# Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami

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GN PRESS, INC. RD #1, BOX 837-K PORT ROYAL, PA 17082

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Second Printing, 1991

ISBN: 0-911233-46-6

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Obstacles on the Path of Devotional Service Talking Freely to My Lords My Search Through Books Am I a Demon or a Vaiṣṇava Viṣṇu-rāta Vijaya Śrī Caitanya-dayā Shack Notes Here Is Śrīla Prabhupāda

idānīm dharma pādas te satyam nirvartayed yatah tam jighrksaty adharmo 'yam anŗtenaidhitaḥ kaliḥ

You are now standing on one leg only, which is your truthfulness, and you are somehow or other hobbling along. But quarrel personified [Kali], flourishing by deceit, is also trying to destroy that leg.  $-Bh\bar{ag}$ , 1.17.25

> na hy asatyāt paro 'dharma iti hovāca bhūr iyam sarvam soḍhum alam manye ŗte 'līka-param naram

There is nothing more sinful than untruthfulness. Because of this, mother earth once said, "I can bear any heavy thing except a person who is a liar."  $-Bh\bar{a}g. 8.20.4$ 

# Contents

1. The Last Leg: Reflections from Śrīmad-	
Bhāgavatam, First Canto, Chapter 17	1
2. Sat, Eternal Truth	13
3. Honesty and Lying	21
4. Distributing the Truth	31
5. The Age of Hypocrisy	42
6. Māyāvāda Theories of Truth and Illusion	60
7. Honesty: The Good Fight	75
8. Anecdotes of Truth	97
9. Glossary	116

Chapter One The Last Leg

#### Setting the Scene

1.1 Sūta Gosvāmī had been describing the glories of Mahārāja Parīkṣit, the last emperor in the dynasty of the Pāṇḍavas. Sūta had narrated other post-Kurukṣetra topics, such as the disappearance of Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Personality of Godhead, and the disappearance of His intimate devotees, the Pāṇḍavas. The Age of Kali (hypocrisy and quarrel) had already begun, but its symptoms had not developed due to the presence of the strong, God conscious emperor, Mahārāja Parīkṣit.

When Parīkṣit Mahārāja learned that the Age of Kali had begun to infiltrate within the jurisdiction of his state, he armed himself with a chariot drawn by black horses, surrounded himself with his army, and left the capital "to conquer in all directions."

It wasn't long before Mahārāja Parīkṣit came upon a pitiable scene. He encountered a low-caste man ( $s\bar{u}dra$ ), dressed as a king, beating a cow and a bull with a club. The terrified bull was standing on only one leg and was trembling and urinating. The cow's legs were also being beaten by the  $s\bar{u}dra$  and there were tears in her eyes. The emperor immediately drew his sword and threatened to kill the  $s\bar{u}dra$ .

Before striking, however, the emperor first offered words of solace to the cow and bull. He asked the bull the cause of his unfortunate condition. The bull, who was religion personified, replied that it was difficult to ascertain the original cause of his misfortune. Mahārāja Parīkṣit was impressed by this reply. "O you who are in the form of a bull! . . . You are no other than the personality of religion."

Mahārāja Parīkṣit recalled that in the Age of Satya (truthfulness), all four legs of the bull were established by principles of austerity, cleanliness, mercy, and truthfulness. But three of those legs were now broken "due to rampant irreligion in the form of pride, lust for women and intoxication."

Now that the scene has been set, we will examine Prabhupāda's statements and try to answer some questions. Why, out of the four legs of religion, was truthfulness remaining? What kind of truthfulness still exists despite the growing degradation of Kali-yuga? How can truth-seekers and protectors maintain this last leg? Can the other legs be restored? These are relevant inquiries, because we are all living in the Age of Kali, and truthfulness is our last hope.

1.2 🖌

tvām vartamānam nara-deva-dehesv anupravrtto 'yam adharma-pūgah lobho 'nṛtam cauryam anāryam amho jyesthā ca māyā kalahas ca dambhah If the personality of Kali, irreligion, is allowed to act as a man-god or an executive head, certainly irreligious principles like greed, falsehood, robbery, incivility, treachery, misfortune, cheating, quarrel and vanity will abound.

—Bhāg. 1.17.32

After giving protection and solace to the cow and bull, the emperor took up his sharp sword, ready to kill the personality of Kali. Although Kali was dressed as a king, his real identity was exposed by the challenge of the *kṣatriya*, Mahārāja Parīkṣit. Under the force of fear, Kali bowed down his head like a subordinate, gave up his royal dress, and asked to be spared. The king replied that he need not fear for his life, "But you cannot remain in my kingdom, for you are the friend of irreligion."

One might inquire, "Which religion was Mahārāja Parīkṣit protecting?" But Śrīla Prabhupāda writes that it was a kṣatriya's duty to see that the principles of religion were followed, and not any particular "state religion."

The principles of religion, namely *austerity*, *cleanliness*, *mercy* and *truthfulness*, as we have already discussed, may be followed by the follower of any faith. There is no need to turn from Hindu to Mohammedan to Christian or some other faith and thus become a renegade and not follow the principles of religion. The *Bhāgavatam religion* urges *following the principles of religion*.

-Bhāg. 1.17.32, purport

A Kṛṣṇa conscious ruler like Mahārāja Parīkṣit might be impartial to the existence of different dogmas in his kingdom, but he could not be indifferent to whether people were indulging in greed, illicit sex, intoxication, falsehood, cheating, and thievery.

In Mahārāja Parīkṣit we see the ideal behavior of a strong executive who does not go along with the bad qualities of the age, but tries to implement God consciousness. We also have learned from Prabhupāda that the principles of religion should be followed by persons of all faiths. We are now ready to hear how truthfulness is the essence of religion (*dharmeņa satyena*).

# 1.3 🖌

na vartitavyam tad adharma-bandho dharmena satyena ca vartitavye brahmāvarte yatra yajanti yajñair yajñeśvaram yajña-vitāna vijñāh

. Therefore, O friend of irreligion, you do not deserve to remain in a place where experts perform sacrifices according to truth and religious principles for the satisfaction of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

-Bhāg. 1.17.33

Śrīla Prabhupāda translates the word yajñaiśvaram as "unto the Supreme Lord, the Personality of Godhead." By referring to Yajñeśvara, Mahārāja Parīksit defines dharma in theistic terms. Yajñeśvara is the supreme Deity; He is the beneficiary of all kinds of sacrificial ceremonies. For example, in Vedic scripture there are sacrifices recommended for the different ages. In the Age of Satya, the prescribed way to please the Supreme was through meditation; in the Tretā Age, one satisfied the Supreme by costly sacrifices performed by priests; in the Age of Dvāpara the sacrifice was worship of the Personality of Godhead in the temple; and in the Age of Kali, the *yajña* is *saṅkīrtana*, or chanting the holy names of God.

Śrīla Prabhupāda combines the concepts of *yajña* and truthfulness as follows:

Any place or country where the supremacy of the Lord is accepted and thus sacrifice is performed is called *brahmāvarta*. There are different countries in different parts of the world, and each and every country may have different types of sacrifice to please the Supreme Lord, but the central point in pleasing Him is ascertained in the *Bhāgavatam*, and it is truthfulness. The basic principle of religion is truthfulness, and the ultimate goal of all religions is to satisfy the Lord.

*—Bhāg.* 1.17.33, purport

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In a previous section we explained that the *Bhāgavatam* religion is not confined to the dogmas of a certain faith; it represents the following of basic religious principles. But now we learn that these principles—and specifically the principle of truth-fulness—must be pursued with the goal of pleasing the Supreme Lord. The principles of religion do not

refer to "a religion without God." The last leg of religion is therefore manifest even in the Age of Kali, by a residue of faith in the existence of God and willingness to perform sacrifice for His pleasure. The types of sacrifices may differ according to culture, but the executive heads should see that education and the activities of God consciousness are flourishing.

The opposite of a *brahmāvarta*, or land of religion, is one that is made up of the four kinds of persons who do not accept the supremacy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. They are described in *Bhagavad-gītā* as "the grossly foolish" (*mūdha*), "lowest among mankind" (*narādhama*), "he whose knowledge is stolen by illusion" (*māyayāpahṛtajñāna*), and the *asuras*, "whose very principle of life is to decry the Personality of Godhead."

One may inquire about religions like Buddhism and Taoism which practice strict sub-religious principles but which do not give knowledge of the soul and the Supreme Personality of Godhead. It is beyond the scope of our present study of truthfulness to make intricate comparisons of world religions on all these points. Suffice to say, if the enemy of religion, Kali, was given a place to live within the kingdom of *brahmāvarta*, then pious followers of sub-religious principles might also be permitted. But those who seek to understand truthfulness as the last leg of religion must accept the existence and the supremacy of the Personality of Godhead. And they must practice some kind of religious discipline in order to please Him. This is the example given by Mahārāja Parīkṣit, who chastised Kali because he dared to destroy religious principles.

1.4 K In two purports of the First Canto, 17th Chapter, Śrīla Prabhupāda asserts that "truthfulness is the basic principle for all religions." Prabhupāda gives two definitions of truthfulness. The first is to recognize the supremacy of God and to perform yajña to please Him. The second definition may be stated simply: *don't be a hypocrite*.

Claiming a sectarian allegiance to religion does not in itself constitute truthfulness. Rather, it is the greatest degradation if a person who claims to be a religionist turns out to actually be a liar and cheater. Vedic knowledge divides society into four social divisions known as *varņāśrama dharma*, and a person's truthfulness is tested within those divisions. If one is acting as a *brāhmaņa*, then he must fulfill the obligations of a *brāhmaņa*. A *brāhmaņa* is supposed to always be truthful. Similarly a *sannyāsī* should have no connection with women. Truthfulness means that persons should stick to the particular obligations of their *varṇa* and *āśrama*, and should not attempt to follow the duty of another *āśrama*. Prabhupāda writes,

If a *brāhmaņa* is not truthful, all his claims as a *brāhmaņa* at once become null and void. If a *sannyāsī* is illicitly connected with women all his claims as a *sannyāsī* at once become false.

*—Bhāg*.1.17.41, purport

Similarly, the public leader must be courageous, free from vice, and willing to work under the guidance of the *brāhmaņas*.

Truthfulness is the basic principle for all religions. The four leaders of the human society, namely the *sannyāsīs*, the *brāhmaṇa*, the king and the public leader, must be tested crucially by their character and qualification.

-Bhāg. 1.17.41, purport

We will discuss these important criteria for truthfulness further in separate chapters. But at least we have now briefly introduced the basic conception of truthfulness: Worship God and don't be a hypocrite.

1.5 K The First Canto, Chapter 17 stresses the crucial connection between religious principles and state support. Prabhupāda writes, "Without state support, no doctrines of philosophy or religious principles can progressively advance" ( $Bh\bar{a}g$ . 1.17.45, purport).

Inspiration for morality and religion must come from the *brāhmaņa* class. If they become corrupt by interest in politics and sense gratification, then there is no hope for other sections of society. People have become cynical due to the many examples of hypocritical priests and religionists, but this is still the task of the *brāhmaṇas*, to teach by their example of truthfulness, renunciation, and pure God consciousness. In the Vedic state, the governors turned to the  $br\bar{a}hmana$  community for advice, and with the  $br\bar{a}hmanas'$  support, the governors would enact strong measures against irreligion. If the king is inclined to corruption and the priests are looking for soft berths and political favors, then the reform claims of such leaders are a mockery. But if the leaders are pure in habit and determined, then religion can be restored even in the Age of Kali. If you break your leg, it can be healed again, and so the legs broken by Kali can be restored.

Even in the rainy season, one can protect himself by boarding up his shop or by using an umbrella. It is not inevitable that we be overrun by the vices of Kali, although Kali does have his allotted time for expansion. Mahārāja Parīkṣit allowed Kali to live in his kingdom, but he had to stay in restricted areas. Unfortunately, once Kali got a toe-hold, he began to expand his influence everywhere.

Measures for government action recommended in this chapter include strong law enforcement against gambling, drinking, prostitution, and animal slaughter. Positive programs for spiritual life would include the suggestion that *grhasthas* spend fifty percent of their income for propagation of *sankīrtana-yajña*.

When everyone is taught to sacrifice fifty percent of his accumulated gold for the Lord's service, certainly austerity, cleanliness and mercy automatically ensue, and thus the lost three legs of the personality of religion are automatically established.

When there is sufficient austerity, cleanliness, mercy and truthfulness, naturally mother earth is completely satisfied and there is very little chance for Kali to infiltrate the structure of human society.  $-Bh\bar{a}g$ . 1.17.42, purport

As we struggle to protect "the last leg" of truthfulness against the flourishing of Kali, we may think it is not possible to restore the other legs also. But as recommended in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, if humanity takes part in Lord Caitanya's saṅkīrtana movement, a golden age of religion will occur, even within the time of Kali-yuga.

 $1.6 \checkmark$  Vices which destroy truthfulness include gambling and the establishment of a gold standard currency.

Gambling of all description, even speculative business enterprise, is considered to be degrading, and when gambling is encouraged in the state, there is a complete disappearance of truthfulness.

-Bhāg. 1.17.38, purport

Gold-standard currency is based on falsehood because the currency is not on a par with the reserved gold. The basic principle is falsity because the currency notes are issued in value beyond that of the actual reserved gold.

-Bhāg. 1.17.39, purport

Gambling is an attempt to increase one's wealth without honest labor, and greed for gold invites the

major vices to gather around it, such as falsity, prostitution, intoxication, and crime.

The pursuance of false economic practices such as gambling and gold standardization is connected to the abandonment of the economic system recommended by Lord Kṛṣṇa—as provided by the cow, bull, and land. It is not by accident that the personification of religion appears as a bull, and that the personification of mother earth appears in the form of a cow. As Kali attacked these innocent creatures, so his policy is continued by the followers of Kali. Those who are  $s\bar{u}dras$  but pretend to be rulers, kill the innocent animals who are unprotected by their masters, the *vaisyas*.

The cow is meant to deliver milk, and the bull is meant to produce grains. But in the age of Kali, the  $s\bar{u}dra$  class of men are in the posts of administrators, and the cows and bulls, or the mothers and fathers, unprotected by the *vaisyas*, are subjected to the slaughterhouses organized by the  $s\bar{u}dra$  administrators.

*—Bhāg.1.17.1,* purport

Readers may think that we have introduced an unrelated subject by claiming that cow- and bullprotection are part of truthfulness, but since truthfulness is the essence of religion, and since cowprotection is an important part of Vedic religion, the two cannot be separated. In fact, it was Kali's greatest irreligious act to attack the cow and bull. By this crime against truthfulness, all the subsidiary evils of irreligion were free to invade the scene.

People do not know what they are doing in the name of economic development. The influence of Kali will keep them in the darkness of ignorance. Despite all endeavors for peace and prosperity, they must try to see the cows and the bulls happy in all respects. Foolish people do not know how one earns happiness by making the cows and bulls happy, but it is a fact by the law of nature. Let us take it from the authority of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and adopt the principles for the total happiness of humanity.

-Bhāg. 1.17.3, purport

Even in the ISKCON movement, which accepts the bull as personified religion, there is very little development of "bull-protection." In agriculture, the bull's role is most important since he pulls the plow. Sooner or later, these programs have to be developed, at least on a small scale, if devotees are to actually counteract the effects of Kali. Cowprotection cannot take place independent of oxen working in the fields. As Prabhupāda once said, "If you don't work the ox, soon you will be thinking, 'Let me kill him.'" Attempts at economic development which ignore the land, cow, and bull are artificial and untruthful.

### Chapter Two Sat: Truth is Eternal om tat sat

2.1 K In Sanskrit, the word *sat* means truth. But *sat* is more than "truth" as described by Western thinkers. *Sat* means "the truth which is eternal." For example, consider the usage of *sat* in this *Bhagavad-gītā* verse:

> nāsato vidyate bhāvo nābhāvo vidyate sataķ ubhayor api drṣṭo 'ntas tv anayos tattva-darśibhih

Those who are seers of the truth have concluded that of the nonexistent [the material body] there is no endurance and of the eternal [the soul] there is no change. This they have concluded by studying the nature of both.

-Bg. 2.16

The material body of a living being is called *asat*, "of the nonexistent." Lord Kṛṣṇa does not mean to say that the material body is entirely false, a mere illusion. The material body cannot be false because it is made up of energies which ultimately come from the Supreme Truth. But because the body is temporary, it is called *asat*. Only that which is spiritual and undestructible deserves to be called *sat*, truth.

2.2 K All branches of the Vedic scriptures uphold eternal truth as the ultimate goal. Another word for eternal is *sanātana*. The Vaiṣṇava teacher, Rāmānujācārya, has explained *sanātana* as "that which has neither beginning nor end."

In some sections of the *Vedas*, such as the *karma-kāņḍa* chapters, it appears that the ultimate goal of life is material enjoyment (either in this lifetime or in the next). But this is a lower stage of consciousness from which one is expected to be elevated by higher knowledge. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes:

When the activities for sense gratification, namely the karma-kāṇḍa chapter, are finished, then the chance for spiritual realization is offered in the form of the *Upaniṣads*, which ...mark the beginning of transcendental life.

-Bg. 2.45, purport

Beyond this material world, which is always subject to birth and death (and is therefore *asat*), there is an eternal existence (*sanātana*). The *Vedas* and the disciplic succession of spiritual masters teach the way for the conditioned soul to realize his eternal nature. Liberation means to become aware of *sat* and to enter the realm of *sanātana*.

