

Everything is created for a purpose: this microphone is created for a purpose, this table is created for a purpose, this Dictaphone is created for a purpose, this computer is created for a purpose; but what is the purpose we're created for, are we aware of it, and are we acting according to it? The value and the longevity of our life should be according to the ability and the extent to which we are fulfilling our purpose. Let's say your life were to end tomorrow; if it were to be scheduled to end tomorrow, and you were to go before the angel of death and say, "I would like to live longer," on what basis would you make your argument? On what basis would you make your plea? Have you lived your life up to this point in time fulfilling your purpose, fulfilling the purpose for which you were put here? If that's the case, you could cite that. "I have acted righteously, I have acted according to your purpose Lord and I will continue to do so," and that would make a very, very strong argument in favor of your continuing your sojourn here on the earth planet. If, on the other hand, you've been unaware of your purpose - and of course being unaware of it there's no way that you could act according to it - how would you change your life from today in such a way as to merit a more prolonged stay on earth?

In our modern consumer society, things are planned to wear out in due course of time. Our bodies are also planned in the same way. We've got seventy, eighty, ninety, or at the most 100 years on this planet and then we're going to become obsolete, we're going to wear out. So, are we fulfilling the purpose for which we were put here? Would there be a rationale by which we could have an extension of life based on the record of our previous activities or based on our promise to change from henceforward? We cited the example of Ajamil, who lived a very profligate life in which he performed any kind of crime you could imagine, and yet at the end of his life, somehow or other he chanted the name of his youngest son Narayan. The agents of the Lord of Death (another name for death is justice) came and they were dragging Ajamil's subtle body away for punishment. But because he said the name of the Lord, the agents of Lord Vishnu intervened saying that having chanted the name of the

Lord one time, he deserves a second chance. There was a conference held and they gave him two more years of life. So if you were going to die of a terminal disease tomorrow, what argument would you make, or what changes would you promise; that in two more years of your life, how would you live in such a way as to merit that extension of life? What is your performance evaluation at this point in time, and if it's not very good, if it's substandard, how could you act in another two years of life in order to get an A1, first class, grade B performance evaluation? In other words, what would you *do* with the rest of your life?

Now a lot of people think of worship or God consciousness as something peripheral to their lives. I've got my business enterprises, I spend thirty percent of my life sleeping, I've got TV and movies that I've got to watch, eating is there, sports are there, and maybe Krishna is occupying a little blip on the far right hand lower corner of the chart. If you consult what God wants, whether it be the Bible or according to the Bhagavad-gita, He doesn't want you to put him off in a corner. He doesn't want you to lock Him up and visit Him in Church once a week. He doesn't want to be just a resident in your heart; He wants to be the President of your heart. He wants to be the hub of your existence, the axis of your life, the nucleus. In fact in the Bhagavad-gita, Krishna says that he is seated within the heart of all living beings¹. There's the individual soul called the jiva which is very, very tiny. In Sanskrit, the dimensions of the soul are described, *kesagra-sateka-bhaga*². Take a hair, *kes* - this is a tip of a hair, *sata* means a hundred, *bhaga*, divide a tip of a hair into a hundred parts. I don't know if there are any samurai swords that can do that, perhaps, but the next part is the real kicker. Then it says, *punah satamsa kari*, then do it again. Take the one one-hundredth tip and divide that into a hundred parts. That one ten-thousandth the size of a tip of a hair gives you an idea of the length and breadth of the soul and the soul is residing in the cavity of the heart about six inches from the front and about six

¹ [BG 10.20]

² [Madhya19.139]

inches from the back. Now along with the soul is the Super Soul, or God. God conducts the wanderings of all living beings. The difference between the Super Soul and the individual soul is that the individual soul is only inside this body, conscious of this particular body. The Super Soul is not only conscious of everybody, but whatever any living being wants: whether it be an ant who wants some sugar that's been spilled on the floor, or whether a llama that wants a nice, juicy carrot, whether a human being that wants to be the CEO or the President - whatever the living being wants, they communicate that to the Super Soul because the living being cannot fulfill their desires. We're limited; we're trapped in this tabernacle of flesh and bone, and we have no influence even as far as this body is concerned. We talk about "my body" - you know the abortion advocates make a big deal out of "my body" - yet we don't even have control. Do you have control when you get sick? Do you have control when you're feeling a little down and grouchy? Do you have control when you're depressed? Do you have control of the day of your death? Did you control the day of your birth? So we don't even have control over this body, what to speak of things external to our body. So if we want anything external, we have to ask God, who is accompanying us as the Super Soul, and it's up to Him whether we get it or not.

