

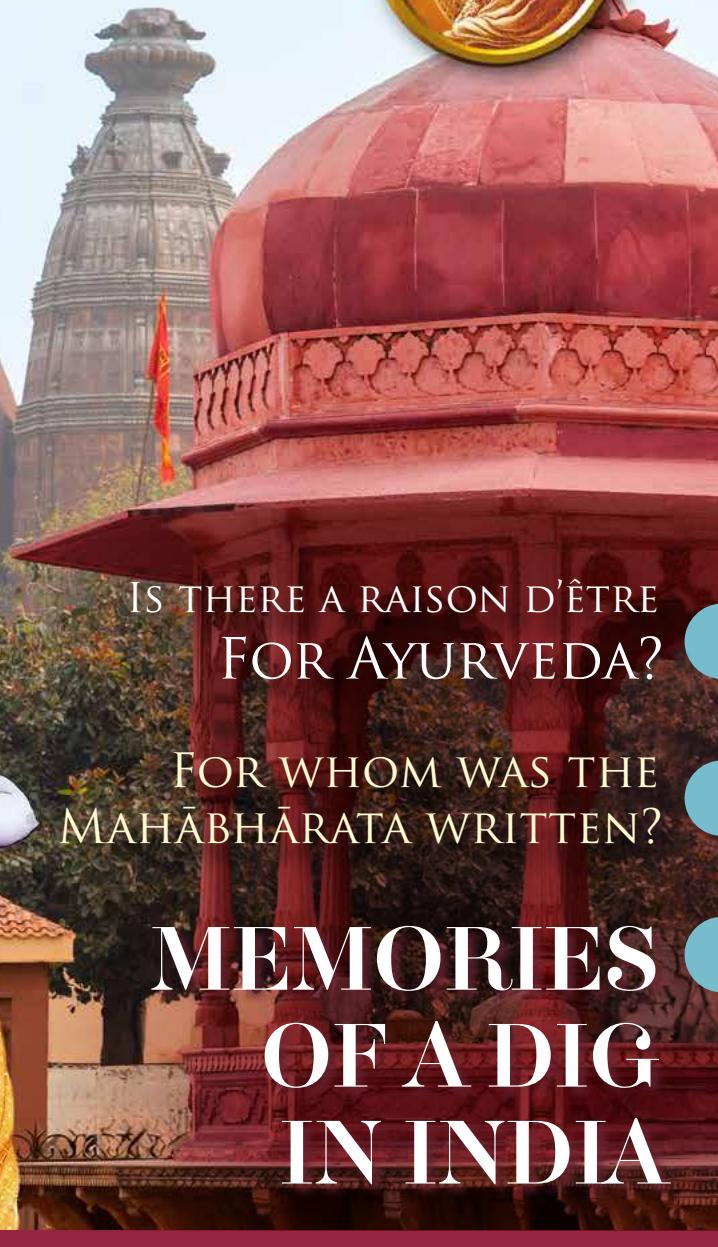


INDIA THE LAND OF DIVERSITY

IS THERE A RAISON D'ÊTRE
FOR AYURVEDA?

FOR WHOM WAS THE
MAHĀBHĀRATA WRITTEN?

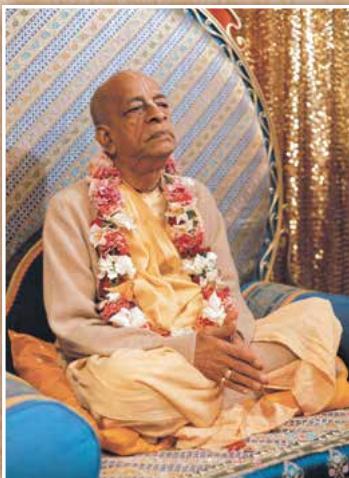
MEMORIES
OF A DIG
IN INDIA





Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Śyāmasundara

on the altar in Krishna Valley, Hungary



His Divine Grace

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

Founder-Ācārya of the International Society
for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda (1896-1977) brought the ancient religious tradition of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism to the Western world. He founded the International Society for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness in 1966. Under his management it became a worldwide mission with āśramas, schools, and farm communities. His books form a complete library of Vedic philosophy, religion, literature, and culture.

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PRONUNCIATION OF SANSKRIT WORDS:

We transliterate Sanskrit words with diacritic marks on them to allow the reader to pronounce these words correctly. **ā**—as **a** in master; **ē**—as **a** in evade; **ī**—as **ee** in feel; **ō**—as **o** in over; **ṛ**—as **ri** in rip; **č**—as **ch** in check; **j**—as **j** in jar; **s**—as **s** in sit; **y**—as **y** in yak; **ch**—as **chh** in catch him; **jh**—as **dgeh** in hedgehog; **dh**—as **the** in breathe; etc. For example the word 'Caitanya' is pronounced 'Chaitanya'.

ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA ON THE MAHĀBHĀRATA



The spotless lotus of the Mahābhārata grows in the waters of Vyāsa's words, the irresistibly sweet fragrance of the Bhagavad-gītā, and the tales of its heroes are the blossoming petals of Lord Hari's word that overcame the sins of Kali-yuga. This beautiful lotus ceaselessly illuminates with its radiant petals the nectar-seeking souls swarming like happy bees. May the lotus of Mahābhārata bless us with the greatest good!

◆ There is a great difference between secular stories, whether fictional or historical, and descriptions of the transcendental pleasures of the Lord. In the history of the universe we can find references to the pastimes of the incarnations of the Lord. The *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Mahābhārata* and the *Purāṇas* are the history of the past, recorded about the pastimes of the incarnations of the Lord, and therefore remain eternally fresh, even after repeated reading. One can read the *Bhagavad-gītā* or *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* again and again over one's lifetime, and one will

always find new information. Worldly news is static, while transcendental news is dynamic, just as the soul is dynamic and matter is static. Those who are in the mood to understand the subject of transcendence will never tire of listening to such narratives.

◆ The complex science of the Vedas is presented in a clear and comprehensible way systematically in the *Mahābhārata*, therefore it is much more relevant in our age than the original Vedas.

◆ The *Mahābhārata* and other similar stories deal

with secular themes as well as with transcendental ones. The *Bhagavad-gītā* is part of the *Mahābhārata*. The message of the *Mahābhārata* culminates in the final instructions of the *Bhagavad-gītā*: one should renounce all other occupations and surrender wholeheartedly and exclusively to the lotus feet of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. However, people with materialistic inclinations are more attracted to politics, economics and philanthropy, which are described in the *Mahābhārata*, rather than to the main subject, the *Bhagavad-gītā*.

◆ Lord Kṛṣṇa is so merciful to the sinful, fallen souls that He personally appears among the various living entities and takes part with them in their daily activities. Every historical event, whether ancient or recent, should be considered as a transcendental narrative of the Lord if it is related to His actions. Without Kṛṣṇa, supplementary writings such as the Purāṇas and the *Mahābhārata* are no more than mere stories or historical events. But by being associated with Kṛṣṇa they become transcendental, and by listening to them we immediately enter into a transcendental relationship with the Lord.

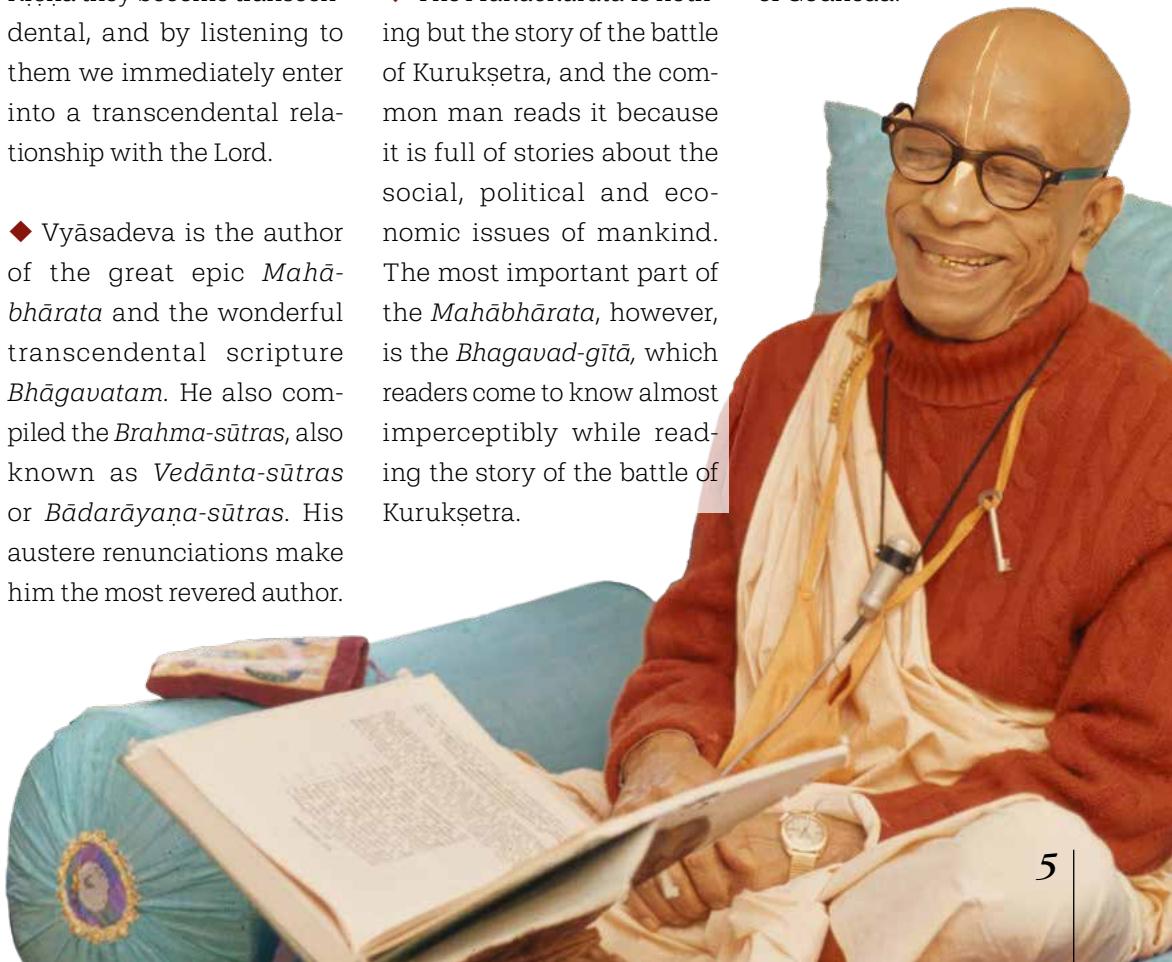
◆ Vyāsadeva is the author of the great epic *Mahābhārata* and the wonderful transcendental scripture *Bhāgavatam*. He also compiled the *Brahma-sūtras*, also known as *Vedānta-sūtras* or *Bādarāyaṇa-sūtras*. His austere renunciations make him the most revered author.

When he wanted to write down the great epic of the *Mahābhārata* for the people of the Kali age, he felt he needed a special scribe who could record his dictation. On the instructions of Brahmājī, Śrī Gaṇeśajī undertook this task on the condition that Vyāsadeva would not stop dictating for a single moment. Thus was the *Mahābhārata* completed, through the joint efforts of Vyāsa and Gaṇeśa.

◆ The *Mahābhārata* is nothing but the story of the battle of Kurukṣetra, and the common man reads it because it is full of stories about the social, political and economic issues of mankind. The most important part of the *Mahābhārata*, however, is the *Bhagavad-gītā*, which readers come to know almost imperceptibly while reading the story of the battle of Kurukṣetra.

◆ The *Mahābhārata*, which is about the Pāṇḍavas and their actions, is sacred because the Pāṇḍavas were in direct contact with the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

◆ The *Mahābhārata* states, "One who causes no disturbance or pain to any living being, who treats everyone as a tender father treats his child, and who is thus pure in heart, will certainly very soon gain the mercy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead."



How can anyone talk about God without ever having met Him?

*And why not just talk
about what one experiences?
Is it being honest?*

I watched the believers, who seemed very sure of God's existence, as we wandered around Mayapur, the main holy place in West Bengal, and pondered the above questions. Then, somewhat mysteriously, later that day, I 'stumbled' upon a rather profound doctrinal tale in an ancient *Upaniṣad*, which answered my questions spot on. The *Kena Upaniṣad*'s tale gave me a wonderful answer.

Once upon a time, the demigods emerged victorious from the battle of demigods and demons, and they became quite proud of their victory which they thought they owed to themselves, to their own strength. Then, God (who is life and Brahman itself too) appeared on the battlefield in the form of a *yakṣa*, a goblin-like creature, and began to walk proudly around. The demigods were puzzled who he was, so they first sent Agni, the demigod of fire, to find this out. By some

strange force, Agni became speechless, so the *yakṣa* asked him who he was. „I am Agni, the knower of living beings, and I can burn everything.“ „Oh, really? Then here is this little blade of grass. Burn it, please.“ Agni tried, but even with all his strength he couldn't. And of course he could not find out who this *yakṣa* was.

The demigods then sent Vāyu, the god of wind, who proudly claimed to be able to grab anything. Of course he failed: the blade of grass did not move a bit without God's will. (At least we now know where the saying comes from.) The demigods then sent Indra, the lord of the heavens, who, as a change, was already approaching the battlefield humbly. However, by the time he got there, the *yakṣa* had disappeared. Instead, he found there a beautiful lady, Umā, the consort of Śiva (who is the manifestation



of God in the material world). Indra asked her who the *yakṣa* was. Umā replied, „God (Brahman) Himself.”

The first of the profound lessons of this *Upaniṣad* is that there are three ways of approaching God according to the three levels of existence (*bhūr bhuvah svah*). The first level is the level of gross matter and material senses, that is, the plane where you only believe what you see. But if a man is overtaken by pride and has a bloated picture of himself, then even if he sees God with his own eyes, he does not recognize Him. Material science also approaches God at this level. Agni is the demigod of this plane. The next level is the mental world, the level of the mind. The master of this sphere is *Vāyu*. This is the second, subtle physical plane of reality. Primarily all mental activities belong here—metaphysics(!), all kinds of psycholog-

ical, spiritual techniques, tantra, meditation, esoteric play with quantum mechanical concepts, travelling all around the three worlds, recalling past lives, chakra meditation, kundalini..., etc. All these can expand our world view in a certain way, but if we are proud, i.e. under the rule of the false ego, they remain only frozen tools in a frozen dream world (namely the material world), and they do not help us to see God, even if He is in front of us.

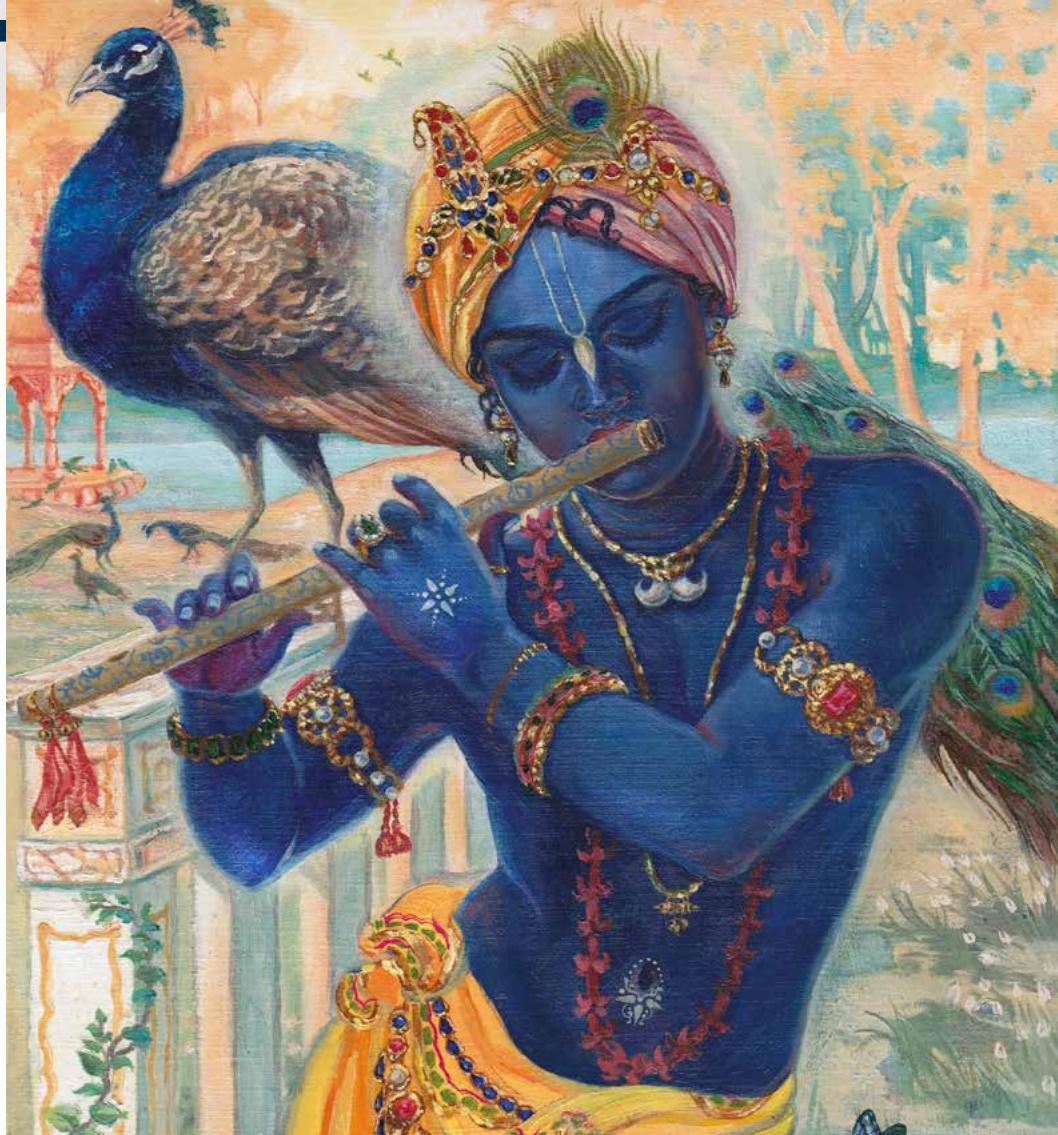
For, pride and false ego prevent us from seeing God (everywhere). They put a cap on our experience, our intelligence. Wherever we go, it will only be a frozen experience, not reality, if pride gets us. That's why Indra came, who is the lord of the third world. And he is also the lord of sacrifices. The sacrifices represent the principle by which the world works, and the first step in peeling away the false ego is to master the principle

of selfless giving. Because Indra approached Him in a more humble way, God has already responded differently. But what happened was quite significant: He disappeared and in His place appeared Umā, the representative, the manifestation of God—material nature incarnate. In this way, the Upaniṣad is showing us the principle that God can be reached through the teachers, through His representatives, because they can give us true knowledge of who God is, how to reach Him, etc. It also shows us, not incidentally, that the material world is also the manifestation of God, and until our experiential knowledge, our consciousness, is expanded by the light of faith to the extent that we can see this, He will not appear in the form of His self-same identity.

