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COMING TO KRISHNA

The Pre-Active Nature of Conversion to a Fringe Religion.

by

Mark Steven Davies

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research through the Department of Sociology and Anthropology in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts at the University of Windsor.

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

1987
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ABSTRACT

Traditionally, conversion to a fringe religious group (such as the Krishna Consciousness movement) has been conceived of as a result of personal deprivations and psychopathology, role learning and acquisition, group dynamics, or coercive persuasion ("brainwashing"). Such models tend, however, to provide a rather simplistic notion of human motivation and action, and portray religious converts as passive victims of circumstance rather than as active volitional agents. This study attempts to deal with this bias in the area of religious conversion research.

Using Kenneth Burke's idea of dramatism, a more sophisticated framework for understanding human motivation is developed. Based on the notion that symbols are an integral part of human experience, and that such symbols are inherently rhetorical, the symbolic realm is proposed as a motivational structure for action.

After a brief introduction to the history and philosophy of Krishna Consciousness, as well as its relevance to modern Western society, a generic 'ideal-type' model of conversion is presented. Proceeding from this eight case-studies of conversion to the Hare Krishna movement are presented to illustrate how Burke's notion of the dramatistic pentad (the idea that any situation must be understood in terms of the symbolic interplay between the nature of the act, the agent, the agency, the scene, and the purpose) can be used as a sociological tool in the understanding of human action in general, and religious conversion in particular.

Finally, it is suggested that such a way of conceiving of human action and conversion is more appropriate than the traditional 'passivist' models in that it portrays human beings as volitional agents responsible for their own choices and behaviour.
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"Consider the case of a popular, slightly spoiled young man from an upper-middle-class family. In adolescence the young man becomes well known in his community for his fashionable, flashy clothes and his enthusiasm for partying with his friends. But as he grows a little older, he comes under the influence of religion. He gives up partying, for he takes his religious beliefs very seriously. Indeed, he takes them so seriously that he becomes intensely dissatisfied with the materialism around him and starts giving away his possessions. He even gives a religious group a large sum of his father's money. His father tries to deal with these disturbing developments by confining the boy to the house, hoping to bring him to his senses. When this fails, the angry and exasperated father subjects his son to severe physical punishment, but again without effect.

Finally, the father brings his son into court to recover the money. When the young man is ordered to return his father's money, he does so. But in protest, he also gives back everything else that his parents have given him, including the clothes he is wearing. He then walks out of the court and through the streets naked. Later, the young man becomes part of a religious sect whose members support themselves by begging, and he never returns to life in normal society.

Would you say that for this young man religion encouraged mental health or sickness? You may find it hard to say. An answer would, perhaps, be easier if you were told that the religion by which he was influenced was the Hare Krishnas or the Unification Church of the Reverend Sun Myung Moon. But this would not be true. The religion was Catholicism, and the young man was a well-known Catholic saint. The description is of the early life of Saint Francis of Assisi (1182-1226)." (Batson and Ventis, 1982:211-212).
Chapter 1

Models of Conversion and the Activist Paradigm

INTRODUCTION

The Hare Krishna movement, officially known as the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), is undeniably one of the more colourful and exotic new religions to have emerged in North America in recent times. Devotees are unmistakably identifiable in their orange robes, shaven heads and tilaka (lines of white clay on the forehead and body), as well as by their public chanting and dancing. Such sights generally amuse, confuse or even alienate most members of the general public.

Krishna Consciousness is a form of devotional Hinduism known in its native India as Gaudiya Vaishnavism. It was founded in the fifteenth century by a Bengali saint named Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and is based on the principle of bhakti, or personal devotion to the god Krishna. This tradition of devotion was brought to North America in 1965 by A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada where it has come to be known as Krishna Consciousness, or more commonly, Hare Krishna.

Life as a devotee of Krishna is very austere and is
completely structured around devotion to God. A primary part of this devotional service is the chanting of the names of God (the familiar 'Hare Krishna, Hare Rama' mantra), studying Hindu holy books (Bhagavad Gita and Srimad Bhagavatam), and living in accordance with the four regulative principles of Vaishnava life (no intoxicants, no gambling, no meat eating, and no sex outside of marriage). A more detailed description of the beliefs, practices, and lifestyle of Krishna devotees will be given in the next chapter (or see Daner (1976), Judah (1974), or Knott (1986)).

Given the rather foreign nature of the lifestyle and beliefs of the Hare Krishna people and in light of the present controversy over the so-called 'cults', 'deprogramming', and civil and religious liberty, it would be interesting to know exactly why and how people come to be involved with such a fringe religious group. Have they indeed been 'brainwashed', as popular opinion would have us believe—psychologically (and even physically) kidnapped and coerced into a lifestyle of exploitation? Or could it be that they are simply people who were looking for a way to change their lives so that they become more fulfilling? Such questions have been explored by a number of researchers in an attempt to explain the phenomenon of religious conversion and participation in fringe religious groups—
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Past research in the area of conversion to new religious movements has typically taken one of three approaches to the phenomenon: the 'deprivation' model, the 'interactive' model, or the 'role theory' model. A fourth model, the 'coercive persuasion' or 'brainwashing' model, is a popular one as well, but is more often used by the general public than by social scientists. Each of the models will be reviewed in turn.

Deprivation Model

The deprivation model of conversion emphasizes the deprivations and deficiencies an individual suffers as conditions conducive to joining a fringe religious group. It supposes that prospective converts are predisposed by various social, economic, and psychopathological problems to seek refuge in a 'cult' environment. Thus, feelings of deprivation (whether actual or relative), and subjective stress, leave the individual prone to participation in groups that function to reduce this stress and satisfy needs not met by or in the previous environment. Various sociological studies have proposed such predisposing problems as neurotic stress, feelings of anomie or powerlessness, sexual inadequacy, alienation, deficiencies in social status, and distresses resulting from rapid social change (see Shupe,
The deprivation model has been criticized for its obviously reductionistic approach. It reduces fringe religious movements to mere "gaggles of borderline personalities and psychological losers" (Shupe, 1981:118), and ignores a variety of studies which show that there is little or no evidence of pre-conversion deprivation in converts to new religions.

Interactive Model

The interactive model is a product of Lofland and Stark's 1965 study of conversion to what is now known to be Reverend Moon's Unification Church (the "Moonies"). This model agrees that deprivations are indeed important in the process of conversion, but that they are not sufficient in themselves to precipitate such a change. According to this view, the social factors associated with the fringe group must interact with the personal deficiencies of the individual to effect a conversion. Thus, this model takes into account both the 'predisposing' psychological factors (such as subjective feelings of deprivation or deficiency and a tendency to view problems in religious terms), and 'situational' contingencies, which include such things as the development of group-affective bonds and deterioration of previous family and social relationships.

Although this model is more extensive than the previous
one in that it considers the phenomenon of conversion from the viewpoint of an interaction of causal forces, it has been criticized for being too deterministic and placing too much emphasis on individual deficiencies. Lofland (1977) himself criticized his own model saying that it gives the "impression that converts are, in reductionist fashion, passive victims of their own personal problems and the forces of group dynamics" (Shupe, 1981:144).

Role Theory Model

The role theory approach represents an organizational rather than psychological view of conversion in that it is based on the ideas of status (one's position in an organization), and role (behavior appropriate to that position or status). Conversion is seen as a socialization process in which individuals move into successive statuses in the organizational structure of the movement and proceed to learn the accompanying roles (i.e. appropriate behaviors). Adoption of these roles requires progressively greater participation, commitment, and lifestyle change.

The role theory model also has its critics who believe that it does not consider actual intellectual commitment to the beliefs of the group or the initial motivation for involvement with the group.
Coercive Persuasion (Brainwashing) Model

Lofland and Stark's interaction model may be the most popular among sociologists, but the so-called 'brainwashing' model is probably the most well known and best accepted by the general public. This model embodies the idea that fringe group leaders utilize psychological mind-control techniques to manipulate unsuspecting victims and implant new thoughts and beliefs in their minds. It assumes a breakdown of an individual's 'free will' such that one is left helpless and powerless to resist. Converts must then be 'rescued' and 'deprogrammed' to be released from the hypnotic spell of the group. Although groups which use techniques that may be termed 'mind-control' may indeed exist, the coercive persuasion model has become an indiscriminately applied and overly-used means of explaining (or explaining away) participation in any new or unusual group that may arise. It has become the battle-cry of the 'deprogrammers' who lump all fringe religious movements into a single category of 'cult', regardless of differences that may exist between such groups and without concern for understanding their beliefs and practices. Shupe (1981:133) points out that "From a critical standpoint, much of the so-called evidence for brainwashing is hearsay and ethnographic misinterpretations." He also believes that deprogramming is merely a "raw exercise of power by the family to restore authority over an errant member."
STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In addition to the unique inadequacies of the four previously mentioned models, there is a more general overarching problem in the field of conversion research. Conventional approaches to the study of fringe religious movements are all based on a 'passivist' conception of humans, viewing converts as victims of personal crises, coercive persuasion, rôle socialization, devious recruitment tactics, group dynamics and the like. The convert is seen as being acted upon by, rather than acting upon, his or her environment, and is hence a victim of circumstance. Recently, however, this passivist paradigm has come to be recognized as a bias in the field of conversion research: one that needs to be overcome if social science is to fully understand the phenomenon of conversion.

In his retrospective review of his own work Lofland (1977:817) criticizes his interactive model as being too passivist. He states: "I have since come to appreciate that the world-saver [i.e. interactionist] model embodies a thoroughly 'passive' actor—a conception of humans as a 'neutral medium through which social forces operate'..." In light of this criticism Lofland encourages researchers of conversion to "turn the process on its head and to scrutinize how people go about converting themselves." Such an idea
assumes an 'activist' rather than the 'passivist' model popularly accepted: one that views the human being as an active, creative being. From the viewpoint of such a paradigm, then, conversion could be seen as "the result of a very positive and conscious search by a person clearly exercising volition" (Richardson, 1980:50).

Such an activist paradigm has been proposed by Roger Straus (1976, 1979). He begins by criticizing the passivist approach as follows:

Sociologists have conventionally approached religious conversion as something that happens to a person who is destabilized by external or internal forces and then brought to commit the self to a conversionist group by social-interactive pressures applies by the 'trip' (as I will denote 'sects', 'cults', and other religious or quasi-religious collectivities) and its agents.

He then continues, by describing the basis for an activist paradigm:

This stands in contrast to an alternative paradigm of the individual seeker striving and strategizing to achieve meaningful change in his or her life experience, and which treats the groups and others involved in this process as salesmen, shills, coaches, guides and
helpers—their own personal quests (Straus, 1979:153).

This activist view then places the responsibility for conversion with the acting, volitional individual as one who willingly seeks out and pursues various means by which one can creatively transform one’s life.

**An Activist Analysis of Conversion**

Working from the viewpoint that individuals actively construct their actions and creatively exploit their social worlds, Straus (1979) proceeded to research various ‘trips’ and the people involved in them. The result was the construction of an activist model of conversion which is based on individuals’ creative and volitional use of a variety of strategies to effect a desired transformation in their lives.

For whatever reason, it may occur that an individual becomes dissatisfied with his or her life causing him or her to seek a change in it. The individual then begins to employ a series of strategies designed to discover possible means of meaningfully transforming one’s life. This phase is referred to as ‘creative bumbling’. Once these opportunities for change are uncovered, the individual proceeds to instrumentally exploit them in order to effect a transformation to a more satisfying life. This phase is
termed 'creative exploitation'. (See Appendix A for a more detailed version of Straus' activist model).

Based on this analysis of conversion Straus (1976:269) concluded that successful transition to a new 'trip' or religious movement "invariably exhibits this pattern of activism". He goes on to say that:

...there is no evidence for the oft-encountered presumption that some 'them'--some differentiated con-artist elite--preys upon gullible or malintegrated 'followers'. There are only seekers at different stages of their life changing career trajectories, who, engaged in a joint enterprise, generate the group.

Thus, conversion is seen as the result of a creative seeking and realization of a life change. Furthermore, the coercive and exploitive image of the 'cult' is exploded and redefined by the activist/paradigm.

PURPOSE OF THE PRESENT STUDY

The activist paradigm represents a valuable new approach to the study of the process of conversion to fringe religious groups and promises to give fresh insight into such groups and their participants. However, even with its new activist focus Straus' model falls short in that it fails to account
for the initial motivation that leads the individual to search out and attempt a life-change. He simply bases his model on the notion that "when normal resources and strategies cease to maintain an individual's sense that his life is tolerable, he may act to change it" (Straus, 1976:252). Thus, although this model provides and activist explanation of how people volitionally act to change their lives (and, in effect, convert themselves), it fails to adequately explain why such people feel the need to effect such a change. In short, Straus merely presupposes an unspecified dissatisfaction with the status quo without investigating from whence this dissatisfaction arises or why it leads to the search for an alternate life experience. Thus, although he provides and activist approach to the how of conversion, he fails to explain the why. It is necessary, then, to delineate an adequate explanation of the motivational aspect of conversion from the perspective of an activist paradigm which might supplement the procedural aspect of the phenomenon as outlined by Straus. It is, therefore, the purpose of the present study to attempt to outline just such an activist understanding of the motivational dynamics of conversion, applying it to the fringe religious group known as the Hare Krishna movement.

Preliminary research suggests that the applicability of conventional models of conversion is questionable in regard to the Hare Krishna movement and that the exploration of conversion and its associated motivations from the
perspective of the activist paradigm might provide valuable
insight and help delineate the parameters of this phenomenon.
Chapter 2

Western Society, Krishna Consciousness, and an Ideal-Typology of Conversion.

Before moving on to an examination of the nature of religious motivation in conversion to a fringe religious group we will pause briefly to discuss the nature of the social context in which such phenomena occur, as well as the philosophical and historical background of the Krishna Consciousness movement.

A. THE 'SPIRIT' OF WESTERN SOCIETY.

In order to better understand the emergence of new religious movements in modern times, it would be best to examine briefly the nature of modern Western society as the context in which such groups arise and have their being. Drawing on the insights of both Klapp (1969) and Ellwood (1973), it will be argued that modern North American society is a fertile medium conducive to the genesis of new religious groups; and that such groups, far from being social oddities, are, in fact, deeply rooted in the nature of Western thought and the North American social system.
In his book *Collective Search for Identity*, Orrin Klapp (1969) argues that new religious movements are actually "cultic responses" to a problem of meaning that plagues modern North American Society. He centers his argument around the notion that personal identity is based on, or rather in, symbols. Identity is a "meaning attached to a person or which [a person] is able to attach to himself", and it is through symbolization that individuals are provided with this sense of belonging to the world. More specifically, Klapp (1969:ix) says that people achieve an identity when they have:

...a socially confirmed concept of self (adequate ego symbolization); fullness of sentiments, including mystiques; and centering or devotion, so that a person's life is focused on a point where [the individual] recognizes some highest value (sumnum bonum—perhaps a supreme "kick"). Then life has meaning—and [the individual] has identity.

