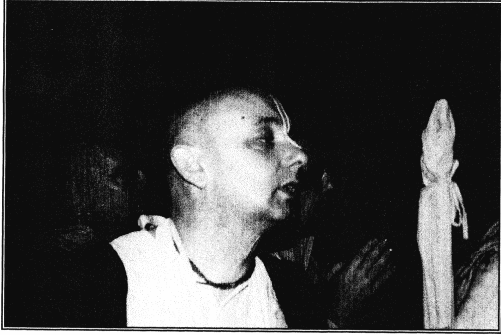

DANDA

Questions and answers with H.H. Śrīla Suhotra Swami, year 1998.



Śrīla Suhotra Swami

*D*edicated to those who
are very eager to be
delivered by the contact with the
touchstone of transcendental
knowledge.

More books from Śrīla Suhotra Swami:
- Substance and Swadov
The Vedic Method of Knowledge
- Transcendental Personalism
Vedic Answers for the Human Situation
- Dimensions of Good and Evil
The Moral Universe and Vaisnava Philosophy
- Six Systems of Vedic Phylosophy
- Apasampradāyas

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“To say that everything is relative is to put oneself in the absolute position. To say, ‘we can’t know the truth’ is to say, ‘I know the truth that there is no truth.’”



H.H. Śrīla Suhotra Swami



IMPERSONALIST DEVOTEES

Question from Cit Śakti d.
January 1, 1998

Dear Guru Mahārāja, how is that, that impersonalists have to perform devotional service to attain Brahman? Which kind? In addition, how can one take to devotional service and simultaneously want to merge into the existence of the Supreme? (ŚB. 3.32.26, 3rd paragraph). In this connection in the Bhagavad-gītā verse 8.15 Śrīla Prabhupāda writes in the purport: "This verse specifically mentions the personalist devotees of the Supreme Lord, Kṛṣṇa." Then, are there also impersonalist devotees? What are they doing?

Answer by Suhotra Swami
January 2, 1998

The simplest answer is that the Māyāvādīs are offenders (māyāvādī haya kṛṣṇe aparādhi, in the words of Caitanya Mahāprabhu). They perform devotional service – they hear the Bhagavad-gītā, they chant the name of the Lord, they worship the Deity, etc. However, they offend the Lord by considering His form to be material. Thus, He absorbs them into His Brahman effulgence, as He does with the demons who He kills.

SELFLESS DEVOTION

Question from Lakṣmī-kuñja d.d.
January 1, 1998

In one of your recent lectures in New Brahma-kuñja you were speaking about selfishness. That devotees are completely selfless - they want to be even exploited by Kṛṣṇa. I was wondering about it in regard to the dealing with the devotees. Sometimes I want to act selflessly in the service to other devotees, but sometimes I feel to go just beyond my limit. When I am acting in this way the

false ego and the mind make revolution, "at least something has to be for you!" I wanted to ask you whether one should act for others regardless one's conditioning, or shall one leave there at least little bit of space for "me and mine"?

Answer by Suhotra Swami
January 2, 1998

This question is answerable in a satisfactory only in terms of the individual. Of course, we can say generally that a devotee's "selfhood" is that of a servant of guru, Kṛṣṇa and the Vaiṣṇavas. Thus, his individual needs are not to be negated. If they are negated, then where is the scope for service? How those needs are to be asserted is an individual matter. The nature of the individual, his service, and the time, place and circumstances are to be taken into account. In any case, taking the position of a servant, and engaging all of one's possessions and resources in service, is not voidism. This question you raise is as if to ask - "Is there anything to be expected after I have voided myself in service to the devotees?" This is not the point at all. The negative premise is wrong. The real premise is the positive loving relationship of persons (devotees) with Kṛṣṇa and through Kṛṣṇa with one another. Only in love is subordinating the ego perfectly agreeable to the living entity. If there is a lack of love, such subordination is distressful.

ARJUNA'S INCARNATION

Question from Aprameya d.d.
January 3, 1998

From Bhagavad-gītā (4.5, purport):

"Arjuna is one of these devotees, and in this verse it is understood that some millions of years ago when Lord Kṛṣṇa spoke the Bhagavad-gītā to the sun-god Vivasvān, Arjuna, in a different capacity was also present."

Does "different capacity" means another incarnation of Arjuna (as in the story about Rakataja and Svadaja)? Could you please tell something more about Arjuna's being present on this particular occasion?

Answer by Suhotra Swami
January 3, 1998

I know of no more specific information about this previous incarnation beyond Lord Kṛṣṇa's statement in the Gītā.

THE TIME

Question from Aprameya d.d.
January 3, 1998

From Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (6.1.47, purport):

"Our past and future are not very difficult to understand, for time is under the contamination of the three modes of material nature."

From Introduction to Bhagavad-gītā:

"Material nature itself is constituted by three qualities: the mode of goodness, the mode of passion and the mode of ignorance. Above these modes there is eternal time..."

I am a bit confused how the time is related with the modes of nature?

Answer by Suhotra Swami
January 3, 1998

As Śrīla Prabhupāda explains elsewhere, there is relative time and there is absolute time. In the material world, there is a difference between past, present and future. In the spiritual world, there is not.



WONDERMENT

Question from Aprameya d.d.
January 3, 1998

From *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (6.2.34, purport):
"If at the time of death the devotee can remember his own name, such as Kṛṣṇa d. or Govinda d., he can be saved from the greatest danger."
I was wondering is it so with any other spiritual name of a devotee?

Answer by Suhotra Swami, January 3, 1998
"I was wondering is it so with any other spiritual name of a devotee?" – "Wonderment – that is the craziness of the artist." – Śrīla Prabhupāda.

CONNECTION OF ANY DUTY TO KṚṢṆA

Question from Aprameya d.d.
January 3, 1998

Recently I heard an authoritative statement that it is not good at the moment of death to think about our devotional service, especially some plans which we couldn't fulfill, because then we will have to come back. Nevertheless, if I am at least trying to meditate and to concentrate my mind and intelligence on what I am supposed to do in the sankīrtana mission, it's quite possible that I think about this instead of Kṛṣṇa's form or pastimes. I have heard from you that Śrīla Prabhupāda said that we will have ISKCON in the spiritual world. Is it really impossible to go back to this ISKCON in the spiritual world, by the grace of the spiritual master and Lord Caitanya, if we are thinking about our duties in this "earthly" ISKCON?

Answer by Suhotra Swami
January 3, 1998

Yes, if we perceive the connection between these duties and Kṛṣṇa. Our life's duties must be connected to something – Kṛṣṇa or Māyā (forgetfulness of Kṛṣṇa). Kṛṣṇa consciousness is seeing the connection of everything to Kṛṣṇa. Even Vṛtrāsura saw his duty as a demon – to defeat Indra and thus revenge the killing of his brother Viśvartipa – in connection to Kṛṣṇa. Thus, he went home, Back to Godhead, Why someone would say we should not think of this or that duty, I do not follow. The real point is seeing the connection of the duty to Kṛṣṇa.

Comment from Aśvathāna d.
January 4, 1998

"Why someone would say we should not think of this or that duty. I do not follow." I have a part of the class, that, I suppose Aprameya d.d. was referring to when asking.

I hope the following quote will maybe help... (From the class of a leading disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda, Göteborg, 2.1.1998):

Question from Aprameya d.d.: "I wonder, it is said about the materialists that in the moment of death they remembering their unfinished plans and then they get... What if devotee thinks at the time of death about his devotional service, about what he is supposed to do?"

Answer: "That is not good. Even if as a devotee you remember all kinds of plans what you want to do for the satisfaction of Kṛṣṇa you may have to take birth again in order to do that for Kṛṣṇa in next lifetime. That is your desire, Kṛṣṇa will fulfill it. Therefore even Śrīla Prabhupāda who had more plans than all of us put together, when his Godbrother Akīñcana Kṛṣṇa d. asked him if there was anything he wanted, Prabhupāda said, 'I have no desire.' Then Akīñcana Kṛṣṇa d. said, 'Yes, it is very good.' He (Śrīla Prabhupāda) just wanted to go back to Kṛṣṇa."

Answer by Suhotra Swami
January 4, 1998

The point I am arguing is made clear in Queen Kuntī's statement of ŚB. 1.8.25. She asked that she might be placed in difficulty again and again up to the point of death, because those difficulties bound her to Kṛṣṇa... thus she would see Kṛṣṇa again and again even at the time of death. In addition, in the *Īṣopaniṣad* mantra, the devotee prays to the Lord at the time of death, "Please remember all the sacrifices I have made for you."

What is here referred to is also illustrated by a story told by Śrīla Prabhupāda of the water-bringer in Jagannātha Purī who was too busy to take *darśana* of the Lord, though his duty was to bring water each day for the Lord's service. Thus he died thinking of bringing water, not Lord Jagannātha.

TRANSCENDENTAL PERSON

Question from Aprameya d.d.
January 12, 1998

The following question asked one guest in Goteborg temple lecture:

"In *The Book of Life* Marchinus is describing seven levels: atoms, cells, organs, bodies, planets, galaxies, and universes. He says there is a higher level above universes and level under atom also. He states that if we know what is above universes and below atom then we can know what is the cause of and how to cure diseases. Is there information about this subject in the Vedic literature?"

Note: This person studies "human technology," the devotees say that he is regularly attending the reading of Kṛṣṇa book in Govinda's but has a hard time understanding that Kṛṣṇa is a person and he has the tendency to speculate.

Answer by Suhotra Swami
January 12, 1998

Tell him to read my next book, *Transcendental Personality – Vedic Answers for the Human Situation*, which will be available next month.

REACTIONS FOR OFFENDING BHAKTA

Question from Kāśya d.
January 18, 1998

In sixth canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, after Nārada Muni presented the path of renunciation to Dakṣa's sons, Nārada Muni was cursed by Dakṣa - not to have any residence anywhere while traveling all over the universe, what actually Nārada considered to be boon. Please, do you know what kind of reaction did Dakṣa receive for cursing Nārada Muni?

Answer by Suhotra Swami
January 18, 1998

There are three kinds of piety (*sukṛti*) – in terms of *karma*, *jñāna* and *bhakti*. Similarly, reactions for offenses are of three kinds. Since Dakṣa's offense was against a great *bhakta*, the reaction is to be primarily understood in terms of *bhakti*: that his possibility of ever achieving love of Godhead is permanently blocked until that offense is removed.

DISTINGUISHING VAISNAVAS

Question from Mahākīrti d.
January 28, 1998

Is there any quotation related to the following subject:
"One should not judge other Vaiṣṇavas as far as their *adhikāra* is concerned (you are *madhyama*, he is

kaniṣṭha...) or also designate Vaiṣṇavas in some other way?"

Answer by Suhotra Swami
January 28, 1998

Well, I hope that you know that in *Śrī Upadeśāmṛta*, Śrīla Prabhupāda gives indications for distinguishing devotees by *adhikāra*. In *Śrī Caitanya caritāmṛta*, where Lord Caitanya is blasphemed by Prakāśānanda Sarasvatī, those devotees who came to the Lord expressing their pain at hearing this blasphemy but who were not able to oppose it are identified as *kaniṣṭha-adhikārtis*. I have seen a translation of *Vaiṣṇava-siddhāntu-mala* (forgive me if it turns out to be another work, but I am pretty sure this is the one) by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura in which he says that a *madhyama adhikārti* of necessity of preaching distinguishes devotees by *adhikāra*. I do not know of a quotation that says Vaiṣṇavas should not be distinguished by *adhikāra*. There might be one. Then its application would have to be squared with the above references. Quotations like *arcye viṣṇau śilādhr̥t̥ guruṣu nara-matir vaiṣṇave jātī-buddhiḥ...yasya vā nārakī saḥ* advise us not to think of Vaiṣṇavas in terms of caste. Somebody could try to turn *adhikāra* into another kind of casteism. One way, perhaps, would be to derisively label a devotee whose service is full-time *pūjā* as being "only a *kaniṣṭha*." Now, Śrīla Prabhupāda himself said that a qualified *brāhmaṇa* engaged in *pūjā* is an example of a *kaniṣṭha*. He also said that a *kaniṣṭha* who dedicates everything to Kṛṣṇa is a pure devotee.

Given the rule (seen in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* regarding Rāmacandra Purī) that praising someone's qualities can be accepted but we should not find fault in those qualities, it would seem to me that the conclusion is that recognizing someone as a *kaniṣṭha* should be an item of praise, not an item of blame. After all, Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu took the position of not being a devotee at all... He declared himself a *Māyāvādī sannyaṣī*. Prabhupāda likewise said one should not think himself a

Vaiṣṇava, but only the servant of a Vaiṣṇava. From this humble position, to say somebody else is a *kaniṣṭha* is to say he is superior to one's own self, who is not a devotee of any kind.

Comment by Jan Mareš
January 28, 1998

I would like to point to three *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* verses (3.29.17-18, 4.8.34) which support the necessity of *adhikāra*-based distinguishing among devotees. Regarding "the other way of designating Vaiṣṇavas there is a file "vaisvart.txt" in the file area of the Kṛṣṇa Kathā conference, a compilation of verses rejecting *vaiṣṇave jātī-buddhi* attitude.

Comment from AC Bhaktivaiṣṇava Swami
February 3, 1998

"...it would seem to me that the conclusion is that recognizing someone as a *kaniṣṭha* should be an item of praise, not an item of blame. After all, Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu took the position of not being a devotee at all... He declared himself a *Māyāvādī sannyaṣī*. Prabhupāda likewise said one should not think himself a Vaiṣṇava, but only the servant of a Vaiṣṇava..."

These are important points. Thanks for sharing them with us.

Comment from Jaya Tirtha Charan d.
February 4, 1998

In *Pañcarātra-Pratīpa* there are some very nice statements that help us to be a little more appreciative of each other (page 261), what to speak of Bhaktivinoda Thākura's *Śrī Caitanya Śikṣāmṛta* Chapters Three & Four. After all who can criticize in the bath-room of devotional activity, pointing the finger at others etc., (either waiting to enter into the shower, or cleansing off) while we ourselves (at least for my part) am still in the shower, scrubbing and finding more and more about myself daily.

VISVA-MŪRTI

Question from Vairāgya-lakṣmī d.d.
January 28, 1998

Is the *visva-mūrti* (Bhāg. 3.4.27), both Uddhava and Vidura perceived, different from the *visva-rāpa* Kṛṣṇa revealed to Arjuna at Kurukṣetra?

Answer by Suhotra Swami
January 28, 1998

Well, in the purport Śrīla Prabhupāda says the *visva-mūrti* they saw was a visualization of the form of the Lord everywhere that appeared out of their mood of separation from Kṛṣṇa. Though a visualization, it was not false nor imaginary. In the 11 chapter of the *Gītā*, the *visva-rāpa* was revealed by Kṛṣṇa at Arjuna's request. In doing so, the Lord had a particular purpose...to show Arjuna that the outcome of the battle at Kurukṣetra was already decided. This form, Kṛṣṇa declared, is that of destructive time. Arjuna was frightened by it. Prabhupāda said this fearful form is not loved by devotees. No details are given about exactly what Uddhava and Vidura saw. The mood of the *darśana* surely was different from that experienced by Arjuna. They saw the Lord everywhere in love, but Arjuna saw that Kṛṣṇa's awesome power is inescapable. I do not know about the details of WHAT Uddhava and Vidura saw, but HOW they saw it was clearly different.

THE MOST ESSENTIAL RULE

Question from Kāśya d.
February 1, 1998

In *Bhāgavad-gītā* (16.6), in purport it is mentioned: "One should perform duties in the light of authoritative scripture. This mentality is called *divine*. One who does not follow the regulative principles as they are laid down in the scriptures and who acts according to his

whims is called *demonic* or *asuric*. There is no other criterion but obedience to the regulative principles of scriptures." Sometimes demons like Rāvaṇa or Hiranyakaśipu follow some part of scriptures, or there are others like *smārta-brāhmaṇas* or *śāktas* who also strictly follow, but nobody of them know the purpose of the Vedas. Could you elaborate on the point that there is no other criterion, to be *divine* or *demonic*, but the obedience to the regulative principles of scriptures?

