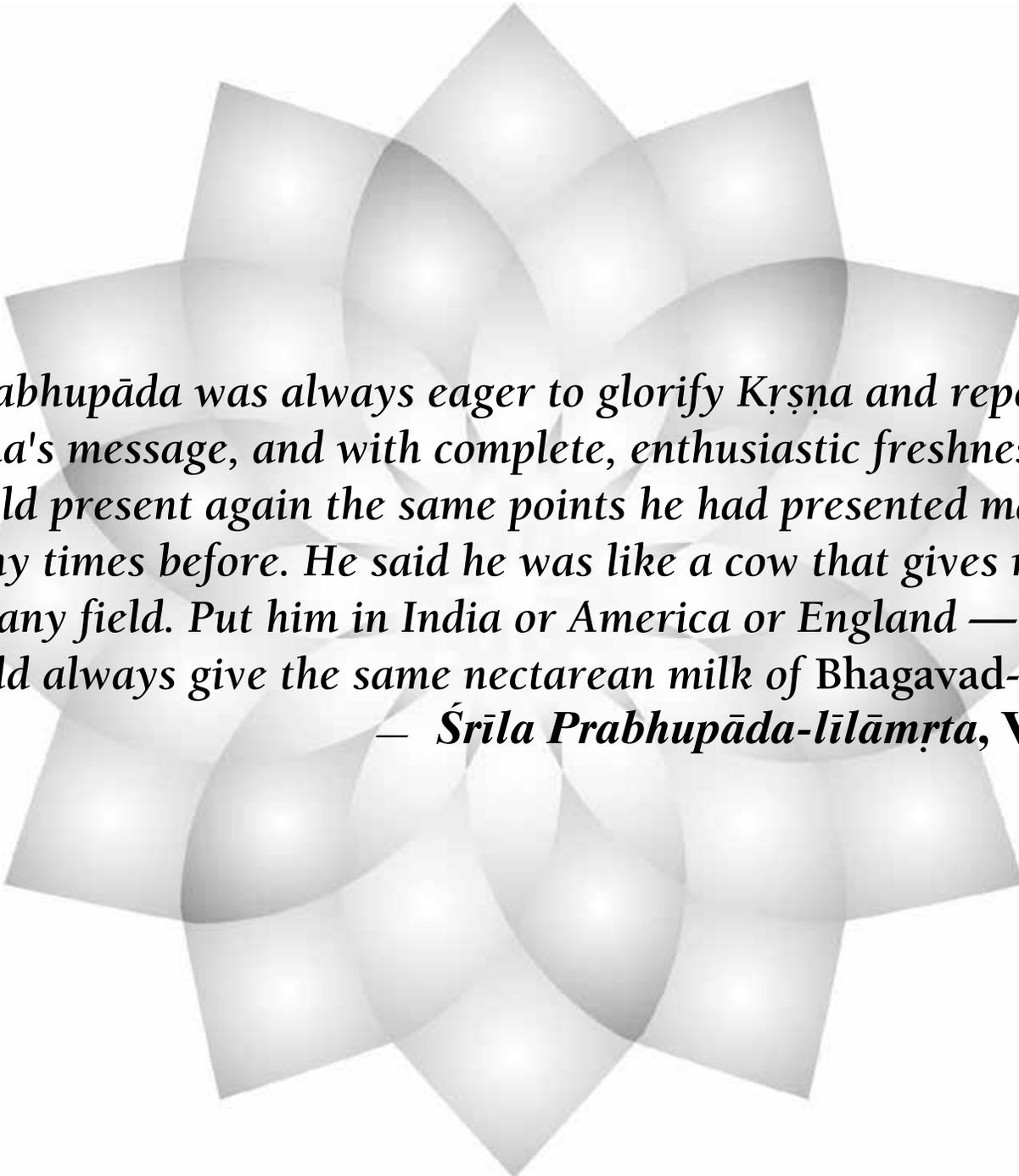


# The Bitter-Sweet Taste of Living *Bhagavad-gītā*

A humble offering to Śrīla Prabhupāda and all his sincere and serious followers in heart-preparation for a meaningful celebration of  
*Gītā Jayantī.*

— Presented by Śrīmatī Dāsī and team  
ISKCON, Śrī Vṛndāvana Dhāma



*Prabhupāda was always eager to glorify Kṛṣṇa and repeat Kṛṣṇa's message, and with complete, enthusiastic freshness he would present again the same points he had presented many, many times before. He said he was like a cow that gives milk in any field. Put him in India or America or England — he would always give the same nectarean milk of Bhagavad-gītā.*

*— Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta, Vol. 5*

# — Content Guide —

<b>1. Let's Face It!</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>2. A Glimpse of Śrīla Prabhupāda's Experience of Trying to Live <i>Bhagavad-gītā</i></b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>3. A Glimpse of Śrīla Prabhupāda's Experience of Trying to Serve <i>Bhagavad-gītā</i></b>	
❁ Scene One .....	<b>5</b>
❁ Scene Two .....	<b>6</b>
❁ Scene Three .....	<b>8</b>
<b>4. Serious Questions — Serious Answers:</b>	
❁ Is the struggling and suffering of a devotee the same as that of a materialist? .....	<b>10</b>
❁ Is a devotee's suffering a karmic reaction? .....	<b>12</b>
❁ Why does Kṛṣṇa allow His devotees to suffer? .....	<b>13</b>
❁ How does a devotee of Kṛṣṇa honestly feel about his struggles and suffering? .....	<b>15</b>
❁ How does Kṛṣṇa respond to such a devotee's mood? ....	<b>16</b>
<b>5. Concluding Words</b> .....	<b>17</b>
<b>6. A very special <i>Gītā Jayantī</i> gift from Śrīla Prabhupāda....</b>	<b>18</b>

## — Let's Face It! —

Let's face it. It's not easy trying to live *Bhagavad-gītā* in today's world — it's tough! And the taste is more often bitter/sweet than sweet/sweet. Govindadeva gives the practical essence of living *Bhagavad-gītā* in verse 18.66.....

***Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me.  
I shall deliver you from all sinful reactions. Do not fear.***

The Kali-yugian heart has no trouble with the first half of the equation — *abandon all varieties of religion*. That's very much in tune with today's life standards. But the second half — *surrender unto Me* — that's the tough part. Why do we find it so tough? Is it because of the qualities inherent to our nature in this Age?.....

***O learned one, in this iron Age of Kali men have but short lives. They are quarrelsome, lazy, misguided, unlucky and, above all, always disturbed.***  
(ŚB 1.1.10)

Śrīla Prabhupāda very graphically elaborates on this just to ensure we know what we're dealing with.....

- ❁ ***In the Kali-yuga the whole atmosphere is surcharged with faithlessness. Men are no longer interested in spiritual values. Material sense gratification is now the standard of civilization. (ŚB 1.1.10p)***
- ❁ ***The Age of Kali is the most condemned age due to its quarrelsome features. Kali-yuga is so saturated with vicious habits that there is a great fight at the slightest misunderstanding. (ŚB 1.1.16p)***
- ❁ ***The Age of Kali is very dangerous for the human being. Human life is simply meant for self-realization, but due to this dangerous age, men have completely forgotten the aim of life. In this age, the life span will gradually decrease. People will gradually lose their memory, finer sentiments, strength, and better qualities.....And so this age is very difficult for those who want to utilize this life for self-realization. The people are so busy with sense gratification that they completely forget about self-realization. (ŚB 1.1.22p)***

Quite a bit of in-built opposition to our trying to live *Bhagavad-gītā*, isn't there?! But if we manage to transcend all this negativity and sincerely surrender to Kṛṣṇa surely the taste will be sweet/sweet, won't it? Let's step into Śrīla Prabhupāda's life in 1954 to answer that question .....

## **A Glimpse of Śrīla Prabhupāda's Experience of Trying to Live *Bhagavad-gītā***

**Abhay, although always travelling and engaged in business and family affairs, was keen to preach. Whether in Allahabad, Jhansi or Kolkata, whenever his schedule allowed him to spend a few days at home, he liked to invite guests and friends for a *Bhagavad-gītā* class. *kīrtana* and *prasāda*. But his wife was never supportive or cooperative.**

**Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta tells us**

*When he visited his family in Calcutta, old friends would gather in his room, and he would preach and give classes on Bhagavad-gītā. Abhay invited his wife and family to take part in these discussions, but they would resolutely sit in an upstairs room, often taking tea, as if in defiance of his preaching. Abhay was supporting them, he was still associating with them, but he was bent on preaching, and they were not making it attractive for him to do so within the family. If there were to be family life for Abhay, then his wife and sons would have to recognize and rejoice in the fact that he was becoming a full-fledged preacher. They would have to understand that his life's concern was to serve his spiritual master's mission. They could not simply ignore his transformation. They could not insist that he was simply an ordinary man. Abhay continued to try to draw his wife in, hoping she would gradually follow him in the preacher's life. But she had not the slightest interest in her husband's preaching. (Vol. 1)*

**Śrīla Prabhupāda explains**

*I wanted as much as possible to get her to work with me in spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness, to get her help. But she was very determined. She wouldn't help me in spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness. So finally, after many years, I could understand — she would not be (of) any assistance to me.*

*She was very attached to drinking tea. I was always telling her not to drink tea, because I wanted to have a nice Vaiṣṇava family. So although I was repeatedly telling her, this time I finally said, "You have to choose between me or tea. Either the tea goes or I go." In this way, I was even criticizing my own family. But*

*because they were thinking I was the husband or father, they couldn't take my instruction seriously. So she replied, "Give up tea-drinking or give up my husband? Well, I will have to give up my husband, then." Of course, she thought I was joking. (Vol. 1)*

***Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta continues***

*One day, Radharani made a great mistake. There was a system of barter in which a customer would place on a scale an object a shopkeeper considered valuable and the shopkeeper would then balance it with an equal weight of merchandise. So while Abhay was out, his wife took his worshipable Bhāgavatam to the market and traded it for tea biscuits. When Abhay came home and looked for the book, she told him what had happened. She hadn't taken the matter as a very serious thing — she was out of tea biscuits — but Abhay was shocked. At first he felt depressed, but then a wave of absolute resolution passed over him: his family life was finished.*