Furthermore, says Klapp (1969:vii), it is within society that these meaning-confering symbols are to be found. Ideally, societies provide relatively "reliable reference points in such things as status symbols, place symbols, style models, cultic values, mystiques, by which people can locate themselves socially, realize themselves sentimentally, and declare (to self and others), who they are."
However, modern North American society, while relatively rich in terms of material wealth and economic property, suffers from a poverty of identity-conferring symbols. Modern science, advancing technology, increasing urbanism, secularization, and rationalism, as well as a host of other 'modern' trends have effectively disrupted many of the non-discursive symbols which have traditionally formed the basis of identity and meaning formation in our society. Furthermore, such modernistic forces have not replaced (and, in fact, are not able to replace) these disrupted symbolizations with new, equally effective ones. The result is a disturbance in the society's symbolic balance. North American society is, therefore, characterized by a symbolic vacuum, and is, in effect, "cheating" individuals of the symbolic anchors around which they must fashion a sense of self. In such a state, people must then discover for themselves new symbolizations around which they can fashion a personal identity and achieve meaning in life. This, Klapp believes, leads to a collective search for identity in North America, a phenomenon he calls groping.

...a collective identity search is symptomatic of the fact that some modern social systems deprive people of psychological "payoffs", the lack of which, expressed by terms such as alienation, meaninglessness, or identity problems, motivates a mass groping for activities and symbols with which to restore or find a
new identity (Klapp, 1969:vii).

Such "groping" then can be seen as attempts to deal with the symbolic imbalance in society, and can take a number of forms. The collective search for identity is manifested in such phenomena as fads and fashions, social crusades, ritualism, romanticism, militancy, celebrity cults, and hero worship, to name just a few. Cultic movements, such as the new religions, are another manifestation of this collective search for identity and meaning. As Klapp (1969:145) so eloquently states:

[A human] is a meaning-seeking animal; and, many, if not most, [humans] are not content with "facts" in the positivistic sense of information which does not answer questions such as why [humankind] is here or what attitude to take toward existence. At the borders of such facts is a world which is felt not to be only unknown, but mysterious. A mystique supplies [individuals] with an orientation toward this mystery and represents in symbol and allegory what it is like. Ritual...is the symbolic means for referring to such values that cannot be achieved by rational techniques or stated in discursive language. The function of a cult is to state mystique and relate [people] to it by ritual; this I call the cultic response.
Thus, new religious movements, as examples of cultic response, are attempts to escape the meaninglessness and banality of life in a society devoid of non-discursive symbolism by creating a mystique which transcends it. And, by relating themselves to this mystique through ritual individuals are able to re-establish identity and meaning.

We can, therefore, understand modern fringe religious groups to be a response to the fact that North American society fails to provide a singular, stable, or deep-seated support for personal identity. Furthermore, "from this standpoint, individual pursuits, such as philosophy and theology, and collective ones such as fashion, recreation, religion, and mass movements, are all streams of the same river. They are a part of a search for identity going on all the time—not only among disappointed and alienated people, but among many [people] who feel meaningless" (Klapp, 1969:40).

Another notion which must be kept in mind when assessing the nature of modern Western society and the rise of new religious movements is the contribution of what Robert Ellwood (1973) refers to as the alternative reality tradition within the history of Western thought. Modern fringe religions don't suddenly appear from nowhere, says Ellwood, but are manifestations of a mode of thought which has been an undercurrent in Western thought for centuries.

Western spiritual thinking can be thought of as being
divided into two camps.

On the one hand there was, both among the ancient Hebrews and the Greeks of the Homeric era, an assumption that men or tribes are each separate entities living and acting in the stream of world history and dominant over nature (Ellwood, 1973:42).

This notion, basically of the mundane or 'profane' nature of the earthly world, has become the dominant tradition in Western thought, and is the basis of our 'rationalistic' thinking and modern science. However, there is also another tradition of thought, a result of early contact with Indian and Asian cultures, which has existed simultaneously throughout history as an undercurrent to the dominant mode of thinking. Ellwood (1973:43) calls this the alternative reality tradition; a way of thinking about the world which rejects the ideas of the dominant mode of thought in favour of an alternative view and experience of reality.

Grounded in Platonic wonder and amazement at Being itself, it sees the soul as separate from the body, and [the human being] as a part of nature in a monistic cosmos. A [person's] task is to attain to individual initiatory expansions of consciousness and awareness until he [or she] becomes mentally one with the whole
cosmos. It is out of this stream that the world view of modern cults comes.

Ellwood believes this alternative reality tradition can be traced throughout history from the Hellenistic period in Greece to modern North American society, at times percolating to the surface and becoming manifest. The Neoplatonism and Gnosticism of the Hellenistic era represent manifestations of this tradition, as do the witchcraft, alchemy and Kabbalistic occultism of the Middle Ages. However, whereas in the Hellenistic era such manifestations were results of a more cosmopolitan and eclectic atmosphere, in the Middle Ages they were more in the nature of a dissent to the repressive medieval order of the dominant Christian culture. During the Renaissance, however, the alternative reality tradition once again flourished in Europe as a reaction against the Medieval system, and astrology and other occult 'sciences' once again became popular.

This tradition of an alternative experience of reality was imported from Europe to North America in the eighteenth century in the form of Freemasonry and Swedenborgianism; the two of which became the spiritual predecessors of the Theosophy and Spiritualism that became popular in nineteenth century America.

Thus, when Eastern-type religions began landing on the shores of North America in the end of the nineteenth century they found fertile ground, the alternative reality tradition
having been firmly established in the West.

Hinduism, in particular, came to America in three waves. The earliest wave brought the philosophic side of Hinduism in the form of Vedanta. This system of radical monism (non-dualism) was introduced in 1893 by Swami Vivekananda, a disciple of the great Hindu saint, Ramakrishna. This philosophical brand of the ancient religion of India attracted mainly the upper-middle class intellectuals of American society. As with other alternative reality groups that arose prior to the first World War (such as Theosophy, Spiritualism, and New Thought), Vedanta tended to be syncretistic and emphasized continuity with the dominant Protestant culture. It therefore abandoned the more exotic Hindu practices in favour of imitating liberal Protestantism's emphasis on the intellect and use of discussions, lectures and books.

The next great wave of Hindu tradition to hit the West occurred in the inter-war period, and introduced the practices of yoga, "as if to supply means for attaining concretely the promises of Vedanta" (Ellwood, 1973:219). Paramahansa Yogananda, founder of the Self Realization Fellowship, is probably the most notable figure of this yogic 'second wave' of Hinduism. As with other new alternative reality groups that emerged during the inter-war period, this 'second-wave' yogic Hinduism represented an attempt to move from the realm of the intellectual (emphasized in the first wave) into the more experiential. Thus the emphasis of
second-wave groups shifted from the deferred realization available from an intellectual understanding of philosophy to the more practical realizations available through yoga techniques and devotion to a spiritual master.

The final wave of Hinduism arrived in the West after World War II in the form of devotional Hinduism (i.e. Krishna Consciousness). Whereas earlier forms of Eastern thought attempted to stress their continuity with American culture and emulated mainline religious groups, post World War II groups, such as Krishna Consciousness, entered America in their original, unadulterated forms. They seemed to be "faiths which almost rejoice in their foreignness" (Ellwood, 1973:83). This phenomenon, believes Ellwood (1973:83) was not only due to the more cosmopolitan mood of post-war America, but also to the fact that "the new generation was more concerned with expressing alienation from their cultural tradition than continuity with its religious format".

Furthermore, such groups desired to achieve a more direct and immediate experience of the spiritual than the previous two waves of alternative reality groups had been able to offer. Such an experience, however, required a special environment and atmosphere which was different from the ordinary, everyday world. The new environments appeared to be strange and foreign to many people in larger society, and therefore generated distrust and hostility toward these new fringe groups. Regardless of this alienation of the
larger part of North American Society, Ellwood believes that such groups merely demonstrate that the alternative reality tradition is alive and well in the West, and, given its historical background, is in no way new or foreign to Western thought.

The new groups are fully in the alternative reality tradition. Indeed they represent a great and pure revival of it, one strong enough to challenge the main pillars of Western culture (Ellwood, 1973:84).

B. THE 'SPIRIT' OF KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS.

Having examined the North American social system as the social context in which new religious movements arise, we will now turn for a moment to a consideration of the ethos of Krishna Consciousness as a specific example of such an alternative reality group.

Historical Background.

As mentioned earlier, Krishna Consciousness is a form of devotional Hinduism based on the principle of bhakti, or the attainment of salvation through loving devotion and surrender to a personal deity.

Hinduism itself is an eclectic religion (or rather
collection of religions) incorporating many different elements and many different means (yogas) of seeking out the absolute. Bhakti-yoga is only one of these means, but it gained widespread acceptance and popularity during the fourteenth to seventeenth centuries, at which time a great bhakti movement spread throughout India, resulting in a widespread dedication to the practice of devotion to a number of personal gods and goddesses, such as Shiva, Durga, Kali, Vishnu, Rama, and Krishna.

One of the most significant figures to emerge from this bhakti movement was a Bengali saint by the name of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu (1496-1570). So great was his influence, and so powerful was the revival of devotional religion he inspired "that during his lifetime, and for a while after his death, it encompassed the greater part of eastern India" (Daner, 1976:25).

Chaitanya’s devotionalism was centered around the god Krishna, whom he proclaimed to be the Supreme God, above and beyond all the others. (As an aside, it should be noted that this henotheism is a point of contention with the majority of modern Hindus, who, although they may be devoted to one or another god or goddess, recognize the power and authority of the many others as well. Regardless of this, however, Chaitanya’s effect was to raise Krishnaite devotionalism to a fervent pitch during his lifetime. And as we will soon see, this tradition has continued down, if only in a minority position, to the present day.)
Aside from elevating Krishna to the status of the "Supreme Personality of Godhead", Chaitanya's major contribution to the devotional tradition was the introduction of kirtan, the congregational chanting of the names of God in public. He believed that the repetition of such holy names was the easiest, most effective means of spiritual realization in modern times, and "the most powerful method for bringing about a frame of mind proper for religious devotion in an age conducive to mental distraction" (Daner, 1976:25). Chaitanya therefore travelled around India teaching people to chant the prayer:

Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna,
Krishna, Krishna, Hare, Hare,
Hare Rama, Hare Rama,
Rama, Rama, Hare, Hare.

As we will soon see, chanting this Mahamantra, or Great Prayer for Deliverance, forms the core of Krishna Consciousness' devotional activity even today.

Although Chaitanya was the inspiration for Krishna devotionalism, he never actually set about codifying the doctrine or ritual which developed under his influence. This job he left to his successors, the most immediate of which were a group of six of his students known collectively as the Goswamis of Vrindavan. It was these men, and later their followers, that formalized the doctrine and practices of the
Chaitanya sect and provided it with a great corpus of literature based on the life and teachings of their spiritual master.

The Chaitanya tradition was passed down by the Goswamis through a series of spiritual masters (acharyas) until, in 1886, an acharya named Bhaktivenode Thakur established the Gaudiya Vaisnava Math, a formal mission organization which was dedicated to the promotion of Krishna-bhakti. It is from this organization that came the man who would bring the Chaitanya tradition of devotionalism to North America.

Abhay Charon De (1920–1977) was born in the state of Bengal and raised in the Chaitanya tradition. He eventually began formal studies under a spiritual master of the Gaudiya Vaisnava mission, who, judging De to be so qualified, gave him the spiritual name A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada and requested that he spread Krishna Consciousness (as the Chaitanya tradition has come to be known in modern times) to the English-speaking countries of the West.

In 1965, at the advanced age of seventy, Prabhupada left his family and job in India to travel to the United States and fulfill his master’s request.

It is important to note that, as an initiated representative of the Gaudiya Vaisnava Math, Prabhupada is considered to be a bona fide representative of Chaitanya; and since devotees believe that Chaitanya was an incarnation of Krishna come to earth to demonstrate the efficacy of
chanting the Mahamantra in achieving salvation, Prabhupada, is considered to be Krishna's official representative on earth.

Furthermore, Prabhupada's authority as Krishna's representative and as a spiritual master rests on the fact that he is the latest in a long line of spiritual masters that dates back through history to the Goswamis, Chaitanya, and beyond, to the time of Krishna himself when He appeared on the earth over five-thousand years ago. This unbroken line of spiritual masters is known as the disciplic succession (parampara) and is as important in establishing the authority of the spiritual master as the apostolic succession is in legitimating the authority of the bishops in the Roman Catholic Church. (For a full list of the disciplic succession from Krishna to Prabhupada, see Appendix B.)

The Philosophy of Krishna Consciousness.

Krishna Consciousness, based on the teachings of Chaitanya, draws on a number of canonical writings. The primary texts, apart from the syntheses of the Goswamis and other acharyas, are the universally recognized Hindu scriptures, Shripad Bhagavatam and Bhagavad Gita. These writings detail the life and pastimes of Krishna in his various incarnations and are taken by devotees to be literally and historically true. They paint a picture in
which Krishna is the supreme personal Lord who incarnated himself as a beautifully attractive and alluring cowherd boy who spent his days frolicking in the heaven-like pastoral setting of the village of Vrindavan, India. Nobody could resist the charm of the young blue-hued god, especially the young milkmaids who would sneak away from their husbands in the dark of night to dance with Krishna and enjoy his love-making in the idyllic forests of Vrindavan.

When Krishna was born in an infant’s body in Vrindavan, he brought with him his eternal paradisical world with all its jewel like flowers, peacocks, and celestial devotees. For a short time heaven dwelt before man’s eyes in the midst of earth (Ellwood, 1973:241).

It is to share in the bliss of such an intimate association with the Lord in his heavenly abode that the devotees of Krishna Consciousness aspire, and to which their devotional practices are directed.