We take a lot of things for granted. Some of us are athletes, swimmers, football players, and we take also common activities like tying our shoe and feeding ourselves for granted - but how many people are unable to do those things? How many people ask God, "I'd like to tie my shoe" and the answer is not forthcoming for one reason or another and they can't tie their shoes; they can't feed themselves? So everything we accomplish that has anything to do even with this body what to speak of external is done by the sanction of God. He *is* the center of our being.

We can ask Him to facilitate something external and peripheral, temporary and nonsensical like, "Lord - oh Lord, oh Lord, I really want the Cardinals to win." He's not an autocrat, He's not a tyrant,

He doesn't demand your allegiance, He doesn't demand that every wish that you have be in accordance with His will. He allows you foolishness. He allows you the misuse of your free agency. At least there's a fifty percent chance that the Cardinals are going to win. Just consider the position of God: The rich man is praying, "Oh Lord, Oh Lord, protect my valuables." Now the thief is praying, "Oh Lord, Oh Lord, let there be some lapse in his security so that I can go in and steal." Just see the contradictory position that God's put into all the time.

The point is that God doesn't want to be on the periphery. He doesn't want to be on the edge. He wants to be the Lord of your heart. And if you have a big God, if you acknowledge that God is in fact the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning, the middle and the end, and He knows what you want to do before you even know yourself, and the accomplishment of anything is according to Him - if you realize how *BIG* God is, then your problems are very little. Those big problems are very little in that realization of a big God. If you have a little God, if you want to keep Him over here at 2%, then you have big problems. Big God, little problems. Little God, big problems. It's our choice. Here's a nice quote from C.S. Lewis:

You want to avoid God? Then you create what's called history. All that we call human history: money, poverty, ambition, war, prostitution, classes, empires, slavery; is the long, terrible story of man trying to find something other than God - Krishna, which will make him happy³.

In New Vrindavan in 1972, Srila Prabhupada gave a lecture and there were a lot of visitors - people from news stations and camera people. Prabhupada was talking about how strong the illusory energy in this material world is. At the end of his talk, one long-haired visitor raised his hand and he said, "If the purpose of life is to serve Krishna, why is illusion so strong? Why do things so easily

³ [C.S. Lewis, "Mere Christianity"]

distract us and deviate us from the central purpose of serving God?" Prabhupada answered, "It's not that Maya is that strong, it's that our purpose is weak." Our purpose is weak. What we hope to accomplish today is to enumerate the five purposes for which we were put here, and clarify them in our minds because if that's not clear to us, we can't fulfill our purposes, can we? So let's do some clarification. As we promised earlier, we said there are five purposes for which we were put here on earth. Let's just go down those one by one and hopefully this will serve to strengthen our sense of purpose. Krishna says in the Bhagavad-gita:

*sarvasya caham hr̥di sannivisto
mattah smrtir jnanam apohanam ca*

[Bg. 15.15]

"I am seated in the heart of all living beings, from Me comes knowledge, remembrance and forgetfulness." Krishna is not just some Hindu name of God. This is what Krishna claims, "I am in the heart of all living beings." This is not a Hindu god. "All living beings" includes Hindus, but it also includes Christians, Muslims, Mormons, Catholics, atheists - it includes not only human species but demigods and birds and bees and reptiles. That Personality - call Him Krishna or Allah or Jehovah - obviously He has many names, but that Personality who is in the heart of every living being is not a Hindu god. He is the universal Lord. The first thing that we need to do is connect; to make the Lord the center of our life.