The Upaniṣad also makes an unambiguous statement in connection with our initial question. God cannot be grasped by the eye, the mind or the intelligence, but what makes the eye see, what makes the mind inspired and what makes the intelligence function is life (Brahman) itself, God Himself. It is also stated by the Upaniṣad that he (the narrator) does not fully know God either. But he still speaks about Him, etc. He teaches it! For God manifests the way in the form of scriptures and through the saints, as a kind of interactive map adapted to place, time and circumstances. As a guide on how to know Him. Experience without guidance is fetishism—without a map it is a dead end. Can we say, just go ahead, the map is not your experience anyway, so don't trust it? If you don't know where the destination is and where to go, you will gain some experience, of

course, but the experience can only become a never-ending wandering, because without knowing the map you may just go round and round in circles for the rest of your life. And once you get somewhere, how do you know there's no further? If you achieve the light of reality, how do you know that the light of reality does not come from a living world full of forms, full of variety? And of course, without knowing the map, the path that leads to the destination will not necessarily manifest, since different qualities of belief may manifest different paths. Of course, all roads lead there, but that also means that there is only one exit from the maze, and wherever you start, that's where you'll end up. It does matter, however, how many millions of lifetimes you wander before it.

An even more appropriate example is a feverish person. When you have a fever, you perceive the world differently. Food tastes different, your mood is different, sunlight is different, sounds are different. They're not as tasty, they're not as joyful. Feverishness is caused by false (not pure) faith. So experience itself cannot lead you out of this state. For what you experience in fever is not the reality. To get grips with reality, you will have to take some medicine, or, to continue the example above, you have to know the map. And true believers believe because if they go by the map, they will see that things are really where and how the map says they are. From this they also know that the destination is also there. But there is another, even deeper aspect to this. Because everything is God. By following the map, the realisation



of this also deepens. True, pure faith is the light of reality. Life reflects on life itself. It is when the sun appears that our life, the lotus of our heart, begins to open within us. This is called *svabhāvika-śraddhā*—pure, natural faith. So real, pure faith is when life reflects on life: when our heart starts opening to God and the light-filtering clouds begin to disappear. The characteristic of this faith is that we experience (!) and see more and more of real life. And if everything is God—because God's dreaming consciousness (the

material world) is also God, and His waking consciousness (the spiritual world) is also God, i.e. everything is God—then is there anyone who sees anything but God? The question is rhetorical. When we experience this, there will come a time when God's own self image will appear and interact directly with us. Because then we will be able to recognize Him...

Acyutānanda Dāsa
(The author's book *India Spirit* can be ordered at info@indiaspirit.hu.)

Trains, dreadlocked saints and an iron pillar

A GLIMPSE INTO A STRANGE
WORLD ALMOST LIKE
ANOTHER PLANET

This is an extract from the travel book
India Spirit.

PROFESSOR TYUKODI AND THE MIRACULOUS PILLAR

Delhi has a nearly infinite number of things to see, being a region that has been inhabited for tens of thousands of years and is now home to some 15 million people.

One of the best looking antiques is the Kutub Minar. It was the first mosque and minaret after the Muslim conquerors entered India. There were originally 27 Jain temples here, but they were demolished and the stones were used to build the mosque in 1193. The construction took about 200 years, and the result was monumental. Although only its ruins remain, what you see of it today is still impressive.

In the courtyard of Kutub Minar





stands a seven-metre high iron column. According to its inscription, it was erected by King Chandragupta to the glory of Vishnu 1600 years ago. In fact, it is not known where it originally stood, what its purpose was, why it was brought here.

I first heard about the column from Professor Tyukodi in my material science class. One of the many mysteries of this column is that it does not rust. It is made of high-purity wrought iron using metallurgical technology that resists... what? The iron teeth of time?

Let us just say, as a teenager, I wasn't particularly moved by this information. I was more concerned about whether there would be a concert of my favourite pop band that weekend. I forgot about my material science class completely.

Then 15 years later I saw the miracle! There stood the iron column that never rusted. The silly curriculum that I had thought useless suddenly made sense. (One day I might encounter the citric acid cycle in real life as well?)

It is said that whoever can clasp his hands around the pillar while standing against it by his back will be born a king in his next life. I remembered King Louie—from The Jungle Book—and I let it go.

HAPPY HOLI

In India, during Holi, it's better not to go out in your best clothes, because spring might pour on you all its glory. This festival is also celebrated in the spiritual world. Krishna and the *gopīs* also throw paint on each other.

Usually people sprinkle coloured rice flour on each other or spray paint dissolved in water from „water guns”. Imagine grown-up people playing in the streets and churches like children. Can anyone imagine such a thing in Europe? (Maybe on New Year's Eve, drunk out of their minds, but that's a far cry from free play.)

The dye can be washed off with water, of course, although it may take some time depending on the dye.

A friend of mine still had a purple head three or four days after Holi, and one of my travelling companions still had a slight pink



tinge to his beard after arriving in Hungary.

THE DREADLOCKED HEART BEATS FOREVER

Dreadlocks may have gained worldwide popularity thanks to Bob Marley, but it is certain that Europeans had not even discovered the continent where Bob Marley was later born, when India was already home to people with the hottest dreadlocks for a long time.

He who is on the path of spiritual realisation renounces worldly beauty. One sign of this in men is that they shave their heads. Only the top of the head is left with a little hair for those of Brahminic culture, such as devotees of Krishna or Vishnu. Hardliners, on the other hand, renounce worldly beauty by not touching it at all. Hair, that is. No cutting, no trimming. As God grows it. And He does grow it!



RICKSHAWS

In India, apart from the big cities with millions of people, there is not really any public transport. (Although maybe this is the real public transport: twenty-three people travelling in a nine-seater jeep!) The traditional means of transport and transportation in previous decades was the rickshaw. One person would pedal, another two, four or six—depending on body size—would sit in the back. It used to be one of the most distinctive experiences: wherever you set off, you'd be surrounded by five or ten rickshaws and the haggling would begin.

They took two of us for 20-30 rupees for a kilometre and a half or two kilometres. (Now they might even ask for 50.) That's the equivalent of 100-150 for-

ints. (And we sometimes don't even roll back an empty shopping trolley for 100 forints if we've parked far away.)

Today, however, they are beginning to be replaced by electric „rickshaws”. One electric tuktuk replaces three traditional rickshaws. Unfortunately, the rickshaw-wallas losing their work are not being retrained as programmers-mathematicians, shop assistants or traffic controllers. They remain two-handed-two-legged porters, only we don't see them anymore.

Nevertheless, India still has the image of the rickshaw rider on a bicycle. You could say it's part of the Indian *couleur locale*.

RAILWAY RECORDS

Indian Railways has about one and a half million employees. If you want to get to know India up close, travelling by train is great, because you can meet half the population, for example, right away. There are six to seven classes of coaches, from first to low-cost, and that's not even counting the buffer passengers.

My longest trip was 36 hours in a sleeper class car; that was too much even for me. Indians eat and drink the whole way. Partly food brought from home, partly food bought from mobile vendors. At each station, dozens of vendors jump on the train and sell their wares from baskets, boxes, thermoses, whatever. All sorts of food, delicacies, souvenirs, betel, gum-chas (a kind of towel). But the main hits are coffee and chai. There is a break for a couple of hours at night, but otherwise all you hear on the train is: „Caffee, caffee, chai, chai...”

They say they move 25 million passengers a day by rail. We've seen how people travel,



now let's see the maharajas!

There are several luxury trains criss-crossing India. The „Golden Chariot”, the „Rolling Palace”, the „Maharaja Express” and others. But these are just tourist trains. Although there are still a few royal families, they don't use trains enough to make it worthwhile to maintain a whole line for them.

But these trains are very good for touring. You can see the main sights and not have a village schoolteacher's big toe hanging off the top bunk in your tea (I wouldn't miss that in India either, but that's a matter of taste).

The only problem with these miracle trains is that they cost between \$800 and \$1,500 a day. The presidential car on the Maharaja Express is about \$7000—if I understood correctly. So that's a DAILY fare.

Work out how much you need to save to afford a seven-day cruise!

Caitanya Dāsa





FOR WHOM WAS THE MAHĀBHĀRATA WRITTEN?

An outstanding piece of humanity's inexhaustible cultural treasure is the Vedic epic *Mahābhārata*, which is in fact the narrative of a great family feud. It is a narrative of events that have taken place—including the bloodiest battle in world history, the battle of Kurukṣetra—but it is also a rich repository of archetypes of human character. It is history, morality, political science and theology in one.

As we often find in the case of great works, the *Mahābhārata* has lost none of its relevance over five millennia: the man of today finds answers to the perplexing questions raised by everyday life just as well. It is not, therefore, an aged text that can simply be relegated to the prison of literary history. In fact, it is so much part of the culture of India today that when the *Mahābhārata* is on television, the streets become empty.

This article will give some examples of how this eternal story was also written for today's man, with the aim of encouraging the reader to read this great work. Let us take a look at the questions in our lives that it answers.

DECISIONS UNDER PRESSURE

In the first chapter of the *Mahābhārata*, we suddenly find ourselves in the thick of events.

Have you ever had a situation in your life where your survival was at stake? What decision are we capable of making at an emotionally charged critical moment when our lives depend on it? When we are aware that we not only have one life, but that we are eternal souls, the weight of our decisions is even greater. How can we manage this responsibility in real life? How can we make the right decision at a critical moment?

THE SECRET OF RENUNCIATION

They say that renunciation turns into strength and empowerment. This principle is fully justified by the examples of the *Mahābhārata*. Of course, many times renunciation does not seem very attractive at first, because we seem to have to give up things that are otherwise desirable to us, but if one practices it properly, then the desired result follows and, rather than suffering, a higher taste is experienced. Renunciation

is a secret science, we just need to know the principle of its operation and its proper practice, the mastery of which will bring about a change for the better in our lives.

While Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Pāṇḍu and Vidura were still children, Grandfather Bhīṣma ruled the kingdom as regent until the princes came of age. Bhīṣma could have taken the throne, but he did not. He could have retired to the forest to focus on himself, for he knew he could not become king, yet he did not, but performed his difficult duty steadfastly and unwaveringly. Where did the grandfather find his strength? What gives us the strength to carry on, even when it is unbearably difficult? What makes us stay sober even when something is too enjoyable? How do duties help our progress? Bhīṣma knew the secret.

SUCCESS—AT ALL COSTS?

What do you need to succeed in life? How to become the best at something in the world? Where and how can you get the knowledge to take your skills to the top?

Arjuna was undoubtedly the finest archer of his time. He achieved incredible success. His exceptional parentage alone was not enough. One needs more than that to succeed: one needs to become a disciple. In other words, it requires the acceptance of an authentic teacher and the right mentality and attitude on the part of the disciple to ensure that the process of imparting knowledge is perfect. Arjuna's thirst for knowledge and determination was exemplary. But from his eldest brother Yudhiṣṭhira, we can

also learn a lot about how to make progress as quickly as possible.

THE ANTIDOTE TO ENVY

When we cannot come to terms with our own situation, we are discontented, and when we are discontented with our own situation in comparison to that of others, it is called envy. As long as we cultivate such negative emotions in our hearts, life is nothing but suffering—a state of disturbed consciousness in which it is almost impossible to concentrate on spiritual life, on our relationship with Kṛṣṇa.

“Whoever acquires the brahminical qualifications—that is, whose only wealth is good behavior, who is grateful and who takes shelter of experienced persons—gets all the opulence of the world.”

(Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.21.44)

Gratitude, happiness and contentment are learnable—they depend on our state of mind, which is determined by the quality of our knowledge and the extent to which we achieve it.

Many times we tend to forget that according to our *karma*, in any situation in life, we receive packages that include both pleasant and unpleasant items. There are packages that we receive for life, but there are also situations where we can choose between packages. But they all come with both pleasant and unpleasant elements. Understanding this and mastering this insight is the antidote to envy. If we learn



to see the packages of our lives correctly, we can move forward on the path of realisation closer to Kṛṣṇa with gratitude rather than envy in our hearts.

THE POISON OF ATTACHMENT

Dhṛitarāṣṭra knew he was making a mistake when he allowed his son Duryodhana to conspire against the virtuous Pāṇḍavas. He was weak and too emotionally biased to be righteous. It was clear to him that he should treat his own and his brother Pāṇḍu's sons equally, yet he was unable to do so. For this he felt intense guilt and constantly struggled within himself during his sleepless nights. He was able to relieve this inner tension, which in modern terms might be called cognitive dissonance, by shifting the blame to fate for what had happened and for all the things that happened later.

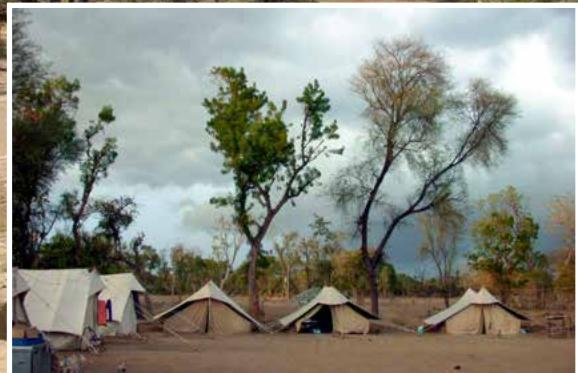
Have we ever in our lives known that we should do something or shouldn't do something, but we were too weak to do it the right way? Have we looked for some rational explanation to assuage our inner shame and guilt, which took the blame off our shoulders, as if we were not to blame?

The responsibility of the individual soul for its own destiny is beyond doubt, yet sometimes we blame others: fate, politics or something external that seems to release us from our responsibility—but in reality it paralyses us.

Why and how should we take full responsibility for our lives?

The wisdom of the *Mahābhārata* helps.

Gurūttama Dāsa and
Madhupati Dāsa



MEMORIES OF A DIG IN INDIA





On a chilly January morning in the middle of Rajasthan, I was standing in a field near a small village, which has not seen the monsoon rain for a long time. At my feet was a regular square pit, the excavation section. "So this is where I will spend the next six weeks as an archaeologist, searching for a forgotten moment in the past in this small slice of earth," I thought. There was a light wind and the morning sunlight struggled to break through the winter mists. The hills and valleys lay like undulating quilts on the ancient ruins, and the morning sun was waking them from their millennia of slumber right here at my feet. My little tool moved clods of earth, uncovering walls of houses, pots and pans, and hearths.

Suddenly, women approached at a brisk pace. Their small group beat up the dust of the dry earth. They came empty-handed, their belongings on their heads. Their faces were veiled up to their chins, but their sparkling brown eyes and cheerful smiles shone through the veil's fabric. They were from a nearby village. In the dry season, when the land was unfit for cultivation, dig-

ing was their livelihood. They had been working on the site for several years and had become almost experts alongside the archaeologists. They worked confidently, sweeping, carrying and sifting earth. They arrived on time every morning and were a great help. Their simplicity, their hospitality and their willingness to serve brought them closer to my heart every day. As they were sweeping the floors of the unfolding four-thousand-year-old houses as if they were cleaning their own clay-pasted huts, they often chatted with each other. What struck me was that as their brushstrokes revealed the past, their words revealed the present, and it was hard to decide which was more interesting.

Nafisa was a round-faced, small, thin girl. From her appearance and her giggle, she looked like a sixteen-year-old unmarried girl with big dreams. She was good at archaeology, and she knew it. She often said she would go to the city and would also study archaeology at the university. Most women, when they thought of working abroad, wanted to go to America, but

Nafisa always said she would come to Hungary to help me. She always radiated a childlike happiness and never seemed to have any problems. Only her hands showed that she had been working hard. One day I noticed her adjusting her veil over her face as a man passed by. In this part of India, married women do not show their faces to men other than their husbands. "How will you go to the city to study when you are married?", I asked with a smile. Her face first beamed with surprise, then laughed when she realised I had "identified" her. "Do you know everything?", she asked, laughing. She then told me that she was close to thirty, had three children and was earning money for them on her own since her husband had turned to drink. I was shocked. With such a difficult fate, where did the childlike laughter come from, where did the carefree sparkle in her eyes? Life had long since vanished from the walls of the house I had excavated, but in Nafisa I found the *joie de vivre*. I thought that often a little

trouble is enough to make us lose our cheerfulness, and Nafisa, despite her difficult life, is cheerful and content. I respected her a lot for that.

As we talked with the women, we also talked about religions. Half of their village community was Hindu, the other half Muslim. Although the daily rituals and lifestyles of the two groups differed, they were one community. They also cooperated during the excavation work and called each other brothers and sisters. They also considered me as their sister. Their religious tolerance touched me deeply.

The dig was over. On top of a bare hill, only an empty pit marks the place where we spent six weeks. A small, square pit, far from tourist attractions, historical cities, famous churches or monuments. On that January morning, I had had no idea that it would be here that India, past and present, would unfold before me, and that the pit, barely a metre deep, would offer such insights.

Amṛtānanda Devī Dāsī
(Rita Jeney)

Vedic Thoughts

The whole world is engaged in sacrificing energy for advancement of learning, social upliftment, economic development and plans for total improvement of the human condition, but no one is interested in sacrificing for the sake of the Lord, as it is advised in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. Therefore, there is no peace in the world. If men at all want peace in the world, they must practice sacrifice in the interest of the supreme proprietor and friend of all.

His Divine Grace
A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda
Śrimad-Bhāgavatam 2.6.28, Purport

The holy names of Kṛṣṇa are the eternal Truth. All scriptures explain Kṛṣṇa and nothing else. Kṛṣṇa is the supreme controller, the creator, the maintainer, and the annihilator. Everyone, beginning from Lord Brahmā and Lord Śiva, is His servant. The life of anyone who gives up the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa and explains things as separate from Him is useless as a result of his false statements. The philosophies in all scriptures headed by the *āgamas* and *Vedānta* describe the wealth of devotion to the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa.

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu
Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata,
Madhya-khanda 1.148–151

The Lord's transcendental form is the Absolute Truth, devoid of duality or of beginning, middle, or end. It is self-effulgent, eternal, and full of knowledge and bliss. Only through devotional service can one understand that form to be infallible.

Vāsudeva Upaniṣad 6.5

An expert geologist can understand where there is gold and by various processes can extract it from the gold ore. Similarly, a spiritually advanced person can understand how the spiritual particle exists within the body, and thus by cultivating spiritual knowledge he can attain perfection in spiritual life. However, as one who is not expert cannot understand where there is gold, a foolish person who has not cultivated spiritual knowledge cannot understand how the spirit exists within the body.

Śrī Prahlāda Mahārāja
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.7.21

It is not logical to say that the Supreme Personality of Godhead does not have inconceivable potencies that can arrange for the Lord to possess mutually contradictory qualities, for no one has the power to understand the Lord completely. The Lord must have inconceivable potencies, for that is logical and it is also confirmed by the Vedic revelation. Therefore the idea that the Lord does not have such powers that can give Him mutually contradictory qualities is illogical and should be thrown far away.

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī
Sri Paramātma-sandarbha, Anuccheda 58

One who follows the disciplic succession of ācāryas knows things as they are.

Chāndogya Upaniṣad 6.14.2

By worshiping the devotees of the Lord, all one's desires will be fulfilled.

Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad 3.1.10



THE KITCHEN OF LORD JAGANNĀTHA, BIGGEST IN THE WORLD





Sri Jagannath is the Lord of the Universe. His kitchen is considered as the largest and the biggest kitchen in the world. It is situated south-east direction of the outer compound of Srimandir. The length of the kitchen is 150 feet, breadth is 100 feet and height is about 20 feet. It consists of 32 rooms with 250 earthen ovens within these. Around 600 cooks (*suaras*) and 400 assistants serve here everyday for preparing Lord's food.