*When he told them he was leaving, they didn't understand what he meant. He had been leaving for thirty years. He was always coming and going. When he walked out the door, they thought, "There he goes again. He's leaving." It was the usual routine. Everyone could see, even the neighbors — Mr. De was going again. He had been at home; now he was going. He would be back again. But Abhay knew he would never come back.*

***Śrīla Prabhupāda reflects on that time:*** *Before leaving my family, I wanted to get all my sons and daughters married, but some of them disagreed. But then... the time is up. Never mind whether they are married or not. Let them see to their own business. Suppose I die immediately — who will take care of my daughter? At that time we say, "God will take care." Then why not now? God will take care. My Guru Mahārāja used to say [that renunciation of family life was] "civil suicide." If you commit suicide, that is criminal. But that [renunciation of family] is voluntarily committing suicide — "Now I am dead. Whatever you like, you do."*

***Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta continues***

*Abhay's spiritual emotions were so turbulent that he wasn't thinking of going to Jhansi. He wanted to take a train to... anywhere. Then he remembered some old Godbrother friends who were living in an āśrama in Jhargram, only a short train ride south of Calcutta. So he borrowed ten rupees from a friend and bought a ticket to Jhargram.*

*It was a small maṭha. When Abhay arrived, he was welcomed by Paramahaṁsa Mahārāja, Dāmodara Mahārāja, and others. Paramahaṁsa Mahārāja had been present when Abhay had first met Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, and he remembered Abhay as he had looked then, dressed in white khādī, looking like a Gandhian "anarchist." Abhay explained to him, "I couldn't fulfill my family's needs. So now let me preach the message of Lord Caitanya." Abhay told him how his business had failed and how he had willingly left his family and was now destitute.*

***Paramahaṁsa Mahārāja comments:*** *When Abhay arrived he appeared very poor, starving. He had no means. He came alone to the maṭha, and when he arrived he only chanted Hare Kṛṣṇa, nothing else.*

*Abhay spent his time in Jhargram chanting the holy name and becoming settled in detachment from his family. For several days he chanted japa almost continuously. Paramahaṁsa Mahārāja would lecture in the evenings, and then Abhay would also speak on Bhagavad-gītā. But as time passed, his thoughts turned again to Jhansi, and he soon felt ready to go back to the League of Devotees. He had to secure the buildings and go on with the preaching.*

*But before returning he obtained a large Deity of Lord Caitanya that he planned to install at the Bharati Bhavan. Ironically, he had gone to Calcutta to do business and raise money, but now he had no money, no business, and no family responsibilities. He had been married thirty-six years, and now, at age fifty-eight, he had fully taken to the vānaprastha order. Now he could dedicate his life fully to preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness. (Vol. 1)*

**Certainly not a sweet/sweet experience for Śrīla Prabhupāda, was it?!  
At very best, it was bitter/sweet!**



**Perhaps my heart's response to reading all this is — Hmm! — I don't think I am ready to live *Bhagavad-gītā*. I don't have a taste for its bitter/sweet taste. Maybe I'll just serve *Bhagavad-gītā*. Govindadeva tells us in Bg 18.69**

*There is no servant in this world more dear to Me than he,  
nor will there ever be one more dear.*

**Yes, that definitely sounds sweeter. Surely the taste of trying to serve *Bhagavad-gītā* will be sweet/sweet/sweet! Let's step back into Abhay's life to gain some practical insight into the dynamics of serving *Bhagavad-gītā* ....**

## **Scene One**

### ***South India, 1948***

*While on business in Madurai, in South India, Abhay showed some of his writings to Muthuswamy Chetty, another medical salesman. Mr. Chetty was impressed and felt he could persuade his wealthy friend Dr. Allagappa, the famous "Birla of the South," to finance the printing. In April of 1948, Mr. Chetty wrote to Abhay, saying that he had been prompted to help Abhay "for something God has meant." He asked Abhay Charan to send him the complete Geetopanishad manuscript so that he could present it to Dr. Allagappa in Madras. Mr. Chetty had already written Dr. Allagappa about the "first-class work Geetopanishad, to cover 1,200 pages of royal size" and had urged him to publish it for the benefit of religious-minded people. He had also mentioned that Abhay had been trying to publish the book since 1946.*

*Dr. Allagappa soon replied to Mr. Chetty that he was interested, and Mr. Chetty wrote to Abhay, "So I am on my way to help you, and only God must help me." As for talking business with Dr. Allagappa, there would be no need, since "once he does it, it is for the sake of benevolence..." Anticipating success, Mr. Chetty invited Abhay to come to Madras to meet Dr. Allagappa. "There he will arrange for what God has meant for you to do in your religious duty." In Madras, Abhay would be able to check and correct the proofs of the manuscript and see the book through the various stages of printing. It was a big opportunity, and Abhay was not one to miss an opportunity. If the book could be published, it would be a great victory in his mission to fulfill the request of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī.*

*But then the worst thing happened. The manuscript was stolen. It was the only copy, the one Abhay was keeping safely at home. He questioned his family and servants — no one knew what had happened. Abhay was baffled; so much work had been undone. He felt he had worked so many months for nothing. Although*