By doting on the beauty and playfulness of the divine child, and through the enchantment of stories, glorifying the divine youth’s tender love, Krishna’s devotees are drawn into the loving embrace of the supreme God and taste the ecstasy of divine bliss through loving surrender to him (Koller, 1982:216).
It is, therefore, through hearing and reflecting on the stories of Krishna’s spontaneous play (lila) that “devotees feel the beauty and playfulness of the divine reality resonating in their deepest being, calling them to surrender to God’s greatness” (Koller, 1982:216). (For a more in-depth discussion of the role of lila, divine play, in devotional Hinduism, see Kinsley, 1977).

According to Krishna Consciousness philosophy such constant intimate association with God and the bliss derived therefrom are the original and natural state of being for humans. The human soul is eternal and is meant to be in eternal blissful association with Krishna in his spiritual kingdom. However, due to the desire to experience material pleasures, eternal souls have become contaminated by material nature and become imprisoned in material bodies. Being so imprisoned, individuals become deluded and come to identify themselves with their material bodies and possessions, forgetting their true nature as spiritual beings who are meant to enjoy God. As long as this false consciousness, or ignorance, of the true self, continues, the individual will be forced to take a new material body life-time after life-time; the nature of the material body being determined by the individual’s good and bad deeds performed in the previous life (karma). Although reincarnated, the new body is still just a another temporary covering for the soul, subject to the same processes of aging, disease and death as any other material being. Thus the ultimate goal of life should be to
escape this round of death and rebirth into the material realm by overcoming the false identification with the temporary body, and realizing one's true self as an eternal spirit soul capable of the blissful association with God that is described in the scriptures. This goal can be achieved, devotees believe, by surrendering to Krishna and leading a life of devotional service.

...bhakti for the devotee[s] is selfless dedication to Krishna by which [they are] released from the power of illusion so that [they] can realize [their] true relationship with god (Daner, 1976:33).

Thus, Krishna Consciousness claims to be the means of the revival of the original consciousness of the living being and of going "Back to Godhead".

Essentially a devotional lifestyle involves performing various activities, the purpose of which is twofold: they function first to evoke in the individual performing them an attitude of love for and surrender to Krishna, and second, to allow the individual to express such feelings of devotion in a physical way. While almost anything, from soliciting donations on a street corner to sweeping the temple floor, may be considered devotional service to Krishna, Daner (1976:35) describes eight things which are fundamental to a proper devotional lifestyle. These are:
1) recognizing Krishna as one's only refuge
2) giving service to a spiritual master (guru)
3) reading and listening to the scriptures and writings of the spiritual masters (especially Prabhupada)
4) chanting the names and praises of Krishna
5) thinking constantly of the name, form, and pastimes of Krishna
6) serving, seeing, touching, and worshiping the deities.
7) performing rites and ceremonies learned from the guru, such as putting symbols of God on one's body with clay, eating the remains of an offering to the deity as a sacrament, drinking the water used to wash the deity, attending temple services regularly, etc.
8) prostrating before the deities and the spiritual master

Temple Life.

ISKCON follows the traditional Hindu asrama system which details four stages of life that individuals pass through.

The first stage is called brahmacharya, or the celibate
student stage. After initially joining the movement, approximately two years are spent in full-time study of the sect's scriptures, philosophy, and ritual, and other aspects of temple life. During this period the students live in collective residences (ashrams) which may be located within the temple complex, but are more often nearby houses in the community. As part of their training these individuals spend their non-study time working at temple chores, such as cleaning, painting, sewing, cooking, grounds-keeping, and so on. They also go out into the community to distribute literature, solicit donations, and chant the Mahamantra for the benefit of the public.

When their training as a student is complete, the devotee may choose to remain celibate, or decide to marry and enter the next stage of life, that of a householder (grihastha). The householder couple moves out of their ashrams and start their own home, usually in a nearby house or apartment, and concentrate on raising a family. Although married devotees may be employed in temple-related activities, such as administration, bookkeeping, cooking, or priestly duties, most householders are encouraged to seek outside employment in the community. In this way they are able to make a better wage and are thus better able to support the temple financially. If circumstances permit, householders may also be employed in one of the ISKCON-owned business such as their publishing or incense-manufacturing companies.
The traditional Hindu third stage of life (as one who is retired from active working life but retains the life of householder) is not practiced in ISKCON, the fourth stage being considered more important. Sannyasa, or the stage of renunciation, is entered into when one's obligations to student and householder life have been fulfilled. Because of its severity, not all devotees enter this stage of life. It is reserved for males only, and then only for the most dedicated and serious. Those who do become sannyasis renounce all material possessions, as well as all family and social ties (including their wives and children), and devote themselves entirely to spiritual life and devotional service to Krishna. One who takes sannyasa is called a Swami, and is expected to serve the Hare Krishna community as a spiritual leader. He generally has no one residence, but travels from temple to temple, where he is accorded great respect and honour.

His main function, other than deepening his own Krishna Consciousness, is to teach and correct any mistaken interpretations of the philosophy, as well as to make sure that the discipline is being strictly followed (Judah, 1974:157).

The daily schedule of any particular individual is varied according to that devotee's occupation, life-stage, and local temple. However, it is possible to outline a
typical day in temple life.

The temple day generally begins at 3:30 a.m. when devotees rise, bathe, dress and proceed to the temple. Here they begin to chant their daily quota of the Mahamantra on a rosary of 108 beads. The devotees are committed to chanting the rosary a minimum of 16 times per day, and will use any free moments during the day to complete the remainder of their 'rounds'. At 4:15 a.m. devotees participate in mangala arati, a religious ceremony in which offerings of water, incense, flowers, fire, and a fan are made to the images of Krishna and Chaitanya. The offering is accompanied by prayers, music, and the congregational singing of the Mahamantra.

Following this ceremony, the first of six aratis throughout the day, devotees resume chanting their 'rounds' until 7:00 a.m. when another ceremony honouring Prabhupada and a scripture class are held. Breakfast is served at 8:00 a.m. and, after another arati, devotees prepare for their daily work, whether in the temple or the community.

Although it is expected that all devotees will participate in the morning routine as described above, it is recognized that some devotees, such as those with small children or those with jobs in the community, may not be able to take part in the morning program regularly.

At noon there is another arati, followed by lunch, and the remainder of the day’s work. Devotees return home around 5:00 p.m., shower, and read sect-related literature until
supper. Following supper there is another _arati_ and a
scripture class lasting until about 8:30 p.m. Devotees then
spend some time reading or relaxing, and, after a small
snack, retire for the evening at approximately 10:00 p.m.

C. AN IDEAL-TYPOLGY OF CONVERSION.

Given the nature of North American society, and the
'spirit' of the Krishna Consciousness religion, it is
possible to construct a generic, ideal-type model of
conversion to this fringe religious group.

We have seen how humans are symbolic, and therefore,
meaning-seeking creatures. We have further seen that the
North American social system, by depriving individuals of the
non-discursive symbolic bases (see chapter 3) for adequate
identity formation, creates a situation in which individuals
become dissatisfied and alienated, and suffer from a lack of
meaning in their lives. Such individuals then engage in a
variety of activities, individually and collectively, in an
attempt to establish a symbol system by which they can
redress the symbolic imbalance in society, and therefore
establish an identity. As Klapp (1969:37-38) says, this
insistence on something more than the merely practical
concerns and banality of everyday mundane living makes
individuals "not only philosophical, but cult-prone,
ritualistic, meditative, faddish, crusading in spirit."
romantic, searching in various directions for the mystique that will add meaning to their lives."

Krishna Consciousness, as an example of the "cultic response" to the symbolic imbalance in society, offers the dissatisfied and confused individual an opportunity to participate in a new symbol system; one that is capable of providing the needed mystique. This world-view is then supplemented by a body of ritual, through which individuals are able to relate themselves to this 'greater reality'.

The true appeal of the Hare Krishna mystique lies in its acknowledgement of the meaningless and banality experienced in the mundane world, and its ability to explain these feelings. As we have seen, the philosophy explains such alienation as being the result of a misidentification of the self with the material body, and ignorance of the eternal spiritual nature of the true self. Furthermore, the ritual associated with this philosophy (the entire devotional lifestyle included) provides a means of overcoming this 'false consciousness' and the experiences of alienation and meaninglessness associated with it. By 'surrendering to Krishna' and engaging in a life of bhakti, one is able to participate in the set of non-disscursive symbolizations that is the Hare Krishna mystique, and thereby link up with 'absolute meaningfulness'. Conversion, then, to Krishna Consciousness and its lifestyle based on devotion, performs the important function of 'centering' an individual's life, of giving it a central focus, and therefore ultimate meaning.
The efficacy, then, of Krishna Consciousness as a cultic response to symbolic deprivation lies not only in its ability to offer an explanation for the predicament experienced by the meaning-starved individual, but also in its ability to provide a solution to this situation in the form of Krishna bhakti. When people who are feeling a lack of identity or meaning come across Krishna Consciousness, they are immediately given an explanation as to why they feel that way, and how they can go about overcoming these feelings of anomie: achieving personal identity in the process.

Finally, while converting to such an alternative reality group such as Krishna Consciousness may appear to be a socially undesirable or psychopathological means of attempting to achieve meaning (as compared to some more 'respectable' means such as psychiatry), it must be remembered that it is certainly not a foreign concept in the history of Western civilization to opt for an experience of reality that is alternative to the scientific, rationalistic, and Judeo-Christian based world view that is presently dominant.

In the following chapters we will see how specific cases of conversion can be understood as being acted out against the background of this ideal-type model and how the motivations for conversion are linked to the interplay of the non-discursive symbols that govern each individual's particular situation.
Chapter 3

A Grammar of Conversion

Introduction

Before initiating an investigation into the nature of the motivational dynamics of religious conversion we must first recognize that such a phenomenon is only a specific example of a much broader phenomenon, that of human action. Hence, in order to understand the motives for conversion, we should first gain an understanding of the motivational elements of human action in general. This chapter, then, sets out to provide a theoretical understanding of the process of human motivation with the intent that such an understanding will then provide a theoretical basis for understanding the elements of religious conversion as a specific case of human action and its associated motivational structures.
A Theory of Human Motivation

As we have seen in the previous chapter, most models of conversion tend to propose a reductionist theory of the motivational aspect of conversion. Such "passivist" perspectives generally emphasize 'drives' and 'states' which originate within the psyche of the individual as motives which force the individual to seek out a fringe religious community. Alternatively, the emphasis might be placed on the social relationships and group dynamics in which an individual becomes enmeshed as generating motives to commit to a new group. We have already discussed the incompleteness of such psychologically and sociologically deterministic theories and will therefore seek to adopt a more sophisticated theory of motivation which will better contribute to the understanding of human action, particularly as it relates to religious conversion. Such an approach can be found in the works of Kenneth Burke.

The heart of Burke's argument is simple enough, namely that symbolic forms affect conduct...

He is saying that motives lie not only in some kind of experience 'beyond' symbols but also in symbols. In sum, symbolization is a motive because symbolism is a motivational dimension in its own right (Duncan in Burke, 1984:xx-xxi).
Following the idea of Langer's (1942) it is Burke's (1966:5) contention that humans are essentially symbol-using animals, and all that passes as reality for an individual or a people is but a "...construct of our symbolic systems." Humans are innately symbolic creatures, and it is this capacity for symbolism which allows humans to experience a meaningful reality.

Starting with this conception of the fundamental role of symbolic structures in human experience, Burke developed a methodology for the study of human action which, being derived from the analogy of drama, he terms 'dramatism'. The main premise of dramatism is that human action is based on, or rather, in, symbols. All human action is a result of 'symbolic play' and the motivational power inherent in symbols. Language, being the quintessential human symbol system, has enormous implications for human motivation and action. Burke (1966:6) asks: "Do we simply use words, or do they not also use us?" His answer to this query is the observation that language is not merely descriptive but inherently rhetorical. It functions to persuade individuals to behave in certain ways and therefore invites and induces action. Hence, for Burke the essence of language is not to be found in phrases like 'it is' or 'it is not', but rather in such action-eliciting expressions as 'thou shalt' and 'thou shalt not'. Language is not merely a statement of reality, but also a call to action: a frame which gives rise to and shapes human behavior. Thus, language is an integral
aspect of human motivation and action. We can, therefore, more eloquently define the dramatistic approach to motivation as "a technique of analysis of language and thought as basically modes of action rather than means of conveying information" (Webster's Third New International Dictionary).

The dramatistic view of language in terms of symbolic action is exercised about the necessarily suasive nature of even the most unemotional language... (Burke, 1966:44).

What this idea of language as symbolic action results in is the idea that the names which humans give to things come to determine the way in which they behave toward them. Hugh Dalziel Duncan states in his introduction to Burke's Permanence and Change (1984:xv):

"Words are not merely "signs": they are names whose "attachment" to events, objects, persons, institutions, status groups, classes, and indeed any great or small collectivity soon tends to determine what we do in regard to the bearer of the name.

But why exactly do symbols become motivations for human action? Wherein lies the rhetorical and motivational power of symbol systems? Dramatism relates this power to the
ability of words to engender specific attitudes and elicit various emotions in individuals toward the reality the symbols create. People, under the influence of those attitudes and emotions, develop conceptions of appropriate and inappropriate actions in regard to the symbolically created reality. In other words,

This use of symbols may be thought of as strategies in conduct that make it possible for us to size up situations, name their structure and outstanding ingredients, and name them in a way that contains an attitude toward them. [Hence] it provides a terminology of thoughts, actions, emotions and attitudes for codifying a pattern of experience (Duncan in Burke, 1984:xxii.).

Thus the way in which an object is symbolized determines the opinion we will have toward that thing. This, in turn, affects our actions toward it. In this way symbolic structures oblige human beings to behave in certain ways and to refrain from behaving in others. Symbols create attitudes; attitudes create duty; duty leads to action. Herein lies the motivational power of symbol systems. By way of example, Duncan (in Burke, 1984:xxi) suggests that the way in which we linguistically symbolize the poor, whether as being lazy, shiftless, evil, humble, happy, victimized or
unfortunate, to a large extent affects our attitudes about poverty and hence the way in which we react toward it. Thus, we can see the tendency for the mere description of a phenomena to become a prescription for action.

The acquisition of a symbolic context releases, or compels, human action by creating channels of obligation and expression. Humans are "symbol-mongering animals" and all motivations are derived from this fact (Signorile, 1977:7).

Thus, we can now see how human action is the result of symbolic play and human motivation a result of what can be conceived as 'symbolic requiredness' (Signorile, 1977:2).