There are three types of hearths in the kitchen of Srimandir such as *anna chuli*, *ahia chuli* and *pitha chuli*. The dimension of hearths where rice is prepared are 4' x 2.5' x 2'. The rectangular space created between two rice hearths is called *ahia*. All types of dal and curry items are cooked in *ahia chuli*. There are ten *pitha chulis* in the temple kitchen which are made of cement. The fire of this kitchen is known as *vaishnava agni*, because it is the fire in the kitchen of

Lord Jagannath and used to serve Vishnu Himself. It is never put out.

It is believed that Mahalakshmi cooks in the kitchen Herself; all are felt to be Her servants. As She is not attentive to the cooking on the days when Lord Jagannath is said to be sick before Rath Yatra, the food is less tasty. During Rath Yatra when Lord Jagannath is in Sri Gundicha Temple She is said to have no zeal to cook, and so the food is tasteless.

It is also said that if mother Lakshmi is displeased with the preparations by the cooks, a dog will appear mysteriously on the temple grounds. If the dog is seen, all the food must be buried and prepared again. As no dog is allowed to enter the temple, this dog is said to be Kutama Chandi, a tantric goddess in charge of purification of the food.

Four types of cooking are prepared in the kitchen of Srimandir. Those are *bhimapaka*,



nalapaka, souripaka, and gouripaka. The items of *bhimapaka* consists of *badatiana, gudakhuara, pakala nadia rasa, purapitha, biripitha, and gudakanji*. In *nalapaka* items like *sakara, tianalapara, adanga* and different types of sweet drinks are prepared. *Souripaka* items include *mahura, deshialubhaja, kadalibhaja, adapachedi, ghialabanga* and varieties of cakes. The dishes cooked in *gouripaka* include *mugatiana, leutia, kosala, and madhura lalita saga*.

In the kitchen of Srimandir, four types of rice are prepared. These are *salianna, khiraanna, dadhianna, and sitalaanna*. *Sunakhila* rice is cooked along with ghee and *phalatabha kharada lavana* to get *salianna*. For getting *khiraanna* along with *basumati* rice: cow milk, ghee and *kharada lavana* are mixed and cooked. Similarly *dadhianna* is prepared from plain rice mixed with curd, and *sitalaanna* is prepared from rice mixed with *tabharasa* and *kharada lavana*.

The food in the temple kitchen is prepared in such a pure way and with such deep devotion that great spiritual impact is felt, both by those who cook and those who eat. The unique feature is that clay pots are placed in a special earthen oven, five in numbers, one on the top of another. Yet the one on the top is cooked first.

There are two wells in the temple complex for the purpose of supplying water to the kitchen. These are named *Ganga* and *Jamuna*, and both are near the kitchen itself. The radius of the wells is more than 10 feet, and their depth is 100 feet each.

All the necessary commodities for the temple kitchen are brought from *Mahalakshmi Bhandar*, which is run by the *Suara Nijoga Cooperative Society*. The earthen pots used for cooking foods are provided by *Kumbhakara Nijoga Society*. The potters of *Kumbharapara* and nearby areas supply these pots to the temple kitchen. The



CHAPPAN BHOGA OR MAHĀPRASĀDA

Mahāprasāda is the term applied to the 56 food items offered to Lord Jagannātha in the holy temple of Puri.

According to *Skanda Purāṇa* Lord Jagannātha redeems the devotees by permitting them to partake His *mahāprasāda*, to have His *darśana* and to worship Him by observing rituals and by offering of gifts. *Mahāprasāda* is treated here as *anna-brahma*. The temple kitchen has a capacity to cook *prasāda* for around a hundred thousand of devotees in a day. *Mahāprasāda* is cooked in earthen pots and traditional wood is used to light fire. The steam-cooked food is offered first to Lord Jagannātha and then to Goddess Vimalā after which it becomes *mahāprasāda*. This *mahāprasāda* is freely taken by people of all castes and creeds without any discrimination.

When the steam-cooked food is carried to Lord in slings of earthen pots, no aroma is sensed from the food but, when the same is carried back after being offered to the Lord, a delicious smell fills the breeze. This is a pleasant surprise to all present and the devotees feel that the food has been blessed.

The tourists prefer to take with them a particular type of dry *mahāprasāda* known as *khaja* (made of maida, sugar and ghee) which stays fresh for many days and is easy to carry.

Mahāprasāda is not offered during the 21 days preceding the Ratha-yātrā, as the Lord is said to be having fever and thus needs rest during that period.

Dried rice *mahāprasāda* known as *nirmalya* is also used by devotees and tourists for different sacred occasions.



required timber for the kitchen was previously supplied from different forests of the State. But after nationalisation of forests, the State Forest Corporation is providing timbers for cooking purpose.

Daily 5,000 persons may be fed, but on big festival days, one to ten million may be accommodated. The temple kitchen of Lord Jagannāth is therefore considered to be the biggest hotel in the world, serving all without reservation or previous notice.

Saroj Kumar Panda
Principal of Gadibrahma
College, Delang, Puri



IS THERE A RAISON D'ÊTRE FOR AYURVEDA?

As an Ayurveda therapist, I am often asked why I am pushing for people to hear about this ancient Indian medicine here in the middle of Europe—today, when every year there are new discoveries in the field of alternative therapies.

I usually reply that this ancient knowledge is not just for Indians, but for all humanity. No matter where

you were born, **Ayurveda is an invaluable approach to health maintenance, healing and personal development that has been tried and tested for 5,000 years and still works today.**

We are full of questions. Poets, philosophers and great thinkers have been searching for answers to the great questions of mankind for thousands of years, and

the answers are often sitting on our bookshelves, waiting to be read. Of course, I know the world is running fast, and so are we. But if we don't stop for a moment to create harmony in our lives, if we don't take the time to learn how to take control of our lives, it is only a matter of time before disease sets in.

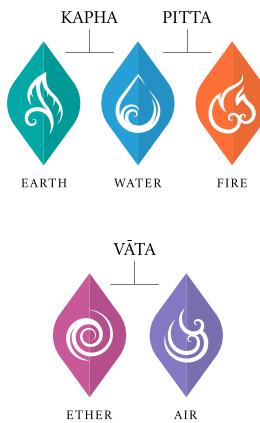
Then, when people hear about the holistic system of



Ayurveda, the body types, the practices we can apply to our daily lives, they become eager to learn more and ask more questions.

The *vātas* (those with airy natures) laugh a lot when I elaborate on how as children their mouths didn't shut, how they couldn't sit on their butts and how they needed encouragement because of their frequent fears, which were the result of bad dreams. And as adults, how much they are fascinated by travel, the arts, and the fact that if they can't move to another apartment, they at least move their furniture every few years, because change is their life.

The *pittas*' (the fiery ones) cool attention is broken and they chuckle when I talk about how critical they can be, how they don't like being late, and how it all brings up the same angry thought in them: "Stop playing with my time!" Even more pleasurable for them is when we push



the point that their expectations of others are only exceeded by their expectations of themselves, so it is their eternal dilemma: "If I can do it, why can't someone else?" They also have a great memory, often remembering accurately conversations and situations from years ago, while others just shrug it off, because who can remember...

The *kaphas* (the earthy ones) are the big-hearted bears who smile when I tell

them that they often don't like to go abroad on holiday, because they are comfortable in their own environment. They want to relax in their own country, they want to speak their own language, they have only one condition: there should be water! Because that's what they are. They are often described as slow, but they are calm, contented, family-oriented, perhaps a little sentimental people.

Because that's what we humans are—different! We can't be lumped together, because we are all different. So we cannot have the same one perfect solution for our lives. Some people care about career, about getting ahead, because for them life is a challenge. They can realise their potential through their profession until they become a leader. Others not only don't want to be bosses, but they even worry about making their own life choices.

What does this have to do with medicine? It is very simple! An airy temperament will be prone to airy illnesses (bloating, digestive difficulties, anxiety), a fiery temperament will have fiery problems (inflammation, fever, outbursts of anger), while an earthy temperament will have earthy difficulties (overweight, oedema, depression). This is important because their treatment should be chosen according to their temperament. For a *vāta* who is constantly suf-

fering from dry symptoms, drying herbs should not be recommended. A fiery *pitta* should not be given heating herbs. A *kapha* suffering from congestion should not be advised to drink a tea with a soothing effect.

An approach according to bodily constitutions will help us in our choices. Whether it's healthy eating, sports, hobbies, work or our studies, it will show the right direction for us.

