have a Rigvedic hymn dedicated to him. Another treatise attributed to him is *Vashishta Samhita* – a book on the Vedic system of astrology.

There is an interesting episode from the life of Vashishta:

There was a king named Kalmashapada, a descendant of Ikshvaku, who was famed for his learning. (This king was originally called Pravridha, but his feet had become disfigured when they came in contact with water that had been charged with incantations for a curse. Thus he came to be called Kalmashapada, which means blemished feet). Once, while walking on a narrow path in a forest, the king encountered an ascetic. The path would admit just one. An argument ensued regarding the right of way, each maintaining that the other ought to yield. Enraged and not stopping to consider his actions, the king struck out at the ascetic with his horse-whip. Angered, the *rishi* cursed the king to become a flesh-eating *rakshasa*.

While these exchanges were going on, Sage Vishwamitra, came that way. He recognised both the

The temple of Thirukkadigai



king and the ascetic, for the ascetic was none other than Shakti, the eldest of Sage Vashishta's hundred sons. Now, regarding the king, both Vishwamitra and Vashishta had wanted to make him their disciple, but neither had succeeded until this time. Vishwamitra seized this opportunity to avenge himself against both the king and Vashishta. Vishwamitra concealed himself by his yogic powers and made the curse of Shakti take effect immediately. By his yogic power, he caused a *rakshasa* spirit named Kinkara to enter the body of the king.

Under the influence of this *rakshasa*, the king turned back to his palace. On the way home, he met a *brahmana* who begged him for food. Seemingly disregarding the beggar, the king returned to his palace. At his palace, he ordered his chef to prepare a meal of human flesh mixed with rice and feed it to the *brahmana* whom he had met in the forest.

When the food was offered to the *brahmana*, by his spiritual sight, he saw at once that the food was unholy. In his wrath, he cursed the king saying, "Since Kalmashapada has caused unholy food made from human flesh to be fed to me, he shall develop a hunger for such unclean food. He shall be turned into a human flesh-eating *rakshasa*!"

Thus reinforced, the curse became very strong. Impelled

by the workings of fate, Kalmashapada once again returned to the forest where he had been cursed first. When he encountered Shakti again, he commenced his career as a human-eating monster by devouring the *rishi*. Vishwamitra, who was really the force behind the *rakshasa*, then caused the king to hunt the other sons of Vashishta. One by one, Kalmashapada devoured them all.

When Vashishta came to know that all his sons were dead by the stratagem of Vishwamitra, he became consumed by grief. If he had wished, he could have destroyed Vishwamitra utterly, but he had made a vow of peace, never to hurt any creature by his yogic powers. Feeling that his life had lost all meaning with the utter destruction of his sons, he tried to commit suicide by various means. He was unsuccessful in this endeavour, for the ocean would not allow him to drown, nor did fire burn him. He tried to drown in a river named Haimavati, but the river, recognising him as a *brahmana* of great merit, fled in a hundred directions to avoid him. It is known to this day as Saptadaru (of a thousand streams). Thwarted in his attempt to commit suicide, Vashishta began wandering all over the world.

At last, he returned to his hermitage. As he approached his abode, Vashishta heard a young voice reciting the Vedic scriptures. When he entered his hut, he found



Vimana of the temple



Yoga Narasimha, the main Deity in the temple of Sholinghur



Mahalakshmi Thayar in the temple

that only his daughter-in-law Adrisyanti was there. The mystery of the anonymous voice was solved, when the *rishi* divined by his yogic power that it was the unborn child in her womb that had been reciting the Vedic scriptures! Glad that there was at least someone to propagate his race, the *rishi* became consoled.

Much later, Vashishta saw the *rakshasa* Kalmashapada in the forest. When the demon saw the sage, he tried to attack him with the intent of eating him. But by his yogic powers, the sage destroyed the *rakshasa* spirit Kinkara and freed the king from his curse. The king, restored to his original form, fell at the feet of the sage and begged forgiveness for his transgressions.

Vashishta said, "I have already forgiven you, for I know that your actions were the direct result of the curse. Go to your kingdom and rule justly, and never insult *brahmanas* anymore."

The king said, "I have one more request to make of you. I am unable to obtain issue to propagate my race. The scriptures allow a royal line to be continued by the means of an issue obtained from a *brahmana*, so you must act as the saviour of my race."