Religion as a Symbol System

Having-covered the basics of the idea of symbolic action let us now look at the phenomenon of religion as a symbol system and the implications of this system for human motivation and action.

Clifford Geertz (1973) views religion as primarily a system of symbolic structures. As such it is capable of being a source of motivation for human action. His comprehensive definition of religion as "A system of symbols which acts to establish powerful and long-lasting moods and
motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence..." emphasizes its status as a motivational realm and serves to reinforce Burke's idea of symbolic action. For Geertz then, religion as a symbol system has two functions. First, it symbolically creates a people's _world-view_; a picture of the order of nature, society, the universe and the individual's place in it. Second, a religious symbol system "...functions to synthesize a people's _ethos_—the tone, character and quality of their life, its moral and aesthetic style and mood..." (Geertz, 1973:90). An ethos, then, can be thought of as a prescription of an appropriate way of life which is derived primarily from the description of the general order of reality. Hence, it can be thought of as including or consisting of the motivational structures which induce humans to action. Sacred symbols not only create a world in terms of a world view but also shape human behavior in terms of predisposing and compelling humans to act in certain ways.

Religion "...tunes human actions to an envisaged cosmic order..." (Geertz, 1973:90). Once again this power is derived from the ability of symbol systems to elicit specific attitudes and hence ideas of appropriate reactions. Such systems shape human action "...by inducing in the worshiper a certain distinctive set of dispositions (tendencies, capacities, propensities, skills, habits, liabilities, pronenesses) which lend a chronic character to the flow of his activity and the quality of his experience" (Geertz.
1973:95). Once again, then, we can see the symbolic implications for human conduct.

Theology as Linguistics

Having considered the idea of religion as a system of symbols, it is now easier to see the connection between religion and the dramatistic perspective which views human motivation in terms of symbolic structures. But we have not yet considered the role of religious language as part of the symbol system of religion. Given the nature of language as humankind's distinctive symbol system, and the fundamental role that it plays in motivation (as we have argued), it would be wise to investigate the phenomenon of religious language in an effort to shed more light on the process of human motivation.

Once again, it is useful to consider Burke's commentary on the subject. The basic proposition of Burke's argument is that the nature of religious symbolism is primarily linguistic and hence open to dramatistic analysis. He argues that theology, being words-about-God, is fundamentally verbal. Regardless of the ultimate truth or falsity of theological claims, from a strictly 'empirical' point of view theology is merely words. Hence, Burke is concerned not with humans' relationship to God, but rather with their
relationship to the word 'God'. More explicitly, he is concerned with the terminology of religion as a symbol system and the entailing motivational implications for human action.

Burke believes that religious language is an example of the rhetorical power of language par excellence, and accord a fundamental role to religious language in the motivational structures of human action.

The subject of religion falls under the head of rhetoric in the sense that rhetoric is the art of persuasion and religious cosmogonies are designed, in the last analysis, as exceptionally thoroughgoing modes of persuasion. To persuade men towards certain acts, religion would form the kinds of attitudes which prepare men for such acts (Burke, 1921-1925).

Burke's reasoning for such emphasis on religious language is drawn from the idea that, since it involves the use of words in regard to an ultimate or 'radical' subject as God, theological language "almost necessarily becomes an example of words used with thoroughness".

Since words about God would be as far reaching as words can be, the "rhetoric of religion" furnishes a good instance of terministic enterprise in general. Thus it is our 'logological' thesis that...
since the theological use of language is thorough, the close study of theology and its forms will provide us with good insight into the nature of language itself as a motive (Burke, 1970:foreword).

Following this idea that language is pushed to its limits in theology, Burkès tries to delineate the motivational implications of such words. His first observation is the fact that, regardless of whether or not there is actually a supernatural realm, human beings have words for it. These words which are used to describe such a transcendent realm are, however, originally derived from situations in empirical reality and then applied allegorically to describe the supernatural realm.

The supernatural is, by definition, the realm of the "ineffable". And language by definition is not suited to the expression of the "ineffable". So our words for...the supernatural or "ineffable" are necessarily borrowed from our words for the sorts of things we can talk about literally, our words for the...world of everyday experience (Burke, 1970:15).

Once such words have been borrowed from the realm of mundane reality and applied in a theological setting, they come to take on new meanings and connotations. We can, of
course, again borrow back these terms and adapt them to
secular reality; however the words now have a new
significance related to their use as sacred terms. By way of
example, consider the word complex ‘father—Father—father’. 
In the first case the word ‘father’, derived from the
empirical world, refers to the biological and social
status of a man in relation to his offspring. Once the word
is borrowed from this context and adapted for theological
purposes, it becomes a word ‘endowed with thoroughness’.
It becomes transformed into the Father, and attains powerful new
connotations and ultimate motivational power. The word then
is borrowed back for use in the empirical realm, but now has
connotations and motivational implications derived from its
use as a theological term. Consider, for example, the use of
the word ‘father’ to refer to Priests in the Roman Catholic
Church.

This ‘carry-over effect’ thus transforms the original
meaning and motivational power of the word. It is by way of
this dual process of ‘borrowing’ that many secular words
become infused with motivational power derived from their
thorough use in theology. Thus Burke (1926: foreword)
believes that ‘...even when men use language trivially, the
motives inherent in its thorough use are acting somewhat in
goods, however vague’.

Related to this notion is the idea that there is a
‘principle of perfection’ at work in language which is
central to the nature of language as motive. Burke (1906:16)
believes that it is possible to adapt the Aristotelean concept of 'entelechy', "the notion that each being aims at the perfection natural to its kind", to the study of words as symbolic sources of motivation. He states that "...there is a principle of perfection implicit in the nature of symbol systems, and in keeping with his nature as a symbol using animal, man is moved by this principle". We can see this principle at work in our previous example of the word 'father' wherein the original word becomes transformed into Father, the perfect embodiment of fatherhood. Such perfectionistic symbolizing can bring great motivational pressure to bear upon individuals to behave in certain ways toward the symbol.

The principle of perfection (the 'entelechial' principle) figures in...notable ways as regards the genius of symbolism. A given terminology contains various implications, and there is a corresponding 'perfectionistic' tendency for men to attempt carrying out those implications (Burke, 1966:19).

This tendency to carry out the implications of one's terminology to their perfect conclusion is called 'terministic compulsion', and constitutes a highly motivational dimension of language (Burke, 1966:19).
The entelechy of language finds its most accommodating location in the religious sphere. It is a place where the rationality (ratio) of language can be brought to its purest perfection, and because of its purity, bring an almost untramelled motivational pressure to bear on its users (Signorile, 1977:16).

Motivation Beyond Language

Burke's analysis of the rhetoric of language (and religion) contributes much to our understanding of human motivation. However, Signorile (1977:16) believes that "...when we probe deeper into the ways in which religion and language, we find a range of motivations that emerge from beyond ratio, beyond language, beyond reason itself."

Langer (1942), as we have seen, defines man as a "symbol-mongering animal". However, she makes a distinction between two types of symbolic forms available to human symbolization processes: these being the 'discursive' and the 'presentational'. Discursive symbolism consists of rational, linear structures such as are the basis for language and scientific reasoning. It is syntactical symbolism and follows the rules of grammar and logic. Presentational symbolism, on the other hand, is non-discursive, non-linear, and based on patterns and forms. It is the basis for human experience of feeling states and is "...particularly united
to the expression of ideas that defy linguistic 'projection'" (Langer, 1942:75).

The symbolic materials given to our senses, the *gestalten* of fundamental perceptual forms which invite us to construe the pandemonium of sheer impression into a world of things and occasions belong to the "presentational" order (Langer, 1942:79).

Given this 'presentational' realm of non-discursive, extra-linguistic, yet motivationally powerful symbolism we can say that there is a source of motivation which is non-logical and non-rational: or rather beyond logic and ratio.

In this vein, Paul Van Buren (1974:4), in an essay on the logic of religion, states that religious discourse takes place on the 'edges' of language; that is, at "the farthest reaches of our rules for, or agreements in, the use of words".

This particular linguistic behavior then, may be thought of as speaking at the frontiers of language, a way...of behaving when we have reached the point at which we want to say the very most that our language entitles us to say, where we want to say as much as could possibly be said (Van Buren, 1974:4).
Although this phenomenon occurs in other areas of human experience, such as poetry and humour, religion is the example par excellence of speaking at the frontiers of language. Van Buren (1974:84) says that in the case of religion we tend to "...extend the application of words, stretching their use from the range within which they work straightforwardly out into areas in which they work less clearly". This "pushing out", at the edges of language is a central aspect of religion and is reminiscent of Burke's 'entelechy'. However in this case, when the word is pushed beyond a certain point, instead of perfecting itself, it becomes over-extended, resulting in language "burning its own boundaries" and moving into the realm of the "unspeakable". It is at this point that we pass from the realm of discursive symbolism into the that of the non-discursive presentational realm: into the 'irrational'.

The movement takes them not only into a transcendence of the mundane world, but beyond, into a transcendence of human reason itself" (Signorile, 1977:16).

This symbolic realm, although beyond logic and criteria, has, by virtue of its nature as a symbolic structure, immense motivational implications for human action. One aspect of this motivational power is the feelings of awe and devotion that
the presentational realm can arouse in individuals. By virtue of its nature as a non-discursive realm which is beyond linguistic expression and intellectual elaboration, it presents itself to human beings as something uncanny, ineffable, and supernatural. Such perceptions of a realm that is beyond logical explication leads to attitudes of awe, respect, fear and reverence within individuals. We have already seen how powerful such emotions and attitudes can be in eliciting and shaping human action. It is these experiences of the presentational realm of symbolism that form the basis of religious sentiment in human beings. Thus, "the movement from the linguistic to the extra-linguistic takes us from the profane to the sacred" (Signorile, 1977:20).

A Method to the Madness

Once more turning to Burke's dramatistic method, we can discern an approach to understanding the non-discursive play of symbols [which] can act as tacit motives for human action" (Signorile, 1977:22).

In reflecting on the nature of an adequate explanation of human behavior, Burke (1969:xv) uncovered the following essential elements:

- the act (what was done),
- the agent (who did it),
- the scene (where and when it occurred),
the agency (how it was done),
and the purpose (why it was done).

These five elements comprise Burke's 'dramatistic pentad', each element separately being a 'pentode'.

In addition to the five pentodes, there are ten 'ratios' which represent the relationships between each aspect of the pentad (e.g. act-agent ratio, act-scene ratio, scene-agent ratio, etc.). It is through an understanding of these ratios and the relationships that they have with each other (the 'ratios') that we can gain an understanding of the motivational structures at work in any situation.

We want to inquire into the purely internal relationships which the five terms bear to one another, considering their possibilities of transformation, their range of permutations, and combinations (Burke, 1966:10).

How exactly is it that these pentodes and ratios can be seen as a "symbolic font of motivation"? The answer lies once again in the fact that human beings are "nurtured with perfection" (Burke, 1966:10). There is at work in any situation a 'principle of consistency' by which individuals judge whether or not each of the pentodes is consistent with each other. It involves the idea of 'propriety' in regard to the ratios. For example, we might ask if the scene is a
proper time and place for the specific act which is occurring in it. Or, is the act appropriate to the agent who is performing it? The principle of consistency calls for all the pentodes to be appropriate to each other. Each ratio must be consistent. This pressure for propriety is the tacit source of motivation for human action. Any perceived disharmony among the ratios acts as a subtle motive to bring the pentodes back into congruence, and hence motivates behavior.

The harmony—or discord—that is, the ratios that might exist among the pentodes of symbolic action emerge as largely subliminal sources of motivation. They behave as any cognitive dissonance might. But it would be best to refer to the process as symbolic dissonance, in order more explicitly to take in the non-discursive, unconscious forms of motivation... (Signorile, 1977:27).

It is important to note that motives are not necessarily perceptible as such to the individual. They can be, and most often are, 'unconscious' in that the individual is unaware of exactly why he or she performed a particular action.

...if motives are construed as aspects of linguistic [or extra-linguistic] structures, then they need not be conscious—no more than
speech requires a consciousness of those complex constraints which compel us to speak our language the way we do (Signorile, 1977:12).

Hence human actors are following an unwritten set of rules which they might or might not be aware of.

In Summary

Burke’s dramatic approach to the study of human motivation and the motivational power of symbolic structure shows itself to be a more sophisticated and much more useful method of understanding human action than the reduction in philosophies of some theories. Thinking of human action as the result of a kind of symbolic institutional requirement which generates orientations more local, felt than theoretical (Signorile, 1977:29) takes us a long way in understanding not only human action in general, but also the topic at hand: religious conversion.

"It’s in the Bells"

Burke’s dramatic approach to human action provides an excellent theoretical background for understanding the motivational element of religious conversion. From such a perspective we can view this phenomenon (or any other example of human action, for that matter) as a result of the
dramatistic pentad and its related ratios. Action, as we have seen, is governed by a principle of propriety. The act of conversion, therefore, can be seen as the outcome of an individual's attempt to bring the pentodes which govern the specific situation into harmony with each other, thereby satisfying the demand for consistent ratios. A theoretical example might be a man who, considering himself to be a pacifist (an agent) and who lives in a society which he considers to be violent to animals (the scene) makes a decision to convert (the act) to a religion which promotes vegetarianism and animal-worship. In this example, the act of conversion is a means of acquiring a new 'scene' which is more consistent with the self as 'agent'. The individual feels more "whole" in the new, more appropriate environment. Another example could be a woman (the agent) whose family and friends are all members of a particular church (the scene), who chooses to join the church group herself (an act). In this case the 'agent' is attempting to make her 'act' correspond to the 'scene'.

These theoretical examples should serve to illustrate how dramatistic analysis can lead to a better understanding of motivation for conversion. Of course, through the act of converting, the individual becomes a part of a new reality, whose parameters will be set by a new symbol system. Thus the individual will come under the influence of a new pentad, and become involved in a new round of ratios. It will be these new ratios that will act as motivating forces for the
converted individual in his or her new world. This helps explain why an individual's behavior seems to be so different after becoming part of a new religious group, a phenomenon usually found confusing by a convert's family and friends.
Chapter 4

Methodological Considerations

The methodology employed in the present study was qualitative, making use of both participant observation and in-depth interviewing of converts to Krishna Consciousness.