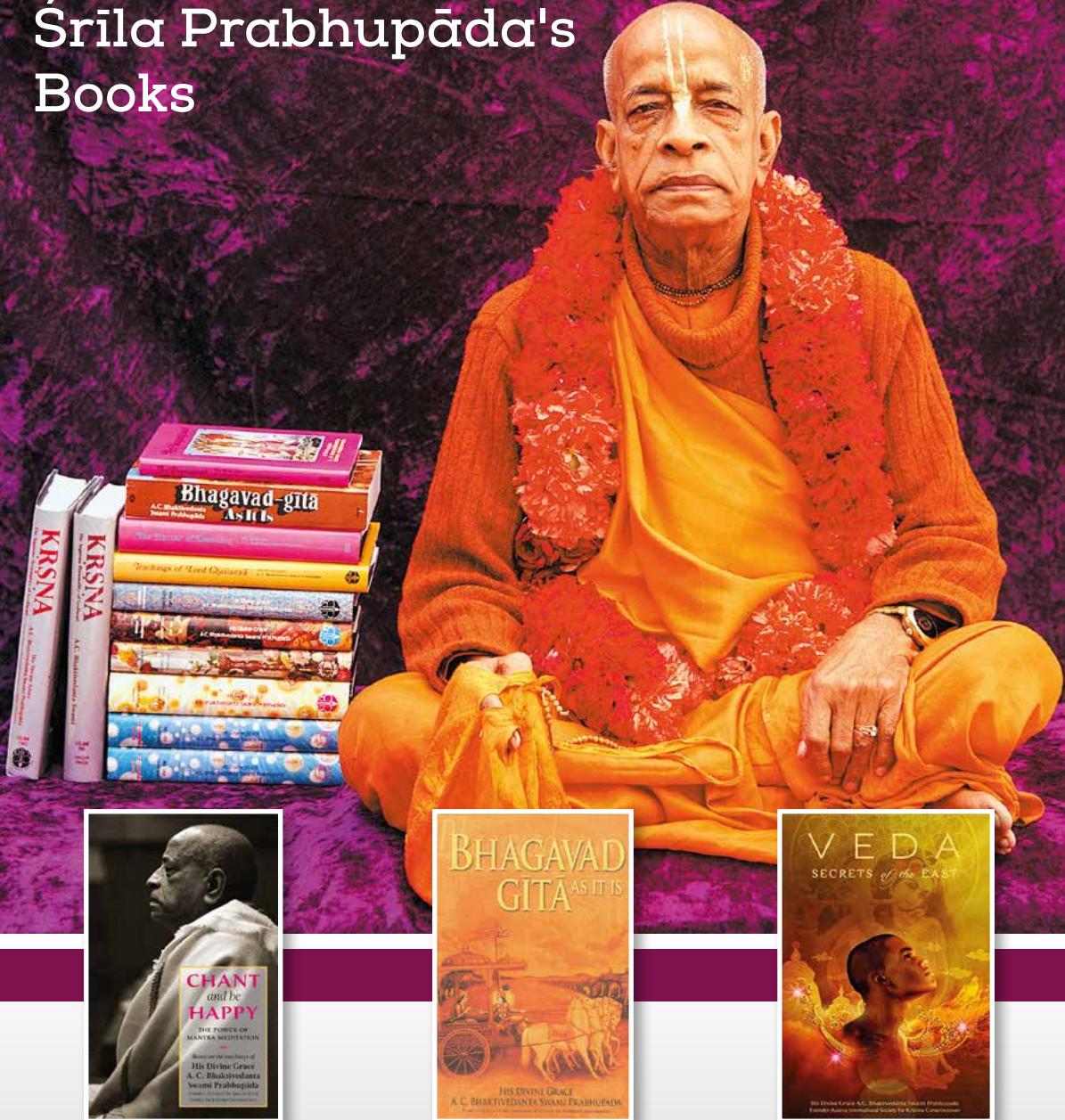
Once we learn the basics of Ayurvedic knowledge,

even at the layman's level, we are guaranteed to stop asking ourselves, "Why am I like this?". We will know the answer! We will even know why my husband, wife, mother-in-law, child, boss or colleague is like this or that. When we get to know ourselves, our innate nature and how we can improve it, while understanding how others work and what drives them, the world becomes a better place!

Viktoria Károlyi Bánki



Śrīla Prabhupāda's Books



CHANT AND BE HAPPY

Just what is the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra, the "great chant of deliverance"? And what are the benefits of chanting it? This book answers those questions and many more you may have about the science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Includes fifty pages of exclusive conversations with George Harrison and John Lennon.

BHAGAVAD-GITA AS IT IS

The *Bhagavad-gītā* is universally renowned as the jewel of India's spiritual wisdom. Spoken by Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead to His intimate disciple Arjuna, the Gītā's seven hundred concise verses provide a definitive guide to the science of self realisation.

VEDA

Veda explores the secrets of spirituality found in the ancient writings of India. Probing into topics such as the soul, karma, reincarnation, and meditation, this book will help awaken within you the spiritual insights great teachers have spoken of for thousands of years.



VEDIC ASTROLOGY: A MEASURE OF SANC

When we step onto the sacred land of India, we enter not only a mystical world, but an ancient realm that maintains a connection with the heavens and the cycle of the year. On the walls of every house in India hang calendars that mark religious festivals, fasting days, sunrises and sunsets, the beginning of lunar months and other important astronomical events. When we arrive in India, we are once again attuned to the cosmos, of which we are all a part, but somehow we have forgotten our natural connection to it, which makes time a sacred time.

In Western countries, we somehow fill the calendar with 365 grey, busy days of the week. Perhaps with the exception of Christmas, even weekends fall victim to our financial ambitions. In India, on the other hand, every week there is a holiday—life is intertwined with the cycle of the year. There are six seasons and winter only lasts for two months. More challenging is the heat and the monsoon, which forces people to pause. Life lasts from January to July, then practically starts again in October. At the end of September, two weeks are dedicated to the



TIFIED TIME

veneration of the ancestral fathers, ending the period of prohibition. No important rites are performed during the four months of the monsoon, and auspicious rituals are aligned with the bright half of the year (21 December to 21 June).

The nature of time determines social customs and activities. Children are named on the twelfth day after birth, while the departed are bid farewell on the thirteenth day, when the body has been cremated and the family has performed the rites that ensure peace and an auspicious rebirth for the departed soul.

In India the days of the week are named after the planets, so everyone knows that on Mondays, Lord Śiva, Candraśekhara, who holds the crescent moon in his hair, is to be visited in temples on the lunar day. It is Lord Śiva who can perfectly create the tranquility of the moon or of the mind. On Tuesday, the day of Mars, people avoid buying sharp, cutting instruments or metal, and many shops and markets are also closed on this day. Wednesday is Mercury's day, which is mainly conducive to administration, procurement,

clerical, office work and is a popular market day in India. It is ruled by Lord Viṣṇu and is therefore considered auspicious. Thursday is the day of the Guru, or Jupiter, so ladies also rest and do no housework. They put on their jewellery, take a yellow shawl and visit a temple to receive the teachings and blessings of the spiritual master. Friday is dedicated to the goddess Lakṣmī and the comfort of the ladies, and the week ends on Saturday, when they ask the ruling demigod of the current iron age, the Kali age, Śani, or Saturn, to remove their karmic debts from their lives. In return, they do good deeds, donate, care for the poor, nurture or feed the elderly and sick. They begin the new week with Sunday, which is dedicated to Sūrya-Nārāyaṇa and Prince Rāma. It is a day for families, communal meals and outings.

The daily rituals are determined by the course of the sun. According to the Hindu concept, in the present age the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa Himself occupies the position of the Sun God. The supreme Bhagavān therefore resides in the sun. Therefore, lamps, incense and flowers are offered to Him at dawn, while prayers are offered to Him at noon and in the evening, and this is also the time for chanting.

The holidays are moving holidays according to the lunar calendar. The days of appearance of the various incarnations of the Supreme coincide with the relevant astronomical events, for example, Prince Rāma, born in the dynasty of the Sun, appears when the sun is in its zenith position in the sky. The vernal equinox and the autumnal equinox are both accompanied by the nine-night festival cycle of the goddess Durgā, the Nava-rātri. The appearance of various forms of Kṛṣṇa, such as Janmāṣṭamī in

August-September, is celebrated with rituals at home and at the temple, and with pilgrimages, fasting, followed by communal prayers and meals. The biggest festivals are Holi and Diwāli, which are associated with the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa and Rāma. In addition to the religious festivals, a fortnightly fast from grains is also observed on the eleventh day of the waning and waxing phases of the moon, and the time of breaking the fast is also calculated from the sunrise.

The type of food on the table is usually determined by the time of year, the hot or humid weather and the days of the week. They also influence the choice of ingredients, the colours used and the spices.

Important business in India is usually done on Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays or Fridays. They also follow the constellations indicated by the lunar calendar. If they want quick results, financial success or to do something for their health, they start at a different constellation corresponding to the expected result. Of course, they often seek the help of a professional astrologer. They don't travel on Thursday afternoons, during the monsoon, in the weeks of the ancestral fathers, and they only pay a visit from sunrise to sunset.

Almost every family in India has one or two astrologers, just as we in Europe have our own family doctor. When a child is born, families invite the family's *brāhmaṇa* to come and prepare the child's horoscope and also to tell them about the most important life events. Later, the horoscope-formula will be the basis for choosing a spouse. The match of a boy and a girl may be viewed by several professionals before the couple even meets for the first time. Weddings are planned with the utmost care and are held



at an auspicious time of the year, for example on the “lucky day” (Akṣaya-tritiya) or on a day corresponding to the personal horoscope of the boy and the girl.

The ruling demigods of the planets are also deeply respected in everyday life. Ultimately, it is believed that one who always performs his prescribed duties in the proper nature of time, always in the right way, and at the right time, completes the dharma, reduces bad karma and has the opportunity to rise to the

level of blissful devotional service to Kṛṣṇa. The many rites and customs based on astrological constellations may seem rigid and restricted at first, yet they beautifully guide the soul as a traveller from birth to death, so that one can live a righteous life that is beneficial also to the community.



Kata Fodor

Lost in India





We were driving through traffic in Delhi on a hot March morning when a strange teaching came to us: you must get lost to find yourself. To find out what makes the stars shine, what makes the flowers smell, what makes everything alive go mad... even unconsciously...

