



The following is an interview with His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, founder-acarya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

Journalist: I think an awful lot of our readers, and an awful lot of people in the United States, are terribly confused with the many people who claim to be gurus and gods and who pop up in this country, one after the other, after the other, and they say that ...

Srila Prabhupada: I can declare that they are all nonsense.

Journalist: I wonder if you could elaborate on that a little bit.

Srila Prabhupada: I can say, furthermore, they're all rascals.

Journalist: For example, the famous one who sells meditation mantras?

Srila Prabhupada: He is rascal number one. I say it publicly.

Journalist: Could you explain, give me a little background on that and why, because our readers ...

Srila Prabhupada: From his behavior I can understand he is rascal number one. I do not want to know about him, but what he has done makes it obvious. But the wonderful thing is that people in the Western countries are supposed to be so advanced how they are befooled by these rascals?

Journalist: Well, I think that people are looking for something, and he comes along ...

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, but they want something very cheap that is their fault. Now, for our disciples, we don't give anything cheap. Our first condition is character moral character. You see? Unless one is strictly following moral principles, we don't initiate him, we don't allow him in this institution. And this so-called guru has been telling people, "Just do whatever you like. You simply pay me thirty-five dollars, and I'll give you a mantra." You see? So people want to be cheated, and so many cheaters come. People do not wish to undergo any discipline. They have got money, so they think, "We shall pay and immediately we'll get whatever we want."

Journalist: Instant heaven.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. That is their foolishness.

Journalist: Let me ask you I have my opinion, but let me ask you Why do you feel that the younger people today are turning more and more toward the Eastern-oriented religions?

Srila Prabhupada: Because your materialistic way of life no longer satisfies them. In America,

especially, you have got enough for enjoyment. You have got enough food, enough women, enough wine, enough houses enough of everything. But still you have confusion and dissatisfaction more in your country than in India, which is said to be poverty-stricken. But you'll find in India that although they are poverty-stricken, they are continuing their old spiritual culture. So the people are not as disturbed. This shows that material advancement alone cannot give one satisfaction. So it is necessary now that people should take to spiritual life. That will make them happy. All these people they are in darkness. There is no hope. They do not know where they are going; they have no aim. But when you are spiritually situated, you know what you are doing and where you are going. Everything is clear.

Journalist: In other words, you feel that the Western-oriented church whether it be a synagogue or a church or whatever has failed to present spiritual life. Would you say that their message is not relevant? Or is it that they have failed to present their message properly?

Srila Prabhupada: Take the Bible. It was spoken long, long ago to primitive people who were living in the desert. These people were not very advanced. So at that time, in the Old Testament, it was sufficient to say, "There is a God, and God created the world." That is a fact. But now people are scientifically advanced, and they want to know in detail how the creation has taken place. You see? And that detailed, scientific explanation is not there in the Bible. And the church can't give any more than that. Therefore people are not satisfied. Simply officially going to the church and offering prayers does not appeal to them.

Besides that, the so-called religious leaders are not following even the most basic religious principles. For instance, in the Old Testament there are the Ten Commandments, and one commandment is "Thou shalt not kill." But killing is very prominent in the Christian world. The, religious leaders are sanctioning slaughterhouses, and they have manufactured a theory that animals have no soul. "Give the dog a bad name and hang it."

So when we ask, "Why are you committing this sinful act of killing?" the priests refuse to discuss the matter. Everyone is silent. That means they are deliberately disobeying the Ten Commandments. So where are the religious principles? It is plainly stated, "Thou shalt not kill." Why are they killing? How do you answer?

Journalist: Are you asking me?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes.

Journalist: Well, "Thou shalt not kill" is obviously an ethic ... and it's timeless, and it's valid. But man is not really interested...

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, that's right. They are not really interested in religion. It is simply show-bottle. If you do not follow the regulative principles, then where is your religion?

Journalist: I'm not arguing with you. I couldn't agree with you more. I'm in total agreement. It doesn't make any sense. "Thou shalt not kill." "Thou shalt worship no other gods before Me." "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods." "Thou shalt honor thy father and thy mother."... Those are beautiful

Srila Prabhupada: "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife" but who is following this?

Journalist: Very few.

Srila Prabhupada: So how can they say they're religious? And without religion, human society is animal society.

Journalist: All right, but let me ask you this. How does your interpretation differ from the basic Judeo-Christian ethic of the Ten Commandments?

Srila Prabhupada: There is no difference. But as I have told you, none of them are strictly following the Ten Commandments. So I simply say, "Please follow God's commandments." That is my message.

Journalist: In other words, you're asking them to obey those principles.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. I don't say that Christians should become Hindu. I simply say, "Please obey your Commandments." I'll make you a better Christian. That is my mission. I don't say, "God is not in your tradition God is only here in ours." I simply say, "Obey God." I don't say, "You have to accept that God's name is Krsna and no other." No. I say, "Please obey God. Please try to love God."