Sample

The sample consisted of eight male and eight female devotees from the ISKCON temples in three North American cities. Interviewees ranged from seventeen years to forty-five years of age, and the duration of their involvement with Krishna Consciousness ranged from three weeks to sixteen years. The sample excluded, of course, all those individuals who have been raised from childhood within the Hare Krishna movement. Hence, the research focuses only on those who were motivated to convert to the faith from a previously different lifestyle.

Participant Observation

Given the rather foreign nature of the lifestyles and experiences of devotees it was decided that it would be
beneficial to become familiar with temple life before actual interviewing began, since "the interviewer's knowledge of and familiarity with respondent's lifestyle, subculture and ethnic customs... all affect his ability to establish rapport." (Schwartz and Jacobs, 1979:41).

Participant observation also helped in resolving the problem of what Schwartz and Jacobs (1979:42) term the ‘ethnographic context’ of interviewing.

The respondent, knowing his own life history, the ins and outs of the cultural milieu of which he is a part... has an 'ethnographic context' in which he decides both what to say to the interviewer and the precise meaning and significance of what he is saying.

The problem is that the interviewer generally does not share this ethnographic context and, hence, is "condemned to interpret the respondent's talk... without access to the meanings and nuances that are distinctive to the social phenomena and class of respondents being studied". In order to overcome this problem a host of relevant literature on devotional Hinduism, Gaudiya Vaishnavism and Krishna Consciousness was explored, as well as the completion of intensive participant observation in various ISKCON temples. As Chadwick et al (1984:211) state:
Qualitative research requires the scientist to be directly involved and forces him or her to acquire some degree of understanding about what life feels like and means to the people being studied. Field work helps the researcher to 'ground' observations and impressions in a richly elaborated context of the perceived world view and values of the subjects.

They go on to say:

Getting close to the data implies interaction with the people being studied: learning their culture, including their values, beliefs, behaviour patterns and language; and attempting to feel or experience their motives and emotions (Chadwick et al., 1984:206-207).

Participant observation was relatively easy to undertake since all ISKCON temples sponsor weekly 'open houses' at which time the public is invited to visit the temple and partake in a vegetarian meal. Visitors are encouraged to observe and participate in the temple ceremonies, hear discourses on Krishna Consciousness, ask questions and meet and chat informally with devotees. Interaction and curiosity are encouraged. As a regular visitor to the temples, this researcher was able to interact with devotees, develop contacts with potential interviewees and establish a comfortable rapport conducive to co-operation.
Interview

The purpose of the interviews was to elicit personal accounts of the individual's life experiences and definitions of reality; especially as they related to the conversion experience. The interview format was of an unstructured nature in order to allow respondents to freely relate their subjective experiences in their life-worlds and to obtain a history of the individuals' pre- and post-conversion lives. An interview guide was used to provide a loose framework for the conversation and to ensure that pertinent areas were covered. Thus, "the emphasis is on obtaining narratives or accounts in the person's own terms. One wants the character and contours of such accounts to be set by the interviewee" (Lofland, 1971:81).

The interview guide was, therefore, not intended to be a rigid or strict framework, but rather a flexible "orientation" for the interview. It was presumed, and correctly so, that further questions and topics for discussion would undoubtedly emerge from the interviewing process itself. (See Appendix B for interview guide.)

Critique of Methodology
In anticipation of the criticism that might arise from the methodological intentions of this study it would be advisable at this time to perhaps address some of the issues involved.

Howard S. Becker (1958:653) saw the main problem of qualitative research as one of inference and proof. The qualitative researcher faces the task of not only collecting data, analyzing it, and drawing conclusions, but also the problem of presenting these conclusions so as to convince other scientists of their validity. The problem is, Becker believes, that qualitative research has traditionally been negligent in presenting the evidence for conclusions and the processes by which they were reached. He states:

Readers of qualitative research reports commonly and justifiably complain that they are told little or nothing about the evidence for conclusions or the operations by which the evidence has been assessed (Becker, 1958:659).

Thus the readers of such reports are not able to make their own assessments of the data and the conclusions based thereon and must rely totally on the faith in the abilities of the other. The problem, then, becomes one of the validity and reliability of the data and conclusions reached by the researcher; in other words of proof and inference.
Becker's solution to this problem lies in a "more adequate presentation of the data, of the research operations and of the researcher's inferences" (1958:659), much the same as is done in quantitative research. However, unlike quantitative data (with its tables, formulae and statistical operations), qualitative data is not easily summarized and presented. In fact, qualitative data "frequently consists of many different kinds of observations which cannot be simply categorized and counted without losing some of their value as evidence" (Becker, 1958:659-660). This problem can be overcome by presenting what Becker calls the 'natural history' of the research. This involves the description of the "characteristic forms that the data took at each stage of the research" as well as discussing "the various statements of findings and the inferences and conclusions drawn from them".

In this way, evidence is assessed as the subjective analysis is presented. The reader would be able, if his method were used, to follow the details of this analysis and to see how and on what basis any conclusion was reached. This would give the reader, as do present modes of statistical presentation, opportunity to make his own judgement as to the adequacy of the proof and the degree of confidence to be assigned the conclusion (Becker, 1958:660).
Thus the presentation of the "natural history" of the research would help to formalize qualitative research and give the reader greater access to data and procedures on which conclusions are based (Becker, 1958:660) thereby overcoming to a large extent the problems of reliability and validity. It is the intention of this researcher to use such a method in the present study.
Chapter 5

The Data and Its Analysis

Through the use of interviews, the research has produced much rich data on the conversion and pre-conversion experiences of the Hare Krishna devotees. It should be pointed out from the outset that such data is not intended to be in any sense definitive, for it would be impossible to establish anything, in a statistical sense, from the materials collected. Rather the data is of an illustrative nature, demonstrating the ways in which the dramatistic framework can be played out in regard to religious conversion. The data is, then, intended to illustrate the working of the theoretical framework and its applicability as a sociological means of understanding human action.

The purpose of this chapter, then, will be to attempt to gain an understanding of religious conversion by demonstrating the ways in which each subject exhibited the dramatistic principles as outlined in the previously elaborated theory. Such an analysis will include exploring those ways in which individuals symbolically defined their worlds prior to conversion and how elements of these definitions of reality became the motivations for seeking change. We will also look at the ways in which individuals
currently see their situations in an effort to understand how their personal odysseys culminated in the Krishna Conscious lifestyle.

In presenting the analyses, a case study approach has been adopted in order to allow the reader to view each individual subject's situation separately and to allow readers to become as familiar as possible with the data on which the analyses and conclusions are based. Hence, it is hoped that by presenting such a 'natural history' of the data, the reader will be able to follow as much as possible the reasoning process utilised in drawing the conclusions, and thereby address the questions of reliability and validity that traditionally plague such a qualitative analysis.

CASE #1

Govinda-dasa is a 36 year-old male householder with a wife and two children. Born and educated in England, he joined the movement in 1972 and presently works within the movement as a teacher/preacher of the Hare Krishna philosophy.

Govinda first encountered the Hare Krishna philosophy in 1969 when he saw the devotees singing on the now famous episode of the BBC's TOP OF THE POPS music programme. At that time they made no impression on him, but three years later he made the decision to join the movement.
I was interested in art. So when I left school I went to art school for a while. But I dropped out of that; because I could see that if I stayed at art school I'd end up being an advertiser, drawing cigarette ads or something, or someone who teaches others to become advertisers. And then we'd just become slaves to the system—the system being a lot of materialistic men with a lot of money dictating what people should do. And I didn't want to get involved with them at all. So I was trying to be a 'love and peace' hippie—working for the people.

So I got this job doing social work, helping misfits, drug addicts, alcoholics, ex-mental patients. At the same time I was realizing that I wasn't really able to offer these people any real positive alternative. Because the things that they were enjoying, or trying to enjoy, I was also doing. Alcoholics were drinking, and I was also drinking. So all the things that they were having trouble with I was also doing. And I didn't feel that we were able to offer them a positive alternative. I thought it was just like trying to patch up the problem. So I was looking for some alternative.

And so during that time I became vegetarian because I realized that I wanted to be more sensitive, more
open, more aware of what’s going on. And I could see that vegetarianism was an asset to that. Also I started visiting different monasteries trying to find spiritual rather than materialistic people. But I was disappointed every time. This one monastery I went to, every Friday night they’d get drunk. And I could see that they really looked forward to it. It was like the highlight of the week for them. And the local vicar would be watching football and drinking beer and smoking cigarettes. But I could see that if you’re going to have a spiritual life it’s got to be something so satisfying that you’ll give up these materialistic things. So anyway I became a Christian: a vegetarian Christian trying to do social work. But all the time I felt I wasn’t really adequate.

Then one day I bumped into some devotees chanting on the streets. It was late and they were looking for a place to spend the night. So I had them stay at the shelter where I worked. And I was very impressed because they were so renounced. They were actually living a holy life. They were very austere in their eating and sleeping habits. And it seemed to me that they had some special qualities that I didn’t have myself. And they told me about the Bhagavad Gita. They said it gave you spiritual knowledge. So I read it. And all the questions that I’d asked were answered straight away. So I became very intrigued by it. So on my days off
from work I used to visit the temple. Because doing social work was so pressurized; you actually lived it. It wasn’t just over a desk! You actually had to live with all these degraded and hopeless people in this dreary shelter. So it was very strenuous work. So every week I would go to the temple to get a spiritual recharge, to get some energy and get pumped up for the next week.

Eventually I could see that my involvement was leading to me surrendering completely to Krishna and moving into the temple. Philosophically it was so perfect. I just couldn’t find a mistake in it. It’s like if you have a mathematical equation. If you can’t find anything wrong with the calculation then you have to accept the conclusion. So the conclusion of the philosophy is that we should surrender to Krishna, to God, to become his eternal servant.

As we have seen, the situations in which individuals find themselves can be thought of as being governed by a dramatistic pentad, as well as a series of ratios which represent the relationships between the various aspects of the pentad (i.e. the pentodes). From this subject’s report we can see that that his conception of himself was as a ‘love and peace’ hippie: a sort of anti-establishment type who was more concerned with individuals than the ‘system’. In dramatistic terms we could describe this aspect of the
situation as the agent. Taking a job at a shelter, the subject saw his goal, or purpose, as helping these people to overcome the problems they had in life. This purpose was certainly appropriate to a scene characterized by degraded, pathetic people. However, Govinda soon discovered that traditional social work was not an effective means with which to deal with these individuals' problems. It only served to "patch up the problem" temporarily. Thus, we could say that social work as an agency was not appropriate to the scene, nor to the purpose, as defined by the subject.

Furthermore, the agent, since he was also attached to the things that were part of the problems of his charges (i.e., alcohol, nicotine, etc.), was unable to offer any viable alternatives to these peoples' predicament, and was helpless to provide any solutions to their problems. Thus, the agent wasn't really appropriate to the purpose of helping others, nor to the scene. These inconsistencies in the ratios are reflected in the subject's complaints of feelings of inadequacy and were the source of a motivational compulsion to find a more harmonious situation. From a dramatistic perspective, then, we can see the taking up of a vegetarian lifestyle and the experimenting with Christianity as attempts to bring consistency to the ratios. In other words, the subject was gradually trying to assemble more harmonious pentodes by taking on vegetarianism as a new agency. He felt that it would make him more sensitive to the plight of living things. Since it was, in his eyes, a more positive and
healthful lifestyle than how he was presently living (i.e., using alcohol, nicotine, etc.), and it avoided causing needless suffering. Vegetarianism gave him a small piece of the alternative he wished he could offer to the degraded ways in which his clients were living. Thus it brought his concept of agent a little more in line with his purpose of helping others to overcome their predicaments. However, as a vegetarian Christian doing social work he still felt that the facts of his life were inadequately put together, and he experienced this as a personal default ("But all the time I still felt inadequate"). These new elements did not bring the needed harmony to his situation. Thus he continued to be motivated to search out a possible solution that would bring the ration into alignment.

Finally, Govinda ran across the Hare Krishna devotees. He reported that he was really impressed because they had some qualities that he wished he had. From a dramatistic perspective, we can see that this encounter was very important because it offered the subject some ideas on how to redefine his concept of agent in order to make it more appropriate to his purpose. And after reading the Bhagavad Gita he reported that the philosophy was very attractive. We can understand this as a recognition by the subject that the austerity and other-worldliness of the Hare Krishna teachings would provide a new agency which could be used to help people overcome their problems. Also, adopting a Krishna Conscious lifestyle would give the subject a way of changing his
definition of agent so that he was able to demonstrate an alternative to a lifestyle characterized by alcohol use, drug abuse, sexual promiscuity, and the suffering experienced by so many in the material world. In this way Govinda was able to make the ratios governing his situation harmonious with each other as well as with the scene.

The subject's final comment regarding the inevitability of joining the movement reflects another example of the principle of consistency at work. Given the definition of the pentodes, one searches for a way they can all be harmonious. When this is achieved, there will be a motivational pressure brought to bear on the individual to act in a way that is consistent with these new definitions. In short, one new situation demands propriety in action.

CASE #2

Ananta-shesha dasa, a 38 year-old male householder, is currently the president of a Hare Krishna temple; a job which requires him to perform a variety of administrative and leadership duties.

Ananta graduated from university in 1972 with a Master of Science degree in biology and education. As a biologist he marvelled at the majesty of nature.

I was completely infatuated with the extraordinary
beauty and mystery of the natural world. Often I wondered how everything came about and what it was meant for. I considered myself an atheist. I didn't really believe in God—but at the same time I always felt there was some sort of 'perfection' that existed in nature.

Employed as a high school teacher, Ananta taught biology classes in which he emphasized ecology, conservation, and protection of the natural environment. He would regularly schedule fieldwork trips for his students to encourage their love of nature, as well as to "gather information to help local conservation groups' efforts to protect natural habitats." He considered these trips great learning experiences for his students, and great opportunities to expound his message of conservation.

I often thought, "what is the use of teaching people about biology when all around us men are bent on exploiting and abusing the environment for selfish motives? What is the sense of studying the natural world around us unless we do something to preserve and protect it?"

One such trip, however, proved to be a turning point for Ananta.

We had spent a couple of months studying a
saltwater marsh slated for the construction of a marina. We did field studies, took animal counts, and wrote letters describing how ecologically beneficial the marsh was. Despite all our efforts, the marsh was eventually turned into a marina. I was completely discouraged. If some party came along with stronger interests or more money, they would just override the interests of those who were less powerful and had less money. This episode provoked me to resolve that I must find a way to influence people’s consciousness and show them that they should become less self-centered.