Granting the kings request, the *rishi* went to his queen, Madayanti, and as a result she became pregnant. Her pregnancy endured twelve long years, at the end of which, unable to contain her impatience, the queen broke open her womb with a piece of stone. The son born thus was named Asmaka, and he later founded the city-state of Paudanya.

While Kalmashapada had been turned into the flesh-eating *rakshasa*, he had devoured a *brahmana* while he was making love to his wife. The wife then cursed the king, "Since you have interrupted our love-making and devoured this husband of mine, you will not be able to approach your wife with amorous intent. Your race can be propagated only by your greatest enemy." This was the reason why his race had to be continued with the help of Vashishta.

The son born to Adrisyanti was named Parasara. He learned the scriptures under the guidance of his grandfather. He used to think that his grandfather was his father. When his mother heard him addressing Vashishta as father, she told him that his real father had been devoured by a *rakshasa*, and that Vashishta was really his grandfather. When Parasara heard this story, he decided to perform a sacrifice to destroy all *rakshasas*. He succeeded in killing a large number of them, before he ended his sacrifice at the insistence of Vashishta and another sage named Pulasthya. They narrated the story of Chyavana as a precedent for leniency.

Another interesting episode in the life of Sage Vashishta:

In the Satya Yuga, there lived a great king called Kusha. Kusha had four sons – one of the sons was Kushanabha. Kushanabha had a son, Gadhi. Gadhis son was Kaushika. The story of Vishwamitra starts with Kaushika.

Kaushika was a brave and valiant king with a huge kingdom. He often traveled from one place to another, to look after his people and listen to their complaints

personally. Once, as Kaushika was traveling, he passed through a dense forest. Kaushika was traveling with a part of his huge army. When Kaushika came to the centre of the forest, he saw a beautiful hermitage there.

Kaushika sent his men to find out whose *ashrama* it was. His men came back, "Your Majesty! The *ashrama* belongs to the great Sage Vashishta!" Kaushika immediately got down from his horse. "Wait here! I will go and pay respects to the sage. Ask the men to be ready...We will be leaving soon..." His men nodded as Kaushika went inside the hermitage.

Kaushika met the great sage inside the *ashrama* and bowed to him. 'Sir! I was passing by on a tour of my kingdom, when I saw your hermitage. I just came to pay my respects to you.'

Sage Vashishta smiled, "Your Majesty! Please accept my hospitality and have your lunch here!"

Kaushika hurriedly shook his head. It was after all a

small hermitage. There was no way they could feed an entire army. "Sir! We are in a hurry...Kindly excuse us now..."

Sage Vashishta smiled, "Your majesty, You think I will not be able to feed you or your men...I think that is the reason you are refusing my hospitality...Please let that not bother you...All of you please have your lunch here..."

Kaushika frowned. There was no way he could back out now. But the sage seemed insistent on feeding all of them. He shrugged, "As you wish sir."

Sage Vashishta said, "There is a river nearby. Please ask your men to clean themselves and come for lunch..." Sage Vashishta laughed, "...a sumptuous meal..."

Kaushika was a little curious now. He went back outside. He told his men that they would be having their lunch here. When the cooks got ready, Kaushika shook his head, "We are going to enjoy the hospitality of the sage