Journalist: Let me put it this way. If your mission and the mission of the Western Judeo-Christian ethic are the same, again let me ask, Why is it that the younger people, or people in general, are disenchanted, are trying to go toward the Eastern-oriented religions? Why are they going toward the Eastern if both are the same?

Srila Prabhupada: Because Judaism and Christianity are not teaching them practically. I am teaching them practically.

Journalist: In other words, you're teaching them what you feel is a practical, everyday method for attaining this fulfillment of man's spirit.

Srila Prabhupada: Love of Godhead is being taught both in the Bible and in the Bhagavad-gita. But today's religionists are not actually teaching how to love God. I am teaching people how to love God that is the difference. Therefore, young people are attracted.

Journalist: All right. So the end is the same, but it's the method of getting there that's different?

Srila Prabhupada: No the end is the same and the method is also the same. But these so-called religious leaders are not teaching people to follow the method. I am teaching them practically how to follow it.

Journalist: Let me ask you something that we've run into a great deal just recently. The biggest problem holding men and women back from love of God and following the Ten

Commandments is the problem how should I put it? well, the sexual problem. Now I'm stating something that's obvious. We've all gone through this.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, everyone.

Journalist: And there is nothing in Western culture or religion that teaches or helps a young person to cope with this difficult problem. I went through it. We all have. Now do you, in your message, give the young people something to hang on to? And if so, what?

Srila Prabhupada: I ask my disciples to get married. I don't allow this nonsense of boys living with girl friends. No. "You must get yourself married and live like a gentleman."

Journalist: Well, let me get a little more basic. How about when one is fourteen-fifteen- sixteen years old?

Srila Prabhupada: One thing is that we teach our boys how to become brahmacari how to live the life of celibacy, how to control their senses. In Vedic culture, marriage generally doesn't take place until the boy is about twenty-four or twenty-five and the girl is about sixteen or seventeen. And because they are experiencing the spiritual pleasure of Krsna consciousness, they are not simply interested in sex life. So we don't say, "Don't mix with women," or, "Stop sex life." But we regulate everything under the higher principle of Krsna consciousness. In this way everything goes nicely.

Journalist: So your disciples don't just bite their tongue or their lip and say, "I won't touch her (or him)." There is a substitute?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, a higher taste. That is Krsna consciousness. And it is working: I'm already teaching Western men and women how to control their sexual impulse. My disciples that you see here are all Americans. They are not imported from India.

Journalist: One thing I want to know is what you think about people like this famous mantra-selling guru, who turned me off and so many other people. My daughter was very involved in that kind of thing for awhile. She's terribly disillusioned.

Srila Prabhupada: The psychology is that the Western people, especially youngsters, are hankering after spiritual life. Now, if somebody comes to me and says, "Svamiji, initiate me," I immediately say, "You have to follow these four principles no meat-eating, no gambling, no intoxication, and no illicit sex." Many go away. But this mantra seller he did not put any restrictions. That's just like a physician who says, "You can do whatever you like; you simply take my medicine and you'll be cured." That physician will be very popular.

Journalist: Yes. He'll kill a lot of people, but he'll be very well liked.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes. [Laughs.] And a real physician says, "You cannot do this. You cannot do that. You cannot eat this." This is a botheration for people.

They want something very cheap. Therefore the cheaters come and cheat them. They take the opportunity because people want to be cheated.

"Oh, let us take advantage!" You see? So the rascals advise people, "You are God everyone is God. You just have to realize yourself you have simply forgotten. You take this mantra, and you'll become God. You'll become powerful. There is no need to control the senses. You can drink. You can have unrestricted sex life and whatever you like."

People like this. "Oh, simply by fifteen minutes meditation I shall become God, and I have to pay only thirty-five dollars." Many millions of people will be ready to do it. For Americans, thirty-five dollars is not very much. But multiplied by a million, it becomes thirty-five million dollars. [Laughs.]

We cannot bluff like that. We say that if you actually want spiritual life, you have to follow the restrictions. The commandment is, "You shall not kill." So I shall not say, "Yes, you can kill the animal has no feeling, the animal has no soul." We cannot bluff in this way, you see.

Journalist: This kind of thing has disenchanted an awful lot of young people.

Srila Prabhupada: So please try to help us. This movement is very nice. It will help your country. It will help the whole human society. It is a genuine movement. We are not bluffing or cheating. It is authorized.

Journalist: Authorized by whom?

Srila Prabhupada: Authorized by Krsna, God. In India this Krsna consciousness philosophy has millions and millions of followers eighty percent of the population. If you ask any Indian he will be able to tell you so many things about Krsna consciousness.