After travelling around the world for the next few years and experimenting with various religious and philosophical traditions, Ananta eventually came across Krishna Consciousness and committed himself to this lifestyle in 1975.

In this case, that aspect of the situation which we would call the subject’s scene, was defined as the mysteriously beautiful and awe-inspiring natural world. Given this scene, the subject felt that the most appropriate attitude that one should have toward the scene was one of reverence. Thus the most appropriate way of behaving in the scene is by protecting it and treating it with respect. With such a view of reality, Ananta’s purpose was to educate people to the reverential nature of the natural world and the appropriate manner in which one should approach it. A
problem arose, however, in that the subject did not view himself as an agent. In his view only those with money and influence could be agents because only they have the power to enforce their definitions of reality and act accordingly. Furthermore, these agent's definitions of reality were in conflict with those of the subject. Whereas Ananta saw the natural world as a scene which demands attitudes and behaviours that are commensurate with its majesty, the agents defined the natural world as an agency. Their attitude toward nature was an instrumental one. Thus the subject's concept of the agents as "developers" who intended on exploiting and destroying a natural habitat was in conflict with his concept of the scene and purpose. With such disharmony in the ratios, again, frustration and dissatisfaction emerged. There was a feeling that something must be done to set things right. Hence the subject was motivated to seek out consistency and propriety.

So motivated, the subject began to experiment with different reality defining systems. He continued to search until he happened across Krishna Consciousness, where he found the pentadic harmonies that satisfied him, and decided to there end his search.

We might now ask how converting to Krishna Consciousness restored the propriety in the ratios and thereby terminated the motivation to seek change. It would seem that the Hare Krishna philosophy, best summed up in the phrase "you are not this body, you are an eternal spirit soul", would allow the
subject to redefine his concept of agent. Such a belief would tend to discount the wealth and power of the developers (and other agents) as being merely illusory, while at the same time emphasizing the value of non-materialistic, spiritual things, such as God and the soul, as the only true and ultimate reality. This philosophy would allow the subject to discount the 'false' agent-hood of the developers and redefine himself as the agent, as the one with the power to act.

Also the typically Hindu doctrine of the immanent presence of God in all creation would help the subject to justify his conception of the natural world as being somehow 'sacred' and worthy of respect and reverential behaviour.

Finally, all these views are consistent with the subject's goal of "influencing people's consciousness so they become less self-centered." As a devotee of Krishna, he will be working to make people more God-centred, in short, Krishna conscious.

With the pentodes so redefined, harmony is returned to the ratios and the motivational pressure to seek harmonious ratios is fulfilled.

CASE #3

Tulasi-devi dasi is a female householder, now 37 years
old. She is currently working as a receptionist for her local temple, but is also seeking employment in the outside community so that she might better contribute to the temple's financial resources.

Tulasi-devi was initiated in May of 1969, at the age of 19. Raised in a Methodist family, she spent most of her late teens experimenting with various philosophies and belief systems.

I was interested in different religions. At that time, in the 'sixties, I was like many people, searching for the truth, searching for God. I went through different phases of being agnostic, to actually joining different churches. I actually got baptised a Mormon.

But after a while I just had questions that couldn't be answered. I wanted to know about life on other planets and about reincarnation. I wanted to know more about God. I was also into yoga. I read Autobiography of a Yogi. I took yoga lessons. I was going through a phase of really searching, in my spare time reading occult books, witchcraft; you name it, I was reading it. But I didn't find anything really satisfying.

All I know is that I really, really loved Jesus. When I was a freshman at college I had an altar with a picture of Jesus. I used to burn incense and have a candle burning and I was reading the Bible everyday. I wasn't any particular faith, but I was praying like
anything: 'please Jesus, help me to find God.' I was just praying to Jesus really sincerely. And I met the devotees right after that, and I'm pretty sure Jesus had answered my prayers.

Tulasi-devi's first encounter with the devotees came during a demonstration she attended on vegetarian cooking. She had recently become a vegetarian for ethical reasons and was interested in learning how to prepare more varied meals. While at the demonstration she was introduced to a Hare Krishna devotee and received some literature on the movement. After reading about the philosophy of the sect, the subject began to attend the Sunday open house at a nearby temple. But, as she explains, she remained reluctant to become involved with Krishna Consciousness.

I was a little bit afraid at that time. In Christianity, most churches teach that Jesus is the only way. So I was a little afraid. I didn't want to, as they might say, get misled by the Devil, or tempted away from Jesus. So I was thinking: 'God, please help me understand. Is Jesus the only way? Or is Krishna actually the name of God?' So at first I had some reservations. So I wrote to Prabhupada and I told him I didn't want to get brainwashed, but that I was interested in his philosophy. He wrote and said: 'we don't ask any one to give up their love for their
religion. Jesus Christ is the son of God. And if you chant the Hare Krishna mantra your love of God can only increase.' And so I began chanting to pictures in a Bible and just looking at Jesus, and I remember actually feeling closer to Jesus by chanting Hare Krishna.' So I was getting really inspired.

One day Shrila Prabhupada visited the town where Tulasi-devi lived and she was able to meet him in person.

I met Prabhupada and I've never met anyone like him. Just being in the same room with him was a wonderful experience. He was very, very humble. He was not walking around like 'I know God'. He was just very humble. He really looked like he had a lot of love in his eyes, just the way he looked at people. When he talked about Krishna I just really felt that this man knows what he's talking about. He's come from the spiritual world. So I decided right then and there that I wanted to get initiated. I wanted to become a devotee and serve Krishna.'

In terms of analysis, we can understand this case as follows. In the subject's definition of reality, she was not the agent. For her, God, or the Absolute Truth was the true agent. Jesus Christ, as the revelation of God to humankind was, therefore, the agency, or the means by which
the Absolute expressed itself. Thus the subject saw the purpose of action as being for the 'glorification of God', so to say. These definitions of agent, agency, and purpose were probably derived from her Methodist upbringing. In such a situation, then, the most appropriate act would be to submit to and serve God as expressed through the agency of Jesus. However, the scene in this situation is the youth/Hippie counter-culture of the 1960's; a scene characterized by the questioning and criticism of traditional ideas and values as well as the encouragement of experimentation with alternative lifestyles, philosophies and belief systems. It was a time when "many people were searching for the truth, searching for God." Thus, the scene in which the subject found herself conflicted, not so much with the agent (because many people were seeking the 'truth'), but with the way in which she believed the truth was revealed, the agency. The traditional view of Jesus as the Son of God, The Way, The Truth and The Light, etc. was questioned and discarded by the majority of the youth culture in the 'sixties. Thus, the scene was innappropriate to the subject's definition of agency. Moreover, by emphasizing questioning, experimentation, and searching, the scene was not conducive to her desire to submit unquestioningly to God (i.e. the scene was inconducive to the act).

For the subject to achieve harmony in the ratios, either the scene or the agency had to be altered. For Tulasi-devi such harmony was found in Prabhupada's reassurances.
Prabhupada’s acknowledgment of Jesus as a valid agency of God and reaffirmation that loving and serving Jesus was an appropriate act, helped reinforce the subject’s notions of Jesus as an appropriate agency of God and discount the influence of the scene. Moreover, Prabhupada’s qualities of humility, concern, and wisdom made her see him too as a revealer of the truth, as an agency of God. Prabhupada’s humility was such an important factor because such a self-effacing manner demonstrated that he did not consider himself to be the agent, but rather the agency of a more worthy agent, the Supreme Agent, God. Since Prabhupada was now seen, along with Jesus, as a co-expression or co-agency of the supreme agent ("He came from the spiritual world"), the most appropriate act would be to submit to Prabhupada and fulfill the purpose of glorifying the Absolute.

CASE #4

Pradyumna-dasa is a 42 year-old male brahmacari. As a Pulici (priest) he performs the many religious ceremonies in the temple and cares for the images of Krishna. He joined the movement in 1975 at the age of 30, an unusually advanced age for converting to Krishna Consciousness.

When I graduated from high school it had been my intention since I was a child to be a priest. I entered
a monastery in 1964 to study for the priesthood. But after a year and a half I realized that my concept of what Christian spiritual life was was totally different from the practicing concepts that the priests were living at the time. What I wanted was something very idealistic. And what I found was nothing but a bunch of arguing, contradictory group of people who weren't very happy. Plus the fact that in the end I kept feeling like saying to Christ: 'if you're a person why are you hiding inside this altar, inside this tabernacle?' I kept thinking 'I am your friend and here I am trying to be your servant and you're hiding from me. You're not letting me know anything about you.' I was frustrated in that I knew too little of him to be able to give all myself to him. He just wasn't available. Whereas the concept of Krishna is completely different because you can read sixty-four books all about him, his pastimes, his lineage, what he eats, everything. So you can really know Krishna as a person whereas you cannot know Jesus as a person. At least I couldn't. So I simply gave up on that idea.

For the next ten years of my life I became very materialistic and I spent my time like any materialist does, buying clothes, buying things for myself, enjoying my senses, making my life as easy and as comfortable as possible. But within there was always that frustration that this isn't enough. This is all going to be wiped
out by death. And I have to work so hard for what I get. I kept wishing that someone would just come and take me away from this; that somehow I could be financially independent or some how I wouldn't have to face the reality of the everyday working world. I was thinking 'couldn't I be different, like win fifty million dollars or something like this?' Just couldn't I be spared having to be like everybody else, having to get up and go to work?' But I certainly didn't have any solution to what I was going to do to make my life easier.

Pradyumna first encountered the Hare Krishna devotees at their annual parade in which the images of Krishna are carried through the streets on large carts.

When I saw the devotees I thought 'these people are worshipping these forms as if they were God.' And I said 'why not? Why can't God look like this? God can look any way.' I just thought it was so far out. I thought that this was so different from anything I'd ever seen before. But I didn't dismiss it as being nonsense because there was a very serious mood and everyone was being very nice. So I read their books and I started visiting the temple regularly. Everything seemed okay. And nothing seemed so far out that I just couldn't accept it. Naturally they kept asking me 'why
don't you just give up what you're doing and move into the temple?' I just thought it was a crazy, irresponsible thing to do, but something inside me said 'do it'. And after I made that commitment to myself I felt like the world had been lifted off my shoulders. I had been worrying about my life and over what my future would be with the company I worked for and the people I worked with. But all these doubts and all the frustrations just flew off of me. And I just thought 'oh my God. It's like I'm free again'. I felt like I had just inherited twenty million dollars and I could now do with my life whatever I wanted. I didn't have the burden of getting up and going to work every day. So then I moved into the temple.

Pradyumna saw himself as a religious person: a friend and servant of God (agent). His goal since childhood was to become a priest and live a spiritual, God-centered life (purpose). However, the scene in which he found himself during his stay at the monastery was not the idyllic one he had anticipated, but one characterized by an 'arguing, contradictory group of people who weren't very happy.' Thus, this scene was inappropriate to both his definition of himself as a servant of God and his purpose of leading an untainted spiritual life.

Furthermore, the very nature of Roman Catholicism proved it to be an inadequate agency in relation to the agent since
it did not allow the subject to really know Jesus on a personal level. Thus he felt he could not be a friend and servant to Jesus, a conclusion that was in conflict with his definition of himself as an agent.

In response to these inconsistencies in the situation (and in an attempt to escape them), the subject removed himself from the inappropriate scene and agency and turned to a more materialistic lifestyle. The secular, materialistic realm provided a new scene, namely the 'nine-to-five' working world. It also provided the subject with new purposes; being comfortable, enjoying the senses, etc. This new scene and purpose, however, also proved to be inappropriate, since the subject did not like the kind of agent these implied him to be. Although he chose to leave the monastery for a secular life, his definition of himself as a friend of God remained intact, as well as his ultimate goal of leading a viable spiritual life. Thus the agency of a basically hedonistic lifestyle and the 'rat-race' nature of the scene proved inappropriate to the agent and his purpose. This sense of inconsistency is reflected in the subject's wishes to be taken away from the reality of the everyday working world and the desire to be "spared having to be like everybody else."

Pradyumna's first encounter with the devotees is interesting because it again illustrates the working of the principle of consistency. He indicates that the encounter was very different and foreign to him, but that he "didn't dismiss it as being nonsense because there was a very serious
mood and everyone was being very nice." The warm yet reverent and serious nature of the scene made the action of worshipping these otherwise strange images seem totally appropriate. The act was consistent with the scene, and hence the whole situation "felt right."

On further investigation, the subject began to see that Krishna Consciousness was able to provide a scene and agency which were appropriate to his definition of himself as a friend of God, and his goal of leading a viable spiritually-based lifestyle. Hence, when invited to move into the temple, the act seemed to be right. He reports that "something inside me said 'do it'." This "something" was the recognition that such an act would bring harmony to the ratios and eliminate the frustration resulting from the "dramatistic inconsistencies" he was experiencing in the secular world. And, in fact, after making the decision to join, the subject "felt like the world had been lifted off my shoulders. It's like I'm free again."

CASE #5

Pandava-dasa, now 29 and single, has a university education and is considering returning to school to study law. Presently he is in charge of fund raising and distributing Krishna Conscious literature.

Pandava was introduced to the Hare Krishna philosophy in the mid 1970's by a friend who suggested he read the Bhagavad
So I was reading Bhagavad Gita in my senior year in high school, and I was really getting more and more into Krishna. More, I think, because it was kind of a cool thing to do than anything else. My circle of friends was kind of like people who were into philosophy, poetry, literature, music, that kind of thing. We were hardly what you would call rowdies or anything like that. So anyway, Bhagavad Gita was kind of accepted in that circle. We all thought that it was kind of far out. Besides, the Beatles were into Krishna, and I really liked the Beatles, so I thought Hare Krishna was a really cool thing to do.

After graduating from high school, Pandava attended a prestigious university with the intention of becoming a lawyer and "to make a lot of money." While there he continued to read Hare Krishna literature.

I wasn't in any kind of distressful situation or anything like that. And I definitely wasn't searching for knowledge of the Absolute. I was basically a hedonist from a very rich Jewish background. And I thought the material world was a pretty good place. And I kind of liked it and all it had to offer. And I wasn't really 'fraid' with relationships with people. I
had a lot of friends. And I got along well with my family. But I guess I was just kind of inquisitive.

Living in a university residence was a new experience for Pandava and he was exposed to many new influences.