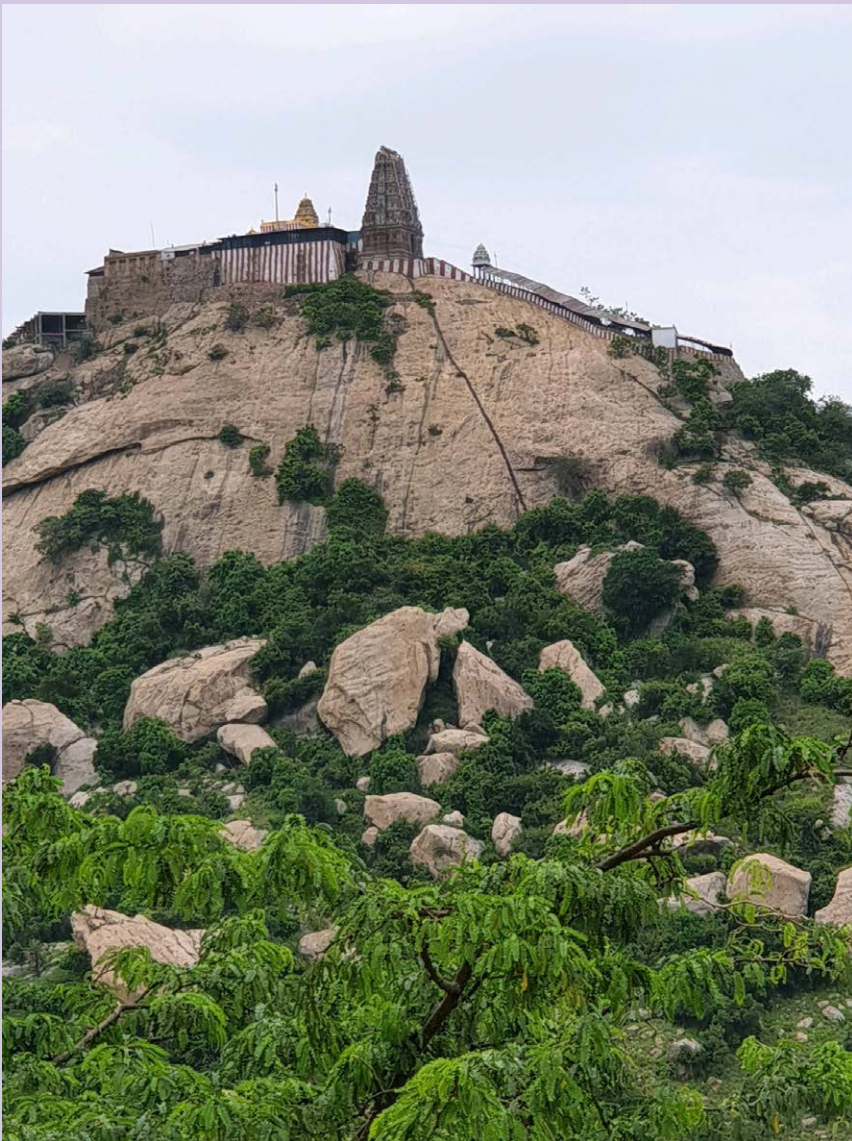
today." If the men found the order of the king a little strange, they did not say anything about it. They just went to the river and washed themselves. The king also came back after refreshing himself.

Much to the surprise of the king and his men, they had a lovely lunch that day. It was wholesome and sufficient for the entire army. Kaushika was now more than curious. After his lunch, he hurriedly cleaned himself. He asked his men to take rest and ran back to the sage.

"Sir! I am sorry to ask this question, but how were you able to feed our entire army?"

The sage smiled, "I have a cow with me, Your Majesty – Nandini. Kamadhenu, the divine cow, came out during the churning of the ocean. Nandini is Kamadhenu's daughter. Indra, the Lord of the heavens presented Nandini to me...Nandini can provide as much food as is necessary! There is no end to how much she can provide."

"Can I see the cow, sir?" Kaushika whispered in awe. The sage nodded and took the king to the back of his *ashrama*.



The rajagopuram of the temple

There, Kaushika saw a beautiful cow calmly grazing. There was a powerful aura around her. Looking at Nandini, Kaushika had no doubt that the cow had indeed provided them with all the lunch they had enjoyed. The king nodded. The sage lovingly caressed Nandini and spoke, “She is like my daughter. All of us in the hermitage love her and worship her.”

Frowning, Kaushika left the *ashrama*. Head bowed, he went towards his horse.

“Such a cow is meant to be with a king! Why, with this cow, I can feed my army anytime, anyplace and there would be no problem. If I take it with me to my palace, every single person in my kingdom would benefit. The sage should understand and gift this cow to me. As a king, I deserve to have the cow!” Such were the king’s thoughts as he neared his horse. Finally, when he was about to mount the horse, the king signaled to his men, “Wait for me! I have some work.”

Saying this, Kaushika returned to the *ashrama*. Sage Vashishta was surprised to see the king. He was even more surprised at the determined expression of the king, who looked as if he wanted something. The sage greeted the king, “Your Majesty! Is there anything else?”