*he couldn't prove anything, he suspected that his servant or even his son might have done it, with a motive for raising money. But it remained a mystery.*

*(Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta, Vol. 1)*

**— Sweet/sweet? — Bitter/Sweet? — Or Bitter/Bitter?! —**

## **Scene Two**

***Jhansi/Bombay/Vṛndāvana, 1956 – 1957***

**Abhay's dynamic and very successful preaching in Jhansi was sabotaged by vested interests and petty politicking, and so he returned to Vṛndāvana. After some months, he received a letter from his one and only disciple in Jhansi.**

***Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta tells us***

*A letter came to Abhay in Vṛndāvana from his disciple, Ācārya Prabhākar Misra, and it gave Abhay an idea. Ācārya Prabhākar, who was in Bombay working as secretary of the Sanskrit Department at the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, invited Śrīla Bhaktivedanta Prabhu to join him there for preaching together, just as in the old days. The founder-director of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan was Governor K. M. Munshi (the same governor whose wife had pressured Abhay to give up the Radha Memorial in Jhansi). But Ācārya Prabhākar, having recently established a friendship with the governor, intimated to Abhay that the governor might be willing to help. Thus in January 1957, after assuring Mahant Gopal that he would return and that he would send five rupees a month for his (Vṛndāvana) room, Abhay traveled to Bombay.*

*Ācārya Prabhākar got Abhay quarters in the faculty residence and introduced him to various scholars and religionists. They then attended a lecture by Governor Munshi, "What Is Wrong With the World?" Afterwards, Abhay approached the governor, expressing his appreciation of the speech, but stressing that it would take a spiritual movement to avert the imminent global disasters. Without God consciousness, even Mr. Munshi's work in the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan would be a waste of time. Abhay spoke of his interest in reviving the League of Devotees, and he suggested how he might work within the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan to infuse the life of God consciousness into the governor's cultural projects. Governor Munshi responded by offering Abhay a post as Honorary*

*Professor of Bhagavad-gītā. Abhay accepted and gave the governor some copies of Back to Godhead, requesting that he read them in his spare time.*

***As Honorary Professor of Bhagavad-gītā, Abhay began each class with Hare Kṛṣṇa kīrtana and then lectured on the Gītā, presenting Lord Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, but he soon found his post confining. Within the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, he found little scope for reviving the League of Devotees.***

*Then, along with other members of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Abhay attended the fifth annual convention of the World Academy of Sanskrit at Kurukṣetra (where five thousand years before, Lord Kṛṣṇa had spoken Bhagavad-gītā). India's president, Dr. Rajendra Prasad; Governor Munshi; and many scholars and paṇḍitas from all over India participated in the discourses. But everyone there had his own thing to say, apart from the conclusions of Lord Kṛṣṇa, so Abhay considered the meeting a waste of time. Since he was not scheduled to speak, since the nondevotional discussions on the Gītā disturbed him, and since he saw that nothing practical would come of such a theoretical meeting, he left Kurukṣetra and returned to Vṛndāvana..... After some months in Vṛndāvana, Abhay decided to go back to Bombay and preach. In Bombay, he quickly broke off his association with the stifling Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan and moved out of the faculty residence there. Staying a week at a time in the homes of various patrons, he tried to generate interest in his missionary activities. When a friend of Ācārya Prabhākar's arranged for Abhay to address Sunday-evening crowds at a Bombay beach, Abhay accepted. Following already established custom, he sat on a cushion, and the people gathered — from five hundred to a thousand, sitting and listening — as he loudly spoke the philosophy of Bhagavad-gītā. Abhay spoke for several nights. And there were other lecture opportunities also. One week he spoke several times at a Bombay Viṣṇu temple. But Abhay wanted to do more than deliver occasional lectures to uncommitted audiences.*

*Alone and poor, Abhay returned to Vṛndāvana. He was sixty-two, but he wasn't thinking of retiring. More than ever, his mood was reflective and renounced. Because few people knew him and because he wanted to write, he kept to himself.*  
**(Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta, Vol. 1)**

**— Sweet/sweet? — Bitter/Sweet? — Or Bitter/Bitter?! —**



### **Scene Three**

**Matchless Gifts, 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, New York, 1966**

**It's a warm July evening in 1966. Śrīla Prabhupāda is preaching *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* in the new storefront, which is appropriately named "Matchless Gifts."**

**Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta tells us:**

*The cars are always passing, roaring and rumbling through every word Prabhupāda speaks. The door is open, and he is poised at the edge of a river of carbon monoxide, asphalt, rumbling tires, and constant waves of traffic. He has come a long way from the banks of his Yamunā in Vṛndāvana, where great saints and sages have gathered through the ages to discuss Kṛṣṇa consciousness. But his audience lives here amid this scene, so he has come here, beside Second Avenue's rushing river of traffic, to speak loudly the ageless message.....Suddenly a Bowery derelict enters, whistling and drunkenly shouting. The audience remains seated, not knowing what to make of it.*