I was living in a dorm with beer drinking, parties, the whole bit. But right from the beginning I wasn't involved in breaking any of the principles because I was already interested in Krishna Consciousness. But I was never into these things anyway. I wasn't into drugs. I never even drank alcohol in my life. I never have. Or smoked. So this was a big help because usually people let loose when they go to school and get away from the folks. And everyone kind of respected it. Because they knew I was kind of bright and getting real good grades. So my lifestyle was never questioned. All I did basically was study at university, play a little basketball. I wasn't partying or going to bars and stuff. I also studied Shrila Prabhupada's books, and I got more and more into Krishna Consciousness. And also more into doing service. Because by reading the philosophy you feel inclined to do something, to do some devotional service. And by doing service you get a taste for it and you want to do it more and more. Eventually I thought that it was important for me to
take up devotional service on a full time basis. Besides, I was feeling that the academics at the school were getting drier and drier and I was losing the taste for them.

In this case the subject describes himself as basically a hedonist who enjoyed the advantages of his wealthy upbringing and the benefits of the material world. However, his lifestyle reflects a fairly disciplined one in terms of avoiding alcohol, drug use, and casual sex (agent). Being happy with the material pleasures of life, he seems to define his goal in life as the further pursuit of such and a continuation of the comfortable lifestyle to which he was accustomed (purpose). He intended to achieve this goal by becoming a lawyer, a profession which was consistent with this purpose (agency). However, the subject found himself in a scene (consisting of a group of rather Bohemian friends) which encourage exploration of various literary and philosophic works, including the Bhagavad Gita. Thus the act of exploring and taking up the principles of the Krishna Conscious philosophy seemed consistent with the scene and was, therefore acceptable and quite in vogue. Moreover, taking up the regulative principles of behaviour was an act appropriate to the agent, since the subject wasn't involved in any of the tabooed indulgences anyhow (i.e. alcohol, drugs, extramarital sex, gambling).

When the subject started university, the scene was
suddenly changed. University dormitory life, with its parties, intoxication, and permissiveness was inconsistent with Pandava's conception of himself. Also, his new scene was no longer conducive to the regulated lifestyle which had now become a part of his agency (i.e. the means by which he acted). Thus there was scene-agent and scene-agency conflict. Coupled with this, there was also conflict between the new agency and the purpose. Krishna Consciousness was not consistent with a comfortable life in pursuit of material pleasures. A more suitable pursuit would be serving Krishna. Such reasoning is evidenced by the subject's report that "by reading the philosophy you feel inclined to do something, to do some devotional service."

With these revised definitions of agent, agency and purpose, the subject's interest in the old agency, becoming a lawyer, gradually waned; it now being inappropriate to the situation. This helps explain why the "academics at the school were getting drier and drier and I was losing the taste for them."

CASE #6

Gopinatha-dasa is a 38 year-old male Indo-Canadian householder who works as a professional engineer in the outside community. Prior to joining the movement he lived with his wife and two children in a large suburb. His aspirations for the future were "to be happy, to buy a house,
to make more money on the job, to maybe to take a trip now and then, and to have less problems on my shoulders."
Although he was a Hindu by birth, he never practiced it or considered himself to be religious.

The idea of Krishna Consciousness had already existed in my family, but I never paid much attention to it. I was busy with my own kind of life.

Then in 1981, both Gopinatha and his wife decided to join the Hare Krishna movement. This decision followed a weekend trip to New Vrindavan, a Hare Krishna shrine in West Virginia.

A year earlier a lot of families that we knew went there. And at that time we said we didn’t want to go. We really weren’t interested. Then the next year a very close friend said ‘come on, I’ve been there. It’s really nice. You can take a little vacation down there from work. It’ll be a nice change.’ I said for that reason I would go. But that was the only reason. Just for vacation. Otherwise I had no intention of going down there.

Once there, Gopinatha witnessed the Hare Krishna lifestyle first-hand and was immediately attracted to the devotees and the Hare Krishna philosophy.
There were many attractive things. The whole place was very clean. And there was so much devotion. It wasn't like it was just showy, it was actual devotion. And we walked around the grounds and saw the Palace of Gold. It was really something. And they told me that it had been built out of love for Prabhupada. That surprised me, how they could build such a monument based on devotion. And I saw how well they treated the animals, with the elephants and cows and peacocks running all around. And the scenery was so beautiful. It was just so peaceful, so serene. And just no pressure down there at all.

I hadn't expected to have my life changed. But it all made sense very quickly. I used to talk to them to find out why they were like that. As they talked and explained it to me it started to make sense. And I was in the wrong and they were in the right, so to say.

It wasn't until the trip back home that the full extent of the experience hit Gopinatha.

I felt it when we started turning back from New Vrindavan. I felt emptiness in my life. I started feeling it as soon as we left. I was feeling vacant and empty. I turned around to my wife and said 'for some
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reason or other. I'm feeling all vacant. Something is missing. I left something behind in New Vrindavan. And she said 'I was going to say the same thing to you!' She felt the same as me.

The very next day Gopinatha and his wife decided to join the movement.

It took about a week to start maneuvering in the right direction and cleaning up my life: eliminating think, meat, gambling, and all that kind of thing. And in three months everything went out the door. My extra activities which were going to all these nonsense places, like eating out, pictures, cinemas, and all that, I just lost the taste for them. They weren't interesting anymore. Staying up at night wasn't interesting anymore, playing cards wasn't interesting anymore. It's not that it was hard to give up. I just lost the taste for it. It just kind of vanished.

Gopinatha defined himself as a committed husband and father, as well as a professional engineer (agents). His goal in life was to be happy; to have a peaceful, comfortable life with his family, free from problems (purpose). He figured that the best way to achieve this goal was by working at a well paying job, having a nice house; occasional vacations, etc. (agency). The scene for all this was a
'nice' neighbourhood in upper-middle-class suburbia.

We can see that the pentodes which defined this situation weren't really incompatible and the ratios were fairly stable. This is evidenced by the subject's expressions of contentedness and the absence of any reports of frustration or dissatisfaction. When questioned about any disillusion with this lifestyle, he responded: "Disillusion? I didn't even know what disillusion was until I went to New Vrindavan. It was just like the rest of the ninety-nine percent of the population. We didn't know any better. We thought we were happy."

Thus, we see that it was the trip to the Hare Krishna shrine that was the pivotal point in this subject's conversion. Once in New Vrindavan, the subject was exposed to a new scene: the serenity, beauty, and peace of the rural religious community. The subject reports finding this scene immediately attractive. He was also attracted to the easy-going devotional lifestyle of the devotees. In dramatic terms, we can understand this immediate attraction as the recognition that this was a scene in which his purpose of living a comfortable, pressure-free, happy life was already fulfilled. Thus, this new scene seemed quite appropriate to his goal. Moreover, seeing how content these devotees were in the sedate rural beauty of a Krishna Conscious community made him further realize that the Hare Krishna lifestyle seemed appropriate to the goal of living a comfortable, low-pressure life. In other words, a Krishna Conscious lifestyle
seemed like an appropriate agency (means by which to act) to achieve the purpose. This harmony in the scene-purpose and agency-purpose ratios, then, explains the subject's immediate attraction to Krishna Consciousness and his fascination with the lifestyle based on devotion. Furthermore, the immediate contentedness experienced in the new situation (i.e., the immediate satisfaction of purpose) probably led the subject to begin to question the efficacy of his previously defined agency and scene in attaining his purpose. A good job and an expensive house in suburbia didn't have quite as immediate results in attaining a relaxing, comfortable life as did an uncomplicated 'devotional' life in this simple, utopian community. Thus, upon speaking with the devotees about "why they were like that," he reports that "As they talked and explained it to me, it all started to make sense. And I saw in the wrong and they were in the right, so to say."

It is important to note that this new scene and agency were still consistent with the subject's definition of the agent. A Krishna-centred life in a Krishna Conscious community does not rule out the possibility of being a devoted father, husband, or professional. There would be, therefore, no conflict between this definition of agent and the new definitions of agency and scene.

With all the pentodes so defined, the principle of consistency calls for an act which is consistent with this new view of the situation. Such an appropriate act would be to commit oneself to the new scene and agency; in short, join
the Hare Krishna movement. However, upon leaving New
Vrindavan, Gopinatha and his wife were, in effect, abandoning
the scene and agency that seemed to be so appropriate to
their purpose. This act, then, denied the propriety of the
ratios and offended the principle of consistency. Such
impropriety, as we already have seen, brings about a sense of
disharmony; of something not being correct. It is,
therefore, no wonder that the subject experienced a feeling
of loss and emptiness upon leaving New Vrindavan. He was
leaving behind a scene and agency which was now seen as the
most appropriate to the agent and his purpose and returning
to a new inappropriate situation back home. Hence, there was
a feeling that “something was missing”, that he had “left
something behind in New Vrindavan.”

This intrusion of new pentodes, then, brought disharmony
to an otherwise consistent situation and hence set up a
motivational pressure to make the ratios once again
consistent. Such consistency was achieved by the act of
joining the Hare Krishna movement.

Finally, the subject’s report of “losing taste” for his
old lifestyle is the result of being involved in a new round
of ratios. Eating out, playing cards, going to the cinema,
etc. are all vestiges of the “old” agency which is no longer
seen as an appropriate means of attaining the purpose.
Hence, these things are no longer a significant part of
reality as defined by the new ratios. It is interesting to
note that, although the subject has accepted new definitions
of scene and agency, these new definitions do not necessarily preclude having a nice house, a good job, vacations, etc. These things are just no longer seen as necessary to the attainment of the purpose.

"I'm finding that I'm still working at my job. I've still got a house and family. But now I'm involved with this wonderful movement as well. So what have I lost?"

Furthermore, such 'materialistic' things actually can become transformed as agencies of the new purpose, since the Hare Krishna philosophy stipulates that material goods used in the service of Krishna or his devotees are made spiritual, in effect, 'purified' of their material 'contamination'.

One final factor in the conversion of Gopinatha was his concern for his family's ethnic identity. Having been born and raised in a Western country and not having experienced a traditional Hindu home life, the subject, his wife, and his children had little knowledge of their Indian heritage. As Gopinatha said:

The idea of Krishna Consciousness had already existed in my family, but I never paid much attention to it. I was busy with my own kind of life.

Both Gopinatha and his wife felt that the family should make an attempt to 'get in touch with their roots'. Thus,
being of Indian ancestry (agent), the principle of
consistency suggests that any agency to achieve a purpose
should be harmonious with this aspect of the agent. Krishna
Consciousness, being essentially a very traditional Hindu
lifestyle, was, therefore, an agency appropriate to the
agent.

CASE 37

Harinama-dasa is a 34 year-old male householder who
works for the temple as a pujari (priest).

In 1977, having just graduated from university with a
Bachelor of Science degree, decided to "take it easy for a
while" and travel around the world.

I must have visited over fifty countries, places
like India Africa, Australia. And I started to get some
feelings like, 'okay, I've visited all these places, now
what's life all about?' And I started to feel some
dissatisfaction. I can remember specifically one
experience. I was in Swaziland. One day I was going up
into the nice rolling hills and just enjoying the nice
easy-going atmosphere there. And I was thinking, 'Wow,
I've really not it made here. There's everything I've
ever wanted.' I was having a good time. Everybody
imagines how they'd have a good time if everything was
working out perfect for them. For some people making
it means getting a million dollars. For me making it was going to some nice place and having a good time. So here everything had worked out perfect. I had achieved my dream. I was in a nice place. Everything was supposed to be perfect and to fulfill my desires. But there was something in my heart that struck me: 'But I'm still not happy. I made it, but I'm not happy.' So there was a seed of dissatisfaction there, and from that seed the dissatisfaction started to grow and grow.

I started to think, 'So what is life all about anyhow?' I was thinking about where I'd been all around the world, and there were so many crazy things happening. There were so many wars and problems in the world. And the world is being run by all these politicians who are ultimately just out for themselves. They have their own selfish motives. And these people are running the world. So it sounds like a pretty crazy world. So that got me more in motion. I was living in this crazy world, nobody knows what it's all about, you can't be happy here anyhow. So I was pushed to know more and more.

So I started going back and looking. I was Catholic when I was younger. So I started to take another look at that to see if there was some truth that I missed. But the answers just weren't there. I asked a priest once about reincarnation, but he didn't have any answer for me. It just went over his head. We
don’t believe in that.” He just brushed it off. So I could tell that in the Christianity scene there was something incomplete; I wasn’t going to find all my answers there. So I had to find them somewhere else.

So anyway, when I was in Paris, I met some devotees singing in the street. They gave me some books and I started to read them. And as I read I started seeing: “hey! these are the answers!” There wasn’t any question that I had asked that they didn’t have an answer to. When you hit on the truth you immediately recognize it. And in the Krishna Consciousness philosophy all the answers are there. And there was so much detail given to you, information about the truth of existence here, that it is like coming home if you’re looking for some truth. I even felt like that when I first met the devotees. I felt like I’ve come home here because these people are willing to talk about these things and many other people don’t care to talk about or discuss them.

So anyway, having received that truth, that truth isn’t going to change. So many things may change in this world, but the truth isn’t going to change. So whenever I have some hardships in my life I meditate: still the truth is Krishna, there’s no denying that. And we’re Krishna’s servants and we can’t be happy any other way other than serving God. So that’s what keeps me going. This the way the path is and this is where
the light is.

The subject, having recently finished his education (agent), felt free to pursue his goal of "making it": of having everything, 'work out perfect' and having his 'desires fulfilled' (purpose). This he planned to achieve by travelling to nice places and having a 'good time' (agency). This agency, however, proved to be inappropriate to this purpose, since it only resulted in revealing to the subject the nature of the scene as a crazy, mixed-up world led by greedy politicians. This scene was not appropriate to Harinama's purpose. Nor was the agency, which only served to exacerbate the inappropriateness of the scene. The realization that his purpose didn't correspond with his agency or scene brought about feelings of frustration and dissatisfaction, feelings which prompted the subject to question his purpose and agency and ask: "what is life about anyhow?" Thus, once again, inconsistency in the ratios acted as a motivation to seek out harmony. The subject then began to look for ways in which to restore propriety to the ratios. Such a means was not, however, to be found in the Catholicism of his youth, since it proved to be "incomplete." In other words, Catholicism didn't offer a feasible way of redefining the parameters and realigning the ratios. "I wasn't going to find all my answers there. So I had to find them somewhere else."