I heard a Christian preacher once say, "We can't serve God because He's invisible, so all of our energy has got to be on serving fellow man. And serving fellow man is synonymous with serving God." Now, I agree that you need to serve your fellow man. In the Bhagavad-gita Krishna says, "Philanthropy, altruism, compassion on other living beings - that should never be given up." That should always be engaged in. No one should give up family, friends, country, and welfare work in the

name of spiritual realization. That is artificial. But it is inaccurate and ignorant to say that God is invisible. He is invisible, but if He wants to make Himself visible then He can do so. He's not invisible to me, He's right there. Is He invisible? He's right there - He's right there.

One great teacher in our line of disciplic succession, Bhaktisiddhanta Swami, said, "Man is infinitesimal, God is infinite." So there's no way with his faculties, as an infinitesimal being, can define the greatness of the Infinite. No way. It's like trying to accommodate an elephant on a dish. But if He's infinite, and if we're eager and anxious, and if we fulfill His purposes, if we work with Him, then He's fully capable of revealing Himself to us. There's no reason why God should - if He's invisible to you now, why He needs to remain invisible. There is a specific and mandated category of service called Love of God which is unique and distinct from serving one's fellow man. Here you have God and He's sitting before us on the altar. God is in His spiritual world and he also supports and pervades this entire universe by His multifarious energies. Just like the sun is in one place, it's localized, but its sunshine is everywhere and in every nook and corner. If you ask someone, they would say, "The sun is on my head." Someone else, "the sun is on my head," someone else, "the sun is on my head." And yet the sun is also one.

So God is one and yet He is also everywhere present. In that case, according to the descriptions in the scriptures, and the realizations and testimonies of hundreds of great saints and sages, the deity form of the Lord is carved according to those descriptions by generations and generations of carvers. Then He's brought to a previously existing temple and installed with weeklong purificatory ceremonies, chanting of mantras, and covenants to the extent that if those who are local worship Him and serve Him nicely, He agrees to stand there on the altar and accept the service. I know the tendency is to think of the deity as allegorical or symbolic or representative, but we do not see Him in that way at all. This is an authorized form of the Lord. If He's everywhere, He's *not* in the temple? Someone makes the

argument, "Well, if God is everywhere then uh, I don't have to go to the temple." Well, why don't I turn that around on you and say, "He's everywhere but He's *not* in the temple? Is that what you're saying?" So - we don't worship stone, we don't worship idols, we don't worship wood, but we do worship the form of the Lord, because right now, God in His original spiritual form is invisible to us. We had a man here earlier about three o'clock, he had cataracts on his eyes: wheelchair, cataracts and everything. Sometimes when one whose vision is inhibited through cataracts, there are special salves that you can apply which will then remove the cataract and allow lucidity. We have material eyes and our eyes must be anointed with the salve of prema, the salve of love of God.

Someone says, "Well I don't see that God is there." Well, do a little service. How can you do service? You're doing service right now. You're listening with your God-given ears and your intelligence to Krishna's words of the Bhagavad-gita, so you're doing service. You're hearing Krishna's names, and you're in Krishna's temple, and even when you go downstairs and enjoy the vegetarian feast, you're using your senses in a way that is not like any activity that we could perform. It's a totally transcendental way. So by *service*, one can come to realize that in fact, this is God. The example is given of the postal boxes, the postal boxes that are orange and blue marked PMG that sit on street corners. Because they are authorized by the postal department you can go with confidence and deposit your letter and it will get to its destination. It's just as good as going to the main GPO. So wherever a Deity is duly installed and worshiped nicely, there the Lord is. Now you may be a very righteous, God-aspiring, God-fearing person, but honestly if you want to go to the spiritual world and if you want to associate with God and if you see this as the dress rehearsal or the practice session, then you would be immensely benefited by knowing who God is and learning some specifics of His service as distinct from welfare work and humanitarian work because there won't be any need for welfare or humanitarian work in the spiritual world - there everything is perfect. In the spiritual world, worship is

the centralization of God that will be going on eternally.