**Drunk:** *How are ya? I'll be right back. I brought another thing.*

**Prabhupāda:** *Don't disturb. Sit down. We are talking seriously.*

**Drunk:** *I'll put it up there. In a church? All right. I'll be right back.*

*The man is white-haired, with a short grizzly beard and frowsy clothing. His odor reeks through the temple. But then he suddenly careens out the door and is gone.*

*Prabhupāda chuckles softly and returns immediately to his lecture.....Suddenly the old derelict returns, announcing his entrance: "How are ya?" He is carrying something. He maneuvers his way through the group, straight to the back of the temple, where the Swami is sitting. He opens the toilet room door, puts two rolls of bathroom tissue inside, closes the door, and then turns to the sink, sits some paper towels on top of it and puts two more rolls of bathroom tissue and some more paper towels under the sink. He then stands and turns around toward the Swami and the audience. The Swami is looking at him and asks, "What is this?" The bum is silent now; he has done his work. Prabhupāda begins to laugh, thanking his visitor, who is now moving toward the door: "Thank you. Thank you very much." The bum exits. "Just see," Prabhupāda now addresses his congregation. "It is a natural tendency to give some service. Just see, he is not in order, but he thought that, "Here is something. Let me give some service.' Just see how automatically it comes. This is natural."*

*The young men in the audience look at one another. This is really far out — first the chanting with the brass cymbals, the Swami looking like Buddha and talking about Kṛṣṇa and chanting, and now this crazy stuff with the bum. But the Swami stays cool, he's really cool, just sitting on the floor like he's not afraid of anything, just talking his philosophy about the soul and us becoming saints and even the old drunk becoming a saint!*

**(Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta, Vol. 2)**

Perhaps my heart's response to reading all this is — Oh my God! If materialists struggle and suffer, and devotees who try to live and serve *Bhagavad-gītā* also struggle and suffer, why should I bother with *Bhagavad-gītā*?! Maybe there's something better I can do with my life than surrender to Kṛṣṇa!



**OOPS!**

It definitely looks like it's time to ask — and conclusively answer! — some serious questions.

❁ **Is the struggling and suffering of a devotee the same as that of a materialist?**

It looks the same. It may even feel the same. But it's very, very different. Śrīla Prabhupāda explains ....

A *karmī* suffers the result of his own fruitive reactions, whereas a devotee is reformed by chastisement directed by the Lord Himself. The sufferings of an orphan and the sufferings of a beloved child of a king are not one and the same. An orphan is really poor because he has no one to take care of him, but a beloved son of a rich man, although he appears to be on the same level as the orphan, is always under the vigilance of his capable father.

(ŚB 1.5.19p)

*To save a surrendered soul from repeated birth and death, the Lord purifies him of contamination by offering him a little distress. This cannot be understood by a nondevotee, but a devotee can see this because he is vipaścit, or learned. A nondevotee, therefore, is perturbed in distress, but a devotee welcomes distress as another feature of the Lord. Sarvaṁ khalv idaṁ brahma. A devotee can actually see that there is only the Supreme Personality of Godhead and no second entity. Ekam evādvitīyam. There is only the Lord, who presents Himself in different energies.*

(ŚB 10.2.28p)

*Although a Vaiṣṇava's happiness and distress are felt as pleasure and pain, just like ordinary karmic reactions, they are different in a significant sense. Material happiness and distress, arising from karma, leave a subtle residue — the seed of future entanglement. Such enjoyment and suffering tend toward degradation and increase the danger of falling into hellish oblivion. Happiness and distress generated from the Supreme Lord's desires, however, leave no trace after their immediate purpose has been served. Moreover, the Vaiṣṇava who enjoys such reciprocation with the Lord is in no danger of falling down into nescience.*

(ŚB 10.88.8p)

**Śrīla Prabhupāda also tells us WHY we suffer:** *The living beings are given as much freedom as they deserve, and misuse of that freedom is the cause of suffering. The devotees of the Lord do not misuse their freedom, and therefore they are the good sons of the Lord. Others, who misuse freedom, are put into miseries destined by the eternal kāla. The kāla offers the conditioned souls both happiness and miseries. It is all predestined by eternal time. As we have miseries without calling for them, so we have happiness also without asking for it, because they are all predestined by kāla. No one is therefore either an enemy or friend of the Lord. Everyone is suffering and enjoying the result of his own destiny. This destiny is made by the living beings in course of social intercourse. Everyone here wants to lord it over the material nature, and thus everyone creates his own destiny under the supervision of the Supreme Lord.*

(ŚB 1.8.28p)

## **Is a devotee's suffering a karmic reaction?**

*When a devotee falls into a miserable condition, it is not due to past impious activities, known as karma-phala; the poverty of the devotee is a creation of the Personality of Godhead. Similarly, when a devotee becomes materially opulent, that is also not due to his pious activities. In either case, whether the devotee becomes poorer or richer, the arrangement is made by the Supreme Personality of Godhead. This arrangement is especially made by Kṛṣṇa for His devotee just to make him completely dependent upon Him and to free him from all material obligations. He can then concentrate his energies, mind and body — everything — for the service of the Lord, and that is pure devotional service.*

