Godhead is light. Nescience is darkness. Where there is Godhead there is no nescience.

BACK TO GODHEAD

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Every Town and Village

A look at the worldwide activities of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

ISKCON Scientists Disclose Life's Origin

In mid-October, as the world's attention turned to the 1977 Nobel Prize science awards in Stockholm, a group of scientists met in the holy town of Vṛndāvana, India, to begin changing the direction of modern scientific research. The First International "Life Comes From Life" Conference, sponsored by ISKCON's Bhaktivedanta Institute, drew government and academic scientists from around the world. Also present was His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the founder-*ācārya* of both ISKCON and the Institute.

Meanwhile, in Stockholm, Russian-born Ilya Prigogine was receiving an award for his thermodynamic mathematical models, which other scientists have tried to use in their as yet fruitless attempts to prove that life comes from chemical combinations. (Despite Prigogine's models, no scientist has ever observed life coming from chemical combinations, either in nature or in the laboratory. Nevertheless, Prigogine received $145,000 for his work.) On the other hand, the Bhaktivedanta Institute members at the "Life Comes From Life" Conference in Vṛndāvana conclusively proved that life can't possibly come from chemicals and that—as we see daily—life comes from life.

The members of the Bhaktivedanta Institute describe themselves as "a body of scientists and scholars who have recognized the unique value of the teachings of Kṛṣṇa consciousness brought to the West by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda." "One reason for the increasing interest of modern intellectuals in Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings," they explain, "is doubtlessly the growing awareness that despite great scientific and technological advancement, the real goal of human life has somehow been missed. The philosophy of the Bhaktivedanta Institute provides a meaningful answer to this concern by proposing that life—not matter—is the basis of the world we perceive." The members add, "The Institute is clearly demonstrating that the Vedic philosophy is not a matter simply of 'faith' or 'belief' but is scientific in the strict sense of the term."



Speakers at the "Life Comes From Life" Conference: (foreground) Dr. Thoudam Damodar Singh and Dr. Michael Marchetti; (rear) D. J. Webb, Robert S. Cohen, and Dr. Richard Thompson.

The "Life Comes From Life" Conference took place in the pleasant surroundings of ISKCON's modern Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma temple complex, with its blend of traditional Indian architecture and Western conveniences. Guests stayed at the temple's International Guest House and dined on delicious vegetarian fare from the guest house restaurant, all free of charge. Mild sunshine during the day and cool breezes at night made for a serene atmosphere.

The main speakers at the conference were Dr. Thoudam Damodar Singh (Svarūpa Dāmodara dāsa) and Dr. Richard Thompson (Sadāpūta dāsa), both of the Bhaktivedanta Institute. Dr. Singh, the Institute's director, was born in Manipur, India, in 1941 and became a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda in 1970. He has written a book entitled *The Scientific Basis of Kṛṣṇa Consciousness* and holds a Ph.D. in physical organic chemistry from the University of California.

To support the conclusion that life comes from life, Dr. Singh presented his findings in the field of molecular biology. Modern science is based on quantum mechanics, which reduces physical phenomena to pushes and pulls among certain particles. Having made these assumptions, scientists go on to say that life and life symptoms result from complex combinations of molecules. But Dr. Singh showed clearly that such theories do not adequately explain the varied phenomena of life (including thought, emotions, and will). Life is based on consciousness, he proposed, and this consciousness obeys higher-order non-physical laws imposed by the supreme consciousness described in the *Vedas*.

Born in 1947 in Binghamton, New York, Dr. Thompson received his Ph.D. in probability theory from Cornell University in 1974. In 1975 he became an initiated disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda. At the conference he delivered a well-received address called "Demonstration by Information Theory that Life Cannot Arise from Matter." A fundamental proposition of information theory states that the information content of a closed mathematical system cannot increase. Now, modern science describes physical nature in terms of mathematical models of low information content, and yet the physical structures of living organisms are so complex that they indicate a very high information content. So, according to information theory, it is impossible to suppose that life's high-information structures can arise from physical nature's low-information structures. On this basis Dr. Thompson discredited the now widely accepted theory that life forms do in fact evolve spontaneously from the ingredients of physical nature. Such evolution requires an outside source of information—namely, the supremely conscious controller of matter described in the *Vedas*.

Among other Bhaktivedanta Institute members who spoke was Dr. Michael Marchetti (Mādhava dāsa), who lectured on the philosophical foundations of science. Geologist Robert S. Cohen (Brahmatīrtha dāsa) demonstrated that fossil records actually give little support to Darwin's theory of evolution. Finally, Oxford's D.J. Webb (Jñāna dāsa) demonstrated how the laws of thermodynamics contradict current theories of chemical evolution.

At the end of the Vṛndāvana conference Dr. Singh announced that similar conferences will take place soon in Europe and North America. For further information about the Bhaktivedanta Institute, readers may write to 70 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, Massachusetts 02116, or Hare Kṛṣṇa Land, Gandhi Gram Road, Juhu, Bombay 400 054, India.