Journalist: Do you really think, from a very practical standpoint, that your movement has a chance to make it here in America?

Srila Prabhupada: From what I've seen it has a great chance. We don't say, "Give up your religion and come to us." We say, "At least follow your own principles. And then if you want to, study with us." Sometimes it happens that although students have received their M.A. degree, they go to foreign universities to study more. Why does it happen? They want more enlightenment. Similarly, any religious scripture you may follow will give you enlightenment. But if you find more in this Krsna consciousness movement, then why should you not accept it? If you are serious about God, why should you say, "Oh, I am Christian," "I am Jewish," "I cannot attend your meeting"? Why should you say, "Oh, I cannot allow you to speak in my church"? If I am speaking about God, what objection can you have?

Journalist: Well, I couldn't agree with you more.

Srila Prabhupada: I am prepared to talk with any God conscious man. Let us chalk out a program so that people may be benefited. But they want to go on in their stereotyped way. If we see that by following a particular type of religious principle one is developing love of God, that is

first-class religion. But if one is merely developing his love for mammon, then what kind of religion is that?

Journalist: Right you are.

Srila Prabhupada: That is our test you have to develop love for God. We don't say that you must follow Christianity, or Muhammadanism, or Judaism, or Hinduism. We simply look to see whether you are developing your love of Godhead. But they say, "Who is God? I am God." You see? Everyone is taught nowadays that everyone is God.

Journalist: Have you seen pictures of a smiling man with a mustache and a pushed-in nose? Before he died, he said he was God.

Srila Prabhupada: He was God? He was another rascal. Just see this is going on. He was making propaganda that he was God. That means that people do not know what God is. Suppose I come to you and say that I am the President of the United States. Will you accept me?

Journalist: [Laughs.] No, I don't think I would.

Srila Prabhupada: These rascals! The people are accepting them as God because they do not know what God is that is the problem.

Journalist: It's just absolutely absurd that somebody comes along and tells you he's God.

Srila Prabhupada: But whoever accepts him as God is just as much a rascal. The man who says he's God he's rascal number one. He's a cheater. And the man who is cheated he's also a rascal. He does not know what God is. He thinks that God is so cheap that you can find Him in the marketplace.

Journalist: Of course, the Western concept is that man is created in the image of God. Consequently, God must look somewhat like man.

Srila Prabhupada: You have got so many scientists. So just find out what the actual image of God is, what His form is really like. Where is that department? You have got so many departments research department, technology department. But where is that department that researches what God is? Is there any such department of knowledge?

Journalist: There's no God department working tonight I'll tell you that right now.

Srila Prabhupada: That is the difficulty. But the Krsna consciousness movement is the department of how to know God. If you study with us, then you'll not accept any rascal as God. You'll accept only God as God. We are teaching about another nature beyond this material nature. This material nature is coming into existence and again dissolving, but God and His spiritual nature are eternal. We living entities are also eternal without any end or any beginning. This Krsna consciousness movement is teaching how we can transfer ourselves to that eternal, spiritual nature where God is residing.

Journalist: That's man's quest.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, that is the quest. Everyone is trying to be happy, because that is the living entity's prerogative. He is meant by nature to be happy, but he does not know where he can be happy. He is trying to be happy in a place where there are four miserable conditions namely birth, old age, disease, and death. The scientists are trying to be happy and make other people happy. But what scientist has stopped old age, disease, death, and rebirth? Has any scientist succeeded?

Journalist: I don't think so.

Srila Prabhupada: So what is this? Why do they not consider, "We have made so much

improvement, but what improvement have we made in these four areas?" They have not made any. And still they are very much proud of their advancement in education and technology. But the four primary miseries remain as they are. You see?

The scientists may have made advancements in medicine, but' is there any remedy that can allow us to claim, "Now there is no more disease"? Is there any such remedy? No. So then what is the scientists' advancement? Rather, disease is increasing in so many new forms.

They have invented nuclear weapons. What good is that? Simply for killing. Have they invented something so that no more men will die? That would be to their credit. But people are dying at every moment, and the scientists have simply invented something to accelerate their death. That is all. Is that to their credit? So there is still no solution to death.

And they are trying to stop overpopulation. But where is their solution? Every minute the population is increasing by three persons. These are the statistics.

So there is no solution for birth. There is no solution for death. There is no solution for disease. And there is no solution for old age. Even a great scientist like Professor Einstein had to undergo old age and death. Why could he not stop old age? Everyone is trying to remain youthful, but what is the process? The scientists do not care to solve this problem because it is beyond their means.

They are giving some kind of bluff, that's all. But Krsna consciousness is the solution, and the whole thing is described in Bhagavad-gita. Let them try to understand it. At least let them make an experiment.