**(Kṛṣṇa Book Ch.88)**

*Lord Kṛṣṇa explains in the Bhagavad-gītā that a devotee who fully surrenders unto Him is no longer liable to suffer the reactions of his previous karma. However, because in his mind a devotee may still maintain the remnants of his previous sinful mentality, the Lord removes the last vestiges of the enjoying spirit by giving His devotee punishments that may sometimes resemble sinful reactions. The purpose of the entire creation of God is to rectify the living entity's tendency to enjoy without the Lord, and therefore the particular punishment given for a sinful activity is specifically designed to curtail the mentality that produced the activity. Although a devotee has surrendered to the Lord's devotional service, until he is completely perfect in Kṛṣṇa consciousness he may maintain a slight inclination to enjoy the false happiness of this world. The Lord therefore creates a particular situation to eradicate this remaining enjoying spirit. This unhappiness suffered by a sincere devotee is not technically a karmic reaction; it is rather the Lord's special mercy for inducing His devotee to completely let go of the material world and return home, back to Godhead.*

*A sincere devotee earnestly desires to go back to the Lord's abode. Therefore he willingly accepts the Lord's merciful punishment and continues offering respects and obeisances to the Lord with his heart, words and body. Such a bona fide servant of the Lord, considering all hardship a small price to pay for gaining the personal association of the Lord, certainly becomes a legitimate son of God, as indicated here by the words dāya-bhāk. Just as one cannot approach the sun without becoming fire, one cannot approach the supreme pure, Lord Kṛṣṇa, without undergoing a rigid purificatory process, which may appear like suffering but which is in fact a curative treatment administered by the personal hand of the Lord.*

**(ŚB 10.14.8p)**

## 🌸 Why does Kṛṣṇa allow His devotees to suffer?

(1)

Maybe we give Him no choice! Maybe we don't want to do things His way — we want things our way. And so we whimsically or willfully violate His plans, His teachings, His devotional process — so many, many things — and hence we suffer!

*Because of my state of complete foolishness and paucity of pious activities, although the Lord offered me His personal service, I wanted material name, fame and prosperity. My case is just like that of the poor man who, when he satisfied a great emperor who wanted to give him anything he might ask, out of ignorance asked only a few broken grains of husked rice.*

*A conditioned soul does not know what complete independence is. Complete independence means situation in one's own constitutional position. The real independence of a living entity, who is part and parcel of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is to remain always dependent on the Supreme Lord, just like a child who plays in complete independence, guided by his parents, who watch over him. The independence of the conditioned soul does not mean to fight with the obstacles offered by māyā, but to surrender to Kṛṣṇa. In the material world, everyone is trying to become completely independent simply by fighting against the obstacles offered by māyā. This is called the struggle for existence.*

(ŚB 4.9.35+p)



**Prabhupāda:** *You are always with God, even (in) your rebellious condition, you are with God. Just like a prisoner. A prisoner is always with the government, [laughter] but in one department he is kicked, and in one department he is patted. That's all. So if you prefer to be kicked, you remain in māyā. But you are always in connection with God.*

(Morning Walk, Nov. 1<sup>st</sup>, 1975, Nairobi)

(2)

Maybe He's confident He can trust us to play a chosen part in fulfilling His plan or purpose. Of course, the Pāṇḍavas immediately come to mind.....

**Bhīṣmadeva said:** *Oh, what terrible sufferings and what terrible injustices you good souls had to suffer for being the sons of religion personified! You did not deserve to remain alive under those tribulations, yet you were protected by the brāhmaṇas, God and religion.*

*Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira was disturbed due to the great massacre in the Battle of Kurukṣetra. Bhīṣmadeva could understand this, and therefore he spoke first of the terrible sufferings of Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira. He was put into difficulty by injustice only, and the Battle of Kurukṣetra was fought just to counteract this injustice. Therefore, he should not regret the great massacre. He wanted to point out particularly that they were always protected by the brāhmaṇas, the Lord and religious principles. As long as they were protected by these three important items, there was no cause of disappointment. Thus Bhīṣmadeva encouraged Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira to dissipate his despondency. As long as a person is fully in cooperation with the wishes of the Lord, guided by the bona fide brāhmaṇas and Vaiṣṇavas and strictly following religious principles, one has no cause for despondency, however trying the circumstances of life. Bhīṣmadeva, as one of the authorities in the line, wanted to impress this point upon the Pāṇḍavas.*

**(ŚB 1.9.12+p)**

**(3)**

**Maybe He's just helping us progress along the path back to Him — or accelerating our progress when we become complacent or whimsical...**

*When a devotee is put into a situation of distress, his devotional activities are accelerated. Therefore, to show special favor to a devotee, the Lord sometimes puts him into distress. Besides that, it is stated that the sweetness of happiness is sweeter to those who have tasted bitterness....When after the dense, dark night there is finally sunrise in the morning, it is very pleasant; when there is scorching heat, cold water is very pleasant; and when there is freezing winter, hot water is very pleasant. Similarly, when a devotee, after experiencing the distress of the material world, relishes the spiritual happiness awarded by the Lord, his position is still more pleasant and enjoyable.*

**(Kṛṣṇa Book Ch. 88)**



Tribulations imposed upon the devotees by the Lord constitute another exchange of transcendental *bhāva* between the Lord and the devotees. The Lord says "I put My devotee into difficulty, and thus the devotee becomes more purified in exchanging transcendental *bhāva* with Me."

**(ŚB 1.9.19p)**

**🌸 How does a devotee of Kṛṣṇa honestly feel about his struggles and suffering?**

*The devotee accepts a reversal of his position in life as a benediction by the Lord and consequently offers the Lord more obeisances and prayers, thinking that the punishment is due to his past misdeeds and that the Lord is punishing him very mildly. The punishment awarded by the state or by God for one's own faults is actually for one's benefit.*

**(ŚB 4.26.21p)**

*The supreme will is the ultimate judgment; no one can argue upon this. A pure devotee therefore submits in all circumstances to the supreme will of the Lord, accepting it as all-auspicious.*

tat te 'nukampām susamīkṣamāṇo  
bhuñjāna evātma-kṛtam vipākam  
hṛd-vāg-vapurahir vidadhan namas te  
jīveta yo mukti-pade sa dāya-bhāk  
(SB 10.14.8)

*The purport of this verse is that when a devotee is in a calamitous condition he takes it as a benediction of the Supreme Lord and takes responsibility himself for his past misdeeds. In such a condition, he offers still more devotional service and is not disturbed.*

**(ŚB 4.6.45p)**

*Even while suffering in the midst of difficulties, devotees simply offer their prayers and service more enthusiastically. In this way they become firmly fixed in devotional service and eligible to return home, back to Godhead, without a doubt.*

**(ŚB 6.9.40p)**

*When a devotee is in great danger, he sees that danger to be the great mercy of the Lord because it is an opportunity to think of the Lord very sincerely and with undiverted attention. Tat te 'nukampām susamīkṣamāṇo bhuñjāna evātma-kṛtam vipākam (SB 10.14.8). He does not accuse the Supreme Personality of Godhead for having let His devotee fall into such a dangerous condition.*

**(ŚB 8.3.32p)**

*One must accept the Personality of Godhead as the supreme controller and not foolishly give up one's faith due to material inconvenience.*

**(ŚB 11.8.3p)**

*The beloved devotees of the Lord do not regard as very troublesome the suffering He imposes on them. Indeed, they find that in the end it gives rise to unlimited pleasure, just as a stinging ointment applied by a physician cures his patient's infected eye.*

**(ŚB 10.88.8p)**

### **How does Kṛṣṇa respond to such a devotee's mood?**

*My devotee is not deterred by any adverse conditions of life; he always remains firm and steady. Therefore I give Myself to him, and I favor him so that he can achieve the highest success of life.” The mercy bestowed upon the tried devotee by the Supreme Personality is described as brahma, which indicates that the greatness of that mercy can be compared only to the all-pervasive greatness of Brahman. Brahma means unlimitedly great and unlimitedly expanding. That mercy is also described as paramam, for it has no comparison within this material world, and it is also called sūkṣmam, very fine. Not only is the Lord's mercy upon the tried devotee great and unlimitedly expansive, but it is of the finest quality of transcendental love between the devotee and the Lord. Such mercy is further described as cin-mātram, completely spiritual. The use of the word mātram indicates absolute spirituality, with no tinge of material qualities. That mercy is also called sat (eternal) and anantakam (unlimited).*

**(Kṛṣṇa Book Ch. 88)**

*Devotees of the Supreme Lord experience both happiness and distress — not as consequences of material work but as incidental effects of their loving reciprocation with the Lord.....In every stage of devotion, however, the Lord watches over His devotee and sees to the gradual elimination of his karma. Thus despite the fact that the happiness and distress devotees experience resemble ordinary karmic reactions, they are in fact given by the Lord Himself. As the Bhāgavatam (10.87.40) states, bhavad-uttha-śubhāśubhayoḥ: A mature devotee recognizes the superficially good and bad conditions he encounters as signs of the direct guidance of his ever well-wishing Lord.*