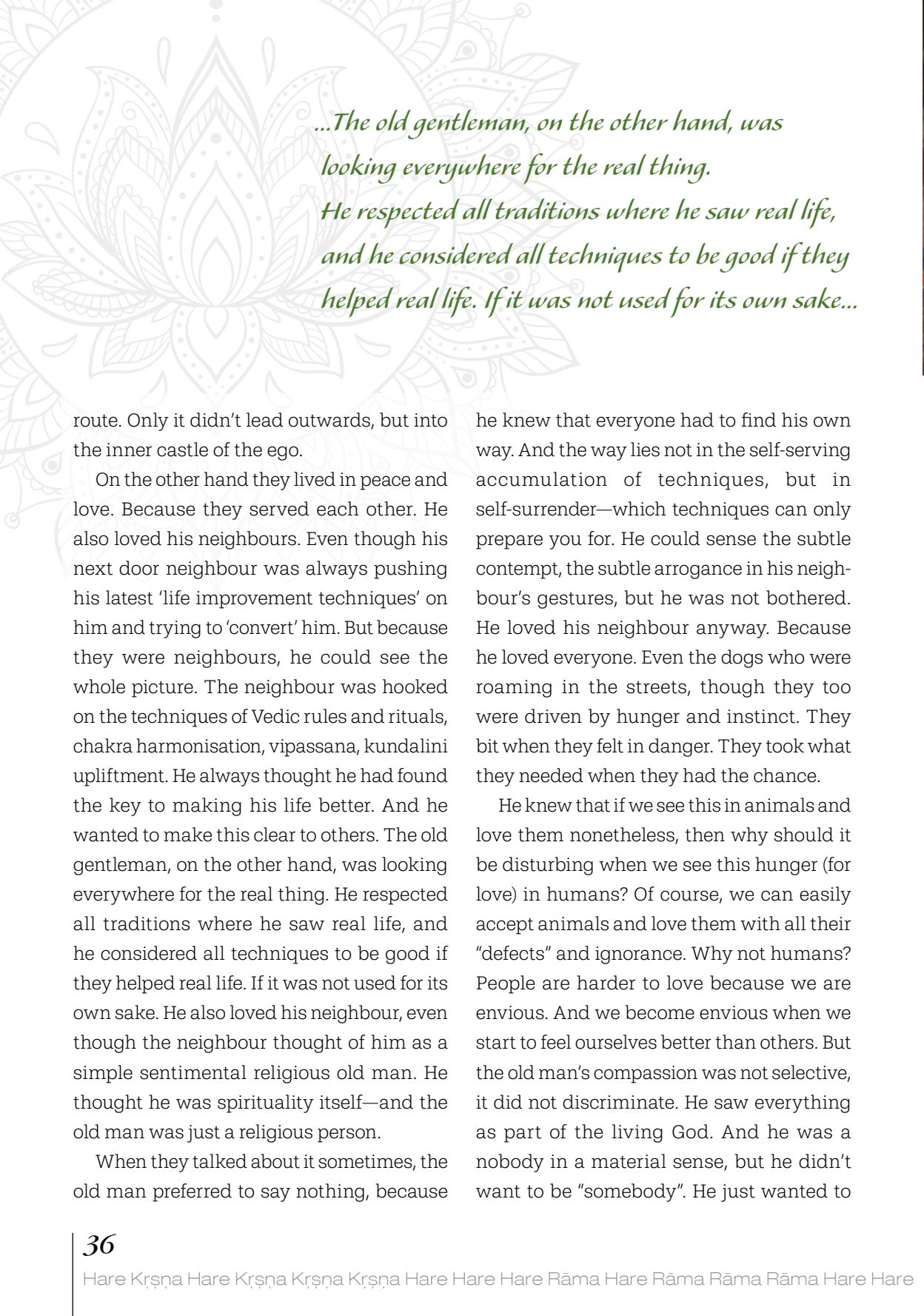
It was a bright morning. Traffic had just stopped completely when I caught a glimpse of something out of the window of our bus. A story that I saw in a man's eyes, which repainted my reality then and there. An elderly gentleman was sitting on a motorcycle rickshaw as traffic came to a complete standstill in the maddening gridlock that was common there. I looked around unsuspectingly and he looked up into the bus. Our eyes met. That was it. Our paths parted here immediately, but the inner story that was unfolding in his eyes had me following his path in an alternate reality.

The old gentleman turned off the busy main road and rolled down a small alley on his way home. He hadn't had any rides before noon, as this business is very competitive here, but in his eyes it was a wonderful day, full of sunshine and cheerfulness. Even in the mad hell of Delhi. Even balancing on the edge of misery. The dewy freshness of his soul permeated his existence, cutting through the poverty and the madness of the seemingly insatiable false sanity of the outside world. Thus everything was full of life and serenity for

him. He quickly went shopping so that his wife can cook lunch, which he would have to take to the school for his children before he went back to his afternoon shift.

He and his spouse were married by obedience at a very young age. Almost as children. Because that was the custom here. Their parents chose them for each other. But surprising as it may seem, they loved each other very much, not in spite of it, but precisely because of it. Because they understood how it worked. They knew that duty was the first key. Kṛṣṇa also talks about this in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. They understood that doing your duty is the first token of love. Because if they take that this relationship is forever—or at least for this lifetime—then they are really working on the relationship and themselves.

For it is precisely the belief that there is another way, that there is always a way out, what fundamentally destroys relationships. Because then you don't feel you have to work on it. It's the attitude that "I have to enjoy things, the other person, and if I can't, I'll look for another situation where I can enjoy myself" that ruins it. Of course, they also saw people who chose a different escape route: living side by side, but with their own ego expectations. Isolated, just throwing constant ego-boosting thoughts at the other. In a sea of compromises and games. Because it was just as much a false ego's escape



...The old gentleman, on the other hand, was looking everywhere for the real thing. He respected all traditions where he saw real life, and he considered all techniques to be good if they helped real life. If it was not used for its own sake...

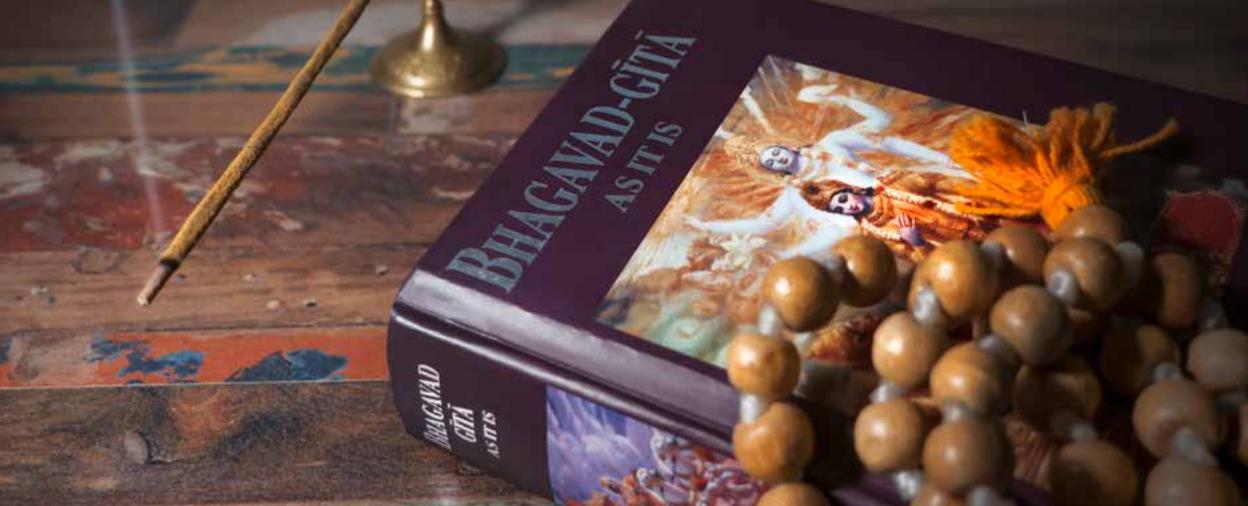
route. Only it didn't lead outwards, but into the inner castle of the ego.

On the other hand they lived in peace and love. Because they served each other. He also loved his neighbours. Even though his next door neighbour was always pushing his latest 'life improvement techniques' on him and trying to 'convert' him. But because they were neighbours, he could see the whole picture. The neighbour was hooked on the techniques of Vedic rules and rituals, chakra harmonisation, vipassana, kundalini upliftment. He always thought he had found the key to making his life better. And he wanted to make this clear to others. The old gentleman, on the other hand, was looking everywhere for the real thing. He respected all traditions where he saw real life, and he considered all techniques to be good if they helped real life. If it was not used for its own sake. He also loved his neighbour, even though the neighbour thought of him as a simple sentimental religious old man. He thought he was spirituality itself—and the old man was just a religious person.

When they talked about it sometimes, the old man preferred to say nothing, because

he knew that everyone had to find his own way. And the way lies not in the self-serving accumulation of techniques, but in self-surrender—which techniques can only prepare you for. He could sense the subtle contempt, the subtle arrogance in his neighbour's gestures, but he was not bothered. He loved his neighbour anyway. Because he loved everyone. Even the dogs who were roaming in the streets, though they too were driven by hunger and instinct. They bit when they felt in danger. They took what they needed when they had the chance.

He knew that if we see this in animals and love them nonetheless, then why should it be disturbing when we see this hunger (for love) in humans? Of course, we can easily accept animals and love them with all their "defects" and ignorance. Why not humans? People are harder to love because we are envious. And we become envious when we start to feel ourselves better than others. But the old man's compassion was not selective, it did not discriminate. He saw everything as part of the living God. And he was a nobody in a material sense, but he didn't want to be "somebody". He just wanted to



experience the wonder of the relationship with Kṛṣṇa and the other living beings. He did not lose his own self. Only his false self. He went from being a controller to being an observer, and that's how he found himself. He knew that this was often confused with 'losing the self'. But as long as there is awareness, there is self-awareness. Because consciousness equals awareness. He lost himself to find himself. He lost his false ego to find the real self. To find the spiritual reality that is reflected in all our experiences as reality is reflected in all our dreams.

In the evenings he would go to *Bhagavad-gītā* readings and listen to the words of God with complete openness. He approached the saints who spoke of the *Bhagavad-gītā* with a primordial confidence from the depths of his heart. In this way he connected to the real current of life, of which techniques are only frozen skeletons if

there is no surrender, if we do not surrender to life, to God. Accepting that everything must happen as it happens, because that is what leads us onwards, upwards. Letting go of the illusory handholds. One by one, all of them. All handholds but the reality of relying on God. Because that is what gives us real freedom, that is what opens our eyes to real life, to the forms of real life, to the relationships of real life. It is what we experience as we try to convey the protective and uplifting nature of divine love.