> paras tasmāt tu bhāvo 'nyo 'vyakto 'vyaktāt sanātanaḥ yaḥ sa sarveṣu bhūteṣu naśyatsu na vinaśyati

Yet there is another unmanifest nature, which is eternal and transcendental to this manifested and unmanifested matter. It is supreme and is never annihilated. When all in this world is annihilated, that part remains as it is.

-Bg. 8.20

2.3 K The topmost Vedic literature for understanding the distinction between perishable (asat) and permanent (sat) is in the Vedānta-sūtra. Of Vedānta-sūtra Prabhupāda writes, "The subject is eternity and the methods are scholarly." The Vedānta-sūtra begins with the code, athato brahma jijñāsā, "Now, therefore, let us inquire into Brahman" (the Absolute Truth). The phrase "now, therefore" indicates that the inquirer into Vedāntasūtra wants to go beyond the relative truths of the marketplace, politics and the speculations of imperfect thinkers. In the next sūtra, Vedānta defines the Absolute Truth as "that from which everything emanates" (janmādyasya yatah).

By studying *Vedānta*, and especially by studying *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (the natural commentary on *Vedānta* by the same author, Śrīla Vyāsadeva), we come to understand that *eternality* by itself is not the Complete Whole or the Absolute Truth.

2.4 K Brahman is sometimes conceived of as an exclusively impersonal realm of eternal light. Yog $\bar{i}s$  and sages who meditate on impersonal

Brahman, sometimes go so far as to say that the material world, with all its varieties of people and places, is entirely false, no more than a mirage. But this is not the version of the Vedic scriptures, which are the standard for truth. Throughout the *Vedas* we are informed that the Brahman effulgence, as well as the material worlds, are different energies of the Supreme Truth. The Supreme Truth from which everything emanates is eternal, full of bliss and knowledge. He is the Supreme, intelligent and loving Personality of Godhead. Knowledge of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, along with His different energies and expansions, constitutes complete knowledge of the Absolute Truth.

> aham sarvasya prabhavo mattah sarvam pravartate iti matvā bhajante mām budhā bhāva-samanvitāh

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

—Bg. 10.8

2.5 K A comprehensive description of the Absolute Truth is given in the  $Sr\bar{i}$  *Isopanisad* invocation:

#### Sat, Truth is Eternal / 17

om pūrņam adah pūrņam idam pūrņāt pūrņam udacyate pūrņasya pūrņam ādāya pūrņam evāvašişyate

The Personality of Godhead is perfect and complete, and because He is completely perfect, all emanations from Him, such as this phenomenal world, are perfectly equipped as complete wholes. Whatever is produced of the complete whole is also complete in itself. Because He is the complete whole, even though so many complete units emanate from Him, He remains the complete balance.

—Śrī Īśopaniṣad, Invocation

In his purport to the *l*śopaniṣad invocation mantra, Śrīla Prabhupāda describes the Supreme Personality of Godhead as *sac-cid-ānanda-vigraha*. This is an all-inclusive term which reveals the Supreme's aspects of eternity, knowledge, and bliss. Prabhupāda writes:

When one realizes the Supreme Person, he realizes these aspects in complete form (*vigraha*). Thus the complete whole is not formless. If He were formless, or if He were less than His creation in any way, He would not be complete.

The complete truth, therefore, is not comprehended only by the quality of eternality. The Absolute Truth is not dead or static, but He can be known through *loving relationships*.

The Supreme Personality of Godhead desires to associate in the exchange of loving service (*bhakti*) with all spirit souls who are His parts and parcels. Many of the spirit souls are already living with the Supreme in blissful exchanges in the spiritual world, but those souls who rotate in different species of life in the material worlds may also aspire to regain their complete harmony with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. An understanding of the dynamics of *bhakti*, as well as the actual practice of *bhakti*, constitutes real awareness of the Absolute Truth. This awareness of the truth in all things can take place even while one lives in the temporary material body within the temporary world:

The completeness of human life can only be realized when one engages in the service of the complete whole. All services in this world—whether social, political, communal, international or even interplanetary—will remain incomplete until they are dovetailed with the complete whole. When everything is dovetailed with the complete whole, the attached parts and parcels also become complete in themselves.

—Śrī Īśopaniṣad, Invocation, purport

2.6 All living beings in the entire creation exist harmoniously within the Absolute Truth. Although there are many partial realizations of this oneness, the ultimate is realization of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Here is a small sampling of Vedic verses indicating that the Absolute Truth is the Supreme Personality of Godhead: There is no truth superior to that Supreme Person, because He is the supermost. He is smaller than the smallest, and He is greater than the greatest. He is situated as the silent tree, and He illumines the transcendental sky, and as a tree spreads its roots, He spreads His extensive energies.

—Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad 3.9

The supreme one who is celebrated as the Supreme Being or the Supreme Soul is the supreme source of the cosmic manifestation as well as its reservoir and winding up. Thus He is the Supreme Fountainhead, the Absolute Truth.

-Bhāg. 2.10.7

O conqueror of wealth, there is no truth superior to Me. Everything rests upon Me, as pearls are strung on a thread.

-Bg. 7.7

Vedic literature describes 8,400,000 species of life, of which 400,000 are of human species. Beyond the human species there are many demigods who manage the affairs of the cosmos. And beyond even the topmost demigods is the Personality of Godhead who is known as Lord Viṣṇu. Lord Viṣṇu also exists in many expansions. The original form of Lord Viṣṇu, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, from whom all other expansions and energies emanate, is Śrī Kṛṣṇa. In the list of incarnations of Viṣṇu given in the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, the name Kṛṣṇa appears, with the words, kṛṣṇaś tu bhagavān svayam. This means that all the expansions of Viṣṇu are parts of Śrī Kṛṣṇa who is the original Bhagavān, the Supreme Person

Himself. This is also described in the Brahma-samhitā,

īśvarah paramah krṣṇah sac-cid-ānanda vigrahah anādir ādir govindah sarva-kāraṇa-kāraṇam

Kṛṣṇa who is known as Govinda is the Supreme Godhead. He has an eternal blissful spiritual body. He is the origin of all. He has no other origin and He is the prime cause of all causes.

—Śrī Brahma-samhitā, Text 1

The Vedic aphorism *om* tat sat, indicating that all works should be done as sacrifice to the Absolute Truth, is ultimately a recognition of Lord Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Truth. Whatever appears to be disconnected from Him is actually but a form of His illusory energy ( $m\bar{a}y\bar{a}$ ).  $M\bar{a}y\bar{a}$  bewilders and covers a person's perception of the truth, but in the eternal light of *sat*, which emanates from the Vedic scriptures and from the words of the spiritual master, one can understand the truth. According to Lord Kṛṣṇa in the *Bhagavad-gītā*:

Having obtained real knowledge from a selfrealized soul, you will never fall again into such illusion, for by this knowledge you will see that all living beings are but part of the Supreme, or, in other words, that they are Mine.

-Bhagavad-gītā 4.35

# Chapter Three Honesty and Lying

3.1 K From what we have described so far, Krsna consciousness gives a perfectly clear conception of the Absolute Truth. As soon as one is fortunate enough to contact a bona fide spiritual master in disciplic succession, he may enter into transcendental reciprocation with the Absolute Truth. By hearing from the spiritual master and the scriptures with faith (*śraddhā*), one begins to purify himself from lifetimes of falsity. As he firmly engages in service of the Absolute Truth, the devotee is comparable to an iron rod held in a fire. As the iron rod becomes hotter and hotter until it turns into fire, so the pure devotee, immersed in devotional service, becomes spiritualized with no material dress remaining. Such a devotee does not need to separately cultivate knowledge of true and false

Here is the distinction between a devotee and a philosopher who speculates on the subject matter of transcendence. A devotee does not need to cultivate knowledge to understand the falsity or temporary

existence of this material world. Because of his unalloyed devotion to Vāsudeva, this knowledge and detachment are automatically manifest in his person (*janayaty āśu vairāgyaṁ jñānaṁ ca* [*Bhāg*.1.2.7]).

-Bhāg. 6.17.31, purport

3.2 🖌

manuşyāṇām sahasreşu kaścid yatati siddhaye yatatām api siddhānām kaścin mām vetti tattvataḥ

Out of many thousands among men, one may endeavor for perfection, and of those who have achieved perfection, hardly one knows Me in truth. -Bg. 7.3

The path of *bhakti* is not easy. *Yogīs* and philosophers become confused in their attempts to understand Kṛṣṇa. Even the great demigods do not always know Him in truth. "No one knows Me as I am," says Lord Kṛṣṇa. And if one does know Him, "such a great soul is very rare." Only when He is pleased with their service can the pure devotees know something of the inconceivable, transcendental qualities of Kṛṣṇa.

We have been discussing the Absolute Truth as *sat*, eternal, and as fully manifest in the Supreme Personality of Godhead. But as we noted in the first chapter of this book (quoting from  $Bh\bar{a}g$ . 1.17), another important aspect of truthfulness is individual honesty. One should not be a hypocrite.

#### Honesty and Lying / 23

Only someone who is totally in illusion will "honestly" claim that he himself is the Absolute Truth, the Supreme Controller. But even among devotees who have enough modesty to admit that we are all controlled by the Supreme, one may easily overestimate his actual realization and devotion to the Absolute Truth.

3.3 K There is an intimate connection between honesty and humility. The dictionary defines humble as, "Aware of one's shortcomings." We may also describe humility as an accurate assessment of one's disqualifications. In Lord Caitanya's Śik $s\bar{a}$ staka, the ultimate expression of humility is given:

One should chant the holy name of the Lord in a humble state of mind, thinking oneself lower than the straw in the street; one should be more tolerant than a tree, devoid of all sense of false prestige, and ready to offer all respect to others. In such a state of mind one can chant the holy name of the Lord constantly.

—Verse 3

But we sometimes ask ourselves, "How is it possible to think of myself as lower than a straw in the street?" It is as if we think Lord Caitanya is asking us to imagine something that is untrue. Lord Caitanya, however, is not exaggerating. According to the scriptures, the eternal  $\bar{a}tm\bar{a}$  is infinitesimal, approximately one ten-thousandth the upper

portion of a piece of hair. Only when we think of ourselves in terms of a human body may we suspect that Lord Caitanya's mood is extreme. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes:

The qualities of humbleness and meekness lead very quickly to spiritual realization. But just as knowledge of Kṛṣṇa in truth is very rare, so humility is not cheaply obtained.

3.4 A beginning of honesty is to admit that we have been mostly dishonest up to now. We are Kali-yuga victims, with a tendency to cheat. By a disastrous misuse of our free will, we have come to this material world to try to enjoy apart from Kṛṣṇa. It is true that once we receive the mercy of Kṛṣṇa in the form of meeting the spiritual master, the worst is over. But we should not minimize past wrongs, or even our present disqualifications. Here is Sanātana Gosvāmī's self-assessment at the time he met Lord Caitanya in Vārāṇasī:

I was born in a low family, and my associates are all low-class men. I myself am fallen and am the lowest of men. Indeed, I have passed my whole life fallen in the well of sinful materialism.

I do not know what is beneficial for me and what is detrimental. Nonetheless, in ordinary dealings people consider me a learned scholar, and I am also thinking of myself as such.

-C.c., Madhya 20.99-100

3.5 K What is honesty? In *Perfect Questions*, *Perfect Answers*, Śrīla Prabhupāda is speaking with a Peace Corps worker named Bob Cohen. Prabhupāda had to explain it at length before Bob's misconceptions were removed. At first Bob thought that being honest was not necessarily connected to God consciousness. He felt that if a person tries to do what is right, then he is honest; and honesty is a result of good karma. Prabhupāda agreed that to become honest was good karma but there was more to it than that.

Prabhupāda said, "If you know what is honesty, then you can become honest. But you do not know what is honesty. What is honesty?"

Bob replied, "Honesty is doing what you really feel is right."

Prabhupāda: "Then a thief is feeling that 'I must steal to provide my children.' Does it mean he's honest?"

Prabhupāda gave this preliminary definition of honesty: "You should not encroach upon others' rights." Recognition of others' rights will lead us to the knowledge that everything belongs to Kṛṣṇa. As stated in Śrī Isopaniṣad:

Everything animate or inanimate that is within the universe is controlled and owned by the Lord. One should therefore accept only those things necessary for himself, which are set aside as his quota, and one should not accept other things, knowing well to whom they belong.

-Mantra One

Our talk of honesty is uninformed and useless until we realize that honesty has to be achieved in relationship to the Supreme Proprietor.

3.6 K The confessional approach to honesty is effective when done sincerely. Admitting our wrongs and feeling sorry for our sins must be accompanied by determined efforts at reform. Confession is mentioned in *The Nectar of Devotion* under the headings *samprārthanātmikā*, "very feelingly offering prayers," and *dainyavodhikā*, "humbly submitting oneself." A prayer from *Padma Purāņa* exemplifies submission in humbleness:

My dear Lord, there is no sinful living entity who is more of a sinner than myself. ... I am so greatly sinful and offensive that when I come to confess my sinful activities before You, I am ashamed.

-Nectar of Devotion, p. 81

Prabhupāda writes that this attitude is natural for a devotee. "It is no wonder that a devotee has sinful activities in his past life, and this should be admitted and confessed before the Lord." The Lord is happy to forgive the sincere devotee for his offenses.

But that does not mean that one should take advantage of the Lord's causeless mercy and expect to be excused over and over again, while he commits the same sinful activities. Such mentality is only for shameless persons. . . . Someone may think, "For a whole week I may commit sinful activities and for

### Honesty and Lying / 27

one day I will go to the temple or church and admit my sinful activities so that I can become washed off and again begin my sinning." This is most nonsensical and offensive and is not acceptable to the author of *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*.

-Nectar of Devotion, p. 82

Feelingly offering prayers to the Lord, and submitting oneself to Him, is always beneficial. But it should not be seen *as a substitute* for avoidance of sin. For example, when a devotee becomes initiated by the spiritual master, he vows to avoid four kinds of sinful activities and to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa at least two hours daily. By keeping these vows we attest to our sincerity. Even if a devotee does follow the rules and regulations he may confess that he has not developed any genuine devotion or taste for the holy name. And so he laments as he makes an honest self-assessment.

3.7 Becoming truthful means to fight with our own tendency to cheat. We often lose battles, but we shouldn't admit that falsehood will win the final triumph. "Wherever there is Kṛṣṇa, the master of all mystics . . . there will certainly be victory." And Prabhupāda writes:

In the beginning of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, one may not fully discharge the injunctions of the Lord, but because one is not resentful of this principle and works sincerely without consideration of defeat and hopelessness, he will surely be promoted to the stage of pure Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

-Bg. 3.31, purport

If we do not regularly practice honesty we will lose the touch for it. When we become absorbed in living a lie, then we cannot even *recognize* the truth.

A pungent literary example of the search for honesty occurs in the American novel *Catcher in the Rye*, by J. D. Salinger. The hero of *Catcher*, Holden Caulfield, is a sixteen-year-old with an acute sensitivity to phoniness wherever he sees it. Holden gives his impressions of a famous nightclub pianist:

... when he was finished, and everybody was clapping their heads off, old Ernie turned around on his stool and gave this very phony *humble* bow. Like as if he was a helluva humble guy, besides being a terrific piano player. It was very phony—I mean him being such a big snob and all. In a funny way, though, I felt sort of sorry for him when he was finished. I don't even think he *knows* anymore when he's playing right or not. It isn't all his fault. I partly blame all those dopes that clap their heads off they'd foul up *any*body, if you gave them a chance.

If one is more interested in getting praise than in spiritual advancement, he will neglect the rigorous practice of honesty. But Prabhupāda writes in a *Bhagavad-gītā* purport, "Humility means that one should not be anxious to have the satisfaction of being honored by others."

Another important Vedic example of honesty is in the life of Lord Rāmacandra, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Acting as an ideal king, Lord Rāma followed the code of truthfulness, no

### Honesty and Lying / 29

matter where it led Him. When, in order to be truthful to His father, He had to face banishment, Rāma accepted it peacefully and happily. He knew that He would be self-satisfied living as a mendicant in the jungle as long as he was following the truth. If He were to maintain a kingdom in disobedience to truth, then there would be no inner peace. But persons in illusion miss this crucial point, and so they cannot see the value in constant surveillance of self, as practiced by the honest man.

3.8 K There are many śāstric statements which describe the symptoms of an advanced devotee of the Lord. If we read these with honesty, we will be humiliated: "In pure devotional service, the only motive should be to please the Supreme Personality of Godhead" (*Bhāg.* 3.29.8, purport.).

A pure devotee has no interest but to act on behalf of the Supreme Lord. When one has even a tinge of personal interest, his devotion is mixed with the three modes of material nature.

-Bhāg. 3.29.9, purport

As I read these verses I ask myself, "Do I have any other motive than to please the Supreme Lord? Do I perform my service with great concern for the personal facilities that I can gain, such as comforts, reputation, and so on?" If I am honest, I have to admit that I don't measure up to the standard described in these verses.

One who works for the satisfaction of the Lord only, however difficult such work may be, is working under the principles of *buddhi-yoga* (*bhakti-yoga*) and finds himself always in transcendental bliss.

-Bg. 2.39, purport

Again, I have to admit I don't always experience transcendental bliss, and therefore, I am not desireless.

