

# Secrets of the Undiscovered Self

Who Are We?  
Why Are We Here?

His Divine Grace  
Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja

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# Dedication

I beg the mercy of my Gurudeva, *nitya-līlā praviṣṭa om viṣṇupāda* Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja. I offer thousands of humble obeisances unto his lotus feet, and the same humble obeisances unto the lotus feet of my *sikṣa-guru, nityalīlā praviṣṭa om viṣṇupāda* Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Mahārāja.

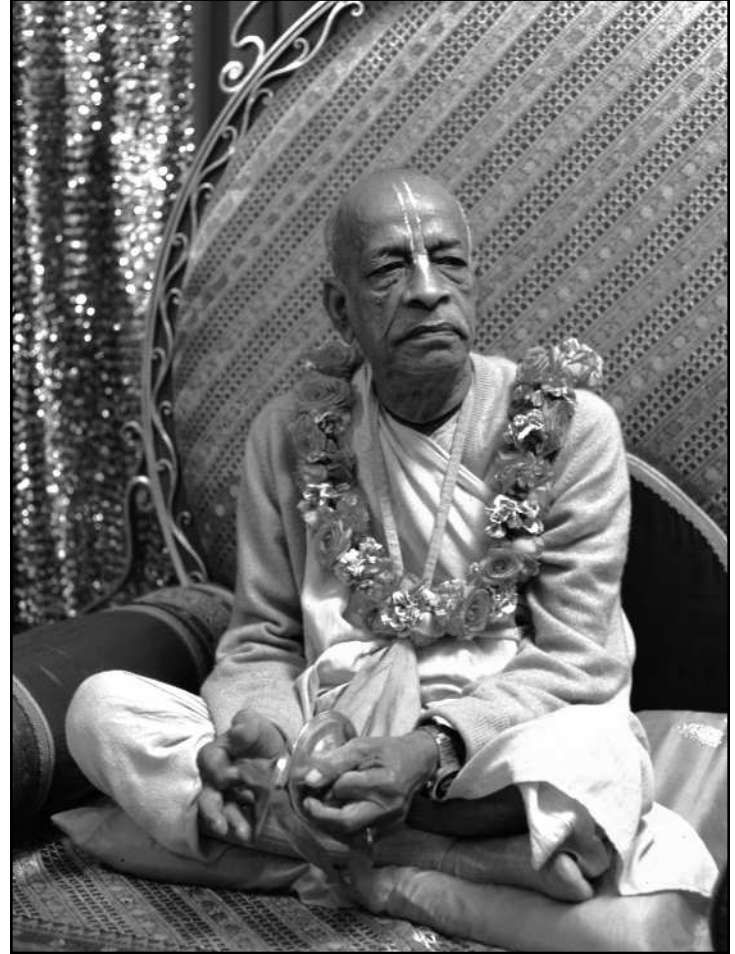
In the present day, it was my *sikṣa-guru* who unlocked the treasure of Vedic wisdom for the entire world. The key to the treasure is in his hands and in my Gurudeva's hands. They have given me their key, and they have ordered me to share that treasure with you all.

Many participated in completing the publication of this booklet in the role of editors, editorial advisors, designers, artists, typists, transcribers, proofreaders and technical assistants. They include: Śrīpāda Bhaktivedānta Mādhava Mahārāja, Śrīpāda Bhaktivedānta Vaikhanas Mahārāja, Atula-kṣṇa dāsa, Ānitā dāsī, Bhūdhara dāsa, Brajanātha dāsa, Dhanañjaya dāsa, Giridhārī dāsa, Gaurāṅgi dāsī, Gurūtama dāsa, Jaya-gopāla dāsa, Mahaprābhu dāsa, Nanda-kīśora dāsa, Nandimukhi dāsī, Nāndinī dāsī, Premavatī dāsī, Rādhā-kānta dāsa, Śānti dāsī, Sudarśana dāsa, Sundara-gopāla dāsa, Śyāmarāṇī dāsī, Vaijayantī-mālā dāsī, Vāsantī dāsī and Viśvambhara dāsa.

Special thanks to all the book distributors,  
for helping to bring this publication to our respected readers.



His Divine Grace  
Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja



His Divine Grace  
Śrīla A.C. Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Prabhupāda

## Contents

Preface . . . . . i . . . . .

We Are Pure Spirit Souls . . . . . 1 . . . . .

We Are Not These Bodies . . . . . 2 . . . . .

A King in Illusion . . . . . 3 . . . . .

We Are Part and Parcel of the Supreme Self . . . . . 8 . . . . .

The Nature of the Supreme Self . . . . . 10 . . . . .

The Process of Self-Realization . . . . . 14 . . . . .

The Bona Fide Guide . . . . . 16 . . . . .

Worldwide Centers & Contacts . . . . . 22 . . . . .

## Preface

The purpose of this booklet is to introduce the reader to the beauty and wonder of his or her own natural being. Sages say that our souls are each more brilliant and powerful than thousands of suns, and that we come to experience this by hearing from those who are self-realized. *Secrets of the Undiscovered Self* was kindly presented in the form of a discourse by such a self-realized personality, Śrīla Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja, a pre-eminent saint and one of the foremost teachers of divine wisdom in the present day. This discourse was given in March 2002, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

The preface of this booklet contains the words of another transcendental personality, Śrīla A.C. Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Prabhupāda, who is intimately related with the author as an instructing guru and a dear friend. Śrīla Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja regards Śrīla Prabhupāda as a main inspiration for his regularly traveling the surface of the globe and teaching the secrets of the undiscovered self.