Answer by Suhotra Swami
February 01, 1998

The essential rule of scripture is *smartavyaḥ satataḥ viṣṇuḥ*..., one should remember Kṛṣṇa always and never forget him. There are those who follow certain portions of the scriptures with the intention of forgetting Kṛṣṇa. For example, demigod worshippers. This is *asuric*. Those who follow with the intention of remembering Kṛṣṇa are devotees. *Ānukūlyena kṛṣṇānu-śīlanam bhaktir uttamā*.

ORIGINAL RELATIONSHIP WITH KRSNA

Question from Ekātma d.
February 4, 1998

Reading recent "Dandas" and hearing one of your lectures in Sweden, a question came into my mind. There were few previous texts on the subject of our relationship to Kṛṣṇa or to Nārāyaṇa.

Earlier in Danda it was mentioned that the desires of the soul in the material world are perverted reflections of our original spiritual desires. The whole material world is working around sex desire, which is originally manifest as pure conjugal love of Kṛṣṇa. It seems to me that every soul has an relationship with Kṛṣṇa on Goloka Vṛndāvana where the *mādhurya-rasa* is prominent and all the other rasas are engaged in its service, whereas in Vaiṅkuṅṭha the *aīśvarya* mood is prominent.

Also I recall from some of your lectures explanations of how Rādhārāṇī and Candrāvalī are expanded to Dvārakā as Sāryabhāmā and Rukmiṇī-devī, and Nārada Muni is Madhumaṅgala in Goloka, and Arjuna and Kārṇa are Śvedajā and Rakṣajā. It seems that one person can have different forms and relationships with Kṛṣṇa in several places/pastimes. Question: Does everyone have their original relationship with Kṛṣṇa in Goloka? If so, is everyone expanded also to Vaiṅkuṅṭha/other places? Please forgive my chaotic question, I had a hard time getting it together.

Answer by Suhotra Swami
February 4, 1998

Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu taught the philosophy of *acintya-bheda-abheda tattva*. This philosophy is nicely presented by Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa in his *Govinda-bhāṣya* commentary on *Vedānta-sūtra*. The potencies of Brahman according to Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa's commentary on *Vedānta-sūtra* (1.4.26), Brahman has three potencies: *para-śakti* (*viṣṇu-śakti*), *aparā-śakti* (*kṣetrājña* or *jīva-tatva*) and *avidyā-śakti* (*avidyā-karma* or *māyā-śakti*). The *para-śakti* is the Lord's personal *svarūpa-śakti* which is also featured in three energies: *samvit* (or *jñāna-śakti*, the power of knowledge), *sandhinī* (or *bala-śakti*, the power of transcendental manifestation) and *hlādinī-śakti* (the power of bliss). The *para-śakti* as a whole, and specifically the *hlādinī-śakti* aspect, is none other than Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī (as per *Govinda-bhāṣya* 3.3.42); nondifference between internal potencies.

In addition, in *Govinda-bhāṣya* (3.3.42), Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa declares there is no difference between the Lord and His *para-śakti*. Within His *para-śakti* there are attributes that are majestic on the one hand (the Vaiṅkuṅṭha mood), and aspects that are sweet on the other (the Vraja mood). There is no internal difference between the two. Following Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa, it is concluded that Vraja and Vaiṅkuṅṭha are two aspects of the Lord's pleasure pastimes. The same prin-

iple of identity is seen with regard to Lord Caitanya's pastimes in Navadvīpa-dhāma. The liberation of the *jīva* means his entrance into the Lord's pleasure pastimes by way of loving devotional service. Thus, *jīva* is incorporated by the *svarūpa-śakti* of the Lord, which manifests as Vraja-dhāma, Navadvīpa-dhāma and Dvārakā-dhāma (Vaiṅkuṅṭha) simultaneously. While there is no difference in ontology (i.e. reality) between these abodes, there is nonetheless a variety that appears out of *rasa* or the mellows (concentrations) of bliss. The *mādhurya-rasa* is the central *rasa* overall. This is the love relished between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, the love that is verily personified as Lord Gaurāṅga, and the love manifested to a degree between all *viṣṇu-tattvas* and corresponding *para-śakti-tattvas* (Lakṣmīs). This *rasa* plays out in a special way in each of the three regions of the spiritual world. Vraja-dhāma, the specific place of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's transcendental loving intimacies, is known as *mādhurya-dhāma*, the abode of sweetness; Vaiṅkuṅṭha, where the Lord and His consort preside in almighty divine majesty, is known as *aīśvarya-dhāma*, the abode of opulence; and Navadvīpa, where *kṛṣṇa-prema* is freely distributed, is known as *audārya-dhāma*, the abode of munificence. You want to know whether "everybody" is originally in *mādhurya-rasa*. In the sense that this is the central *rasa* that all liberated devotees serve, the answer is yes. For example, all the residents of Vṛndāvana relish the loving pastimes of Śrī Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Thus, the whole of Vraja-dhāma is described as *mādhurya-dhāma*. However, this does not mean that all the residents of Vṛndāvana are *gopīs*. When Śrīla Prabhupāda was told of a group of disciples who were trying to cultivate *gopī-bhāva*, and who considered *mādhurya-rasa* "higher" than the *vātsalya-rasa* of Mother Yaśodā, he became furious. It is not that everybody is supposed to be *gopī*, but some have "failed" the standard and are obliged to be "only" Kṛṣṇa's parents, friends and servants. Rather, the central *rasa* is *mādhurya-rasa*, which is the Lord's own personal, transcendental enjoyment of topmost concentration, and everybody serves that en-

joyment in a variety of ways. All these ways of service are encompassed by the same *para-śakti*, *viṣṇu-śakti* or *hlādinī-śakti*, who is none other than Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī.

PRAVṚTTI OR NIVṚTTI-MĀRGA

Question from Tattvavāda d.
February 4, 1998

What is the relationship between *pravṛtti-mārga* and *ISKCON*? (This came up while discussing with one devotee from our eastern neighbor. He seems to get an idea that there is maybe need to teach some principles of *pravṛtti-mārga*, if people are not ready to take the *nivṛtti* or *bhakti-mārga*.)

Connected to that: If *grhastha-āśrama* is performed in our movement according to the instructions of the spiritual master, does it have anything to do with *pravṛtti-mārga*?

Answer by Suhotra Swami
February 4, 1998

As stated above, there is scope for it in that *āśrama*. This should not be taken to mean that all *grhasthas* are *pravṛtti-mārgīs*.

BRAHMAN

Question from Kalatuta d.
February 11, 1998

I have two questions:

1. Is there any difference in Brahman realization for devotees and impersonalists as far as their perception is considered?
2. Does Brahman realization includes different stages according to what Śrīla Prabhupāda said in *Bhāgavad-gītā*, that there are three kinds of Brahman:

effulgence coming from the Lord, total sum of all living entities and material energy?

Answer by Suhotra Swami
February 14, 1998

For a devotee, Brahman means Kṛṣṇa and His *cit* and *acit-śaktis*, or in other words spirit, matter and the controller of both. That is the Absolute (all-inclusive) Truth...the Brahman conception. Brahman is effulgent. Hence the term *brahmajyoti* (the light of Brahman). Both devotees and impersonalists see this light, but the devotee prays that the light not obscure his *darśana* of the Lord's face. Such a prayer is found in *Īsopaniṣad*. The impersonalist wants to merge into the light.

GET CRAZY IN SEVA-KUŅJA

Question from Madhura d.d.
February 17, 1998

When I was in Vṛndāvana during the *parikramā*, we saw a *Seva-kuñj*. That most special holy place is surrounded by high walls, and we were told that nobody is allowed to enter it during the night time because we would get crazy. Why this happens?

Answer by Suhotra Swami
February 18, 1998

Regarding overnighiting in *Seva-kuñj* as a cause of madness, that is the story they tell, but I have not gotten this confirmed from a reputable source. You could ask a long-time resident of Vṛndāvana, for example my God-brother Bhūrījāna Prabhu, who is on COM. Personally, I have not given much importance to this story.



PARAMAHANSA IMPERSONALISM

Question from Vipula d.
March 6, 1998

In *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (2.4.13) *Śrīla Prabhupāda* writes in purport: "The paramahansa stage of existence is the highest perfectional stage of spiritual values... The paramahansas are generally found among both the impersonalists and the devotees, but according to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (as clearly stated by Kuntīdevī), pure bhakti-yoga is understood by the paramahansas, and Kuntīdevī has especially mentioned that the Lord descends (paritrāṇāya sādhanām) especially to award bhakti-yoga to the paramahansas. Since the Lord is very kind to everyone, the impersonalists, who accept bhakti as the means of merging in the existence of the Lord in His impersonal brahmayōti, are also awarded their desired destination." I was always sure that impersonalists cannot attain the paramahansa stage, as in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (7.13.9) *Śrīla Prabhupāda* writes: "The Māyāvādī impersonalist sannyāsīs cannot attain the paramahansa stage. This is because of their impersonal conception of the Absolute Truth..." What does it mean? How impersonalists can follow the bhakti-yoga path as it is personal worshipping of the Lord. Could you to clarify that, please?

Answer by Suhotra Swami
March 7, 1998

The impersonalist paramahansa is called a brahmānandī. That means he finds his spiritual satisfaction in impersonal Brahman. Nevertheless, he does not offend the Supreme Personality of Godhead like the Māyāvādīs do. He knows the Lord's position but prefers not to partake in a personal exchange of līlā. Rather through worship of the Lord, he desires to achieve the impersonal Absolute. The Lord rewards his desire.

However, the impersonalist paramahansa misses the Vaiṣṇava paramahansa stage, called premānandī.

ORGAN TRANSPLANTATION

Question from Varadarāja d.
March 14, 1998

I wanted to ask what to think about organ-transplantation, because Prabhupāda says nobody can live longer than ones destiny is. Is that an attempt to defy destiny? If some patients still live after the transplantation then does it mean that they would live anyway?

There is an interesting story about a woman who went through a lung, and heart operation and said afterwards that her personality was changed in some ways. For example, before she hated to eat chicken and listen to rock-music. Now she loved them without any reasonable cause. Then she got an obsession to find out who was the giver of the organs. Yes, it had been a boy who was driving a car, hearing rock-music, eating chicken while driving, and then had an accident! Then she met the boys parents and they could prove that there was amazing similarities between the psyche of their dead son and this woman... Maybe the cells in the body have some kind of memory, and that our thoughts have some effect on them? If this is true, then it's awful because nowadays people have pigs and monkeys, not to eat them, but for giving their inner organs for transplantation! One can just imagine what kind of thoughts that they will have afterwards...

Answer by Suhotra Swami
March 15, 1998

That someone gets a chance to exchange an organ in this life is his or her karma, that is all. You seem to be suggesting that it might be outside of karma. What is the

logic of thinking that way? Everything, even "miraculous" events in a person's life, is determined by karma.

"There is an interesting story about a woman..." Well, I do not know if any of this lady's tale is really true. There are so many strange stories that people say happened to them, including the man in Indonesia who woke up in bed to find himself being beaten by two little Cyclopes (only one eye in the center of their heads) who were not more than one meter tall, both wearing black leather jackets and having green Mohawk haircuts. They chased him out of his house. When the neighbors came, hearing his screams, the little punk-monsters disappeared...but the man was covered with bruises and weeping in terror. His neighbors believe his story. What does it mean? I do not want to have to be the one to figure it out.

"If this is true, then it's awful because nowadays people have pigs and monkeys, not to eat them, but for giving their inner organs for transplantation! One can just imagine what kind of thoughts that they will have afterwards..."

Here you say, "if this is true." Who knows if what that lady says is true? I would rather say nothing about uncertain "facts."

FOLLOWING GURU

Question from Lakṣmīkuñja d.d.
March 15, 1998

Recently I was reading in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* about Dhruva Mahārāja when he received the instructions from Nārada Muni, but he said to him that he was unable to follow them. Then Nārada Muni gave him another instructions. *Śrīla Prabhupāda* writes in the purports that it was a test from Nārada Muni. Still, there should be no instance when a disciple says to spiritual master that he can not carry out his instructions. Could you please clarify this point?

Answer by Suhotra Swami
March 15, 1998

Well, by this logic then there would have been no occasion for *Bhagavad-gītā* to be spoken. Arjuna was tested by Kṛṣṇa in a similar way...not that Arjuna took from Kṛṣṇa a different instruction in the end (as Dhruva did from Nārada)...but the similarity is that Arjuna, before Kṛṣṇa spoke more instructions, could not carry out his duty. *Śrīla Prabhupāda* compared the spiritual master to a general, who sometimes, when he sees the "army" (his disciples) faltering, has to order them into retreat, even though the original order was to attack. However, under the expert direction of the general, the retreat leads to victory over the enemy. The whole point is to conquer over illusion under the direction of the spiritual master. If that is accomplished in the end, everything is accomplished. Just to follow an order exactly is not necessarily the way to victory. Prabhupāda told of an accountant who was ordered to make a fair copy (i.e. a neater, presentable version) of the company accounts of daily cash transactions. The accountant thought that since it is to be a copy, everything in the original book should appear in the one he was ordered to make. On one page of the original a fly was smashed. He went into the stool-room to catch a fly to smash on the equivalent page of the copy. This is fanaticism. Similarly, a spiritual master may ask a disciple to remain brahmācārī. Later the disciple may discover this too difficult. He won't achieve victory by the method of blind following. He should admit the problem to the spiritual master, who will help him to victory by sounding retreat...take householder life. In the end, both instructions – be brahmācārī, or be gṛhastha – are aimed at the same goal, victory over illusion.



PERCEIVING THE SOUL

Question from Kāśya d.
March 18, 1998

"The soul is atomic in size and can be perceived by perfect intelligence. This atomic soul is floating in the five kinds of air..." (Bg. 2.17, purport, quotation from *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*)

"As far as the soul's existence is concerned, no one can establish his existence experimentally beyond the proof of śruti, or Vedic wisdom. We have to accept this truth, because there is no other source of understanding the existence of the soul, although it is a fact by perception." (Bg. 2.25, purport)

I have a doubt whether the soul can be perceived just by the proper discrimination without the proof of śruti?

Answer by Suhotra Swami
March 18, 1998

The soul can be directly perceived. That is confirmed by śruti, the *Śrī Isopaniṣad*, Mantra Seven. One who always sees all living entities as spiritual sparks, in quality one with the Lord, becomes a true knower of things. What, then, can be illusion or anxiety for him? Such perception is not obtainable by any process other than that approved by the Vedic scriptures...the process by which consciousness is freed from all material affinities.

WORSHIP IN DIFFERENT MODES

Question from Vyomadhara d.
March 27, 1998

In *Bhagavad-gītā* (17.4) it is said: "Men in the mode of goodness worship the demigods; those in the mode of passion worship the demons; and those in the mode of ignorance worship ghosts and spirits." Does that mean that Hiranyakaśipu and Rāvaṇa were in the mode of goodness?

In Chapter Seven of *Bhagavad-gītā* it is stated: "Those whose intelligence has been stolen by material desires surrender unto demigods and follow their particular rules and regulations of worship according to their own natures." In the purport Prabhupāda writes: "...because they are in the lower mode of nature (ignorance and passion) and therefore worship demigods." I am confused, could you please elaborate on this point?

Answer by Suhotra Swami
March 27, 1998

"Men in the mode of goodness worship the demigods; those in the mode of passion worship the demons; and those in the mode of ignorance worship ghosts and spirits." Does that mean that Hiranyakaśipu and Rāvaṇa were in the mode of goodness?"

No. They exploited the mode of goodness for ignorant and passionate ends. Both were excellent Vedic scholars. In addition, both were demons. Vedic knowledge is satvik.

Today demoniac, beef-eating Indologists and Sanskritists study the Vedic knowledge to further their career as demoniac misleaders of society. The Vedic knowledge they study remains in the mode of goodness, but their way of using it is in passion and ignorance.

"In Chapter Seven of *Bhagavad-gītā* it is stated: "Those whose intelligence has been stolen by material desires surrender unto demigods and follow their particular rules and regulations of worship according to their own natures." In the purport Prabhupāda writes: "...because they are in the lower mode of nature (ignorance and passion) and therefore worship demigods."

One can worship the demigods in any of the three modes. Lord Śiva can be worshipped as a servant of Viṣṇu. That is in goodness. He can be also worshipped as one who awards a nice husband, as young Hindu girls do. That is the mode of passion. Alternatively, he can be worshipped as Kālabhairava, who receives blood sacrifices. That is in the mode of ignorance. Generally

speaking, the worship of the demigods is done through a *brāhmaṇa* priest. A *brāhmaṇa* is in the mod of goodness, he follows the *śāstra* nicely, and he worships the demigods as servants of Viṣṇu. That kind of brahminical worship of demigods is in the mode of goodness.

PHILOSOPHY OF OPINIONS

Question from Caitya-guru d.
April 1, 1998

In preaching I meet so many questions from people, and there is one, which is often asked, to which I was not able to answer properly. When I asked devotees: some also cannot answer, some say it is a stupid question. The question is How to prove that there is Absolute Truth at all? People say that, "Yes, every thing has its cause, but there is no final cause, it is an endless chain." Like the scientists think sometimes that there is no final particle in the matter, every particle can be divided into some smaller particle. On the other hand, if we see to infinitive big, beyond every big thing there is a bigger thing. There is no limit. From this they conclude that everything is relative, there is no absolute knowledge, etc... Yesterday I have heard another opinion: if there is Absolute Truth at all (they sometimes identify the Absolute Truth with infinite universe), why not two, or three, or endless number of absolute truths, which are separated from each and other. They cannot accept that there is a final cause from which everything emanates. They sometimes say that if all energies are permanent, why they have a cause, from which they emanate. Also, there are so many opinions about this. I remember when I met Kṛṣṇa consciousness, I also had this problem: why should I accept that there is an Absolute Truth, it was very difficult to accept. (Now it seems that I have accepted, I hope) Although I know from the Bhagavad-gītā (16.8) that a person who has demonic mentality, he is not able to understand the existence of Absolute Truth

and a human being accept its existence, but, please, give your help me that how can I prove logically (if there is a method at all) that there is an Absolute Truth, and it (He) has such qualities mentioned in Vedic literature. What kind of different basic ideas are there about Absolute Truth in different philosophies? How can I defeat them? I know that in Your book entitled Substance and Shadow, you spoke about this topic, but unfortunately I do not have this book, but maybe later I will be able to buy it (if Kṛṣṇa helps – I am a poor brahmācārī), so please if You do not mind, answer.

Comment by Rājavidyā d.
April 2, 1998

Dear Caitya-guru Prabhū. You write to H.H. Suhotra Mahārāja, "I know that in Your book entitled Substance and Shadow, you spoke about this topic, but unfortunately I do not have this book, but maybe later I will be able to buy it (if Kṛṣṇa helps – I am a poor brahmācārī), so please if You do not mind, answer."

I am the publisher of this book and I would like to donate one copy to you since you seem to be a nice, philosophically minded person. I will also send you a copy of Suhotra Mahārāja's second book called Transcendental Personalism, if you just give me your exact name and mailing address. OK? I wish you all the best and beg to remain, Your servant, Rāja Vidyā Dāsa

Answer by Suhotra Swami

April 3, 1998

"When I asked devotees: some also cannot answer, some say it is a stupid question. The question is how to prove that there is Absolute Truth at all. People say that, "Yes, every thing has its cause, but there is no final cause, it is an endless chain."

This is stupid. It is *regressus ad infinitum*, or *anvatha* in Sanskrit, which has long been considered by all great philosophers East and West to be a logical fallacy.

"Like the scientists think sometimes that there is no final particle in the matter, every particle can be divided into some smaller particle."

If the scientists really believed that, why do they continue to seek an ultimate particle beyond which there is nothing further to know? Why do they theorize about the Higg's boson, which is the "virtual particle" that is the first cause of the so-called Big Bang?

"If we see to infinitive big, beyond every big thing there is a bigger thing. There is no limit. From this they conclude that everything is relative, there is no absolute knowledge, etc..."

To say that everything is relative is to put oneself in the absolute position. To say, "we can't know the truth" is to say, "I know the truth...that there is no truth."

"Yesterday I have heard another opinion: if there is Absolute Truth at all (they sometimes identify the Absolute Truth with infinite universe), why not two, or three, or endless number of absolute truths, which are separated from each and other."

"Absolute" is a philosophical term introduced in the West by Nicholas of Cusa in the late Middle Ages that simultaneously means "all-inclusive" and "separate from everything," just like the words *abhījñāh* and *svārāt* from the first verse of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Anybody can give opinions, but we do not need to accept them as serious philosophy. If somebody told you, "I think absolute means a cherry pie floating in the sky," would you believe him?

"They cannot accept that there is a final cause from which everything emanate. They sometimes say that if all energies are permanent, why they have a cause, from which they emanate. Also there are so many opinions about this."

Opinions are simply opinions. Logical thought, by definition, seeks to trace out causation. To say there is no "why" behind the appearance of things, that things just "are the way they are," is to give up logical thinking. The whole of science seeks causation, and from the

logic of causation, it strives to make predictions. It has been said, "Science is nothing without prediction."

You can only accurately predict something if you know its cause. I am right now in Warsaw temple, situated on the flight path to the Warsaw International Airport. Only if I know the landing schedule of the incoming flights, can I predict the time an airliner will zoom over the temple. This is science. To say, "airplanes just appear spontaneously in the sky without any cause" is childish ignorance.

"What kind of different basic ideas are there about Absolute Truth in different philosophies?"

The concept of the absolute truth is from the beginning a theistic one. "Absolute," as I indicated earlier, encompasses both immanence and transcendence. It necessarily refers to the Supreme Being from Whom everything emanates and by Whom everything is controlled. Otherwise, Pantheism admits only immanence, and Deism admits only transcendence. These ideas are opposed to Theism. Neither can be said to truly accept the absolute truth.

"How can I defeat them?"

You have to stop listening to opinions and come to the point of knowledge. This requires learning, and intelligence. Learning is found in Śrīla Prabhupāda's books, and intelligence arises from purification of consciousness by the steady practice of *sādhana-bhakti*.

INNOCENT PEOPLE

Question from Kāśya d.
April 12, 1998

It is not completely clear to me what does "innocent" mean as is stated in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (11.2.46), tṣvare tad-adhīneṣu bālīṣeṣu dviṣatsu ca. Śrīla Prabhupāda few times explained that innocent people means those who do not know God. In Bhagavad-gītā

16th Chapter two kind of living beings are described. Do these innocent people belong to the asuric section?

Answer by Suhotra Swami
April 13, 1998

The innocent are not deliberately demonic, though due to lack of knowledge, training and good association they can come under demonic influence, as is obvious in this age. People who are innocent act blindly. However, due to having soft hearts, they often regret later the acts they performed in blindness. For example a parent under the modes may become smitten by anger and strike the child. Afterwards that parent feels an ache in the heart. "That was not nice to hit this defenseless child." Then parent tries to rectify the bad act by doing something nice for the child. That is innocence. However, a demon has no regrets. A modern term for demon is psychopath, or sociopath. These terms are different in meaning from psychotic, which is the appropriate term for a raving madman. Psychopath and sociopath refer to people who externally might appear completely normal...but in time through association one comes to realize that they have no conscience, no capacity for guilt, no sympathy and empathy for the pain suffered by others. Their hearts are as hard as stone. Their emotional life is limited to desire and anger. In comparison, even a drunkard is innocent. In fact, in the beginning in New York, Śrīla Prabhupāda used to comment that the drunks on the Bowery have soft hearts, because although they were completely degraded, still they were respectful to Śrīla Prabhupāda. They could see he is a saintly person. How fortunate they were. Thus an innocent person, even when totally surrendered to sinful life, can still recognize purity and be moved in the heart by it. We have here in the Amsterdam congregation a woman who was a prostitute for 25 years, and in her private life, apart from her profession of selling her body to men for sex, she was a Lesbian. In addition, she was a heroin addict the whole time too. Even before she came in touch with ISKCON, she reached the end of her sinful life, to a point of "now

either death or God." Thereafter, by her own decision, without even reading Śrīla Prabhupāda's books, she spontaneously took to the four regulative principles and followed them for four years before meeting the devotees. This is an innocent person. Śrīla Prabhupāda said 90% of the population is innocent.

IMPERSONALISM IN ISKCON

Question from Tattvavāda d.
April 20, 1998

In your lecture 20.12.97 on Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.23.10 from New Brahmakunda, entitled Utopian Perfectionism, you explained the impersonal principles behind the uncertainty situation. Can those impersonal principles sneak in even to the Temple management, for example.. in the name of economical calculations and principles? If so, could you mention some of the symptoms in those cases?

Answer by Suhotra Swami
April 20, 1998

It is always possible for impersonalism to enter into ISKCON. We should make it as hard as possible for impersonalism to do so by practicing personalism. Sometimes when there is a disagreement about managerial matters between temple devotees who have erected impersonal walls between one another. These devotees try to advance their own opinions about management by asking so-called hypothetical questions to their GBC, spiritual masters or visiting *samnyāsīs*. These are "what if" questions that seem to be completely theoretical, but in fact are expressions of a political struggle being waged in the temple. The idea is to trick the ISKCON leader into making a comment that can be used to further a particular point of view, but without letting the leader know that this is the intention. The reason the devotees do not want the leader to know that their ques-

tions reflect a real confrontation in the temple is to avoid that leader forcing them all to break down their impersonal walls and meet together face to face and discuss and solve their conflicts in an atmosphere of love and trust. Especially in certain Scandinavian countries, it is considered better to swallow poison and die than to sit down and find a solution to political rivalry.

THE LAW OF KARMA

Question from Petra
April 22, 1998

It is said that there are no laws of karma for animals, how is it possible then that some animals suffer more than others? [As we can see for instance in cosmetic laboratories or simply with some ugly people.]

Where come man's distress and happiness from, when he is embodied for the first time in human body (coming directly from cow, monkey or lion?)

Answer by Suhotra Swami
April 22, 1998

Who says there is no law of karma for animals? *Vāyu Purāna* 21.42 states *karmabhiḥ prāṇinām loke sarvacestapavaratatakāḥ* - karma is the cause of all activities among the living beings of this world. *Bhāgavatam* (3.31.1) states *karmaṇā daiva-netreṇa jantur dehopa-pattaye*, all *jantus* (creatures, or *jantu* can mean 'animals') are controlled by *karma*. The animals do not create new *karma*. They suffer or enjoy in that animal body the reactions of what they did previously in a human body. The human form is the *karma-sthānam* or platform in which new *karma* is accumulated.

"Where come man's distress and happiness from, when he is embodied for the first time in human body (coming directly from cow, monkey or lion?)"

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam Canto Four, Chapter 29 states that living entity is a spiritual being, but when he actu-

ally desires to enjoy this material world, he comes down. From this verse we can understand that the living entity first accepts a body that is human in form, but gradually, due to his degraded activities, he falls into lower forms of life - into the animal, plant and aquatic forms. By the gradual process of evolution, the living entity again attains the body of a human being and is given another chance to get out of the process of transmigration. If he again misses his chance in the human form to understand his position, he is again placed in the cycle of birth and death in various types of bodies.

MOST PLEASING TO KRṢṆA

Question from Aprameya d.d.
April 26, 1998

Among the different ways to keep our mind fixed on Kṛṣṇa like, for instance, praying to Him, hearing about Him, chanting His Holy name or verses glorifying Him and so on, which one is most pleasing to Kṛṣṇa and most beneficial for us?

Answer by Suhotra Swami
April 26, 1998

Love pleases Kṛṣṇa. If you do any or all with love, that pleases Him most. It must also be noted that chanting the holy name is the most important process for this age.

UNIVERSAL FORM

Question from Aprameya d.d.
April 26, 1998

In one lecture you explained, "Therefore the Supersoul, Paramātmā, is called 'prāṇa-śarīra'. He has the name 'prāṇa-śarīra', means the prāṇa is actually His body, śarīra means body. The total prāṇa of the universe, total life force of the universe, is actually the body of the

Paramātmā..." Is it correct to understand this in the same sense like the description of the universal form of the Lord, virāt-rūpa, which has no factual existence but exists for meditation?

Answer by Suhotra Swami
April 26, 1998

The universal form as understood by the impersonalists has no factual existence. It is imaginary. That is because they do not accept the Lord's original transcendental form that supports the universe. They imagine the universal form as explained in the Second Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, by thinking that the oceans are his belly, the rivers his veins, the mountains the stacks of his bones. This is mental sketch work. The actual universal form is Hiraṇyagarbha. He is the *prāṇa-śarīra* feature of Lord Viṣṇu (Supersoul). This Hiraṇyagarbha is also a name of Brahmā, who is likewise *prāṇa-śarīra*, or as Śrīla Prabhupāda states, "the incarnation of Vedic sound" (i.e. Vedic sound vibrating in the universal *prāṇa*). The cosmic *prāṇa* is the "real" form of the universe, which is subtle and described in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* Canto Five.

INCONCEIVABLE ENERGY

Question from Sevābhīruci d.
April 26, 1998

We (devotees from our city) have weekly evening meetings to discuss topics of Śrīmad Bhagavad gītā. On the last of them, one devotee said that spiritual world is unlimited and it is always expanding. Then there was the question how it is possible because if something is expanding that means it has limits. My suggestion was that logic is not proper tool to understand transcendental world. Not everybody accepts my point of view. My question is, how far we can use our mind forces, logic and mathematics to understand transcendental world?

We have to start with logic to understand basic points, but when we can reject it? When is it useless? Could you, Guru Mahārāja, also explain how to understand the topic of always expanding never ending spiritual world?

Answer by Suhotra Swami
April 26, 1998

It is very simple. Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa terms the personal energy of Kṛṣṇa as *acintya-prakṛti*, or inconceivable nature. Just as the material universe is formed out of material nature, the spiritual world is formed out of *acintya-prakṛti*. That nature is inconceivable. Thus, human logic cannot conceive of how it is unlimited and yet expanding at the same time.

REVEALED SCRIPTURE

Question from Bhagadatta d.
April 28, 1998

What does the term "revealed scripture" mean? Are the scripture of the other religions, such as Christianity and Islam, also in the category of revealed scriptures?

Answer by Suhotra Swami
April 28, 1998

Revealed scripture means a religious by an empowered servant of God. Śrīla Prabhupāda accepted the Bible and the Koran as a kind of revealed scripture. However, they are of the kind revealed to *mlecchas* and *yavanas* - meat-eaters, in other words.



REST FOR THE SOUL

Question from Bhagadatta d.
April 28, 1998

In a lecture, I was asked to comment (verify) on the following statement, "When a person goes to sleep, he goes, in his subtle body, to the Brahmaloaka." After the class, different opinion was given that he enters brahmajyoti, where he gets his batteries recharged." My answer was that as far as I know, we badly need to "switch off" for some time, in order that we become relieved from the stress of the material existence. My question is, is there any further explanation in the śāstra about the soul's need of rest, or is the sleeping process (rest) only necessary for the gross body to recover.

Answer by Suhotra Swami
April 28, 1998

This "sleeping soul goes to the brahmajyoti" is a persistent fiction. The sleeping soul goes to the *acit-śakti* of the *Paramātmā*. *Acit-śakti* means "unconscious energy."

In other words, it is the unmanifest material energy. Entering that, the soul is plunged into *suṣṭi* or dreamless sleep. I pray for the day when I will not have to hear more questions from ISKCON devotees about the sleeping soul merging into the brahmajyoti.

"My question is, is there any further explanation in the śāstra about the soul's need of rest, or is the sleeping process (rest) only necessary for the gross body to recover."

Śrīla Prabhupāda does not say a lot about it, except that the energy of the living entity is renewed in sleep. It is not actually the soul that needs a sleep, or more exactly, it is not the pure soul that needs it. Sleep is a feature of material conditioning. Kapiladeva says it is a feature of *buddhi* or intelligence. Without sleep, the intelligence becomes deranged. Scientific studies attest to that. After 3-5 days without sleep, a human being starts to dream while awake.

TRUTH - THE LAST LEG OF RELIGION

Question from Bhagadatta d.
April 28, 1998

Could you explain, how is the only remaining pillar of religion, namely, the truthfulness, still present in the current time?

Answer by Suhotra Swami
April 28, 1998

It means that truth is still respected. Of course, it is mostly only relative truth that is respected. Anyway, if truth were not respected then the newspaper and TV reporters who try so hard to expose scandals and corruption would go out of business. Many other modern examples could be given to show that people do want to know what is really going on. Yet, they do not want to be really clean, or be austere. Moreover, because they are meat-eaters, there is no question of mercy.

ĪŚVARA-BHĀVA AND SEVAKA-BHĀVA

Question from Rāmānanda Rāya d.
May 7, 1998

During your recent lecture in Radhadesh (Belgium) you mentioned how due to their Īśvara-bhāva even Lord Brahmā and Lord Śiva get sometimes in difficulties understanding Kṛṣṇa and His pastimes. Then you said something about Brahma-sainhitā related to this. Śrīla Prabhupāda says that we should study Brahma-sainhitā as a daily function and try to enter in the spirit of it. How does Your Holiness see this?

Answer by Suhotra Swami
May 7, 1998

Yes, let us daily study *Śrī Brahma-saṁhitā* and enter into the spirit of it.

The question in that class about the demigods thinking themselves as lords arose in connection with the *karma-kāṇḍa* and *jñāna-kāṇḍa* sections of the Vedas. Those scriptures are about knowledge and work pertaining to the cosmic manifestation, where *īśvara-bhāva* predominates. The demigods themselves obtain their powers of control from Vedic knowledge given them by Kṛṣṇa at the dawn of creation. They study and then preach the *karma* and *jñāna* scriptures for the purpose of nicely regulating the material affairs of the universe. People who follow such scriptures take advantage of, and thus share in, the powers the demigods have over material nature. This is all the business of *īśvara-bhāva*. However, *Śrī Brahma-saṁhitā* is spoken by Brahmā in frank admission of his servitorship (*sevaka-bhāva*) to Kṛṣṇa. *Śrī Brahma-saṁhitā* is a *bhakti-sāstra*, not a *karma* or *jñāna-sāstra*. I mentioned that Śrīla Prabhupāda stated that certain confidential truths about Brahmā's relationship to Kṛṣṇa were not revealed to Brahmā. That does not mean that the *Brahma-saṁhitā* is not pure. The Ganges water I hold in my hand is as pure as the water in the Ganges River. The difference is in the amount. The truths that are revealed to Brahmā and expressed in the *Brahma-saṁhitā* are certainly enough to purify the human mind. His handful is an ocean for us. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (6.17.32), spoken by Śiva, states: "Neither I [Lord Śiva], nor Brahmā, nor the Aśvini-kumāras, nor Nārada or the other great sages who are Brahmā's sons, nor even the demigods can understand the pastimes and personality of the Supreme Lord. Although we are part of the Supreme Lord, we consider ourselves independent, separate controllers, and thus we cannot understand His identity." Therefore, as I said in the class, the Lord descends personally to reveal Himself and His transcendental pastimes, because even great personalities like Śiva, Brahmā and Nārada

find themselves incompetent to understand His position. Again, that certainly does not mean that what Śiva, Brahmā and Nārada have spoken in the pages of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and other *bhakti-sāstras* is impure, or not sufficient for we human creatures. However, they find their realization limited and in need of refreshment. Thus, Kṛṣṇa comes Himself. Whether Śiva's statement expresses a factual lack of spiritual understanding or just Vaiṣṇava humility is beside the point. Even if it is an expression of a factual lack of realization, that does not make Śiva's words in this verse impure. What is impure is what is misleading. The *karma* and *jñāna-kāṇḍa* scriptures are misleading, because they aim for heaven and for liberation in the impersonal Brahman. Lord Śiva's words above are aimed at Kṛṣṇa. They are not misleading. Neither is the *Brahma-saṁhitā* nor *Nārada-pañcarātra* misleading.

ŚĀNTA-RASA IN THE SPIRITUAL WORLD

Question from Aprameya d.d.
May 9, 1998

In one lecture you said, "...in Caitanya-caritāmṛta Lord Caitanya in His explanations of the āmārāma verse says that in śānta-rasa there is some thirteen stages. The lowest platform are those who just merge in the light of brahmajyoti and the highest platform are those who have penetrated the light and have realized the form of the Lord."

Is it correct that in the spiritual world there is no śānta-rasa, because I have heard that the trees, stones and so on, in the spiritual world are in śānta-rasa. Is it really so?



Answer by Suhotra Swami
May 9, 1998

"Is it correct then that in the spiritual world there is no śānta-rasa?"

No.
"Because I have heard that the trees, stones and so on, in the spiritual world are in śānta-rasa. Is it really so?"

Yes...but these are steadily manifested by the *sandhini-sakti* of the Lord. The devotees liberated in the spiritual world can occasionally assume a *śānta-rasa* form whenever they see an opportunity to serve Kṛṣṇa in that way. For example, a cowherd boy took the form of a river when Kṛṣṇa wanted to take bath at a distance from the Yamunā. When Kṛṣṇa came out of the water, he then assumed the form of a towel so that the Lord could dry Himself. Afterward that devotee resumed his normal form as a cowherd boy. The personal servants of Kṛṣṇa do not remain forever in the *śānta-rasa*. The *jñānis* and *yogīs* who come up from the material world to the *śānta-rasa* also usually do not remain there forever. Either they go to a higher *rasa* by development of *bhakti* or they fall back down for want of positive service. The transcendental trees, stones and so on of Kṛṣṇa's abode are expansions of Lord Balarāma as His *sandhini-sakti*.

CONTRADICTING KARMA

Question from Aprameya d.d.
May 9, 1998

In *Bhagavad-gītā* (8.24, purport) Śrīla Prabhupāda says, "Mystics who are advanced in yoga practice can arrange the time and place to leave the body. Others have no control – if by accident they leave at an auspicious moment, then they will not return to the cycle of birth and death..."

In my imperfect understanding it seems contradictory to the law of karma if somebody can arrange the time and place to leave or leaves by accident. Please, dispel my misunderstanding.

Answer by Suhotra Swami
May 9, 1998

First of all, there is no accident...there is *adrṣṭa karma*, or unseen *karma* from the unknown past that is suddenly imposed by the time factor without apparent reason. This is what people call fate. As far as the *yogīs* arranging the time and place of their death, this is a boon that is won from higher controllers in return for extraordinary austerity, as is seen in the case of Grandfather Bhīṣmadeva. Chāṇḍogya Upaniṣad states *sarva lokeṣu kāmācaro bhavati*, a person free from attachment is able to accomplish anything in all the worlds. Rg Veda 8.18.22 and 10.186.1 are prayers for lengthening life.

NOT COMING BACK FROM BRAHMALOKA

Question from Aprameya d.d.
May 9, 1998

In *Bhagavad-gītā* (8.26) Lord Kṛṣṇa says, "When one passes in light, he does not come back..."

In what sense he does not come back when, as stated in *Bhagavad-gītā* (8.24), he attains *brahmajyoti*? In addition, in the purport Śrīla Prabhupāda says, "Actually they do not attain ultimate salvation, for they do not surrender to Kṛṣṇa."

Answer by Suhotra Swami
May 9, 1998

They attain Brahmaloaka via this path, which is also known as *deva-yāna* or *nyūtti-mārga*. At the time of cosmic dissolution, they go with Brahmā to Mahā-Viṣṇu. However, when Mahā-Viṣṇu breathes out more

universes, they enter them and return to the material world. Their not returning means they do not drop into *samsāra* again for the rest of duration of the cosmic manifestation, because they have attained Brahmā's shelter, whose life extends to the end of universal time.

GURU-AVAJĪNĀ

Question from Aprameya d.d.
May 16, 1998

Would you please elaborate a little bit more on the practical meaning of the third offense – to disobey the orders of the spiritual master? What exactly is considered disobedience? I know from the *sāstras* how it was in the Vedic culture – till 25 years the disciple was completely dependent on his spiritual master, so much so that he couldn't even eat without his permission, but afterwards he was leaving the spiritual master's *āśrama* and was having his independent life. How it is supposed to be nowadays in ISKCON? Did Śrīla Prabhupāda say something in this connection? In this light, what about the disciple having his own plans and, as I recently heard of, a specific instruction which the disciple has the right to disobey?

Answer by Suhotra Swami
May 17, 1998

In ISKCON, "not disobeying the spiritual master" basically entails keeping the initiation vow to follow four regulative principles and to chant 16 rounds daily. In Bengali, the third offense is given the name *guru-avajñā*, which means, "to disrespect the spiritual master." Śrīla Prabhupāda puts it as to consider the spiritual master an ordinary man. Considering this definition, many possibilities of offense arise. *Bhakti* is personal. Thus, a disciple does have some room to adjust his service in consultation with his spiritual master. If the disciple does not care what the spiritual master thinks

about what he is doing, because he is just another guy with just another opinion, that is *guru-avajñā* even if that disciple continues to obey the basic initiation vows.

METAPHORS

Question from Rogier
May 18, 1998

Could you please answer my questions? They concern the use of metaphors. I read in Śrīla Satsvarīpa dāsa Goswami's book *The Twenty-six Qualities of a Devotee* that it appears from the statements of Lord Caitanya that unless a person can think in poetic metaphors, he cannot appreciate Kṛṣṇa in His eternal rasas. One of the many names for Kṛṣṇa is *Uttamahāstaka*, which means that He is praised with the choicest poetic words: "To describe the beauty of Kṛṣṇa's form, His pastimes, the nectar of His holy name, the glories of His abode, Vṛndāvana, and the sweetness of His love, is impossible – except by poetic language." (p. 192, *A Devotee is a Poet, Kavi*). Śrīla Satsvarīpa Mahārāja refers to Lord Caitanya's statements in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Antya 1.95-98). My question is the following: if a metaphor describes one thing in terms of another thing, does the false ego have a metaphorical function in that sense that it makes the living entity experience everything spiritual in terms of matter? Moreover, is it that when we are free from false ego it means that we will experience everything spiritual in terms of spirit (again)?

I once read a statement by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda in which he says, "A devotee feels the presence of Kṛṣṇa everywhere, but one averse to the Lord denies His existence everywhere." (*Ray of Viṣṇu*, p. 136). Does "denying" here mean that the atheist is too much covered over with false ego that he cannot at all think in poetic metaphors anymore but instead sees everything in "material" metaphors? Is this

the root cause of the scientists thinking in mechanistic instead of nonmechanistic ways?

Moreover, why do Māyāvāds and śūnyāvāds use metaphors when, according to them, all that exists can be designated with just one term or with no term at all? (Like for instance one metaphor the Sūfī poet Rumi used, "Personhood is the shutter against the breeze of non-existence," or the one Vidyāvīrudha uses in your book *Substance and Shadow*, "Śabda is but broken light upon the depth of the unspoken") Does not the fact that such philosophers use metaphors indicate that their philosophizing is actually very much below the standard due to persistent inconsistencies? (One would expect that they would hate metaphors because "it creates dualism"). Because metaphors are so pervasive in our language and because language is essentially personal, the use of metaphors must therefore be personal (?). Could we then say that because metaphors are present here in the material world, they must exist in the spiritual world also and that therefore the spiritual world must therefore be essentially personal? (There is a very interesting book that deals with metaphors and experience in great depth, especially how it pervades our language and that we cannot but conceive of things in metaphors; *Metaphors We Live*, by Lakoff & Johnson. It argues that we have a "conceptual system" which metaphorically structures all our concepts and thereby determines the way in which we experience reality). How and why do Kṛṣṇa and the residents of Vṛndāvana use metaphors?

I know that "brevity is the soul of wit," but as I haven't got any, please forgive me if I let myself get carried away too much or if any of my questions were phrased impolitely.

Thank you very much.

Answer by Suhotra Swami
May 18, 1998

A metaphor is a "trope" or a figure of speech. Another example of a trope is irony. If you and a friend are

moving a large glass-topped table, each of you lifting one end, but you drop your end of it causing the glass to shatter, and your friend remarks, "Well, you've been a big help," that is an ironical trope. Thus, a trope is a non-literal statement. Literally, you would say, "The Ganges is a river." Metaphorically, you might say, "Time is a river." A metaphor compares one thing with another (time and a river) without announcing the intention to make such a comparison. Such a comparison is thus implicit in a metaphor. It is not explicit.

Your question is rather complicated, but it seems to me that it can be re-expressed in a simple way: is metaphorical speech only decorative, or can it be cognitive? If it is only decorative, then metaphors can only help us understand what something is like. "A wise old dog" tells us that an old dog (which is never really wise) looks like it is wise. Maybe it tells us that a wise old man (who is never really a hound) looks like a dog. When Elvis sang, "You ain't nothin' but a hound dog just a cryin' all the time," he meant that the girl he was singing about is like a sad old dog. He did not mean that he'd been having a love affair with a real dog. Scientific materialists usually hold to the decorative position. Time is not a river. "River" is only a decoration of the idea conveyed by the word time. It does not reveal something factual about time. Time is only like a river. Why then does a metaphorical explanation sometimes seem to convey a sharper, clearer meaning than an attempted "literal" explanation? Again, take the example of "time is a river." If you compare that with some dry scientific account of time, it seems so much more convincing. Why? The answer is that the figure of speech in this case is indicative of a deeper reality, while the "literal" explanation of time is too often just a vague cover-up of ignorance. The problem scientists have in their "literal" presentation is that they are not certain what time literally is. They just pretend that they know. Thus, their explanations convey no convincing meaning. We find in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* the term *kāla-strota*, "the waves of time." This is not decorative speech. Time

actually does move in waves. Mahā-Viṣṇu's breathing out the universes on the surface of the causal ocean creates waves that flow outward; when he breathes in, waves flow inward. This is literally the flow of time, which carries us through the cosmic phases of creation, maintenance and destruction. Moreover, that time-flow is literally a river: the Virajā River that flows between the material and the spiritual existence. Another metaphor is, "I melted when I heard that song." That seems like a decorative statement because we never observe anyone melting as they listen to some emotionally stirring song. Yet, everyone can recognize that on a deeper level this statement has some sort of cognitive meaning. We do experience melting inside when we hear a soul-stirring sound. Now, in the spiritual world, where consciousness is fully manifest in transcendental literal reality, such melting literally happens. The *Purāṇas* relate that the Ganges is the liquid form of Lord Nārāyaṇa who melted when He heard the transcendental singing of Lord Śiva. Therefore, the conclusion is that some metaphors get their power to convey meaning from a deeper cognitive level. In the book *Transcendental Personalism* I showed how the Oedipus myth is a metaphor of a truth that goes far deeper than Freud's attempt to explain it. In other words, the Oedipus story draws its power from cognition rather than decoration. Take a look at the section of *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* beginning with *Anyā-līlā* 5.136. From the evidence it could be reasonably held that all metaphorical speech – even that which blasphemes Lord Kṛṣṇa (!) – has a cognitive root. I am not prepared to argue that as being hard and fast, however. It is something to think about.

Question from Rogier
June 11, 1998

I am a little obsessed these days by metaphors. I am writing my thesis and am trying to find out how *Literary Studies* has constituted itself and justifies its existence as an autonomous discipline by making use of rhetoric and metaphors. I wanted to ask you some more questions

concerning metaphors and spiritual understanding. Could you please answer them?

First of all the terms you used, decorative as opposed to cognitive metaphorical speech, were quite enlightening and helped me a great deal in understanding much of the literature I am reading on the subject (my question was indeed rather complicated, which is of course a clear indication of my lack of understanding). The reason why I am so interested in metaphors is the sentence I quoted earlier, "...unless a person can think in poetic metaphors, he cannot appreciate Kṛṣṇa in his eternal rasas." Moreover, I am trying to understand Kṛṣṇa, otherwise how can I love Him?

Another reason is what Richard Moran says: *Metaphor enters contemporary philosophical discussion from a variety of directions. Aside from its obvious importance in poetics, rhetoric, and aesthetics, it also figures in such fields as philosophy of mind (as in the question of the metaphorical status of ordinary mental concepts), philosophy of science (as in the comparison of metaphors and explanatory models), in epistemology (as in analogical reasoning), and in the cognitive studies (as in the theory of concept-formation).*

Moron further writes that he will concentrate on issues of metaphor in the philosophy of language.

Then I found a book on *Metaphor and Religious Language* (1985) and from that I infer that the study of metaphors has entered theology also. When I talked with a teacher of English (who had read my essay on *Metaphor and Experience* and who could certainly not agree with me because I claimed that the "experiential basis" of metaphors had to be nonphysical rather than physical because we - who are the ones having experiences - are nonphysical entities) he told me that there is something on metaphors in what is called 'Theolinguistics' (which is a perverted way of saying Kṛṣṇa-kathā I suppose). Lord Caitanya established the doctrine of *acintya bheda - and - abheda tatra*; is this the only philosophy by which we can understand Kṛṣṇa? If so, is there a correlation between understanding Kṛṣṇa through poetic

metaphors and *acitya-bheda-abheda tatra*? (After all a metaphor is also an expression in which the two terms or systems of terms are simultaneous one and different - because there seems to be a special interdependence between the figurative and the literal).

This all made me also think of Kṛṣṇa's statements in the Seventh and Tenth Chapter of the *Bhagavad-gītā* wherein He continually says: of this I am that. This is much like a metaphor with the structure A is B (as in Man is a Vulture). However, when Kṛṣṇa says, "I am the taste of water" (Bg. 7.8), is not He saying that He "is" indeed the taste of water and that He is at the same time different from it? (Is it this what you meant when you wrote that philosophical speculation is trying to find out how Kṛṣṇa is the taste of water? I.e. is what I am doing mental or philosophical speculation?). Is Kṛṣṇa using metaphorical language here in the sense that he "is" water, the scent of the earth, the ability in man, etc. and that He is simultaneously different from them?

Is this connected with Kṛṣṇa being both immanent and transcendent (all-inclusive and independent)?

Can we see "everything in relation to the Supreme Lord, [...], and see the Supreme Lord within everything" (Īsopaniṣad 6) when we see things metaphorically?

I am trying to understand Kṛṣṇa to be able to love Him, because: "Common man, including the demons and atheists, cannot know Kṛṣṇa, because He is guarded by His yoga-māyā energy. [...] The common man who has no love for Kṛṣṇa cannot always think of Kṛṣṇa; therefore he has to think materially. Arjuna is considering the mode of thinking of the materialistic persons of this world. [...] Because materialists cannot understand Kṛṣṇa spiritually, they are advised to concentrate the mind on physical things and try to see how Kṛṣṇa is manifested by physical representations." (Bg. 10.17, purport). I guess the end my questioning is, whether the metaphors are transcendental because of their indispensability for our understanding Kṛṣṇa, or are they physical representations of the mind and can therefore initially be used as "tools" but which in later stages of

development in Kṛṣṇa consciousness can be put aside or be given up?

I am sorry that I am proverbially rushing in where angels fear to enter, and that I took so much of your most valuable time, but I just wanted to know what you think of all this, because I am confident that you can help me to understand Kṛṣṇa better.

Answer by Suhotra Swami
June 11, 1998

"Lord Caitanya established the doctrine of *acintya bheda - and - abheda tatra*; is this the only philosophy by which we can understand Kṛṣṇa?"

We can only understand Him by His mercy. Lord Caitanya is the most merciful appearance of Kṛṣṇa, even more merciful than His appearance "as" Kṛṣṇa 5000 years ago. The answer is that Lord Caitanya gives the most perfect philosophical understanding of Kṛṣṇa. Other levels of understanding are there also, which come from the different *avatars* of Godhead in different ages. The philosophy is actually one, but it is presented in different ages in terms of different levels of capacity to understand. That is evident in the various presentations we find in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

"If so is there a correlation between understanding Kṛṣṇa through poetic metaphors and *acitya-bheda-abheda tatra*? (After all a metaphor is also an expression in which the two terms or systems of terms are simultaneous one and different - because there seems to be a special interdependence between the figurative and the literal)."

I think you are on to something, but you would be heading for trouble if you try to establish that *acitya-bheda-abheda tatra* is a metaphor. In a sense that is right, but most people do not have the right sense to understand it right. They take metaphor to be decoration. That conception would turn *acitya-bheda-abheda tatra* into a mere symbol. Now, as Śrīla Prabhupāda showed, if I say on a bright day when sunshine streams through my window, "There is sun in my room," that is

in one sense a fact, not a metaphor or that is what we mean by a "cognitive metaphor." In one sense, the sunshine is not different from the sun. Of course in another sense it certainly is different...if the sun itself entered my room, that would be the end of all discussions about metaphors.

"This all made me also think of Kṛṣṇa's statements in the Seventh and Tenth Chapter of the Bhagavad-gītā wherein He continually says: of this I am that. This is much like a metaphor with the structure A is B (as in Man is a Vulture). However, when Kṛṣṇa says, "I am the taste of water" (Bg. 7.8), is not He saying that He "is" indeed the taste of water and that He is at the same time different from it? (Is it this what you meant when you wrote that philosophical speculation is trying to find out how Kṛṣṇa is the taste of water? I.e. is what I am doing mental or philosophical speculation?). Is Kṛṣṇa using metaphorical language here in the sense that he "is" water, the scent of the earth, the ability in man, etc. and that He is simultaneously different from them?"

I would say that you could get away with calling them transcendental cognitive metaphors, meaning that they are more than just flowery words. If Kṛṣṇa was "not" those things, we would have no conception of their existence at all. By philosophically speculating on these statements, we get cognition – more than an imagination – of Kṛṣṇa's glories.

"Is this connected with Kṛṣṇa being both immanent and transcendent (all-inclusive and independent)?"

Yes.

"Can we see 'everything in relation to the Supreme Lord, [...] and see the Supreme Lord within everything' (Īṣopaniṣad 6) when we see things metaphorically?"

In the sense given before, yes.

"I guess the end my questioning is, whether the metaphors are transcendental because of their indispensability for our understanding Kṛṣṇa, or are they physical representations of the mind and can therefore initially be used as 'tools' but which in later stages of de-

velopment in Kṛṣṇa consciousness can be put aside or be given up?"

No, a Vaiṣṇava never thinks what Kṛṣṇa presents in *Bhagavad-gītā* may be later given up. The *sahajiyās* think like that. At the stage of *prema*, one sees these "metaphors" in the dimension of ecstatic loving consciousness. Here is where the point about the poetry of *rasa* comes in. A mundane poet writes about a woman, "Her glowing face is the moon in the sky of my mind." This is decorative metaphor... "sweet nothings," as they are aptly called. However, a pure devotee sees in separation the bright face of Lord Kṛṣṇa as the moon in the sky, and indeed He "is" the moon, in His *bhāva-rūpa* or form of ecstasy. Thus a devotee at this stage is never actually separate from Kṛṣṇa...as Bilvamaṅgala Thākura called out to the Lord, "You are the strongest, Kṛṣṇa, so it is not surprising you have freed yourself from my arms. Actually I will not be impressed with your strength until the day you can free yourself from my heart."

There is the earlier stage of "understanding" Kṛṣṇa in everything through philosophical speculation. Moreover, there is the later stage of perceiving His presence in everything through ecstatic feelings of separation.

KNOWING THE NESCIENCE

Question from Śīlpakarīṇī d.d.

May 18, 1998

In *Śrī Īṣopaniṣad Mantra 11* it is stated: "Only one who can learn the process of nescience and that of transcendental knowledge side by side can transcend the influence of repeated birth and death [...]"

Is it because of our conditioning that we cannot understand transcendental knowledge without comparing it to material knowledge? If we have *Śrīmad-*

Bhāgavatam why is it recommended in this mantra to learn also the process of nescience?

Answer by Suhotra Swami

May 19, 1998

It means that the material world is not totally false, like the Māyāvādīs think. One should know that nescience is the shadow or reflection of spiritual knowledge. Knowledge is like light. It reveals forms, and casts a shadow of those forms. Real spiritual knowledge reveals the form of Kṛṣṇa and the spiritual world. The shadow of those forms is the material world. When do you see light without shadow? Only when you see light without form. In other words, only when you are blinded by light. Then you see neither form nor shadow. This is the plight of the Māyāvādīs. Moreover, when do you see shadow without light? Only when you are plunged into total darkness. There again you can see no real form. These are the two extremes – impersonal monistic knowledge, and atheistic, materialistic knowledge. One is like a blinding light. The other is like total darkness.

PURĀNAS

Question from Vrajendra Kumāra d.

May 20, 1998

Dear Mahārāja, this time in Māyāpura Bhānu Swami was giving seminar on *Daśa Māla Śikṣā* and he was speaking about Purāṇas as bona fide sources of information. He mentioned that one of the explanation of the word *purāṇa* (except "ancient") is that it comes from *pūrṇa* (making something full or complete). Then he said that Vedas are compared to the golden necklace and Purāṇas complete (connect) this necklace. Of course, if the necklace is made of gold, the connection is also made of gold. This is the standard rule amongst jewelers. He gave this example to confirm that all Purāṇas are also golden i.e. bona fide. On the other

hand when somebody tried to translate *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa* with all those predictions, some authority mentioned that *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa* is not bona fide, that it was changed etc. My question is; who can guarantee that other Purāṇas were not changed in some places? Who controls and protects the authenticity of Vedic literature?

Another point is that in your new book *Transcendental Personalism* you gave a nice story of Oedipus with Vedic analysis of it. One point remained unclear to me: what his two sons and daughter Antigone represent? It says that when he went into exile he was accompanied by Antigone. What does this daughter symbolize?

Answer by Suhotra Swami

May 20, 1998

"On the other hand when somebody tried to translate *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa* with all those predictions, some authority mentioned that *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa* was not bona fide, that it was changed etc. My question is; who can guarantee that other Purāṇas were not changed in some places? Who controls and protects the authenticity of Vedic literature?"

The answer is the *ācāryas*. Though editions of the *Purāṇas* as they are now available in the marketplace may be interpolated and mixed with unauthorized additions, still the *Purāṇas* are eternal Vedic sound which vibrates within the heart of Brahmā and great saints and sages in the disciple succession. In our case, we rely on the six goswamis: *nānā-śāstra-vicāraṇaika-nipūṇau sad-dharma-saṁsthāpakau...*

"Another point is that in your new book *Transcendental Personalism* you gave a nice story of Oedipus with Vedic analysis of it. One point remained unclear to me: what his two sons and daughter Antigone represent? It says that when he went into exile he was accompanied by Antigone. What does this daughter symbolize?"

This is not a point of that explanation of the story. Therefore, I have no comment to make.

HIRANYAGARBHA

Question from Gaura Kṛṣṇa d.

May 24, 1998

Please explain the meaning of *Hiranyagarbha*. I have already seen some kinds of meanings like that it is Lord Brahmā; the lotus that came from navel of *Garbhodaka-sāyī* Viṣṇu; material nature activated by the glance of *Mahā-Viṣṇu* etc. Are all this meanings OK? Please explain this subject a little bit more.

Answer by Suhotra Swami

May 25, 1998

"Are all this meanings OK?"

Sure.

"Please explain this subject a little bit more."

In previous texts in this conference, I have said some things about this subject. I prefer to answer specific questions rather than general ones like this one. I do not have the time to invest in composing essays on broad subject matters like *Hiranyagarbha*.

GRADUAL CREATION

Question from Gopīcandra d.

May 25, 1998

Does creation happen at the same time in all universes, or are the Brahmās born and do they die at the same time?

Answer by Suhotra Swami

May 25, 1998

The universes form from the breathing of *Mahā-Viṣṇu*'s body like bubbles of foam. Think on this, the answer will come clear.

SELF-SITUATED

Question from Kāṣya d.

May 26, 1998

The *Bhagavad-gītā* (12.11) verse reads, "If, however, you are unable to work in this consciousness of Me, then try to act giving up all results of your work and try to be self-situated." What means self-situated? I thought of it as being situated according to *varṇa* and *āśrama*, at least in this context.

Answer by Suhotra Swami

May 27, 1998

"What means self-situated? I thought of it as being situated according to *varṇa* and *āśrama*, at least in this context."

That is all right. It refers to a person who cannot outright engage the results of his work in Kṛṣṇa's service. He is told to do his duty, be detached from the results, and satisfied in his detachment.

WHY DISEASES?

Question from Carol

June 5, 1998

Why there are diseases according to our philosophy?

Answer by Suhotra Swami

June 05, 1998

According to *Garuḍa Purāṇa*, (I have the original Sanskrit on file) diseases are persons who serve *Yamarāja*. They strike living entities as punishment for sins.



THE SOURCE OF THOUGHTS

Question from Carol
June 5, 1998

Where are the thoughts coming from? Sometimes they just appear in my head and I am as if observing them while chanting.

Answer by Suhotra Swami
June 05, 1998

Thoughts are sound in ether. The ether is pervaded with sounds. The gross sounds we hear with our ears have their beginning in the subtle ethereal sounds too. We access the ether (*ākāśa*) through our mental functions. Our mind is like a radio receiver that picks up ethereal sounds. Some of these sounds are random, some are purposeful (like when we sit down to think). All these sounds originate with Lord Viṣṇu (*Paramātmā*), but they are distorted by the three modes of material nature, thus they appear as "material" sounds until we purify our minds of the modes. That purification is done by *sādhana-bhakti*. When purified, as Prabhupāda puts it, one can then "take dictation from the Supersoul."

Question from Rāmānanda Rāya d.
June 5, 1998

Related to this explanation, how do we differentiate here between thoughts, vision, and imagination?

Answer by Suhotra Swami
June 6, 1998

The *ākāśa* is an oceanic realm of subtle forms. All material forms have their beginning in ether, though they only start to become visible with the appearance of the element fire. Therefore, imagination is a process of the mind taking pictures and concepts out of this oceanic realm and putting them together in a new way... Prabhupāda gave the example of taking the concept "gold" and combining that with a mental image of a

mountain to get the imagination of a golden mountain. A vision is a case of the presentation of extra-dimensional *ākāśic* information within the human mental wavelength. It is something like picking up a radio broadcast on your temple speaker system. The microphone-speaker system in the temple is only meant for locally produced sounds like a lecture or a tape played in the temple room, but sometimes you get a radio program coming in from far away. When this happens in a person's mind, it is called clairvoyance, clairaudience, mystical visions, etc.

LORD BALARĀMA

Question from Magda Wiessentaner
June 6, 1998

*I would like to ask you to kindly explain the meaning of the *sānta-rasa*. I have heard that Balarāma is also in that *rasa*. Is that so? In addition, what is the actual difference between that neutral *rasa* and servitorship (*dāsyā-rasa*).*

Answer by Suhotra Swami
June 7, 1998

You can easily answer these basic questions by consulting Śrīla Prabhupāda's books. I really do not have the time to re-explain on COM what is clearly evident in the *Gītā* and *Bhāgavatam*. It is not true that Lord Balarāma is in the *sānta-rasa*. By His energy, He manifests the transcendental domain in which Lord Kṛṣṇa displays His pastimes. The features of that domain, like the land and the trees, exhibit *sānta-rasa*.



PROVE BY ANUMĀNA

Question from Gaurāṅga Premānanda d.
June 14, 1998

How to prove by anumāna that the material energy is expanded from or created by Kṛṣṇa or Viṣṇu? According to the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.11.1 the material energy is composed of atoms as the ultimate indivisible particles. Atoms being round balls are products of a Creator. He could have created these from formless matter, which has not come from Him.

Answer by Suhotra Swami
June 15, 1998

"How to prove by *anumāna*..."
You cannot prove anything by *anumāna*. You can give evidence and make arguments. However, that is not proof. *Śāstra* is the proof of those who follow the Vedic way of knowledge.

"Atoms being round balls are products of a Creator. He could have created these from formless matter which has not come from Him."

What? I do not follow your point.