Once he encountered Krishna Consciousness, he found the
'answers,' the subject was looking for. It was able to explain the meaning of life to his satisfaction. This satisfaction was, in dramatic frame, due to the fact that the subject recognized in Krishna Consciousness the possibility of satisfactorily realigning the ratios. The Hare Krishna philosophy affirms the definition of scene that the subject already had (i.e., the world as a confused and confusing place), and explains this reality as a product of peoples' ignorance of God and attachment to materialistic pleasures. The philosophy also offers a new agency with which one can effectively deal with this scene, namely by renouncing it and taking on an anti-materialistic, God-centered lifestyle. Being presented with the opportunity to redefine his ideas of agency, agency, and purpose in ways that explain the scene and allow one to deal with it, the subject decided to reduce the inconsistencies in his situation by taking up Krishna Consciousness.

Finally, the subject states that "having received that truth, that truth isn't going to change." In other words, when there is harmony restored to the ratios, the original impropriety is corrected and the motivation to seek change, which was a result of such impropriety, is terminated.

CASE 118

Jayatguru Swami is 34 years and is a guru, or spiritual
master. Having entered the life-stage of sanyasa, he has renounced all material possessions and family ties to dedicate himself to the study and teaching of Krishna Consciousness.

Born and raised in a rural farm community, Jagat-guru always considered himself "kind of a loner" and never really got used to the idea of living in the city where he attended the fine arts program at a community college.

All along since I was very young I always thought of a monastic life or a renounced life. At least I was thinking that I'd probably be very reclusive and I'd work at my art or something. I thought I'd probably be one of those crazy artist types following in the disciplic succession of Van Gogh. Maybe not quite so crazy, but definitely a little bit reclusive. I was thinking that this might be a career I'd get involved in and I was prepared to follow the poverty kind of life that goes along with being an artist. It was also a time when I was thinking of doing some kind of social work in the social welfare area. I wanted to work with aboriginal peoples or something like that. I always had a sort of a deep conviction inside that I should do something to benefit mankind."

But in college, he was not happy. Although he had some good friends and he was working at his art, he was "getting
no real satisfaction from it."

I was doing what I thought I liked best, my art work, and I had some talent for that. And I had a good large body of friends. Still, inside, although I never really admitted it to them, I was searching for something more.

What I was trying to do in college seemed very artificial. Through my artwork I was trying to evolve a kind of religion out of itself. But I wasn't successful at it. So I tried to acquire a sense of peace through working with my hands, and of course it is a kind of therapy, but I wanted to try and gain a kind of mental peace from it as well. But it wasn't there. It wasn't satisfying. It just wasn't complete.

Jagat Guru didn't see himself as searching for the truth or God. Nor was he concerned with investigating philosophical or religious traditions. However a chance encounter with some devotees started him thinking about Krishna Consciousness.

I must say that I agreed with a lot of what they were saying. What they had was so right-on in terms of the philosophy and the lifestyle. They indicated I should be a vegetarian and immediately it registered, 'yes I should. I never liked that flabby blubber that
we used to eat." So it immediately registered in my mind. It just went very well with me. It digested well and I decided that I would probably join them one day.

I was always disenchanted with society. I was very much disenchanted with the way people were toward one another. I was very disenchanted with the way people were so inconsiderate of one another. This just kind of alienated me more and more from the kind of society that we're living in. And I saw that the only way out really, was to be in a community that was doing the complete opposite; a community where people were trying to get along. And I could see that these people were making a very honest attempt to come together and work harmoniously under the umbrella of Krishna consciousness. So that was very attractive to me.

It was one specific instance of such "alienation" that precipitated Janat's decision to join the Hare Krishna temple. After visiting some relatives in the country for the day, he tried to hitch-hike a ride back to his apartment in the city.

I wasn't successful. I stood there in the rain for about an hour and I just thought 'people are basically so self-centered. Why can't they just lend a helping hand?' So I didn't feel so much offended to myself, but I was just disgusted with the way people were in general
toward each other. And while I was walking I just
developed a strong inspiration, a strong desire to join
the temple. So when I got home, I packed my things and
headed for the temple.

Looking back, I can say that I'm very content in
Krishna Consciousness and I have no plans whatsoever to
do anything other than this. There will always be
dissatisfaction with the way things go on out there in
the world. And the more I see it, the more it degrades the
more it increases my fervor for propagating Krishna
Consciousness further.

Jagat Guru saw himself as a sensitive, caring, creative
individual who was a bit of a loner (agent). Unfortunately
he found himself in a scene composed of inconsiderate,
insensitive, self-centered people. The subject saw this
scene as being totally inappropriate to the agent and hence
was disgusted and offended by it. His goal, therefore, was to
remove himself from this scene and lead a reclusive life "far
from the madding crowd", as it were (purpose). This he tried
to accomplish through the life of an artist (agency). By its
very nature such a lifestyle tends to be rather eccentric and
reclusive. However, the subject soon found that this agency
was inappropriate to the agent; since although disgusted with
the nature of the scene, he still felt a concern for the
welfare of others and desire to benefit humankind. Thus
there was impropriety in the agency-agent ratio. This
explains why the subject found no peace through his art, and that it seemed artificial and lacking something.

These incongruences, then, acted as a motivation to be open to any new situations in which the inconsistency could be resolved. When the subject encountered Krishna Consciousness he recognized that it offered such a possibility. Krishna Consciousness offered a way of escaping the inappropriate old scene and provided a scene more appropriate to the agent: a scene in which “people were making a very honest attempt to come together and work harmoniously.”

Furthermore, Krishna Consciousness’ offer of salvation and ultimate spiritual knowledge was congruent with an agent who was concerned with social welfare. Thus the agent could achieve his purpose of being a recluse from society while at the same time leading a life which had the best interests of people in mind. This is evidenced by the subject’s final comment that the more he sees the world become degraded the more he desires to spread spiritual knowledge, as well as by the following:

I understood that the highest welfare work was the spiritual kind of work. Various humanitarian concerns only alleviate problems temporarily, whereas if you can give someone spiritual knowledge or well-being, then it permanently fixes them. So I thought that being a devotee was the most charitably disposed kind of career.
This was another great consideration in joining because I always wanted to help people in some way.
Chapter 6

A Discussion and Concluding Comments

One of the first things that should be noted is in all of these accounts there is very little—indeed, if any—sense of a crisis in life that makes the conversion an urgent necessity. Although all subjects reported a feeling of 'something not being quite right' or a sense of unbalance, these feelings rarely reached crisis proportions. They remained as nagging 'pushes' to resolve a situation in which the individual didn't quite fit. Thus, the conversions weren't, in large part, a violent reaction to some critical event, but rather the result of a more drawn-out, and 'logical' process of thought. Joining the Hare Krishna movement then, at least for the people interviewed in this study, seems to be a far more deliberate and reasoned act than is generally believed by most people. The converts see their decision as quite reasonable under the circumstances of their lives. Of course this conclusion must be tempered by considering the effects of the retrospective reconstruction of reality. It is very possible that the respondents' reports are biased, since people tend to reconstruct their past histories in light of the decisions and choices they have made. Having committed oneself psychologically,
emotionally, socially and even financially to a new lifestyle and new set of beliefs, one would tend to see one’s past experiences in a way which makes the decision to convert more positive. Hence it is possible that having committed themselves to the Hare Krishna movement “body and soul”, as it were, the subjects may have unwittingly biased their reports in a way which made their conversions appear to be more rational and volitional than they were. However, participant observation in situ of people at all stages of involvement with the movement tends to show that most individuals do experience the conversion process in the “rational”, activist way described by the interview respondents.

Another important factor in the conversion to the Hare Krishna movement, at least from the perspective of dramatism, is the fact that all initiates are given a new devotional name. These names are drawn from Hindu religious lore and tradition and are names of people, places, and things associated with Krishna, combined with the suffix dasa or dasi, meaning servant. Thus, the devotees new names serve to firmly establish them as servants of God. In dramatistic terms, this naming process functions to redefining the individuals as agencies of the Supreme Agent, Krishna. With such notions of agent and agency, the principle of consistency then demands action that is appropriate as a servant of the Absolute Actor. The devotional names therefore play a major role in the symbolic structuring of
reality for a Hare Krishna convert, and hence, as we have argued, a serve as a major part of his or her motivational structure for further action.

The purpose of this study has been to demonstrate the viability and utility of dramatism as a sociological tool in understanding the nature of conversion to a fringe religion, as a pro-active process.

A dramatistic analysis of any human behaviour is necessarily an activist analysis, since it assumes that, being essentially symbol-using creatures, humans react not to situations themselves, but to the situations as they are symbolically defined and elaborated in the minds of individuals. Moreover, dramatism argues that we will be able to "understand a person's motives when we comprehend the structure of those regnant, salient symbols that conceivably govern the situation in which the action takes place" (Signorile, 1977:6). It is precisely this explanation of motives as being derived from symbolic realities, and therefore subdivisions in a larger frame of meanings (Burke, 1965:ch.2), that makes a dramatistic approach an activist paradigm for the study of human action. Behaviour of any kind must always be, in some sense, volitional, since it is always a product of the manner in which an individual apprehends reality. All action, then, can be viewed as a deliberate attempt to engineer one's situation to achieve consistency among the aspects of reality as symbolically
defined. We can view religious conversion, being only a specific example of human action in general, as also a pro-active process. Conversion is the result of individuals becoming caught up in a new round of ratios in their attempts to establish propriety in their symbolic realities.

As we have seen, previous explanations of religious conversion to fringe religions presume a 'cause and effect' motivational base of behaviour, assuming that deprivations, role expectations, group dynamics, and coercive techniques act as motivations to join a new religious group. These views do not, however, take into account the fact that such 'stimuli' must be interpreted by individuals and become part of their symbolic realities before they can become part of the individuals' motivational structures. Moreover, depending on how these things are symbolically defined, they may or may not become motivations for action. Thus, one person may define a certain 'stimulus' in such a way that it is incorporated into the existing view of reality (i.e., becomes a relevant pentode). Another may simply see the same 'stimulus' as irrelevant and therefore not incorporate it into his or her pentad structure. Furthermore, if the 'stimulus' does become a relevant part of the pentad, it may or may not be consistent with the other aspects of reality as already defined by the individual. As we have seen, if it is inconsistent then there will be a motivational pressure brought to bear on the individual as a result of the violation of the principle of consistency. If, however, this
new element is consistent with the other pentodes, then no such motivational pressure will arise. Hence, the motivational power of such things as posited by the traditional 'passivist' models of conversion is not inherent in these 'stimuli' but dependent on humans' ability to differentially define reality through symbolization. In other words, a deprivation is not a deprivation unless it is defined as such. And it will not become a motivation unless it is perceived to be in conflict with other aspects of reality.

Even if two individuals were exposed to the same 'stimulus', and both did incorporate it into their definitions of reality in such a way as to be inconsistent with other aspects of reality and are hence motivated to act, the ways in which they will act will differ based on the specific nature of the pentodic conflict, the particular ratios affected, and so on. Thus one individual may act to change his scene while the other redefines her concept of purpose or her nature as agent.

Finally, even if our two individuals both join a fringe religion, their reasons for doing so will differ according to their particular consistency 'needs'. One may find that Krishna Consciousness provides a new, more appropriate scene, while the other may find that it restores propriety by providing a new purpose.

Thus we can see that there is an active role to be played by humans in defining reality and hence in determining
the motivations they will experience and the behaviours they will engage in. The dramatistic approach, then, serves to show how these proactive processes operate and therefore offers a more sophisticated and enlightening understanding of not only conversion, but human action in general. Moreover, its nature as an "activist" paradigm of motivation and action helps it to overcome many of the problems and criticisms that plague the former explanations of conversion: models which tended to victimize human beings and portray them passive, objects rather than as the social actors they are.

A. Phase of 'Creative Bumbling'

1) Vague sense of dissatisfaction and desire for life transformation
2) Covert investigation of possible means of life transformation and groups associated with them—use of social encounters, mass media, publications
3) Emergence of self-definition as a 'seeker' and willingness to play out that role
4) Discovery of a prospective and potentially successful means of change and its associated group

B. Phase of 'Creative Exploitation'

5) Checking out the group to get a feel for the situation and testing the efficacy of the means of change—tentative association with group
6) Trying out the means of life transformation on an experimental basis
7) Formal entrance into the group and full implementation of the means of change
8) Realization of and commitment to changed life—creation of a satisfying life experience within that new context

Please note that this is merely a summary of Straus' model and that the stages into which it has been broken down are arbitrary and only for the sake of presentation.
APPENDIX B: ISKCON's Disciplic Succession.

The disciplic succession (parampara) is the succession of spiritual masters who are considered by ISKCON to be bona fide representatives of Krishna. Devotees believe that it is through this historical "chain of command" that the philosophy of Krishna Consciousness has been passed down through the ages from the time of Krishna's appearance on the earth five-thousand years ago to the present day.

Krishna
Brahma
Narada
Vyasa
Madhva
Padmanabha
Nrihari
Madhava
Aksobhya
Jayatirtha
Jnanasindhu
Dayanidhi
Vidyandidhi
Rajendra
Jayadharma
Purureshape
Brahmanyatirtha
Vyasatirtha
Laksmipati
Madhavendra Puri
Ishvara Puri
Chaitanya Mahaprabhu (with Nityananda, Advaita, Shrivas, and Gadadhar)
Rupa Goswami
Swarupaa Goswami
Sanatana Goswami
Raghu Natha Goswami
Jiva Goswami
Krishnadasa
Narottama
Vishvanatha
Baladeva Jaganath
Bhaktivinoda Thakur
Gaurakishora
Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati
A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

Reference: Daner (1976:107)
APPENDIX C: Interview Guide.

1) Tell me about your life as a devotee.

PROBE FOR: -satisfactions/dissatisfactions
-aspirations-for self, for community
-lifestyle
-role in the community
-relationships within the community
-views of larger society and the community's relationship to it
-views of ideal society

2) Tell me about your life prior to joining the movement.

PROBE FOR: -lifestyle
-satisfactions/dissatisfactions
-family background and relationships
-beliefs/idea systems
-social relationships
-interests/involvements
-aspirations
-education

3) Tell me about the transition from your prior life to that of a devotee.

PROBE FOR: -motivating factors
-decision to convert
-experimentation with other groups/idea systems
-why Krishna Consciousness?
-initial exposure to Krishna philosophy
-first contacts with ISKCON/devotees
-information gathered/sources
-feelings/experiences at the time
-support systems/responses of others
-desire for life transformation
-elements of 'creative bumbling and exploitation'
-perceived responsibility for conversion
REFERENCES


VITA AUCTORIS

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