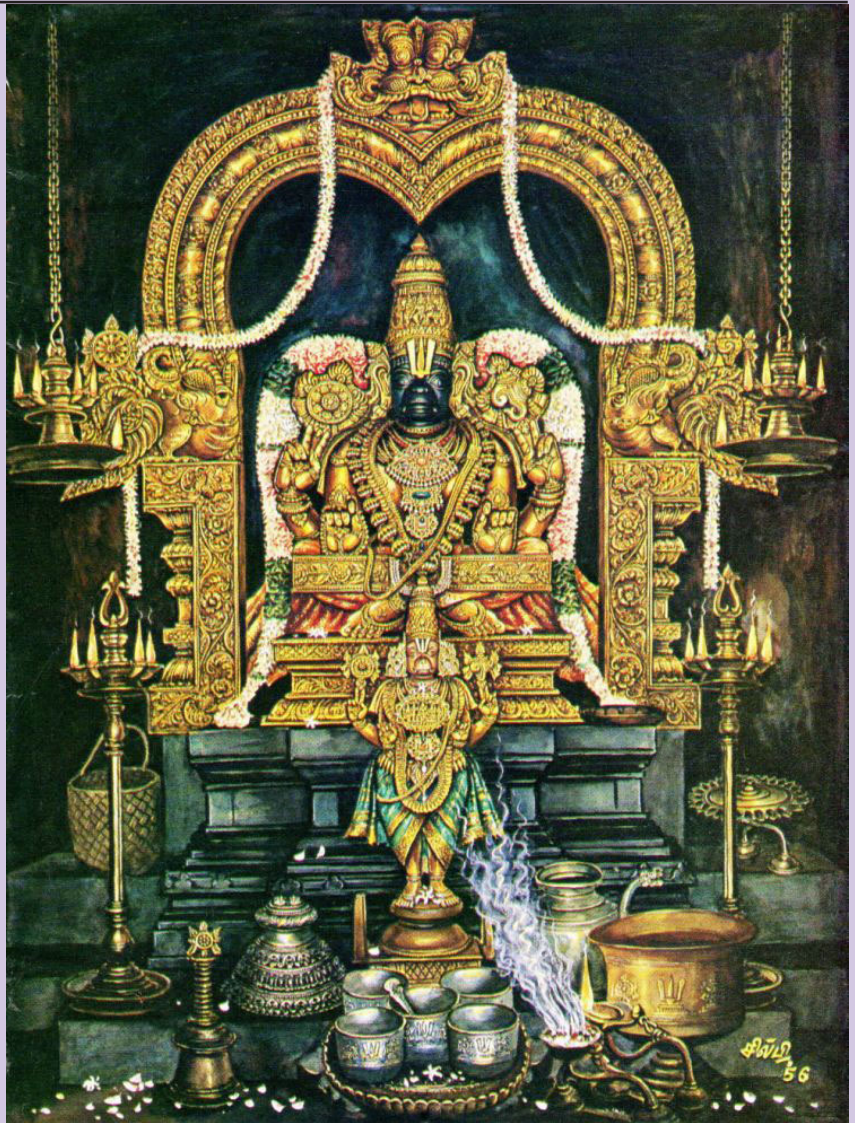
Kaushika slowly nodded his head and looked at the sage, “Yes sir! I have a favour to ask of you.”

Sage Vashishta remained silent and looked at the king, waiting for him to continue. The king said, “Sir! I am a king and I have an army which travels with me. My kingdom has many citizens whom I love like my own children.”

Sage Vashishta allowed the king to continue.

“Sir! I think it would be better if I had Nandini with me! You have only a hermitage here and do not need much, but I can use her well in my kingdom.”

Sage Vashishta spoke sternly, trying not to show his anger, “You just look at the cow as a source of food. Do you know what she means to me and to my family members? She is part of my family’s I cannot just hand her over to you. She will not be pleased.”



Yoga Anjeneya of the temple

Kaushika could not understand the sage’s obstinacy. He tried to convince the sage again, “Please sir! Think how many people would benefit from this.”

Vashishta shook his head, ‘No Your Majesty! I cannot give you Nandini. Please understand.”

Kaushika impatiently spoke, “Name your price! I am a king. I can give you whatever you want for the cow.”

Vashishta laughed, “Your Majesty! You cannot expect me to take your offer seriously. What riches can you offer me in return for a cow which already offers me everything?” He spoke to the king contemptuously.

Kaushika angrily looked at the sage and said, “If you will not give the cow to me, I will take it anyway. I do not need your permission!”

Sage Vashishta said quietly, “Do whatever you want, Kaushika! I will not give you this cow!” ☸

(To be continued)

Photo courtesy: Kesavabhasyam

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Sunday, August 22 - 2021



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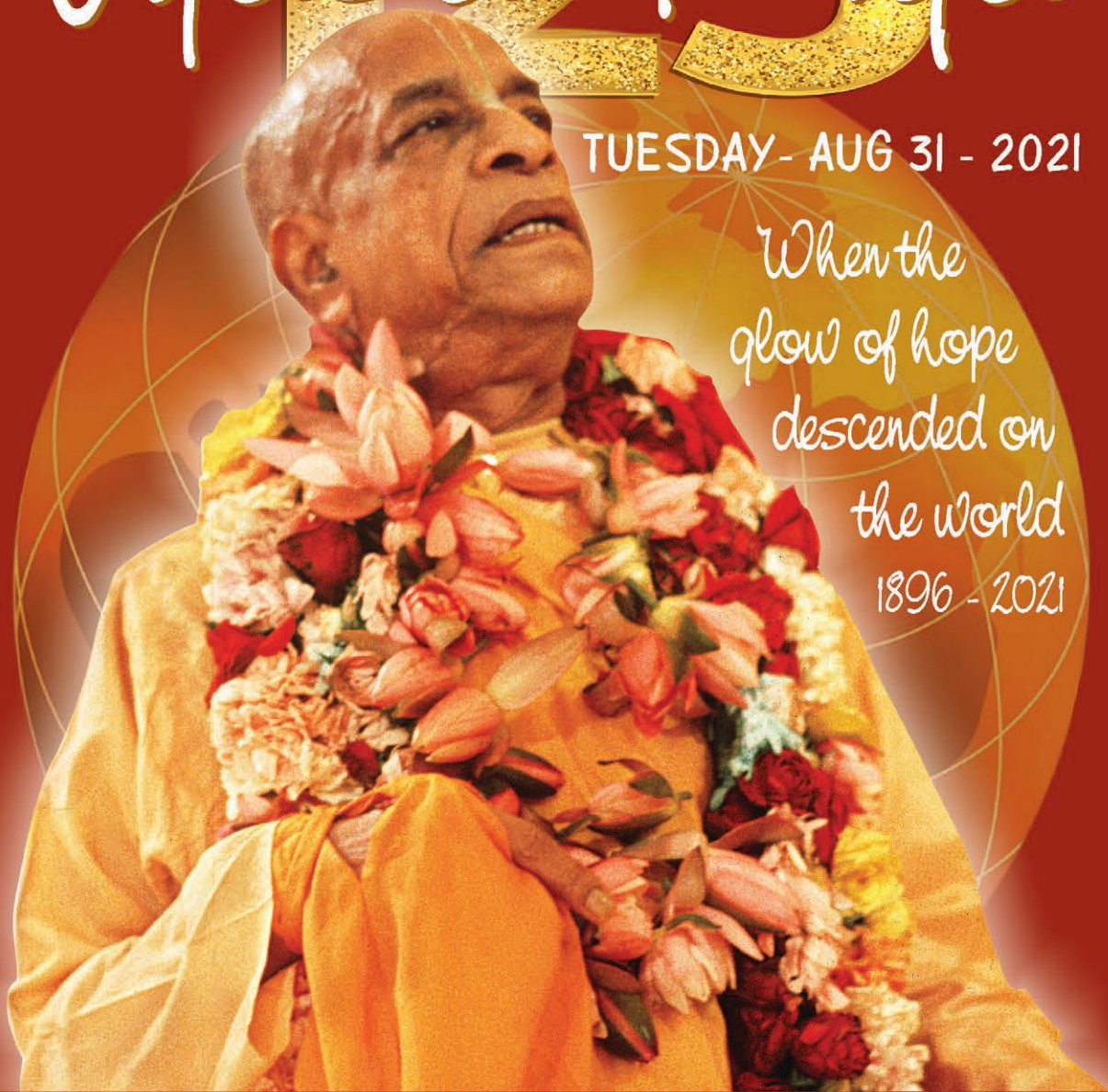
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