Herein, Śrīla Prabhupāda gives an analogy of a bird in a cage, comparing the bird to the soul and the cage to the body that covers it. He writes, “We are neglecting our real comfort and identifying the material cage with ourselves. We have concentrated all our energies for the meaningless upkeep of the material cage for its own sake, completely neglecting the captive soul within. The cage is meant for the undoing of the bird; the bird is not meant for the welfare of the cage. Let us, therefore, deeply ponder this. All our activities are now turned toward the upkeep of the cage, and the most we do is try to give some food to the mind by art and literature. But we do not know that this mind is also material in a more subtle form.”

“The self is beyond the gross body and subtle mind. He is the potent active principle of the body and mind. Without knowing the need of the dormant soul, one cannot be happy simply with emolument of the body and mind. The body and the mind are

but superfluous outer coverings of the spirit soul. The spirit soul's needs must be fulfilled. Simply by cleaning the cage of the bird, one does not satisfy the bird. One must actually know the needs of the bird himself.

“The need of the spirit soul is that he wants to get out of the limited sphere of material bondage and fulfill his desire for complete freedom. He wants to get out of the covered walls of the greater universe. He wants to see the free light and the spirit. That complete freedom is achieved when he meets the complete spirit, the Personality of Godhead.”

Speaking in a simple yet profound manner, Śrīla Prabhupāda elaborates on the difference between the body and the soul: “If we meditate upon this body and study whether or not the body is our true identity, we will come to the conclusion that we are the knower of the body – not the body. The body is simply the field of our activities. We are no more the body than the cultivator of a field is the field.

“This good intelligence applies even in a child. You may show a child his finger and inquire, ‘What is this?’ The child will reply, ‘It is my finger.’ The child will never say, ‘I finger.’ Every part of his body is ‘mine’ – my body, my head, my leg. But where is the ‘I’? That should be the inquiry.”

The histories in this booklet actually took place. They have been taken by Śrīla Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja from the parts of the Vedas called the Purāṇas and Upaniṣads. The names of all the personalities herein are in the ancient Sanskrit language. Following the tradition of our spiritual preceptors, we use standard diacritical markings to indicate the pronunciation of Sanskrit words. Pronounce *ā* like **a** in **father**, *ī* like **ea** in **neat**, *ū* like **oo** in **root**, *ṛ* like **ri** in **rip**, *m̄* and *n̄* like **ng** in **hung**, *ś* and *ṣ* like **sh** in **shy**, and *c* like **ch** in **chap**.

Śyāmarāṇī dāsī, on the appearance day of Lord Caitanya  
March 6, 2004

# Secrets of the Undiscovered Self

## We Are Pure Spirit Souls

Long ago there lived a powerful sage named Aṣṭāvakra Ṛṣi. The sage was curved in eight parts of his body, and when he walked his movements were quite peculiar and awkward. He was also very ugly, and ordinary people often laughed at the sight of him. Although externally he was awkward and crooked, internally his heart was pure because he had realized his eternal transcendental identity. He knew and realized the difference between the body and the soul.

Once, Aṣṭāvakra Ṛṣi was invited by the great king Mahārāja Janaka to attend an assembly of saintly persons. As he entered the assembly, everyone present began to laugh at him. Hearing them, Aṣṭāvakra Ṛṣi also began to laugh. The members of the assembly were surprised and said to each other, “We are laughing at him, but he is laughing even more loudly than us. Why is this?”

Janaka Mahārāja rose from his throne and asked Aṣṭāvakra Ṛṣi, “Why are you laughing so loudly?”

The sage replied, “I thought I was coming to join an assembly of saints and sages, but instead I have stumbled into a convention of shoemakers. A shoemaker's interest is in leather and skin, and I see that all of you are just looking at my skin. Your interest is in seeing if someone is beautiful or ugly, healthy or disabled, young or old. Your minds are absorbed in these temporary things. You are not seeing my soul as saintly persons

would. It is simply illusion to place importance on the external, temporary body while being oblivious to the eternal soul dwelling within.”

Janaka Mahārāja’s heart was deeply penetrated by Aṣṭāvakra Ṛṣi’s words. He realized that the sage was a liberated soul, and fit to sit on the throne. He very lovingly placed him on his own throne, bowed down to him, and accepted him as his instructing spiritual master.

### We Are Not These Bodies

The body is not the self. What is this material body? It is a bag of bones, blood, urine and many other unclean substances. The mind is also part of the material body and is different from the soul. It experiences temporary mundane emotions as real, thus causing much anguish and only a little pleasure. We are individual souls, not these bodies or minds.

These bodies are mortal; all the doctors and scientists of this world cannot prevent old age. One day, twenty, thirty or fifty years from now, we will become old. Our beauty and power will disappear; we won’t be able to walk without the help of a cane, and after some time we will die. At that time we will have to give up everything we have accumulated during this lifetime. Nothing in this world will be able to save us from continued suffering – only God can save us in all respects. If we realize this and engage in His loving service, we will become happy.

As spiritual souls we are all parts and parcels of the same God, the Supreme Lord. Souls in all species of life, from the lowest, such as plants and animals, to the highest, such as humans and demigods, are His parts and parcels. The ancient scriptures of India, the Vedas, say, “God is one. Everything in this world is merely an expansion of His power, or energy.” Atheists, who

don’t believe in God, believe in the world of nature. They believe that everything comes from nature and returns to nature. The world of nature in which they have placed their faith, however, is simply a part of the energy of that Supreme Lord.

We are like the Supreme in that we have been created in His image, but unfortunately we have turned away from Him and have forgotten who we are. We think that these material bodies are our real selves. We spend our days collecting money and securing positions, thinking that these things will make us happy – but this conception is totally wrong.

### A King in Illusion

*[The history of Aṣṭāvakra Ṛṣi illustrates that we are not these mortal bodies. The following history describes how another great sage, Viśvāmītra Muni, helped another righteous king to realize and correct his misconception regarding his own identity. In days of yore, kings greatly honored holy men, and therefore Viśvāmītra was able to help him.]*

In ancient India there lived a great and very powerful emperor named Hariścandra. His wife’s name was Śaibya and his beautiful young son was Rohitasva. Hariścandra was extremely truthful; he never told a lie or tolerated any untruth, and he was renowned throughout the world for his generosity to all creatures. Although he possessed such qualities, an exalted sage named Viśvāmītra was concerned for his welfare.

Viśvāmītra thought, “The truth that Hariścandra follows is merely worldly truth, and worldly truth has no real value. Except for devotees of the Lord, no one in this world can speak the actual truth. If I ask him, ‘What is your name?’, he will say, ‘My name is Hariścandra.’ ‘Who are you?’ ‘I am the Emperor.’

‘Who is he?’ ‘He is my son.’ ‘Who is she?’ ‘She is my wife.’ But in reality there is only one truth: We are not mortal bodies. We are spirit souls, servants of the Supreme Truth.”

Viśvāmitra Muni’s concern grew. He was convinced that King Hariścandra’s happiness and eternal well-being would lie only in a proper spiritual understanding, and he was convinced that his misfortune would lie in his lack of such understanding.

One night, by his mystic power, he appeared to the king – as if by entering his dream – and he told him, “You are an excellent king. You are very generous, a truthful speaker and you worship God. Because you are so pious I am confident that you will give me whatever I ask you for. I want something from you.”

Hariścandra awoke from his sleep and replied, “Certainly, I will donate anything you ask for.”

Viśvāmitra voiced his request, “I want your entire kingdom.”

Hariścandra replied, “Of course, I will give it to you.”

Viśvāmitra at once left, the king fell back asleep, and by the next morning he forgot what had happened. Later that morning, Viśvāmitra again approached him. He asked, “Do you remember any dream you had last night?” “Yes, I remember.” “You gave me your entire kingdom.” “I may have given it, but it was in a dream.” “No, it was not a dream. I really came to you last night.”

Aware that by divine power great sages can go practically anywhere and perform wondrous activities that would appear to ordinary people as magic, the king believed his words.

Viśvāmitra continued, “So now, in your fully wakened state, you should say, ‘I vow to give you my kingdom.’”

Hariścandra said, “Yes, I declare that the kingdom is yours.”

According to ancient Indian culture, if someone gives in charity, he gives some coins in addition to his gift. Viśvāmitra therefore asked Hariścandra to give him some additional money.

“Without a donation of coins,” Viśvāmitra said, “no vow is complete. Something has to be given – even if it is only one percent of the value of your gift.”

“How much would you like?” Hariścandra asked.

Viśvāmitra replied, “Ten thousand gold coins.”

Hariścandra immediately ordered his treasurer, “Give the sage ten thousand gold coins.”

Viśvāmitra smiled and said, “Liar, it seems that you are going back on your word. You gave me your entire kingdom. Since your treasury is now also mine, how can you instruct the treasurer to give me gold? You will have to think of another way to give me this donation.”

Hariścandra agreed, and said that he would take a loan from someone in the kingdom. But Viśvāmitra said, “The citizens are also mine. You may not take a loan from any of them.”

The king thought, “All I have left are my wife, my son and myself – everything else is gone.” He told the sage, “I will sell myself, my wife and my son, and then I will pay you.”

Viśvāmitra replied, “You cannot sell yourself within my kingdom. You can do so only outside.”

Since the kingdom of Hariścandra encompassed the entire Earth, he was now quite perplexed as to what to do. Viśvāmitra then said, “Although Kāśī is within my kingdom, it is not considered part of this world. It is the abode of the demigod Lord Śiva. If you go there you will be outside my kingdom. You can go there to sell yourself, but do not forget to pay me.”

Hariścandra, his wife and his son had to go to Kāśī by foot, because his chariots and horses now belonged to Viśvāmitra. After traveling for many days they finally arrived in Kāśī and Hariścandra began calling out to the residents, to see who would purchase him. At that time a lowly person, the guard of a

crematorium, told him that he would purchase him if he would perform duties at the cremation grounds. No one else had offered to purchase him, so Hariścandra accepted and was paid five thousand gold coins. To make up the other five thousand gold coins, he sold his wife and child to a very cruel person of the priestly caste and then he paid Viśvāmitra.

When someone sells a cow, he is no longer the owner of that cow. Similarly, Hariścandra was not the king now, nor was he the husband of his wife or the father of his child. However, he still somewhat identified himself as such. He thought, “I was a king. I am the husband of Śaibya and the father of Rohitasva.”

After some time, by the mystic power of Viśvāmitra, a snake bit Hariścandra’s son and killed him. It was late at night during the rainy season and bitter winds now blew along with a heavy downpour of rain. The cruel owner of Śaibya told her, “Make your own independent arrangements to cremate your child. I have already purchased you and I will not spend any more coins to cremate your son. Take this dead body away from here.”

So, on that dark night, the weeping Śaibya took her son’s body in her arms and carried him to the cremation grounds on the bank of the Ganges, the same cremation grounds where her husband stood guard. Hariścandra did not recognize her and, although she was poor and destitute, he told her, “You cannot cremate this child without paying the fee.” She had no money with which to pay. All she had in the world was the dead body of her son wrapped in her veil.

Just then a lightening bolt flashed, and Hariścandra saw that it was his own wife standing before him. He never expected to see his son there – dead – nor did he expect to see his wife in her distressed and worn condition. His heart broke and he

began to weep, crying out, “Oh God, what has happened?”

Now he was in a dilemma. He wept – but he tried to be true to his new identity as a guard at the cremation grounds. Being very strict in what he considered his sense of duty, he told Śaibya, “Still you should pay me. I am the watchman of this crematorium.”

“I have nothing to give,” she replied, “except half of my veil.”

As Śaibya began to tear that veil, Viśvāmitra, along with Lord Nārāyaṇa (one of the incarnations of the Supreme Personality of Godhead), and demigods such as Yamarāja (the lord of death) and Lord Brahmā (the creator of the universe and the head of the demigods) immediately appeared on the scene, calling out, “Rohitasva will be king!”

Viśvāmitra placed his hand on the dead body of the son and said, “Rise quickly, my child!” Within a moment the boy stood up, his eyes gazing toward the sky.

Viśvāmitra told Hariścandra, “I took everything away from you and now I am returning it. The kingdom is again yours. With your new realizations, you are now qualified to leave your worldly responsibilities and enter the forest to meditate on God.

“In this world no one can speak the truth, in the real sense. You are not Hariścandra. This is the name of your physical body. And what is this body made of? It is a combination of blood, flesh, urine and stool. When you think, ‘I am a father, husband, king and so forth,’ how is it the truth? You, the soul within the body, are the eternal servant of God. You are part and parcel of Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Lord. You are not of this world. Try to serve God and chant His holy name.”

King Hariścandra had previously believed in some conception of the Supreme and had dutifully worshipped Him, but his heart

was not devoted nor was he surrendered to Him. He was devoted to the false truths of this world. Therefore, even in his palace he could never experience any happiness in truth. By the mercy of Viśvāmitra Muni he achieved the full-fledged freedom of his transcendental nature, the freedom for which every living being is anxious. Moreover, an incarnation of the Supreme Lord, Śrī Rāma, later appeared in his dynasty.

What would have taken many lives of endeavor to achieve, he achieved in only a few moments by the arrangement of the powerful sage. And, by that same arrangement, others may learn from hearing this history from the Vedas.

### We Are Part and Parcel of the Supreme Self

The Vedas instruct us, “Don’t live in darkness; move toward the light.” “Light” refers to knowledge of our true spiritual form, of the Supreme Lord of whom we are minute parts and parcels, and of the eternal relationship of loving service we have with Him. That Supreme Lord is known in the Vedas as Lord Kṛṣṇa, which means the all-attractive reservoir of complete pleasure, knowledge and eternal existence. He has many manifestations and they are all non-different from Him. He is the supreme person we generally call God, Allah or Jehovah. To serve Him in our constitutional or spiritual form is light, and this service brings full and eternal happiness.

“Darkness” refers to the state of spiritual ignorance. To be in darkness or ignorance means to be attached to objects related to this body and to have a sense of possessiveness toward the things of this world. Everyone in this world wants to be completely happy and no one wants to suffer. We can see, however, that despite people’s endeavors to attain happiness

since time immemorial, they have not been truly successful. Medicines, trains, airplanes and now computers have been invented with the intention of creating convenience and happiness, and new forms of entertainment have been designed for this purpose. But has all this given anyone lasting inner happiness? It is especially thought that accumulating wealth can buy happiness, but who has ever become permanently happy by becoming wealthy?

There is, however, a transcendental science, a spiritual scientific process that leads one to eternal happiness and puts an end to one’s cycle of birth and death. That science is called *bhakti-yoga*, or pure devotion to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Performance of *bhakti-yoga* does not require money, nor does it require us to expend much energy, but by practicing it we attain everlasting happiness. Just over five hundred years ago, the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa descended to this world in the form of His own devotee, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and He demonstrated the process of performing pure devotion to God. By that process one realizes his own self as part and parcel of God. He experiences love and affection for all living beings, knowing they are part and parcel of the same God, and he naturally attains true inner happiness.

In this world it is absurd to think that one can have love and affection for all living entities. If you get too close to a ferocious tiger it will attack you, and a poisonous snake may bite you. If you really want to love all beings, first love the Supreme Lord. That love will automatically be distributed to all beings and in this way everyone can be happy. This is true love and affection. In that realm of love even tigers and bears can be calmed and quieted. Great sages of the past who resided in dense forests were never attacked by tigers or other wild beasts. If we can

attain that love for the Supreme, we can truly love all others.

### The Nature of the Supreme Self

*[In order to be attracted to love that Supreme Being, we first need to know who He is, what His nature is, and what His attractive qualities are.]*

One who can create entire universes cannot be formless or without attributes. He must have all varieties of power and opulence. All the forms we see in this world have come from Him, so how can He Himself be formless? The Bible says that God has created man in His own image, and this is also confirmed in the Vedas.

He is ever-existing, and in the Vedas He is called Brahman (which refers to the impersonal effulgence of His body), Paramātmā (His manifestation as the Supersoul in the heart of all beings) and Bhagavān (the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who embodies all opulence and powers). Of these three, only Bhagavān is complete. Brahman and Paramātmā are His partial expansions. Everything is present in Bhagavān.

He is so large that complete universes are contained within Him. Simultaneously, He is so minute that He resides in each and every atom – in every atom of air, in every atom of fire and in every atom of water. He is everywhere and He can hear everything.

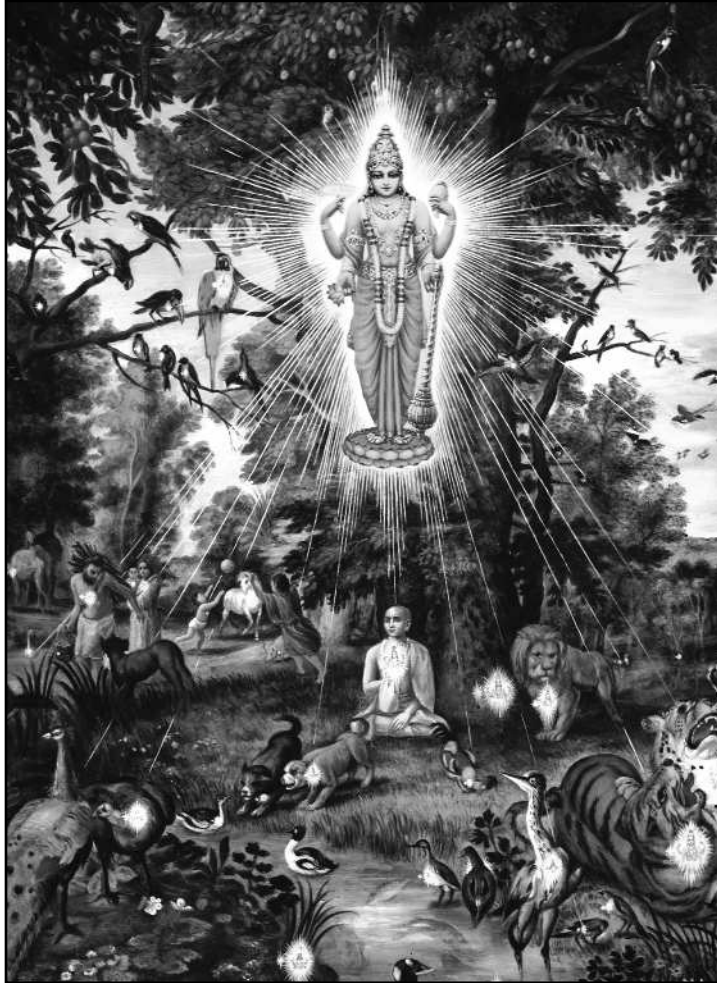
The Supreme Personality of Godhead is one without a second. He is the same God for the Christians, for the Muslims, for the Hindus and for all others. There are not different Gods. He is the same God, the same Allah, the same Christ. Just as there is one sun and one moon for the entire world, there is one God for all people. How can there be more than one God? There is only one God, but He appears differently according to

individual vision.

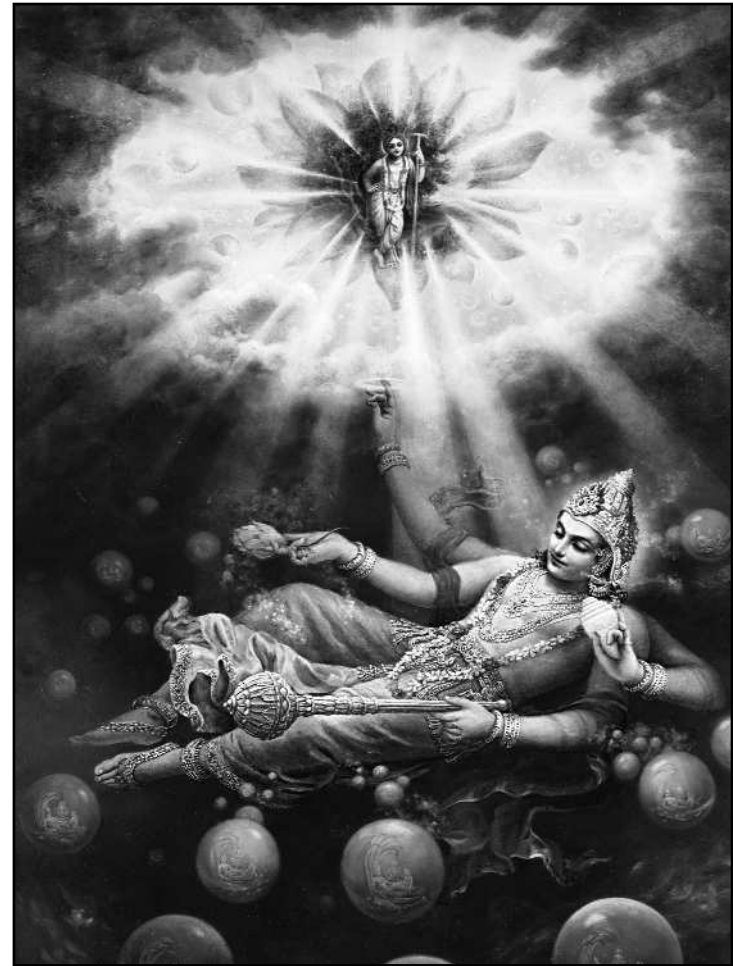
For fifteen days the moon appears to gradually increase in size until it becomes full. Its size then begins to decrease until it becomes a new moon on the last day of the lunar month. In this way it appears that there are fifteen different moons. These “moons” are not different from each other; only their names and appearances differ: full moon, new moon, quarter moon and so on. Similarly, there is only one God, but people have, in ignorance, separated themselves from each other and from Him, due to their different languages and conceptions of Him.

All forms and incarnations of God are His manifestations and are non-different from Him. Some, being more complete, are more powerful; and some are less powerful – just as the full moon is always the same moon, perceived as full, new, quarter, etc. In reality the moon is always full, but we see it to be waxing or waning. In the same way Lord Kṛṣṇa is one without a second, and He has innumerable manifestations who are all non-different from Him. He sometimes manifests in this world personally, and sometimes He sends His associates here to disseminate pure knowledge. In this world all souls are His eternal servants, but we have forgotten Him since the beginning of creation. He sometimes descends, therefore, and performs very sweet and powerful pastimes to attract us and engage us in His service.

No one doubts the existence of the sun, so why should one doubt the existence of the creator of the sun or thousands of suns? That personality can create millions upon millions of worlds in a moment, and He can also destroy them. He comes to this world only to save us from suffering, by establishing a relationship with us and by engaging us in His loving service.



“One who sees the Supersoul accompanying the individual soul in all bodies, and who understands that neither the soul nor the Supersoul within the destructible body is ever destroyed, actually sees.” (Spoken by Lord Kṛṣṇa in the *Bhagavad-gītā*.)



“Unlimited universes pass through the pores of the Lord’s body, just as particles of dust pass through the openings of a screened window.” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*)

There is no other way to become happy in this or any other world. There is only one God, and ignorance of our eternal, individual relationship with Him is the only cause of our unhappiness.