In describing the divine qualities (Sixteenth Chapter of *Bhagavad-gītā*) Lord Kṛṣṇa includes "freedom from envy and a passion for honor." But that's not me. And what about the demoniac qualities beginning with pride? Isn't it true that I still have some demoniac qualities? Therefore, I should cultivate humility, the first item of knowledge.

It is only by the mercy of the Supreme Lord and the spiritual master, that I have been allowed to perform activities which they accept as devotional service. Otherwise, on my own I cannot claim to be on the level of liberation which is required before one can practice *bhakti*.

## Chapter Four

## Distributing the Truth

4.1 K If you know the Truth, you should distribute it to others, because the Truth brings liberation.

We receive Vedic knowledge from the spiritual masters, who are described as *tattva-darśina*, "they have seen the truth." When the spiritual master accepts a disciple and initiates him in spiritual knowledge, the sincere disciple feels indebted and offers, "My dear master, what can I do for you?" This indebtedness is called *guru-dakṣiṇa*. In 1966, when I was initiated, Prabhupāda described the significance of *guru-dakṣiṇa*:

Lord Caitanya asked His disciple Rūpa Gosvāmī to go to Vrndāvana to preach and sustain His mission. This is disciplic succession. Not that one thinks, 'I have understood everything from my spiritual master; let me now sit tight.' That is also nice, but no. Lord Caitanya's mission is to spread the teaching .... It is your duty.

-A Handbook for Krsna Consciousness, pg. 326

4.2 K There is a great need to distribute Kṛṣṇa consciousness. While writing his commentaries on Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam in the early 1960s, Prabhupāda noted that international wars were due to the Age

of Kali in which "there is always a chance of quarrel on slight provocation."

Due to Kali, there is also now propaganda to stop glorification of the name and fame of the Supreme Lord. Therefore it is the duty of those who have received the transcendental message to broadcast it throughout the world in order to do the supermost good as well as to bring about peace in the world.

-Bhāg.

A *brāhmaņa* receives absolute knowledge but if he does not distribute it he is compared to a leaky pot. Unless a *brāhmaņa* teaches, he will lose whatever knowledge he has. Distributing the truth is therefore an integral part of knowing the truth.

4.3 Sut if we admit that we haven't realized the Truth, then how can we distribute it? I once asked Śrīla Prabhupāda a question like this. I admitted that I was accustomed to telling people they would go back to Godhead if they chanted Hare Kṛṣṇa, although I, myself, was not confident that I was going back to Godhead. Prabhupāda replied that my main duty as a preacher was to *inform others* of the process by which anyone could go back to Godhead. The truth of my message was not dependent on my own success. But Prabhupāda said the preacher should not be merely a business agent who stays in his office and ships parcels to other countries. The devotee who is advising others to go to the spiritual world should be making all endeavor to go there himself.

The obligation to assist a spiritual master in distributing knowledge to others may be something we didn't "bargain" for at first. It is an added responsibility, beyond tending to our own spiritual needs in chanting and hearing. Even in terms of our own self-realization, however, knowledge of the Absolute Truth will be revealed to us only when we please the Supreme Lord and His representative. Although preaching may seem undesirable or impossible to us at first, we should not reject it:

One who does not like to take the risk, he does not take the risk of preaching. But one who takes the risk, he is recognized by Kṛṣṇa immediately, "Oh, he is taking risk." But he must know where to take risk and where it is to act foolishly.

—Śrīla Prabhupāda, lecture, 7/8/75, Chicago

4.4 K Lord Caitanya said, "First become perfect, and then preach" ( $\bar{a}pani \ \bar{a}cari \ prabhu \ \bar{j}\bar{v}vera$  $sik\bar{a}ya$ ). What does this mean? If I have to wait to become perfect, when will I *ever* be ready to distribute the truth to others?

The perfection referred to here is behavior which is possible even in a neophyte. He has to at least keep the initiation vows, avoiding four kinds of sinful activities, and chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda used to say, "If I smoke cigarettes, how can I teach others to stop smoking?" A disciple

following the rules and regulations, even though a beginner, may distribute books or repeat what he has heard in disciplic succession. The preacher's perfection is like that of a mailman; his duty is to deliver the untampered message.

4.5 K If a devotee is too weak in spiritual practices, and has too many doubts, then he cannot preach. It is for the strong.

For example, one has to know the philosophy of the Absolute Truth in order to distribute it to others.

One who represents someone else must fully know that person's mission ... otherwise they will be considered foolish. All devotees, especially preachers, must know the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness so as not to be embarrassed and insulted when they preach.

-Bhāg. 6.1.38, purport

If it is our duty to distribute the teachings of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, then we must also study the scripture. But one does not have to first become a great scholar or devotee before he can distribute Krsna consciousness.

If a devotee is not able to distribute the Truth directly he should try to help others who are doing it. If one can donate money to this cause, that is spiritual activity and helps to raise one to a higher perfection. 4.6 K Is there a conflict between admitting one's disqualifications while at the same time claiming to be a distributor of the Absolute Truth? One may think, "If I haven't attained it myself, how can I claim to give it to others?"

In fact, humility and preaching go well together. Just as we must constantly struggle to undeceive ourselves, so we must regularly face our duty to distribute the Truth. Preaching is an excellent way to undeceive oneself provided it is done honestly.

When I distribute knowledge of the Absolute Truth, I am not claiming that I am perfectly realized. I accept the process of brahma-śabda, or hearing from Vedic authorities, as the superior method for knowing that which is inconceivable: the Absolute Truth. I may admit that I have very little realization of this, but I have faith in the realizations of great *ācāryas* in the past, and also in the realization of my own spiritual master. Therefore, I think that others should get the opportunity to begin their surrender unto the Absolute Truth. Even if those I approach cannot take to it in this lifetime, and even if I cannot fully do it, still it is worthwhile. As Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote, "A grain of faith is worth more than tons of faithlessness."

4.7 K The reasons why I think I am unable to distribute the Absolute Truth should be given up before the order of the spiritual master. Prabhupāda writes:

Spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness is Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's mission... This order comes down through the *paramparā* system, and the spiritual master presents these orders to the disciple so that he can spread the message of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. It is the duty of every disciple to carry out the order of the bona fide spiritual master and spread Lord Caitanya's message all over the world. -C.c., Madhya 16.64

If I do not attempt to carry out this order, how can I please the Absolute Truth? According to the scriptures, unless the Supreme Lord sees that I am inclined to help others, then He will not call me back to Godhead.

The self-effulgent Vaikuntha planets, by whose illumination alone all the illuminating planets within this material world give off reflected light, cannot be reached by those who are not merciful to other living entities. Only persons who constantly engage in welfare activities for other living entities can reach the Vaikuntha planets.

-Bhāg. 4.12.36

4.8 K In distributing truth, one has to consider how it will affect others. According to social convention one should only speak the truth when it is palatable to others: satyam bruyat priyam bruyat. Describing the etiquette of "palatable truth only," Prabhupāda writes, "But that is not truthfulness. The truth should be spoken in a straightforward way so that others will actually understand what the facts are" (Bg. 10.4–5, purport).

### Distributing the Truth / 37

In Sanskrit, a saintly person is called a *sādhu*, which literally means "one who cuts" illusion. The cutting words of the *sādhu*, who tells us to give up our material attachments, are not always pleasant to hear, but it is the *sādhu's* humble duty to tell the truth. If a man is a thief and if people are warned that he is a thief, that is the truth. One should not refrain from speaking the truth even if it is unpalatable. Truthfulness demands that the facts be presented as they are for the benefit of others.

4.9 K Is it permissible to tell lies in order to distribute the Absolute Truth? Śrīla Prabhupāda replied to this on many different occasions and to different persons.

...it is not very much advisable to make lies just to sell a book. If we simply stick to describing how wonderful Kṛṣṇa is, then whatever we may lie or exaggerate, that will not be lie! But other things, lies, they will not help us to train ourselves in truthfulness. Lie to some, not to others, that is not a good philosophy. Rather the *brāhmaṇas* are always truthful, even to their enemies. There are sufficient merits in our books that if you simply describe them sincerely to anyone, they will buy. That art you must develop, not the art of lying. Convince them to give by your preaching the Absolute Truth, not by tricking, that is the more mature stage of development of Krsna consciousness.

-Letter, 12/25/72

On the other hand, Prabhupāda wanted to see as many books as possible distributed, "somehow or other." The books themselves would speak the truth better than anyone else, and so a distributor's success was to convince a person to take one.

... if a brahmacari would sell even a one paise magazine... our Guru Maharaja would be very glad and say, "Oh, you are so nice!". .. distribution of literature is our real preaching. Now if you cannot handle the matter nicely, that is your fault. But the success of your preaching will be substantiated by how many books are sold. Anything you want to sell, you have to canvass it a little, so that he gives you some money for the service of Krsna. That is his good luck, when he gets the chance to read some transcendental knowledge. But if you only irritate him, and he goes away, that is your less intelligence.

The fact is that we have to adopt the same tactics as ordinary salesmen but, the difference is we do it for the satisfaction of Krsna, and they do it for sense gratification.

-Letter, 9/30/72

When I think of Śrīla Prabhupāda's directions for book distribution, I see him as a general on the battlefield. Prabhupāda sometimes described the temples as forts, the devotees as soldiers, and the books as bombs to pour down "like anything" upon the populations in illusion. These "bombs" would not kill, however, but bring transcendental enlightenment and peace. Prabhupāda's advice to his disciples for meeting obstacles in preaching were not classroom theories, but urgent messages to the front line.

*Vaiṣṇavera kriyā mudrā vijñeha nā bujhaya, "*One can never understand the mind of the *ācārya."* We should not try to judge the liberated *ācārya* according to ethics and morality. He *is* ethical and truthful, and it is only our misunderstanding if we don't appreciate what he is doing according to time, place and persons.\*

4.10 K We may admit our inability or dislike for distributing the Absolute Truth. Perhaps we think of preaching as pushy proselytizing. We may have had the bad experience of being trained by a person whose preaching was abusive, who was mostly concerned with collecting money, or who looked down upon all nondevotees as demons. But we should not allow the bad experiences to affect the larger reality. Bad preaching does not prove that all preaching is bad. Prabhupāda told the story of a man who came home and discovered that robbers had taken all his dishes and utensils. In frustration the man cried, "From now on I'll only eat my food off the floor." But no-a sane man would purchase new utensils and continue normal life (while also taking security measures against further robberies).

<sup>\*</sup> Footnote: I have fully discussed Prabhupāda's instructions to book distributors in Vol. 6 of the *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta* in the chapter "Distribute Books!" For further research, one may study Prabhupāda's original letters in the five-volume set.

4.11 Perhaps you cannot distribute under the most "front-line" conditions, as in selling books to passersby in an airport. But that does not mean that you can't do *any* distribution of the Absolute Truth. There are many ways to preach such as by letter, or even by praying for the welfare of others. Mainly, we should *desire* to distribute the knowledge that we have received.

Our good example can influence others. Living and working to develop Kṛṣṇa conscious farm life is another valid way of distributing absolute knowledge. We have heard that the Supreme Lord wants the cows and bulls to be protected and He wants people to live simply from the produce of land. The distribution of this knowledge is not accomplished merely by someone in the city telling people of the philosophy of farm life. It is distributed by the examples of people who are actually protecting the cows, working the oxen, and living by the production of the field.

We should honor the bold preachers and try to serve devotees who do the front line work, but we should not disqualify ourselves from the mercy which is given to the distributors of the Absolute Truth. If while chanting one's *japa* he thinks, "I want to serve Śrīla Prabhupāda," then he is engaged in something more than selfish meditation. We can pray to do more.

# 4.12 🖌

"One who liberally disseminates this knowledge among My devotees is the bestower of the Absolute Truth, and to him I give My very own self" ( $Bh\bar{a}g$ . 11.29.26).

# Chapter Five *The Age of Hypocrisy*

# 5.1 **K**

The demigods prayed: O Lord, You never deviate from Your vow, which is always perfect because whatever You decide is perfectly correct and cannot be stopped by anyone. Being present in the three phases of cosmic manifestation—creation, maintenance, and annihilation—You are the Supreme Truth. Indeed, unless one is completely truthful, one cannot achieve Your favor, which therefore cannot be achieved by hypocrites.

—Bhāg. 10.2.26

The Age of Kali is sometimes called the Age of Hypocrisy. Although the bull of religion is still standing on the leg of truthfulness, "Kali, flourishing by deceit, is also trying to destroy that leg."

We have mentioned that honesty sometimes cannot penetrate through the layers of falsity. But an honest man at least attempts to undeceive himself. Hypocrisy, however, is a direct attack at truthfulness. Hypocrisy takes many forms; sometimes it disappears and then reappears like the mystical airplane of the demon Śālva. As Śālva and his plane had to be personally killed by the Supreme Lord, so we have to call upon Lord Kṛṣṇa in His holy names to be spared from the liars and hypocrites who abound in the nation, the city, the home and within the conditioned self.

All ordinary transactions and dealings became polluted with cheating, even between friends. And in familial affairs, there was always misunderstanding between fathers, mothers and sons, between wellwishers, and between brothers. Even between husband and wife there was always strain and quarrel.

—Bhāg. 1.14.4

5.2 K Every conditioned soul living within the material world has the tendency to cheat others. According to the Vedic  $\bar{a}c\bar{a}ryas$ , there are four defects which no one can escape: (1) the tendency to make mistakes; (2) the tendency to be illusioned; (3) the propensity to cheat others; and (4) imperfect senses. An example of cheating is to pose oneself as very intelligent. Although a person may be in illusion by mistaking his self for the body, and although he makes many mistakes, he still puts himself forward as an authority, professor, author and so on. Śrīla Prabhupāda says, "He writes books of philosophy, although he is defective. That is cheating."

The self-realized sage, Jada Bharata, was engaged as the palanquin carrier for King Rahūgaņa. But one day Jada addressed the king:

My dear King, although you are not at all experienced, you are trying to speak like a very experienced man. Consequently you cannot be considered an

experienced person. . . . Any advanced, experienced man, considering the Absolute Truth, does not talk in this way.

-Bhāg. 5.11.1

Jada Bharata's exposure of the king as a cheater is similar to Kṛṣṇa's telling Arjuna:

While speaking learned words, you are mourning for what is not worthy of grief. Those who are wise lament neither for the living nor for the dead.

-Bg. 2.11

In both these cases (by Lord Kṛṣṇa's arrangement), King Rahūgaṇa and Arjuna were posing as learned men although they were not actually so. Mahārāja Rahūgaṇa's posing as a king was a similar fraud. But the cheaters may be delivered from ignorance. As stated in the *Bhāgavatam*:

... if one carries out the order of the spiritual master in disciplic succession, or the *paramparā* system, he overcomes the four defects. Therefore, knowledge received from the bona fide spiritual master is not cheating. Any other knowledge which is manufactured by the conditioned soul is cheating only.

-Bhāg. 3.24.12, purport

5.3 K Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī used to say, "The whole world is a society of cheaters and cheated." Researchers are accumulating evidence that this is so. The recent decline in public confidence is not only in the American government but in lawyers, bankers, businessmen and doctors. In 1960, many Americans were genuinely astonished to learn that President Eisenhower had lied about the U-2 incident in which an American spy plane and pilot had been forced down in the Soviet Union. But only 15 years later, battered by revelations about Vietnam and Watergate, 69% of the respondents to a national poll agreed that "Over the last ten years, this country's leaders have consistently lied to the people."

The loss of confidence reaches far beyond government leadership. From 1966-1976, the proportion of the public answering yes to whether they had a great deal of confidence in people in charge of running major institutions, dropped from 73% to 42% for medicines; for major companies from 55% to 16%; for law firms 24% (in 1973) to 12%; and for advertising agencies from 21% to 7%.

—Lying: Moral Choice in Public and Private Life, by Sissela Bok, p. xviii

The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* gives similar evidence that cheating will increase more and more in the Age of Kali. Prabhupāda writes:

Especially in these days, people do not believe in a next life or in the court of Yamarāja and the various punishments of the sinful. But at least one should know that one who cheats others to acquire money will be punished by the laws of the government. Nonetheless, people do not care about the laws of this life or those governing the next. Despite whatever knowledge one has, one cannot stop his sinful activities if he is unable to control his senses.

-Bhāg. 7.6.15, purport

5.4 K There is no need for us to add to the evidence of cheating in government, business, family and so on. But in the name of truthfulness, and for the purpose of purification, we may tell something of cheating among religionists and would-be transcendentalists.

Who is a greater cheater than that person who claims that he is the Absolute Truth or God himself? Spiritual masters who present themselves as the Supreme should be at once rejected.

The Supreme is supreme, and He has no worshipable superior. The *ahaṅgrahopāsitā*, or the one who worships himself with the idea of becoming God Himself, is misleading, but the intelligent disciple can at once detect that the Supreme God does not need to worship anyone, including Himself, in order to become God.

-Bhāg. 2.5.7, purport

Another colossal fraud is the person who introduces himself as an incarnation of God. The Vedic scriptures describe standard symptoms, such as scheduled lists of incarnations along with their specific identifications, as well as their ability to perform extraordinary activities. But although modern day incarnations are constantly embarrassed by petty scandals, they continue to do profitable business with the gullible public, especially if the "incarnation" is able to display a token of magic or charisma. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes:

### Age of Hypocrisy / 47

... but he must be on his guard not to be misled by pretenders who claim to be the identical person as Lord Kṛṣṇa but are not able to act like Him or exhibit the *virāṭ-rūpa* (universal form), comprehending the whole universe.

-Bhāg. 2.1.25, purport

Teachers who invite their students (for a fee) to obtain supreme all-pervading consciousness or "cosmic consciousness" are also cheating.

Such foolish persons cannot know what is going on behind the next wall, yet they are falsely proud of possessing the cosmic, all-pervading consciousness of the Supreme Person. For them also, hearing the  $Sr\bar{n}mad-Bh\bar{a}gavatam$  is a great help. It will open their eyes to see that simply by claiming supreme conscious-ness one does not become supremely conscious. One has to prove in the physical world that he has such supreme consciousness. The *rsis* of Naimiṣāraṇya, however, were above the gross materialists and the false transcendentalists, and thus they were always anxious to know the real truth in transcendental matters, as discussed by authorities.

-Bhāg. 2.10.50, purport

5.5 K In Vedic culture, a person who renounces material life to dedicate himself body, mind and words to the service of the Absolute Truth is known as a *sannyāsī*. But if a person adopts the saffron colored dress of a *sannyāsī* merely to solve his economic problems, and with no qualifications of renunciation, celibacy, or knowledge, he is a misleader. Many centuries ago, while fighting

with a rival, King Indra posed himself as a *sannyāsī* in order to gain an advantage. Ever since the time of Indra's foolish introduction of this pose, cheating *sannyāsīs* and *yogīs* have flourished. The *Bhāgavatam* predicts it will increase in the future:

Uncultured men will accept charity on behalf of the Lord and will earn their livelihood by making a show of austerity and wearing a mendicant's dress. Those who know nothing about religion will mount a high seat and presume to speak on religious principles.

—Bhāg. 12.3.38

The epidemic of bogus gurus, swamis, priests, and so forth, is a great hindrance for those who are sincerely trying to prosecute religious principles. In traditional Vedic culture, a householder would always receive any person dressed in saffron, give him food and lodging, and inquire from him about the truth. But now one suspects that the saffrondressed visitor may be a parasite living at the cost of society without making any contribution. An example of truly renounced *sannyāsīs* were the Six Gosvāmīs of Vrndāvana.

For the benefit of all in human society, they (the Six Gosvāmīs) left behind them immense literatures of transcendental importance. Similarly, all the  $\bar{a}c\bar{a}ryas$  who voluntarily accepted the renounced order of life aimed at benefiting human society and not at living a comfortable or irresponsible life at the cost of others. However, those who cannot give any contribution should not go to the householders for food, for such mendicants asking bread from the house-

holders, are an insult to the highest order. Śukadeva Gosvāmī gave this warning especially for those mendicants who adopt this line of profession to solve their economic problems. Such mendicants are in abundance in the Age of Kali.

-Bhāg. 2.2.5, purport

5.6 🗶 Aside from the mendicants, the other social orders also engage in cheating. In the Mahābhārata, the whole conflict between the Kurus and the Pandavas came about because of cheating. Mahārāja Yudhisthira was the rightful heir to his father's kingdom, but just to favor his own sons, headed by Duryodhana, Dhrtārastra adopted various unfair means to cheat his nephews of their rightful share of the kingdom. Dhrtārastra was blind from birth, but his blindness in committing impious activities was a greater blindness than his physical lack of eyesight. The king engaged in many lying intrigues and he attempted to kill the Pandavas. He also insulted or plotted against anyone who tried to give him good advice. This kind of court or political intrigue has continued in each and every kingdom and administration throughout the world because of the inevitable tendency to cheat and gain power.

5.7 K In the present century, Kali is splurging his cheating powers as never before. Partly because of the new availability of world travel and

communications, cheating *yogīs* and swamis are more available. Although the authorized teachers of *yoga* and Indian spirituality tell us to restrain the senses, the cheating *yogīs* avoid this. In order to make more followers and to collect money, unauthorized persons give a cheap imitation of meditation. They flatter their followers that they can meditate while simultaneously continuing their hedonistic habits.

This demoniac sex mentality of material enjoyment is sometimes encouraged by so-called *yogis* who encourage the public to enjoy sex life in different varieties and at the same time advertise that if one meditates on a certain manufactured *mantra*, one can become God within six months. The public wants to be cheated, and Kṛṣṇa therefore creates such cheaters to misrepresent and delude. These so-called *yogis* are actually enjoyers of the world garbed as *yogis*.

-Bhāg. 3.20.35, purport

Another symptom of pretenders is that they manufacture their own interpretations of scriptures like the *Bhagavad-gītā*. They are not actually eager to hear the teachings of Lord Kṛṣṇa but to squeeze out their own artificial meanings and interpretations. Lord Kṛṣṇa has anticipated them and warned us in the *Bhagavad-gītā* of *asuras* who "sometimes proudly perform [religious] sacrifices in name only, without following any rules and regulations" (*Bg.* 16.7).

People sometimes think that no  $s\bar{a}dhus$  should be criticized. Certainly no true  $s\bar{a}dhus$  should be criticized, but it is the responsibility of the bona fide teachers to warn the public against frauds. Śrīla Prabhupāda considered it one of his main duties. He said, "I am not anxious about going back to Godhead. I just want to expose these rascals."

5.8 K The quality of service to the Absolute Truth cannot be judged by what color cloth a person wears, but by his actual works. Lord Kṛṣṇa says:

One who is unattached to the fruits of his work and who works as he is obligated is in the renounced order of life, and he is a true mystic, not he who lights no fire and performs no duty.

-Bg. 6.1

The *Bhagavad-gītā* also contains strong criticism of persons who pretend to be religious and therefore superior to others.

Instead of becoming a pseudo-transcendentalist for the sake of wanton living and sense enjoyment, it is far better to remain in one's own business and execute the purpose of life, which is to get free from material bondage and enter into the kingdom of God. . . . A sincere person who follows this method is far better situated than the false pretender who adopts showbottle spiritualism to cheat the innocent public. A sincere sweeper in the street is far better than the charlatan meditator who meditates only for the sake of making a living.

-Bg. 3.7, purport

5.9  $\checkmark$  A hypocritical act that is easy to fall into is to think that because one is on the path of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, he is therefore automatically better than every devotee of every other sampradāya. We are very fortunate to be on the best path, the path of *bhakti-yoga*, but how far have we traversed the path? Does Lord Caitanya's tṛṇād api mood call for a pride that "I am better than others"? A manifestation of this mistake is to compare the *ideal* of Kṛṣṇa consciousness with the *realities* of other religionists as hypocrites who do not follow the commandments of their own scriptures and who have no genuine love of God. But not all religionists are at that lowest level.

To claim that all members of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement are free of taint and hypocrisy is another kind of dishonesty. The Kṛṣṇa consciousness membership has its "dirty laundry" (leaders and members who deviate, a high percentage of marriages that break up, and so on). We do not need to advertise our mistakes, but neither should we lie about them. And neither do we need to enthuse ourselves by unfair comparisions or coverups. With conviction ( $niṣth\bar{a}$ ) that devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead is the highest goal, we may go forward with becoming confused by other *sampradāyas*—but without stooping to the tactic of comparing our scriptural ideals with others' sordid realities. 5.10 K As long as a person maintains material desires in his heart, he will sometimes cheat in order to acquire an apartment, food, friends, wealth and so on.

In order to acquire these things he has to cheat others, and this creates enmity even among the most intimate friends. Sometimes this enmity is created between the conditioned soul and the father or spiritual master. Unless one is firmly fixed in the regulative principles, one may perform mischievous acts, even if one is a member of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.

-Bhāg. 5.14.35, purport

Cheating is never condoned by sincere members of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. But serious lapses in morality may occur in the lives of those who are struggling to come to transcendental life. There is always a difference, however, between devotee and nondevotee moralists. A nondevotee moralist may display all good qualities ethically, but he lacks the most important consideration of all rendering sacrifice to the Supreme Lord. For example, Lord Kṛṣṇa says:

The devotees of the Lord are released from all kinds of sins because they eat food which is offered first for sacrifice. Others, who prepare food for personal sense enjoyment, verily eat only sin.

—Bg. 3.13

Therefore, even if one is an enlightened vegetarian, he is still "eating sin" until he offers his

food to the Supreme Lord and eats the *prasādam*. Śrīla Prabhupāda says, "Without God consciousness, nobody can be ethical."

All the demigods and their exalted qualities, such as religion, knowledge and renunciation, become manifest in the body of one who has developed unalloyed devotion for the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Vāsudeva. On the other hand, a person devoid of devotional service and engaged in material activities has no good qualities. Even if he is adept at the practice of mystic *yoga* or the honest endeavor of maintaining his family and relatives, he must be driven by his own mental speculations and must engage in the service of the Lord's external energy. How can there be any good qualities in such a man?  $-Bh\bar{a}g$ . 5.18.12

Aside from pure devotees, there are also mixed and pseudo-devotees. Lord Kapila states (Third Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*) that devotees may be mixed in the modes of passion and ignorance. He advises us not to associate intimately with such persons. Bhaktivinoda Thākura, writing after the disappearance of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, counted no less than twelve pseudo-sects of followers of Lord Caitanya, and he clearly exposed their discrepancies. So it is not disloyal or improper for devotees to point out where cheating occurs even among the membership of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Those who are actually pure devotees are faultless, and those who are aspiring to be devotees will eventually reach that stage. But when hypocrisy occurs, it should be pointed out, for the purpose of rectification.

5.11 **K** Some of the prominent deviations from Vaiṣṇavism include  $pr\bar{a}krta-sahajiy\bar{a}$  (professional *Bhāgavatam* reciters), yajñic priests, and those who claim to be *brāhmanas* by birth.

The *prākṛta-sahajiyā* is one who takes Kṛṣṇa consciousness very cheaply, and acts as if he has reached the topmost stage of conjugal loving exchanges with Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. His imitation sometimes involves illicit sex in the name of appreciation of the *rāsa* dance. The professional reciters of the *Bhāgavatam* concoct a system of a seven-day hearing of the *Bhāgavatam* in which they mainly recite the confidential sections of the scripture, although they and their audiences are unfit to hear them. The *Bhāgavatam* reciter is mostly motivated by economic greed.

The cheap reciters of the *Bhāgavatam* are very much enthusiastic about the Lord's internal potential activities, and the pseudo-devotees, absorbed in material sense enjoyment, falsely jump to the stage of liberated souls and thus fall down deeply into the clutches of external energy.

-Bhāg. 2.7.53, purport

5.12 K In former *yugas*, a system of sacrifice used to be performed for gaining material benefits. The sacrifices were very scientific, and mainly de-

pended on the process of vibrating mantras with particular accents. Due to a lack of qualified  $br\bar{a}h$ maṇas, this science has been out of practice for thousands of years, and therefore anyone who is performing such a yajña today is just pretending. Prabhupāda writes:

... such performances of sacrifice are no longer effective. Nor are they recommended in this fallen age. Any such sacrifice undertaken in this age as a matter of show may simply be a cheating process by the clever priestly order.

-Bhāg. 2.6.26, purport

The only effective sacrifice in this age is *saṅkīrtana-yajña*, chanting of the holy names.

5.13 So-called caste *brāhmaņas* claim that one who is not born in a *brāhmaņa* family cannot receive the sacred thread or become a high-grade Vaiṣṇava, but this interpretation is not accepted by Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura or Śrīla Prabhupāda. Neither is it supported by Rūpa Gosvāmī or the Vedic scriptures.

5.14 K Imitation is always a false display. We are warned not to imitate Haridāsa Țhākura who used to chant 300,000 names daily. Similarly, we cannot imitate Śrīla Prabhupāda, who preached Kṛṣṇa consciousness all over the world, and was honored by his disciples as a *mahā-bhāgavata*. There

is a distinct difference between sincere following and imitating the example of great teachers. Those who are expert at analyzing their own situation honestly, or who can analyze the behavior of others, will be able to distinguish the imitations from the genuine articles.

5.15 K When a devotee receives initiation, but later breaks his vows, that is a form of cheating on the orders of the spiritual master. This cheating can be done in a gross or subtle way. An example of gross deviation was described by Bhaktivinoda Țhākura who spoke of a "Vaiṣṇava," who wore neck beads but who was actually a *kali-cela*, a devotee of Kali, and whose "*bhajana*" was illicit sex. Gross misbehaviors and illegal and immoral activities bring shame to the reputation of the spiritual master and the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.

Subtle deviation occurs when a person presents himself as a respectable follower, but breaks the rules in subtle ways. For example, one important prohibition is to avoid illicit sex. In *grhastha* life this means to engage in sex only for the service of Kṛṣṇa, which is for procreation within marriage. But the deviant disciple may take his own interpretation of this rule and claim that as long as he only engages in sex with his wife and not with others, then he is following his spiritual master's order. Another prohibition is against meat-eating. The actual spirit of the injunction is that one should offer all of the foods that he eats to Kṛṣṇa

and take the remnants as *prasāda*. One may deviate, therefore, by being a vegetarian, but by being negligent in offering suitable foods to the Lord. A disciple may be able to hide some of his deviations from others, but Kṛṣṇa in the heart sees everything, and we get the results of our activities.

5.16 K Psychologists cannot comprehend transcendental reality, but some of their analyses are applicable to devotees as well as nondevotees. The psychologist, Kohlberg, outlined stages of moral development which he conceived of as universal. He claimed that there was no observable difference in moral behavior based on the fact that one belonged to a particular religion. In other words, young Christian boys were not more morally developed than were Buddhists, or vice versa. What is of interest for our purposes in the moral development stages outlined by Kohlberg, is that they are similar to stages of development for a Vaisnava according to Rupa Gosvāmi. Researchers Malinowski and Smith describe Kohlberg's model as follows:

In his cognitive developmental theory, Kohlberg postulates an invariant sequence of stages of moral development beginning with obedience to external rules and fear of punishment and culminating in adherence to self-chosen universal principles of justice. Is this not similar to the progress of a devotee from initial behavior based on the rules and regulations, followed by voluntary submission in love to Lord Kṛṣṇa?

We should not be bewildered by the fact that there are moral discrepancies among aspiring Vaisnavas. Wrong behavior is never condoned, but the devotees are always optimistic about the benefits, spiritually and materially, that will be accrued by a steady following of the *bhakti-mārga*.

5.17 K It is not easy to be a devotee in Kaliyuga, but it is certainly possible. Prabhupāda used to say it is easy for those who are simple and difficult for those who are crooked or unsubmissive. We should not be discouraged by the fact that we have bad habits and a tendency to cheat. Even persons who were considered great criminals in society, such as the hunter Mṛgāri, became pure Vaiṣṇavas when they submitted to the teachings of the spiritual master, Nārada Muni. Another disciple of Nārada Muni's was formerly a robber and murderer but became converted into Vālmikī, the spotless author of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. The path of success is to surrender to the order of the spiritual master, and give up our cheating.

# Chapter Six *Truth and Illusion*

6.1 A Philosophers who think that the Absolute Truth must be impersonal, also sometimes say that "It" is not a fit subject for discussion. This is similar to the Taoist saying, "The way that can be described is not the true way."

A similar doubtful question was placed by Mahārāja Parīksit to Śukadeva Gosvāmī:

Although *Brahman*, or the Absolute Truth, has no material qualities, our power of speaking does not go beyond the material qualities. How then can Brahman, the Absolute Truth, be described by your words? I don't see how it is possible to understand transcendence from such expressions of material sound.

Sukadeva's reply was direct. He said that the Supreme Personality of Godhead has created the mind, senses and the living force for the purpose of sense gratification (in transmigration from one body to another). But there is another purpose for which we can employ our senses, mind and speech. That is, for purifying one's consciousness and returning back home, back to Godhead.

Mahārāja Parīkșit had implied, as do the Māyāvādīs, that all speaking within this world must be material and limited. But because the living being is originally one in quality with the Absolute Truth (both are spiritual and personal), so we can revive those qualities by practice of *bhakti-yoga*, beginning with chanting and hearing. Śukadeva Gosvāmī said:

The Absolute Truth is therefore the Supreme Personality, with transcendental mind, senses and intelligence. When one's mind, intelligence and senses are purified of material contaminaton, one can understand the original feature of the Absolute Truth as a person.

6.2 Although the Māyāvādīs may say that Brahman is beyond discussion, this has never stopped them from writing thousands of books and giving lectures on the inexpressible, the void, or the indefinable. In doing so, they give many analogies to establish impersonal oneness and to deny personal individuality of the Absolute Truth. A favorite example is, "All is one; just as the rivers enter the ocean, so we can all enter the Ultimate Oneness." This analogy has a certain mystical appeal, but doesn't bear up under scrutiny.

Although the river goes to the ocean, its place in the ocean is not permanent. Again the water evaporates into the sky, forms clouds, and falls back onto the land. To argue that in spirituality everything becomes one as the rivers go to the ocean, the Māyāvādī would have to accept the actual conclusion: the water again falls back onto the land. Similarly, those spirit souls who try to merge into

the Absolute must again fall back into the material world.

Besides, there is more to the life of rivers and the ocean than water. There are many aquatics, some of whom live deep in the ocean and dive and play there. For example, the largest animal in the world, the whale, lives in the ocean. These aquatics may be compared to the Vaiṣṇavas, who have the capacity to take shelter in the ocean and live and play there. As liberated souls we can enter the Oneness of God, without losing our individuality, and without threat of being thrown again into the material world.

The debate as to whether the Absolute Truth is only impersonal, or both personal and impersonal, is not to be settled just by exchanges of analogies. The ultimate proof is the *sruti* and *smrti*, or the Vedic *sāstra*. Lord Kṛṣṇa really settled it for all time in the Twelfth Chapter of *Bhagavad-gītā*, when Arjuna asked him which was the higher form of worship.

The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: "Those who fix their minds on My personal form and are always engaged in worshiping Me with great and transcendental faith are considered by Me to be most perfect....For those whose minds are attached to the unmanifested, impersonal feature of the Supreme, advancement is very troublesome. To make progress in that discipline is always difficult for those who are embodied.

-Bg. 12.2,12.5

As Prabhupāda said after a debate:

The devotees are more interested in talking about Kṛṣṇa and in chanting His name than in arguing. But because so many godless parties come forward and challenge, a Vaiṣṇava must be able to argue on the basis of *sāstra* and sound logic.

—Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlā, p. 65

6.3 K According to the Māyāvādīs, brahma satyam jagan mithya, only the Brahman is true, the cosmos is false. But according to Vaiṣṇava philosophy, the cosmos is caused by the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The asat manifestation is also an emanation from the supreme sat. Although the material world is temporary, it is not false but factual.

In the Krsna book, Prabhupāda writes:

Factually the material world is simultaneously both truth and untruth. It is truth because everything is an expansion of the Supreme Absolute Truth, and it is untruth because the existence of the material world is temporary; it is created, and it is annihilated.

In arguing that the world is false, the *Māyāvādīs* give the example of the snake and the rope. At night, a person might mistake a curled up rope for a snake. There are other examples of mistaken identity like this, such as mistaking a shining oyster

for gold, or mistaking water in a desert mirage. But these analogies are all defective as used by the  $M\bar{a}y\bar{a}v\bar{a}d\bar{i}s$ . When something is taken as a fact but actually has no existence at all, then it is called false. But if something is mistaken for something else, that doesn't mean that it's false. I may think that the rope is a snake, and that is my ignorance. But ropes and snakes do exist. There is no water in the desert mirage, but there *is* water somewhere else.

The Vaiṣṇava philosophers more appropriately compare the material world to an earthen pot. The pot is temporary but it can be used to carry water. The earthen pot originally comes from the earth, but it manifests temporarily as a useful by-product of the earth. Therefore, because this material world is a product of the Supreme Truth, is it not completely false.

6.4 K The impersonalists say that we are all Supreme Truth, and only in illusion do we forget that we are the Eternal Truth. But the Vaiṣṇavas say that our actual illusion is to forget that we are the eternal servants of the Supreme. We cannot rightly claim that we ourselves are each the Supreme One, as the Māyāvādīs say. If that were true, how could "the Supreme" have become covered by illusion? Is illusion greater than God? Why is "the Supreme" forced to take birth and suffer as a human or an animal? The Māyāvādīs have no good answers to these questions. 6.5 K Discussions of what the Māyāvādīs say and what the Vaiṣṇavas say are more than armchair philosophizing. Depending on what view one accepts, there are very practical consequences. The Māyāvādī conclusions are similar to those of the atheists, as described in *Bhagavad-gītā*:

They say that this world is unreal, with no foundation, no God in control. They say it is produced of sex desire and has no cause other than lust.

Following such conclusions, the demoniac, who are lost to themselves and who have no intelligence, engage in unbeneficial, horrible works meant to destroy the world.

-Bg. 16.8-9

Formerly, Māyāvādī sannyāsīs were strict ascetics. But in Kali-yuga, impersonalism and voidism—with their avoidance of obedience to the Supreme Personality of Godhead—are used as supports for hedonism: "Life is just a dream, so do your own thing."

To live in a world without truth, or any possibility of reaching truth, is to live in chaos and darkness. One may advocate this as freedom—"We can do whatever we like!"—but it is more like hell.

6.6 K Although Western philosophers are almost entirely speculative, there is an apparently strong agreement among them that at least man can attain and share the truth. According to the

introductory essay, "Truth", in *Great Books of the Western World*, "The philosophers and scientists from Plato to Freud seem to stand together against the extreme sophistry or skepticism which denies the distinction between true and false or puts truth utterly beyond the reach of man."

If all opinions are equally true or false, then why, Aristotle asked, does not the denier of the truth walk "into a wall or over a precipice" instead of avoiding such things? And, "If it really were a matter of indifference what we believed," Freud argued, "then we might just well build our bridges of cardboard as of stone, or inject a tenth of a gram of morphia into the patient instead of a hundredth, or take tear gas as a narcotic instead of ether." "But," Freud adds, "the intellectual anarchists themselves would strongly repudiate such practical applications of their theory."

Agreement among Western philosophers disappears, however, as soon as each one begins to speculate on what the truth actually is. Truth is often agreed upon as "reality," but when the different thinkers theorize about the nature of mind, reality and being, they scatter in all directions. As stated in Vedic literature, no one can become a famous philosopher unless he refutes previous philosophers and says something new.

Vedic philosophers give up inductive, speculative attempts to understand truth, and accept the deductive method of "hearing from authority."

Vedic knowledge is not fanatical dogma. With thorough logic, the Vaiṣṇava philosophers explain

# Truth and Illusion / 67

why they reject ultimate knowledge through the systems of *pratyakṣa* and *anumāna*. *Pratyakṣa* means learning through the direct evidence of the senses, and *anumāna* refers to theories (such as Darwin's theories) built upon direct evidence. Vedic knowledge is called *śabda-brahma*, receiving knowledge by hearing from the authorities or *Vedas*. Prabhupāda gives the example of receiving a program guide from the radio station authorities, and accepting it as knowledge, without experimenting.

The Vedas instruct that in order to understand transcendental knowledge, we have to hear from the authority. Transcendental knowledge is knowledge from beyond this universe. Within this universe is material knowledge, and beyond this universe is transcendental knowledge. We cannot even go to the end of the universe, so how can we go to the spiritual world? Thus to acquire full knowledge is impossible.

—Śrī İsopanişad, Introduction

6.7 K One may ask, "Granted that there is truth and men can attain to the truth—but how can the truth be a Person?"

The main problem for this doubter is that he thinks all persons must be like those he has experienced. Prabhupāda refers to this as "Doctor Frog philosophy." The frog in the well cannot imagine that there is such a vast body of water as the Pacific Ocean, although he hears about it from a reliable friend. He thinks at most the ocean might be five or ten times bigger than his tiny well. And so we think, "How could a person be eternal, unchanging, unlimited?" In order to remove this deep-rooted conditioning, the *Upanişads* sometimes state that the Absolute Truth is not a person. But the actual meaning of the text is, "He is not a material person, such as you have experienced in this material world." *Apāni-pādo javano grahitā*; "Although the Supreme Lord is described as having no hands or legs, He nonetheless accepts all sacrificial offerings and moves very quickly." In the *Īsopaniṣad* it is stated, "The Supreme Lord walks and does not walk. He is far away, but He is very near as well. He is within everything, and yet He is outside of everything" (Mantra Five).

Prabhupāda's purport to this verse is crucial for our understanding:

Here is an explanation of the Supreme Lord's transcendental activities as executed by His inconceivable potencies. Contradictions are given here by way of proving the inconceivable potencies of the Lord. He walks, and He does not walk. Such a contradiction serves to indicate the inconceivable power of God. With our limited fund of knowledge, we cannot make accommodations for such contradictions; we can only conceive of the Lord in terms of our limited powers of understanding. The impersonalist philosophers of the Māyāvāda school accept only the Lord's impersonal activities and reject His personal feature. The Bhagavata school, however, accepts the Lord as both personal and impersonal. The bhagavatas also accept His inconceivable potencies, for without them there could be no meaning to the words "Supreme Lord."

—Śrī Īśopaniṣad, Mantra Five, purport

Lord Kṛṣṇa personally reprimands faithless speculators who cannot accept that the Absolute Truth is a person: "Fools deride Me when I descend in the human form. They do not know My transcendental nature and My supreme dominion over all that be" (*Bg.* 9.11).

Persons who are materially affected cannot understand the personal feature of the Supreme Absolute Truth.

Such materialists cannot even imagine that there is a transcendental body which is imperishable, full of knowledge and eternally blissful. In the materialistic concept, the body is perishable, full of ignorance and completely miserable. Therefore, people in general keep this same bodily idea in mind when they are informed of the personal form of the Lord. For such materialistic men, the form of the gigantic material manifestation is supreme. Consequently they consider the Supreme to be impersonal.

-Bg. 4.10, purport

It is therefore a kind of disease (too much materialism) which prevents one from understanding this higher truth. Another disease is the fear of retaining personality after liberation. Intelligent thinkers come to learn that the material world brings suffering. They therefore sometimes seek release by different kinds of meditation. But if such persons who are mostly in the negative concept of truth are told about the Supreme Personality of Godhead and how they can rejoin Him in the spiritual world, they become afraid of becoming persons again, and so they naturally prefer a kind of

merging into the impersonal void. Prabhupāda writes later in the same purport:

Generally they compare the living entities to the bubbles of the ocean, which merge into the ocean. That is the highest perfection of spiritual existence attainable without individual personality. This is a kind of fearful stage of life.

Bg. 4.10, purport

Another disqualification occurs when one becomes skeptical about spiritual existence because he has heard so many theories and contradictions. Such people become disgusted and conclude that there is no supreme cause and everything is void. This is also a diseased stage of life.

The Vedic knowledge is, however, quite clear on this point—the Absolute Truth is the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

The Supreme One who is celebrated as the Supreme Being or the Supreme Soul is the supreme source of the cosmic manifestation as well as its reservoir and winding up. Thus He is the Supreme Fountainhead, the Absolute Truth.

-Bhāg. 2.10.7

6.8 K Impersonalists advise meditating on any form that one likes according to his imagination. But Prabhupāda states, "Imagination is always imagination and results only in further imagination." Specific and elaborate descriptions of the eternal form of the Supreme Lord are given in many places in the Vedic literature, especially in *Srīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Liberation from the material world is not achieved by mental speculation but by meditating on the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord.

The devotee should first concentrate his mind on the Lord's lotus feet, which are adorned with the marks of a thunderbolt, a goad, a banner and a lotus. The splendor of their beautiful ruby nails resembles the orbit of the moon and dispels the thick gloom of one's heart.

—Bhāg. 3.28.21

As described in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, the Absolute Truth appears in this world when there is a discrepancy in the discharge of religious principles and a prominence of irreligion. The Lord descends for the protection of the devotees and the destruction of the nondevotees. His main purpose is to give solace to His devotees.

The Lord appears in the particular form loved by a particular type of devotee. There are millions of expansions of Kṛṣṇa, but they are all one absolute. Some devotees want to see Him in the form of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, others prefer to see Him as Sītā and Rāmacandra, others would see Him as Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa and others want to see Him as four-handed Nārāyaṇa, Vāsudeva. None of these forms are imagination.

Those so-called *yogīs* who manufacture a circle or target are engaged in nonsense. Actually, a *yogī* must meditate upon the form of the Supreme Personality of Godhead that has been experienced by the Lord's pure devotees. *Yogī* means devotee. *Yogīs* who are not actually pure devotees should follow in the footsteps of devotees. It is especially mentioned here that the *yogī* should meditate upon the form thus approved; he cannot manufacture a form of the Lord.

-Bhāg. 3.28.29, purport

6.9 K The highest stage of realization of the Absolute Truth is *prema-bhakti*, love of God. In the beginning, one enters the study of the *Vedas* to obtain *vidyā*, knowledge, and to become civilized. Then he may advance further to study the *Upaniṣads* and gain *brahma-jñana*, impersonal realization of the Absolute Truth. He may then go on to understand Paramātmā, or the Lord in the heart, and engage in the method of *yoga*. But the pure devotee surpasses all these stages.

When one attains the stage of *prema-bhakti*, one does not love the Supreme Lord because He is the Absolute Truth. By the mystic potency of *yogamāyā*, the liberated devotees in the spiritual world (Kṛṣṇa-loka) love Lord Kṛṣṇa in a way that is devoid of awe and reverence. They see Him as their best friend, or as their dependent child, or as their lover. They do not think of Him as God, the cause of all causes, the creator, the supreme controller and so on. The Supreme Lord prefers such intimate exchanges with His pure devotees to the adorations

# Truth and Illusion / 73

of those who look upon Him with awe and reverence as the Supreme Truth. Śrīla Prabhupāda describes Kṛṣṇa's mother, Yaśodā, as follows:

She has come to the platform of loving Kṛṣṇa as her beloved child, and therefore she is accepted to be on the highest stage of spiritual realization. The Absolute Truth is realized in three features (*brahmeti paramātmeti bhagavān iti śabdyate*), but she is in such ecstasy that she does not care to understand what is Brahman, what is Paramātmā or what is Bhagavān. Bhagavān has personally descended to become her be-loved child.

-Bhāg. 10.8.45, purport

Lord Kṛṣṇa states, "As all surrender unto Me, I reward them accordingly" (*Bg.* 4.11).

When one wants to see the Supreme as impersonal Brahman, the Lord will reciprocate in that way. Even if one rejects God completely, then God will reciprocate and appear to him as death. To the philosophers He appears as the Absolute Truth, the cause of all causes. But the highest truth is known to the *bhaktas* who reciprocate with Kṛṣṇa in personal ways because of their intense devotion for Him. This intimate knowledge of truth is not easily granted, even if one tries for it by performing austerities and studying philosophy for many, many lifetimes. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes:

The Lord easily offers liberation, but he rarely agrees to offer a soul devotional service, because by devotional service the Lord Himself becomes purchased by the devotee.

-Nectar of Devotion, Second Edition, p.15

ittham satām brahma-sukhānubhūtyā dāsyam gatānām para-daivatena māyāśritānām nara-dārakeņa sākam vijahruh krta-puņya-puñjāh

"In this way, all the cowherd boys used to play with Kṛṣṇa, who is the source of the brahman effulgence for  $j\bar{n}an\bar{s}$  desiring to merge into that effulgence, who is the Supreme Personality of Godhead for devotees who have accepted eternal servitorship, and who for ordinary persons is but another ordinary child. The cowherd boys, having accumulated the results of pious activities for many lives, were able to associate in this way with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. How can one explain their great fortune?" (*Bhag.* 10.12.11).

# Chapter Seven

# Honesty: The Good Fight

7.1 K Where am I in relation to the Absolute Truth? I tend to say, "I know the truth; the Truth is Lord Kṛṣṇa." And thus I may think I am truthful. But do I know Kṛṣṇa? If I admit that I don't know the Lord yet, then how can I claim to know the truth or to be truthful?

But I *do* say confidently, "The scriptures and the spiritual master accept Lord Kṛṣṇa as the Absolute Truth. They have given reason and evidence to prove this and I submit to it. I accept it, I yearn for it. I will accept no other truth."

As declared by Mādhvācārya, "The Supreme Lord Hari is revealed throughout the *Vedas*, in the beginning, the middle, and the end, in all branches." And, the *Bṛhan-nāradīya Purāṇa* declares, "Chanting the holy names is the only way to understand God in this age."

I have some realization of these statements and I would never be satisfied outside of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

But on the other hand, Lord Caitanya says that as for Himself, He has no love for Kṛṣṇa. But He says it with such fervor! As for myself, I'm tepid, not aflame with truth.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is all bliss, and only the liberated souls know Him. I am outside of that realm. I say

"outside" with no thought of theological doubt. Neither do I say it with great pain. I speak of tepidness, mediocrity, spiritual slumber. I am faithful but aware that Truth is distant from me. And yet the Truth is so beautiful and radiant, that even from a great distance, its rays warm my soul.

7.2 Sometimes we think, "Let me be honest," but we are actually attempting to avoid surrender. We rationalize, "I cannot be a fired-up devotee and preacher as I once thought I could." And so we decide to take it easy; mix in some sense gratification in the name of honesty.

This laid-back version of truthfulness sometimes includes an implied criticism of those who still try to subdue all their own interests in favor of carrying out the order of the *guru*.

Since we may easily mistake dishonesty for honesty, it requires careful thought and balance. It may be best if one admits, for example, that one is not a *brahmacārī*, and so stops the false appearance of one. One devotee who had been living as a *brahmacārī* for years decided to get married and wrote this poem:

> Saffron dressed monk, watching the girls go by: stop living this lie.

Being honest with oneself might also include admitting that I am ease-loving and that I tend to

# Honesty: The Good Fight / 77

put myself in situations that indulge my weakness. So in *honesty*, I decide not to indulge these weaknesses but to put myself in a more austere situation. With this in mind I may join with a party of traveling preachers in order to improve my discipline and enthusiasm.

7.3 K Śrīla Prabhupāda defined honesty in terms of our relationship with Kṛṣṇa. Therefore to admit, "I have a lower nature and I'm going to indulge in it," is not honesty.

People like to quote the statement by Polonius in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, "To thine own self be true, and then as sure as day follows night, thou canst be false to any other man." But Shakespeare puts these words into the speech of a worldly fool whose other advice includes, "Clothes make the man." Polonius' "To thine own self be true" translates into modern jargon as, "Son, just take care of Number One." It's selfishness. You can call that honesty, but it is a shallow, selfish kind of candidness. In Kṛṣṇa consciousness we want something more than that.

7.4 Kṛṣṇa conscious devotees work hard at being honest. We receive training to see through the cheating methods of many kinds of bogus teachers and followers. And so we should be alert that the cheaters not enter within our camp.

One of the most prominent falsities is the pseudo-devotee, the *prākṛta-sahajiyā*. He claims too easily that he has entered the most intimate exchanges with Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in the *rāsa* dance. But devotees know that one cannot enter into the conjugal affairs with Kṛṣṇa unless one is free from all mundane sex desires. We have to ask ourselves, "Am I free of material desires?" In honesty we will not imitate the symptoms of advanced ecstasy such as tears, rolling on the ground, etc. No play-acting.

But there is no hopelessness or nihilism for the devotee. He knows that Kṛṣṇa is in his heart. Unfortunately, we have closed ourselves to Him. One Vedic verse states, "How can Lord Kṛṣṇa who is known as Mukunda, and whose face is as beautiful as a lotus flower, appear in the heart of one who is still corrupted with material desires?" We know that merely mechanical chanting and serving will not move Lord Kṛṣṇa to reveal Himself to us.

7.5  $\Join$  We have to regard our present position as not final. Otherwise, how will we get past our present rationalizations and evasions? I know that there is falsehood in my life and I want to change it. So at least I must agree that my present state of surrender is provisional.

Śrīla Prabhupāda quoted Cāņakya Paņdita, "One can take good instructions even if spoken by a *śūdra*, and one should be ready to fetch nectar from a pot of poison." Maybe today something that someone will say will break through the layers of my pride. I pray for this to happen, and I will look for it. Maybe today I'll get strength from a passage in my spiritual master's books (although previously the same words did not arouse me, or did not open up to me). Or maybe some criticism that a rival has been making of me will quietly dawn upon me as truth. It may not be the whole truth, but maybe up until now my pride has prevented me from seeing the bit of nectar in his criticisms. Suddenly today, I may be able to pick up nectar even from harsh words, for my self-improvement. Every day is another chance to do this.

7.6 K We can understand why honesty is the last leg for those persons who have no connection to the Supreme Truth. Those who live only for the bodily concepts of "I" and "mine," who do not follow *sāstras* or guru, who do not chant the holy names, are in darkness. They live in a world of phantoms. But they often appear very confident and successful, and they laugh at the pious devotees. The nondevotees also have an inordinate trust in the world. They think that it is worthwhile to spend their major effort in maintaining a respectable place in society, and providing as much sense gratification as possible for themselves and their family. The *sādhu* is meant to cut through these illusions.

If a person is busy in the world of darkness, and yet can still ask himself, "Is my life with all its concerns mere delusion?"—then he still has hope. He's honest enough to consider that he may be lost and wrong and it may require painful changes for him to get back on the track. He considers that he may be willing to make a personal revolution, because he wants the Truth. He is not yet completely lost to lies.

If one keeps at least a spark of truth-seeking, then the words of a devotee may enter his heart and he will think, "If what the *Bhagavad-gītā* says is true, and I'm not this body, then my present life is all illusion."

7.7 K Honesty means that we have to do what we don't want to do, but what is best for us. When we do the unwanted task and suffer voluntarily, that is called *tapasya*—and that is honesty in spiritual life. To sink back from a prescribed duty claiming, "I have to be honest with myself; my heart is not attracted to this duty"—is not honesty, but more like corruption and laziness. We should at least strive to know the difference.

7.8 K I keep thinking of the tension between a friend's encouragement and a critic's insults. If they had their way, the critics would stop me from doing what I love. If I turned to them for guidance, would they know how to best direct me with their punish-

ments? And if I agreed to follow my critics, would I actually be able to do it? It doesn't seem likely.

As for my best friends, yes, they encourage me. They allow me to feel an innate worth. They will fight for me, if necessary. What can I say? I prefer the friends.

Yet I think of the statement by Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. He said that those who criticize me are my friends. In response to this, I sometimes take the words of my critics as a special "underground" message. I don't literally follow my critics' advice. But I cherish an inner core of what they have said as true. Maybe a critic has completely misunderstood me, and yet *he has seen me as a culprit*, and in this he is correct. I am too proud to go to him and thank him or surrender to him. And I am too clever to really think that he is right. There is also too much at stake in my personal commitments to give them up just on the dictates of a critic. How could I confess that most things I'm doing now are a farce?

So I salute my critics with a wish to keep the spark of honesty within me. I think of their words as a hope for what I may become someday—one who rectifies the faults that others see in him.

7.9 Admitting that I may be wrong—is that what honesty is? Or does it possibly mean that I'm right? Why does honesty mean I'm wrong? One reason to say that honesty usually means admitting I'm wrong, is because I'm in this material world for

a basic wrong. I can't rationalize my way out of it and say that I came to the material world for divine purposes. I came out of a serious misuse of freewill, out of hatred of God and desire. I was wrong and I am still wrong. Honesty means to return to my rightful position as servant of the servant of the servant of the Lord. Therefore it doesn't seem surprising that success in honesty means admitting to more wrongs.

Another reason to think that honesty is closely connected to admitting wrongs is that I don't find in myself the symptoms of the advanced Vaiṣṇava. This is wrong. I should feel blissful when I chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. I should be a more active devotee, more surrendered, more detached from what other people say of me and think of me. So many verses that I look at which describe the symptoms of a devotee, don't describe *me*. These are reasons why I'm wrong, and honesty means to know that I'm wrong.

A good symptom will be that I feel light-hearted and happy to catch a wrong, and to aspire to rectify it. Even if I have to suffer a setback, if I'm happy to see a gain in honesty, that's a good symptom.

7.10 A crooked person is filled with ulterior motives, but according to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the best religion (*para-dharma*), is *unmotivated*.

The eighth offense against chanting the holy name should also make us wary of mixed motives. We should not consider the chanting as an

# Honesty: The Good Fight / 83

auspicious act for our own benefit or for the material benefit of others. Pure intentions make for pure devotional service. Mixed motives occur as karma-kāṇḍa and jñana-kāṇḍa, the "two pots of poison." Uttama-bhakti occurs when there is no more jñana and karma. Then service to Kṛṣṇa is "favorable."

Is my motive to please Kṛṣṇa?

7.11 **K** Question and Answer:

Q: Why should you be so concerned about the truth of your actions when you have the Absolute Truth, Kṛṣṇa? Isn't the Absolute Truth much more important than relative honesty?

A: But Kṛṣṇa will not be deceived. He wants to see if we love Him in truth, or if we are just performing lip service. Truthfulness is important, especially in performing acts dedicated to the Absolute Truth. Insincerity in serving the Truth is impure devotional service. Lord Kṛṣṇa says that He will reveal Himself "in truth" only to those rare souls who are true to Him.

7.12 K Ecstasy may seem to be the ideal way to conquer mechanical habits. Inattention is consumed in the flames of ecstasy. But the  $\bar{a}c\bar{a}ryas$  have warned us about faking ecstatic symptoms.

... Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī says that sometimes persons who have no love of Godhead at all display ecstatic bodily symptoms. Artificially they sometimes laugh, cry and dance just like madmen, but this cannot help one to progress in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. ... If one who is not yet developed imitates such symptoms artificially, he creates chaos in the spiritual life of human society.

-C.c., Ādi 7.88, purport

7.13 Another serious form of dishonesty is to think that I am self-reliant, to think that I don't need Kṛṣṇa at every moment. Asuras advocate selfreliance. Devotees advocate dependence on God. Look into your heart—are you depending on Kṛṣṇa? If you are, then you are a genuine Vaiṣṇava. Queen Kuntī prayed, "If you do not look upon us, all our fame and activities, along with the Pāṇḍavas and Yadus, will end at once" (Bhāg. 1.8.38).

7.14 Z Q: Is honesty, then, just admitting lots of embarrassing stuff about yourself?

A: That's a part of it.

Q: Tell me again what you mean about rote chanting or routine duties being hateful. Didn't Śrīla Prabhupāda speak of routine duties as favorable?

A: Daily duties in a devotee's life are sacred, as good as prayers. That's why it's so unfortunate when we turn our routine duties into mechanical or inattentive acts. Śrīla Prabhupāda was never in favor of mechanical duties. The Movement is Kṛṣṇa *consciousness*, thinking of Kṛṣṇa. We should not give up our daily routine, but we must prepare for it in advance. Be in a worshipful state of mind as you perform it, cleaning and cooking in the kitchen, worshiping the Deity, and so on.

At least you can admit that *if* this were to occur to you or to your community—that is, if you chanted and bowed down to the Deity and honored *prasādam* with very little consciousness for those acts—that would be a travesty of *bhakti*, and if it happened to you, you would be in need of some religious renewal. Do you agree, theoretically?

Q: Yes.

7.15 K Q: This honesty that you speak of seems to require a lot of self-examination—trying to catch your motives and false ego and all that. But is that against the principle of simplicity? Is it dangerous?

A: Things can be misused, and so can selfexamination. But simplicity could also be dishonesty in disguise. Śrīla Prabhupāda used to criticize "innocence" as uninformed, inexcusable. True simplicity is a characteristic of a *brāhmaņa* and we should cultivate it. The actual word used in the *Bhagavad-gītā* is *ārjavam*, honesty. Simplicity means to be direct and truthful, not diplomatic. So in simple basic ways, we should surrender to Kṛṣṇa and *guru*. Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted to see if a devotee was honest in basic ways.

"Swamijī, I feel like I am many different persons but how do I know which person I should be to please Kṛṣṇa? If I have many different selves, which self would He like me to be?"

Looking at me and then replying before a roomful of people, Śrīla Prabhupāda says, "This boy Steve is very nice. He does typing for me, and sometimes he gives me donations. So you should all be like this."

-Under the Banyan Tree, p.18

As for self-examination, let's not scorn it. As long as the motive is to scrutinize whether I'm serving Kṛṣṇa or  $m\bar{a}y\bar{a}$ , it is not harmful. It's necessary. If by much thought we rout out a bit of hypocrisy, then the more the better.

7.16 Q: Are you saying that honesty is never possible?

A: It's possible only by Kṛṣṇa's grace. When it happens we should thank Him and desire more of it. Our simple convictions and honest sentiments are precious. More truth is possible but we have to prove that we want it. If truth comes in the middle of the night with a heavy realization about my own self-deceit, I have to accept it willingly, happily. Even if I can't jump from bed, put on the light and take action immediately, at least I should be thankful that Kṛṣṇa still deems me worthy of knowing what's what, despite my leaning toward lies. We can pray, "Dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, dear Śrīla Prabhupāda, please tell me the truth and let me bear it."

# Honesty: The Good Fight / 87

Remember Śrīla Prabhupāda saying, "If I told you everything (about Deity worship) you would faint"? And his saying, "To become Kṛṣṇa conscious is to declare war on the whole material world"? He was talking about truthfulness.

7.17 K Everyone is waiting to see if the truth in Śrīla Prabhupāda's books is also in the lives of the devotees. If not, then people may conclude that the Vedic philosophy is idealistic—it existed once five thousand years ago and occasionally it reappears at great moments, such as in the life of Lord Caitanya, and in Śrīla Prabhupāda's life—but it is not here now: it is not for us.

A devotee's life is a vital form of preaching. Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī said, "If at the cost of all my *mațhas* I could produce one pure devotee, I would consider my mission to be a success." Why? Because a true (pure) devotee establishes the truth of religion. Without a true devotee, we only have buildings, by-laws, inventory, holy books, managers, followers....

7.18 K We were discussing how the world is true and at the same time not true. But the world of the nondevotees is clearly false. An honest man sees the falsity and keeps away from it. Yes, we can "use everything" in the service of Kṛṣṇa according

to our capacity. But Śrīla Prabhupāda warned, "You have to catch the fish without getting wet."

I have no purpose in trying to enjoy the world or to alleviate its misery by sociopolitical means. This world will consume me and kick me backand-forth like a soccer ball. I want to know myself as a servant of Kṛṣṇa, and that means I cannot be a servant of man or servant of country or family. I have to flee the world. I can flee into the temple, or I may flee into the shelter of a Kṛṣṇa conscious gṛhastha life. Or if my family turns out to be too much opposed to spiritual life, I can flee to the vanam, the forest. But I must flee, and if you call it "escape," I reply, "Yes I'm escaping from the grip of māyā, at last. Why don't you come also?"

We reject sense gratification in all of its tantalizing forms because of its falsity. In sense gratification, you lose your honest self.

7.19 K I want to admit something. I push my way through the crowd, and stand at the podium for an honest speech. "I admit," I say, "that I don't have the price for the ticket of love of God. I don't have the intense desire (*laulyam*). And so, I seem to be waiting for 'something else' to happen. It's as if I think there will be a special concession for people who joined the movement in 1966. I'm ready to scale down my ambitions, and settle for less, but I can't admit to it. I'm too ashamed and embarrassed that after so many years I have so little that I can't pay for the ticket." My speech is met with a few

# Honesty: The Good Fight / 89

smiles, knowing nods, and brief applause. I sit down and wonder why I opened my mouth in the first place.

Maybe honesty is so volatile that we have to live with lies. If we *were* to demand more honesty in spiritual life, how might we proceed? A devotee could undergo more self-examination before he takes his first initiation vows. He must vow that he will never again commit illicit sex, intoxication, meat-eating or gambling, and he will always chant sixteen rounds daily. But before the Deity, the spiritual master, and the devotees, he also has to consider, "What if I change my mind? What if this institution I'm joining changes? What if my spiritual master leaves? What if the world changes? What if the "others" don't take it so seriously?" His surrender should be unconditional.

We are so accustomed to lies, we think of truthfulness as old-fashioned, like the "impossible" vows that the heroes of the *Mahābhārata* were always making. Truthfulness may seem extreme nowadays for practical men. "This isn't the age of chivalry." But Kṛṣṇa consciousness is not supposed to be a product of the age. By lying propaganda the last leg of religion will be broken.

7.20 K Q: I'm afraid that you may be speaking too harshly with your criticisms of dishonesty among devotees. Let's just follow this wonderful

*bhakti* process in a gentle way. It will take us all home. Why make fun of us?

A: All right. But there is a lot of pretending.

Q: Don't worry about it. Kṛṣṇa knows everything.

A: I agree. I meant no harm. I just wanted to be honest.

Q: Just be quiet. Here's your *prasādam*.

A: (tail wagging)

7.21 K What would it be like if all shame were removed and you were left with only the truth? It would be very embarrassing, but maybe you would not be so surprised by the few true things you were left with. You might even feel shy to have it known how *fortunate* you are to be connected to Śrīla Prabhupāda .

Let's say that a "truth operation" was performed on you and the results were published in the newspapers, and even written across your face. The truth might be that you have no faith in Lord Kṛṣṇa and the Vedic scriptures. Your main concerns in life are not "chanting and hearing," or "spreading the mission of Kṛṣṇa consciousness," but getting sufficient and palatable food to eat daily, a comfortable place to sleep, companions, reputation and so on. And there are more extreme and unpalatable truths that we dare not face right now. The "truth report" might conclude, "This person is a first class hypocrite." And yet they would add, "But Prabhupāda gave his blessings."

# Honesty: The Good Fight / 91

Is this the truth report?—"He had a very fortunate opportunity but he blew it."

7.22 Reabhupāda used to say that the hedonists do not accept transmigration of the soul, because if it were actually true, they would "shudder" to think how they are wasting their lives. In a similar sense a neophyte devotee might shudder if he really knew how little he was exerting himself, and how quickly his life duration is passing away. When the demigods offered King Khaṭvāṅga any benediction he might desire, the king wanted to know, "How much longer do I have to live?" He was informed that he had only a few moments and that forced King Khaṭvāṅga to surrender totally to the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa. Are we ready for the truth?

7.23 K The truth hurts. I don't want the devotees thinking the worst of me when they see me. And when I see them I don't want to think harshly like a fault-finder.

The *sāstras* state there is always a mixture of good and bad in this world and so one should neither praise nor criticize. Especially one should not criticize. A devotee like Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa Go-svāmī, however, didn't want to hear even "the truth" of the devotees' discrepancies. He was like a bee who went for the honey. He said he simply

knew that the devotees were engaged in Kṛṣṇa's service. His mood seems preferable to one who says, "Have you noticed how all the devotees in this movement are on the lowest platform? Just see how they overeat!"

7.24 K We can be truthful but at the same time forgiving. Forgiveness is the wealth of *brāhmaņas*.

When the elder gopis lodged complaints to Mother Yasodā she heard the "faults" of her son Krsna, but she never decreased in her unlimited affection for Him. She said, "If Krsna's ornaments create a light by which He steals the yogurt, then I will take away His ornaments." But the gopis said, "Never mind that. He and Balarāma have Their own natural effulgence." Mother Yaśodā then said, "So protect your yogurt in a high place, and then Krsna cannot steal it." Mother Yasodā was obliging to her friends and she did not argue against their reports of her son's mischievous nature-His alleged pinching of children, His pouring water in their ears, His urinating on the floors, and so on. But even while hearing about Krsna's misbehavior, her heart filled with love and her breastmilk flowed. The complaining gopis said, "Look at Krsna now. He is sitting there as if He is an innocent boy. Just see His face!" The gopis implied that Lord Krsna was acting sweet but was actually deceitful. Mother Yaśodā couldn't help but smile at His beauty, even while they complained.