So what are some of those categories of activities which are different, which are totally spiritual and have nothing to do with mundanity, even mundane welfare work? Well, Prabhupada is cooking in this picture. He's cooking. He's cooking for the Deity. Portions of that food will be offered on the altar. Now, you may be a devotee, you may not be a devotee, but thousands and thousands of people in the western world since Prabhupada came in 1965 and introduced the idea of prasadam - vegetarian food offered to Krishna - thousands and thousands of people upon tasting the prasadam said, "Hmm, *that's special! That's different!*" Not just because it's vegetarian, but because it's cooked in love and devotion and it's offered to the Lord. So imagine if you offered people vegetarian food. Imagine if you had a humanitarian society which offered unfortunate people all over the world vegetarian food. You wouldn't stop with poor people, you'd also offer it to the rich people because you'd want the rich people to be purified and go back home back to Godhead too, wouldn't you, as much as the poor people? There is such an organization. It's called Food for Life. The Hare Krishna organization feeds every day two million people worldwide not just vegetarian food, but food that's been offered - prasadam. Not that all the food is offered but portions are offered and then everything in the pots are considered offered.

I have a picture of a group of dancers, the Odissi dancers. They're dancing for the pleasure of the Lord. The devi dasis in the temple are trained to dance for God on the altar, and yet when you and I see this dancing, it takes our breath away. It is described that in the spiritual world, talking is like singing and walking is like dancing. When you have your spiritual body in the Kingdom of God, you don't walk along dragging your feet. In your spiritual body, you dance. That's the nature of your spiritual body. You don't talk, you sing. There's no talking, and there's no walking there. The talking becomes singing and the walking becomes dancing. Only after many, many decades of training can

these highly disciplined dancers approximate those movements of the spiritual world. Their purpose is to please the Lord; to create the same atmosphere here in the temple that exists in the spiritual world. But anybody who happens to see this dance, the grace and the devotion, they say “I want to go there! I want to go there!” and the purpose of your life becomes clarified.

Now I have a picture of our Festival of India. It gets about three or four thousand guests every September. Our festivals are to celebrate the pastimes of the Lord. The festivals are not for you. They're not for you, they're for *Him*. I don't do festivals for you. I do festivals for Him. I'm a devotee. Now when we do a festival (and we do about seven of them a year), between 500 and 15,000 of you come along. That's how nice it is. When you celebrate the Lord's pastimes, the singing and dancing, it's wonderful for everybody; everybody enjoys it. That's what the spiritual world is like; it's a festival every day. No wonder we're attracted! Talking with people about our festivals, I say, "Well we get 15,000 people at the festival of colors," and someone enviably asks, “Do Mormons come?” I say, "Does anyone *else* come? Mormons are all that I see because it's not sectarian, it's spiritual. It's the soul celebrating the spiritual world.” By going to the festivals and having prasadam and by singing and dancing, you may think, "I'm taking time off from my studies, from my career, to go and have fun at the Hare Krishna festival." What you're *actually* doing is fulfilling the purpose for which you were put here, by going to the Hare Krishna festival and eating the food. Our study in order to get temporal wealth and fame is not the purpose, not the prime purpose you were put here. So that which you think is recreational is actually the main reason why we're here. So this is how you can literally make the Lord the center of your life. That's one of the purposes for which we were put here.

Now the second purpose - you'll notice as we go along these are all C's so we can all remember them very easily. The first purpose is “Center your life on God”. The second purpose: “Connect with devotees.” There's no place for the lone ranger in spiritual life. It's social. You join a church, you

become a member of a family, you've got people to watch your back, you've got friends, and you've got fellowship. That's what it means to be purposefully involved in serving the Lord. He doesn't want you to be alone. He himself has so many associates. When Krishna was on the planet, it was estimated that at one point among his associates, there were several *billion* intimate associates of the Lord. When He came from the spiritual world, He brought all of His associates with Him. Spiritual life is meant to be our prime social experience.

There's a story of Prabhupada in the Memoirs book of told by a devotee named Bhakta das. Bhakta das was initiated and his name was given name was Bob. Usually, when Prabhupada would initiate someone, he would use the first name of their previous name for their spiritual name. So Bhakta das sat in on his initiation ceremony and Prabhupada said, "Now, Bob, your new name is Bhakta das," and Bhakta das asked, "What does it mean, Prabhupada?" Prabhupada said, "Das means servant and bhakta means devotees." He said, "Your name means that you serve the devotees. By serving the devotees of God, you go back to the Kingdom of God. By thinking of yourself as a servant of the devotees, you go to the Kingdom of God." The more you think of yourself as a servant, the more you qualify yourself for the spiritual world. The more you think of yourself as a master, the more likely you are going to go to hell.

In Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu's time, our preceptor, they used to worship in the temple just like we are doing now. They'd come together on Sundays, they'd worship in the temple and then for relishing the intimate devotional mellows, the devotees would get together in small groups during the week. They would come together and do a seeker service, introduce the concepts to new people in the temple and then they would get together during the week and meet in homes. Others, uninitiated people, would not be allowed. Lord Caitanya regularly for one year went to the house of Srivasa Thakura and the devotees - just like last night, we were at the clock tower in Cottonwood Mall on the

second floor, and we were rocking. Jai Krishna was leading kirtan, people were singing and dancing. It was a cold, rather forbidding night outside with not too many people around. I'm sure anyone who walked by must think, "Wow, what are those guys on?" It just makes you curious, "How can these people be happy?" We're just in a bare room in a yoga studio and he's singing and everyone's up and dancing and chanting and shouting. "What is that all about?" People are curious. But Caitanya locked the door, "You want to be initiated, you want to agree to forswear the following regulative principles? Then you can come and taste the mellows with us." It would really bother some people. Some people got really bugged. One old lady, she got herself carried in during the day in a water bucket, a forty gallon water bucket. She stuffed herself in a bucket with air holes. The kirtan went roaring and roaring, "Hare Krishna Hare...", and Lord Caitanya just stopped. He said, "There is some envious person in here. They looked around and they found this lady hidden in a water bucket, and they put her outside the door.

One Brahmin said, "I would like an invitation to your nocturnal meetings of sadhu-sanga."

"No sir, you don't believe in Krishna, you haven't centered your life on Krishna, and your purpose is not Krishna."

"But I am Brahmin. I am better born than any of you. You cannot refuse me!"

"I'm sorry, but that's what we're doing."

He said, "Then I curse you! I curse your Lord Caitanya that he'll never have material happiness."

"Jaya Haribol!"

Do not isolate yourself. Studies have shown people who isolate themselves from relationships are three times more likely to die an early death. People who isolate themselves are four times more likely to have a nervous breakdown, they are five times more likely to be clinically depressed, and they are ten times more likely to be hospitalized for a mental or emotional disorder. So for your own

emotional well-being, get in a small group.

So - connect with the church, center your life on God and thirdly, cultivate spiritual maturity. This is called discipleship. Cultivate spiritual maturity. We all have to grow up and that's what Mormonism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Krishna - that's what it's all about. It's to help you grow up and become spiritually mature. We see these young kids and they're just as cute as buttons and they're the apple of our eye, but if they're still doing the same things when they're 15, 18, 20, 30, and 45 - it becomes a tragedy. They were meant to grow up. You teach them, you teach them, and you teach them. Why do you teach them? So they can become teachers themselves. It's not good if they're perpetual students. We teach and we teach and we teach and we teach with the idea that the students will then themselves become teachers. This is called spiritual maturity. It's the goal of spiritual processes. How do we know when we've come of age? Five things:

- We know the word of God.

There are so many wonderful verses in the Bhagavad-gita. We need to memorize those verses. We need to memorize those verses so that they're part of us, so that they bubble to the service when we need them in trying circumstances.

- We need to trust His wisdom.

We need to say, "Lord, this is what I want to do but what do *You* want me to do? I want to do this, but more importantly, what do *You* want me to do?"

- We need to love His devotees.

We need to love those who are serving Him; we need to worship His character and we need to develop character ourselves like Prabhupada, like Lord Jesus Christ. Prabhupada came all the way from India in 1965 at the advanced age of 70 in order to deliver what he had learned from his spiritual master. You can't bottle it up. If you've learned something about the purpose of life, you need to pass it on.

You can't just keep it and hoard it. That's the whole problem with India since hundreds of years.

They've had the wonderful spiritual philosophy, the crest jewel of all spiritual wisdom, the crest jewel of all spiritual texts, Bhagavad-gita, and yet they come to America for technology. One Indian came to give to us what had been given to him by his spiritual master and that has resulted in the Hare Krishna explosion; that the lives of hundreds of thousands of people all over the world have been transformed. He established 108 centers when he was here between '65 and '77 and now the number of centers has grown to 400.