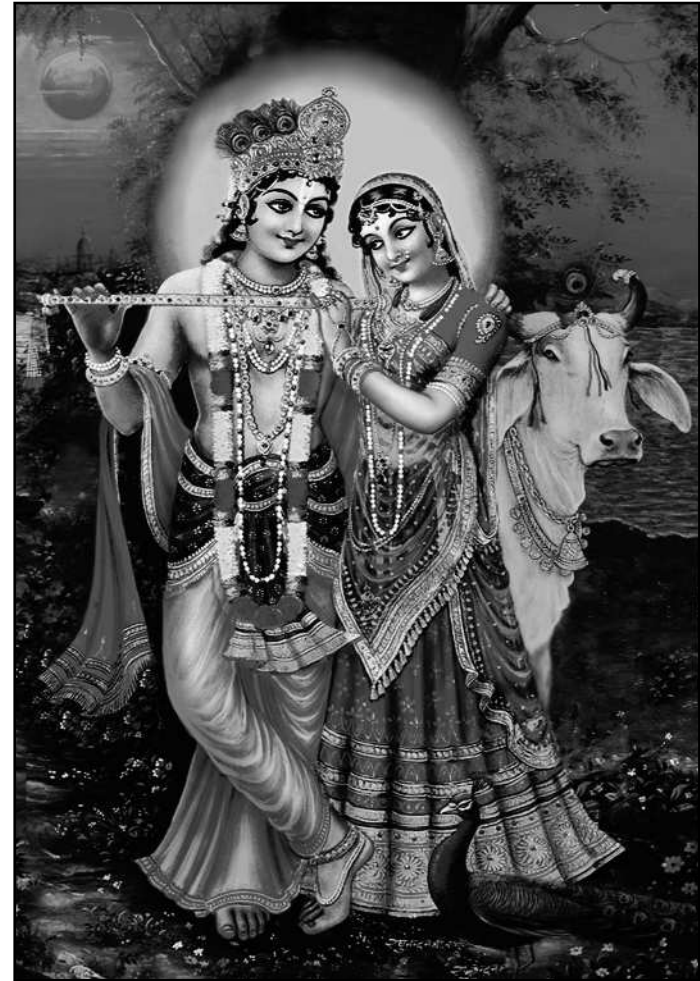
We need not fear serving Him, thinking it to be like serving someone of this world where the master gains and the servant loses. It is not like that in the realm of spiritual love. One receives great happiness in serving Him, a very relishable love and affection that is even more than one receives by serving one's wife, husband, children, father and so on. There are oceans of love and affection in Kṛṣṇa's transcendental realm. Have very firm faith in this. Do not doubt that we are spirit souls, parts and parcels of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and that we are His eternal servants.

### The Process of Self-Realization

In the previous age of Satya-yuga, the Age of Goodness, mankind lived pious, peaceful and pure lives of thousands of years. At that time, great sages used to see Him by meditating upon Him. In this present age it is not possible to meditate so deeply, because our minds are unsteady. Such meditation can be achieved, however, by chanting His name, and by this process we can realize His mercy and actually see Him. The Vedic literatures recommend that to attain pure love of God in this current age, one chant:

In this age of quarrel and hypocrisy the only process to

Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa  
Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare  
Hare Rāma Hare Rāma  
Rāma Rāma Hare Hare



Lord Kṛṣṇa along with His eternal supreme pleasure-potency (Hare), Śrī Rādhā. He is also known as Rāma, which means the unending limit of all happiness.

achieve God-realization and self-realization is to chant the holy names of the Lord, and this is easy to do. These names may be chanted by anyone of any language – whether one is English, Malaysian, Indian, Spanish or Chinese. People of all faiths call out to that one God, who is very beautiful, charming, powerful and merciful. He can come and play with you in any relationship – as a master, friend, son or beloved.

For the chanting of these names to be truly effective, however, they should be chanted according to an authentic process, given by the Supreme Lord Himself. Otherwise, such chanting will not produce the desired result. Knowledge of this transcendental process and its goal has descended through a line of disciplic succession of pure spiritual masters, beginning from the Supreme Lord Himself. Those who have heard directly from Him appear in that succession of perfect masters, and a disciple of such a spiritual master can chant successfully.

### The Bona Fide Guide

The bona fide spiritual master, or *guru*, tells us, “Give me your ears. I do not want all of your senses – only your ears.” Among all the senses, only the ears can hear sound vibration, and thus transcendental words. The *guru* coming in disciplic succession helps us surrender to God by engaging our function of hearing. Through this vibration of sound, his transcendental words enter the heart of the disciple and reveal Kṛṣṇa, God Himself, who is hidden in everyone’s heart. No sense but the ears can perceive this transcendental sound.

There are two kinds of sound vibration. One is transcendental and is beyond this material world. It comes from the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself via the disciplic succession. The other is ordinary material sound vibration, which comes

from the vibration of the material tongue. One who has not extensively practiced *bhakti-yoga* and who is not perfect may give Kṛṣṇa’s holy name and various spiritual *mantras* to others, but the sound vibrations spoken by him will have no spiritual effect. Although such sounds are by nature powerful and transcendental, they must be imbued with realization. Otherwise, they will manifest as worldly, mundane words. If a *guru* is not sufficiently expert in chanting transcendental sound and has no realization of its nature, that sound vibration will not produce any real fruit in the heart of the person who receives it from him. Self-realized souls perfectly utter that transcendental sound, and one should receive it from them.