# Honesty: The Good Fight / 93

Lord Kṛṣṇa is unique. We are supposed to discipline our children or disciples if they behave dishonestly. Don't give them the impression that it is all right to cheat. One aunt who was lenient toward her nephew's stealing later had her own ear bitten off by that boy when he grew up and was about to be killed for his crimes. He said, "Your leniency led me to this!" So we should be honest and see the faults in our friends and relatives, but continue to guide them with love.

7.25 **K** Q: In Kali-yuga if you intend to do the right thing, that's counted as truth, even if you don't actually do it. And if you think wrong but don't do it physically, it's not held against you. So why do you emphasize the inner state of an act?

A: There is a concession in Kali-yuga, but the mind is so strong that *if* you think of cheating, soon you'll *will* to cheat and *feel* like a cheater. Then you will actually *do* it. The concession is an aid to right behavior for weak persons; it is not to be taken as normal behavior that one can think evil thoughts but say, "It's okay, I'm not *doing* it."

Especially worship and service must go beyond the mechanical acts. It has to be done from the heart and with thought. Mahārāja Bharata fell down by thinking of his deer, even while the sage continued to perform his rituals. Prabhupāda writes:

Even though he was engaged in worshiping the Deity, his mind was restless due to his inordinate affection. While trying to meditate, he would simply think of the deer, wondering where it had gone. In other words, *if one's mind is distracted from worship, a mere show of worship will not be of any benefit.* (emphasis added)

-Bhāg. 5.8.14

7.26 K In their essay, "What is Matter and What is Life?" Doctors Thoudam Singh and Richard Thompson give evidence of the intellectual dishonesty of many scientists who attempt to prove that life has evolved from chemicals. Dr. Thompson states that while the scientists themselves, in their more technical works, admit that their "origin of life theories" are filled with problems and inconsistencies, they make a presentation to the public as if these theories were perfect and should be completely accepted. Dr. Thompson concludes, "One could appreciate their efforts more if the findings were presented more honestly."

Intellectual honesty should also be applied to our practice of devotional life. Then we can consistently present to the world that while Kṛṣṇa consciousness is perfect and complete, and contains the Absolute Truth for everyone, yet it requires very thorough practice in order to achieve the desired states. There is no profit in making false claims about our own advancement in the name of advertising Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Perfection exists in the Supreme Lord and in the chain of liberated

# Honesty: The Good Fight / 95

devotees whose lives and works are testimony to real achievement. Perfection has also been delineated in the scientific texts and scriptures. For ourselves, we can honestly say, "I want to serve those who have seen the truth." When we make an honest though imperfect effort, "those who are thoroughly honest" will appreciate it. Prabhupāda states, "This simplicity of acceptance of the Lord's authority is more effective than showy, insincere religious fervor" (*Bhāg.* 1.8.20, purport).

7.27 K There's a story that a thief joined with pilgrims who were visiting holy places. By their association he became purified and wanted to serve God. But his stealing propensity remained. One night while everyone was asleep he got up and moved their luggage into different places. In the morning the pilgrims noticed the disarray of their belongings and wondered what had happened. The thief stood up and confessed. "I am a professional thief. It was I who moved your luggage. But by your association I no longer wish to steal, so I didn't do anything harmful, I just moved one bag to one place and one bag to another place. You will find that everything is still intact."

Today, once again, the old thief within me will try to steal some *mahā-prasādam* from the kitchen, and he will try to overeat. But I am ready to catch him in the act. And my lecherous mind, who is not a Vaiṣṇava, will lust after women. But this thinking of women will not lead to feeling and

willing. Because I know that lecherous mind is around, I will be vigilant over every thought. And the false saint will murmur his *japa* aloud in hopes that others will think that he is a sincere Vaiṣṇava with a genuine inner life. What can I do with all these rascals and their tendency for monkeymischief? I can chase them with a stick, "Hut!" And I can use my best energies in the good fight.

# Chapter Eight Anecdotes of Truth

8.1 K In the Mahābhārata, Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, tells a story to the Pāṇḍavas about the meaning of truth. This story continues to be told by great thinkers all over the world, often, and they do not even know that Śrī Kṛṣṇa told it in the Mahābhārata. It is usually offered as a test case against the absolutist version of truthfulness in the world.

Lord Kṛṣṇa's friend Arjuna had vowed to kill anyone who suggested that he give away his Gāṇdīva bow. In a moment of anger when Yudhiṣṭhira was disappointed that Arjuna had not killed Karna, Yudhiṣṭhira suggested that Arjuna could give the Gāṇḍīva bow to someone more qualified. When Arjuna drew his sword against Yudhiṣṭhira, Lord Kṛṣṇa intervened and told His story.

Lord Kṛṣṇa said that once there was an ascetic named Kosikatha who lived a small distance from a village. He had made a vow, "I will only speak the truth," and had become famous as the one who never told a lie. One day innocent persons seeking refuge from robbers entered the forest near the dwelling of the ascetic. The robbers soon arrived searching for the men. They approached Kosikatha and inquired, "By which path have these men gone?" Kosikatha replied, "They have entered the

forest just near here." The robbers then slaughtered the innocent persons and took their wealth. For this sin, Kosikatha fell into hellish life and suffered greatly.

Lord Kṛṣṇa then drew His moral from the story. He said, "There must be some indication of distinguishing virtue from sin. Therefore great sages have indicated that seeing through the eyes of scriptures does not provide for every case. Hearing this from Me you should now decide whether your brother should be slain." In this story and other explanations, Lord Kṛṣṇa found a way to preserve Arjuna's vow, while at the same time avoiding the killing of Yudhisthira.

For centuries after the time of the *Mahābhārata*, moral philosophers such as Augustine and Immanuel Kant have made the argument that lying should always be rejected. Kant taught as follows:

Truthfulness in statements which cannot be avoided is the formal duty of an individual to everyone, however great may be the disadvantage accruing to himself or another.

*—Lying: Moral Choice in Public and Private Life,* by Sissela Bok.

In describing the history of this moral debate, Sissela Bok states that most philosophers have found Kant's view too inflexible. There are times when truthfulness causes or fails to avert such great harm that a lie is clearly justifiable. Where a would-be murderer inquires whether our friend who is pursued by him had taken refuge in our house, should one lie to save a friend? Or should one tell the truth? This is a standard case from Biblical times, used by the scholastics in many variations and taken up by most commentators on deception.

In Nineteenth Century England, Cardinal Newman took up the same case and was defending himself and Catholic scholars against charges of immorality and laxity regarding truthfulness. Newman quoted Samuel Johnson: "The general rule is that truth should never be violated; there must, however, be exceptions. If, for example, a murderer has asked which way a man has gone."

-Lying: Moral Choice in Public and Private Life, by Sissela Bok.

In Lord Kṛṣṇa's dealing with the Pāṇḍava brothers, He introduced a way that Arjuna could get the effect of "killing" Yudhiṣṭhira by insult, while sparing his life, and so He did not advise direct breaking of the truth. But the real point of this story is that morality is, in Kṛṣṇa's own words, "very difficult to understand."

8.2 K The solution to moral dilemmas is to know what God wants us to do. His will is always righteous and auspicious for everyone. For a Vaişnava, the ultimate morality is to please the Supreme Lord. If the Supreme Lord were to ask us to tell a lie according to worldly morality, the telling of that lie would be the highest moral act.

In the Mahābhārata there is the famous story of a time when Lord Krsna asked Yudhisthira to tell a lie. This was in the midst of the battle of Kuruksetra. Lord Krsna knew that the general of the opposing side, Dronācārya, was very formidable, but he would lose his enthusiasm if he heard that his son had died. So Lord Krsna suggested that Yudhisthira announce aloud, "Asvatthāmā has died." Drona's son, Aśvatthāmā, had not actually died, and so to avoid a complete lie, Lord Krsna suggested that Yudhisthira could add, but in a very low voice, "Asvatthāmā, the elephant, has died." King Yudhisthira was also known as Dharmarāja and he had a reputation as one who had never told a lie. Truth-telling was so important to Yudhisthira, that even though he was asked by Lord Krsna to say that Asvatthāmā had died, Yudhisthira hesitated. After his hesitation he finally agreed, but transcendental scholars have analyzed that Yudhisthira was diminished in his standing as a pure devotee by that hesitation. Some commentators misunderstand, and think that Yudhisthira was diminished because he told a lie. Yudhisthira was so pious that his chariot used to ride above the ground, but after this incident his chariot's wheels rolled on the ground like everyone else's. The real reason for the coming down of Yudhisthira's chariot and fame was his hesitation to immediately carry out the will of Krsna, even if it meant telling a lie.

This story focuses on the point that truthfulness means to satisfy the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The story does not condone whimsical telling of lies and claiming that this is what Kṛṣṇa wants. Neither should the story be used to blaspheme the Supreme Personality of Godhead and say that He is an immoral man. Kṛṣṇa's acts are transcendental and cannot be compared to the activities required of a human being in the world. If one cares to study the activities of the Lord deeply, he will see that there is actually no contradiction or mistake.

8.3 K Bali Mahārāja became a *mahājana*, one of the twelve great authorities in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, because he was truthful to his vow to Lord Viṣṇu.

Lord Vișnu appeared as a brāhmaņa boy with a glowing effulgence, and entered the court of Bali Mahārāja. Bali was jubilant to see the beautiful young boy and he respectfully washed the Lord's lotus feet then placed the water on his head. As a ksatriya, the King surmised that the brahmana boy, Vāmanadeva, had come to ask for some charity, and so Bali gladly told Him that he would give whatever He asked. Vāmana only asked for three steps of land. Bali thought the boy was acting a bit childishly and encouraged Him to ask for a sizable piece of land, but speaking with brahminical wisdom, Vāmana explained that one should be satisfied with whatever he achieves by his previous destiny. Bali then granted His wish, and to confirm it, he took up the brahmana's water pot. But Bali's family guru, Śukrācārya, interrupted and warned

Bali that this *brāhmaņa* was actually Lord Viṣṇu in disguise. He warned him that Lord Viṣṇu, always a friend of the demigods, was now going to cheat Bali and take all his land.

Sukra offered wily advice how one could renege on a promise without incurring blame. Sounding like the Western moralists in their hair-splitting attempts to understand the truth, Sukra said:

In flattering a woman to bring her under control, in joking, in a marriage ceremony, in earning one's livelihood, when one's life is in danger, in protecting cows and brahminical culture, or in protecting a person from an enemy's hand, falsity is never condemned.

-Bhāg. 8.19.43

But Bali thought differently and did not want to revoke the sacred promise he had made to Vāmana. There is nothing more sinful than untruthfulness. Bali asserted, "Because of this, Mother Earth once said, 'I can bear any heavy thing except a person who is a liar'" (*Bhāg.* 8.20.4).

Vāmanadeva then expanded to the full size of the universe displaying His prowess as Lord Viṣṇu. When it appeared that Bali did not own enough land in the universe to fulfill Vāmana's three steps, Bali surrendered his own head.

O best Personality of Godhead, most worshipable for all the demigods, if You think that my promise has become false, I shall certainly rectify matters to make it truthful. I cannot allow my promise to be false. Please therefore, place Your third lotus footstep on my head.

-Bhāg. 8.22.2

After this, Bali was tested in many ways by the Supreme Lord, who eventually took everything away from him—all his land, soldiers, and reputation. But throughout all the "cheating" by Vāmanadeva, Bali remained steadfast and faithful to the Lord. He realized that Vāmanadeva was actually purifying him of his material attachments. In praise of Bali, the Supreme Lord said:

Bali Mahārāja has become the most famous among the demons and nonbelievers, for in spite of being bereft of all material opulences, he is fixed in his devotional service.

Although bereft of his riches, fallen from his original position, defeated and arrested by his enemies, rebuked and deserted by his relatives and friends, although suffering the pain of being bound and although rebuked and cursed by his spiritual master, *Bali Mahārāja, being fixed in his vow, did not give up his truthfulness*. It was certainly with pretension that I spoke about religious principles, but he did not give up religious principles, for he is true to his word. (emphasis added)

-Bhāg. 8.22.28-30

We like to hear of someone who sacrificed his life for truth, but when that sacrifice is specifically to uphold one's truthfulness to the Supreme Lord, then the virtue of truthfulness becomes most sublime.

8.4 K The story of the honest boy who approached Gautama Muni is an all-time favorite example of truthfulness.

When the young boy asked the sage to become his spiritual master, Gautama asked, "Who is your father?" In those days, gurus generally accepted disciples only from the families of *brāhmaņas*. The innocent boy did not have a ready answer and so he went home to ask his mother.

"Who is my father?" he asked.

"My dear son," said the boy's mother, "I do not know." His mother was a maidservant and couldn't even ascertain, among the many men she knew, the identity of the boy's father.

Most persons would have received this news as a great shame, and something to be kept secret. But this boy promptly returned to Gautama Muni and told him exactly what his mother had said.

"My dear sage," said the boy, "my mother says that she does not know who my father is."

"Then *you* are a *brāhmaņa*," said Gautama, and he accepted the boy as his disciple. Gautama recognized that the boy had the main qualification of a *brāhmaņa*, truthfulness, although he was a lowborn child. The boy was therefore qualified to receive spiritual knowledge.

This story cannot be considered merely a tale of worldly ethics. Because the boy was honest, therefore he was eligible for spiritual life. Truthfulness is the criteria, and once one accepts a spiritual master he should always relate to the guru with utmost truthfulness. Sometimes when we are honest, the result is that we get a reprimand. But it's better to be punished for telling the truth than to lie before the spiritual master in order to save some false prestige.

8.5 K The result of deceitfulness before saintly persons is told in the story of the young men of the Yadu dynasty who mocked Nārada Muni.

Nārada and great sages like Viśvāmitra, Asita, Bhrgu, Kaśyapa, Vasistha and others had performed auspicious yajñas at the house of Vasudeva, the father of Lord Krsna. When the ceremonies were complete, Lord Krsna, who was staying at Vasudeva's house, respectfully sent the sages away, and they went to the holy place called Pindaraka. It was there that Sāmba and other boys of the Yadu dynasty went to play a trick on the sages. Sāmba, the son of Jāmbavatī, dressed himself in a woman's garb, and surrounded by other smirking boys, they all approached the great sages. Feigning humility, a boy grabbed hold of the sages' feet and asked, "O learned brahmanas, this pregnant woman has something to ask you. She is too embarrassed to inquire for herself. Since you are all great sages with infallible vision, please tell us whether her child will be a boy or a girl."

Nārada and the sages knew perfectly well the boys were mocking them as if to expose the fact that the sages could not know anything about material affairs. So the sages decided to teach the boys the seriousness of offending great devotees.

Ridiculed by deceit, the sages became angry and told the boys, "Fools! She will bear you an iron club that will destroy your entire dynasty."

In this instance, the events that followed brought about the destruction of the Yadu dynasty, and they were all arranged by the will of the Supreme Lord. But at the same time, the lesson of misfortune that follows the deceitful treatment of devotees should not go in vain.

The Yadu boys were wary about jeopardizing their advanced position and indeed had been thinking that as long as they kept their trickery concealed, others would never be able to detect such sophist-icated cheating. Nonetheless, they were unable to protect their family from the reaction of their grievous offense against the devotees of the Lord.

-Bhāg. 11.1.17, purport

8.6 As the topmost servant of the Supreme Lord within the universe, Lord Brahmā maintains an honest and submissive attitude towards His Master. Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam mentions Lord Brahmā's penances as "non-duplicious."

An instructive incident of Lord Brahmā's honesty occurred when he was approached in reverence by his son and disciple Nārada. Nārada was so impressed with the cosmic powers of his father, that he took it for granted Brahmā was the source of all creation. My dear father, all this is known to you scientifically because whatever was created in the past, whatever will be created in the future, or whatever is being created at present, as well as everything within this universe, is within your grip, just like a walnut.

My dear father, you know everything, and you are the controller of all. Therefore may all that I have inquired from you be kindly instructed to me so that I may be able to understand it as your student.

-Bhāg. 2.5.3,8

As the unalloyed servant of Lord Kṛṣṇa, Lord Brahmā immediately made it clear that he was not the Supreme Lord. A cheater might have taken advantage of Nārada's apparent bewilderment and bluffed his student with word jugglery. But Lord Brahmā said:

I create after the Lord's creation by His personal effulgence....

I offer my obeisances and meditate upon Lord Kṛṣṇa [Vāsudeva] the Personality of Godhead, whose invincible potency influences them [the less intelligent class of men] to call me the supreme controller. —Bhāg. 2.5.11-12

Lord Brahmā then proceeded to answer all the inquiries of Nārada, with explanations as good as those given directly by the Personality of Godhead. Because Brahmā is a tested and unmotivated servant, the Supreme Lord was pleased to manifest knowledge through his heart, and so through Lord Brahmā, all Vedic knowledge emanates.

All teachers in disciplic succession should follow Brahmā's example and refrain from bluffing their students. Sometimes a disciple will flatter the guru, but the genuine spiritual master will not be misled. Neither will he instigate (directly or indirectly) claims to be something more than he is. Because Brahmājī's actual position as creator is unimaginably great, his modesty is especially refreshing.

Since neither Lord Śiva nor you nor I could ascertain the limits of spiritual happiness, how can other demigods know it? And because all of us are bewildered by the illusory external energy of the Supreme Lord, we can only see this manifested cosmos according to our individual ability.