What is the mark of physical maturity? When you're becoming physically mature, what is the symptom? You get muscles. So what are the symptoms of spiritual maturity? You get some spiritual muscles. You get some spiritual muscles and you start to become strong and fixed in Krishna Consciousness. Another symptom of physical maturity is that you're able to reproduce. Justin and Eugene are expecting, in June. So if Justin wasn't physically mature and if Eugene wasn't physically mature we wouldn't be awaiting the happy day in June would we? So similarly, spiritual maturity means you reproduce. Who's coming to the temple because of you? Who is getting in small groups because of you? Who are you bringing to the temple? Who are you extending yourself to in their despondency, in their confusion? "Hey, come along with me! Let me show you something." Who are you doing that to? When you go to the spiritual world, is anybody going to come up and say, "I'm here because of you"? You're here because of someone else and that somebody else is here because of Prabhupada, so molding our character in the image of Srila Prabhupada is a mark of spiritual maturity. Oftentimes in order to make us spiritually mature we get tested, we get problems. How we deal with those problems determines whether we are in fact mature. We can see those problems as stumbling blocks or we can see them as stepping stones.

I'll tell you a light story and then a heavy story about Prabhupada dealing with problems. One

time, Prabhupada was on a plane with his secretary and it was in Australia, on Qantas airlines.

Australians tend to be a little rowdy. I can say that because I lived there for five years. They're exuberant, they're boisterous, they're fun, but they these guys had come back from some sort of rugby match. Their team had won, so they were drinking and smoking in the nonsmoking section. The plane was just filled with cigarette smoke. Prabhupada's secretary asked the stewardess, "Could you tell these people not to smoke in the nonsmoking section?", so she went over and told them. They heeded for some time, but then they were a little drunk and they just forgot about it and lit up again. The secretary was sitting next to Prabhupada and was starting to get quite agitated. He was thinking, "Why should my spiritual master inhale this smoke in the nonsmoking section?" He was going to push the button to call the stewardess again and Prabhupada grabbed him and said "What are you doing?" He said, "I want to tell them to stop smoking Prabhupada." Prabhupada said, "If we cannot tolerate better than they can, then how can we be better than they are? If we can't put up with it, how are we any better than they are? Let's just put up with it." That's a small story.

Another time, about 1972, Prabhupada had come to America and he had a few hippie disciples in New York who were just gaga about anything from India. So one day, an aerogram - a single sheet of paper that you fold which reads "Republic of India Aerogramme," came for Prabhupada. When you got one of those, it was really exciting; you know, "From India!" They said, "Prabhupada! An aerogram came from India for you." And Prabhupada just nodded his head and he put it on the desk...and everyone was like, "When's Prabhupada going to....what does it say? Who is it from?" They went out of the room and they were peeking through the keyhole thinking, "When's Prabhupada going to open it?" So Prabhupada - he always had a letter opener - he opened it, he read it, then put it down. Sometime later they came back in the room, and they couldn't wait to ask. They said, "Prabhupada! You got an aerogram from India?" "Yes." And they were hinting, you know, "Oh, was it good news?"

"Yes." "What was the news, Prabhupada?" "My sister died. She was a pure devotee and she went back home, back to Godhead." Now, I can't even say that without choking up, but Prabhupada said it without a hitch. He was completely on the Absolute platform. His sister died, she was a pure devotee, and she was back in the spiritual world. There wasn't even a hitch - "*good* news." Can you imagine that? He loved his sister more than probably any of us love our brothers and sisters, and because he loved her, it was good news that she left her aged body and now was with Krishna in the spiritual world. Prabhupada himself in 1977 lay on his death bed, having been ill for some time. He was just skin and bones. For six months he fasted. For six months he didn't eat anything, just a little charnamrita. One time a devotee came to Prabhupada and asked, "Prabhupada, are you in pain?" Prabhupada just looked at him and he said, "What kind of question is that? No. No." What's the purpose of Krishna Consciousness if you are just going to be writhing in pain? No! He was totally lucid. I was there in Vrindavan the day before he died. He was dictating his purports, Bhaktivedanta purports to the Srimad-Bhagavatam. When you read those purports, they are as lucid and clear as anything he ever wrote within twenty-four hours of his passing. This is spiritual maturity, and why was he giving his life right up until the last breath? So that as many people as possible could go back to the Kingdom of God. So how many people are you going to be responsible for? Prabhupada did that for *us* - what are *we* going to do? Follow in his footsteps for others.