LEVELS OF BHAKTI

Question from Aśvahari d.
September 09, 1998

*Does different stages of development of devotional service (*śraddhā, sādhu-saṅga...*) correspond somehow with *kaniṣṭha, madhyama* and *uttama* levels? If yes, which corresponds with *kaniṣṭha*, which with *madhyama* and which with *uttama*?*

*Somewhere else Śrīla Prabhupāda writes about *guṇī-bhūta, pradhānī-bhūta* and *kevala* platforms, which correspond with *jñāna, jñānamayī* and *rati*. With which stages of *adau śraddhā tataḥ sādhu-saṅga* do correspond these three platforms?*

Last question is about "ruci." In verses 1.4.15-16 of Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu (adau śraddhā...) Rūpa Goswami does not list rati - attachment, but Śrīla Prabhupāda somewhere mentions this. Does it belong between ruci and bhāva stages or somewhere else?

Answer by Suhotra Swami
September 10, 1998

"Does different stages of development of devotional service (*śraddhā, sādhu-saṅga...*) correspond somehow with *kaniṣṭha, madhyama* and *uttama* levels? If yes, which corresponds with *kaniṣṭha*, which with *madhyama* and which with *uttama*?"

I would not answer with "yes" to this, since Śrīla Prabhupāda said there are pure devotees in all three classes of devotees.

"Somewhere else Śrīla Prabhupāda writes about *guṇī-bhūta, pradhānī-bhūta* and *kevala* platforms, which correspond with *jñāna, jñānamayī* and *rati*. With which stages of *adau śraddhā tataḥ sādhu-saṅga* do correspond these three platforms?"

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.3.31, purport) says: "*Bhakti* may be considered in three stages, called *guṇī-bhūta, pradhānī-bhūta* and *kevala*, and according to these stages there are three divisions, which are called *jñāna, jñānamayī* and *rati*, or *prema*—that is, simple knowledge, love mixed with knowledge, and pure love. By simple knowledge, one can perceive transcendental bliss without variety. This perception is called *mana-bhūti*. When one comes to the stage of *jñānamayī*, one realizes the transcendental opulences of the Personality of Godhead. However, when one reaches pure love, one realizes the transcendental form of the Lord as Lord Kṛṣṇa or Lord Rāma. This is what is wanted. Especially in the *mādhurya-rasa*, one becomes attached to the Personality of Godhead (*śrī-viṅghra-niṣṭha-rūpādī*). Then loving transactions between the Lord and the devotee begin.

According to Nectar of Devotion and explained also by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura, there are three divisions of *bhakti: sādhana, bhāva* and *prema. Bhāva-bhakti* is

performed by the *jīvan-mukta* devotee (liberated while still within the body). *Prema-bhakti* is performed by the *videha-mukta* (liberated in the spiritual abode of the Lord). Direct perceptive knowledge of Kṛṣṇa and His pastimes begins at the *bhāva* stage. Within *bhāva-bhakti*, there are various stages of this knowledge also, which arise one after the other by the mercy of *guru*. At the culmination, *bhāva-bhakti* matures into *prema-bhakti* – pure love. From this, my answer would be that the *jñāna* and *jñānamayī* divisions fall within *bhāva-bhakti*, and *rati* or *prema* is *prema-bhakti*.

"Last question is about "ruci." In verses 1.4.15-16 of *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu (adau śraddhā...)* Rūpa Goswami does not list *rati* - attachment, but Śrīla Prabhupāda somewhere mentions this. Does it belong between *ruci* and *bhāva* stages or somewhere else?"

Please consult the purport to *Caitanya-caritāmṛta, (Madhya 24.30.)*

KĀLAM IS KṚṢṆA

Question from Madan-mohana d.
September 11, 1998

Could you please explain who is meant in the Bhagavad-gītā (8.23) by the word kalam? Śrīla Prabhupāda says in the purport, quoting Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhāṣaṇa, that the word kalam "refers to the presiding deity of time." What is the identity of the deity?

Answer by Suhotra Swami
September 13, 1998

One is never wrong when one says the presiding deity of anything is Kṛṣṇa. In the Eleventh Chapter of *Bhagavad-gītā*, He shows Himself to be time. All the other deities I mentioned last time derive their potency from Kṛṣṇa. In addition, another deity of time mentioned in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Canto 5, is *Sudarśana cakra*.

ENERGY OF CAUSE AND EFFECT

Question from Ātmārāma d.
September 29, 1998

The verse from Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (1.2.30) says: "In the beginning of the material creation, that Absolute Personality of Godhead [Vāsudeva], in His transcendental position, created the energies of cause and effect by His own internal energy." My question is: what are these energies of cause and effect? Especially I cannot comprehend what could an energy of effect be.

Answer by Suhotra Swami
September 29, 1998

The Lord has, in the final analysis, one energy, His *acintya-śakti*. *Acintya* means inconceivable. It works in contradictory ways, as both cause and effect. The cause is spirit. The effect is matter (or, in other words, the creation, maintenance and destruction of the material manifestation, which takes place against the background of eternal spirit). For your understanding, think of the ocean. Waves are created, maintained and destroyed on the surface. The energy is one, yet there is still within this one energy a cause (the ocean) and an effect (the waves).

JĪVA

Question from Ekātma d.
October 11, 1998

*In Bhagavad-gītā it is stated that the jīva is *acalab*, or *immovable*. Recently I heard one of your lectures, in which you explained how the jīva is *not moving*, whereas the matter around him is. Often you give the example of a person going to see a movie. He is *observing the movie and identifying with the characters*, as *jīva identifies with material body*.*

The person is sitting in his chair, but where is this *jīva* of the analogy actually situated? Once you explained that having come to this material world, the living entity is as in a state of shock, stunned.

How is it that he is still interacting with other *jīvas*, and not even moving? Referring to the word *acalāh*, you explained that Supersoul moves the *jīva* on at the point of death, for he himself does not have the power to move.

Connected with the first question; if he really moves, where does he move, or does he just focus his attention to another character of his movie, seated on his chair. I hope I was not misquoting Your Holiness due to my limited understanding.

Answer by Suhotra Swami
October 12, 1998

"The person is sitting in his chair. Where is this *jīva* of the analogy actually situated?"

It is in the heart, of course...with *Paramātmā*.

"How is it that he is still interacting with other *jīvas*, and not even moving?"

Everything is done by material nature, even the subtle and emotional parts. The *jīva* is the witness. He is tasting what he witnesses, trying to enjoy it.

"Connected with the first question, if he really moves, where does he move, or does he just focus his attention to another character of his movie, seated on his chair."

One can look at it this way: The Lord reconfigures the material nature around the *jīva*.

Question from Ekātma d.
October 14, 1998

"It is in the heart, of course... with *Paramātmā*." Nevertheless, as the material body moves, the heart also moves, being a part of the material body. Still the *jīva* in the heart does not move?"

"...in the heart..." Śrīla Prabhupāda said we were all originally with Kṛṣṇa. How did the *jīva* come from his spiritual *svarūpa* to this seed like form in the heart? Now, I do not mean to ask how he misused his independence, more likely how it technically happened. Once I heard he was compressed (?).

Answer by Suhotra Swami
October 14, 1998

"As the material body moves, the heart also moves, being a part of the material body. Still the *jīva* in the heart does not move?"

You are thinking of motion in terms of time and space, which is material. The *jīva* is not material. The *jīva* moves in terms of *rasa* in the spiritual world, a movement that cannot be understood in terms of material time and space. Looking at the *jīva* from the standpoint of the material existence, we can only say it is eternal. Time moves all things material. Thus, the *jīva* is unmoved. You cannot put all this together by the mechanics of your mind. It is *acīnyā*. Stop speculating.

"Śrīla Prabhupāda said we were all originally with Kṛṣṇa. How did the *jīva* come from his spiritual *svarūpa* to this seed like form in the heart? Now, I do not mean to ask how he misused his independence, more likely how it technically happened. Once I heard he was compressed (?)."

Once you heard he was compressed. I would prefer to deal with clear quotations from *sāstra* than things one has heard here and there. The answers to these questions are given by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura. In Chapter Two of the book, I am now writing I will quote what he has said in *Śrī Caitanya-śikṣāṁṛta* and *Prema-pradīpa*. However, even without knowing these answers there is no call to try to imagine how such events occur in terms of physics.

"...compressed (?)." Sounds like the philosophy that identifies the *jīva* with *prāṇa* or life air; compressed air. The *jīva* is nonmaterial. Though the analogy of the seed is also material, it shows that within that seed state the

potential of the mature form remains. Compressed air shows nothing. For that potential of spiritual form to manifest the seed must be implanted in the internal potency. When the soul becomes attached to an object of love inferior to Kṛṣṇa, it is removed from that potency and transferred to the material potency. Thus, the spiritual form is unmanifest, as it has not the appropriate environment to manifest in. However, that form is not lost. Stop speculating about these things. The subtle mechanics of the mind are not competent to grasp them. We have a basic explanation offered by our *ācāryas*, an explanation that is already well known in ISKCON. It is not esoteric knowledge. It requires realization to perceive. It cannot be perceived any clearer by turning the subject matter around and around in the mind. In the material world, we are like Bedouins who have lived in the desert our whole lives. Then we meet a Bedouin who visited a city and saw a mirror. He tries to explain what a mirror is to us. How will we understand it through the mechanics of the mind? Even if he draws a picture in the dirt of a square outline representing the shape of the mirror, and then draws a face within it, does that give us a more accurate picture of what a mirror is? We only know dirt, man. The mirror is a medium of which we have no experience. How can you "think" of something you have not experienced?

Ceto-darpana-mārjanam is the answer to your question. The mirror of consciousness must be cleansed, then the form of the soul is manifest in it. Clean consciousness is the doorway to the internal potency. What is this compressed air? Now the mirror of consciousness is dirty. Of course then the form of the soul is unmanifest. Nonetheless, it is there. We say unmanifest to give an indication. What is unmanifest is the mirror of clean consciousness, because we are like Bedouins trying to understand a clean mirror in terms of dirt on the ground.

Comment by Ekātma d.
October 17, 1998

Dear Guru Mahārāja, thank you very much for the most illuminating answers. You answered both questions I asked and to questions I didn't have the brain to ask. "It's only dirt we know, man." I am sorry the dirt is flowing up the lines from my side. "Ceto-darpana-mārjanam is the answer to your question." Thank you, gladly I take the medicine.

BRAIN FUNCTION

Question from Caitya-guru d.
October 15, 1998

From the *Bhagavad-gītā* and other Vedic literature, we hear that the process of thinking happens in the subtle-body (in conditioned life). The modern science says that it is the working of the brain. I have also heard from HH. Bhaktividyāpūra Swami Mahārāja that on our platform there is a basic difference between the working of the brain of a man and a woman regarding to their psychic nature, especially in the workings of intelligence, which is the part of the subtle body. I have also read the article of H.H. Devānṛta Mahārāja in which it is described that there is no need of a brain for psychic functions at all. He mentioned examples, who are not devotees (who could go above the material circumstances) and have very good intelligence (high IQ), but practically they have no brains at all.

It seems that the brain has a big part in the thinking process. What is the connection between our subtle-body and brain? What is the function and role of the brain in the whole body at all?

Answer by Suhotra Swami
October 16, 1998

"It seems that the brain has a big part in the thinking process. What is the connection between our subtle-

body and brain? What is the function and role of the brain in the whole body at all?"

All things develop from subtle to gross. The brain is the grossest manifestation of the mechanics of thought, which originate in the heart from the platform called *para*.

Thought, or sound (it is the same) manifests from there in three further stages, the lowest of which is the gross platform physical functions.

NECESSARY KNOWLEDGE

Question from Prema-vanya d.
October 31, 1998

Many times when we read Śrīla Prabhupāda's books we find the statement that on the level of spiritual advancement we stopped in this life from that level we will start our devotional service in the future life. Nevertheless, we see that already in this life we forget some knowledge (information). What is the right understanding of this statement? Is it right to think that during the practice of devotional service we develop some kind of intuition which will help us in the future life? As far as I understand we will any way forget the philosophical knowledge which we accumulate now.

Answer by Suhotra Swami
November 3, 1998

Read *Bhagavad-gītā* (10.8-11). All knowledge required for going back home back to Godhead is at the disposal of the devotee by the special grace of the Lord in the heart.



KAVI, MUNI AND RSI

Question from Madana-mohana d.
November 12, 1998

In *Bhagavad-gītā* (18.2-3), answering Arjuna's inquiry about *tyāga* and *sannyāsa*, Lord Kṛṣṇa is quoting opinions of three different authorities:

- 1) *kavasyab* - the learned
- 2) *vicasāṇāb* - the experiences
- 3) *manīṣiṇāb* - great thinkers

I would like to ask you if these three sources quoted by Kṛṣṇa are just named differently, or they actually represent three different philosophical schools, and if so, I wonder what schools does each of them represent?

Answer by Suhotra Swami
November 12, 1998

Well, this is an invitation to speculate, since we see little in the purports that would justify forming conclusions about different schools. What I see in these terms is not various philosophical schools but various sorts of expertise in Vedic knowledge. The first refers to persons expert in poetic speech. *Kavi* generally means "learned," but in one lecture Śrīla Prabhupāda pointed out a distinction between *kavi* and *muni* or *ṛṣi*. A *kavi* speaks nicely. The second refers to those who see the truth directly. Such a person may not be learned in the sense of scholarship. By spiritual realization, he sees the truth: *tatva-darśi*. The third refers to a thoughtful person a philosopher, one who does not accept or reject a thing on the basis of emotions (the "heart," which is becoming so important to a certain section of ISKCON devotees lately), nor does he accept or reject a thing on the basis of instinct (the "gut"). He has to think about it carefully first. This term would be equivalent to *muni*.

DEFECTS OF THE CONDITIONED SOULS

Question from Gaurāṅga Premānanda d.
November 17, 1998

There are four major defects inherent in all conditioned souls. What is the difference between bhrama and pramāda?

Answer by Suhotra Swami
November 18, 1998

Bhrama means mistake. Just like you see a rope but mistake it to be a snake. When this mistake makes you feel afraid, that is illusion (*pramāda*). When you warn others and make them afraid too, that is cheating.

ACTIVITIES OF CATUR-VYŪHA

Question from Gaurāṅga Premānanda d.
November 17, 1998

In the Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta it is stated: "...the ādi catur-vyūha the original quadruple forms are the source of unlimited dvīṭya catur-vyūha." Do they exhibit the same activities or rasas as in Dvārakā and do the unlimited dvīṭya catur-vyūhas have the same name on all different Vaikuṅṭha planets they reside on?

Answer by Suhotra Swami
November 18, 1998

The original *catur-vyūha* is in Dvārakā. The *catur-vyūha* that expands from this one consists of four-handed Viṣṇu forms. For example, Vāsudeva in *śuddha-sattva* expands Saṅkaraṣaṇa who is Mahā-Viṣṇu, controller of *tamo-guṇa* (the ignorance of sleep, *Sadāśiva* Mahādeva). From Saṅkaraṣaṇa comes Pradyumna, who is Garbhodakaśāyī Viṣṇu, in charge of passion (cosmic creation, *Brahmā*). From Pradyumna comes Aniruddha,

who is Kṣīrodakaśāyī Viṣṇu, in charge of goodness (Supsoul).

PROPHECIES

Question from Gaurāṅga Premānanda d.
November 17, 1998

In the book Vedic Prophecies we find that in 1999 there will be a great war of wars and that probably in May 2000 AD there will be earthquake, floods, shifting of the poles. (This is translated from the Bhaviṣya Purāṇa). Is this the official ISKCON viewpoint or in other words is this Purāṇic viewpoint bona fide?

Answer by Suhotra Swami
November 18, 1998

Regarding prophecies, Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "I am not a fortune teller." I shall follow his example. There are COM conferences devoted to this sort of magical thinking. You may go to these for other opinions.

SEX LIFE AND TRANSCENDENTAL POSITION

Question from Vrajendra Kumāra d.
November 20, 1998

In Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (3.23.42, purport) Śrīla Prabhupāda states "Although he (Kardama Muni) was enjoying with his wife and many other women, he was above material, conditioned life. Therefore, the word Vyāsānāyayaḥ is used to indicate that he was beyond the position of a conditioned soul. He was transcendental to all material limitations."

We know that enjoying on the bodily level is the symptom of conditioned life, but Kardama is described as transcendental. Was he engaging in those affairs just

for the sake of Devahūtī and others or how should we properly understand his transcendental position while he was enjoying sex life for many, many years as stated in the verse 44?