Because *bhakti*, unconditional love, is the inherent nature of reality, of real life. Love is based on attention and is woven from awareness and self-surrender.

We must lose ourselves in God to find ourselves, to find reality. The reality what... the reality who (!) makes everything alive go mad... even unconsciously...

Acyutanānda Dāsa



INCREDIBLE INDIA



This January, I flew to India with my eight-year-old son, Govinda. Our purpose was to visit holy pilgrimage sites and meet my spiritual teacher Śrīla



They say that you don't go to India with a plane ticket, you go there by the desire. It is certainly true, although I was sitting on the plane and I was unsure: do I want to do this? Or why do I want this? Of course, then my whole life was a question mark... where to and how to go? But a trip to India is no accident in life. I'll find out why I came here...

I am an idealist. Everyone knows that. I am sensitive to rubbish, waste, even aesthetic pollution... I also resent it when a house is stupidly designed and doesn't fit in with the streetscape. Well, India has had plenty of all that!

In the first few days, we had the opportunity to visit Ekacakra, a very ancient village where Lord Nityānanda—one of the incarnations of Kṛṣṇa—appeared. In 2012, there were endless bright green rice fields in every direction, but now we were greeted by large temples, parking lots, narrow streets, small bazaars, and a lot of trash on the side of the road.

Of course, the reader will have heard and seen this before, so I won't bore you with it. On the plus side, the local

Indradymna Swami whom I have not seen for a long time. I had been to India in 2012 and, as now, I had received a gift of a plane ticket.



Garden of The Mayapur Candrodaya Mandir
(Source: www.A108.net)

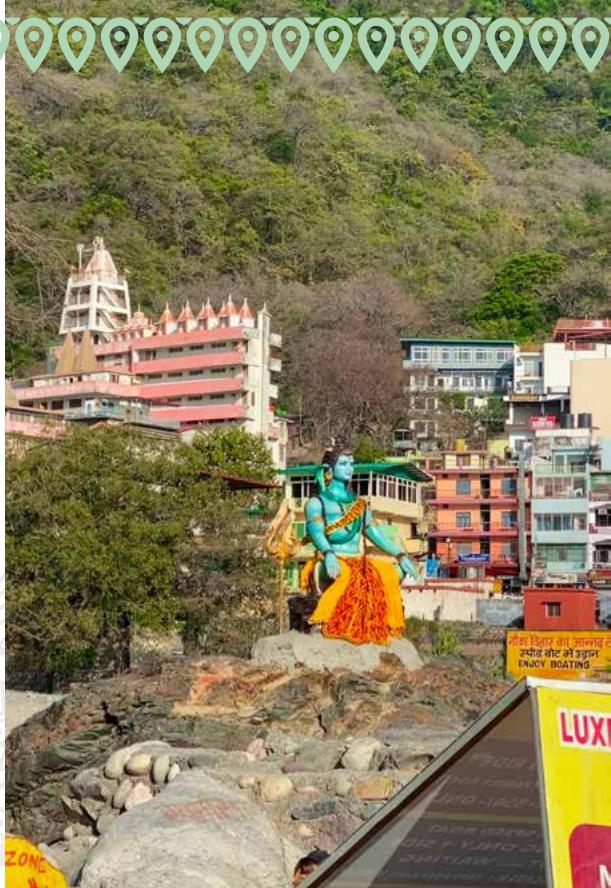
Kṛṣṇa temple is very nice and clean, and the garden is beautiful and tidy.

It was fasting day—*ekādaśi*—and the locals welcomed us with a very delicious fasting breakfast. Afterwards, it was refreshing to visit the vegetable garden behind the temple, where we saw kale bigger than a man's head, as well as aubergines, peas and beautiful flowers. The papaya was just starting to ripen. Next to the garden, some men were building a huge tent out of 3-4 metre long bamboos for an upcoming feast, expected to accommodate thousands of guests, and two men were carrying clay on their heads in large buckets. At last I could forget for a while the depressing, gruelling sight that had been haunting us all along the bumpy bus ride. But this scene was just as if it had taken place a few hundred years before. But it is always about the lesson—because, as promised, I won't bore the reader. There is no history writing in India. Why? Because the importance is not in what happened when, but



what we can learn from it. So I will not go into any more detail about my travel experiences. The point is what I took home: a deeper faith, a deeper conviction.

We Westerners are very good at doing bad things, while Indians are very bad at doing good things. Let me explain this so that there is no misunderstanding. India's was once the most advanced, the most sublime culture in the world. To this day, many things bear witness to this: the buildings, the clothes, the temples, the remains of old cities, the surviving books, the paintings, the natural endowments, the special foods... But India was plundered in more ways than one. During the Muslim conquests, many temples were destroyed, and with them the worshippers, the priests, the *brāhmaṇas*. Later, when the British arrived, they still found a beautiful, prosperous empire here, which fascinated them. It was then that the India fever developed. Many believed that India's culture was the root of all human culture. But this was not practical, because if that was the case, how would they colonise it? So the English rulers systematically began to have the scholars of the time write books about how India was in fact inferior and backward. Western developments, such as the building of the railways, were a wonderful revolution in the subcontinent. Then came other machinery, factories and cars. But what really dealt a killer blow to Vedic culture in India was the undermining of people's faith. For the seemingly lofty and authentic civilisation that we once saw in the land of Bhārata, as India was once called, was based on nothing but faith and reverence. That is what has faltered. The developed West had led naive Indians to believe



that their society was in fact oppressive and exploitative. Why should they follow spiritual leaders, *brāhmaṇas* and scriptures—they are just fables. Science will solve everything... But India's ancient spirituality is so deeply rooted that it has survived to this day in its outward appearance. This is the strange mixture we see there today. The design is still Vedic, but the values and the way it works is not always so. And they are definitely not prepared for plastic bag chips and PET bottles. Unfortunately, most places have no garbage collection at all. Not that transport solves anything... Because we do collect our rubbish and store it somewhere, or even recycle it. In the worst case, we ship it to Malaysia, for example, and then dump it in the rainforests, or even in the sea, to make it look tidy... But the main problem is that we are constantly pro-



ducing it, and in Delhi the mountains of rubbish are going sky high, and when they can't do anything with it, they simply burn it.

By contrast, if you go to Krishna Valley, or any ISKCON centre or community anywhere in the world, you really do find yourself in a spiritual and cultural oasis.

I have been crying over India. I am being serious. Sometimes I even closed my eyes.

I have only one consolation: the deeper conviction and admiration I have for Śrīla Prabhupāda now. As from a sinking ship, he has rescued a treasure and placed it in the hands of young people in the West whose faith has been shaken by the false promises of modern consumerism. So the circle becomes full circle. What we have messed up, we can now put right together. Śrīla Prabhupāda often said that he wanted to combine modern tech-

nology and ancient Vedic knowledge in the right way. Just as in the story of the lame and the blind man coming together. The West is doing very well, but it is blind. It does not know which way to go. It is spiritually aimless, meaningless. From the East comes light, spiritual knowledge, but if it is not put into practice, or if it only takes shape in some superficial rites, it saves neither body nor soul from corruption...

The West is good at doing the wrong thing, in other words it packages it very nicely, serving us a soul-killing life which in the end does not give us any happiness. And India is a bit worn, a bit rotten, not even sure what it believes in... It is not convincing in this form.

And the Krishna consciousness movement is just like the Matsya-avatāra described in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, a gigantic fish incarnation of Kṛṣṇa who appeared millions of years ago and, pulling an ark, he saved the Vedic scriptures from being destructed in the flood.

According to Shakespeare, East and West are irreconcilable, but Śrīla Prabhupāda's view is that this can be a successful marriage if the West's precision, glamour and efficiency can be made to work for the real good of humanity in accordance with the teachings of the *Bhagavad-gītā*.

Vallabhī-kānta Dāsī

In addition to the three vegetables listed above, you can enrich this sabji with other seasonal or favourite ingredients, so the variations are endless. Enjoy cooking!

Light summer sabji



PREPARATION:

Heat the oil in a saucepan and brown the whole cumin and the hing until fragrant, then add the chopped green pepper. Once that's browned a little, add the potatoes and braise for a while. Once this is done, sprinkle with the remaining powdered spices, season with salt, add enough water to cover, and when

half cooked, add the courgettes and green peas and cook until done.

As you can see in the picture, you can enrich it by using your imagination—or by using leftovers from the fridge. At just the right moment, you can add carrots, California peppers, broccoli florets or caulif-

HOZZÁVALÓK:

- 4 tbsp oil
- 1.5 tsp cumin
- 1 tsp hing
- green hot pepper
- 6-8 potatoes, diced
- 2 tsp ground coriander
- 1 tsp ground cumin
- 3/4 tsp turmeric
- 2.5 tsp salt
- 1 courgette, diced
- 4 dl cooked green peas

flower florets. All of these will bring new flavours to your kitchen.

Source: krisna.hu/gasztro



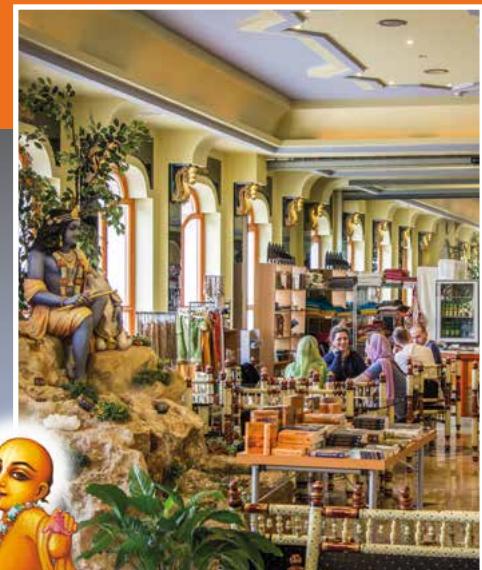
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