➤ Contribute back.

And that brings us to the fourth point: "contributing back." This is ministry, giving back what we have received. In New York did you know that within two years of retirement half of the men die of boredom? We're not meant for retirement. I had someone just the other day that doesn't really do that much but they asked about the retirement program for devotees. You come and take prasadam, join the kirtan once a week, and then you want to know, "What's ISKCON's retirement program for devotees?" Well,

I've got news for you. If you want to fulfill God's purpose for you, you've got to do more than come and take prasadam and chant. If you want to fulfill God's purpose, you center your life upon the Lord; you connect with the church; and you contribute back. And guess what? There's no retirement. Even Krishna does not retire. In the Bhagavad-gita He says:

utsīdeyur ime lokā
na kuryām karma ced aham
sañkarasya ca kartā syām
upahanyām imāḥ prajāḥ

[BG 3.24]

"Even I work." God doesn't have to work, but "Even I work" He says, "because if I didn't work, I would be setting a bad example and all the worlds would be put to ruination." So we work, but we work in love. We work serving the devotees.

When we were in Australia in the seventies, we used to be out in our dhotis passing out magazines and the Australians - sometimes the Australians would say "Why don't you get a job, mate? Get a job, mate." We told this to Prabhupada. "Prabhupada - they said we should get a job, we should go to work." Prabhupada said, "We are working twenty-four hours a day. We are working more than they are. They could not keep up with us, getting up early in the morning and going to bed late at night. They could not keep up with us. Only difference is, we are not toiling. They are toiling. We are engaged in the labor of love." It's not that we don't have work, but we have work of love.

Once Prabhupada was giving a lecture at Uppsala University which is the Harvard University of Sweden. He was describing to the student body the four Varnas, the four divisions of human society, starting with what he described as the first class man: Brahmin or the intellectual. The second class man: Ksatriya, or the administrator. The third class man: Vaishya, or the mercantilist. The fourth class

man: Sudra, or the craftsman and laborer. So he described this and at the end of the lecture he asked for questions. One student thought he'd trip Prabhupada up and asked, "What class of men are you Swamiji?" The student expected Prabhupada to say, "We are first class men. We are Brahmins." Prabhupada shocked him and everyone in the hall. I have the tape. He said, "We are fifth class men. We're not first, second, third, or fourth - we are fifth class men because we are serving the other four classes." Those who are bound to repeat their stay in this material world and burn in the fires of repeated birth and death, they think of themselves as masters. But we are trying in a different way to be servants of the servant of the servant of the servant of the servant. And in serving our fellow man, we need to see ourselves all as ministers. We all need to see ourselves as ministers. Look at the person next to you and say, "You are a minister. You are a minister." Now if we could get you all tax write-offs that would be nice. You are a minister. You are a minister, because, success doesn't bring significance. Status doesn't bring significance. Sex doesn't bring significance. Salary doesn't bring significance. If you want significance in your life, it comes from service. It comes from giving your life away in order to find it.

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu was an incarnation of Krishna five hundred years ago in the guise of a devotee. One of his associates, Haridas Thakur, who chanted,

Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare
Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare

Haridas Thakur was called Namacharya which means - everyone has a different way of serving. Haridas Thakur's way of serving was just to chant all day long. Just to show that it's so joyful and so blissful, you could do it twenty-four hours a day. He didn't do it twenty-four hours a day, he only did it twenty-three hours a day, but anyway - nobody's perfect, right? He would take a half an hour to sleep and a half an hour to eat. He went to Lord Caitanya while he was quite elderly. He was born a