Let us offer our respectful obeisances unto that Supreme Personality of Godhead, whose incarnations and activities are chanted by us for glorification, though He can hardly be fully known as He is.

-Bhāg. 2.6.37-38

8.7 K A devotee's sincerity and honesty is tested in severe conditions. When there is no opposition, it is much easier to be true.

Haridāsa Ṭhākura was faced with an ultimatum: either he stopped chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa or the Muslims would beat him to death in twenty-two market places. Haridāsa chose to be true to the chanting of the holy name, and Lord Caitanya personally protected him.

Bilvamangala Thākura was convinced by a prostitute that he should become a devotee of the Lord. Bilvamangala started for Vrndavana, but again he was attracted by sex desire in the form of a woman he met along the way. Bilvamangala then asked the woman for her hair pins and he put out his eyes so that he might no longer be attracted by lust. Śrīla Prabhupāda has said that Bilvamangala's activities are all transcendental and cannot be imitated or compared to other persons, but at least we can appreciate the determination of a great devotee once he starts on his course to please Krsna. The lives of Vaisnavas such as Prahlāda Mahārāja and all the associates of Lord Caitanya attest to the fact that the devotees remain true to their Lord even in times of distress.

Devotees in the modern age who are sincerely following Śrīla Prabhupāda are also tested. In Soviet Russia, previous to the *Glastnost* era, devotees risked their lives simply to practice even the most private Kṛṣṇa conscious *sādhana*. Many devotees were arrested and detained for years in psychiatric hospitals or labor camps. Some were told by the police that they would be let free if they would just sign a statement testifying against Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but the devotees refused to tell the lie, although it caused them so much suffering and deprivation.

8.8 K Tapana Miśra was a learned scholar who used to read many books and scriptures, hear many

many men, but it only produced doubt in his heart as to the ultimate goal of life. With this splayed attention, Tapana Miśra was not able to give full appreciation to unalloyed *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*, but because he was a very sincere seeker of the truth, Lord Kṛṣṇa guided him in a dream. During Lord Caitanya's youth in Navadvīpa, Tapana Miśra, who lived in East Bengal, was instructed in a dream to go to Nimāi Paṇḍita.

In his dream, the brāhmana told him, "Because He is the Lord [Isvara], undoubtedly He can give you the proper direction." Tapana Miśra immediately sought out Caitanya Mahāprabhu and described all the details of the dream to the Lord. Caitanya Mahāprabhu was satisfied with him and told him that the basic principle of success is to chant the holy name of the Lord. Lord Caitanya then instructed Tapana Miśra to go live in Benares, promising that He would eventually meet him there. At the time, this seemed a very odd instruction. Tapana Miśra had come to Navadvipa, and the Lord sent him away promising a distant rendezvous in Benares. But it was actually the Lord's plan that Tapana Miśra should be present when He went to Benares to fully instruct Sanātana Gosvāmī about the Absolute Truth. Prabhupāda writes:

Lord Caitanya's instruction to Tapana Miśra is especially significant for persons who loiter here and there collecting books and reading none of them, thus becoming bewildered regarding the aim of life.

-C.c., Ādi 16.11, purport

From the account of his early life, Tapana Miśra sounds like many truth seekers. Not only do they fail to find the ultimate truth, but they take pride in their eclectic knowledge. A truth seeker may develop ethical honesty and appreciation of world philosophy, but this is not enough to bring one to the end of knowledge. For that one needs the mercy of the Absolute Truth or His pure devotee.

Another associate of Lord Caitanya who was formerly a great scholar, was Sarvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya. When Sarvabhauma was delivered from his impersonalism, he declared to the Lord that it was a great wonder that He had delivered such a dry scholar. Sarvabhauma said:

I had become dull-headed due to reading too many books on logic. Consequently I had become like an iron bar. Nonetheless, you have melted me, and therefore Your influence is very great.

-C.c., Madhya 6.214

By the mercy of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, scholars may drop their burden of studying inconclusive books and take the nectar of hearing and chanting *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

8.9 K Śrīla Prabhupāda taught that truth means to surrender to Kṛṣṇa. And cheating means not to recognize that Kṛṣṇa is the supreme proprietor of all the worlds, the object of all sacrifices, and the best friend and well-wisher of all living entities. First you have to know the truth. And to be honest, you must not steal from the proprietor. This is the basis of truth and truthfulness.

But it will be very difficult to convince the atheists to give up their theories that there is no ultimate truth, and no Supreme Being.

To illustrate the stubborness of the materialists, Prabhupāda told the story of "Scissors Philosophy."

Two men were arguing about which cutting instrument was best, a knife or scissors. "Knife!" said one. "No, scissors!" said the other. Quickly, their argument became heated.

"If you don't agree," said the man who advocated the knife, "I will throw you in the river."

"No, I'll never change my mind. It is scissors!" So the knife advocate threw the other into the swift river. He swam for a while but became exhausted and began to sink, but he was so stubborn about holding his point of view that even after he was sinking under the water to his death, he held up his arm and moved his fingers back and forth like a pair of scissors cutting.

"The scientist will be like that," said Prabhupāda. "Even after defeating them with all logic, still they will say, 'Life comes from matter.'"

But although the scientists are always changing their theoretical "truths," they expect everyone to believe *whatever they* say.

Prabhupāda said, "Another bluff is the Marsgoing expedition. After a few years they will present some stones and say, 'Now we have gone to Mars. There is no possibility of living there. Take this stone and sand and be satisfied with your millions of dollars that you have spent.'"

"There is a song in Bengal," said Prabhupāda, "that formerly anything European, *sahab*, is good. So one person was selling the flesh of a dog. No one takes the flesh of a dog, at least in India. But he said, 'This is not ordinary. This was the dog that was killed by a Viceroy. It is *that* dog. So because a Viceroy killed it, it has become a nice dog and you can eat it.' The scientists are like that. Anything they say is to be accepted."

8.10 K The most important thing for someone hearing about Kṛṣṇa is to accept the existence of Kṛṣṇa in a literal way. Otherwise, even if nectarean  $līl\bar{a}$  of Kṛṣṇa or advanced states of devotional service are described, the hearer will think it is mythology. Prabhupāda writes:

They accept the statements of Srimad-Bhāgavatam to be allegorical and they try to interpret them in their own way. But factually the Lord lifted the hill in the presence of all the inhabitants of Vṛndāvana, as corroborated by the great ācāryas and authors like Vyāsadeva and Nārada. Everything about the Lord—His activities, pastimes and uncommon features—should be accepted as is, and in this way, even in our present condition we can understand the Lord.

Prabhupāda's constant effort to convince us of the literal truth of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam makes his presentation great and powerful. Especially in Kaliyuga, people are slow and faithless, and there is a huge army of speculators and atheists who are conditioning people to disbelieve. Prabhupāda's clear purports have convinced many intelligent persons that the seemingly fantastic events of Krsna's pastimes, although beyond material conception, are reality. Unless spiritual teachings have this potency to convince people of the truth of the Vedic statements and of the need to practice devotional service, they are useless, like ornaments on a dead body. We have yet to fully appreciate how Śrīla Prabhupāda has singlehandedly gone against the predominant atheistic tide of Kali-yuga and effectively presented Krsna. We sometimes glibly say, "Prabhupāda preached all over the world." But the astounding fact is not simply that Prabhupāda traveled widely, but wherever he went he convinced people to give up all their previously held material conceptions and accept Krsna consciousness. This he did by his purity and his faithfulness to the paramparā. He was a true servant of the Absolute Truth and everyone may appreciate this in his books.

# Summing Up

Knowledge of the Absolute Truth is that which will save you at the time of your death. Other truths will fall away and only prove that you've wasted your life. The Absolute Truth is Lord Kṛṣṇa, param satyam dhīmahi.

Truthfulness is to admit your dependence on the Supreme Lord. It also means admitting your lack of devotion, and asking Kṛṣṇa to help you. And truthfulness means following the promises you made in front of Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Vaiṣṇavas, and the spiritual master, at the time of your initiation.

## The Truth lives!

Become honest—read Prabhupāda's books.

# Glossary

#### A

 $\bar{a}c\bar{a}rya$ —a spiritual master who teaches by example

- *anumāna*—method of acquiring knowledge by logic and inference
- Arjuna—one of the five Pāṇḍava brothers; great devotee of Kṛṣṇa to whom He spoke the *Bhagavad-gītā*

asat—not eternal; temporary

- *āśramas*—the four spiritual orders according to the Vedic social system: *brahmacārya* (student life) *grhastha* (married life); *vānaprastha* (retirement); and *sannyāsa* (renounced order of life)
- asura—(a=not + sura=godly); one who does not
  follow the principles of religion
- *ātmā*—the self (refers sometimes to the body, sometimes to the mind, and sometimes to the soul)

#### B

- Bali Mahārāja—a king who became a great devotee by surrendering everything he owned (including himself) to Vāmanadeva, Kṛṣṇa's dwarf-brāhmana incarnation
- Bhagavad-gītā —literally,"Song of God" a discourse between Lord Kṛṣṇa and His devotee friend, Arjuna, expounding devotional service as both the principle means and the ultimate end of spiritual perfection
- bhaktas-devotees of the Lord

bhakti-devotional service to the Supreme Lord

Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Mahārāja—spiritual master of A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

Braĥmā, Lord—the first created living being and secondary creator of the material universe

Brahman—the impersonal, all-pervading aspect of the Supreme Lord

- *brāhmaņa*—a member of the most intelligent class of men, according to the four Vedic
- occupational divisions of society
- Brahma-samhitā—ancient Sanskrit scripture of prayers of Lord Brahmā to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa
- *brahmāvarta*—any place or country where the supremacy of the Lord is accepted and thus sacrifice is performed

# С

- Caitanya-caritāmṛta—Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja's biography of the life and philosophy of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu (an incarnation of Kṛṣṇa)
- Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Lord—the incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa who appeared in West Bengal, India, in the 15th Century and came to teach love of God by chanting His holy names
- Cāṇakya Paṇḍita—the *brāhmaṇa* (priestly) advisor of King Candragupta, who was responsible for checking Alexander the Great's invasion of India

#### D

- Deity—authorized form of the Lord in the temple made according to bona fide scripture in order to accept our worship
- *dharma*—(1) religious principles, (2) one's eternal natural occupational duty, i.e., devotional service to the Lord

Dvāpara-yuga—the third age in the cycle of a *mahā-yuga*; it lasts for 864,000 years

#### G

gopī—Kṛṣṇa's cowherd girlfriend, His most confidential servitor gṛhastha—a married man living according to the Vedic social system guru—spiritual master

guru-daksina—a gift given to the spiritual master

#### I

*İsopanişad*—one of the philosophical portions of the Vedic scriptures

#### J

Jada Bharata—great devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa who was Mahārāja Bharata in a previous life

japa—chanting the holy names of God (Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare) on 108 prayer beads

- Kali-yuga—( Age of Kali ) the age of quarrel and hypocrisy, the fourth and last age in the cycle of a *mahā-yuga*. This is the age in which we are now living; it lasts 432,000 years, of which 5,000 years have already passed
- *karma-kānda*—sections of the *Vedas* prescribing rituals for material benefits
- Kṛṣṇa—the original name of the Supreme Personality of Godhead (literally means "the allattractive one")
- *kṣatriya*—the administrative or protective class of men according to the four Vedic occupational divisions of society
- Kurukṣetra—holy place of pilgrimage where Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa spoke the *Bhagavad-gītā* to His dearmost friend and devotee, Arjuna, on the battlefield (located near modern New Delhi, India )

#### L

laulyam—a greediness to attain pure love of God

#### Μ

mahā-bhāgavata—a great devotee of the Lord
Mahābhārata—the history of greater India compiled
by the literary incarnation of Kṛṣṇa, Vyāsadeva,
which includes the Bhagavad-gītā

*mahājana*—the Lord's authorized devotee, who by his teachings and behavior, establishes the path of religion

- mantra—(man=mind + tra=deliverance); a pure
  sound vibration to deliver the mind from its
  materialistic inclinations
- $m\bar{a}y\bar{a}$ —( $m\bar{a}$ =not +  $y\bar{a}$ =this) illusion; the external energy potency of Kṛṣṇa which allows the living entity, due to his own desires to enjoy separately from Him, to become forgetful of his original position as loving servitor of the Lord
- *Māyāvādī*—impersonalist or voidist adhering to the philosophy that ultimately God is formless and without personality
- *mūdha*—one who is grossly foolish and will not surrender to the Supreme Lord

### Ν

Nārada Muni—pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa who travels throughout the universes glorifying the Lord *Nectar of Devotion*—Śrīla Prabhupāda's scholarly and devotional translation of the Vaiṣṇava scripture, *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, written by Rūpa Gosvāmī

#### Р

- Pāṇḍavas—the five sons of King Paṇḍu: Yudhiṣṭhira, Bhīma, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva
- *Paramātmā*—the Supersoul or the form of the Lord who resides in the heart of all living entities
- Parīkṣit, Mahārāja—the saintly emperor of the world who submissively heard Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam from the pure devotee, Śukadeva Gosvāmī, and thus attained perfection

- Prabhupāda, A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami—Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON, Hare Kṛṣṇa movement)
- *prākṛta-sahajiyā*—pseudo-devotees of the Lord who pretend to be on the highest platform of love of God and thus take spiritual life cheaply
- prasādam—(literally, "the Lord's mercy"); food offered to Kṛṣṇa which is thus sanctified
- *pratyākṣa*—method of acquiring knowledge by empiricism (that which can be perceived by the senses)
- prema-bhakti—pure, unalloyed, spontaneous devotional love for God

# R

- *Rāmāyaņa*—history of Lord Rāmacandra, the perfect king incarnation of Kṛṣṇa, written by the great sage Vālmikī
- rasa—one of five relationships between the Lord and His devotees: neutrality (*sānta-rasa*), servitorship (*dāsya-rasa*), friendship (*sakhyarasa*), parental affection (*vātsalya-rasa*), and conjugal love (*mādhurya-rasa*)
- Rūpa Gosvāmī—one of six great spiritual masters who were authorized by Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu to establish and distribute the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness

*śabda-brahma*—transcendental sound vibration *sādhana*—regulative spiritual practices (such as chanting the holy names of the Lord) which gradually elevate one to spontaneous love of

God gradually elevate one to spontaneous love o

sādhu-saintly person

- Śālva—a demon who lived when Kṛṣṇa appeared on the planet 5,000 years ago in India; he possessed a magical airplane in which he terrorized everyone, but Kṛṣṇa easily killed him
- Sanātana Gosvāmī—one of six spiritual masters who were authorized by Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu to establish and distribute the philosophy of Krsna consciousness
- *saṅkīrtana*—congregational glorification of God, especially by chanting of His holy name
- *sannyāsī*—one in the renounced order of life in the Vedic social system

sat—eternal

- Satya-yuga—(Age of Satya); the first of the four ages of a *mahā-yuga* characterized by virtue, wisdom and religion, it lasts 1,728,000 years
- *smrti*—scriptures compiled by living entities under transcendental direction

*śraddhā*—faith

- Śrīla Prabhupāda—see Prabhupāda, A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami
- Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam—the Vedic scripture composed by Vyāsadeva to describe and explain Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa's pastimes

*śruti*—scriptures heard directly from God

*sūdra*—the laborer class of men according to the

four occupational divisions of Vedic society

- Sukadeva Gosvāmī—fully enlightened sage who originally spoke the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* to Mahārāja Parīkṣit just prior to the king's death, when he asked what was the duty of a human being
- Sūta Gosvāmī—the sage who recounted the discourses between Mahārāja Parīkṣit and Śukadeva Gosvāmī to the saintly sages assembled in the forest of Naimiṣāraŋya

# Т

Tretā-yuga—the second age in the cycle of a *mahā-yuga;* it lasts for 1,296,000 years

## V

- Vaikunthas—eternal planets (literally "without anxiety") residing in the spiritual sky
- Vaișņava—devotee of the Supreme Lord Vișņu, or Krșņa

*vaiśyas*—a member of the mercantile and agricultural class according to the Vedic occupational divisions of society

- Vāmanadeva—incarnation of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa as dwarf-brāhmaṇa
- *varņāśrama*—the Vedic social system which organizes society into four occupational and four spiritual divisions (*varņas* and *āśramas*)
- Vedas—the four original scriptures ( Ŗg, Yajur, Sāma, and Atharva )

Viṣṇu—the Personality of Godhead ( a plenary expansion of Kṛṣṇa ) who maintains the material universes

#### Y

Yadu dynasty—family of Lord Kṛṣṇa

yajña—sacrifice

Yaśodā—Kṛṣṇa's mother

- yogī—a transcendentalist who, in one way or another, is striving for union with the Supreme Lord
- Yudhiṣṭhira—eldest of the five Pāṇḍava brothers, whom Kṛṣṇa established as emperor of the world

# Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the following friends and disciples who have helped produce and print this book:

Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa dāsa Caitanya-rūpa-devī dāsī Mādhavendra Purī dāsa Țhākura Haridāsa dāsa Mādhava dāsa Bhaktin Lael Backus Lalitāmṛta-devī dāsī Bhakta Steve Reddy Bhaktin Kate Kāmeśī-devī dāsī Vegavatī-devī dāsī Kaiśorī-devī dāsī and all those who did research.

Special thanks to Kṛṣṇa-bhakta dāsa and Vṛndādevī dāsī for financing the production and printing of this book.