The definition of *bhakti*, pure devotion, is given in the Vedic scriptures as follows: “Pure devotional service is the cultivation of activities that are meant exclusively for the pleasure of Lord Kṛṣṇa, or in other words, the uninterrupted flow of service to Kṛṣṇa, performed through all endeavors of the body, mind and speech, and through the expression of various spiritual sentiments. It is not covered by knowledge aimed at impersonal liberation or by reward-seeking activity, and it is devoid of all desires other than the aspiration to bring happiness to Kṛṣṇa.” (*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.1.11)

The same Vedic scriptures contain many verses that explain the quality of a person who, because of his own pure devotional service, can actually help us. One such verse is as follows: “Any person who seriously desires real happiness must seek a bona fide spiritual master and take shelter of him by initiation. The qualification of the bona fide *guru* is that, having left aside all material desires, he has realized the conclusions of the scriptures by deliberation and is able to convince others of the Supreme



Śrī Nārada Muni carries a stringed instrument called a vina. He is the great sage who possesses eternal life, unlimited knowledge, and a bliss that is unfathomable. Here he is accompanied by his associate, Parvata Muni.

Godhead.” (*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.2.97)

The following history illustrates how the heinous criminal Vālmīki became a great devotee by associating with a self-realized spiritual master who had the above-mentioned qualities. Vālmīki, though born into the priestly caste, associated with bad men. As a result he became a ferocious criminal, even murdering many sages. He once approached the exalted sage Nārada Muni to kill him, but as he moved toward him Nārada raised his hand and said, “Stop!” The astonished Vālmīki was forced to freeze his movements and thus a mood of submission to Nārada entered his heart. Nārada then revealed to him the reactions that would come to him as a result of his abominable sins. Vālmīki took shelter of Nārada and inquired from him how to become free from those reactions.

Nārada said, “Sit down here and chant ‘Rāma Rāma Rāma Rāma Rāma.’ (Rāma is the name of one of Kṛṣṇa’s incarnations.) Do this and nothing else.” Vālmīki tried, but the reactions to his sinful activities had fructified to the point that he was unable to chant that divine name. Nārada cleverly told him, “If you cannot chant Rāma, you can chant *māra*.”

*Māra* (which in the Sanskrit language means “death”) has the same syllables as Rāma said backwards. When *māra māra* is chanted repeatedly, it automatically becomes “Rāma Rāma.” Having given Vālmīki these instructions, Nārada left that place.

Vālmīki was easily able to chant *māra māra*, and continued chanting for thousands of years while waiting for his *guru*’s return. During that time he did not eat or even pass stool and urine. Ants ate his flesh, blood and other bodily substances, gradually enclosing him in an anthill. In this way his own body vanished, and it now appeared that he had a body made of

earth. In due course of time, Brahmā, the chief demigod and original *guru* of the disciplic succession of *gurus*, came to that place. Upon seeing the condition of Vālmiki's body, Lord Brahmā sprinkled water upon him from his sacred water pot while uttering *mantras*, and Vālmiki's body then became that of a beautiful youth. Brahmā told him, "Now you have perfected the chanting of your *mantra*; you have realized the Supreme Lord."

*[Later on, in the course of his meditation, the great sage Vālmiki composed the famous Rāmāyaṇa, the authorized history of Lord Rāma, whose name he was chanting. Written hundreds of thousands of years ago, the Rāmāyaṇa is counted as one of the original Vedas and is considered the most famous spiritual epic in India. Vālmiki compiled it just before Lord Rāma descended to this world. -ed]*

In this day and age it is not possible for us to perform such austerity. We find it difficult to refrain from eating, drinking or sleeping for just one day, what to speak of several years, and we cannot be fully absorbed in meditation for twelve hours, six hours or even one hour. But there is a process that we can easily follow, and this process is the essence of all Vedic scriptures. Take the seed of the perfect transcendental name of Kṛṣṇa by accepting initiation from a bona fide *guru*. Chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* and you will very easily find happiness.

Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa  
Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare  
Hare Rāma Hare Rāma  
Rāma Rāma Hare Hare



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**AMERICA:** • California – Los Angeles: Śrī Rādhā-Govinda Gauḍīya Maṭha, 301 Rose Ave., Venice, CA 90291 Tel: (001) 310-450 5371 e-mail: [purebhakti@hotmail.com](mailto:purebhakti@hotmail.com) – Badger: Nanda Gopal dāsa Tel: (001) 559-337 2448 e-mail: [nandagopal@purebhakti.com](mailto:nandagopal@purebhakti.com) – San Jose: Subala Sakhā dāsa, 5212 Union Ave., San Jose, 95124 Tel: (001) 408-377 1632 e-mail: [bhatium1@yahoo.com](mailto:bhatium1@yahoo.com) • Florida – Alachua: Iśa dāsa Tel: (001) 386-462 9029 e-mail: [isadasa@hotmail.com](mailto:isadasa@hotmail.com) – Miami: Institute of Vaisṇavism, 934 N. University Drive #102 Tel: (001) 754-245 2345 / Sunanda dāsa Tel: (001) 954-907 2884, (001) 954-344 5404 e-mail: [sushelle@aol.com](mailto:sushelle@aol.com) – Orlando: Latika dāsi Tel: (001) 407-366 8582 e-mail: [latikal08@yahoo.com](mailto:latikal08@yahoo.com) • Hawaii – Hilo: Gopa-vṛndapāla dāsa Tel: (001)808-9357247 – Maui: Chiranjiva dāsa and Shamapriya dāsi, 1140 Freitas place, Makawao, Maui Hi 96768 Tel: (001) 808-573 6968 e-mail: [shamapriya108@yahoo.com](mailto:shamapriya108@yahoo.com) • Texas – Houston: IGVS, Kṛṣṇa dāsa, 16119 Abergreen Trail, Houston, TX 77095 Tel: (001) 281-550 2940 e-mail: [kris4basics@hotmail.com](mailto:kris4basics@hotmail.com) • New Jersey: Vinay Krishna dāsa 491 Vernon Ct., Piscataway Tel: (001) 732-878 9719, (001) 732-878 3840 e-mail: [igvs\\_nj@yahoo.com](mailto:igvs_nj@yahoo.com) • New York: Pūru dāsa e-mail: [unclepuru108@yahoo.com](mailto:unclepuru108@yahoo.com) • Oregon – Eugene: Puspādanta dāsa Tel: (001) 541-461-3169 e-mail: [puspadanta@hotmail.com](mailto:puspadanta@hotmail.com) • Washington, DC: Preaching Center, 6925 Willow Ave. NW, 20012 Tel: (001) 301-864-3354

**AUSTRALIA:** • Cessnock: Yugala Kīśora dāsa, 19 William St. Paxton 2325 N.S.W. Tel: (0061) 02-4998 0067 e-mail: [jugala@iprimus.com.au](mailto:jugala@iprimus.com.au) • Murwillumbah: Śrī Girirāja-Govardhana Gauḍīya Maṭha, 33 Nullum Street, N.S.W. 2484 Tel: (0061) 02-6679 5258 e-mail: [info@giriraja.org.au](mailto:info@giriraja.org.au) Website: [www.giriraja.org.au](http://www.giriraja.org.au) • Perth: Śrī Rādhā-Vinoda-vihāri Gauḍīya Maṭha, 2 Tottenham Street, Chidlow, Western Australia, 6556 Tel/Fax: (0061) 08-9572 3030 e-mail: [banwari-lal@bigpond.com](mailto:banwari-lal@bigpond.com)

**BOLIVA:** • Cochamba: Ranga Puri dāsa, PO Box 2070 Tel: (00591) 4-450 2132, (00591) 4-450 3467 e-mail: [bbr@supernet.com.bo](mailto:bbr@supernet.com.bo), [epicentrohk@yahoo.com](mailto:epicentrohk@yahoo.com)

**BRAZIL:** • Belem: Bhaktivedānta Association, Pass Sao Francisco 152, 07 Conj. Jd. Sideral, Nova Marambaia, Cep: 66.635-560, Nityā dāsa Tel: (0055) 091-8116 0115 e-mail: [nityagopaldasa@yahoo.com.br](mailto:nityagopaldasa@yahoo.com.br) • Boa Vista: Gauḍīya Maṭha, Avenida Bento Brasil, nū 29 Centro, Roraima, Cep: 69.301-050 Tel: (0055) 095-623 0135 • Fortaleza: Rādhā Kānti dāsi e-mail: [bhakti@postoffice5.com](mailto:bhakti@postoffice5.com) • Parana: Vidya Nagar Institute, Av. Coronel Santa Rita, 671- Bairro Tuiuti, Paranaçu Cep: 83203-630 Tel: (0055) 041-3038 4025 e-mail: [govinda@sadhanatimes.com.br](mailto:govinda@sadhanatimes.com.br) Website: [www.sadhanatimes.com.br](http://www.sadhanatimes.com.br) • Sao Paulo: Śrī Gaurāṅga Rādhā-Govinda Gauḍīya Maṭha, Rua Mourato Coelho 981 casa 2 (segundo andar), Villa Madalena Tel: (0055) 5511-3814 9309 / Kuñjabihāri dāsa Tel: (0055) 12-3648 8848 e-mail: [gopi.velas@uol.com.br](mailto:gopi.velas@uol.com.br) • Teresópolis: Subala dāsa Tel: (0055) 021-2644 7253, (0055) 021-2644 6191 Mobile: (0055) 021-9725 5699 e-mail: [subal@gaura.com.br](mailto:subal@gaura.com.br)

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**FIJI ISLANDS:** • Lautoka: Fiji Gauḍīya Maṭha, 63 Vitoga Parade Tel: (00679) 661 633 e-mail: [jagannath@punjas.com.fj](mailto:jagannath@punjas.com.fj)

**FINLAND:** Kumudinī dāsi e-mail: [kumudinidd@yahoo.com](mailto:kumudinidd@yahoo.com)

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**UNITED KINGDOM:** • England – Birmingham: Śrī Gour-Govinda Gauḍīya Maṭha, 176-A Alcester Road, Moseley Village B13 8HJ Tel: (0044) 121-449 2676 e-mail: [gourgovinda@hotmail.com](mailto:gourgovinda@hotmail.com) – London: Gaṅgā-mātā Gauḍīya Maṭha, Kamala dāsi e-mail: [gagamatajis@yahoo.com.uk](mailto:gagamatajis@yahoo.com.uk) • Wales – Oakford: Svānanda-Sukada-kunja Temple, Sa. 470 Rd Llanarth, Ceredigion Tel: (0044) 15-4558 0441

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**Stanley A. Gill**  
#25 - 15030 58th Ave.  
Surrey, B.C. CANADA V3S 9G3  
Attn: Prasasya Prabhu  
Phone: (866) 575-9438  
Email: [stannshel@shaw.ca](mailto:stannshel@shaw.ca)

**Europe-UK (England)**

**Sri Gour Govinda Gaudiya Math**  
Attn: Jiva Pavana Prabhu  
Phone: (44) 153648-1769  
Email: [jivapavana@aol.com](mailto:jivapavana@aol.com)

**Malaysia**

Attn: Vijaya Krsna Prabhu  
012 3854202, 012 3213787, 0123973723  
E-mail: [vjkrnsa@yahoo.com](mailto:vjkrnsa@yahoo.com)

**Philippines**

Quezon City, Metro Manila 1113  
Attn: Krishna Candra Prabhu  
**IGVS Radha Krishna Gopala Mandir**  
96 ROTC Hunters Clusters 23 Tatalon  
Phone: (63) 2783-0267,  
(63) 91873-32659  
E-mail: [krsnacandra@yahoo.com](mailto:krsnacandra@yahoo.com)

**USA**

**Bhaktiprojects, Inc.**  
4589 Pacheco Blvd.  
Martinez, CA 94553  
Attn: Vishwambhara Prabhu  
Te. (800) 681-3040 ext. 108  
E-mail: [orders@bhaktiprojects.org](mailto:orders@bhaktiprojects.org)

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