Muslim, actually, and he became a great devotee. He said, "Lord, I think that you are going to leave off your earthly pastimes soon and go back to the spiritual world. From your recent behavior, I fear that you are going to leave us in this world, and I have one request. Don't go before me. I'm an old man. Let me go before you. Give me this benediction." Lord Caitanya didn't say anything but he just kind of - in India when you bob your head, it means yes. If you're ever in India and you ask someone and they bob their head, it means yes. So Lord Caitanya bobbed his head and said "I'll come back tomorrow." Lord Caitanya came back the next day and had all his associates start chanting. It was a roaring kirtan. Roaring, thunderous kirtan - "Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna...", and Lord Caitanya got very close to Haridas Thakur. He was an old man by then, and Lord Caitanya allowed Haridas Thakur to take His feet. Haridas Thakur grasped Lord Chaitanya's feet and looked up at Lord Caitanya with the intensity that a bee looks into the corolla of a flower for honey. Haridas Thakur held Lord Chaitanya's feet and looked up at His face while he was chanting Hare Krishna, and left his body. He left his body, and it says Lord Caitanya celebrated the passing of Haridas Thakur. He took Haridas Thakur's body and he danced with it and chanted with it. It was on the beach in Puri. You can still go there and visit it; we used to go every day. Lord Caitanya went and dug the hole in the sand and He lovingly placed Haridas Thakur there, covering it with sand. He went to all the shopkeepers said, "We're going to have a grand festival for a great departed devotee! Can you donate something?" The shopkeeper put his dhoti out and everyone started piling things, saying, "Lord Caitanya, let us do this. Let us do this." They got everything and prepared a huge feast. Then Lord Caitanya personally went down on the leaf plate and He served every devotee - not normal portions. It says Lord Caitanya did not believe in taking prasadam in small quantities so he served everyone what at least four or five people could eat. Lord Caitanya served the devotees. This is called giving back and contributing. No

retirement. Krishna said, "If I do not engage in work, certainly all men would follow my path⁴."

Prabhupada did not retire. He was translated. People would ask him, "Prabhupada, what about retirement?" Prabhupada said, "I'll never retire. I am a warrior. I am a warrior. I am a preacher. I will go on saving souls, canvassing until my last breath" - and that's exactly what he did.

➤ Communication

The last thing is communicate. This is called mission. If you have something which is very benedictory for people - if you have that knowledge; if you knew how to cure cancer; if you knew how to cure AIDS and you didn't share it, you would be a big offender. If you know the purposes for which we were put here: to center our lives on God, to connect and to contribute and to cultivate spiritual knowledge, then you would communicate it. We know something much better than a cure for cancer, or a cure for AIDS. We know how you can revive your eternal position in the spiritual world, and we know how you can benedict other living entities in this material world to the highest degree. We know how you can go back home, back to Godhead. If you didn't communicate that, then you would be in default. So who do we communicate this to? Well, everybody. Everybody at our work, in our family, the gym we go to – everybody! I work out at the gym, I wear an OM hat and neck beads. People come up to me all the time and say, "I was at this festival, I was at that festival...", so I talk to them and I invite them to come along to the Sunday feast. I always indicate by some sign who I am and what I stand for so that I offer people the opportunity to come up and have a chat, to remember Krishna, to remember the devotees, and get invited back home back to Godhead. If you're a Krishna devotee and you're following these principles, you'll be of ideal character, so there's no need to hide. There's no need to hide. We want to let people know who we are and what we represent so that we can then communicate the purpose of life to them, and that's called mission. We communicate with our words

⁴ [BG 3.23]

and our life.

We're building our life, not on pleasure or popularity or possessions or passion or position, but we're building our lives on the purposes of God. When the emotional earthquakes, when the physical earthquakes, when the financial earthquakes, when the domestic earthquakes of life come - and they will come, because this world is not perfect; we've got a rock solid foundation. This world is full of faults and imperfections. If you're not in a crisis right now, just wait - you will be. We live our life in crisis or in between crises. It's how we deal with them; it's the panache. If you're living your life according to Krishna's purposes, you're rock solid. You're rock solid. So we're going to conclude with these words; you can say them to yourself or say them out loud:

Lord Krishna, I have to admit that I haven't always used my life the way you intended. I'm sorry. But I know today what you want me to do. I want to change. I want to follow your purposes. I want my life to be centered on you. I want to be connected to other devotees. I want to cultivate spiritual growth. I want to contribute something back and I want to communicate your love. Dear Lord, thank you for this family of devotees, thank you for giving me the life that I have, and thank you for the opportunity to learn your purposes.

Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare
Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare