

Introduction

In 1965 His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda [popularly known as Śrīla Prabhupāda], founder-ācārya of the worldwide Hare Kṛṣṇa movement, left India and traveled to New York City, where he began the International Society for Krishna Consciousness a year later. His purpose was to preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness, the practical and complete process of developing love of God, a process delineated in the Vedic scriptures. Śrīla Prabhupāda's profuse commentated translations on these scriptures certainly establish him as one of the greatest religious scholars of all time. He authoritatively presented the science, philosophy, and pastimes of Kṛṣṇa in more than eighty books, simultaneously establishing the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement as a major religious force throughout the world.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's dynamic presentation of Kṛṣṇa consciousness as a spiritual alternative to a society stripped of spiritual values especially attracted the Western youth. Many of these young people were seeking the true meaning of life and were sick of hedonistic materialism, nihilistic atheism, and sentimental hypocritical semitheism. Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings and his life demonstrate that the message of the ancient *Vedas* is by no means outdated but is completely relevant to every person in every place,

especially in the modern age. In the spirit of all true religious teachers, Śrīla Prabhupāda spoke out against materialistic society, which enslaves people in ever-increasing complexities while keeping them blind to their real spiritual needs.

Śrīla Prabhupāda certainly spoke out strongly, clearly, and consistently against the spiritual ills of modern society, but without a trace of malice. He did not criticize anyone indiscriminately, nor did he allow his disciples to do so. In his personal dealings he encouraged the good in others and avoided condemning the bad. He gave all respect and praise to genuine spiritual teachers, such as Jesus Christ. Thus, his aim was not to antagonize or condemn anyone but to wake people up to their actual life of happiness in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

In mid-1977 Śrīla Prabhupāda became very pleased when, in a column entitled *Śrīla Prabhupāda Speaks Out*, excerpts of his conversations in which he forcefully presented the tenets of Kṛṣṇa consciousness in an informal setting began appearing in *Back to Godhead*, the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement's magazine. This collection of "Speaks Out" columns gives the reader the opportunity to take advantage of a pure devotee's perspective on the modern world.

The selections in this book portray Śrīla Prabhupāda in a particular mood. The reader should not think that such a strong tone was the only one Śrīla Prabhupāda employed. Most of the exchanges in

this book are conversations between Śrīla Prabhupāda and his intimate disciples. Yet in his general preaching to nondevotees he was philosophically no less compromising, though he may have cast the same thoughts in softer tones. For a view of another side of Śrīla Prabhupāda, the reader new to his works may want to refer to other publications from the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, such as *Perfect Questions Perfect Answers*.

Śrīla Prabhupāda is a perfect Vedic *sādhū*. One of the meanings of the word *sādhū* is "one who cuts," and readers of this small book will certainly experience a lifetime of illusions being chopped away. *The Hare Kṛṣṇa Challenge—Exposing a Misdirected Civilization* is provocative, controversial, and to the point. Its conclusions are weighty, and no thoughtful person should refrain from studying it from cover to cover. ●

malice = intention to harm or deprive in an
illegal or immoral way