**(ŚB 10.88.8p)**

# — Quite Some Food For Thought, Isn't It?! —

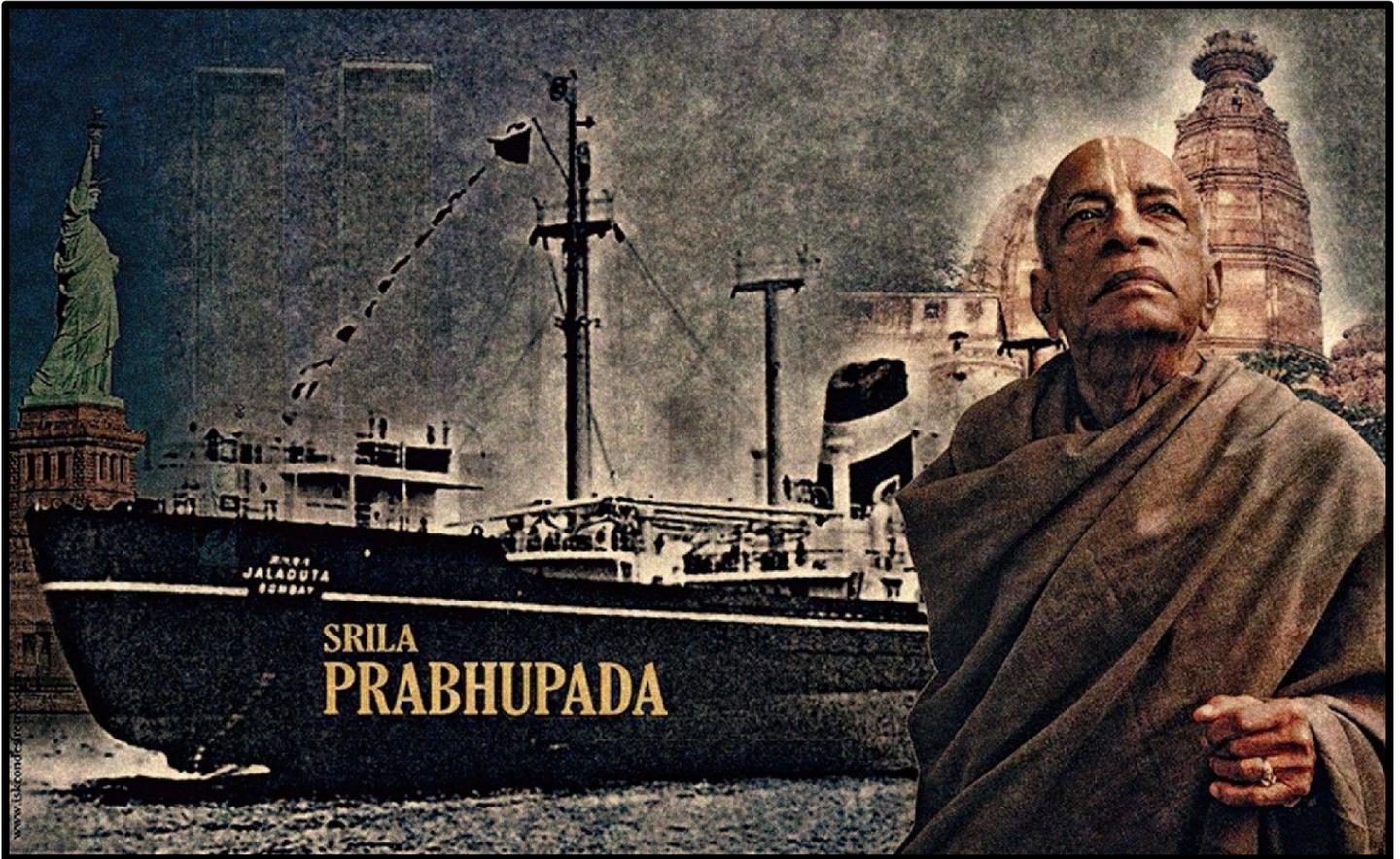
Yes, it's definitely time to face the facts. Whether we're trying to live *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* or just trying to survive or enjoy — life is tough! But as devotees we can't really complain. We **do** have a choice — a way to sanity and safety. We can choose to take shelter of an amazingly potent and merciful PERSON and develop our loving relationship with Him — rather than just constantly and endlessly struggle with His external energy. It's not always so easy, but moment-by-moment, hour-by-hour, day-by-day, we do have a choice.

**So what would a sane and self-interested person do?**

**That one is for you to answer!**

*(jaya) śrī-kr̥ṣṇa-caitanya prabhu-nityānanda  
śrī-advaita gadādhara śrīvāsādi-gaura-bhakta-vr̥nda*

*Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare  
Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare*



**Please read on to receive a very special gift in celebration of  
*Gītā Jayantī* from Śrīla Prabhupāda .....**

A Śrīla Prabhupāda

# MASTER KEY

— It's Good for Everyone — It's Good for This Life — It's Good Forever —  
**Please use it! And please don't ever lose it!**

Intelligent persons factually dip into the ocean of Your nectarean activities and very patiently hear about them. Thus they are immediately freed from the contamination of the material qualities; they **do not have to undergo severe penances and austerities for advancement in spiritual life. This chanting and hearing of Your transcendental pastimes is the easiest process for self-realization. Simply by submissive aural reception of the transcendental message, one's heart is cleansed of all dirty things.** Thus Kṛṣṇa consciousness becomes fixed in the heart of a devotee.....the devotee who wants to elevate himself simply by the process of devotional activities, especially by hearing and chanting, very soon comes out of the clutches of the dualities of material existence. **By this simple process of penance and austerity, the Supersoul within the devotee's heart is very much pleased and gives the devotee directions so that he may go back home, back to Godhead.**



As a fatigued man feels refreshed by dipping into a reservoir of water, so the conditioned soul who is very much disgusted with material activities becomes refreshed and forgets all the fatigue of material activities simply by dipping into the transcendental ocean of Your pastimes. And eventually he merges into the ocean of transcendental bliss. **The most intelligent devotees, therefore, do not take to any means of self-realization except devotional service and constant engagement in the nine different processes of devotional life, especially hearing and chanting.**

— Kṛṣṇa, The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Ch. 87

The most feasible and practical way to open the path of salvation, or to get relief from all miseries of life, is to hear submissively the transcendental activities of the Lord from the right and bona fide sources. This is the only remedial process.

—ŚB 1.5.2p