

SOUL LIFE

When people get up from their beds in the morning, they assume that they have shaken off their sleep. Little do they know that another sleep is waiting for them – a sleep much deeper than the first one.

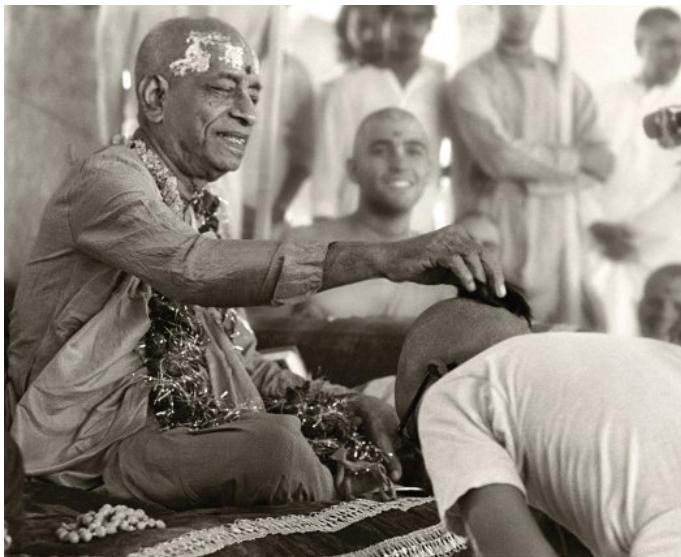
The *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* reminds us that we are awake only when we are awake to the eternal soul.

*uttīṣṭhata jāgrata prāpya varānnibodhata
kṣurasya dhārā niśitā duratyayā
durgam pathastatkavayo vadanti*

*Arise from the slumber of ignorance!
Awaken to your own true self.
Go to the great souls and learn.
The wise say that the path is hard to walk
and full with obstacles which are difficult to cross over.
It is exactly like the sharp edge of a razor.*
(*Kaṭha Upaniṣad* 1.3.14)

When, with a few of my god brothers, I met Śrīla Prabhupāda (my spiritual master) for the last time, he tested our understanding of what he had taught us. As we entered his room in London and greeted him, we were shocked by how emaciated he was. We must have looked very startled – yet he was unmoved.

There was something about him which was difficult to grasp. He seemed to have one foot already in eternity. He had hardly waited until we sat down before he asked us: “So, have you understood our philosophy?” One by one we tried to present our understanding but he remained dissatisfied.



Finally he responded to his own question: “First of all you have to understand that life is eternal.”

His words carried an enormous weight, especially because it was only months before he was to give up his physical body. The words have etched themselves into the consciousness of all who were in that room: “First of all you must understand that life is eternal!”

On many other occasions, he had already impressed upon us the need to understand the eternal soul – not theoretically, but practically by personal realization. But this time it was particularly special.

In one of his books he had written:

“The very first step in self-realization is realizing one’s identity as separate from the body. ‘I am not this body but am spirit soul’ is an essential realization for anyone who wants to transcend death and enter into the spiritual world beyond. It is not simply a matter of saying ‘I am not this body,’ but of actually realizing it. This is not as simple as it may seem at first. Although we are not these bodies but are pure consciousness, somehow or other we have become encased within the bodily dress. If we actually want the happiness and independence that transcends death, we have to establish ourselves and remain in our constitutional position as pure consciousness.”
(*Beyond Birth and Death*, 1st chapter)

He certainly had realized the eternal *ātmā* and therefore did not wish us to grieve for him. Instead he wanted us to connect more to his *vāṇī* – his instructions – and thus live with him eternally.

As I am writing this, I am finishing my work on the first draft of the Atma Module for the Vedic Way (a spiritual life school which I am currently developing). I am awed by the amount of information and practical exercises, which are there in our tradition to ‘actually realize’ this truth. Let me share one of them:

AN EXCELLENT PRACTICE

Stand before a mirror,
Look deep into your eyes, down to where the soul is.
Hold your gaze even if it is an unusual situation.

Now ask yourself: "Who am I?"
"Am I the body, am I the mind or am I the soul?"
Let the question sink in. Engage your mind with it.

Now ask: "Where have I come from?"
"Where am I going after this life?"
"And why am I not experiencing unadulterated happiness?"
Conclude with: "If this day were the last day of my life, what would I actually do and think today?"

When you do this practice everyday a new world of opportunities will open to you. Please try it.



A RARE OPPORTUNITY TO BECOME FREE FROM ANXIETIES

"There is no death" wrote Herman Hesse, "only fear of death. But that can be cured."

In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, King Parīkṣit who was cursed to die within seven days asked his exalted spiritual master Śukadeva Gosvāmī about overcoming the fear of death. Śukadeva gave a very practical answer in which he explained how one can transcend material consciousness and become fixed in god consciousness.

*tasmād bhārata sarvātmā bhagavān iśvara hariḥ
śrotavyaḥ kīrtitavyaś ca smartavyaś cecchatābhayam*

....One who desires to be free from all miseries must hear about, glorify (do kīrtana) and also remember the Personality of Godhead, who is the Supersoul, the controller and savior from all miseries." (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, 2.1.5)

Hearing about Krṣṇa is the life-giving elixir for the soul in this world. By drinking it regularly you will first become aware of and

then absorbed in the Lord. This is called Krṣṇa *samādhī* – attaining the level of Krṣṇa and standing by his side. In his presence our soul will be illuminated and safe. Where the Lord is, there is no fear!

Let me conclude with a text from the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*:

"Therefore, O king Citraketu, carefully consider the position of the ātmā. In other words, try to understand who you are — whether body, mind or soul. Consider where you have come from, where you are going after giving up this body, and why you are under the control of material lamentation. Try to understand your real position in this way, and then you will be able to give up your unnecessary attachment. You will also be able to give up the belief that this material world, or anything not directly in touch with service to Krṣṇa, is eternal. Thus you will obtain peace." (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, 6.15.26)

May all beings live in the peace of knowing who they are!

ॐ Śacīnandana Swami, April 2014.



MEET ŚACĪNANDANA SWAMI

upcoming seminars & events:

May 3	12 hour Kīrtana, Berlin, Germany
May 10-11	24 hour Kīrtana, Birmingham, UK
May 23-26	Sādhu-saṅga Retreat, North Carolina, USA
Jun. 30 - Jul. 6	Kīrtana Course, Bhaktivedanta College, Belgium

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