Answer by Suhotra Swami
November 20, 1998

Kardama Muni is a direct son of Lord Brahmā. He belongs to the order of sages who dwell in the topmost planetary system. Therefore, he is transcendental to the rules and regulations of *varṇāśrama-dharma*, which govern the affairs of conditioned souls in lower realms of the universe. Such personalities as he may engage in sex life, but they do so not for the purpose of sense gratification (though of course sense gratification is always a part of sex). Their interest is to have pure progeny that will purify the universe. Thus Kapiladeva, the Lord Himself, became Kardama's son.

Question from Vrajendra Kumāra d.
November 20, 1998

In Bhagavad-gītā (12.8-12) Kṛṣṇa gives different levels of spiritual advancement from the highest to the lowest and in the second part of the verse 12 he gives the reverse order which looks strange to me. Kṛṣṇa starts in the verse eight from the devotion on the mental level which is meditation and then goes down to the level of external activities but in the verse 12 He states that renunciation of fruits of action is better than meditation. Is it different meditation from that mentioned in the verse eight?

Answer by Suhotra Swami
November 20, 1998

No, the verse 12.8 is not about meditation on the mental level. It is about a mind that is ever fixed in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, a mind that has totally accepted Kṛṣṇa and rejected everything not-Kṛṣṇa. In other words, He is speaking of love of God. Thus the next verse says if you

cannot fix your mind on Me in this way, follow the regulative principles of *bhakti-yoga*. Now, we need to keep in mind that in *Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa is speaking in the language of *Vedānta*, not so much in the language of love, because Kṛṣṇa's purpose in speaking the *Gītā* was to establish the ultimate goal of the Vedas, (*Vedānta*). Thus *Gītā* is known as *Gītopaniṣad*. The *Upaniṣads* are *Vedānta* scriptures and their language follows a certain vocabulary. Lord Kṛṣṇa was using the same vocabulary. Thus, verse eight may sound like He is talking about *yoga*. Well, He is of course, but not *yoga* as a practice. That starts with verse nine: *bhakti-yoga*, then *karma-yoga*, *nyāya-yoga*, *jñāna-yoga*, *dhyāna-yoga* and back to *karma* and *nyāya yogas*. These involve taking steps to perfection, but verse eight IS the perfection: *yoga* that means simply "connected" – completely connected to the Lord in pure Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

SPIRITUAL MASTER

Question from Prema Vanya d.
November 20, 1998

I heard from some devotees a statement that the more a disciple advances in spiritual life the more advancement makes his Spiritual Master. Moreover, if the Spiritual master have many fallen disciples his advancement go not so fast. Is it proper to think that on some degree the advancement in spiritual life of spiritual master depends from the advancement of his disciples?

Answer by Suhotra Swami
November 20, 1998

It is not wise to make generalizations like this. Such statements are the result of speculation upon the position of the spiritual master. You cannot do that. The spiritual master is not an ordinary man. He may be subjectively an ordinary man, in the sense that he himself thinks, "I am just a fallen soul like everybody else, and I am trying

to serve Kṛṣṇa like any other devotee." The spiritual master has been selected by Kṛṣṇa for His special purpose in this world. Thus, Kṛṣṇa can do anything through the *guru*. Śrīla Prabhupāda, for example, was himself astonished by his own success in preaching. He used to say it was all Kṛṣṇa's doing...his qualification was "just" that he followed his spiritual master strictly, which is a high qualification indeed. There is a lot of magical thinking in ISKCON these days, especially among Russian devotees. It is not that the spiritual master is a "magic person" with powers that can be strengthened or reduced by material circumstances. It is simply that the spiritual master is chosen by Kṛṣṇa to be His instrument. As long as he remains Kṛṣṇa's instrument, then everything is happening according to Kṛṣṇa's plan, even if there are disciples in *māyā*, does not matter. However, if the spiritual master deviates from Kṛṣṇa's plan, then he will become weak due to separating from Kṛṣṇa.

"Is it proper to think that on some degree the advancement in spiritual life of Spiritual Master depends from the advancement of his disciples?"

This is speculation. Guessing, it is uncalled for. The spiritual master is under Kṛṣṇa's direction. There is a warning in the *sāstra* that a *guru* should not accept too many disciples. It means unqualified disciples, those who do not take spiritual life seriously enough to follow the regulative principles. Spiritual master should try to the best of his sincerity to observe this rule, otherwise he deviates from Kṛṣṇa's protection. If he deviates, he is under risk of reaction. However, if he is sincere, Kṛṣṇa will protect him even if some disciples are fallen (that is to be expected anyway in this dark material world).

DESTINY AND FREE WILL

Question from Jason Rapp
November 20, 1998

How is it that there is simultaneous destiny and free will?

Answer by Suhotra Swami, Nov 21, 1998

This is explained in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (4.29.26-27). The living entity's actual free will is in choosing between matter and spirit. When he chooses matter, he loses his real freedom and is conducted by the modes of nature. Within the modes, there is a relative freedom of choice. It is like the freedom within one of these complex modern computer games, which brings you into a vast world of adventure. Many different endings are possible. However, in the last analysis they are all pre-programmed. Moreover, all endings good or bad, are temporary, and thus unsatisfying to the eternal soul.

SĀṅKHYA-YOGA

Question from Madana-mohana d.
November 21, 1998

In his purport on Bhagavad-gītā (2.40, page 125, first paragraph) Śrīla Prabhupāda writes: "Real Sāṅkhya philosophy is described by Lord Kapila in the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, but even that Sāṅkhya has nothing to do with the current topics. Here, Sāṅkhya means analytical description of the body and the soul. Lord Kṛṣṇa made an analytical description of the soul just to bring Arjuna to the point of buddhi-yoga, or bhakti-yoga. Therefore, Lord Kṛṣṇa's Sāṅkhya and Lord Kapila's Sāṅkhya, as described in the Bhāgavatam, are the same. They are all bhakti-yoga." I would like to ask you to please explain, why Śrīla Prabhupāda first says these two Sāṅkhyas to be different and having nothing to do with each other and then points out that they are the same.



Answer by Suhotra Swami
November 21, 1998

By the way, this quotation you have cited is from the Purport to *Bhagavad-gītā* 2.39, not 2.40. Reading the whole purport, it seems to me that Śrīla Prabhupāda primarily wants to establish that the difference most scholars see between Sāṅkhya and *bhakti* arises from their considering the atheistic Sāṅkhya of the imitation Kapila to be the real Sāṅkhya. Secondly, in this segment of the purport cited above, he mentions that even the Sāṅkhya of Devahūti-putra Kapila has nothing to do with "the current topics."

The key to the problem you have raised is what Śrīla Prabhupāda means by "current topics."

Prabhupāda goes on to say that Lord Kṛṣṇa's analytical description of the soul, which was meant to bring Arjuna to *buddhi* or *bhakti-yoga*, is one and the same with Devahūti-putra Kapila's. That means to me that the term "current topics" is not supposed to be understood as only the section of verses in Chapter Two where Lord Kṛṣṇa summarizes Sāṅkhya philosophy. Of course, this is my personal conclusion after considering your question. The language is not explicit here. Someone else can say that "current topics" must be what Kṛṣṇa is currently explaining, which is Sāṅkhya. Then we are left with a contradiction that I do not see any way to solve. I think "current topics" means the *Gītā* as a whole, separated from the context of *Mahābhārata*. When you compare the 700 verses of the *Gītā* with the teachings of Lord Kapila to his mother Devahūti, you find that the *Gītā* focuses on the urgency of Lord Kṛṣṇa's request that Arjuna surrender to Him. The Lord's arguments on Sāṅkhya in this section, and his talks on *karma-yoga*, *jñāna-yoga* and *dhyāna-yoga*, are simply geared to convince Arjuna to surrender to Him and fight. This is *bhakti*. The Catuṣloki (culminating verse) of the *Gītā* is the famous *sarva-dharmāṇaṁ paritijā...*

I taught a study course on the *Gītā* once, and in preparation for that I marshaled an impressive collection of quotations from Śrīla Prabhupāda stating that in the

Catuṣloki Kṛṣṇa is rejecting all the other *yogas* He referred to earlier in the *Gītā*. *Bhakti* pertains only to the relationship of the Lord and His devotee. *Sāṅkhya*, *jñāna*, *dhyāna* and *karma-yoga* are outside of this. There is a different mood in Kapiladeva's teachings. He takes us on an engrossing tour of very complex concepts of philosophy. The call to surrender is there, but it is not urgent. To surrender to the Lord in pure devotion is of course the logical consequence of what Kapiladeva is teaching; so in this sense, there is no difference between what he is telling Devahūti and what Lord Kṛṣṇa is telling Arjuna. However, Devahūti is under no pressure. She is an amazingly intelligent and perceptive woman who is putting questions to her beloved son (an incarnation of God, no less). He is taking care of his dear mother for the rest of her days on earth. She is the daughter of Svāyambhuva Manu, a great demigod.

Her life span is very, very long. There is no urgency here like at Kurukṣetra. She and her divine son have plenty of time to track down every thread of philosophy, wherever it may lead, however long it may take. That luxury is not there in the *Gītā*. Kṛṣṇa wants Arjuna to fight. He therefore speaks with fewest words, maximal meaning, and comes right to the point: "As My devotee, you are meant to serve Me under My direction. All other considerations can be thrown out. Surrender is what is important here today."

PRĀṆA & ĀKĀŚA

Question from Nārada-kunda d.d.

Nov 24, 1998

In your new (very insightful and helpful) book, *Transcendental Personalism*, you seem to equate *prāṇa* with the element ether. In the 11th Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (and a book on *Āyurveda*), however, *prāṇa* is referred to as part of the air element, and a short explanation is given that each of the five *mahā-bhūtas* has

a gross and a subtle manifestation. According to *Āyurveda*, *prāṇa* is related to *vata-doṣa*, which is a combination of air and ether.

Please shed some *siddhāntic* light on all this. In addition, sometimes one hears how the "ether" of a person or place is polluted, meaning their "ākāśic record" is burdened by (still unfructified) sinful reactions. This fits in with your explanation of *prāṇa*.

You also mention how each element has its internal and external manifestation. Does this mean only that it's part of either the microcosm or the macrocosm, or does it mean that it's modified by being in these "cosmoses"? Thank you for your answer and for disseminating knowledge of Kṛṣṇa as He appears all around us and inside us through His different *śaktis*: *vāsudevaḥ sarvaṁ iti...*

Answer by Suhotra Swami
November 24, 1998

"In your new (very insightful and helpful) book, *Transcendental Personalism*, you seem to equate *prāṇa* with the element ether. In the 11th Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (and a book on *Āyurveda*), however, *prāṇa* is referred to as part of the air element, and a short explanation is given that each of the five *mahā-bhūtas* has a gross and a subtle manifestation. According to *Āyurveda*, *prāṇa* is related to *vata-doṣa*, which is a combination of air and ether. Please shed some *siddhāntic* light on all this."

I mentioned, on page 64 of *Transcendental Personalism* Śrīla Prabhupāda's Purport to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (3.26.24). Here is a relevant segment: "The mind, the senses and the vital force, or living entity, have forms, although they are not visible to the naked eye. Form rests in subtle existence in the sky, and internally it is perceived as the veins within the body and the circulation of the vital air. Externally there are invisible forms of sense objects. The production of the invisible sense objects is the external activity of the ethereal element, and the circulation of vital air and blood is its in-

ternal activity. That subtle forms exist in the ether has been proven by modern science by transmission of television, by which forms or photographs of one place are transmitted to another place by the action of the ethereal element. That is very nicely explained here. This verse is the potential basis of great scientific research work, for it explains how subtle forms are generated from the ethereal element, what their characteristics and actions are, and how the tangible elements, namely air, fire, water and earth, are manifested from the subtle form. Mental activities, or psychological actions of thinking, feeling and willing, are also activities on the platform of ethereal existence."

Regarding the association of *prāṇa* with both ether and air, I think that is straightened out above where Śrīla Prabhupāda states that air, fire, water and earth are manifested from the subtle form (meaning the potential forms within ether). Elsewhere it is stated there are ten *prāṇas* that govern all bodily functions. These airs in turn have their root in ether... which Śrīla Prabhupāda very clearly says is seen in the circulation of the vital air and blood. This means that air and blood move due to *ākāśa*. This sheds light on why it is said in scripture that there are ten *prāṇas* altogether, and these can be reduced to five, which in turn are reduced to one *prāṇa*. The one root *prāṇa* is the internal *ākāśa*, which is not different from the *prāṇa* which expands from the Lord to fill the universe, which vibrates with Vedic sound, and which is the basis for all elemental movements within the macrocosmic body of Viṣṇu.

"Also, sometimes one hears how the 'ether' of a person or place is polluted, meaning their 'ākāśic record' is burdened by (still unfructified) sinful reactions. This fits in with your explanation of *prāṇa*."

Hmmm...This is too *sūtra*-like for me to comment on.

"You also mention how each element has its internal and external manifestation. Does this mean only that it's part of either the microcosm or the macrocosm, or does

it mean that it's modified by being in these 'cosmoses'?"

Well, ultimately each element has its most internal identity as spirit (the *antaranga-śakti* or internal potency of Kṛṣṇa). There are spiritual earth, water, fire, air and ether ever on display in Lord Kṛṣṇa's eternal abode. The shadows of these appear in the material world as gross elements (*mahā-bhūtas*). I just give an indication of this, for example on page 113, where I argue that even matter is ultimately transcendental, for the deeper scientists go into matter, the more it vanishes. "Matter" is the external shadow of spirit. Spirit, the substance on which the shadow depends, is inaccessible to the observing and conceptual powers of our senses and minds. Stay tune for the next book, entitled DIMENSIONS OF GOOD AND EVIL: THE MORAL UNIVERSE AND VAISNAVA PHILOSOPHY, to be published soon on an Internet site that will be called MILK OCEAN.

JĪVA (NO FALLDOWN)

Question from Madana-mohana d.

November 25, 1998

Recently, reading *Śrī Iṣopaniṣad*, I came across the two following statements by Śrīla Prabhupāda, which might be interpreted to support a conception of *jīva*'s never falling down from the spiritual world. I realize that bringing this topic up again in Danda may seem irrelevant, but by doing so I do not mean to get into controversies again. I just hope you could kindly give some comments on the passages to clarify Śrīla Prabhupāda's words without necessarily touching upon the issues you would deem unwelcome in your conference.

Śrī Iṣopaniṣad Mantra 16, Purport says: "The all-pervading feature of the Lord—which exists in all circumstances of waking and sleeping as well as in potential states and from which the *jīva*-śakti (living force) is

generated as both conditioned and liberated souls—is known as Brahman."

Mantra 17, Purport says: "The *brahmayoti* emanating from the transcendental body of the Lord is full of spiritual sparks that are individual entities with the full sense of existence. Sometimes these living entities want to become enjoyers of the senses, and therefore they are placed in the material world to become false lords under the dictation of the senses."

Answer by Suhotra Swami
November 25, 1998

These quotations do not say that the original position of the *jīva* is in the *brahmayoti*. Without going into details and reconstructing a whole line of argument that has been gone through before, I will say that you have to try to understand what Śrīla Prabhupāda meant when he wrote in a letter to Ravatinandana that the *jīva* in *brahmayoti* is already fallen. It seems you have not caught that point, and that is why you are stuck on this quotation. The point is not that we who argue the *jīva* was originally with Kṛṣṇa in a personal relationship say that the *jīva* does not come into the material world from the *brahmayoti*. The effulgence of the Lord's glance when he activates creation is the effulgence of Brahman. Of course, all the *jīvas* here arrived by way of the rays of Brahman. That says nothing about why they were situated in those rays, and why other spirit souls remain ever-associated with the Lord in a personal relationship.

"SIMPLE" VAISNAVAS

Question from Nārada-kunda d.d.
November 26, 1998

Are the "esoteric" matters automatically revealed, either by direct perception as one's consciousness is elevated, or by immediate realization upon hearing, to one adhering exclusively to the process of *vaidhi-sādhana*—

bhakti? Do they cease to be theoretical knowledge and become tangible reality for the devotee?

For example, Śrīla Prabhupāda understood and was able to give the purport to the sections of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam dealing with subjects like the structure of the universe, time, etc., which remain a complete mystery to neophyte and/or nonscientifically inclined devotees. Can we hope to understand these matters just by virtue of spiritual purification? For example, there is the story of Gopa Kumāra – on his way to Goloka he passed through all the layers of the universe. It seems to be part of the journey back home to Godhead. Is it so for everyone? Is the desire for this understanding considered *jñāna-mīśra-bhakti*? Is it only for those who cannot directly surrender, but must first understand God's might and omnipresence (see Bg. 10.7, Purport)? On the other hand, both Arjuna and Parīkṣit seriously inquire about the material nature, because it is, like you state in Transcendental Personalism, one of the two natures of Kṛṣṇa.

Somebody told me today that understanding the universe around us is only for the sages, that one has to be especially empowered for this, and that Kali-yuga makes it even more difficult. This person was of the opinion that the "simple" Vaiṣṇavas of the past prove his point – he thinks they were ignorant of these matters just because they were not scholarly. Is this true? I was thinking about Kṛṣṇa's intimate associates – they are not concerned about His opulences, but it is not that they are ignorant. For example, Rāpa Mañjarī, etc. – when they come to the material world they exhibit their knowledge, but otherwise they are happy to serve Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa in some mental capacity.

I heard that you would like to visit Ireland. The devotees here in Belfast would appreciate it very much if you came to our temple.

Answer by Suhotra Swami
November 28, 1998

I will give just one answer to this and your other questions, which all revolve around the same point. The reason for the "esoteric" description of the universe in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Canto Five is made evident in the beginning of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Canto Six, where Parīkṣit Mahārāja requests Śukadeva Gosvāmī to kindly explain how the conditioned souls can be delivered from the hellish planets. The mission of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is a rescue mission. Consider the crash rescue team at a modern airport. They have a responsibility to know the insides and outsides of all the different models of passenger aircraft. They have to know about fire and explosion hazards. They have to know how to deal with injured and hysterical crash victims. If they remained "simple," how could they do their job effectively? The Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam presents nothing intended for armchair speculators. It is a field manual for rescuing consciousness from the subtle intricacies of material nature. As we see from Mahārāja Parīkṣit's question, hearing about these intricacies moves the heart of the devotee to compassion for the souls so entangled. This knowledge is a prime motivator for preaching. At the same time it is the means of our own deliverance from the clutches of *māyā*. (Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Mādhyā 20.123):

*śāstra-guru-āima'-rūpe āpanāre jānāna
'kṛṣṇa mora prabhu, trātā' — jīvera haya jñāna*

"The forgetful conditioned soul is educated by Kṛṣṇa through the Vedic literatures, the realized spiritual master and the Supersoul. Through these, he can understand the Supreme Personality of Godhead as He is, and he can understand that Lord Kṛṣṇa is his eternal master and deliverer from the clutches of *māyā*. In this way one can acquire real knowledge of his conditioned life and can come to understand how to attain liberation."

It is a habit of *prakṛta-sahajiyās* to claim themselves simple devotees and to deride great authorities like Jīva Goswami to be puffed-up intellectuals.

"I heard that you'd like to visit Ireland. The devotees here in Belfast would appreciate it very much if you came to our temple."

Well, as one with the family name "Crowley," I do feel that the Old Green Sod tugs the heart from afar. Another example of the subtle intricacies of material entanglement...too ra loo ra loo ra...

PANDITA

Question from Rādhā-vinoda
November 30, 1998

Could you please explain the meaning of the term *paṇḍita*.

Answer by Suhotra Swami
December 1, 1998

Śrīla Prabhupāda referred to *Bhagavad-gītā* (5.18) whenever he explained the word *paṇḍita*. He said it means a *brāhmaṇa* who actually knows Brahman.

ABOUT ŚRĪMAD-BHĀGAVATAM

Question from Carucandra d.
December 2, 1998

I have a question concerning how Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam was originally spoken.

1) In the Bhāgavatam we find, that Sūta Gosvāmī describes how Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam was spoken by Śukadeva Gosvāmī to Mahārāja Parīkṣit. We also find a description about how it was compiled by Vyāsadeva.

Did the original Bhāgavatam, written by Vyāsadeva contain these descriptions, or they were introduced later. If the last is true, then how these narrations are considered part of Bhāgavatam. Does it mean that the original form of Bhāgavatam is changed?

2) Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam begins with a glorification of the Bhāgavata Purāna. In this glorification is mentioned, that Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam was compiled by the "great sage Vyāsadeva [in his maturity]" and that it "emanated from the lips of Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī." Then this glorification turns into a narration of how Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam was spoken by Sūta Gosvāmī before the sages of Naimiṣāranya. I would like to ask who is the person, who is speaking here this glorification and narration?

3) In the narration that follows, we find (Bhāg. 1.2.4, spoken by Sūta Gosvāmī):

*nārāyaṇaṁ namaskṛtya
naraṁ caiva narottamam
devīm sarasvatīm vyāsam
tato jayam udvṛjyet*

"Before reciting this Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, which is the very means of conquest, one should offer respectful obeisances unto the Personality of Godhead, Nārāyaṇa, unto Nara-nārāyaṇa Rṣi, the supermost human being, unto mother Sarasvatī, the goddess of learning, and unto Śrīla Vyāsadeva, the author."

Then follows the beginning of Sūta Gosvāmī's answer to the six questions put by the sages. We do not find anything similar in the verses before 1.2.4.

Does this mean that in fact the recitation of the very Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam has not started in the verses before that verse (1.2.4)?

Answer by Suhotra Swami
December 3, 1998

1) The written Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam was composed by Śrīla Vyāsadeva. Sūta Gosvāmī is the son of his disciple Romaharṣaṇa Sūta, who was given responsibility for assisting Vyāsa in compilation of the Purāṇic literature. However, Romaharṣaṇa was killed by Lord Balarāma. Therefore, his son took over that responsibility. Thus in a sense the Bhāgavatam can be said to be a collaborative effort between Vyāsadeva and his disciples Roma-

harṣaṇa Sūta and Sūta Gosvāmī. The complete text is credited to Śrīla Vyāsadeva, who empowered his disciples to assist him and who gave written shape to the final version that includes the narrations brought together by his disciples.

2) Śrīla Vyāsadeva is taking what is termed in literature "a third-person narrative reporter's role." That means though he is Vyāsadeva, when he mentions himself in the text, he writes "he" (third person; second person is "you") instead of "I" (first person). I have gotten other questions about this in the past. Devotees wonder why he does not just say "I." I suppose some of our ISKCON devotees were not so widely exposed to literature before they joined. Third-person narrative reporting is a well-established motif. I could give examples, but they are all mundane, so who cares?

3) No, that verse begins Sūta Gosvāmī's contribution to the compilation ordered by Śrīla Vyāsadeva.

USE OF TAMOGUṆĀ

Question from Ekātma d.
December 3, 1998

In one of your lectures, you explained how the three modes of material nature are also Kṛṣṇa's energy, and can therefore be engaged in Kṛṣṇa's service. As there is the analogy of the captain guiding the ship blown by the winds of karma. At this time of the year, there is plenty of tamas around Finland, dark all around, and melancholic people. I can see how the other guṇas can be engaged in Kṛṣṇa's service, but will this wind of tamogūṇa be of any use, or is it just to be completely discarded?

Answer by Suhotra Swami
December 4, 1998

It is of use if people recognize it as unhappiness and from this desire to become happy. However, when

someone is in ignorance and can not even see anything wrong with it, that is just madness.

HEAVENLY VARNĀŚRAMA

Question from Madana-mohana d.
December 18, 1998

Could you please explain if there are varṇas and āśramas among the residents of the heavenly planets. If so, what is the difference between "heavenly" varṇāśrama and the "earthly" one?

Answer by Suhotra Swami
December 18, 1998

Yes, *varṇāśrama* is a universal social system. Great sages are the demigods, Indra is the *ksatriya*, Kuvera is an example of a heavenly *vaiśya*, and Viśvakarmā is the example of a heavenly *śūdra*. What is the difference between heavenly and earthly *varṇāśrama*? The answer to this seems rather obvious. Everything in heaven is more perfect than on earth. Most perfects, however, is the *varṇāśrama* that is displayed in Goloka Vṛndāvana for Lord Kṛṣṇa's personal pleasure.

TRANSCENDENTAL OPULENCES

Question from Madana-mohana d.
December 22, 1998

In the purport to Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (3.29.13), Śrīla Prabhupāda writes:

"In sārṅgi liberation the opulence of the devotee is equal to the opulence of the Supreme Lord."

What does this exactly mean? Does it mean that such a devotee becomes a Lord's co-proprietor of all the universes, both material and spiritual? Otherwise, what comprises the Lord's opulences referred to here?

Answer by Suhotra Swami
December 22, 1998

The living entity is never equal to the Lord in matters of creation, maintenance and destruction of the universes.

There are six transcendental opulences: wealth, strength, beauty, knowledge, fame and renunciation. These are natural to the personality of the Lord as well as the living entity; but in the living entity who is separated from Kṛṣṇa, these opulences are covered by matter. When the living entity attains *sārṣṭi* liberation, he enjoys the six transcendental opulences as they are fully manifested in the spiritual world, in company with the Lord.

LORD SAṆKARSANA

Question from Gaurāṅga Premānanda d.
December 22, 1998

In Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya 20,368-378) one of the two types of śaktyāveśa avatāras is described as the mahīya sākṣād. There Ananta and Śeṣa are described as jīvas (empowered by the śakti of Kṛṣṇa) aren't they Balarāma or viṣṇu-tattva and in relation to this: śaktyāveśa avatāras are never Viṣṇu-tattva but always jīva-tattva?

Answer by Suhotra Swami
December 23, 1998

You will find in Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Ādi-līlā) that Saṅkarsana is called *jīva*. There is an elaborate purport by Śrīla Prabhupāda about this. In short, while Saṅkarsana is *viṣṇu-tattva*, He is also the original *jīva*, in the sense that He sustains the material existence of all the other *jīvas*.

TRANSCENDENTAL POTENCIES

Question from Gaurāṅga Premānanda d.
December 22, 1998

Saṁvit, hlādinī and sandhinī become in the reflection in the material world the three modes of material nature. Which mode of nature saṁvit becomes, which mode of nature hlādinī becomes and which mode, sandhinī becomes.

Answer by Suhotra Swami
December 23, 1998

Yes, these six items are correlated as you have indicated, but I do not recall seeing an explicit connection in Śrīla Prabhupāda's books except he says that the opposite of transcendental knowledge is the mode of ignorance. *Saṁvit* is the potency of spiritual knowledge. It would seem from this statement that *saṁvit* is reflected as *tamo-guṇa* in the material world.

Comment by Bhāgavat-dharma d.
December 24, 1998

Please allow me to make a comment in this regard. In the same line of thought you are mentioning in regards to *saṁvit-śakti*, I heard in a lecture from Śrīla Tamāl Kṛṣṇa Goswami where he mentioned the following points: "The variety in the spiritual world is made possible by the *sandhinī* potency. That same variety when perverted in the material world becomes the material variety, passion. *Hlādinī* is the principle of spiritual happiness. When perverted it becomes material happiness in the mode of goodness."

Comment by Suhotra Swami
December 25, 1998

This makes the correlation quite clear...though again, I have not seen this spelled out point-by-point by Śrīla Prabhupāda.

PURIFYING ALCOHOL

Question from Madana-mohana d.
December 24, 1998

In Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (9.11.26) it is stated that: "During the reign of Lord Rāmacandra, the streets of the capital, Ayodhyā, were sprinkled with perfumed water and drops of perfumed liquor, thrown about by elephants from their trunks."

I would like to ask you how wine, which is generally considered to be a contaminating liquid, could be possibly widely used for purifying cities during Lord Rāmacandra's reign? Alternatively, is it some other kind of liquor?

Answer by Suhotra Swami
December 25, 1998

Alcohol is used to suspend essences. The same process of alcohol suspension is employed in making intoxicating beverages, some perfumes, and certain *ayurvedic* medicines. Although alcohol is in one sense considered impure, there is a question of intent as to why the alcohol is used. Just like to tell a lie is supposed to be impure behavior. However, even Lord Kṛṣṇa expected Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira to tell a lie on the battlefield of Kurukṣetra to bewilder the enemy. Another thing is that the perfumed liquor is being sprinkled by elephants. There is no sin for an elephant to drink liquor. The appearance of elephants during festivities is considered auspicious in Vedic culture. If they sprinkle perfumed liquor around the streets during these festivities that too is auspicious.



SĀṆKHYA IN ŚRĪMAD-BHĀGAVATAM

Question from Ekātma d.
December 24, 1998

I am figuring out the Sāṅkhya-philosophy of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and here are a few points to be shed light on. The quotes two and three are translations from Finnish, but they should be accurate.

1. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam tells about the manifestation of different elements from ether to earth, and the birth of lord Brahmā, which are both parts of creation. How do these two fit in chronologically?*

2. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (3.26.37, purport) says, "If the circulation of air is suffocated, we cannot seek our direction on the basis of hearing. If someone is calling for us, we hear the sound because of the circulation of the air and approach the sound or the place from where the sound comes from."*

In my understanding modern science says that sound is a vibration in some substance, and if there's none between the source of sound and the receiver of the sound, the sound cannot be heard. This seems to be also what is in Śrīla Prabhupāda's purport. Still we know that sound is the quality of ether, and thus it should be heard despite the existence or nonexistence of the other elements.

3. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (3.26.39, purport) says, "Tastes and qualitative construction are basic principles in trying to understand the form of an object." I wonder how taste is relevant in understanding a form?*

Answer by Suhotra Swami
December 25, 1998

1. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes that Brahmā is the incarnation of Vedic sound. If you are figuring out the *bhāgavata-sāṅkhya*, then the rest should be clear.

2. There is no contradiction in what Śrīla Prabhupāda writes about the connection between hear-

ing and air, and the connection of sound to ether. The existence of sound is one thing, what we require to hear it is another.

3. You have only quoted one sentence from the purport; the rest of the purport seems to answer your question quite clearly.

MODERN SCIENCE AND ŚRĪMAD-BHĀGAVATAM

Question from Madana-mohana d.
December 26, 1998

In Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (3.29.43) it is stated:

*nabho dadāti śvasatām
padaṁ yan-niyamād adah
lokaṁ sva-deham tanute
mahān saptabhīr āvṛtam*

"Subject to the control of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the sky allows outer space to accommodate all the various planets, which hold innumerable living entities. The total universal body expands with its seven coverings under His supreme control."

Quote from purport: "It is also stated here that the total universal body is increasing."

Does this all mean that the cosmology of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam supports the modern view of the universe as an ever-expanding or inflating body, rather than a static firm shell?

Answer by Suhotra Swami
December 26, 1998

Someone asked Śrīla Prabhupāda this question and he replied in the affirmative. Still we need to be ever cautious about correlating modern scientific findings with the statements of the *sāstra*. Science changes its theories as time goes by, but *sāstra* does not. We should not get in the habit of thinking the *Bhāgavatam* is "confirmed" by modern science.

SERVICE ATTITUDE

Question from Ekātma d.
December 26, 1998

In The Nectar of Instruction (4) pratigṛhṇāti or accepting gifts is mentioned, as an essential part of loving exchange among devotees. On the other hand, one should consider himself an unworthy object of anyone's any kind of service.

Regarding this what is the proper behavior of a devotee?

Answer by Suhotra Swami
December 27, 1998

One should consider himself a servant. If the service is that one must receive gifts to reciprocate with other devotees, how is there a problem? Unless one does not want to think of himself as a servant at all...

SUBJECTIVE OPINIONS

Question from Aprameya d.d.
December 28, 1998

Sometimes I am told that Śrī Śrī Rūdhā Gokulānanda are too serious, are not smiling or are like dolls. I cannot accept such statements as true. Is the reason my false ego that I am partial, or is it something else?

Answer by Suhotra Swami
December 29, 1998

I do not think this is a question of great relevance to this conference.

Among ISKCONians, there are so many discussions that involve opinions about very subjective issues: "What this looks like to me." Philosophy is a different matter. Philosophy takes us off the mental plane. Subjective opinionating tends to keep us on the mental plane.